

IMPROVEMENT (DON LEAVES LINDA)

An Opera

BY ROBERT ASHLEY

Like John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress, Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)* is an allegory for an individual's self-realization. The opera takes its imagery from the history of the Jews – beginning with their expulsion from Spain in 1492 and ending 500 years later in the United States.

## SYNOPSIS

Scenes 1 – 7. Don leaves Linda at a roadside turnoff vista somewhere in the southwest. He returns the rental car and undergoes questioning at the Airline Ticket Counter. Linda gets a ride to town with the Unimportant Family and is taken to the same Airline Ticket Counter, where she answers the same questions from a different point of view. At home, finally, she pretends that she is someone else.

Scenes 8 – 12. On the flight home Linda meets the amazing Mr. Payne, who remembers everything, and who proposes marriage to her. After the proposal, which she declines, he takes Linda and her son, Junior, Jr., to supper at his mother's house. Junior, Jr. recalls that Mr. Payne tried to teach him golf (left-handed). Linda faces her life-dilemma (symbolically) in an encounter in an all-night delicatessen.

Scenes 13 – 16. Linda moves to the big city and comes up against public opinion in various forms. Everything seems to have a meaning that is hard to decipher. After a typical, big-city party, she and a companion, having a late coffee and discussing nutrition, are threatened by four drunken men. They are saved in the nick of time, but the experience is ominously unpleasant.

Scenes 17 – 23. Linda has almost completely adapted to her new life, but there are still problems of meaning. At a crucial moment she catches a fleeting glimpse of Don (much changed), who seems to recognize her, but "disappears" in front of her eyes. She decides not to think about this experience. Finally, playing bridge with friends, she reads them a letter from Junior, Jr. in his new (mysterious) job and goes over the high points of her life in memory.

— Robert Ashley, 1994

## IMPROVEMENT (DON LEAVES LINDA)

Idea	EXPERIENCE
Arena	THEATER
Imagery	LANDSCAPE
Technique	COLLAGE (3-D effects)
Protagonist	LINDA "A sense of self satisfaction, given off, follows everything she does."
Style	ANSWERS Requiring an attitude of restrained exaggeration. Every point seems to portend more than can be justified.
Model	ALLEGORY "Also, as part of the nesting instinct she puts things on all of the chairs."
Subject	A PEOPLE
Example	THE JEWS
Reference	THE KABALA
Theme	IDENTITY
Code	1492

## CAST - CHARACTERS

Linda	The Jews
Don	Spanishness
Now Eleanor	America
Junior, Jr.	The descendants of Jews and non-Jews (i.e., us)
Mr. George Payne	Giordano Bruno
Mr. Payne's mother	The Roman Catholic Church
Tap dancing	The Art of Memory
A car with a rumble seat	Integrated Philosophy
Left-handed golf	Cosmology (Bruno's)
The Narrator	Omniscience
The Airline Ticket Counter	The Inquisition
The Correspondences Text	Exploration
The Unimportant Family	The Star Chamber
The Indifference Text	The Affirmation
Back home ...	Some recanted
A moment (very late) ...	Exile
The big city	Assimilation
The Doctor	Analysis (Marxism, etc.)
The Good Life	Art
Trouble	Politics
A place in the country	Israel
Happiness, Prosperity ...	America 1952
The Office	The idea of an historic refuge (Holland)
The bridge game	Self-image
North	Berlin (style)
East	River Rouge (The Movement)
South	Campo Dei Fiori (history)
West	Atlantis: "as far back as you can go (on this system) ..."

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Prelude: (The Argument)  
(The Narrator)

1            UMMMMM  
2            UMMMMM  
3            UMMMMM  
4            UMMMMM  
5            UMMMMM  
6            UMMMMM  
7            UMMMMM  
8            UMMMMM  
9            UMMMMM

10           To continue  
11           I must explain  
12           An idea that  
13           I am inadequate  
14           To communicate  
15           In the music  
16           In the settings  
17           In the actions  
18           In the intentions  
19           Now Eleanor's idea  
20           Conceived as if  
21           In a flash of light  
22           The offering of images is  
23           A radical form of Judaism  
24           Which has come to us  
25           Unacknowledged  
26           In the same form as  
27           Protestantism  
28           Modernism  
29           Science  
30           And Theater as we know it  
31           Her idea explains  
32           At least to her how  
33           All of these things have come together  
34           And differences have disappeared  
35           For the sake of argument Don is Spain in 1492  
36           And Linda is the Jews

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### Scene One: "Sunset at the Turnoff"

(Chorus)

37 DON LEAVES LINDA  
38 LEAVES IS CERTAINLY THE WORD  
39 THE PICTURE IS TAKEN AT SUNSET  
40 TWO PEOPLE ARE ON THE HORIZON  
41 A cynic might say where else could they be  
42 THEY HAVE PARKED IN A TURN-OFF  
43 A turn-off in this case means: picked for the view  
44 COMFORT IS ADVERTISED  
45 Comfort in this case means: separate facilities  
46 ICE MELTS IN THE THERMOS  
47 What a beautiful way to begin a story  
48 SHE HAS JUST THOUGHT OF THE WORDS: A CASTLE  
49 AT NIGHT HE DOESN'T SPEAK  
50 A CAMERA CLICKS IN THE DISTANCE  
51 A dog barks  
52 THE MOMENT IS LOADED  
53 THEY STOP HOLDING HANDS  
54 THE JET TRACKS ARE FADING  
55 THE DECISION IS MADE  
56 SHE STEPS AWAY FROM THE SIGNAL  
57 THE LIGHT HAS MOVED SLIGHTLY  
58 THE BUILDING IS TOO SUBSTANTIAL  
59 The door on the left is marked women  
60 HE WALKS TOWARD THE CAR  
61 IT STARTS ON THE KEY  
62 A song on the radio finishes  
63 HE DRIVES AWAY  
  
64 -- REACHES THE AIRPORT FINALLY.  
65 -- GOES TO THE COUNTER AND UNDERGOES  
66 -- QUESTIONING. WONDERS WHY HE THINKS OF  
67 -- HIMSELF AS CARLO. SUBVERSIVE.

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### Scene Two: "The Airline Ticket Counter"

Don goes by the name of CARLO;

The Agent at The Airline Ticket Counter (Linda) is named CARLA.

- 68 Do you have a ticket?  
Yes.
- 69 May I see it please?  
Yes.
- 70 The ticket says that it was issued as one of two.  
Yes.
- 71 The ticket says that you came here with your wife.  
Yes.
- 72 Where is your wife?  
She is not here.
- 73 Why is she not here?  
She stayed behind.
- 74 Ordinarily we would not honor such a ticket.  
I understand.
- 75 But today is a special day.  
I know.
- 76 So we will honor the ticket.  
Thank you.
- 77 Do you have baggage?  
Yes.
- 78 You have more baggage than you are allowed.  
I have my wife's baggage and my own.
- 79 Why do you have your wife's baggage?  
She stayed behind.
- 80 Why did she stay behind?  
I left her behind.
- 81 Why did you leave her behind?  
I had to leave urgently.
- 82 What is the reason for such urgency?  
My reasons are my own.
- 83 Do you refuse to tell me the reason?  
No.
- 84 What is the reason?  
Another person.
- 85 Is that person a woman?  
Yes.
- 86 The ticket says that you have rented a car.  
Yes.

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- 87 Do you have the rented car to return at this time?  
Yes.
- 88 The ticket says that you will return the car with your wife.  
I know.
- 89 If your wife appears without the car, it is possible that her ticket will not be honored.  
I understand.
- 90 What will happen to your wife, if her ticket is not honored?  
I do not know.
- 91 Where is your wife now?  
I do not know.
- 92 Does she have transportation to the Airline Ticket Counter?  
I do not know.
- 93 Does she have resources other than the airline ticket?  
I do not know.
- 94 Does she know where she is in relation to the Airline Ticket Office?  
I do not know.
- 95 And she has neither baggage nor the rented car?  
Yes.
- 96 This is a rather unusual situation.  
I understand.
- 97 Where was you wife when you left her?  
She was in the toilet at the turnoff.
- 98 She went into the toilet and you left her?  
Yes.
- 99 You took her baggage and the rented car?  
Yes.
- 100 You left urgently to meet another person?  
Yes.
- 101 That person is a woman?  
Yes.
- 102 Your wife will be angry and jealous.  
No.
- 103 How is that possible?  
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### Scene Three: "The Correspondences Text" (Don and Chorus)

- 104 As if the Commander had spoken sharply to them, they  
105 Ground ... (LONG PAUSE) -- what is the word? -- "they



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106 Ground ...” (LONG PAUSE FOLLOWED BY EXTRAVAGANT GESTURE  
107 TO SIGNIFY THE ABSENCE OF THE ADVERB) -- to a halt.  
108 This simple sentence, with the hole in it,  
109 occupied me for years. Nor have I found the solution, yet.  
110 What is the word? “They ground...” (LONG PAUSE, THEN,  
111 THE SAME GESTURE) -- “to a halt.”  
112 The word I need should symbolize the whole of the psychology  
113 of the process or attitude of what is not -- I repeat,  
114 not -- subservience, which is the way we see it  
115 from the “outside”, so to speak. Remember “as if”.  
116 “As if” the Commander had spoken sharply to them, etcetera.  
117 In other words, “they”, acting to all appearances in unison,  
118 ground to a halt. And, for us, how is that unanimity  
119 of purpose and action to be achieved, if not  
120 in subservience? We have a special view of the world.  
121 The roads, for instance, are understood.  
122 They represent a unanimity of purpose that is understood,  
123 because, in my view of things, they are unframed in time.  
124 When did they begin and when did they end are questions  
125 we have not asked ourselves, because --  
126 ALTHOUGH, MAYBE THERE IS NO “BECAUSE”,  
127 HOWEVER, IMPOSSIBLE THAT MAY SEEM --  
128 as accomplishments they are “on-going.”  
129 But architecture has its accomplishments “framed in time.”  
130 The great “accomplishments” of architecture are, finally,  
131 “finished”, they are “framed in time”, and, because we have  
132 no understanding of our schedule on a scale so vast,  
133 the “accomplishments” of architecture are a mystery to us,  
134 and we explain them to ourselves in simple words  
135 of great significance, whose meanings we barely have  
136 examined -- much less “understand.”  
137 There is a precise -- perhaps, even to the moment --  
138 correspondence, in time measured,  
139 between the Ziggurats at Ur, “stepped pyramids”  
140 (THEIR “DATE”, HOWEVER THAT IS DETERMINED),  
141 to the gleaming, polished Pyramids at Giza  
142 -- “CLOCKS”, THEY THINK, FOR THE WHOLE WORLD --  
143 and the “stepped pyramids”, unnamed,  
144 that are the accomplishments of the great Aztec Tribes,  
145 to the World Trade Center at New York.  
146 This is one example among many; but, then,  
147 I don’t have time to discuss this in detail;

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148 I mean, the correspondence.  
149 This is certainly a puzzle; I mean, the precision  
150 of these correspondences. And it is not to be explained  
151 in stupid and arrogant concepts, such as  
152 the concept of "subservience." As in:  
153 "They were ordered to do it, and they did it. We made  
154 them do it, and it is done." Boy, how stupid can you get?  
155 The Ziggurats at Ur -- on what sustenance we have  
156 not named -- and the great "Clocks" at Giza -- on garlic,  
157 it is said (AND THAT MAKES SENSE TO ME, WHEN I EAT GARLIC)  
158 -- and the great stepped pyramids thrown toward the sky  
159 among the Aztecs -- on coca leaves, it is surmised  
160 (AND, BOY, THAT MAKES SENSE TO ME, EVEN AT THIS DISTANCE) --  
161 and the World Trade Center at New York -- on grain carbohydrates,  
162 I assume -- are, obviously, the "will of the people."  
163 Consider the stupidity of the concept of  
164 "subservience" on a scale so vast and the concept  
165 disappears, like the value of flesh and blood as  
166 sustenance to a monumental task. Do you know what I mean?

