

STEVEN HARRIS / Tilt

I try to write the most embarrassing thing I can think of.
John Wieners in conversation with Raymond Foye, 1984

Walking across the High Level Bridge, I remember the precision of words.

I remember William Carlos Williams' "good government is never more than the government of words"—or, rather, I misremembered it this way for many years, as I only found out recently.

I remember the Old Roller Rink on First or Second off Lonsdale, which was only open for a few months. I remember seeing Dan Hicks there, *sans* Hot Licks.

I remember walking down lower Lonsdale discussing the closing of the Old Roller Rink with Bill Bell.

I remember Harvey Wallbangers (another Dan Hicks association).

I remember the Erection Shop.

I remember buying furniture in the secondhand shops on lower Lonsdale, and carrying it home by hand.

I remember a recurring dream in which I worked my way up lower Lonsdale, discovering fabulous bookstores. I remember, years later, standing in Bill Hoffer's warehouse in Gastown and saying, "I think I've seen this in a dream." To which Hoffer replied, "I think I've seen this in a nightmare."

I remember that Moodyville was never Gastown.

I remember the Stanley Building.

I remember the Élite Café, a little further up Lonsdale.

I remember a young woman greeting me as we crossed Lonsdale in opposite directions, strangers in countercultural camaraderie.

I remember riding the Third Street bus with Chief Dan George as my most frequent fellow passenger, though we never spoke.

I remember the small detached homes located high above Third Street and reached by many stairs, which were replaced almost overnight by the instant ruins of apartment blocks.

I remember the Cockatoo Lounge at the St. Alice Hotel, a tiny room with black velvet paintings framed in bamboo.

I don't remember ever going to the Big O, though I may have been there.

I remember being so shitfaced one time from the green beer at the Coach House that I threw up out the passenger window as we headed down Third Street, the driver nearly as drunk as I was. I remember that that's how we did things then.

I remember when a fellow worker drove me home one morning after the night shift, and we crashed into a taxi at an intersection. I remember how slowly we moved as the car careened into a school fence.

I remember leaving my door ajar when I wasn't home, as a Buddhist might. Coming home one morning after work, I found a stranger sleeping on my bed, who'd just got into town, but whose sister (who lived below me) hadn't come home that night.

I remember this same sister criticizing the use of "man" as a universal term, which was the first time I'd heard that this might be a problem.

I remember one evening being terrified of going mad, and how grateful I was that someone was home at Susan, Michael and Greg's place.

I remember the last lines of Ed Dorn's "Love Song #22": "the world is shit—and I mean all of it."

I remember the man across the hall who'd converted to Islam while in Turkey, and who prayed for forgiveness every night for serving meat and alcohol at Mr. Mike's.

I remember paying \$72 per month for rent in 1976.

I remember living directly across the street from Presentation House before it was Presentation House, in a house of which no trace remains.

I remember walking up past the Dome Grocery for another Sunday family dinner.

I remember attending Pierre's opening at Presentation House Gallery, and seeing his painting there entitled *In Memory of My Feelings*, after a poem by Frank O'Hara that I already knew and loved.

I remember Pierre, on being asked to describe his political position, replying that he was a communist in politics.

I remember thinking that I was an anarchist, without having read any anarchist literature.

I remember couples dancing at parties with the women sitting on their partners' hips, arms and legs wrapped around their lovers' bodies—vertical sex, or nearly.

I remember waking up one morning and realizing that my hand was covered in dried blood, then looking in the mirror and seeing that my face, too, was covered in blood. I remember my astonishment on realizing, only then, that Mette was a virgin. I still remember how her thigh felt in my hand, like no other since.

I remember the first time I bought a punk rock record, and how transgressive this felt. I remember that it was *Teenage Depression*, by Eddie and the Hot Rods.

I remember how utterly strange Patti Smith and the Talking Heads sounded on first hearing them.

"Bless my soul what's wrong with me? / I forgot to forget to remember."

I remember how our dog would sometimes escape when off his leash, to run up over the Upper Levels to where my brother used to live; and that he would always

be found there waiting patiently for Jim's return.

I remember the scent that Linda Johnstone wore behind her ears, which could only be detected in an embrace. I remember how thrilling this was.

I remember crossing on the Seabus one evening to meet Helga for dinner and smiling in sympathy at a man whose companions were acting like idiots. I remember my intense embarrassment when I realized that he thought I was coming on to him.

I remember the musky scent of Janet Cotgrave's body, which drove me so crazy with desire that I had to put an end to our friendship. I remember, years later, how off-putting I found this same scent, though it hadn't changed at all.

I remember when Don McGinnis cut his throat.

I remember all this as if it happened at night, though it didn't always.

I remember Janice Harris, Karen Metcalfe, Daryl Rasmussen, Cathy Enquist, Holly Beaumont, Rob Youds, Steve Rive, Jim McDonald, Janet Cotgrave, Don McGinnis, Stuart Morris, Lois Redman, Michael Armstrong, Susan Benton, Greg Johnson, James Roberts, Duncan Brown, Bill Bell, and Linda Johnstone among the companions of that time, and the faces and gestures of many others whose names I've since forgotten.

I remember leaving the North Shore for the further shore in the summer of 1978.

Je me souviens

The sequence is modeled on the 'I Remember' exercise invented by the American artist Joe Brainard and first published (as *I Remember*) in 1970, which was then taken up by Georges Perec (*Je me souviens*), Harry Mathews ("The Orchard"), and by many others since (including George Bowering in *The Moustache*, his memoir of Greg Curnoe). Brainard's, Perec's and Mathews' texts all have different emphases—as does mine, which is oriented to the remembered experience of living in two homes in the lower Lonsdale area in the mid- to late- 1970s, before I left the North Shore for Vancouver and points beyond.





