

FRED WAH / Messing around with *Sticks & Stones*

In Buffalo in the fall of 1984 at the university in English grad studies taking seminars from Charles Olson and linguist Henry Lee Smith, Jr., Pauline and I have arrived in the VW Van that we bought in Trail, BC with our daughter Jennifer just born that summer. We're short of cash (I think I was getting \$1600 as a TA), living on S&H Green stamps, living in a small apartment just off Elmwood. David Posner in the Lockwood Library agrees to buy some of our literary dendrita for their Special Collections so, as I recall, I sold him a run of *TISH*, a duplicated set of the tapes I made at the Vancouver '63 poetry conference, maybe the first issues of *SUM* magazine that we had produced from Albuquerque, and my printer's copy of Bowering's first book, *Sticks & Stones*. I faintly recall that I managed to get \$40 for the whole batch.

In the spring of '62, we (the *TISH* people) were looking forward to Creeley coming to teach at UBC for the coming year. In anticipation of publishing *Sticks & Stones*, we asked him to write a preface and he obliged. We had it in hand before Creeley actually arrived that summer and we set up to print during May/June. George got some drawings from Gordon Payne, we laid out the book, and he started typing multilith stencils (offset press, plastic-coated or metal stencils fixed onto a drum which took type from a carbon ribbon which, in turn, picked up the ink from the dispenser tray on the press). The stencils were laid out in landscape with two pages per stencil. George typed them and I tried to print them. We used metal stencils since we were hoping to print an edition of several hundred. But the printer rollers screwed up and we ended up with a bit of a mess; text would suddenly float into the gutter, paper would get skewed, pages would offset off of one another, and so forth. According to the note on my copy in the Lockwood, we came out with no more than fifty copies, some in better shape than others. As Roy Miki notes in his end note to the Talonbooks edition, some of the copies were missing poems and/or drawings. Apparently George sent out some of the copies to a few friends. He still has two.

Here are the two pages in my copy that have Gordon Payne drawings. That first one of George is pretty accurate, though I've never known him to be that serious.

(benzedrine

holding my eyes open
early Sunday morning

I sit & look at Chinese poetry

Han Shan)

keeping me awake

& I am tired

with no sleep

it must be two or three days
but someone would say

less

Used to load his animals
with containers of whitewash
& hike far into the steep mountains
where no one would go again
but maybe walking Buddhists years later

looking for tall bare cliffs
he could lay his brush to

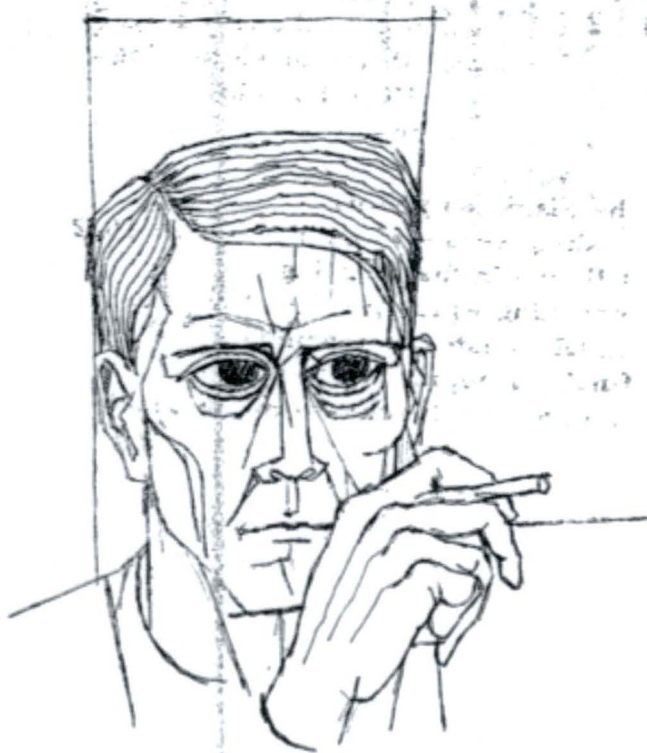
to make huge white calligraphs
of poems fifty feet high

& pack up & go to another place
never returning to look
published to himself, his animals,
& Buddha

It will keep me awake

till the sun comes over
Sunday morning

(and that will be another night
didn't get away from me)



*LOCUS SOLUS

(for Bill Trump)

Attaching toes to Vancouver downtown sidewalks
over-

sluiced with rain water

under billowed concave black

umbrella dripping around me

eyes down on neon

reflections

wiggled in the gutter

cursing & moving

alone

next to shoulders of down looking strangers

soggy in the rain

I remember dried out lips & tongue

long trip without water-

bottle down the side of old Blue Mountain

It was a hundred & twenty

in the shade

but there was no shade

& coming down was harder than going up

down in the empty water-

drainage slashes

in dust now

& over boulder slides

Finally down

to lichen green rocks

& face first into the stream

muddied

by the dog a few yards up

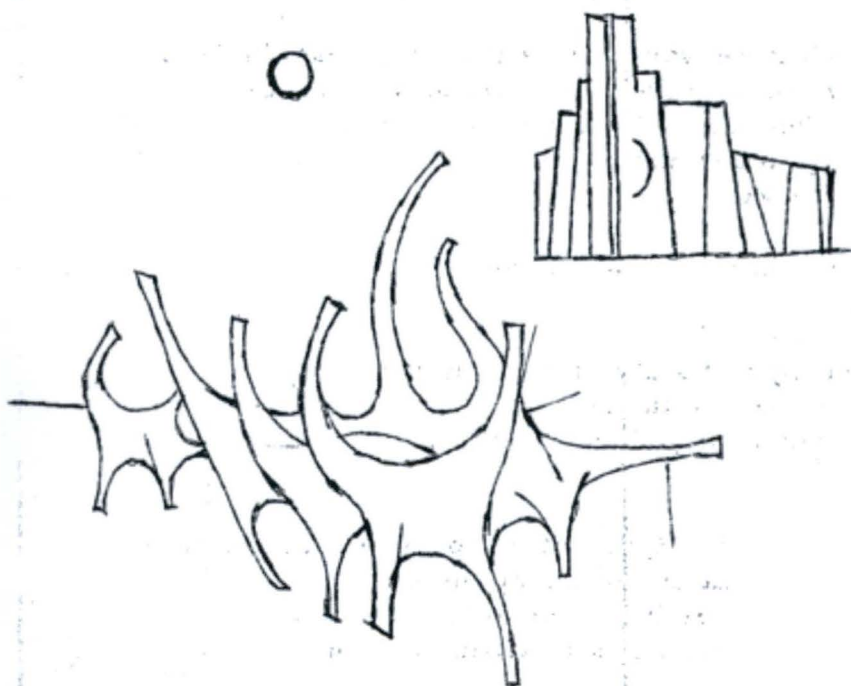
head pushed into the water

teeth aching & belly pulled tight by the cold

sucking

down the throat

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& the final walking home
 *respecting the sun & taking it
 easy
planting feet in long easy strides