### Insert end of Scene Two.

167 Well, sort of. I get the idea that this is a subject that you are interested in.  
That's one way of putting it.  
168 Have a good trip -- Carlo.  
Thank-you. (What?)

### Scene Four: "The Ride to Town" (The Unimportant Family)

169 MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE TURNOFF,  
170 LINDA IS OFFERED A RIDE TO TOWN.  
171 SHE DOESN'T LIKE THE LOOK OF IT.  
172 FOUR PEOPLE TOO MUCH ALIKE.  
173 A TYPICAL TRAP. SHE ACCEPTS.  
174 GO FOR IT, LINDA. GOOD LUCK.

175 Well, here's a cute little thing,  
176 just came out of the toilet,  
177 and she appears to be alone.  
178 A maiden in distress.

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179 Madam, my name is unimportant, and this is my wife,  
180 whose name is unimportant, and our two, lovely  
181 children, whose names are unimportant.  
182 We are the Unimportant Family,  
183 but we are a family, nevertheless,  
184 and that is our charm.  
185 You appear to be alone, the victim of circumstances --  
186 circumstances of your own creation,  
187 according to one point of view,  
188 or not, according to another -- and  
189 we can offer you a ride to town.  
190 You apparently have been deserted.  
191 It happens all the time, really.  
192 Especially here. This is the perfect place:  
193 The desert, the lack of public telephones,  
194 that cosmic feeling of our singular  
195 relationship to God, and the feeling of  
196 detachment from the things of the world.  
197 They just drive away.  
198 Sometimes one, sometimes the other.  
199 Maybe it's no more than who has the keys  
200 and, of course, that madness  
201 that comes to each of us so suddenly.  
202 We come here all the time.  
203 We live in a nearby town with telephones,  
204 radios, airplanes, the works,  
205 and there, burdened with the "works",  
206 we have a hard time seeing.  
207 So, we come here all the time.  
208 First, of course, the reason was the vista:  
209 pale, purplish blues and pale violets  
210 at sunset, the gleaming stars at midnight,  
211 wild yellows reflected off the morning rocks,  
212 and, at midday, the blast of whiteness.  
213 That wore off, of course.  
214 If you've seen one, you've seen them all.  
215 Then, among all this stage-business,  
216 we began to see the drama.  
217 Finally, accustomed to the light,  
218 we began to see the drama.  
219 The children enjoy it. My wife packs the  
220 picnic lunch. I clean up the van, which is

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221            what we call our vehicle, leaving room always  
222            for the extra person, who, like yourself,  
223            needs a ride to town, and we come here.  
224            Probably, were we elsewhere, there would be opera,  
225            or the theater, or the promenade --  
226            I don't even know the words, except from books.  
227            So, this is it. This is your life.  
228            Excuse me for the little joke.  
229            And we can offer you a ride to town.  
230            It takes on the order of an hour.  
231            Just time enough for the separation to  
232            be accomplished, all things going  
233            right, without embarrassment  
234            to either party  
235            I can tell, just from the look in your eye, that  
236            you don't believe me -- that this happens  
237            all the time. You are convinced of your  
238            uniqueness. What has befallen you  
239            has befallen you alone. Is this not true?  
240            Let me tell you, you are wrong. Why, just  
241            last week, we picked up a guy out here whose  
242            head was three times the size of his body.  
243            Where do they come from, the kids say.  
244            Who do they call, when we drop them at the  
245            airport, the wife says.  
246            I say, don't ask. Believe in  
247            God, and don't ask.  
248            This attitude usually gets us to the airport,  
249            and then we have our ice-cream cones  
250            and go off separately to think it over.  
251            Until the next time.  
252            Do you believe in God? Of course not,  
253            or you wouldn't be here.  
254            People who believe in God don't  
255            stand around looking at the vista --  
256            that is to say, pretending they are  
257            looking at the vista, and waiting  
258            for the drama to unfold.  
259            People who believe in God pray,  
260            right? Pray constantly.  
261            Take ten minutes off to eat a pizza.  
262            Are you kidding?

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263 Ten minutes off to look at the sunset?  
264 Are you kidding?  
265 That's why you're here, seven paces from the toilet  
266 under the golden sky --  
267 see how it changes just at the edge to blue;  
268 the rule of complementaries they say;  
269 bullshit, I say; the largest part is  
270 modulated gold, and just at the edge  
271 there is blue; period --  
272 and, if there is a God, prayer is sufficient.  
273 That's why you're here, seven paces from the toilet  
274 under the golden sky,  
275 talking to a creep in whose name  
276 the van owned in common law by  
277 the Unimportant Family is registered --  
278 because you don't believe in God,  
279 else you would pray constantly,  
280 and that would be sufficient.  
281 This ride is uncomfortable, I know.  
282 Try as I will to keep things up to date --  
283 I mean the van, as we call it,  
284 the stereo cassette player with its  
285 four loudspeakers placed  
286 around the enclosure,  
287 each separately controlled for  
288 ideal balance of the sound  
289 among the passengers with the  
290 sole exception that the ideal balance  
291 does not include the possibility of  
292 no sound at all for one passenger,  
293 if any other passenger wants or  
294 needs a sound,  
295 the fuzzy seat covers washed almost  
296 monthly by the wife, and the air-conditioner --  
297 there is a certain wornness about it,  
298 and this wornness makes the  
299 passenger uncomfortable,  
300 reminding him or her that this  
301 event is probably not unique.  
302 Notice that even the landscape itself  
303 looks worn. I don't mean the road.  
304 In my opinion they do

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305           pretty well at keeping up the road.  
306           I mean the landscape and the  
307           feeling that it gives you.  
308           So many people have looked at it before.  
309           So many people have felt these feelings.  
310           And it is impossible to conceive,  
311           is it not, that your feeling --  
312           I mean, the feeling that you have now;  
313           God knows, we cannot "possess"  
314           feelings; that figure of speech  
315           is just a convenience --  
316           is yours uniquely or, to involve  
317           time in the concept, yours alone.  
318           So, here we are at the airport,  
319           where we must part. Good luck trying to  
320           use your ticket. We would help you  
321           if we could, but probably  
322           it would only make things worse.  
323           So, we will leave you and have our ice-cream,  
324           and you will leave us for whatever  
325           your destination is, and,  
326           God willing, we will meet again  
327           under less dramatic circumstance.

328           REACHES THE AIRPORT, FINALLY.  
329           GOES TO THE COUNTER AND UNDERGOES  
330           QUESTIONING. WONDERS WHY SHE THINKS OF  
331           HERSELF AS CARLA. SOUNDS LIKE A  
332           NAME FOR A SPY. YOU'RE READING THE  
333           PAPERS TOO MUCH, LINDA.

### Scene Five: "The Airline Ticket Counter"

Linda goes by the name of CARLA;

The Agent at The Airline Ticket Counter (Don) is named CARLO.

334           Do you have a ticket?  
              Yes  
335           May I see it?  
              Yes  
336           The ticket says that it was issued as one of two.  
              Yes.

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- 337 The ticket says that you came here with your husband.  
Yes.
- 338 Where is your husband?  
He is not here.
- 339 Why is he not here?  
He went ahead.
- 340 Ordinarily we would not honor such a ticket.  
I understand.
- 341 But today is a special day.  
I know.
- 342 So we will honor the ticket.  
Thank you.
- 343 Do you have baggage?  
No.
- 344 Where is your baggage?  
It is with my husband.
- 345 Why is it with your husband?  
Because he went ahead.
- 346 Why did he go ahead?  
In order to leave me behind.
- 347 Why did he leave you behind?  
He had to leave urgently.
- 348 What is the reason for such urgency?  
His reasons are his own.
- 349 Do you refuse to tell me the reason?  
No.
- 350 What is the reason?  
Another person.
- 351 Is that person a woman?  
Yes.
- 352 The ticket says that you have rented a car.  
Yes.
- 353 Do you have the rented car to return at this time?  
No.
- 354 Why do you not have the rented car to return?  
My husband returned it.
- 355 Do you know that as a certainty?  
No.
- 356 Why do you believe that he returned it?  
Because he went ahead.
- 357 If he has not returned the rented car, your ticket cannot be honored.  
I understand.

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358 Will you allow me to determine if the car has been returned?  
Yes.

359 The car has been returned.  
I know.

360 We will honor the ticket.  
Thank you.

361 You have neither baggage nor the rented car.  
Yes.

362 This is a rather unusual situation.  
I know.

363 Where were you when your husband left?  
I was in the toilet at the turn-off.

364 You went to the toilet building and your husband left you?  
Yes.

365 He took your baggage and the rented car?  
Yes.

366 He left urgently to meet another person?  
Yes.

367 That person is a woman?  
Yes.

368 You are angry and jealous.  
No.

369 How is that possible?  
--

### Scene Six: "The Indifference Text" (Linda)

370 To all appearances I am complacent and indifferent.  
371 That is, I appear to be complacent and indifferent.  
372 And, in fact, I am complacent in that I am  
373 indifferent to appearances. My apparent indifference  
374 and my apparent complacency would seem to be  
375 the result of my position in the social world.  
376 I am well-fed. I am well-dressed. I am,  
377 to all appearances, without need. No one would challenge  
378 me that I do not understand the value of my resources,  
379 that I should have undertaken actions that would result  
380 in waste and make me a burden to society.  
381 These outward manifestations, these appearances,  
382 show nothing about my -- if I may use the word --



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383 spiritual or my intellectual well-being,  
384 though commonly they are taken to do so.  
385 Our common experience is that spiritual  
386 or intellectual degeneration cannot take place  
387 without outward manifestations. Our common  
388 experience is that beggars on the street or  
389 madmen who rant and tear their clothing  
390 should not be approached except in acts of  
391 defense of society. So, my indifference is  
392 different from the indifference of the beggar or  
393 the madman. My indifference is wedded to complacency,  
394 and complacency is reassuring at all times,  
395 signifying as it does, the stability and  
396 reality of the things of this world.  
397 Thus, you have honored my ticket, which certainly  
398 you should not have had I appeared before you  
399 as a beggar or as a madman.  
400 The irony of the threatening aspect  
401 of complacency is too complicated to  
402 go into here, except to remark that  
403 there is some connection between the threat and  
404 the continuing illusion of stability and  
405 reality, which illusion is so valuable to us all.  
406 I have driven my husband from me by my  
407 complacency and my indifference. The moment of  
408 his departure, which was inevitable, is of  
409 little consequence, except for the drama -- which  
410 purports to teach us something. My husband  
411 is embarked upon an adventure of the mind --  
412 if I may use that word. Inevitably,  
413 his partner in the adventure would be another woman --  
414 to address the question that is most troubling to you --  
415 else the adventure would not be, precisely, "of the  
416 mind." He has gone to determine if there is  
417 continuance apart from the continuance of things.  
418 In my complacency I have but little respect  
419 for the purpose of his adventure. My  
420 attention is to the things of this world  
421 and precisely to the order of things  
422 -- to their social value apart  
423 from immaterial continuance.  
424 Another answer to your stupid question is

