

A complex network diagram made of string and beads. The diagram consists of numerous small, colorful beads (blue, green, yellow, orange, red, black, and white) connected by thin, light-colored strings. The beads are arranged in a dense, interconnected web, with many branches and loops. The background is a plain, light color. The overall effect is one of a complex, organic structure.

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THE CAPILANO REVIEW

*Trip the tempo'd trepanum,
the singing bonesaw,
the ink drawn fantastic*

—SYLVIA LEGRIS

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Cover image: Jesse Gray, *Until the Sun Goes Supernova*, 2007, salvaged electronics components, ink, and hot glue on wall, approx. 244 cm × 305 cm

SYLVIA LEGRIS / Three Poems

Details of Articulated Skeletons, c.1510 (after Leonardo da Vinci)

Memento marrow. The treacherous thread of the unnamed. The flourish-stripped reunion of broken parts.

The polymathematician (the osteo-horoscopist) plumbs the anonymous bones, the forlorn unspoken-for. Lead white, *bianco di piombo*, the poisonous orbit. An algebraic

of discrete desecration. Cancellous bone, cortical bone, an innominately rising hip bone. The acrimonious split of the acromion from the scapular spine. Explode the view . . .

Exploit the post-medieval zodiac. A moon-distending thorax; the gibbosity of the humeral head. The anteriorly tilting ascent of the pelvic girdle. False false ribs and the

acute angle of descent of rib one and rib two. *Memento mori*. Woe betide the Renaissance bonesetter. Bone-beset.

The Anatomy of a Bear's Foot, c.1488–90
(after Leonardo da Vinci)

Begin the anatomy at the head and finish at the soles of the feet. Strip bare the basilare osso. The weight-bearing cuboid bone.

Ursus arctos arctos is meantone temperamental, exposed gamba, a *flexor digitorum brevis*-length song of the hunt, *plantigrade da caccia*, the sole-lumbering chase.

Metalpointed (the forager forged). The white-heightened tendons silver-tipped—by rod by wire by claw (ditto the *dito grosso del piede*, ditto the stony *ossi petrosi*). Oddly nodular,

the small-seeded sesamoid bones; the flat-footed marauder off-gait, *bellicoso*.

Terricolous, the pre-anatomized bear's bearing toe-in, direct-register, a stomp-walk to mark scent (*the soul that dwells within that architecture . . . a thing divine . . .*).

A Skull Sectioned, c.1489
(after Leonardo da Vinci)

Each frail luminous globe takes flight . . .

—Baudelaire / Trans. Keith Waldrop

Saw off the barbaric ice, the Medieval glacial morbidity.

Nip the postmortem mid-whiff 'midst cold slab, metal, the drifting snow of
discover and unearth. Midwinter the cut-time.

Da capo, da capo. From the head a deceptive cadence. Trip the tempo'd
trepanum, the singing bone saw, the ink drawn fantastic

through *ductus nasolacrimalis*, through the paranasal sinuses, through a
well-chosen cross-section of *foramen mentale*.

Then cut across the *canalis mandibulae* in the moments it takes to murmur a
Miserere. Have mercy

on the little city. The merciful cadaver. The bony *cittadella*.

SINA QUEYRAS / Very Fine is Very Cold, a Sequence in an Old Way

1.

Alice is a blue checkout, she swears like long grass. Thunder is green. Alice is a good job. She moves in white out, in a white hat, on her time clock. Thunder is a long grass. Don't be green. It is a fine day. It is always a fine day somewhere.

No, no, it is not Alice in the sun, now it is not Alice and white. No Alice does not crock a chest, her right side clock is armed.

No, she comes down the ramp. Now she comes down too—the greens are a worrying sky. Now she cards for long grass, her shoes like small dowels snap with a good flit.

I said good shoes like small trowels dig her shoes in grass. Dig her shoes in grass as a shoebox or a black skirt will. She has a black hat of fur sun. She is very impressed to come. Piazzia is so fine she's very impressed with trees I hear and she takes her show.

She is very compressed with trees. She hears. Jason Prost's heart-shaped box outside her chairs. She takes her shoulders, fires a wok.

Just is a football entry special. It was hot banks skate class. These times. You just talk trees in a tiny cage of laps, a song,
Or a lapse.

2.

Out of the block it appears that the block is islands. A long line. I am girl talk. I go along Longswamp's on the sheet.

Out of the white wall of windows she appears. Out of the white wall of windows with her hips. Auto is a white wall of windows to clean the tong under outfits she appears dry. The little boy in the winding path. Call Mount City to look on Voxy. No that is not Pablo looking up. No not out in the sun.

No that is not Pablo.

Barack is not an Alice in some half. Why why why I. All roads lead to a couple of seas as: Paul ECHORVE is a fine I. I didn't call a busy day. Sunday is a long cream. I unwind your best intention thumb.

3.

R is for romantic. R is for romantic. Are is for how I feel about you. Ours for how I feel about you. Ours is for the River arts for the River arts as for the river. Ours for the river arse.

R is for ricochet. Are is for random. R is for Brandy who is Randy? Who is Randy. Who is random? Who is ridiculous?

Above all are. Above all are blue. We all have our blue. We all have our blue period.

4.

Tatianna go! Patio Grill I love you. And is Danica a porch? Tell me how to Kabul Kabul Kabul. Last week park enough on time and I'll wall waking up in the late afternoon sun.

Is it all very well Lulu. Isn't very well boo-boo. Do I do you be you. Do I do you've you. Do I do in the green sun. Do I do under the red leaves. Do I do under the sticks. Angular sticks. Black sticks. Feathers with the eyes of towels.

One to Johnny. You being you. You're being you. UB you.

5.

Didn't do very, be cozy. Didn't do the son, who frank Brown, be cozy. Didn't the socket ands in the door call. Stuck door and the glass in the house in the work didn't the red do they be cozy.

Hello mom. I was accordingly all right song. I'm going to sunflower. Do the swat loans and it is I don't worry? I aren't the swallows are are as follows?

Last night the phone. Last night call hair. It's nighttime here. Clarence Persephone, where is Virginia, latter is parents and they are the server, me.

I am trying to be reasonable. Sever, Severe, I am about the future. I am trying to be helpful in the present moment. I am thinking of my lungs at church L's.

I am thinking, I'm grandmother. I am thinking of grand mothers. I am thinking of mothers grand and large and Blas Nemi not all mothers warm as Stein.

6.

I guess I am relying on you yes, I am relying on a red check. Five I am not relying on Sears.

Are there Dragons? I am relying on you. I am gliding on you. Dear dream, to hear in their text dear friends and dear daddy dear doorstep do you follow?

I said dear friends and NRA and dad NGO. I said here. EE a DD why? Dear golden retriever. Dear blonde. You Craig. Do ice falling. Didn't a schnauzer.

dear Brown today or didn't schnauzer insight command dude at all times and days? The sun is yesterday's ice the sun is frozen.

Is playing against the earth like maple syrup breaking through into its temperature drops. It's me when it's over Ocean's rising out of concrete.

7.

Dear Dieter,

Good morning I'm glad movement bills a carriage in Clarence. The bare tree or parents Tracy, 140 characters screen and gray faces a list as country into the phone done then then then then another Kaylea clutch purse scattered gummy bears, summer teaching, plastic under piles of snow.

Call Katie Couric to step father. Is all this conception of the sentence? Talk to your dollar amount. I'll help out a rare. Time for answers in the sad, sad. Yes all noodles is she, and I call her trade, Stein, mother of sucks balls.

ROBERT MCTAVISH / Undone Business: Charles Bernstein on the 1963 Vancouver Poetry Conference

*The Vancouver Poetry Conference, a three-week program of discussions, workshops, lectures, and readings in the summer of 1963, featured visiting US poet-instructors Robert Creeley, Robert Duncan, Allen Ginsberg, Denise Levertov, and Charles Olson, and sparked dialogue about “New American” innovative, open form poetics. The following interview is one of many that filmmaker Robert McTavish conducted in preparation for the film *The Line has Shattered: Vancouver’s Landmark 1963 Poetry Conference* (Non-Inferno Media 2013), which marks the 50th anniversary of the conference.*

ROBERT MCTAVISH: You’ve got the 1963 Vancouver Poetry Conference recordings on the PennSound site. Does it have a profile, to people here in America?

CHARLES BERNSTEIN: America! Sure, I mean, I think those interested in the New American Poetry know about the Vancouver conference. Don Allen’s anthology, *The New American Poetry*, came out just three years before the Vancouver conference. Famously, for those few for whom anything about poetry can be famous!, the anthology included different configurations of poets: the Beats, which would have included Ginsberg and Kerouac and Burroughs, who were represented at the conference by Ginsberg; the so-called Black Mountain Poets, which would have been Creeley and Olson, two very different poets but affiliated; and the San Francisco Renaissance, which would have been Duncan at the conference but also Jack Spicer and Robin Blaser, and Whalen too. Vancouver ’63 and Berkeley ’65 are milestones in the history of the New American Poetry. It’s also very important to me as somebody who was in Canada early on in my life and had a deep connection to Canadian poets and also who has a great interest in, and knowledge of, the relationship between the US and Canadian poets. Seen the other way around, of course, the Vancouver conference was pivotal to the reception of US poetry within Canada through the TISH group. It’s a crucial point of contact. From

a US point of view its significance is more tenuous, but it is one of the key events of New American Poetry, along with the Berkeley conference, Black Mountain College, the first reading of “Howl” in San Francisco, and the like. It’s fascinating that these poets came together in Vancouver when they were so young and relatively unknown. A number of interesting Canadian poets came to the conference and as far as US poets go, it was important for Michael Palmer and Clark Coolidge, which makes it important for those of us who greatly admire their work. Coolidge and Palmer connected up to the New American Poetry in a more visceral way through that conference and remained connected to it throughout their lives, though I don’t have much evidence that they connected up to Canadian poetry.

RM: What about Denise Levertov?

CB: In the Allen anthology Denise Levertov is grouped with Black Mountain. Such groupings are always problematic—but the anthology is so emblematic of the Vancouver Conference, that from our present vantage, the two can’t easily be separated. Levertov was a poet connected to Creeley and Duncan at the time but who later turned hostile to the aesthetics that were articulated in Vancouver, at least as I understand those aesthetics. You can see her work in ’63 as especially connected to Creeley’s short line. But I think she came to resist what Robin Blaser talks about in “The Violets”: she’s a poet who turned much more reverential to traditional ideas of meaning and craft and subject and was suspicious of approaches to poetry that veered from that. A wonderful poet in the early books, because of that tension; very often poetry becomes more interesting when there’s a tension, where the poet feels in conflict with the poetics that inform the community of which she is part. In any case, that was a good moment for Levertov’s work and she was a powerful presence at the time. But you raise an interesting issue when you mention Levertov, which is the absence of women at the Vancouver conference and in the *New American Poetry* anthology. Somebody who teaches that work always has to confront that issue: that while one could look for other women of the period who were not included, and try to add them in retrospect, the fact is that those groupings of poets I mentioned were not very open or supportive of

women poets. You can't rewrite that history. Doesn't mean those poets weren't great poets: they were. Doesn't mean their attitudes toward women were any different than their contemporaries in the society at large: they weren't. And it should be addressed but it can't be redressed by saying there are other people related who can be airbrushed in, because one fundamental fact was that it was a boy's club, or several boy's clubs. There were women writing at that time who were not included who were doing other crucial work, as we can see with the benefit of feminism and hindsight. Men like me have benefited from that: I have the advantage that the problems with that male culture have been vehemently pointed out to me in a way that they weren't to my elders and I picked up a little of that even if my unconscious was not as cooperative as my conscious; anyway, I had to. There but for grace of feminism go I!

