

bp Nichol / A PARTIAL DRAFT OF
INCHOATE ROAD

I

1

in Choate Road
a car stalled
underneath the bridge i
pass over
another fragment

water spill
the frozen spume of
the river
 runs thru Port Hope
into

winter storm across the lake's imperfect ice
blue gaps in the clouds & snow
older worlder order
o der wrld er wrld
inchoate world

2

life like lake like
line
lingers
a dream of
ocean and
pacific one i was born by
bounded in that first family
superior as the other shore
crossing the land bridge between
ocean-going vessels steaming into
both ports i
was there
sea to sea
all i needed was
to let the water take me
home

3

i was taught it as
their history
but it made sense :
1 if by land
(you can make it on foot)
2 if by sea
(i need
a boat
to carry me
OUT
THERE

4

water music

two rivers
winding thru

winnipeg

ocean & lake

what our music

our poems come
down to
the sea in

“everything gives way &
nothing stays fixed”

“the river shines
between the villages”

two translations

see how they wind
this way & that

this name or
another

tracking me

5

“for other waters are
continually flowing on”

& other songs

emptying out

spring into stream into river into lake into
ocean

'n ocean

'n ocean

'n ocean

'n ocean

'n ocean

'n ocean

'n ocean

6

in Choate Road
the cars go by
exhaust blue
late january frost

i thot the water spill
a broken mill
going too fast &
couldn't quite connect it

the image

& beyond that
the town &
beyond that the lake &
beyond that

7

this is the world

not these words

not this poem

this is the world

II

1

snow out the window's light
glimmer's outline
ships, a bay
(anchored)

across this page
a light moves
in the water's now
wet blackness of the street
empty stretches snowy beach
reach as far as i can see into the darkness around this bay

window'd prairie sky
empty hole dug
to make a pond the city will not let them put water in &
then the tree 'n trees
mark the twisting course of

these lines stretch across a country a life snow falls birds &
i grow older with every word
every liquid gesture flows from this blue pen watermarks
mark time
my life by
the side of
this bodies these

2

beginning with lead & wood
mark the course of the writing's later
ink as the words begin to flow

late rink lights coming on
shouts of the kids on the frozen water &
later th'aw
flooding spring
hot stretches of summer
falls

ice/water
ice/water
ice

pigeons on the track, a rack
 ing cough ing
 breaths frozen face
 mouth of the assiniboine / the red
 (river) (brick) (engine of the train)
 under the bridge the birds
 nest along the top ledge of
 abandoned factory across the river to
 St Boni face to face
 with memory at the mere's edge
 more'n merely water goes
 one into the other Y (see from the plane) those
 alphabets these
 rivers
 strokes of
 pens together in the plain
 words dried ink dyes
 strained thru books
 the stain of thinking
 the rivers the
 type we were
 down at the mouth
 where the two come together
 watching our breath
 lines of trees
 track across the river tracks we was
 thinking of writing
 vast expanse of white twisting no

4

not so much that but this

not so much then but now

not so much beginnings but beginning

again's a gain

a river arrive
air ver-y cold &

the drift

under the stillness
the silent stretches
a current accrues
air collide us

not so much the river but the riven
moment (more meant to you than

then this

5

out window the light
dammed width of river's length
twists thru the mountains
clouds just below the tops
twist too the two
wind thru &

 the river's
ever varied very song the
birds & the snow & the
very hush of the dammed world goes
dawn & on ocean river
 lake stream

i was in river

i was lost in lake

i was caught in the twist &
toss in the water

(essential's pull
these pools
perception

falls

all's a damn now
a pulsated
full)

o
'n tary
o
'n hurry
o
'n linger

(so that these rhythms are established
closure (details — what we call a
theme) globular, returning, the
circumnavigation of
the work/world

o)

'cean 'n stay
o
'n go
o-ke-an-o
winds thru the poem the
words say slower & slower the
eaupen measure of

(i stood at the edge of o & e

a u (au — “to”) the translation where
e goes in these
l'eau countries

6

in the snow world
slowed wheels rumble
the heaped flow of the crystals grow
around us
white's white shift
slips thru the hung trees
line the slopes of these mountain valleys &
we drift on as the snow mounts
higher climbing
towards an imagined top or ridge
entrances the cloud world hid
to the fall now
thru snow, white clouds
the world be /l'eau

7

o eau (eaucean)

o world (lake
river, path the vowels take
to the sea)

eau io
i 'nvoke you
sometimes
 why?

o beginning gaining
vision of the water
births you int'
o

 wave of speech
sound sine g

s-ing
 ing
 mouther
sonne
 farther

INK o it
!whirl!