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425           that inevitably we had to part, for some  
426           period of time, as the result of having  
427           become more alike, more like each other.  
428           Apparently, at some moment in the recent past  
429           we crossed the threshold of tolerable  
430           similarity. That that moment -- the moment of  
431           crossing the threshold -- should come in a form  
432           that seems dramatic to you, that  
433           it should come while I am in a toilet in  
434           the middle of a desert, is more acceptable to me,  
435           more generous on his part, more friendly,  
436           because it is clearer and, thus, more humorous,  
437           more human than had it come hidden, ambiguous,  
438           timid and without confidence in me.  
439           He would never go out after dinner to buy a pack of  
440           cigarettes and not return. His imagination is  
441           bigger than that. But we crossed the threshold  
442           and a solution to the difficulties of that  
443           situation had to come about. He had come to be --  
444           I speak, of course, from my singular "point of view"  
445           (as people say). There are things we can never  
446           understand, thoughts that we can never have --  
447           too much like me, too much of me. Before,  
448           it had been mysterious, exotic; he had a  
449           language of his own, apart, leaving me  
450           "free" -- if there is any meaning to that word --  
451           free to see the world in him, free to learn,  
452           free to possess the fact of what is termed  
453           "experience", free of the presence of the mirror.  
454           Gradually, then, he changed himself in my image.  
455           He became me in many parts of himself, because  
456           we are not strong enough to behave otherwise. He became  
457           me, because I am a woman -- as I became him,  
458           because he is a man -- and my particular womanness  
459           in him got to be as unbearable to me  
460           as, certainly, it is unbearable to him.  
461           We all resent, I believe, imitations of ourselves.  
462           I have heard, or I imagine I have heard, that  
463           in other parts of the world -- among other peoples --  
464           this is not true, that among some peoples of the world  
465           imitation is not resented. I don't believe it.  
466           That idea seems to me to be what the Viennese called

## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

467 "wishful thinking." It hardly matters, does it? Our  
468 case could be particular in the extreme and still  
469 you and I, here at the ticket counter, would have come to  
470 understand it for ourselves. No that's not true. Were it  
471 particular in the extreme I would be exiled from the  
472 community. It's not particular. It's common. I came to  
473 dislike the image of myself in him. How can we conceal our  
474 feelings? Enchantment left. Separation grew in us, a  
475 pact between us. It's my feeling that I drove him out, in  
476 order again to acquire facts from the material world,  
477 which act of acquisition was blocked for me by his presence.

Insert end of Scene Five.

478 Will you see him again?  
Without a doubt.  
479 Have a good trip -- Carla.  
Thank you. (What?)

Scene Seven: "Back home some days she pretends she's someone else"  
(Linda and Chorus)

480 (LINDA ON THE TELEPHONE)  
481 Hello.  
482 No.  
483 I mean, no, it's not she.  
484 No.  
485 No.  
486 Wrong again.  
487 No.  
488 Well, it's not exactly charming.  
489 No.  
490 Of course.  
491 Yes.  
492 Goodbye.

## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

493           BACK HOME  
494           SOME DAYS  
495           SHE PRETENDS  
496           SHE'S SOMEONE  
497           ELSE.  
498  
499           Hello.  
500           No.  
501           I mean, no, it's not she.  
502           No.  
503           No.  
504           She hasn't been at this number in some time.  
505           No.  
506           I wish I could help you.  
507           No.  
508           Of course.  
509           Yes.  
510           Goodbye.

511           ON THE THIRD CALL SHE'S  
512           TOLD THAT DON HAS BEEN SEEN  
513           ON THE ROAD WITH ELEANOR.  
514           AND TALK LOCALLY IS THAT THEY'RE  
515           HEADED FOR MEXICO.  
516           MORE OF THIS LATER.

517           Hello.  
518           No.  
519           Well, ...  
520           Yes.  
521           Yes.  
522           Really.  
523           No.  
524           I can't say I'm exactly surprised.  
525           No.  
526           Of course.  
527           Yes.  
528           Goodbye.

## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

Scene Eight: "Finally, she starts seeing Mr. Payne, an Italian man, who tap dances."

(Mr. Payne, Linda and Chorus)

529 FINALLY, SHE STARTS SEEING

530 MR. GEORGE PAYNE

531 AN ITALIAN MAN

532 WHO TAP DANCES

533 (MR. PAYNE AND LINDA SPEAKING)

534 ---

535 No, George, there is your mother, my mother and birth control.

536 These are three reasons why we should not get married.

537 I have a car with a rumble seat. It is better than the car of your  
538 brother-in-law. It is better than the car of your brother  
539 who assures us that he is not interested in driving. It is better  
540 than the car of your brother, who modestly allows that, for the time being  
541 all things of his marriage are the property of his wife,  
542 in order that her mother's future is secure. It is better  
543 than the car of your brother, who runs around with the daughter  
544 of the sofa-stuffing family, amazing as she is.  
545 It is better than the car most people will ever ride in.

546 Another reason, George, is your background. Or  
547 my background. We seem to see things so differently.

548 My family is Payne and, though I am sure they merely  
549 changed it from meaning bread, because that's the way the Officer  
550 saw it, still words would be useless, if  
551 the sound were not the meaning, and so I live in Payne,  
552 to make a silly joke, I am, as it were, inside of Payne,  
553 and from that perspective I ask you to reconsider, to remember  
554 that my origins suggest a certain skill in providing,  
555 as in to provide, that a person would not be named bread  
556 and have in him a characteristic inability to provide.

557 Another reason, George, is your name. There are customs  
558 in my family about how men should be named.  
559 George is practically unheard of. They would never  
560 get it straight. Do you know what I mean?

## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

561 As you know, all tap dancers are named George. It means  
562 "light-hearted." In tap dancing one retraces. (Rehearses is  
563 the word they use, but they are wrong, trapped in the first  
564 stage or first test of memory; how many syllables  
565 and for how long: immediately, ten minutes later, at the  
566 end of the day, forever? No, the trick of memory, or the dance  
567 of memory, as we say, meaning the same thing, is in the  
568 positioning of the information. The dance of memory is just that,  
569 and music is the rehearsal of that dance. Do you follow?)

570 You made a point or two that I could bear to hear again.

571 In tap dancing one retraces. That's why  
572 we are so often seen looking down. The observer  
573 thinks that we are looking down in order to keep things  
574 right for the observer. To prevent error.  
575 The observer has never seen what the dancer sees  
576 looking down, or the observer wouldn't think that.  
577 The world moves on the air of music. There's nothing  
578 like it. It's the only thing we had before  
579 automobiles as four-dimensional.

580 LINDA SEES THE  
581 CONTENTS OF HER PURSE  
582 IN RETROSPECT

### Scene Nine: "The Contents of Her Purse" (Linda, Mr. Payne and Chorus)

583 This is the kind of talk  
584 that got me through.  
585 It is so full of something or other --  
586 little injections of regret:  
587 "amazing as she is"  
588 "to make a silly joke"  
589 "as it were"  
590 "as in to provide"  
591 "as you know"  
592 "but they are wrong"  
593 "as we say"  
594 It is so ...

## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

595 It is too big to have been thought out.  
596 Detail upon detail.  
597 Never repeating itself.  
598 It agitates the air.  
599 I heard it beside me, first –  
600 THIS IS LINDA SPEAKING.  
601 as the Airline Ticket Counter agent questioned me.  
602 How can we conceal our feelings?  
603 Enchantment left.  
604 Separation grew in us.  
605 I heard myself saying these things to a stranger.  
606 I was almost in tears.  
607 Then I heard him beside me,  
608 speaking to me:  
609 The Indifference Speech, naturally, doesn't impress  
610 me at all. You hear that stuff all the time.  
611 I couldn't believe it.  
612 I was almost in tears.  
613 And this guy had stopped to insult me.  
614 RIGHT AT THE AIRLINE TICKET COUNTER.  
615 I dropped my purse.  
616 Everything came out.  
617 And that was everything.  
618 Everything else gone you know where.  
619 And what's left scattered all over the terra-cotta.  
620 And this guy is saying about my Indifference Speech,  
621 You hear that stuff all the time.  
622 And then he took me by the arm.  
623 I was about to fall on my knees.  
624 You know how women are made to act silly in all those  
625 stupid films. I hadn't made a move.  
626 I was waiting for my heart to break.  
627 I saw myself scrambling around on the floor,  
628 trying to pick up all that precious trash.  
629 And then I felt his hand on my arm,  
630 and the picture disappeared.  
631 Everything that had gone wrong in my life up to that moment  
632 disappeared. I lost the past of problems --  
633 like some sort of royalty.  
634 And then I watched the Airline Ticket Counter Agent come out  
635 from behind the counter, right over the luggage scales,  
636 clumsily, and start picking up my things.

## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

637 HE WAS NOT IN A GOOD MOOD.  
638 He hadn't intended to do what he did.  
639 But he found himself picking up my things,  
640 and apologizing.  
641 I had the feeling that Mr. Payne had just taken control of the  
642 idea that I had projected with me in it  
643 and erased it and come up with a new one that had the Airline  
644 Ticket Counter Agent picking up my things.  
645 This uncanny feeling came to me more than once, when  
646 we were together. He would rearrange things,  
647 as if in the power of his imagination. No, obviously --  
648 or, I should say that now it's obvious, remembering that  
649 experience of the intensity being directed,  
650 of things being moved around, being arranged  
651 according to some plan, it is obvious  
652 what had happened, it is obvious why my things were  
653 on the terra-cotta, it is obvious why I dropped  
654 my purse -- he memorized the contents.  
655 Why? I asked myself so many times.  
656 Why did he need to know? Why, with his commanding presence,  
657 was the theater of the "accident" required,  
658 the drama of the tears that had to come inevitably?  
659 Why not just make friends and ask?  
660 OR, IN THE STYLE OF THE SECRET AGENT,  
661 MAKE FRIENDS, AND, THEN AT THE RIGHT MOMENT,  
662 OPEN THE PURSE AND STUDY.  
663 Why involve so many unknowns? One hesitates to say,  
664 in his case, imponderables.  
665 Anyway, I learned this power of his only later.  
666 First, there was the tangible magic of his  
667 presence. We sat together on the plane.  
668 Bravely, I had recovered poise.  
669 This was just hours after  
670 I had emerged from the moment of the parting  
671 to look at the desert of the setting sun  
672 alone.  
673 When I told him this later,  
674 when I told him what had happened to me,  
675 and I was going on just about this way  
676 and with these words,  
677 he said, "It's always setting."  
678 He knew everything. It was



## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

679 as if he had memorized the contents of a vessel  
680 that had in it all of ... experience.  
681 We talked about everything. I thought the reason was mine.  
682 I thought that having found him out --  
683 a person who wanted to know everything  
684 -- I had found a weakness. Why do we do that?  
685 And so I decided to talk about -- everything.  
686 I moved the conversation pointer  
687 as fast as I could.  
688 Overconfidence, they used to call it.  
689 He brought this out in people.  
690 The -- uhn -- predator  
691 has the victim in sight. I wonder what  
692 it would be like to play tennis with one of the great ones  
693 -- who had decided to make the returns all playable.  
694 We talked about everything,  
695 and everything was there in place.  
696 An Alexandrian library  
697 for one person at a time.  
698 MUST BE READ HERE. NO CHECKOUTS.  
699 NO EXCEPTIONS. I got drunk on the abundance.  
700 Ball bearings, no problem.  
701 A history of ball bearings in a few sentences.  
702 As if from scripture.  
703 Electrical power, no problem.  
704 Where the great dams are and who made them and what they do.  
705 Ancient migrations, no problem.  
706 Whence and where from the past in such  
707 detail and with such understanding  
708 that the past became indistinguishable,  
709 magically, from the future.  
710 And then we landed.  
711 And I pretended I was headed --  
712 home -- to something.  
713 And then after a decent period  
714 OF DAYS  
715 OF WEEKS  
716 OF MONTHS  
717 WHATEVER,  
718 he called, and  
719 we dropped the pretense,  
720 and --

## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

721           We dropped the pretense.  
722           And.  
723           What happened then?  
724           WHERE HAVE THOSE DAYS GONE?  
725           I have forgotten and  
726           he showed me how -- never to forget.  
727           It began as a game between us.  
728           Let me guess what's in your purse.  
729           For everything I get right I get a kiss.  
730           I'll bet a dozen, which is modular.  
731           We made a picnic, the two of us  
732           on a Sunday afternoon in the shade  
733           of a box-elder near the river.  
734           I asked him why we took  
735           his precious Sunday afternoon of golf.  
736           He said that we should marry.  
737           I could learn to play golf. And we could  
738           spend every Sunday afternoon together,  
739           forever. I think he said,  
740           "...THROUGH ETERNITY." I said I didn't think that  
741           I could learn to play golf. He said,  
742           "It's just like what's in your purse.  
743           "It's the same thing. It needs  
744           "going over now and then to make sure  
745           "it's all there. That's the only reason  
746           "we do it. The scale is different, but  
747           "that's all. Every position  
748           "over the whole course, every  
749           "consideration, is knowable  
750           "as a fact. On a certain  
751           "Sunday we retrace a certain number,  
752           "more or less. That collection  
753           "is a fact -- a larger fact  
754           "composed of smaller facts,  
755           "and to play golf with enjoyment  
756           "each larger fact  
757           "and all of the smaller facts  
758           "must be remembered  
759           "as exact experiences  
760           "in order that we don't  
761           "wander around in uncertainty, as if  
762           "the game were mostly chance, as if the

## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

763 "responsibility were too big to bear, and -- "  
764 If I knew more about the way we express things  
765 to each other, maybe I could finally understand  
766 and explain his -- "and -- "  
767 "AND -- "  
768 As if leaping from one star  
769 to another. "and --  
770 "finally the accumulation of exact  
771 "experiences, remembered  
772 "exactly, becomes wisdom,  
773 "even before all of the infinite possibilities  
774 "have been exhausted, and --  
775 "you discover that the wisdom,  
776 "as if a gift,  
777 "is usable in other ways.  
778 "You can use it in other places.  
779 "To know every fact of golf  
780 "in the experience of playing it  
781 "is to know  
782 "with the same certainty  
783 "how people beget people, how the car  
784 "with the rumble seat is made to run and  
785 "what's in your purse, for instance."  
786 I was a little frightened.  
787 Did I dare suggest that he knew what was in my purse,  
788 from the very beginning?  
789 Then, it occurred to me,  
790 finally --  
791 I mean, finally, I got it,  
792 and the fear went away --  
793 that, if my purse had changed its contents  
794 how many times  
795 since the moment at the Airline Ticket Counter,  
796 he would be betting kisses  
797 ON THE PAST RECAPTURED  
798 only in a snap shot memory.  
799 So, the purse had fallen at the Airline  
800 Ticket Counter, in order that we could  
801 get to know each other quickly, and both of  
802 us were at fault, finally,  
803 for why it fell.  
804 The golf course,

## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

805 the contents of the purse  
806 and the infinitely complicated  
807 re-circling re-tracking  
808 re-tracing but finally  
809 finite series of points  
810 on the route of the car with the rumble seat  
811 indeed had a common pattern,  
812 and to know one was to know them all,  
813 in every moment of the ever-changing world.  
814 AS LONG AS YOU HAVE A PLACE TO START.  
815 Start at the Airline Ticket Counter.  
816 Take a reading.  
817 Compare it to the pattern.  
818 And, then,  
819 months later, you can bet  
820 kisses that you know it all.  
821 That evening, having  
822 not played golf,  
823 Mr. Payne took Junior, Jr.  
824 and me to supper  
825 at his mother's house.

826 THAT EVENING HAVING  
827 NOT PLAYED GOLF  
828 MR. PAYNE TOOK JUNIOR, JR.  
829 AND LINDA TO SUPPER  
830 AT HIS MOTHER'S HOUSE.  
831 ---

### Scene Ten: "Supper with Mr. Payne's Mother" (Mr. Payne's Mother/Linda and Chorus)

832 How is it that (SLOWLY TO MAKE THE WORDS  
833 UNDERSTANDABLE) with the name of Payne  
834 you serve pasta at every meal?  
  
835 It is because we immigrated by the eastern route.  
836 My child, full grown now, who has brought you here to supper,  
837 and I, alone after his father's death, came in from the east.  
838 Had we come in by the southern route, the meaning of the sound  
839 -- due to the typically southern way with vowels --  
840 translates, as they do at the southern entrance,

## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

841 to Flat-Tire, as in Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull, and such.  
842 What is your name? -- you give the sound -- The Officer  
843 replies: You shall be called Flat-Tire. Next please.  
844 But, Officer, Flat-Tire is so different from the meaning,  
845 which is to provide. Please reconsider. The Officer replies:  
846 You can keep the dash and pretend it's English.  
847 We're not going to call you Payne, if that's what you want.  
848 We don't like for our children to hear those sounds.  
849 If you want to start over again, that's your business,  
850 but you'll have to do it later, once you've settled.  
851 If I get into that kind of thing here, nobody will get through.  
852 Everybody trying to figure out what they want to be called, can you imagine?  
853 It's Flat-Tire. That's the best I can do. Please.

854 She pauses. (SOTTO VOCE, LINDA) Offers pasta.

855 Mostly I am glad that we came in by the eastern route,  
856 where Payne was allowed.  
857 Only rarely I am not.  
858 (UMMMMMM)

859 What is the reason  
860 for serving pasta  
861 at every meal?

862 After years of experience -- and this goes back to  
863 times before my time or my mother's time,  
864 I am not sure about the beginning,  
865 probably it is lost in time -- it was discovered  
866 that proper weight keeping finally  
867 has to abandon all external measures.

868 (SOTTO VOCE, LINDA) followed by quick glance at Junior, Jr., who has  
869 come along today, and who has come abruptly to attention,  
870 almost as if anticipating where the argument is headed.

871 The first responsibility in eating is to measure  
872 calorie value to the immediate future.  
873 Allowing roughly five hours for sleep, the rest of the  
874 day can be divided in to periods of three hours each.  
875 The discovery that I mentioned is that three hours  
876 is just about the longest average time that any of us can

## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

877 look ahead. So, it is possible to figure out  
878 how many calories will be needed for the next three hours,  
879 and, since pasta is a constant measure,  
880 approximately 300 calories per cup, with sauce,  
881 eat no more than necessary.  
882 The importance of pasta is the importance of a standard.  
883 With training one can learn to know to within  
884 ten calories how much one has eaten.  
885 (UMMMMMM)

886 Is there an advantage to this  
887 way of life in which pasta  
888 is eaten at every meal?

889 As I said, it is the perfect diet. That is  
890 important to us, because -- the habit of dancing  
891 runs deeply in this family. And, finally, the  
892 heroism of dancing in a heavy body is forgotten.  
893 Of course, age and the dignity of age play a  
894 part in this, too. One encourages tap dancing  
895 up to a certain point. The reasons must be obvious.  
896 Where to stop is a question of dignity. The sense of  
897 the importance of a good family, the importance of  
898 caution in one's behavior, comes from the need to  
899 keep the image of dignity important in the family.

900 A quick glance at Mr. Payne, who is alternately  
901 absorbed in thought -- and rigidly attentive.  
902 I am reminded of a large cat. (SOTTO VOCE, LINDA)

903 Ballroom dancing can go on forever, of course.  
904 One never tires of the gracefulness of abstinence.  
905 Tap dancing, beyond a certain point, has too much of  
906 self-gratification about it. Beyond a certain point,  
907 tap dancing works against society in many ways.  
908 Self-gratification is one: waste.  
909 Nitrogen intoxication is another: uselessness.  
910 Contagion, the social networks filled with ephemeral  
911 information, is another: confusion. There are  
912 many reasons. I prefer to think of the matter as closed.

## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

913           CLOSED IT IS.  
914           NOW LET'S JUMP AHEAD IN TIME.  
915           GIVE OURSELVES RELIEF FROM ALL THIS --  
916           QUESTIONING.  
917           IMAGINE JUNIOR, JR. YEARS LATER  
918           (CHANGED HIS NAME, OF COURSE!)  
919           IMAGINE HE'S THE PRESIDENT, JUST RETIRED, OF  
920           SOME HUGE CORPORATION.  
921           JUST RETIRED, HE REMINISCES.

Scene Eleven: "He tries to teach Junior, Jr. to play golf left handed"  
(Junior, Jr., Mr. Payne and Chorus)

922           Distrust in me of foreign things  
923           -- THIS IS JUNIOR, JR. SPEAKING --  
924           made it impossible from the start.  
925           I loved the two-toned shoes.  
926           I loved the bag.  
927           I loved the names,  
928           the angles of the face plates,  
929           the idea of the special purpose clubs  
930           sheathed until the moments when they are  
931           precisely needed. I loved it all, but...  
932           THIS IS THE MEANING OF REGRET,  
933           THE DISGUISED TONE OF  
934           IMPATIENCE IN HIS VOICE.  
935           We stand there in the quack grass,  
936           untended front yard. Tries to teach me  
937           how it get it off the ground at least.  
938           I will not suddenly catch on and smack one  
939           through the box-elders into the traffic.  
940           AFRAID OF THE SUN, HE THINKS TO HIMSELF.  
941           Too confident absolutely in himself,  
942           the expensive sweaters, the two-toned shoes,  
943           the dark hair swept back neat,  
944           the smell of cigarettes, the knowledge that  
945           tomorrow in the presence of the boys and girls,  
946           in the presence of their mothers  
947           he will dance again. HOW IT'S DONE.  
948           Romantic place in town, waiting there,  
949           paid for by the month by dancing.

## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

950 Too confident absolutely in himself,  
951 dancing, a roadster with a rumble seat,  
952 to think even for a moment that  
953 distrust in me of foreign things  
954 is a distrust of himself, not  
955 fear of golf left-handed,  
956 fear of free-lance living.  
957 THIS IS THE MEANING OF REGRET.  
958 They seek security, Mom and Dad,  
959 seek it so that I do as a child  
960 without knowing that I seek it, what I seek.  
961 Boy child turned extremist,  
962 barely a decade, recently abandoned,  
963 as earnestly desires security  
964 as a Jesuit, living wildly  
965 in imagination only, within  
966 strict secure limits of security,  
967 encounters a man who lives  
968 month to month by dancing.  
969 Tap and ballroom dancing. His studio  
970 a romantic place in town. ("The Arcade,  
971 an enormous gallery, filled with people,  
972 light filtered through the glass above,  
973 two stories high, a block long,  
974 without rain, perfect temperature forever  
975 on stone pavements made beautiful with use.  
976 A cathedral, secular, just big enough.  
977 Royal chambers on the second floor.  
978 Secret stairways, gold lettered windows,  
979 locked doors. The studio itself,  
980 vast hardwood, perfect in tongue and groove,  
981 the likes of which, etcetera. The Arcade  
982 builder, Worth, knew what he was up to.")  
983 Now dancers every day there,  
984 proxy children, mother vicarious,  
985 except weekends. Saturday market.  
986 Wild flowers. Fear of mushrooms.  
987 Foreign things. From farmers,  
988 onions for the married sister.  
989 OH, GEORGE, YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE.  
990 Then, Sundays, left-handed golf,  
991 The Country Club. Businessmen.



## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

992 Northern stock. This country needs  
993 less dancing. Right-handed golf.  
994 Credit God for good government.  
995 Social Security enacted. Y'HAVE TO  
996 PUT SOMETHING IN TO GET SOMETHING OUT.  
997 Years later, evenings, I,  
998 Junior, Jr., see him.  
999 The drugstore with music.  
1000 The bookrack, English self-taught.  
1001 Well-dressed, of course. Stopped smoking.  
1002 Sometimes he doesn't know me.  
1003 Remembers, but doesn't know me.  
1004 Elegantly cordial, when he does.  
1005 I studied with this man one time.  
1006 Tried to teach me golf left-handed.  
1007 Tried to teach me living  
1008 month-to-month by dancing. Instead,  
1009 learned what I knew already. Love for  
1010 good government. Social Security.  
1011 He's only cordial. Little wonder.

1012 TO HONOR MR. PAYNE,  
1013 WE'LL LET HIM DESCRIBE THE NEXT SCENE.  
1014 MR. PAYNE, IT'S ALL YOURS.

1015 Well, let's just say it didn't  
1016 work out. She danced away.  
1017 I stopped calling. Sold the car.  
1018 She likes loneliness. She will  
1019 spend her days in loneliness.  
1020 It's written.

## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

### Scene Twelve: "A moment (very late) in an all-night delicatessen" (The Narrator and Linda)

1021 Abruptly we have moved ahead in time.  
1022 She is not particularly older,  
1023 but she is noticeably changed.  
1024 The time is evening, very late.  
1025 Whom she is talking to  
1026 is out of sight. Hidden,  
1027 but near. She speaks softly  
1028 and with force. We watch.  
1029 And they are watching.

1030 You don't hear me.  
1031 I try to tell you.  
1032 You don't listen.  
1033 You couldn't understand,  
1034 if you could hear me.  
1035 This person's aunt.  
1036 That person's brother.  
1037 The girls at the office.  
1038 That's it.  
1039 It'll change.  
1040 People say so.  
1041 With eye contact.

1042 IT CAN'T BE THAT BAD.  
1043 CHANGE IS GRADUAL.  
1044 PROGRESS TO BE NOTICED SOON.

1045 What do I care?  
1046 Look at the time.  
1047 This is Linda speaking.

## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

1048            Beyond her in the aisle  
1049            four or five people  
1050            secretly drunk,  
1051            the joy of that moment  
1052            when the alcohol takes over,  
1053            notice she's distressed,  
1054            beckon silently to her  
1055            to leave with them. Oh,  
1056            how we misunderstand.

End of Act I.

1057  
1058  
1059  
1060

## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

### Scene Thirteen: The Big City (Now Eleanor and Chorus)

1061 (TACIT)  
1062 THIS ACT  
1063 SPEAKING GENERALLY  
1064 IS ABOUT -- UHN --  
1065 PUBLIC OPINION. BUT, OF COURSE,  
1066 ONLY AS IF IN A DREAM.

1067 She gets a call from the city.  
EVERYTHING HAS STARTED TO GO RIGHT.  
1068 Stronger for what she's been through.  
APPROACHING THE AGE OF PERFECTION.  
1069 The future no longer a burden.  
LEAVE EVERYTHING BEHIND.  
1070 Hang no regrets in the closet.  
BACK TO HIGH HEELS AND FRIENDS.  
1071 Speak sharply if I disagree.  
(UMMMMMM)  
1072 About now the radio stations  
START PLAYING A SONG WITH A MESSAGE.  
1073 She is unsure of the moral  
(When the words can be understood.)  
1074 But the song has something for her in it.  
THEMES OF MIGRATION AND CHANGE.  
1075 A positive negative feeling.  
NATURE CORRUPTED AND THRIVING.  
1076 On irony, language and greed.  
(UMMMMMM)

## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

1077        Here come Tarzan.  
              Look at that suntan.  
1078        He's a big swinger.  
              ---  
1079        He got a wife an'  
              Her name Jane an'  
1080        She's a humdinger.  
              ---  
1081        They got a son an'  
              He name Boy an'  
1082        He's a gunslinger  
              ---  
1083        Livin' in a tree an'  
              Hopin' to be a  
1084        Rock and roll singer  
              ---  
1085        HANGIN' AROUND WITH THE APES ALL DAY.  
              ---  
1086        WHAT A WAY TO RAISE A FA-MO-LY.  
  
1087        ---  
              ---  
1088        One day here come  
              Into that jungle  
1089        A movie director.  
              ---  
1090        He see Tarzan  
              Doin' his thing an'  
1091        He quite affected.  
              ---  
1092        He say Tarzan  
              Have a cigar, man.  
1093        You been selected.  
              ---  
1094        You represent that  
              One element that  
1095        Can't be corrected.  
              ---  
1096        HANGIN' AROUND WITH THE APES ALL DAY.  
              ---  
1097        WHAT A WAY TO RAISE A FA-MO-LY.  
              ---

## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

1098 ---  
---  
1099 Tarzan and Jane sign  
Up with the man for  
1100 Some compensation.  
---  
1101 Lock up the hut an'  
Wash up the boy an'  
1102 Leave from the station.  
---  
1103 Takin' their thing to  
The world capital of  
1104 Civilization.  
---  
1105 Hopin' to achieve, if  
You can believe self-  
1106 Realization.  
---  
1107 HANGIN' AROUND WITH THE APES ALL DAY.  
---  
1108 WHAT A WAY TO RAISE A FA-MO-LY.  
---  
1109 ---  
---  
1110 Now Boy doin' fine.  
Got a thing goin'.  
1111 He gone electric.  
---  
1112 Tarzan and Jane, man,  
They got a thing that's  
1113 Very selective.  
---  
1114 Lotta fine clothes an'  
Three or four cars an'  
1115 A private detective.  
---  
1116 To guard all the things that  
Tarzan regard as  
1117 A social Corrective.  
---

## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

1118 HANGIN' AROUND WITH THE APES ALL DAY.  
---  
1119 WHAT A WAY TO RAISE A FA-MO-LY.  
---  
1120 ---  
---  
1121 Like all of the rest of us,  
Tarzan and Jane sometime  
1122 Feel sentimental.  
---  
1123 The pool is cool but  
The flow is slow an'  
1124 The drain's temperamental.  
---  
1125 The neighbors are animals,  
Strange in their ways,  
1126 Whose troubles are mental.  
---  
1127 Oh, bring it back, please,  
The house in the trees an'  
1128 The breeze sweet and gentle.  
---  
1129 HANGIN' AROUND WITH THE APES ALL DAY.  
---  
1130 WHAT A WAY TO RAISE A FA-MO-LY.  
---  
1131 ---  
---  
1132 The song stays on the air for some weeks, infecting  
1133 Almost everyone. If it is not so good in  
1134 The world capital of civilization, where is it good?  
1135 Celebrities continue to die of disappointment.  
1136 The very poor continue to die of hunger.  
1137 The unrecognized continue to die of striving.  
1138 And in the meantime, as if in a dream, the parties go on  
1139 Almost nightly in the city. At a party one drinks cautiously,  
1140 Avoids the room where the heavy smokers have gathered,  
1141 Expresses for the record some degree of vulnerability  
1142 In matters of health, habit and desire, tries to be helpful,  
1143 Waits inconspicuously, exchanges dreams with strangers.

## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

### Scene Fourteen: "The Doctor (All Things Rolled Into One)" (Linda and The Doctor)

1144 Last night I dreamed that --  
(Just a moment, please.)

1145 I'm sorry. Last night I dreamed that -- this is a common dream for me.  
1146 (A woman, recently hurt by circumstances, begins her dream  
1147 with the insight that the dream, itself, which we have not  
1148 experienced, remember, is a common dream for her.)  
1149 I'm sorry. What I meant was that last night I dreamed as  
1150 I ordinarily do, and I wanted you to know that the dream  
1151 was a common one for me, which I thought you could  
1152 not know unless I told you.  
(Just a moment, please.)

1153 I'm sorry. I dreamed that I was standing in a beautiful  
1154 meadow on an almost cloudless day. The meadow seemed to  
1155 go on in soft rolling hills almost forever. It was covered  
1156 with early summer flowers. The sun was shining.  
(Just a moment, please.)

1157 I'm sorry. The sun was shining. I was alone. I was at peace with  
1158 myself. It was a rare moment. It was without any foreboding.  
1159 (The dream began in foreboding. To appreciate that the  
1160 dream is commonplace even before the dream has begun  
1161 is a version of foreboding.)  
1162 I'm sorry. There was no foreboding. If I gave you that  
1163 impression, it was a mistake. There was no foreboding.  
1164 That is the part of the dream that I don't understand.  
1165 The moment that is so memorable in the dream came with no  
1166 foreboding. Unlike most of the moments in my life.  
(Just a moment, please.)

1167 I'm sorry. This is hard for me to explain.  
(Just a moment, please.)

1168 I'm sorry. What is hard to explain is that I was taken so much by  
1169 surprise by what happened, and at the very same time it seemed so natural.  
1170 It was surprising and natural at the same time.  
(Just a moment, please.)

1171 I'm sorry. It was such a pleasure to be surprised.  
1172 I had forgotten.  
(A woman is shaken by the absolute rarity of her dream.)

1173 I'm sorry. I was standing in a vast meadow that was, at  
1174 the same time, the front yard of my house. I had those  
1175 feelings at the same time. I don't remember any details



## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

1176 from the dream that gave me the idea that the meadow was the  
1177 front yard of my house, but the feeling of the identity  
1178 was clear. And I remember it clearly even now.  
1179 (The language of describing the dream describes the foreboding,  
1180 intentionally or not. The memory of the dream has no sense  
1181 of foreboding. The language describes an image with two  
1182 identities. The memory of the dream reconciles the two.)  
1183 I'm sorry. Neither of those things seemed important to me  
1184 compared to the power the dream had over me.  
(Just a moment, please.)

1185 I'm sorry. As I was standing in the meadow, an airplane  
1186 flew over at a great height. It was an old type of airplane  
1187 with a propeller engine. That sound is easy to recognize.  
1188 I could barely see the airplane, it was so high. But, when I  
1189 noticed the sound, the airplane was almost directly overhead.  
1190 The idea of the distance of the airplane is very clear.  
1191 (The language for describing the dream is full of foreboding.)  
1192 I'm sorry. I don't know any other way to tell the story  
1193 of the dream, without telling you why the dream could  
1194 surprise me so and still seem natural.  
1195 (The image of the dream has about it the structure of foreboding.)  
1196 I'm sorry. I'll go right to the thing  
1197 that happened in the dream.  
(Just a moment, please.)

