part 3

BAPPING

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Everybody knows in a way the difference between the night and the day. She did and she did not. He did but what difference does that make [...] 

And then everybody knew it was true. She the mother fell out of a window on the cement floor and then knew no more than anybody what had happened before [...] 

There is no further guess. Everybody knows, and they need not say. That is why everybody talks and nobody says, because everybody sees, and everybody says they do. Not by and by, there are no secrets about what everybody knows and still they do complain [...] 

I feel I do not know anything if I cry. 

Slowly they could see their way. 

Everybody proposes that nobody knows even if everybody knows. 

There is no difference between knows and grows. 

Gradually they changed the garden [...] 

– Gertrude Stein, Blood on the Dining Room Floor
How to Tender

Just beneath the neon signage of the arcade archway, a bas-relief ornament sits at the pinnacle inflexion. The architect chose the Roman god Janus, a clean-shaven androgin as the building’s guardian. The concrete relief is relatively inconspicuous, bookended by ornate dragon-heads breathing hot fire. An arcade voyeur tends to follow the Janus gaze and notice the flamethrowers, missing the punchline of the central figure.

Janus god of beginnings, middles, endings.
Janus god of doorways and passages.
Janus old breaching new in one rupturing clock-tick. Janus the transitional.
Janus the non-binary.

The relevance of this icon, embedded in the armature two centuries earlier, has never been lost on The Bettys. A wide-angle peripheral gaze, often described as duplicitous, stares northeast and southwest from a conjoined visage. Dissensus and consensus announce themselves, bilaterally peering at the terrifyingly mythic and nothing much else. A monster doomed to stare down another monster in perpetuity.

Here was a symbol waiting to be pirated.

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The aftermath of Red’s plunge left the ladies in a queasy predicament. Venture capitalists and hard-core anti-capitalists alike were parading through the now infamous atrium with little flags on sticks and fatigue jackets covered with political buttons. This space was the place for the ostentatious demonstration of beliefs. One-on-one battles erupted with uncomfortable frequency. When the blare of soapbox grandstanding drowned out the purr of the commodity elevator the Bettys felt it was time to instigate change, offer a refreshed profile, produce a gimmick.

They hastily rechristened TAP to BAP. The acronym, for anyone interested, stood for the Betty Arcada Projekto. Brown Betty had been working on dethroning English as the lingua franca for years, so the mashup was unanimously agreed upon though several Bs thought it not radical enough. It unnecessarily clings to the Roman alphabet, they argued. Alternatives in Arabic, Cherokee, Hanzi, Hangui, Ethiopic, Sanskrit, Hebrew, Greek, Armenian, Kana, Cyrillic were proffered. A committee was es-
established to review the issue and recommend an egalitarian linguistic solution. In the meantime, BAP it would be.

The stale Arcada air was rife with urgency and the need for a clearly stated mission. The stakeholders, such as they were, wished to eliminate any compromising authorship claims with Benjamin’s estate. The Bettys, the shop owners, and the clientele all grappled over designs that suggested a facelift without forfeiting the heritage. Notoriety had brought *Shop Til You Drop* unexpected surplus value. The old banner was vacuumed, washed, and rehung. An LED ticker display would be added to the visual ambiance of the atrium.

**RENOVATION W/O GENTRIFICATION**

Now at a pinnacle of hype, with more eyeballs on the Worldometer than ever before, BAP was designated an exemplary ethical marketplace by progressive organizations throughout the declining West. In this Arcada, in this stripped-down mall, it was said, is the eye of the coming storm. The still point of a destructive force set to mitigate all semblance of customary consumption.

BAP retained its four distinguishing TAP features:

1. the Netting transport model
2. a thriving barter system
3. J-coin exchange
4. the climbing wall

The skylight was scrubbed clean. Shimmering tracks of sunlight now swamped the atrium, the bannisters, the shop fronts. The grungy cargo net was replaced with a
newer, sturdier hemp type. The graying hand and footholds on the climbing surfaces were colorfully repainted. Resembling the Jerusalem temple that JC cleansed of money-traders on a few occasions, this place, this mecca mall, aspired to be a corrective to the nagging problem of P-R-O-F-I-T.

How to say it?
Sounds like prophet.
How to think it?

How to accede to growth without appropriation? Without greed? “And without a goddamn moral imperative,” as WB shouted whenever she felt The Bettys were inching too close to the intractable. They noted that Noam Chomsky always spelled this word out—P-R-O-F-I-T—as a parent might a curse word in front of children. Children of course, always snicker at this gesture.

In Red’s time, TAP featured barter and variations on gift economies. Buyers and sellers, givers and takers. The BAP era required stimulating the pragmatic exchange of a quasi-currency. The Arcada’s unique collective netting system demanded such an option. Object exchange was often too perilous. The bitcoin, corrupt from the get go, was rejected by The Bettys. Capitalist desire was in its DNA. Precious metals still held an iron grip on free-market transaction, but Red Betty’s astute proclamation
How to Tender

held sway at BAP: “All the gold on planet earth, creatively expressed from a billion bursting supernovas, could be poured into a single Hollywood swimming pool. Such is the limit of gold’s profundity.” Never letting a statement go uncontested, UVB had commented that in the vast “out there” gold and other metals were created every time neutron stars collide, so perhaps gold – a.k.a. Au a.k.a. shining dawn – should be granted its cosmic potential.

Discussions of applicable tendering models were fierce. The J-coin emerged as the alt-economy of choice for the adventurous few if not the anxious many. The Bettys coined their term and minted their quasi-currency concept. It grew legs. Fandom. Weightless, it made its way up and down the Netting with ease. Drenched with very real sweat and spit as ancient coins and bills once literally were, its value unexpectedly soared. Here was a crypto-currency juiced with “effort” as material equivalency. Currently 2.78 to the US dollar, 2.05 to the Euro, 1.75 to the Yuan, 1.05 to the Rupee and .25 to Gold, the J-coin or Jani was having a moment. No bullion bank could rival the exponential confidence in this tender, especially among GenTelZ.