MAYA-SPECTRA

*In the Popol Vuh, the Council Book of the Quiché Maya, Hunahpu and Xbalanque are the conquering and playful twin heroes. And players of the Mesoamerican ballgame, in which a rubber ball is hit with a yoke that rides on the hips. They are challenged to a lethal ballgame by the twelve lords of Xibalba, the death-dealing rulers of the underworld.*

The bright beam, sent caroming

off four mirrors of the optical

bench, into the monochromator,

penetrates, invisible but intent; like

the mosquito off on his spying

errand for Hunahpu and Xbalanque,

sly heavenly twins of the Popol

Vuh. For that light means to sting

too, inciting the electron clouds'

harmony with a ball, a wave,

to a state-to-state dance; while

the mosquito flies - in dark rain,

the sun yet unformed - down the Black

Road to Xibalba, bites the false

wooden idols, registering their blank

of an answer, on to the first, who,

god-flesh-bit, cries out, jumps

and the next dark lord calls

"One Death, what is it, One Death?"

which in turn the mosquito records;

from the light is drawn energy,

like blood, leaving on a plotter

a limp signature of H bonded to C;

sampling down the row of heart-

reeking gods: Pus Master, Seven Death,

Bone Scepter, Bloody Claws. The row,

stung, name each other, as do

carbonyl, methyl, aldehyde, amine

prodded by the beam, caught in the end,

like the ball in Xbalanque's yoke.

The losers are sacrificed, the twins win

and life is made clear by signals from within.