1198 I'm sorry. Somebody called to me from the airplane. They called my  
1199 name. I could hear it as clearly as if the caller were only a  
1200 few feet away. But the sound of the call was at a great distance.  
1201 The sound of the call came from the airplane.  
(Just a moment, please.)

1202 I'm sorry. There was a great difference between the sound  
1203 of the call and the sound that I could imagine coming from  
1204 the airplane, especially because the sound of the airplane  
1205 engine was so natural.  
1206 (A woman is distressed by a dream, because the image of the  
1207 dream differs from any image in her experience.)  
1208 I'm sorry. The dream made me very happy, and it was memorable,  
1209 because it was so surprising and so natural at the same time.  
(Just a moment, please.)

1210 I'm sorry. I'm finished telling about the dream. That's all there was to it.  
1211 I was standing in a meadow that had some kind of meaning that I could feel.  
1212 An airplane flew over at a great height. A voice called to me,  
1213 called my name, from the airplane. It was all very clear.

## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

1214 The Offering of Images, as a spiritual activity,  
1215 Replaces the impulse to find a personal vision, an icon.  
1216 As a spiritual activity it distracts the individual from  
1217 The task of finding and recognizing a singular, true path.  
1218 The Offering of Images categorizes human activity and offers  
1219 The sum of the categories as a sum of possibilities and  
1220 Alternatives, each one of which must be equally good and  
1221 Equally valid, else the system of categories breaks down.  
1222 Like Modernism, Science and Theater as we know it, the  
1223 Offering of Images and Protestantism, hand in hand,  
1224 Are egalitarian, democratic and communistic.  
1225 The Offering of Images is a secular spiritual activity.  
1226 The Offering of Images has in our era attached itself  
1227 As a spiritual activity to Judaism as a secular corrective  
1228 To mysticism and individualism. The Offering of Images is a  
1229 Secularization of Judaism, as Protestantism is a  
1230 Secularization of Christianity, Modernism is the secularization  
1231 Of taste, Science is the secularization of memory  
1232 And Theater as we know it is a secularization of experience.  
1233 There are other examples, but you get the idea.  
1234 Remember that we have yet to find a language that is common to the Occident  
1235 And Orient, except for the language of technology.  
1236 Consider, then, the difficulties of speaking to the Fourth World, the world of  
1237 Those who are "different" with a difference that is independent of geography;  
1238 For instance, the mentally different. Secularization  
1239 Must exclude the mentally different by definition.  
1240 The mentally different share no images with us and they share no  
1241 History with us. The mentally different cannot be Modern.  
1242 The mentally different cannot be trusted in Science.  
1243 The mentally different cannot appreciate Theater as we know it.  
1244 One supposes that other differences than mental differences  
1245 Separate the Fourth World from the three that communicate  
1246 With such difficulty now. For instance, feeling.  
1247 Suppose for a moment that beginning this instant, while  
1248 Nothing in you changes mentally, you enter into a state of  
1249 Permanent rapture, maybe not more intense than the pleasure  
1250 You felt standing in the meadow of your imagination and being  
1251 Addressed by name, without the ambiguity of distance, by  
1252 Some animate being or knowing system in an elevated position  
1253 -- to simplify the image a great deal without changing it  
1254 Structurally -- but as intense

## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

1255           And without the encumbrance of the image.  
1256           I think this is what is meant by pure bliss.  
1257           The feeling without the image. You could not be Modern.  
1258           You could not be trusted in Science. You could not appreciate  
1259           Theater as we know it. You would be in the same relationship  
1260           To the Real Worlds, One, Two and Three, as if you were  
1261           Mentally different, and you would never be able to communicate to  
1262           Those worlds that while intent upon a state of permanent rapture,  
1263           You are mentally OK. You could do it by reference to the  
1264           Dream, but remember you would not have had the dream --  
1265           Might not know what dreams were -- and to try to communicate  
1266           Through the image of the dream would reveal the passing nature of your  
1267           Rapture. The Fourth World is different from the other Three,  
1268           Otherwise we wouldn't need words at all, and it is different in the words.  
1269           Now, the problem you will have in dealing with your dream as a  
1270           Yardstick in your life is that it will fade. The greatest of the  
1271           Prophets, Moses, the first Jew we can remember, was  
1272           Very discouraging about the use of images. He thought that  
1273           Any attempt to animate the world in one's imagination, to give it  
1274           Any meaning at all, is a big mistake. If you, for instance, think of  
1275           Dogs as "little" because they are smaller than you think  
1276           You are, you have a long way to go before you rest.  
1277           Traditionally, when imagination becomes too strong,  
1278           Cultures resort to very strong chemical treatments,  
1279           Usually from the vegetable world, to burn off the waste,  
1280           Which is where the imagination arises. I think  
1281           You must do some of that. Don't be frightened of the first stage,  
1282           In which the imagination is purposely inflamed.  
1283           Remember who you are. Stay near help. And don't give up.  
1284           Eventually, you will come to pure bliss. The images will disappear.  
1285           Dreams will stop. You won't need me.  
1286           ---

1287           THANK YOU, DOCTOR.  
1288           NOT TOO WELL SAID, BUT SOMETHING.  
1289           GRANTED IT'S A HARD IDEA.  
1290           HARD TO EXPRESS AND FAR FROM REASSURING.  
1291           BUT WE'LL KEEP YOUR CARD ON FILE. JUST IN CASE.

## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

### Scene Fifteen: "The Good Life"

(Linda and her Companion with Now Eleanor and Junior, Jr.)

- 1292 I can't imagine why I told that doctor my dream.  
(She can't imagine why she told that doctor her dream.)
- 1293 We had just been introduced.  
(They had just been introduced.)
- 1294 We might have made friends.  
(They might have made friends.)
- 1295 It was like I was showing him pictures of my family from my wallet.  
(It was like she was showing him pictures
- 1296 Fourteen dollars and twenty-eight cents for your thoughts, Linda.  
of her family from her wallet.)
- 1297 I'm sorry. I was day-dreaming.  
(She's sorry. She was day-dreaming.)
- 1298 You're not kidding. I've been sending you signals for the last five minutes.  
(He's been sending her signals for the last five minutes.)
- 1299 I was thinking about that Doctor I met at the party last night.  
(She was thinking about that Doctor she met at the
- 1300 And you know what he wanted!  
party last night.) (Does she know what he wanted?)
- 1301 You're looking tired. You're not taking care of yourself.  
(Do I look tired? I thought I looked good. He should have seen me a year ago.
- 1302 Now, what have you had to eat today? Don't leave anything out. Even a cup of  
coffee counts.  
(Does she look tired? She thought she looked good.
- 1303 There was my alarm radio. I left the music on for about twenty minutes,  
(He should have seen her a year ago.)
- 1304 then I wanted to get the weather, I turned it off.  
(She left the music on for about twenty minutes,
- 1305 Music has no calories.  
then she wanted to get the weather, then she turned it off.)
- 1306 But you have to count the toothpaste.  
(First the smell and then the toothpaste.)
- 1307 Toothpaste ...  
(Toothpaste ...)
- 1308 I got some soap in my mouth, when I was washing my face.  
(She got some soap in her mouth, when she was washing her face.)
- 1309 I'll bet I can list them for you.  
(I don't know about that.)
- 1310 Coffee.  
(First, tea.)

## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

- 1311 First, tea.  
(More caffeine.)
- 1312 Toast with butter.  
(One hundred calories.)
- 1313 Orange juice.  
(This is sixteen hours ago.)
- 1314 Your morning cigarette.  
(My morning cigarette.)
- 1315 The newspaper.  
(Headlines, pictures, astrology, recipes with guilt,
- 1316 You can only count what you put in your body.  
pictures of world leaders, mainly men and women who look like men, pictures of  
women (who look like women),  
(I can only count what I put in my body.)
- 1317 What about the pictures?  
letters to the editor saving the language, comic strips, mast heads, -- then, the  
order gets blurry.)
- 1318 OK, you can count the pictures, but not the astrology.  
(Saturn: A long day, with a lot of excitement. You tend to draw attention
- 1319 What about the flowers you gave me? What about the smells?  
to yourself. Take chances, but be prepared for a hard knock or two.)
- 1320 If you count smells, you have to count the bad ones, too.  
(If you count smells, you have to count the bad ones, too.)
- 1321 OK. No smells.  
Do it as fast as you can. I'll bet you can't get
- 1322 half of them.  
(Half of what?)
- 1323 The toothpaste.
- 1324 I got soap in my mouth.
- 1325 One prescription antihistamine.
- 1326 Half a valium.
- 1327 Two cups of tea with nothing.
- 1328 Glass of orange juice.
- 1329 Piece of toast with butter.
- 1330 Two cups of black coffee.
- 1331 Two nicotine cigarettes.
- 1332 Small amount of cocaine.  
(By mouth, now. Wish I could go back to the real way,
- 1333 One nicotine cigarette.  
but that's gone forever. Regret.)
- 1334 Toothpaste.
- 1335 Trace of mouthwash.

## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

- 1336 Four cigarettes.
- 1337 Black coffee
- 1338 Part of a sweet roll.
- 1339 Three nicotine cigarettes.
- 1340 Part of a marijuana cigarette.
- 1341 One nicotine cigarette.
- 1342 Glass of red wine.
- 1343 Two slices of French bread, with butter.
- 1344 Some eggs cooked in milk and flour with small pieces of vegetables almost too small to count.  
(But then what about the flavors? Why are they there?)
- 1345 Some lettuce with some kind of oil, cheap olive oil and vinegar and garlic.
- 1346 Black coffee.
- 1347 One nicotine cigarette.
- 1348 Part of a marijuana cigarette.
- 1349 Some nicotine cigarettes.
- 1350 Black coffee.
- 1351 A piece of chocolate candy.
- 1352 Little bit of cocaine.
- 1353 Some nicotine cigarettes.
- 1354 Alcohol and fruit juice.
- 1355 Salty fried things.  
(Who can tell anymore.)
- 1356 Glass of wine.
- 1357 One nicotine cigarette.  
(She'll never finish.)
- 1358 A complicated dinner. I can't do it all.  
(Meat and vegetables, all kinds of flavors, sugar.)
- 1359 Black coffee.
- 1360 Nicotine cigarettes.
- 1361 A small amount of cocaine.  
(Small amount of cocaine.)
- 1362 This is all mixed up now.  
(Sweet things. Cheese. Wine. Cigarettes. Part of a marijuana cigarette.)
- 1363 Smoke from some powder heated up that they say is a kind of opium.  
(This is very special. Too expensive for her. And she doesn't know who sells it to whom or how it's done.)
- 1364 And here we are.  
(And here she is and here he is.)
- 1365 More black coffee and more sweet things.  
(Another cigarette.)
- 1366 When we get back to the car, I'll give you some more cocaine.

## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

- 1367 I could give it to you now and you could do it in the bathroom.  
1368 No thanks.  
(Men give drugs to women.)  
1369 What happens when you get home?  
1370 Cigarettes. Cup of tea to make me sleep. Maybe some marijuana.  
(The other half of the valium. Toothpaste.)  
1371 Do you think that you could get through a whole day on your own?  
(Does she think she could get through a whole day on her own?)  
1372 Do you mean without prayer?  
(Does he mean without prayer?)  
1373 Very funny. Do you pray?  
1374 Do moods count?  
(Do moods count?)  
1375 What do you mean?  
(What does she mean?)  
1376 Sometimes I get in a certain mood and I think it must be what prayer is like.  
(Sometimes she gets in a certain mood, and she thinks that must be what prayer is like.)  
1377 Maybe. I thought you had to actually do something.  
(He thought you actually had to do something.)  
1378 You mean like get down on your knees?  
(Does he mean like get down on your knees?)  
1379 Well, maybe. I thought that was the point.  
(He thought that was the point.)  
1380 What do you mean?  
(She wants to know what he means.)  
1381 I thought you had to humiliate yourself or something like that.  
(He thought you had to humiliate yourself or something like that.)  
1382 I guess I don't pray, then.  
(She guesses she doesn't pray, then.)  
1383 You do exercises.  
(He says she does exercises.)  
1384 Not any more.  
(Not any more.)

(Scene Fifteen interrupted.)

## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

### Scene Sixteen: "Trouble"

(Now Eleanor and Chorus)

1385 During this conversation a man seated at another table  
1386 with a party of other men has begun attracting  
1387 her attention in the crudest kind of way.  
1388 Where do they come from, these guys?  
1389 What do they do when they're not acting like this?  
1390 The men are laughing loudly. She and her companion  
1391 are the subject of the jokes. That's obvious.  
1392 She is afraid of what is happening.

(Scene Sixteen interrupted.)

### Scene Fifteen: "The Good Life" (continued)

1393 I think we ought to go now.  
(She thinks they ought to go now.)  
1394 I do, too. Those drunks are making me mad.  
1395 Don't do anything. Just ignore them.  
(She asks him not to do anything. She asks him to ignore them.)  
1396 We can pay the waiter on the way out.  
(She wants to pay the waiter on the way out. She is nervous. Men acting this way confuse her.)

(Scene Fifteen interrupted.)

### Scene Sixteen: "Trouble" (continued)

1397 They stand to go. To walk by the men  
1398 laughing at them is the direct way.  
1399 To take another path would invite comment.  
1400 She walks past the table ahead of her companion.  
1401 As he starts to walk past the same spot,  
1402 the man at the table leans back suddenly,  
1403 knocking him into a person at a third table. Much laughter.  
1404 Her companion puts the coats he is carrying, his and hers,  
1405 on the nearest chair, and hits the man who leaned into him  
1406 more or less in the face. This is what it has been leading  
1407 up to. Two other men from the table grab her companion  
1408 clumsily. The fourth is laughing loudly. She  
1409 notices how much the men are grunting.



## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

1410 Other people in the restaurant are talking loudly.  
1411 Two waiters are there almost immediately.  
1412 Their authority prevails. The man who was  
1413 attracting her attention fakes some kind of  
1414 emotion. He calls her ugly names.  
1415 There is still pushing and shoving. A woman from  
1416 another table is talking loudly to the drunken man who  
1417 started the trouble. He answers her in  
1418 vile language. Her companion, then,  
1419 strikes the drunk very hard and quickly.  
1420 The drunk is obviously hurt. His face is bleeding.  
1421 The other three men from the party  
1422 talk loudly, but they are afraid.  
1423 Suddenly, there are two policemen in the room.  
1424 Everybody is surprised. Why are they  
1425 here? With so much authority.  
1426 The drunken men pretend that they are sober.  
1427 But they respond too quickly to the policemen  
1428 and to the commands. They argue.  
1429 The younger waiter explains quickly to  
1430 the policemen. He called them earlier. He saw  
1431 the trouble coming. There is very little discussion.  
1432 This is the source of the police authority.  
1433 They have learned not to listen unless they have asked to be told.  
1434 They are not interested in blame. Before anyone is  
1435 aware that it has been done they have the names of everyone in the restaurant.  
1436 They have moved the four drunken men to the sidewalk.  
1437 Another police car arrives, lights flashing, but the policemen do not come  
1438 into the restaurant. The four drunken men are gone. One of the policemen  
1439 speaks briefly to the man who struck the drunk and hurt him. The man looks very  
1440 sad. His wife is trying to console him. The waiter explains that the  
1441 restaurant does not expect to be paid. The man and woman leave quickly,  
without  
1442 speaking. The waiter apologizes for what happened. He saw  
1443 the trouble coming, but he didn't know how to stop it.  
1444 He called the police. They didn't get here in time.

End of Scene Sixteen.

## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

### Scene Fifteen: "The Good Life" (continued)

1445 Four nicotine cigarettes.  
(One left for tomorrow morning.)

1446 A little bit of brandy.  
(It's always too strong. Why do people drink it?)

1447 Marijuana.

1448 End of the cocaine.

1449 Five grain valium.  
(Use the broken tab tomorrow.)

1450 Toothpaste.  
(A fake mint flavor.)

1451 AND THE TROUBLES ARE PUT ASIDE.

1452 WELL NOT QUITE. LET'S SAY PUT

1453 INSIDE. BEST NOT THOUGHT OF.

1454 BUT THE CITY HAS LOST ITS CHARM.

1455 AND WHAT FOLLOWS IS A RECORD OF REWARDS

1456 WITHOUT SWEETNESS. WHAT ELSE IS THERE TO SAY?

### Scene Seventeen: "A Place In the Country"

(Now Eleanor, The Doctor, Mr. Payne's Mother, with Linda and Junior, Jr.)

1457 She makes a name for herself at work

1458 She speaks sharply if she disagrees

1459 Attracting respect for her opinions

1460 This is as high as I can go

1461 How do you know that you know it?

1462 She wins a large cash prize in the lottery

1463 She allows her picture in all of the papers

1464 Showing a permanent disbelief

1465 This is as high as I can go

1466 How do you know that you know it?

1467 She is trapped with a man in an elevator

1468 She imagines he looks like her father

1469 Television is there when they get out

1470 This is as high as I can go

1471 How do you know that you know it?

## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

1472            “Approaching the present, time is compressed  
1473            Toward an infinite Now, infinitely fast,”  
1474            She tells them (What an Idea, Linda!)  
1475            This is as high as I can go  
1476            How do you know that you know it?

1477            She finally buys an apartment in town  
1478            Through a cousin who works in the government  
1479            -- and does real estate on the side  
1480            This is as high as I can go  
1481            How do you know that you know it?

1482            The picture window reminds her of Don  
1483            It looks west toward what could be water  
1484            (The best views are all bought by the Army)  
1485            This is as high as I can go  
1486            How do you know that you know it?

1487            She inherits a place in the country  
1488            She visits once and then puts it in trust  
1489            “For cousins, of cousins, from cousins, forever.”  
1490            This is as high as I can go  
1491            How do you know that you know it?

1492            She visits Europe (partially business)  
1493            She sees too much that reminds her of home  
1494            But a sense of the past is still there  
1495            This is as high as I can go  
1496            How do you know that you know it?

1497            Back home she encounters the man from the restaurant  
1498            She feels sympathy and he doesn’t know her  
1499            He wears the same brown shirt and tie  
1500            This is as high as I can go  
1501            How do you know that you know it?

1502            She finally remembers her companion’s name  
1503            She lists everything she’s done today  
1504            All diet and exercise (thoughts for the future)  
1505            This is as high as I can go  
1506            How do you know that you know it?

## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

1507 WE'VE REACHED THE END, ALMOST. YOU CAN READ IT IN THE VOICE, NOT TO  
MENTION WHAT SHE'S  
1508 SAID. SO, IMAGINE, NOW, FOR THE NEXT FEW MINUTES, AN OLDER WOMAN,  
1509 STILL BEAUTIFUL, SENSE OF WONDER INTACT, PLAYING BRIDGE WITH FRIENDS,  
1510 THE DAY-DREAMING INSEPARABLE FROM THE NARRATIVE, SUCH AS IT IS.  
1511 NOTICE THAT SHE TRIES TO TELL US ABOUT SOMETHING UNUSUAL. AN  
EXPERIENCE.  
1512 SHE DOESN'T TELL IT VERY WELL. THEN A LETTER FROM HER SON. THEN WHAT'S  
IN THE CARDS.

### Scene Eighteen: "Happiness, Prosperity and Forgetfulness" (The Chorus with Now Eleanor and Linda)

1513 Places better  
1514 On the horizon  
1515 The Wanderer (copyright)  
1516 Pretends she doesn't  
1517 The way she thinks  
1518 Now the idea of  
1519 Refuge, the idea of  
1520 Looking ahead to  
1521 The sun and a pool  
1522 "Wherever she goes  
1523 she learns the dances  
1524 she learns the language  
1525 faster than anyone"  
1526 Miami (Cuba)  
1527 Chicago (Germany)  
1528 Hollywood (Aztlán)  
1529 Then gone  
1530 Oh, well, forget it  
  
1531 Scrapbooks from home  
1532 Old occupations  
1533 A craze for religion  
1534 Changes her name  
1535 Jesus Brings Happiness  
1536 Changes it back  
1537 Thinks she sees --  
1538 I'm almost positive  
1539 Tanned (with a mustache!)

## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

1540 More heavy and serious  
1541 Careless with urgency  
1542 Troubled (she watches)  
1543 She follows (unthinking)  
1544 He disappears  
1545 She follows, approaches  
1546 He disappears  
1547 He's gone  
1548 Oh, well, forget it

1549 For a few days she thinks she should consult with someone  
1550 but these are the kinds of things that when you tell people  
1551 that's what you've experienced and that's what concerns you  
1552 they misunderstand and take your concern (for your sanity)  
1553 more seriously than they take the experience -- what it  
1554 might mean if it were simply factual and un-interpreted.

1555 Those men go out to space in those little capsules with their  
1556 brains and their imaginations tested for any possible thing  
1557 going wrong but they come back "changed" by something and  
1558 then we stop believing them and believing in them when just  
1559 recently their experiences were an ultimate authority for us  
1560 and their reports of their experiences are all we have.

1561 In other words, at the moment when you most need help  
1562 in the form of belief in the authority of your experience --  
1563 the extent of the experience (how it compares to others, its  
1564 power) is the very way we measure whether the experience is  
1565 something you might have had or whether it is just something  
1566 you dreamed up and you really need a different kind of help.

1567 I'm almost positive  
1568 But then  
1569 Does it change anything  
1570 Whoever it was  
1571 Did it the same  
1572 What I said, though,  
1573 He seemed to know  
1574 No sign of --  
1575 "recognition" -- and  
1576 He seemed to know  
1577 He was closer than you are

## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

1578 Three steps away  
1579 I saw the sign  
1580 not “recognition”  
1581 Acknowledgement  
1582 (“Which card is the red one?”)  
1583 Then gone  
1584 Oh, well, forget it.

1585 It occurs to her finally that unless there are to be  
1586 many of these things in her life and the whole life  
1587 changes in tune with them then she is allowing the  
1588 experience to cast a shadow over other kinds of things  
1589 that are more important to her and that before the experience  
1590 had gone unnoticed, unattended and unexplored.  
1591 She says to herself whenever she gets trapped now in  
1592 the “How many of us are there” kind of questions  
1593 you have to learn to keep your mouth shut about  
1594 something that is only a part of you even if it is  
1595 unusual or that part of you will get in the way of  
1596 having the “pleasure” of the other parts.

