F. J. Bergmann - Appropriate Tools

*… a man opens a wooden crate with the help of a bird …*

—J.M. Coetzee, “Speaking in Tongues,” *The Australian*, 23 February 2006

He wanted to see what was inside his head, but his workshop had been rifled by his disaffected spawn, and all that was left him in the way of tools comprised a set of asymptotes, a spandrel, and something resembling (but that he hoped was not; he had been rather relieved that *it* had not been taken) a choking-pineapple. Eventually, he decided that the spandrel would suit his purposes best, and carefully fitted it around the nape of his neck, just below his hairy ears, and began to wind up his skull onto its verdigrised shaft. No matter how meticulously he tried to keep the nutwings even, wrinkles formed, but he hoped that a change in hairstyle might conceal them. The dura mater parted like a veil of fears. Each time he inserted the spike of an asymptote, spangles rose and fell, until the oil-stained workshop floor was littered with their frozen corpses. He was getting somewhere at last. He wistfully eyed empty chalk outlines where other tools had been hung: scunner, martingale, castor, quetzal, bustier (*that* one would have come in handy for facilitating retention), figment, vortex. He tried to look everywhere but at the pineapple. It felt not so much that night was falling as that he was rising, slowly, through muffled air, up the face of an infinite obsidian cliff. Somewhere on the moon, a crater full of dust transformed itself in blue, reflected light.

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