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THE H2 ROBOT POET¹

ANA HATHERLY

H*e was just* a man. An ordinary man, a common example of the species. Simply a man. He stood out. He was also nondescript, an ecological example of his particular type, because being distinguishable is precisely what characterizes the human species, not only from other species but also within itself. He is a man in the sense of having the particularity of endless variation and of being defined according to such endlessness.

He was therefore a man, the common homo sapiens, appearing at that evolutionary stage in which prognathism was already quite lessened; the frontal region, and in general the whole skull, were gaining amplitude, and the ability to move increased in the opposite ratio to muscle importance.

He was a transient individual, with relatively too much baggage but with the peculiarity of dispensing it to acquire more baggage; it was not a gradual elimination process but merely the result of a curious serial chaining; the most recent acquisitions were added to the former, keeping them precisely where they were, fixing them. Thus, he traveled with hinged baggage, a dépliant,² which besides being his Baedeker,³ his vade mecum,⁴ was also his guide and pilot. It was also his pantry, his lunch bag, his picnic basket, and his hand-fan.

One day, when a new fold was taking shape in the map and when it was time to close the pantry, a little crumb, shiny and small as a mouse's eye, fell from the picnic basket and started jumping up and down before the man. It jumped and jumped, ran and hopped, perhaps trying to say something.

Very kindly, the man bent until the angle of incidence equaled the angle of reflection.

When he reached the highest degree of refringence, the little crumb jumped into his eye. Hanging from his brow, it slid to his ear, slipped down his neck, down his back, climbed his shoulder, slipped down his arm, climbed a fin-

1 Ana Hatherly, "O poeta robot H2" (from *Um calculador de improbabilidades*, 2001, [originally published in *Sigma*, 1965], pp. 58-60). Translation by Isabel Basto.

2 Translator's note (T.N.): folder.

3 T.N.: travel guide book.

4 T.N.: hand book.

ger, crossed his chest gravely, went around his waist, until it penetrated his skin by osmosis and traveled the paths leading to the spot the guidebook had indicated as the telegraph office. Upon arriving, it knocked on the door and ordered all the lights to be turned on.

At that moment—due to the laws of geometrical construction of images by spherical concave mirrors—as the object was accurately focused, the image formed at infinity. That was an outstanding event because if the object were at infinity, the image would be real and would be focused, but there would be no representation.

Total reflection takes place when all incident light is reflected. Due to total reflection, the observer sees mirrored images of distant objects.

Optics defines a prism as a transparent medium limited by two sloped, flat surfaces. But objects seen through a prism are not very clear. Images are virtual and diverted to the edge.

That was the reason why the total reflection prism—for example, the periscope or the telescope—that reached an incidence angle larger than the limit was an extremely precious instrument to overcome distance.

And by folding these events, the telegram was delivered. Actually, the telegram delivered itself. The delivery coincided with the moment the TV set was on and fully operational, and the telegram was broadcast by all channels on all wavelengths, so that the message fully impregnated everything, saying:

IF YOU WANT TO BE HAPPY USE THE ROBOT

The homo sapiens understood perfectly. He turned off the TV set, grabbed his tools, placed them in the basket, went down the stairs, turned off the lights, closed the door, went down to the basement, lit a dim light, opened the basket, picked up his tools, placed them neatly on the table, and started making the robot.

For many days he worked. He made his calculations, chose materials, made the pieces, and began assembling. He mounted the engine, connected the wires, completed the finishing touches, painted it, and left it to dry for a few days. He took that time to produce the code by which the robot would be guided. He passed it on to his Baedeker, his maps, and his instructions.

All very complex for the outcome to be exquisite.

When the paint was totally dry, the man took the robot. As he left, carrying it in his arms, he remembered he didn't tidy the workshop, which could be a

hindrance for future work. And he prepared himself to lay the robot on the floor to tidy the workshop when it told him:

No! From now on you won't need to do anything. I will work for you. You will place me at the most southern promontory, and while you sleep lying on the sand, I will work. When a cloud passes by, I will shut my lid and shed a tear inside. When a bird passes by, I will create laughter, and when the stormy sea approaches, I will shiver. When the wind blows, I'll start singing, and at the setting sun, I will create the night's propitiatory dance. I'll be intoxicated with the smell of pollen, a sea perfume will color my strong emotions, and at each beating of your heart, I will create a name, and with all that, I will make the poem. When the sun has gone, you will climb the promontory. Every night you will lay me down with you, and according to the drawing in your dreams, I will renew my cells. In the morning, I will wake you gently, and in your arms, you will carry me to the promontory where I will remain eternally shuddering until night brings us together.

The man heard all this and agreed.

He headed towards the promontory. Settled the robot. Headed towards the beach. Undressed. Laid down. The sea approached and recoiled. The day gradually ended. The robot worked exceptionally. There was one and only one shudder. A single tremor.

When the night had almost fallen, the man went up the promontory. Took the robot in his arms and headed home. According to schedule, he laid the robot by his side and fell asleep. The robot fulfilled his nightwatch and the next morning was even more awake and alert.

The man stood up, headed towards the promontory. Settled the robot. Headed towards the beach. Undressed. Laid down. The sea was approaching.

The sea was approaching.

The sea was approaching. The day deflecting. The sea approaching. The day recoiling. The robot poetizing. The man sleeping. The sea approaching. The sea approaching. The day recoiling. The robot poetizing. The man recoiling. The day falling asleep. The robot approaching. The day advancing. And the sea poetizing. The man recoiling. The sea falling asleep, the day poetizing, and the Robot advancing.

The sea