

## PREFACE

Though this issue appears later than planned, it comes at a time when the voices in it can remind us of plain speech, open searching, generous embrace. Now that we're surrounded by the "news" of the Gulf War, we need to remember that not all language is designed to disguise reality or valorize brutal force. The language of the artists in this issue is not the language of propaganda or the language of euphemism. The writers here have no interest in making events and experiences opaque. Their interest is in a fully human speech which can deliver the *news that stays news*, as opposed to the toxic ephemera the cable networks now disperse to cloud perception.

William Carlos Williams rightly said that *To write badly is an offence against the government, for the government can never be more than the government of the words*. If the fact of this war offends many, the language of this war should offend all. No beneficial "new world order" is likely to result from governments that use unnecessary force and reduce language to a techno-speak in which real people vanish as "collateral damage."

Against such brutalizations of people and perception we have the wit and delicacy of bpNichol's concrete poems. We have the moral force of Robin Blaser's articulate anger. We have George Stanley's tribute to resonant sources in "San Francisco's Gone." We have the explorations of individual trajectories in the work of Merrily Weisbord and Ven Begamudré. We have Myrna Kostash's evocation of Jan Palach's tragic heroism. We have the surreal and disturbing fables of Bill Gaston. We have Stan Persky's delicious tale of irony and desire. We have the beauty of swift perception itself in the poems of Vicki Walker and Toni Sammons. Each of these writers honours language and human experience, takes us to, as Blaser puts it,

*the intersection between life and thought*

Pierre Coupey