giggle mesh

looking for the place the puns flesh out
 the body of speech is
 re vealed, the veil
 drops away
 the dance!
 sheer ecstasy of glimmering
 part icles part airy
 nothingnessence
 flow of grammar hammers in
 my chest, the breath's pressed OUT
 quick liquid spout of
 the wail:
 THOT

a kind of harbour or

land
 and m and no
 places the eyes rest
 flat / calm / march / day
 — still snow still —
 (did i expect to blow away?)

pair of dice
 — adox

pay the price &
 get your change

“do you have exact change?”
 i can only approximate

vapour

how the words (the selves) twist
 every chance you take

water
 watair

(dew

dawn

deer on the lawn below me

river rushes &

clouds &

(water rides

the passes: the

rocks & twists of

river bubbling up from

earth falling

emptying out (somewhere)

beyond

water

int'

ai'r

o

III

river riven
wandering the length up & down
when was it i

quoted myself
into the world

1

word'l get you world

flood of feeling

when the river
overflows its banks
mudder

no fodder now

floating away in a boat from the house
Winnipeg 1950
that fall we nailed a donkey to the wall
just below the window on the second floor
to mark how high the water'd risen

flood was the word i learned
& rain & river, water
drove me out of my world
mother/father
into another

2

ech-

eau

vo-cab-u-lar-y

diction airy or
at best suspect

flood

mud

(wreck

row)

two rivers known
two more as the summer comes & goes

Red Assiniboine
Saskatchewan Bow

wryme

the old wrym
ouroboros

i-row-ny
(set out in a pun t'
cross this
sudden sea)

3

the trick is to know the depth always
& that the surface'll get you there

the flood'll bring the bottom to the top

spins & the spinner marks the spot
the line drops down

the hook's only visible when
you get more than your feet wet

50 copies of the above draft of INCHOATE ROAD were printed in connection with a reading at Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, July 21, 1982. Part III sections 4 through 8 have been revised for this publication.

rhy-
wry thm
 theme

two in-
separable
tune

leer ich
(sneer i)

trance forms
within you (around you)

dusk rain on the harbourfront
from the cafe chair
gulls gulled
i am engulfed, flooded with
même mer, 'e says, or
the same more 'e
experienced be-
fore

feelings flow
like a river
the river flowed
like a river at flood tide
watch the lake rise
rainy august night
or maybe ordinary
like a jewel eye
glittering in a real face
sudden surprise of place
the distraction of resemblances

— in land sea
— under ground river
— fire water
— air stream

wa of birth
of water
waltz

wan
(one
(singular ich's istence))

along a rain-pocked river
across this rain-pocked lake

sea
be { gan
gins
a gain

air 'n rain
'n a trance later

two in one
wanders the flood
plain

5

among the bushes
the brush the
rushes the
different rivers i followed the courses of
— Assiniboine, Red, Seine, Neebing, McIntyre, Kaministiqua —
some i knew the proper names of
we called them all “the river”

heading upstream
tracking the beaver dams
flooded bush
collecting bullrushes for
my mother fell
full face in the mud

slow meander of sludge brown water swam in
shit drifting by
sewage from the towns lay south of us

learned those names for water
(sky aspect — storm —
intermixed with elemental fire
the sign for 'loud noise')
understood the local & the universal
but moved too often to make the local my own

i was born from water
bore me away from home
again & again after i was born

6

"i should've been a sailor"

wasn't

7

the contradiction is
to spend your life on land
trance fixed in
the sea

contra the diction is
the land wage
(when the water comes
— sea pun — you pay a
price)

pays

flood

flawed

flowed

(how you move from
imperfection to imperfection in
the world)

my body is water
my life is water

ich eau
ech eau
eau

8

ink eau
ate world

our obra is
the water works
hydro eclectic

tide ties me in this flux
the surface change is
constantly

when the flood resided
i saw we'd lived
under the sea
all those years

i never saw it till
water covered me
clouds blew by
sea 'n
folds of fields appeared in air
I saw the saints there
& here &

i think in ink
particle charged airs
hum

 anity
 in
 anity
 an ity world a
pen opens
floods over me

i write from the bottom of a see
step out upon the surface
poetic feet give me access to
stare cases
& where that leads me
floods the white plain page is
ground/sea/sky

 inchoate world
 words

sequence

 “the way,” we say,
 “the letters lie”

from THE MARTYROLOGY Book VI Books
the quotations in part I poems 4 & 5 are from Heraclitus, Wang
Wei & Heraclitus respectively.

 other writers' lines are echoed
thruout.