

George Bowering / ALLOPHANES

V

"Talk to me of originality
and I will turn on you with rage."

Open me not to find a beating heart
but the irregular book of my people.

Hell is filled with those who have
lost the good of the intellect.

Lost their *parole vide*,
unable to serve their sentences in the dark.

Whatever I learned has run wild.

I awake in a hospital
under a patchwork quilt.

I underwent the operation of language
& wake in the recovery room.

As the colours stitch together
before my eyes.

As St. Arte is my bedside nurse



in a snow white skirt.

VI

I havent got a Dante's chance in Hell.

That snowball's got red stitches
& it's imitating God.
Tells me from third to home
is The Way Down And Out.

(Aw poet, just tell us how you
felt about something.)

What?
You dont want the untying
that frees the mind?
Dionysus is the power in the tree.
— like a Louisville Slugger.

There is safety in derision,
read either way.

Sacredness of the act of thought
is transferred to the record, books made from trees,
& there it is, unmelting literature.

(Oedipus at Kelowna)

I woke to find the others gone,
six men working round the camp,
& I alone inside the tent,
I alone to meet the boss.

I'm too far north to run into the wood
where wisdom floods out work & fear.

VII (labour, life, literature) (the gods)

Keeping your eye on Satan's dewlap
you seek my complicity (

And when, amid no earthly moans
Down, down that town shall settle hence,
Hell, rising from a thousand thrones,
Shall do it reverence.

) in this watching
in this (?) madness

/ Hermes & Aphrodite
face to face
coupling again
on the far side
of the moon

I have loved you better than my soul
for all my words, else why be we here?

You'll join in burying my poem
At some crossroads.

Aw narrative
is a telling blow.

Tell the story of men,
their progress on Earth,
a cancer on her body.

This is depressing salt I stand in, I sink.

The egg sits there,
it does not rot itself.

Watch the three-year-old
walk thru the gate
carrying her own lunch bucket.

A burden I cant stand to carry
as I must rattle my head & body
to break the pictures of my
cooperating, dying father.

An other, that close,
an other, &
that near, an other.

& where has Maud gone?

Here I am,
all over.

She crouches
over the fire,
her back curved
to her care,
child watching
from his wrappings
in the dark.