1597 That’s harder than you think because as we all know  
1598 the palaces of the imagination are full of  
1599 people who have no imagination to speak of.  
1600 Something happened to them that no one believes.  
1601 They have become untrustworthy in our eyes.  
1602 We must convince them that they are wrong.

1603 Years pass  
1604 It’s forgotten  
1605 Just forgotten  
1606 Proving that one  
1607 Experience  
1608 Among many is  
1609 One among many.  
1610 Learn to play bridge  
1611 The pleasure of company  
1612 Systems of memory  
1613 (Cards out of focus!)  
1614 “How to Remember”  
1615 Memories shared  
1616 I used to smoke cigarettes

## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

1617 I used to love dancing  
1618 I used to stay up late  
1619 Then gone  
1620 (TACIT)

1621 Nearest of all in memory is Mr. Payne: "it can end  
1622 so suddenly, so completely, and who remembers what  
1623 the reason was?" I heard, much after it had happened,  
1624 that he had been seriously hurt. It seemed almost  
1625 unimaginable to me. It was clear when I was with him  
1626 that he had to suffer. That was written all over him.  
1627 The suffering was there, had probably always been there  
1628 in him. It must have come to him and been accepted  
1629 by him when he was very young. But hurt is different  
1630 from suffering. It's a kind of insult. And so it was  
1631 unimaginable that both could be together in one person,  
1632 and that that person could endure.  
1633 Next nearest in memory is the guy -- what is his name?  
1634 This moment! Now! this moment! No, now it's  
1635 too late. If it's not there, it's never been  
1636 a part of you. The Doctor told a funny story about  
1637 a man who lost his fiancée's name when he was  
1638 introducing her to someone at the announcement party.  
1639 She walked out and refused to go through with  
1640 the marriage. The Doctor was sure that she had  
1641 done the right thing, and I asked if he meant  
1642 that from a defensive point of view or whether  
1643 you could take it from the point of view of jousting,  
1644 or whatever. He didn't understand my question.  
1645 The guy I wanted to put nearest to Mr. Payne,  
1646 the guy next in my life -- the nameless one --  
1647 could never understand what I was telling him  
1648 about myself. We always stayed up too late,  
1649 and -- he could never understand. Everything  
1650 a girl could want, except -- I had to leave.  
1651 Who is next in memory? Oh, yes, my days with  
1652 the founder of The Paris Salon of Beauty, Inc.  
1653 ("I Am A Reductionist:" By Appointment.)  
1654 A charming view with modernistic furniture and  
1655 a closet full of French clothing in America.  
1656 Imagine those characters in the closet plotting.  
1657 The angry exiles. Their revolution. That was

## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

1658 the most fun about him and I couldn't tell him.  
1659 He was a charmer with certainty like sunshine.  
1660 Nothing without a reason. Daylight. No whispers.  
1661 I heard a constant whirring motion. High pitched.  
1662 The idea of the perfect machine. Admired.  
1663 What does it take to make one stop looking?  
1664 First, midnight dancing in the arcade cathedral.  
1665 Pure happiness, if that word means anything.  
1666 Then -- this is funnier than I thought -- Prosperity:  
1667 "Gourmet Foods from Around the World (24 hours)."  
1668 Finally, the idea of the perfect body. Forgetfulness.  
1669 You'd think I'd look a little better than I do.

### Scene Nineteen: "The Bridge Game" (Linda, Junior, Jr. and Chorus)

1670 I'd like to read you this letter from my son.  
1671 My pride is boundless. It seems so perfect.  
1672 The way he has found a life that pleases him.  
1673 His mind is so clear about what he calls  
1674 "reality." No grudge against his father.  
1675 No grudge against his mother, I hope. No  
1676 trace of something hanging in the air about him.  
1677 Where did he learn to dress so well? How did he  
1678 come by such confidence and poise -- after  
1679 what he went through? It makes him very happy.  
1680 Dear Mom, everything is going well.  
1681 I love the summer in the winter here.  
1682 I hope to get a new assignment.  
1683 The Office has a new, large project.  
1684 They call it by a famous painter's name.  
1685 You'll read about it in the papers.  
1686 When you do, you'll know where I am.  
1687 That's as much as I can say.  
1688 I meet the most interesting people.  
1689 Yesterday it was a man who sells --  
1690 I have to think about the way to say this --  
1691 A very common object that we never see.  
1692 Couldn't get anywhere without it.  
1693 Old as the wheel. And that's a hint.  
1694 Some Italians thought about it differently.  
1695 That's as much as I can say.



## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

1696           Anyway, we bought thousands of them.  
1697           Does that give you an idea?  
1698           He's the strangest man I've ever seen.  
1699           Didn't care about the Office Project.  
1700           Didn't know the painter's name.  
1701           Took the Executive Washroom for two hours!  
1702           Can you imagine? Two hours!  
1703           I asked a person (whose name you know)  
1704           Why do we do business with him?  
1705           You'll never guess the answer.  
1706           "HE MAKES THE BEST ONES IN THE WORLD."  
1707           The common object that we never see.  
1708           Two hours in the Executive Washroom.  
1709           So what? Disturbs the Office staff.  
1710           So what? The best ones in the world.  
1711           He calls his employees, "My subjects."  
1712           And there's funnier stuff than that.  
1713           Incredible pictures of his family.  
1714           We're in stitches. He's around  
1715           A few more days. Then he goes  
1716           Off on contract for the Office.  
1717           A consultation. GOD KNOWS WHAT THEY'LL SEE.  
1718           The Office has a large-scale project.  
1719           I said that already, didn't I?  
1720           The Project's in my specialty.  
1721           Maybe the reason I was hired.  
1722           I want to measure the unmeasurable.  
1723           Reconcile the incommensurable.  
1724           The world could use this.  
1725           And I like the painter's name.  
1726           It even sounds like success,  
1727           if you begin with what is --  
1728           "silent, as in swimming."  
1729           Remember that old joke?  
1730           Then make the second sound  
1731           (FIRST, DROP THE ESS)  
1732           broader, as in father.  
1733           Then, add an oh, as in, say --  
1734           Regret for a father lost.  
1735           That's as much as I should say.  
1736           I'll write to you again, soon.  
1737           Maybe I'll have a permanent address.

## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

1738 Meantime, use the Office one.  
1739 Letters get to me eventually.  
1740 Hope your bridge is getting better.  
1741 Love, your hardworking Son.  
1742 His specialty is measuring the use of  
1743 energy in what he calls "Unknown Systems."  
1744 As far as I can understand it,  
1745 he thinks about whether humans  
1746 could exist on other food than --  
1747 what we call food. Imagine.  
1748 He thinks vitamins are old-fashioned,  
1749 but a good idea. I take them.  
1750 God only knows what he takes.  
1751 I love his letters, but I can't  
1752 understand them. He's so secretive.  
1753 But what he can't tell me in this one  
1754 will be in the papers and on TV  
1755 tomorrow. Just wait and see.

1756 And that's the end of Linda's story.  
1757 Playing bridge with friends.  
1758 Sharing pictures from the past --  
1759 too complicated for photography.  
1760 ---

1761 THIS IS THE LAST HAND. IT'S GETTING LATE.  
1762 NORTH: BERLIN, A TANGO. MIXED EMOTIONS.  
1763 EAST: RIVER ROUGE. THE RED RIVER. THE MOVEMENT.  
1764 SOUTH: CAMPO DEI FIORI (ROME). EARLY WARNING.  
1765 WEST: ATLANTIS, WHERE WHAT CAME BEFORE AND NOW ARE JOINED.

## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

### Scene Twenty: "North (Berlin / A Tango)" (Chorus and Linda)

1766 tentative and of two minds she  
1767 about the tango records is  
1768 and about nostalgia here  
1769 and in the pauses questions of  
1770 respectability about  
1771 nostalgia great distances  
1772 longings fear and bravery mixed  
1773 argentina (etcetera)  
1774 look the boy has wild, yellow hair,  
1775 a cafe ("everyone's a spy")  
1776 green hair, dark hair, layered bands of  
1777 meeting places in the open  
1778 graffiti "a" advertisements  
1779 "for music, sir" (not anarchy)  
1780 corrects her english is happy  
1781 proud and fearful *das gewissen*  
1782 suddenly the music is back  
1783 listen for words now the answer  
1784 the high drums again (... proportions)  
1785 evening the idea of a place  
1786 beyond, where the western ocean  
1787 is not far the usefulness of  
1788 water on the hair the beauty  
1789 ... glistens something interrupted  
1790 the idea (a little worn, now)  
1791 the divided city penance  
1792 as if, apart from the idea...  
1793 and watching a tango berlin  
1794 *einer berliner* remembered  
1795 i am a half dollar *ich bin*  
1796 dallas (argentina) fear with  
1797 bravery mixed nostalgia

## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

### Scene Twenty-one: "East (River Rouge)" (Linda and Chorus)

1798 THE BIGGEST BUILDING  
1799 IN THE WORLD  
1800 PAYS ME FIVE A DAY.  
1801 BRAND NEW SUIT,  
1802 CIGARETTES,  
1803 I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU SAY.  
1804 WORDS CAN NEVER CHANGE IT.  
1805 MONEY TALKS.  
1806 WORK IS HERE TO STAY.

### Scene Twenty-two: "South (Campo dei Fiori, Rome)" (Linda and Chorus)

1807 I say to them, look, twenty-eight  
1808 million, two hundred seventy-eight thousand,  
1809 four hundred sixty-six (the figure  
1810 makes it real!), all facing the same way,  
1811 arms raised, allow their image to be snapped?  
1812 We're supposed to take that idea  
1813 seriously? You must be kidding.  
1814 BUT THEY DO.

1815 Almost unimaginable. Twenty-eight  
1816 million, two hundred seventy-eight thousand,  
1817 four hundred sixty-six (calculated  
1818 simply!), all facing the same way,  
1819 arms raised, allow their image to be snapped.  
1820 To represent an idea? You can't  
1821 believe they could hold still.  
1822 BUT THEY DO.

1823 I try to tell them. I hear others  
1824 try to tell them that it's a big mistake.  
1825 It's unspeakable. A flash of light. Twenty-eight  
1826 million, two hundred seventy-eight thousand,  
1827 four hundred sixty-six (because it  
1828 happened once!) could perish in a flash of light.  
1829 They deny that they admit the possibility.

## Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

1830 BUT THEY DO.  
1831 WHAT COMES NEXT IS WHAT WAS FIRST, OR SO THEY SAY.  
1832 AS FAR BACK AS WE CAN GO  
1833 (AT LEAST ON THIS SYSTEM.)  
1834 NOTICE THAT WE SPEAK OF IT WITH AWE.  
1835 AS IF THERE WERE PERFECTION ONCE. THAT'S NICE.  
1836 AND AS IF THERE IS RENEWAL. THAT'S NICE, TOO.

### Scene Twenty-three: "West (Atlantis)"

(Linda and Chorus)

1837 Some islands  
1838 GONE NOW  
1839 The first among us  
1840 TALKED ABOUT  
  
1841 Some islands  
1842 GONE NOW  
1843 Safe place for sailors  
1844 TALKED ABOUT  
  
1845 Some islands  
1846 GONE NOW  
1847 Lost in an instant  
1848 TALKED ABOUT  
  
1849 Some islands  
1850 GONE NOW  
1851 Still in the papers  
1852 TALKED ABOUT  
  
1853 ---  
1854 ---  
1855 ---  
1856 ---  
1857 ---

End of the Opera.