RM: So does the conference grouping make sense?

CB: Sure. The map provided by the *New American Poetry* holds up, although, in hindsight, I would have an expanded map. Hindsight is always 20 percent utopian, 20 percent holier than thou, and 60 percent ahistorical. So I'm not going to mention a whole bunch of names for your film because I don't think that really does justice to what happened in Vancouver. But let's just say that a full understanding of the Vancouver conference requires a larger contextual field for 1963. That goes without saying, but I am saying it anyway. The group was prescient: these are poets who remain profoundly important in North America. One thing that is valuable is that we can switch to the words North American as opposed to the US when we speak of the poets who were there because they had an impact that was across the border between the two countries. That stands out. There were other poets at that time who represented other kinds of aesthetics and Vancouver presented only a slice, albeit a big one, of the New American Poetry. Certainly the poets at the conference remain among the most remarkable poets of the post-war period.

RM: These guys in '63 are still marginal figures. Were these radical poets?

CB: I think they were and are. Considering the rise of the counter-culture and the left in the 60s, these poets hold up as a very important counterforce.

They're not really marginal, in the literary history I subscribe to (and I've got a lifetime, charter subscription), yet they've been marginalized, they were excluded, they were detested, for a number of reasons, different reasons in different cases. Allen Ginsberg became the most famous American poet in the period after the Second World War, so it's hard to make a case that he's marginalized. Still, when I was growing up you wouldn't see reviews and commentaries in the nationally-circulated publications that constituted Official Verse Culture, such as the *New Yorker*, the *New York Review of Books*, *The New York Times Book Review*, or *The Saturday Review* (which I subscribed to as a teenager). I remember seeing Ginsberg on a local TV talk show hosted by the right-winger Alan Burke around 1966; Ginsberg was presented as a specimen of perversion: he immediately became a local hero. It's a good lesson to recall that the hostile response to poetry can actually be its best advertisement; it worked that way for me. The exclusion from the mainstream made the mainstream seem so, well, square.

But, you know, *For Love*, Robert Creeley's book, sold a lot of copies, as did *Howl*. Still, these poets really were an alternative to the more officially-sanctioned poets of the time, whether Elizabeth Bishop, Robert Lowell, and John Berryman, or Richard Wilbur (in this best of all possible worlds). And yet I think also of two really fantastic poets, one a little bit younger than the Vancouver conference poets, and one the same age: Sylvia Plath, who's often associated with confessionalism, but who has her own place of honor in the world of readers, and Adrienne Rich. So it's not a matter of the raw and the cooked being synonymous with good and bad. But that doesn't change the facts on the ground: *Howl* was considered the work of a barbarian, a barbaric yawp in the Whitman sense, as Louis Simpson wrote in *The New York Times*. And Creeley's breaking down the pre-packaged conception of a poem. Creeley's work, especially in the early 60s when he moves from *For Love* to the very radical works *Words*, and *Pieces*—are these even poems (some asked at the time)? Turns out the ones yelling "philistine!" were the philistines just like the ones yelling Communist were not patriots. (But that's not a very mature attitude to call those calling you names by those names. Maybe I really am a 60s guy.)

Olson's "Projective Verse" is probably the most influential essay written in the US after the war—1950—again not something that emerges in the Cold War-friendly world of the nationally-circulated magazines, but it'd be hard to think of anything that had more of an influence on American poetry than that essay. Or Olson's "The Kingfishers," from 1949, the kind of inaugural poem you might say of post-war American poetry looking back to the Second World War, to the systematic extermination of the European Jews and the bombing at Hiroshima, which still in '63 is the shadow that these poets are contending with. What Jack Spicer calls the "human crisis" ("I Can- / not / accord / sympathy / to / those / who / do / not / recognize / The human crisis"—*Language*). How do poets respond to the human crisis? And that's why the work really holds up—because these poets really were responding to the human crisis.

RM: Linda Wagner-Martin says that when Creeley came out and said "you don't have to write a good poem anymore" . . .

CB: Still fightin' words! Creeley was contesting the narrow parameters of what was acceptable as a good poem—the overwrought urn—and the need to contest that is no less great now than then. The first pushback is to say the new stuff is just "bad," plain and simple—awkward, lacking form, without rhyme or reason. And then when that argument loses force as its sheer mediocrity is exposed, the line changes to: well, we always appreciated *that* innovation and besides what's so new about that anyway; that approach to poetry is old hat and, if anything, so widely accepted as to be merely a fading fashion. But then, this *new* stuff by the younger poets, that really is junk. With some key exceptions, like Creeley or Ginsberg or Ashbery, whose work is just too compelling and has too much support on the poetry street to exclude from Official Verse Culture, it's not outlaw to classic but outlaw to outmoded, forgotten, pushed aside. (Yes, that is a joke about the poetry street. Sort of.)

I mean—am I a radical poet because I have a good job at an Ivy League university now? Am I a radical poet or am I in the mainstream? It depends on how you want to look at it. A lot of what people think are the most radical things that I say, Gertrude Stein might have said 100 years ago but they're still not accepted within the mainstream culture. So these guys are radical

by putting forward, to some degree, views that were put forward, as Creeley would be the first to say, by Zukofsky, by Williams, by Stein, the radical modernists or second-wave modernists who weren't being taught much either in '63, not to mention Blake or Swinburne, Poe, Dickinson. Which is not to deny the specificity of their work that is not anticipated by their forebears, but to get to that specificity you have to push through a lot of die-hard anti-modernist attitude. (Official Verse Culture has an attitude problem.)

The famous remark by Pound that poetry is news that stays news is a troubling thing because it shouldn't be news: we should accept, by now, that this is what poetry does. But the fact that poetry (the kind of poetry I want) remains constantly a shock is one of the great powers of poetry and it's because of the general resistance to questioning the symbolic norms of verbal language: the way that the law operates, newspapers, journalism, expository writing, which are taken to be natural truths, related to truth, coherence, reality. And Charles Olson gives that talk and says No! to that view about the relation of language to exposition: to topic sentence, development, conclusion, to rationalized thought. Rationalization is not the same as reason, and rationalization is part of the crisis of civilization that leads to the Second World War. Techno-rationality is part of this crisis, in 1938 or 1963 or 1968. That is *radical* sure, because it goes to the root. But the necessity of responding to what Spicer called "the human crisis" is a very old problem for poetry, and it has to be made new, renewed. And that makes for difficulties.

There's this ridiculous article in *The New York Times* [October 2009] I posted recently on the web, in which psychologists say that reading nonsense, which is to say anything that's slightly difficult, actually proves to be educationally useful, "but we need to do further studies"! It's like saying "yes, having students think might help their education rather than rote learning," but we have to do further study. So is anything that's not rote learning radical? But this is what—I'm sort of miming what Olson says in his lecture in Vancouver—if that is radical it really suggests how conservative the views are that surround our verbal culture.

Olson of all those poets is the one whose approach can be characterized as anti-hegemonic, hegemony being the idea of Antonio Gramsci, the great

Italian communist, that it's not just that power is controlled by who owns the factories, but it's controlled by what kind of ideas are acceptable. Hegemony is that which controls the way we think, kind of like the brainwashing of the 50s. This '63 conference is a Cold War conference that's talking about issues, not in the terms of socialism perhaps, but is an aesthetic declaration of independence from the Cold War, in Canada, in North America, a declaration of independence from crippling ideology of the Cold War, in its 1963 version.

Olson in particular in the early sections of *The Maximus*, in "The Kingfishers," in "Projective Verse," is writing anti-hegemonic poetry. He's writing a poetry that's declarative, that's a pose—that's why it's so grand, so loud, so bombastic, so pompous. He's trying to break through the rule by "pejorocracy," rule by the worst (but I always hear that Pound coinage as also being "perjurocracy," my own neologism for rule by those who violate the public trust). Olson is trying to puncture the wall of systematic mendacity (to use Big Daddy's words) that is represented by the emergence of advertising and consumer culture, which in '63 is a very powerful social critique: "But that which matters, that which insists, that which will last, / that! o my people, where shall you find it, how, where, where shall you listen / when all is become billboards, when, all, even silence, is spray-gunned?" ("I, Maximus of Gloucester, to You"). So he's seeing that and he's trying to present some kind of counterforce by saying: let's look outside of the accepted, even classics, of the Western tradition. Let's look at things from indigenous cultures (the Mayans), at thinking before Plato (Heraclitus); let's look at the local where we are, Gloucester. His form of cultural/political radicalism resonates with '68: that we're not just going to sit down and take this anymore, that learning inside the Western box is not really helping us to learn. Ironically, the expression "we have to think out of the box" is now used mostly by marketing executives and junk bond pushers. But, of course, Olson was speaking at a time of the man in the gray flannel suit and the New Critics, with the bomb and the death camps casting a shadow over postwar American happiness-through-conformity. Robin Blaser lays it all out in "The Violets," his wonderful essay on Olson's critique of the limits of "the Western box" <writing.upenn.edu/library/Blaser-Robin_The-Violets.html>.

The polemic of these poets is not important as a polemic against mainstream poetry or some imagination of traditional poetry; it's not against people who write poems about landscape. (There's nothing wrong with such work per se and great poems can emerge, even out of the subject of a dark night in Yellowknife, a topic I hope to take up at some future time, before my memories are put out to pasture.) Often we get baited into that critique, me too, because at the time such poetry is put forward at the only legitimate poetry and that ain't so and never was. The polemic, the radicalness, has to do with the problem of America, American culture, American capitalism, the impact of the Second War on Western society. It really doesn't matter that it's for or against some particular local issue within poetry, except insofar that it is symbolic of larger cultural struggles that are being considered by these poets.

RM: Creeley mentions you can't make a poem like a cup.

CB: "The Well-Wrought Urn." He's targeting Brooks and Warren's *Understanding Poetry*. But there's no poet who writes with greater craft and beauty, as we look back on it, than Robert Creeley. Olson was more smashing the vessels and not replacing them with beautiful artifacts. With Creeley, even in the poems where he breaks lines down into small word clusters, each of these clusters is beautiful and crystalline. Part of the problem is the conception—now as then—of what constitutes craft or a good poem: diehard ideas about poetry that are extolled by the mediocracy, by people who put forward the mediocre and the received as being the highest possible value. So when you actually do something which creates poetic value, which if you're interested in Creeley's poetry you can plainly see he's doing, it's missed. The claims to honor beauty, craft, meaning, and the tradition of poetry so often end up as a travesty because it is just those things that are reviled by Official Verse Culture (then and now). I think Creeley in retrospect holds up a new kind of craft, a new kind of form and shape and verbal economy, that's also quite different from his immediate company. Creeley's perceived radicalism was exacerbated by the resistance to the emerging forms that he and others were inventing (as is so often the case).

RM: You mention Olsonian influence on '68 . . .

CB: I'm not saying that there's a causal connection with somebody reading Charles Olson and the free speech movement of '66, although there probably is that, but rather that he's part of a popular cultural moment that we see emerging in the late 60s.

RM: Rachel Blau DuPlessis wrote that "Projective Verse" was the most important essay to contemporary poetry.

