

# The Angel of Science: A Triptych

i.

The hyper-violet sunrise rose over the far brown  
buildings outside my room, 911, at Pittsburgh's Western  
Psychiatric, with me unaware of the twin towers  
until after another breakfast of mediocre eggs and rubbery bacon,  
one of the dark "ghetto" but gorgeous clients deriding my anguish

at feeling that my room number meant I was the cause  
of the tragedy, while declaring to the dishwater blond nurse that Bush  
should scramble our fighter jets because the impact was too square to be  
in error.

The dark woman's prominent cheeks were like twin towers of their own  
burning with a similar kind of venom as she accompanied me  
for twenty minutes until I broke down and screamed "fuck off!"

In Charlotte, seven years later, we played dominos after roast beef  
and fried okra, the petite balls all brown on the outside alongside  
the slabs of sepia-colored meat, longer than a first grader's  
half-foot ruler, rules being simpler then.

Don't believe in the benevolence of men, one of the newbies  
taking my just-filled coffee cup when I turned

my back on the light brown circular table which held it and our half-  
played  
game of dominos, with dots of various colors for different denominations.  
He'd been too shattered to learn how to use the coffeemaker,  
as I showed him minutes after he was checked into the ward,  
later on that evening having slept in three different clients' beds for

catnaps

with his smelly body, battle-tested from his three week stint out on the streets.

ii.

The caduceus, etched in white on both swinging glass doors in my mind, is the faceless Angel of Science—its wings extended in some attempt at a saving gesture without any effort to curve their tips into some show of personalization because the Angel isn't compassionate

in its portrayal of being paired with twin serpents, only effectively compliant to those who're serviceable before its altar.

The codification of the twenty-first century's "new religion" would be defeated by a book of poetry entitled *The Angel of Science*—those notes now in the hands of my former payees. In my dreams, the Angel became a doll-like bastardization of the goddess of numbers,

from *The Golden Underground*: her dark hair and cabbage patch doll-type face in the hands of nearly everyone—all singing the praises of my failed project—as I turned in my hospital bed, sleeping in precise one hour increments before reawakening to think of how my payees treated me. They're like anyone else, all out for just themselves—especially when it came to taking

my money. But the populace of my dreams tried to shower me with dollars for the notion of this incomplete deity I left, in seventy pages of the lost red notebook, to be free of my payees. I refused money at every turn, the dolls piling up in the streets as people had no use for an idol to which they could pay no tribute. Even in my dreams, I creamed the Angel of Science.

iii.

Before a breakfast—with loads of creamy cheese  
sprinkled over a half plate of grits in margarine,  
eggs, and toast with grape jam—at a Charlotte  
group home, I prayed over that godly meal provided  
for me free of charge until I could afford  
to repay them: when the next check would be in the hands

of my group home manager, the first payee to give  
and not take. My roommate has left  
his used towels balled up between the toilet  
and the wall, always a new incursion  
by this fellow schizophrenic who doesn't seem  
to want to put in the effort to deal with it.

(I don't bemoan the manuscript, given up to have a chance  
at the life I'd always wanted.) He sees faces throughout  
the day that come back to terrify him in dreams, as he believes  
he's causing their comeuppance and that they're causing his—those eyes  
both leering, then closed, as he slowly nods his head between those  
phases  
of the pupils as if saying “yes” when all he wants is to keep

my face from being one of the furies in his dreams.  
I await new associations, the southern people walking around  
Wal-Mart in non-stereotypic fashion. The woman  
whose cart I commented upon as being loaded down, my style alone  
having elicited a smile and conversation as the words might've  
otherwise seemed bland, presents a positive sign for a swiftly healing  
man.