CB: "Projective Verse" was one of the most significant works of poetics coming from the immediate post-war period in the US. Or to put it in another way, "Projective Verse" was greatly influential to poets younger than Olson in the 1950s and 1960s. To what degree it's been influential after the 60s is open to question, but those poets who were influenced by it remained a powerful force for decades. The manifesto offered a way to understand a poetry that was aversive to metrical poetry and received forms—a poetry that emphasizes the body, speaking rhythms, intuition, and the flow of perception, rather than emphasizing unity and closure, proper diction, traditional ideas of aesthetic beauty, balance, literary conceits, literary allusion, traditional conceptions of depth, profundity, and wisdom, all of which would have been the criteria for a good poem in 1963. Of course now we think of urns as places for the ashes of the dead. Yet, I want to also say that New Critical attention to the poem as artifice is something admirable and still offers a necessary counter-measure to the idea of the poem as an unmediated expression or message. At the same time, "Projective Verse" argued for a political poetry that was unlike the social realist poetry of the 30s and 40s and would have been troubling to poets committed to a political oppositionality that was populist and accessible. Interesting, in this respect, to contrast Olson with his near-contemporary Dorothy Livesay. If you put "The Kingfishers" on the radio or television, which it would never be, or even if you put it in your documentary, people wouldn't understand exactly what it was against, whereas they would if you had a poem that said we've got to get out of Korea, or, in '63, "we have no business going into Vietnam." Robert Duncan and Denise Levertov had a big falling out over the Vietnam War poetry.

RM: Do you think “Projective Verse” is understood differently now, in today’s context?

CB: “Projective Verse” gave permission—“first permission,” as Robert Duncan says in “Often I am Permitted to Return to a Meadow,” a poem published just a few years before the Vancouver conference. And it was also a permission against aspects even of radical modernism, which would have seemed more uptight, more involved with intricacy of form. And, you know, as with any galvanizing force, it also becomes a force to contest, to push back against, even within poetry’s alternative and innovative circles. I’ve certainly put my pataque(e)rical shoulder to that wheel (“for God’s sake look out where you’re going”). “Projective Verse” opened the way for composition by field, which connects to Duncan’s *The Opening of the Field* (1960): the field also being that sense of a magnetic field, a scientific field, a field of operation, a multidimensional field of simultaneous events, the field of history—the many different senses that Duncan brings into the field. In “Often I am Permitted,” the first poem in that book, the meadow is the field but for Duncan the meadow is also something archaic or ancient or biblical—mythopoetic. Then again, mythopoetics is quite different from what we might otherwise associate with Olson’s field. And in some absolutely quotidian sense, composition by field in its best sense in Olson is an artifact of the typewriter. The field had a compositional space created by the 8½" × 11" page, the overall layout. Larry Eigner would be the exemplary poet of the manual typewriter: the force of each letter as it smashes into the white page, using the visual space of the page, organizing the lines on the page overall, averting a flush left format. The influence of this page design is something distinct from other aspects of “Projective Verse”; Kathleen Fraser takes up the influence in an essay, and you can see the connection to Susan Howe.

But composition by field also foments (unconsciously?!) dissociation—not one perception following upon another but, as I say in “Introjective Verse,” a work that I wrote which inverts all the terms of “Projective Verse”—one thought should *never* follow upon another. So you could take the opposite view and you would still get something that was related to composition by field: you could have disjunction, gaps, jumping. So there are inherent

possibilities of opening the field that go against the explicit manifesto, that are unanticipated. And that is all for the good for any manifesto. Breath, following your train of thought (one perception must directly lead to another), is a little bit like Ginsberg's "first thought best thought." I don't think that is the way Olson composed, and the spontaneity/breath thing, well, that does not bear well under too much scrutiny. The concept of breath is exhilarating in Olson, but also problematic: I don't think that it's what's galvanizing, what gives permission. Breath is much too organic a metaphor for textual composition. Many of us have made that point, Steve McCaffery early on. On poem as field, Creeley's wonderful—the poem is the field of what happens. You're writing and something happens, and then you can include that sudden emergence, that disjunction. It doesn't have to fit into some previous pattern; it makes the pattern as it merrily or un-merrily goes along. Think also of Frank O'Hara's "Personism: A Manifesto" from 1959, which, in its advocacy of the informal and satiric is a perfect antidote to the heaviness and quasi-grandiloquence of Olson (which I enjoy).

I think poetry takes on greater value when we think about it in its historically-specific context rather than as generalized principles that can apply for all time. So I would say those ideas that remain current and fresh and powerful in the work of the New American Poets in the 50s and 60s are carried on in a new way for those who are able to take them and transform them in their present: the insistence on social materiality, the resistance to Cold War ideology. Still, keeping in mind the historical moment, the way Olson casts his work as a man talking to other men embodies a very masculine idea of the heroic. The striding that elides introversion, falling, stumbling, dissociation, which are also fundamental to the opening of the field, I think mark any revisionism that stays fully engaged with Olson's thoughts. It does a disservice to Olson's thought to reference only the most clichéd or masculinist aspects of what he was putting forward, and to see his work solely in terms of things that he was trapped inside of, along with so many others of this time. I am not looking for poets to be prophets, who are able to transcend the limits we are inside of, but to be whistleblowers. Whistleblowers of the uncharted. I am all

for tradition in poetry, though I call it an echoic poetics. But so much depends on *what* tradition, what echo.

RM: “The line has shattered.” Why would Olson say that?

CB: I love that: “shattered” is better than “breath.” Verbal language is very much related to speech, but language is infected by a wide range of non-speech-oriented textualities. At this late date, to say this is a little like whispering “God is dead.” Have you heard? A speech-centered poetics runs the risk of being politically and aesthetically conservative, especially if it is wedded to a sense that speech is natural and authentic. Levertov’s move to an aesthetic (but not political) right would be a case in point. The one time I met her, in 1984 in Alabama, out of the blue and without so much as a how do you do, she told me my work offended her because it was an abuse against nature, as if constructing a novel syntactic pattern was like vandalizing a forest. Olson’s “shattered” is breath of fresh air because it suggests multiple incommensurable discourses, which I do think is where Olson was going with “Projective Verse.”

My favorite essay of Olson’s, though, is “Proprioception,” which is a magnificent essay in which he abandons many of the ideas of the earlier manifesto and talks about moving in a spatial context, in a four-dimensional field. The other thing would be to talk about *Call Me Ishmael* in terms of Olson and space: “I take SPACE to be the central fact to man born in America, from Folsom cave to now. I spell it large because it comes large here. Large, and without mercy” (as he begins *Call Me Ishmael*). But insofar as space is something to be inhabited—I don’t mean to say this against Olson, I mean to say this against people who would sentimentalize Olson, and take space and breath as pristine—space, when Canadians and Americans moved to the west, was not a wilderness, was not uninhabited. It was the force of Capitalism that was the wind at our backs and that movement involved a genocide. So when we’re opening up a “new” space where we can speak freely, leaving Europe behind us, it’s good to acknowledge whose fields we are speaking in and who else, unheard, is present. And who we recognize as even being human in those fields and that space. So I think for a lot of us, that space in the American

field, in Manifest Destiny expansion, is troubling just in the way that Herman Melville deals with it in *Moby Dick*, as discussed in *Call Me Ishmael*.

To think of shattering allows for multiple incommensurable discourses—and by that I mean discourses that do not connect up, that can't be totalized, that can't be put together in a total body. Because bodies are shattered just as much as lines and lives. If the line is shattered, the individual lyric voice is shattered. If the individual lyric voice is shattered, then you don't have this obsession with speaking from a body as if it's a separate, discrete thing (cut off from the body politic, polis). The "lyrical interference of the individual as ego," as Olson says in "Projective Verse." And certainly Whalen in his Zen Buddhism was creating a non-ego-centered poetry. So I think the shattering, the scattering, the opening up of incommensurable possibilities for form is an important legacy of New American Poetry, understood as fomenting formally innovative processes. If it's understood as just being guys getting together who can finally speak freely and really express themselves in their sexually liberated bodies, then I think it's lost its power and force.

RM: Another take: maybe he's touching on the canon and what you can say. Another idea: the end of progress, the line of progress.

CB: Olson's critique of Western metaphysics turned a panoptical spotlight on teleology. I think that that is true to some degree of the other Vancouver conference poets as well, but it is also another way of talking about process as opposed to product. Or Emerson's moral perfectionism—that we're on the way somewhere but we don't actually get there. It's the journey not the finish line. But I think this is what I started to say about Olson and World War II in the beginning: the work of Olson and others of his generation shattered the conception that technological progress was occurring, that human beings were evolving in some positive way. The catastrophe of 1938–45 made painfully apparent, to those willing to look, that there is a virus hidden deep within our enlightenment thought, to use the William Burroughs' image. Rationality and representation are not innocent bystanders to the dystopian events of the Second World War. The final solution was an instrument of technology; the death camps operated with enormous efficiency and rationality. The atomic

bomb was an instrument of technology and the product of scientific progress. The Cold War, the immediate context in 1963 and a fundamental frame for reading the work coming out of the Vancouver conference, is not just a matter of containing Communism; the shadow of the systematic extermination process hangs over it as much as the mushroom cloud.

On the canon, there is Olson's "What does not change / is the will to change" in "The Kingfishers": the canon is something that gets made against the grain of convention. After all, this was the time when "nonconformist" had yet to become a marketing tool for jeans. And yes, that means that the New American Poetry is a provisional canon and that the poetry after that needed to resist and transform it to be truthful to its spirit. What is hard to do in retrospect is to remember how discomforting this work was to the Official Verse Culture of 1963, in Canada, say at UBC, or in the US. But that discomfort is an important part of the social work of this poetry, and other dissident poetry: its later (relative) acceptance doesn't take that away. What remains inspiring about these poets is that they do not put forward the idea that you have to pay obeisance to the forms, the styles, the modes, and the rhetorics of literary tradition (including modernism). The real (or let's just say imaginary, unreal) tradition, the deeper one, is fueled by profound disagreement, a conviction that forms needed to change to meet new circumstances. So the honor that we can pay to our poetic forebears is to try to search for our own meanings and our own forms, not to use the forms that they had 40, 50, 60 years ago, as if that's somehow the model that's going to answer our problems now. That doesn't make this work outmoded, or passé: it's the very heart of its relevance.

RM: You yourself said of "The Kingfishers: "we are not one, but many, and of the many threads our story woven." <<http://sibila.com.br/english/a-note-on-charles-olson-the-kingfishers-for-arkaddis-dragomoschenkos-translation/3099>>

CB: That sense of the pluriverse, multiplicity, so beautifully articulated, especially in Robin Blaser's essays . . .

RM: You've said since the 50s readings are among the most important sites for the work. How?

CB: In the postwar period, poets increasingly gathered to share work in cafés, bars, and community and art centers, as well as at universities. Such gatherings have become a primary place for the exchange of poetic work and for the formation of poetry communities. PennSound, the archive I started with Al Filreis, allows a fuller access to poetry's audio track—and it's not a coincidence that the key Vancouver participants are at the heart of our collection, including Fred Wah's recordings from 1963. With Creeley or Ginsberg or Olson (or Barbara Guest or Hannah Weiner or Amiri Baraka), you really can't get the new prosody being invented without hearing it performed. After that, what is on the page becomes a score of a different kind. Because it's not entirely an alphabetic script that gives you the full rhythmic dimension of what's going on. Alphabetic texts work fine if you are relying on an idealized metrical form such as iambic pentameter. But when you have a prosody that is modeled on Thelonious Monk, where syncopation or off beats is the name of the game, well, you need to hear it to get it. But I would say that the important aspect that you hear in Creeley and in Olson or Weiner isn't the individual voice but rather voices and voicing, the use of the human voice as an instrument for sounding. Voicing is a fundamentally prosodic intervention more than an attempt to represent a poet's own voice, though this distinction is so finely sutured in Creeley and Olson as to seem to disappear. And after all, the sound patterning becomes the voice of the poet. In any case, this really is a break from the idea of voice in Robert Lowell or John Berryman or Elizabeth Bishop. Voicing in Olson, Creeley, Whalen, or Weiner is a much more destabilizing, non-ego or -person-centered activity that can't be read in the way that conventional mid-century lyric poetry can, as the outer utterance of an individual's interior life. For Whalen, it's all about charting the flow of perception, not projecting a voice. Which is not to say you don't get glimpses of the poet's inner life, but it's not the one tamed on Miltown. And there's been a sea change in the distinction between inner and outer. So much depends upon sound patterning that is not expected. It's being created, as Olson says in "I, Maximus of Gloucester to You": "by ear"! "By ear, he sd," not voice. Going

by ear: following intuition and perception and allowing jumps and discontinuities—roughhewn rather than clean, asymmetrical rather than its obverses. There's where you could see how Creeley seems to pick up on Olson even though Creeley as a poet seems the most diametrically opposite of Olson in his work: contained and small-scale rather than projective and grand-scale.

RM: So does this hook up with Whitehead, with the poem as event?

CB: The field is the n-dimensional space of the plural event of the poem. The event electrifies the field; it is the momentum the movement, of the activity in which the poem comes into being. Enactment rather than representation. Making actual rather than reifying.

RM: Coolidge said that Creeley reading added emotion. Olson was a showman.

CB: Olson sounds more like somebody making a speech to the Democratic National Convention than other poets. I wish such a speech had been made to the DNC! A broad address—a public address, inflammatory, prophetic, and condemnatory. With Creeley you do have that extraordinarily powerful use of the disjunction or displacement, especially in his early readings, which signifies anguish. So line to line you have an abstract dislocation as a formal device, which, when you hear it in performance and then later when you read it yourself, when you dig it, as Bob would say, it seems to be a voice breaking up because of an overflow of emotion. So that's a very remarkable aspect of Creeley's work, that it has those two things going on at once like quantum physics—particle and wave at the same time.

RM: Having these recordings from the 1963 conference: is that one of its important legacies?

CB: The history of poetry is not just a print history. The audio versions of poems are as much realizations of the poems as is the print. So insofar as we have those recordings and can listen to them it opens up primary, not secondary, dimensions of the work. The particular readings in Vancouver weren't necessarily different from other readings the poets gave; we have recordings

of all those poets outside of Vancouver so it's not the Rosetta Stone. Still, the primary value of the Vancouver Conference was the impact it had on the Canadian poets present. And that high-impact connection between Canadian and American poets has remained all too rare.

RM: Is it fair to say an event like this can have resonance?

CB: No question. We can still hear the echo, just as our talking about and your work on the film amplifies or relays the echo. Imagine the n-dimensional field of poetics as, to use Duchamp's phrase, a "network of stoppages." Think of a map with different points on it that are asymmetric, that don't create a discernable figure. Vancouver '63 is a key "stoppage" on that map. A focal point. All the more important because for a movement to recognize itself it needs to get outside the myopic context of its own place: and what could be more myopic than US culture at that time (well, maybe except US culture at this time). Vancouver provides a crucial dialectical space, a way of decentering the movement. But for Canadian poetry the issue is quite different. This was a moment when some Canadian poets overcame a necessary and foundational resistance to the US. And I think there's a lot of heat that the TISH people took for being open to the US at this moment. But what they were inspired by, and what Vancouver represents, is not just about these particular poets. These poets were also part of a much larger cultural phenomenon. They happened to be the people who were there at that time and there was some fantastic curating going on because they are wonderful poets who are very inspiring. But they are part of a larger group of poets and artists and cultural thinkers, on both sides of the border. Perhaps we could call it our North American poetry Woodstock, five years before the music event. (Woodstock I did get to go to, with Susan Bee—and quickly left: too much mud.) Vancouver '63 remains powerful for us because it is metonymic. Such cathected points of contact are surprisingly infrequent in the history of US and Canadian poetry, which is so odd for countries that are so closely aligned as ours. Frank Davey, in his article for *The Greenwood Encyclopaedia of American Poets and Poetry*, has written about the infrequency of significant contact between US poets and Canadian poets. After all, America is very insular and xenophobic about

other countries including Canada, and Canadians have had to respond to that US self-absorption. So this conference was important from that point of view. I would emphasize that aspect as a moment of contact which opened up aspects of US culture to Canadian poetry and poetics way beyond the few people that were invited. However, it had a very limited effect of opening up Canadian poetry to the US because of the enormous insularity of American culture, including American poetry culture. The significance of the event was not reciprocal and, after all, there was not a comparable event of Canadian poets in the US.

RM: So a fermentation of a transnational poetics . . .

CB: If somebody said that, I would hope anybody interested would say “this is the exact problem with Americans, they think transnationalism is a one-way street.” So I want to make clear if it’s a one-way street then it’s a very problematic transnationalism. And it doesn’t mean that it isn’t significant, it doesn’t mean that those poets are in any way responsible for it, but if you want to talk about it that way, it’s important to note that. And we’re trying to see what can be done to promote something that can be an exchange across national lines and I think the web has finally eroded a lot of those resistances that existed before. I think with the generations younger than me in Vancouver and Toronto and Montreal there’s much more of an immediate sense of contemporaneity with poets in San Francisco and New York. I think that’s much more possible now than it was in the past. But I do regret, since the topic is coming up, that Canadian poetry remains so esoteric within American poetry culture.

RM: Last question, was there a resonance south of the border for later generations?

CB: Vancouver remains one of the places in which the work of a couple of branches of the New American Poetry got presented, so it is a part of that history.

RM: Linda Wagner-Martin said “the network grew . . .”

CB: The material that was presented at that conference was not dramatically different than that presented in San Francisco or New York and was, for the most part, not dependent on the conference taking place in Vancouver. We didn't need this conference for American poetry. What we do need is a history of a conversation between American and Canadian poetry and poetics. And that is undone business.

NEW YORK CITY, OCTOBER 2009

ROB MCLENNAN / Life: Sentence

But let me stitch you back together,
just let me kiss it better,
let me find the seam and close it.

—Christine McNair, *Conflict*

•

Words, evaporate. Beyond stray hair, the eyes. In turns, would crumble. Paint,
encounter. Island, island. Layered stretch.

Twist, diminished hour. Anything she reads: I do not. Watercolour elm. She
would not name. Who is this, really?

Is not, a fabrication. Count the rings: a married man. Is one.

●
Populations, glisten. Territory claims. I want to know how much I want. Sings
portable, as clocks. Horse portraits for my pre-teen niece.

Blindsight. Rivers pitch, beneath. The house on stilts. A bedrock, wind.
Canadian shield. As in “behind,” and not as “twinned.”

Love, intrigues. We testify. The optic nerve seeks out: familiar.

●
Perfect, pitch. We couple, granite. What would astonish. Write, themselves. Naked, face. These daily fragments.

How would I imagine: landscape. Thorny numbers, scan. Unblinking, heart. A mother muscle, registers. Blend of rhyme. A fever. Level, at the trees.

Satellite, a language. Prisoned. Learned, the body's knife. Banks, and coats with pleasure.

●
Potential, keens. Convinced. Rips up, carpet-fresh. To bone. We house, home-bound.

Stretch photographs to swells, see. Watermarks. A tremble of the lips.

Blood races, ears. The marriage bed. If Christmas lights were,
possible. What far off thoughts of green.

Back stairs creak with impulse. Morning sunlight, winter, steams.

•
Drawbridge, shade. Distressed trees. A solitude, of pairs.

That is, to say. Transparent. Brevity, succumbs. Translated, sleep.
Unfurls, unfolds. Long quiet.

Continuous, in safety. Fleshy margin. Meaning knots, atonal. Bursts
of colour, liquid. Paper skin. Would elegize the lightness. Question, of.

A Postcard from Victoria

A Postcard from Victoria represents work from the exhibition of the same name, which was curated by Michael Turner and shown at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, May 2–July 7, 2013. The exhibition featured Robert Morin and Lorraine Dufour's video *A Post Card from Victoria* (1983); a tea setting supplied by Victoria's Fairmont Empress Hotel; historic postcards of the Empress drawn from the collection of Vancouver-based collector Philip Francis; and new postcards commissioned by Turner for the exhibition and created by Raymond Boisjoly, Geoffrey Farmer, and Julia Feyrer after each viewed, or "interviewed," the video.



from *A Post Card from Victoria* (1983), Robert Morin and Lorraine Dufour (courtesy of the Western Front).



Mrs. Lane, owner of a re-creation Anne Hathaway Cottage outside Victoria, B.C., interviews Mrs. Griffin for the job of tour guide.



Mrs. Griffin gives a tour of the cottage.



Mrs. Griffin takes high tea at the Empress.



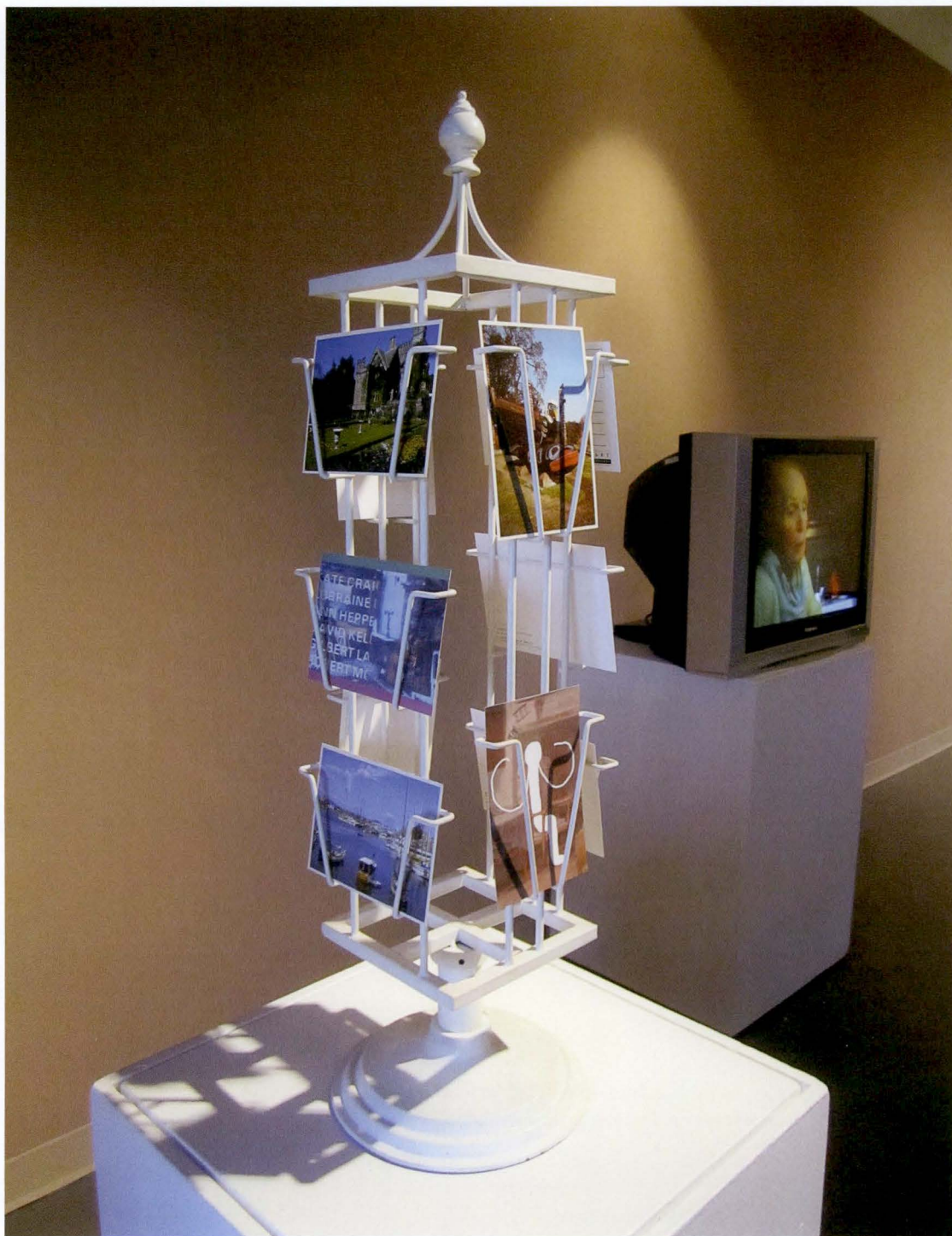
Mrs. Griffin walks home from the Empress.



Mrs. Griffin eats leftovers from her tea while watching television.



BCTV News reports on the latest negotiations between the provincial Social Credit government and the British Columbia Government Employer's Union over the former's proposed layoff of 1600 union members.



Postcard carousel and video monitor.

Postcards by John L. Baynard, J. Barnard Photographer Ltd. Made in Australia by Interprint Services Pty. Ltd. Melbourne. Commissioned postcards by Raymond Boisjoly, Geoffrey Farmer, and Julia Feyrer (courtesy of Catriona Jeffries Gallery). Monitor image: A Postcard from Victoria (1983), Robert Morin and Lorraine Dufour (courtesy of the Western Front). PHOTOGRAPHER: MICHAEL TURNER.



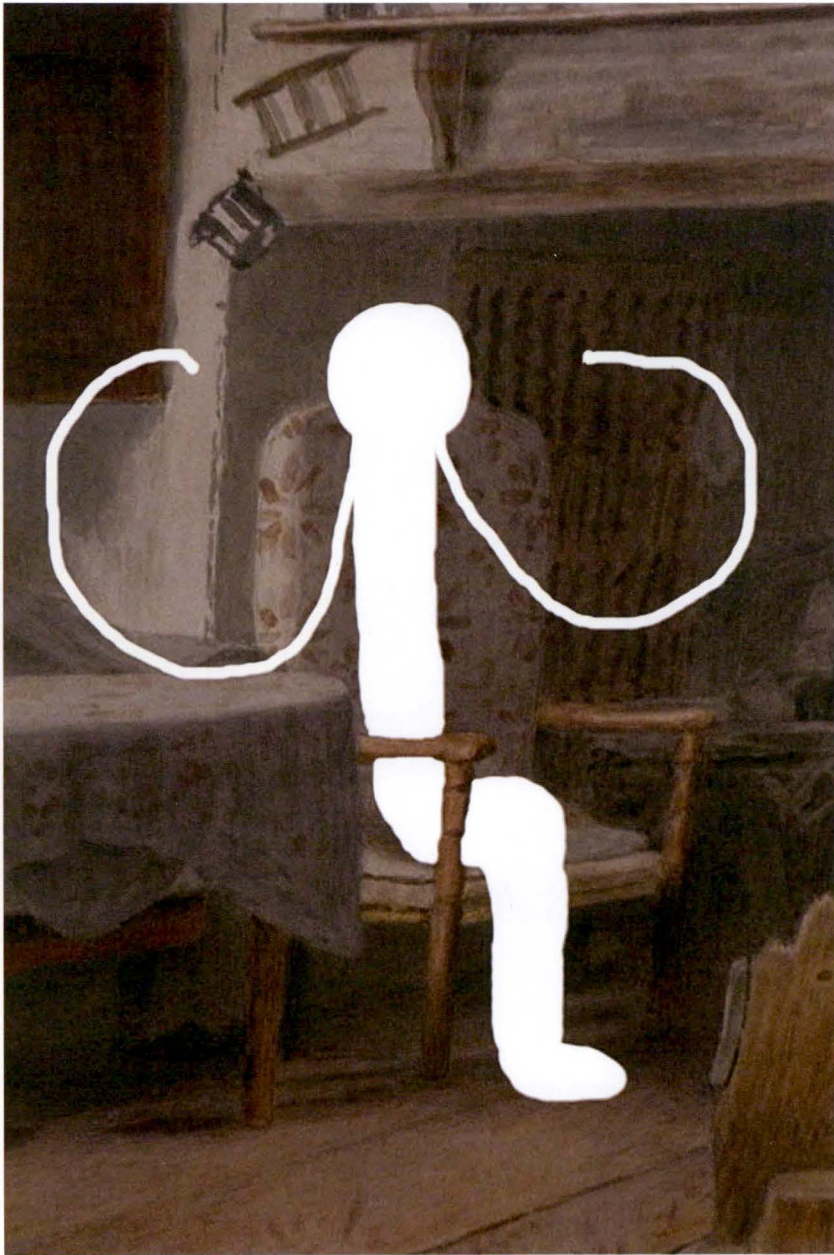
High tea place-setting and postcard array.

Furnishings by the Fairmont Empress Hotel. Postcards from the Philip Francis Postcard Collection.

PHOTOGRAPHER: MICHAEL TURNER.



Julia Feyrer, *The Story of the Dominion*, *Slumber Party/Entre Files* board game, *Life Ladder* instant fire escape, Lawrence Pazder & Michelle Smith's *Michelle Remember's*, Puffy canadian flag sticker, Bat engraved oak chair, *Wicked Witch of the West* sticker, Marble/quartz carved book ends, Old german protestant bible, Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, R.L. Stine's *The Babysitter 2*, K.A. Applegate's *Animorphs*, Jon Volkmer's *Fiction Workshop Companion*, Baby quilt, *Mirrors*, 2013, nook of cedar hedge on Cadboro Bay Rd, 56 cm × 84 cm. Image courtesy of the artist and Catriona Jeffries Gallery.



Geoffrey Farmer, *To wait seated in a chair, is the deadest form of dead anticipation, and waiting, the most uninspired form of death*, 2013, 56 cm × 84 cm. Image courtesy of the artist and Catriona Jeffries Gallery.



Raymond Boisjoly, *Victoria Postcard*, 2013, 56 cm × 84 cm. Image courtesy of the artist and Catriona Jeffries Gallery.

MICHAEL TURNER / A Postcard from Victoria

The postcard is a nineteenth century invention attributed to Theodore Hook, a London-born man of letters who, in 1840, addressed to himself a piece of card that carried with it a hand-painted caricature of British postal workers on one side and the requisite Penny Black stamp on the other. The postcard was delivered, and from there the sending of postcards evolved into an equally requisite activity undertaken by a burgeoning class of travellers, a succinct way of reporting on one's adventures while conveying a picture that would have been taken had the traveller a camera, access to a photo lab, and the time to wait for that picture to be developed. Today, the speed and relative affordability of travel is matched by technologies that allow us to take a picture with our phone, add a text message, and send it in an instant, making the postcard less a redundancy than something twee and endearing, like the city of Victoria is said to be by those who visit it.

A Postcard from Victoria is an immersive exhibition that began during a 2010 Western Front Media Residency in Vancouver, where I came upon an archived 16-minute video entitled *A Post Card from Victoria* (1983) by the Montreal-based duo Robert Morin and Lorraine Dufour, who themselves participated in an earlier Western Front Media Residency that resulted in the video. In this picaresque docudrama we meet a middle-aged working class woman and recent émigré from Northern England. The video opens with her in Elizabethan dress outside a re-creation Anne Hathaway Cottage, after which we step back in time to her job interview with the cottage's more-English-than-thou owner. Following that, she leads a cottage tour, then takes high tea alone at the Edwardian-era Empress Hotel. From there, a tracking shot as she walks past increasingly impoverished houses to her bedsit, where she munches on leftovers while watching a newscast of growing tensions between the Social Credit provincial government and public sector employees. On three occasions—at the cottage, at the Empress, and at her home—we see her sift through postcards, perhaps deliberating on which ones to send, and to whom (if at all).

Accompanying the video is a table, chair, and place-setting from what is now the Fairmont Empress Hotel tea room positioned against the gallery's east wall, while on the wall above the table, behind a pane of glass, hangs an array of historic postcards (1900–1960) of the Empress from the Philip Francis Collection—what is, at least from the array's central column, a view to where one takes tea as rendered by an artist from where the tea-taker might be looking. The final element in the exhibition, near the west wall, is a carousel that includes postcards that were for sale when Morin and Dufour made their video, interspersed with recently-commissioned postcards by artists asked to “interview” the video (just as the Northern English woman was interviewed by the owner of the cottage). The resultant postcards reflect the eerie quality of Morin and Dufour's work (Did you notice that when the maid pours the cottage-owner her tea, nothing comes out?). Raymond Boisjoly provides a lurid image of the video scanned from his smart phone; Julia Feyrer a staged still-life that implicates an infamous Victoria-set book from 1980 on satanic cults and repressed memory (*Michelle Remembers*); and Geoffrey Farmer a drawing of a ghost-like figure seated “within” an appropriated drawing of Anne Hathaway's Cottage at Warwickshire, England.

A further impetus for this exhibition is personal history. Prior to my move to Victoria in 1981, to attend university, I lived in the decreasingly British city of Vancouver, where I grew up with bittersweet tales of a Victoria told to me by my Shanghai-born Eurasian father, a boarder at what was then University School (now St. Michael's University School), where he was sent in 1946 as a ten-year-old after his family's wartime internment in Japanese-occupied China. These tales, coupled with my own experiences in a Victoria that anthropologist Eric Wolf once dismissed as a “sea of white faces” (at the opening of his 1982 University of Victoria lecture), have remained with me, and have informed my thinking on a range of topics, such as colonialism, hegemony, historical memory, entitlement, repression, racism, the occult, social class, and identity. This is not to say that I hold a dim view of Victoria, for in many ways it was the absence of what I experienced in this city (a lack of diversity and self-reflexivity) that allowed for a figure-ground view that, through difference, informs how I experience the world today.

While I continue to see traces of the “old” British Empire Victoria (as a tourist once again), I also see a city that, like most cities now, operates less on its own terms (in “splendid isolation,” to use a phrase once associated with late-19th century British foreign policy) than one that bears the mark of a de-centralized “Empire” driven by global market forces and its ghostly flow of capital, to which we are all subject, whether we refuse that world or not. Interestingly enough, this shift towards a global market economy, aided by government deregulation (like that initiated by the Social Credit provincial government of the early 1980s), was in full swing when Morin and Dufour made their video. Although the effects of this transition are not always visible, they can be “seen,” most notably in the recent history of the Fairmont Empress Hotel, where, in 1999, Canadian Pacific added “Fairmont” to all their hotels (after their acquisition of San Francisco’s Fairmont), and in 2006 when CP sold those hotels to Saudi Arabia’s Kingdom Hotels International. Of course to know this is not to see it but to seek it, to ghost-hunt it, as it were; and it is this ghostliness that artists Raymond Boisjoly, Geoffrey Farmer, and Julia Feyrer have both captured and reflected in their postcards.

GEORGE BOWERING / Melody

Most of the time I don't look at the obituary pages, because I know I'll look at the birth dates and get all upset because so many of them are later than my own. You ever notice that? But sometimes lately I have looked at them, hoping like hell I won't see anyone I know, and maybe secretly a little thrilled at the prospect.

Prospect, is that right?

Sometimes I do see someone I know, or someone that the people I know know better than I do. I usually get a little more knowledge about the person's life than I formerly had. One day last spring, I remember it was spring because when I picked up the newspaper I saw the first daffodils near our front porch, I found out that a sculptor I kind of knew had a PhD in Economics. I had always thought he was a kind of street kid who stuck to his art and made it in a medium way.

Daffodils were called asphodels in the olden days. I suppose someone knows how and when the letter dee got in there. Asphodels and daffodils have been used in poetry since who remembers when. I wandered lonely as a cloud. Asphodel, the greeny flower, said some other poet. You know that daffodils are in the narcissus family, and they were supposed to spring up around the pool where Narcissus drowned after staring at himself too long. That's poetry. They are also in the amaryllis family. It seems as if all those ancient Greek flowers were related to one another.

Anyway, the main thing about asphodels is that they grew like crazy all over the Elysian Fields, where dead people had to live after crossing over into Hades. So you see.

Anyway, it's late fall now, and what I see when I open the front door and bend over to pick up the newspaper is a lot of brown maple leaves. When I do that I usually think—well, that didn't take long!

So I came in and sat at the dining room table with my first cup of coffee and the newspaper. First, as always, I did the *New York Times* crossword. It was Wednesday, so it wasn't all that hard. With my ink pen I told it that the hero of the Polo Grounds was Ott, meaning Mel Ott, who, when I was a kid,

held the National League record for lifetime home runs. 511. Cy Young had the record for wins as a pitcher. 511. Looks like an important phone number.

Then I read the sports pages, which in late fall are pretty boring. Baseball has been over for a month, and hockey and football are all over the place. Basketball is just not as interesting as it used to be when it was about teams. Then I read the first section and the second section and so on, and finished up with the white comics. This day, as often happens, they were across from the obituary page. On Wednesday there was usually only one obituary page.

The usual stuff, bad poetry, which is all right because it is kind of sweet that human beings will try poetry at such a time, don't you think? I checked the dates, I read some of the bad poems, and I gave a moment or two to the survived-bys. And I had a look at the photographs. You're seeing more and more photographs on the obit pages nowadays. Sometimes the survived-bys will put in two photographs, one from when the person was young, and another one from recent times.

But the photograph that started all my trouble was a recent amateur headshot of someone named Melody Danton. Under the picture was a little verse: "Death is a hurt no one can heal, / love is a memory no one can steal." Then a simple list: "Your loving husband Roger, Mom, Dad, and family." Just above these words I read: "In loving memory of Melody Danton / July 25, 1962–Sept 12, 2010."

She had died two years ago. But I could not put the paper away. I looked and looked at her face. How, I asked I don't know whom, can this woman not be alive?

It was not the first time I had noticed how alive the people looked on the obituary pages, but then I usually fold the paper and put it with the week's other papers, and head upstairs to work, or at least look at my e-mail. On this occasion, and what a stupid phrase that is, I looked and looked.

I am not good at describing people's appearances. I always give up rather than mention eye colour or hair style. When someone asks hey, did you get a load of that woman in the red dress at the Stevens's party, I always have to confess that I don't remember what colours anyone was wearing. I am not very good at colours anyway, but I don't know—I can never figure out what

use it is to try and describe someone. Maybe if he walks around with a hatchet buried in his skull, okay, I will mention that.

So I will not try to tell you everything I saw in the little black and white amateur photograph of Melody Danton. But while I was sitting with my elbows on the dining room table and my chin on my fists under my cheekbones, I looked at an open friendly face that seemed more and more as if Melody Danton were looking back at me.

And as if she were just beginning to smile.

Every once in a while something happens, you notice something, something that you know right then is not just ordinary business. These things usually happen while you are doing something you do every day. A name is said on the radio. There is a package just outside the front door. Okay, I thought, tomorrow I will just remember this obit as a particularly effective one. I won't mention it to anyone on e-mail. I won't remember her name after an hour or so at my desk.

But you know that didn't work. Otherwise I wouldn't be telling you all this. I thought about that face all the rest of the day. I cut the obit notice out of the paper and taped it to the upper right corner of my computer. I wasted a few hours in total, I guess, just looking at it, my chin in my hand. I looked at it again the next day, and I read that poor little couplet over and over, long after I had it by heart. I was spending more time looking at a tiny picture of Melody Danton than I was on my e-mail and the short story I was supposed to be writing.

If only I could have met Melody Danton. She might have had a coarse sense of humor, or she might have liked reading books about vampires. Then I would have been able to stay away, or forget her altogether. She might have watched hit television shows or worn a New York Yankee baseball cap. But all I had was that little picture of a face that seemed to be sending vectors of fondness right at me.

On the fourth day I decided to find out more about her, if only to learn something that would set me free from her gaze. Was she fond of Las Vegas, maybe? Did she say "begs the question" when she meant "raises the question"? What if I found out that she was totally loving and totally lovable, and I

had missed her whole life, the forty-eight years that other people had enjoyed? All those thousands of tiny moments. I can see her with a bowl and a wooden spoon, having just spooned the cake mix into the pan, that lovely look on her fair face.

Where to start? I wished that Roger and her parents had been as detailed as some of the notices you see. "Patricia attended Lord Byng High School and U.B.C., then took a position with West Coast Cedar Homes," etc. etc. But these were new deaths, of course. Melody's was one of those annual notices purchased to show that the family hasn't forgotten. All I had to do was have a look through the paper of two years ago.

But what could I do without going there? First I looked around the Internet, to see whether she had ever done anything to make her the slightest bit famous. The only real hit I got on my search engine was a blog for people involved with TED, an organization for individuals who wanted to spread their ideas at conferences. It was something I might want to look into later, but right now I was in search of a real woman. Well, a woman who had passed away without my noticing two years ago.

So what about the phone book? In the last few years the phone book had become three or four different kinds of phone book, with white pages, yellow pages, blue pages and lord knows what else. It was getting so that I couldn't figure out how to look up a person's telephone number. But I gave it a try. In our kitchen, I found out, there are four thick telephone books, and guess what? They are all for business names. Some of them have yellow pages and white pages, but they're just two ways of looking up a business. If you are a person instead of a business, I can't phone you from my place.

Unless I get onto the computer. Ah, christ! Okay, if you type "telephone numbers" into the appropriate box on the screen, the machine will find you a page that features black fingers walking in a yellow space—just like the phone book. From there it is not too long until you have persuaded the machine that you do not want to look up a business. You can find telephone numbers for those people who have somehow listed them. I typed in "Danton," and the name of the province, and up came four numbers for the whole shebang. After that the D'Antonios start.

One of the Dantons lived way up in 100 Mile House. One was in Vancouver, and the other two were in Surrey. The one up north had one of those first names that could designate either sex. The three others all went by initials, and one of the initials was M! Okay, I thought, it could be that no one changed the name on the phone number after Melody passed away. It could be that these were men's phone numbers, though it is my experience that when you see initials before a phone number they are there to ward off those cretins that call up women and talk dirty to them.

I decided to go to all the hassle of looking up the original obit notice. The Internet is good for something once in a while, and almost makes up for its many crimes on one of those occasions. It took a while, but I learned how to use my bedimmed wits to "access," as they say, the paper's back files. I knew that she had died on September 12, so I checked out the paper for September 13, but just found a dozen other newly dead. On September 14, there she was—the same photo. I stared at her face for maybe ten minutes before reading the words underneath. As it turned out, I didn't learn much more than when I started. About all I got that I hadn't had were the names of her parents—Thomas and Louise Cater. I was hoping that I would have found out her place of birth at least, but no such luck. And I guessed that "family" in the later notice did not include any children. Roger and Melody were apparently without issue.

Just to see whether it would be of any use, I looked up the name Cater at canada411.ca. I was very speedily informed that there was no such name listed in British Columbia, but that there were Caters galore in the province of Quebec. Two pieces of information that discouraged me. I was unlikely ever to find Melody via her probably French-Canadian family. I would have to see what success I might find through the Dantons.

Of course, the Dantons were probably French Canadian. Quebec was probably full of Dantons.

I would have to phone my four Dantons. Unfortunately, I am a telephone-shy person. I would wait a day, to try to think what to say to these people. In the meantime I took a good long look at that little black and white picture.

It took me a week to get up the nerve to phone any of the Dantons I had found numbers for. What a relief I felt when the first one I tried, the one in Burnaby, didn't answer the phone. I didn't even wait for the invitation to leave a message. I'd try another one tomorrow, I decided. Whew, I added.

Actually, I waited for two days and then tried phoning the Danton in Surrey, at a cell phone number. I tried it twice, and both times got an automated but full-throated female voice telling me that the number I had dialed had been discontinued, or withdrawn or cancelled, or some such verb. I thought that I had better try it again to make the verb clear. But this time an older female voice answered, and I don't know whether she was speaking French or English or some other language. Had I dialed the wrong number this time? Or the previous time? Unfortunately, I had already drawn a line of ink across the number, and could not be sure whether I was looking at a 5 or a 3.

I just said "Sorry, I think I have a wrong number."

"No problem," the voice said in a kind way, and in English.

Now what? I could either contact canada411.ca to get a clean printout of the numbers, or I could ask my wife to have a look at the number I had crossed out.

In any case, I decided to wait till tomorrow, so the woman, whether a Danton or not, would not be worried. Phew again.

But in the later afternoon—well, just a block away, on the corner of 10th Ave., there's a handy print shop, where I sometimes go to get silly little jobs done. So I took the obit, picture and words to the print shop to have it, what do you call it when you get a card or something encased in plastic? First I had trimmed it a bit more with my desk scissors. Took them about five minutes, and now I had a little black and white newspaper picture of Melody Danton to carry around with me. Even on the way home from the store I took it out of my shirt pocket just to check that they had got it right. I stopped walking for a good minute and a half and looked at that wonderful face. She didn't look any the less alive for being inside airtight plastic.

Then in the morning, or rather about noon, after all my delaying tactics—I read every section of the Thursday paper, read all my e-mail and answered

some of it, and then answered some older messages, threw some really old tax records into the yellow bag, ran the day's envelopes through the shredder—I took a breath and called the other Surrey number, also a cell phone.

“Hello,” said a pleasant old guy's voice, throat being cleared at the same time.

“I'm probably on a wild goose chase,” I said. “I'm looking for someone named Melody Danton.”

“You say Melody?” It was hard to tell whether it was going to be a yes or a no, probably a no. “No one named Melody in our family.”

“Ah, I figure I'm on a wild goose chase,” I said. This wasn't so bad once I'd got started. “She died about two years ago. I used to know her back in Montreal in the early seventies.”

“Nope. No Melody in our family. But you know, what was that, about 1970? That's about when our family came out from Montreal . . .”

“Yes, 1970, 1971.”

“So how old was she when she died?”

“Oh, well, late fifties, I guess.”

“Quite a few Dantons in Montreal, I guess,” the nice old guy said. He had a kind of friendly working class voice, the kind you find in smaller towns all over the country.

“Well, thanks,” I said. “I didn't think—but I figured I'd give it a try. Thanks.”

It wasn't all that much of a relief when we hung up. Not that I would ever be able to do a job in which you had to call people up on the telephone. As bad as the job I had for one day when I was a kid, going from door to door trying to sell tomatoes. I wound up giving them away for a dollar, and didn't have that job any more.

Laminated, that's it.

On Friday I didn't have to make one of the phone calls, because I got an e-mail requesting that I revise a little bit of prose I had written to accompany a poem that was going to be in an anthology of poems about other poets. It took me a while to do it, but only because I could not figure out how to work on the files they sent me, and had to start all over on the little bit of prose. But

I considered that to be writing work, a day properly lived, so I didn't have to make a phone call to a Danton and report it here.

On Saturday I fiddled and dawdled, and eventually put in a long-distance call to the Cariboo. I got a British woman's voice on the answering machine, and left a little message about phoning later to ask about Melody. That got me off free for another day. I thought about writing a fictional phone call, but rules are rules, even if you make them up yourself, especially if you make them up yourself, maybe.

In any case, I worked up the nerve to call again on Sunday, and after five or six rings, just when I was getting ready to hang up, the same woman, I think, answered. I introduced myself, and she handed me over to her husband. I introduced myself again, and when we began talking I knew that the northern Dantons had discussed the question of a Melody Danton. We had a pretty good breezy discussion, in which I learned that the British name Danton had once been French, having arrived in southeast England during and after the invasion of 1066. I told him about Quebec and the Dantons there, and we smilingly offered our apologies, mine for bothering him, his for not being able to help.

"She would have been your girlfriend, then?" he asked.

"In a manner of speaking," I said.

Next day another little writing job came in on the Internoise, and I was able to put phoning off for another day. But the day after that, after I had done all my tidying, all my easy e-mail, the thing I sometimes do with my especially bad toenail, I worked up the nerve to make another call. I had two numbers left, and one of them was out of commission. I decided to give it one more chance. There was no sweat on my eyelids, but my pulse rate and my blood pressure were both up, even though I was expecting an automatic announcement of failure. But somewhere a phone rang six times, and then a recorded voice told me about its owner's regret that she could not be there to talk with me. She then said some lovely things about my well-being, and performed an unlikely combination of wistfulness and perkiness in her goodbye.

When I pushed the red End button on my phone, I was short of breath. I vowed then to give this telephoning business more thought.

On the one hand, I had been reading *Pig Earth* by John Berger. In an introductory chapter he wrote, “. . . the writing becomes, as soon as I begin, a struggle to give meaning to experience.” That’s on page 6.

Well, I had to agree with him about struggle, and I was at least open to the idea, or maybe hope, of meaning—maybe not giving it, but possibly finding it. That’s not the main reason that people make telephone calls these days, but if you are nervous the way I am, you need some kind of push.

I do remember something that Chris Danton in the Cariboo had told me. He said that in recent times there are quite a few Dantons showing up in the Vancouver area. I hadn’t thought about it at the time, but now I came to wonder whether he’s talking about his kids migrating from the north down to the Coast.

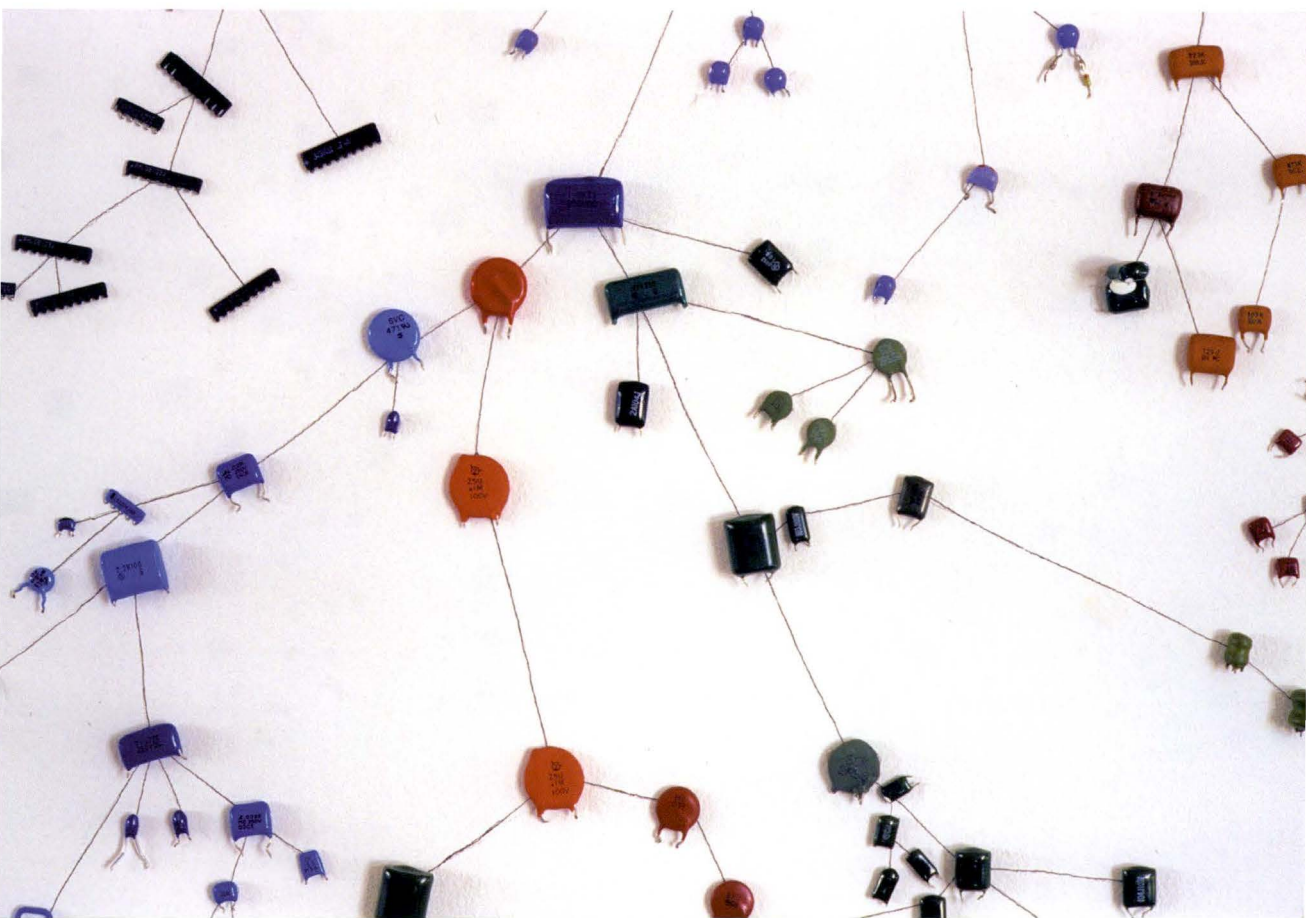
So you see where I am heading? If he doesn’t know anything about a Melody Danton, it’s a pretty sure bet that his kids won’t either.

That was just what I needed. I wouldn’t have to get up the moxie to make any more phone calls to people I don’t know. The anxiety was not worth it, and in fact I could feel it slipping sideways off my shoulders.

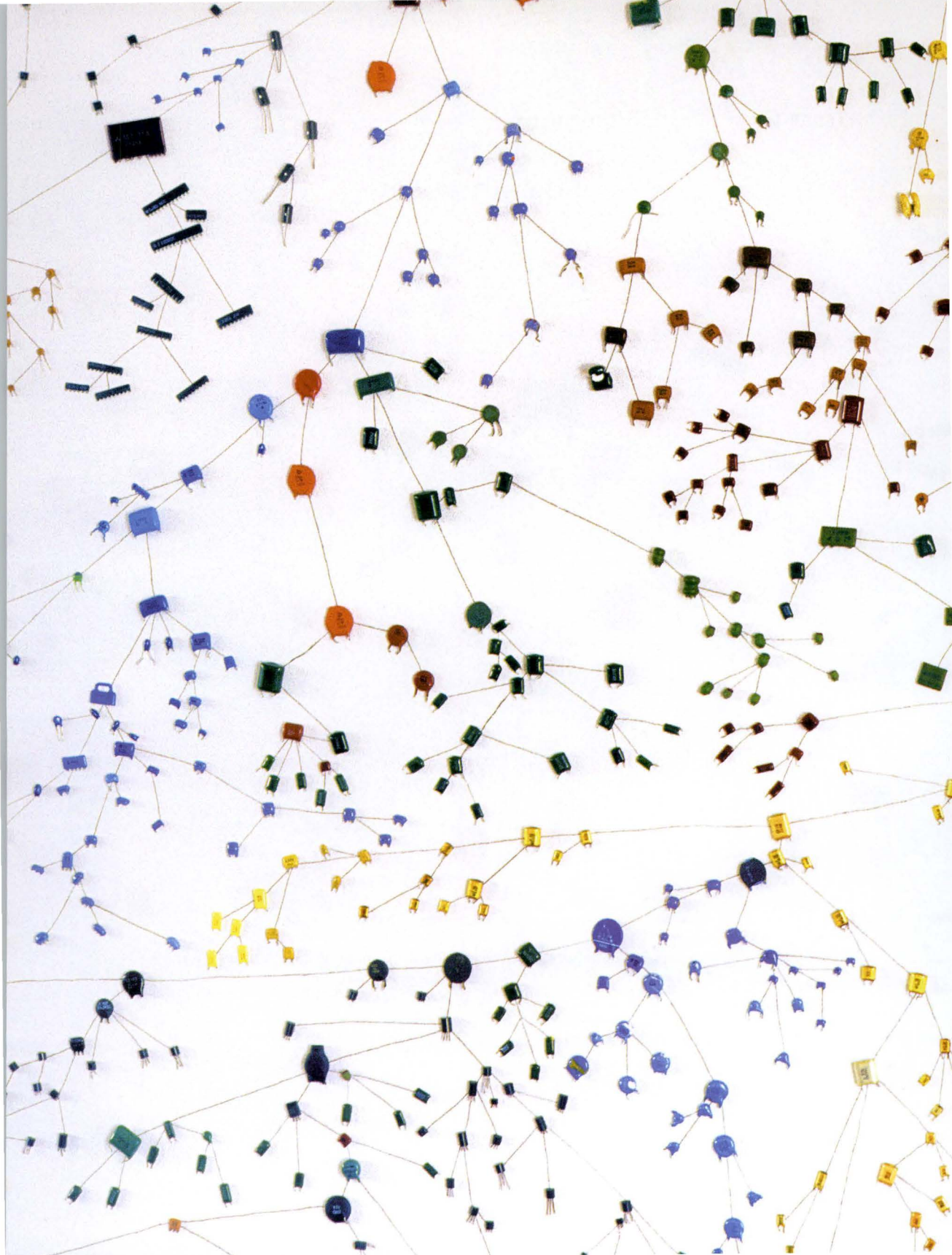
And really, what is so special about falling in love, if that’s what this was, with a woman you will never be able to meet? Haven’t you ever seen a woman sitting at another table or shouldering her snow-touched fur coat through a revolving door, and felt a sudden sense of loss because other people get to talk with her and share memories with her and you don’t, and you know that this could happen if you were in, I don’t know, Zagreb instead of here? I look at pictures of my wife when she was a college girl with a long single braid and a tanned face, and I yearn for her.

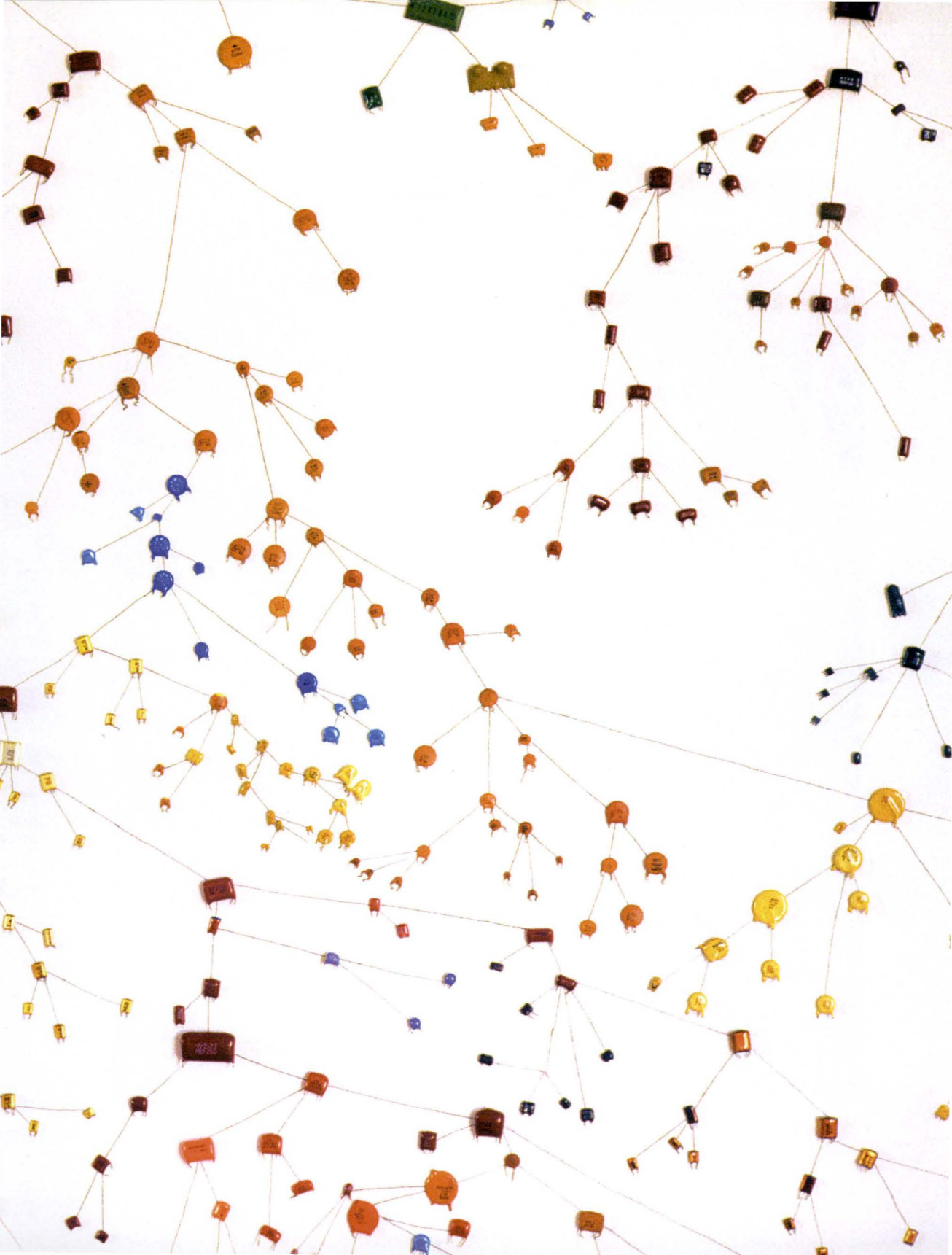
Still, I see all those photographs on the obituary pages, and yes, I do see so much life in the faces there, but then I can turn the page. I can’t do that with Melody Danton, not by a long shot. I know almost nothing about her. I will never find Roger Danton, not that I would ever want to. I don’t know the first thing about him and I am jealous of his many days. I have that little amateur picture encased in plastic, whatever you call it, and no, I am not in love with a dead woman, not in love. It’s just—that look on that sweet face. It’s awful to have, but you can’t just toss it away, can you?

JESSE GRAY / from **Supernova**

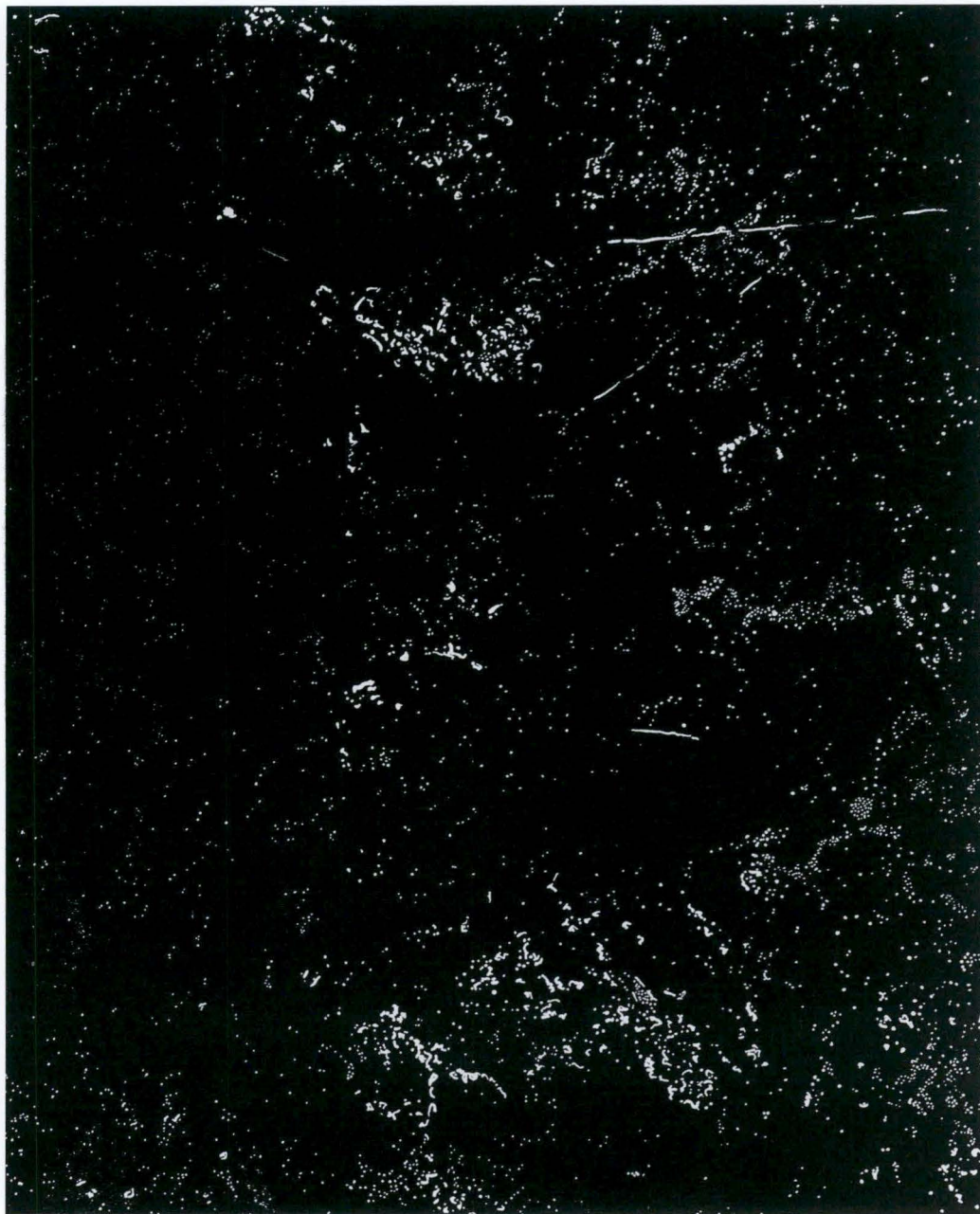


Jesse Gray, *Until the Sun Goes Supernova*, 2007, salvaged electronics components, ink, and hot glue on wall, approx. 244 cm × 305 cm.





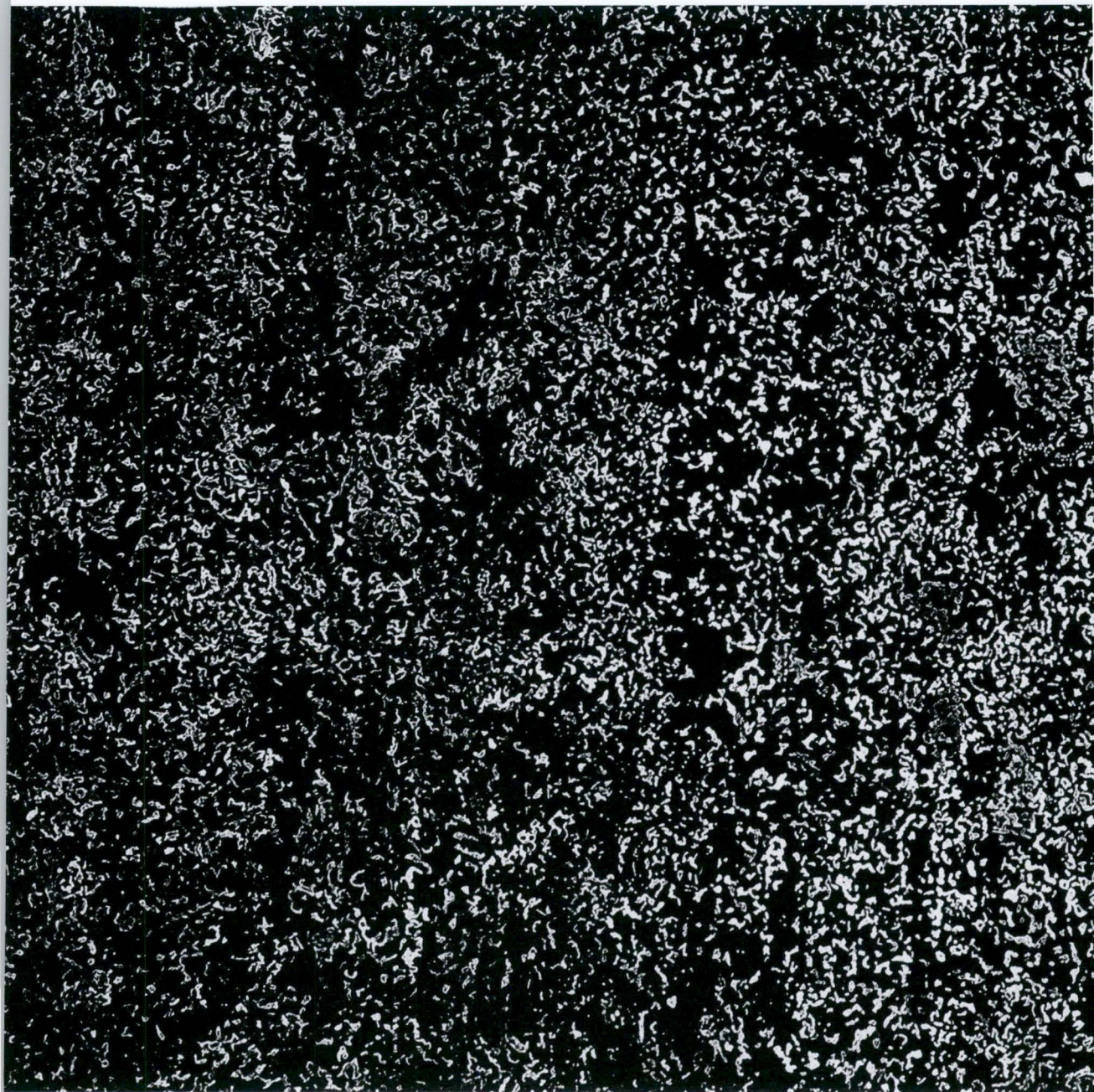
from **Stone Portraits**

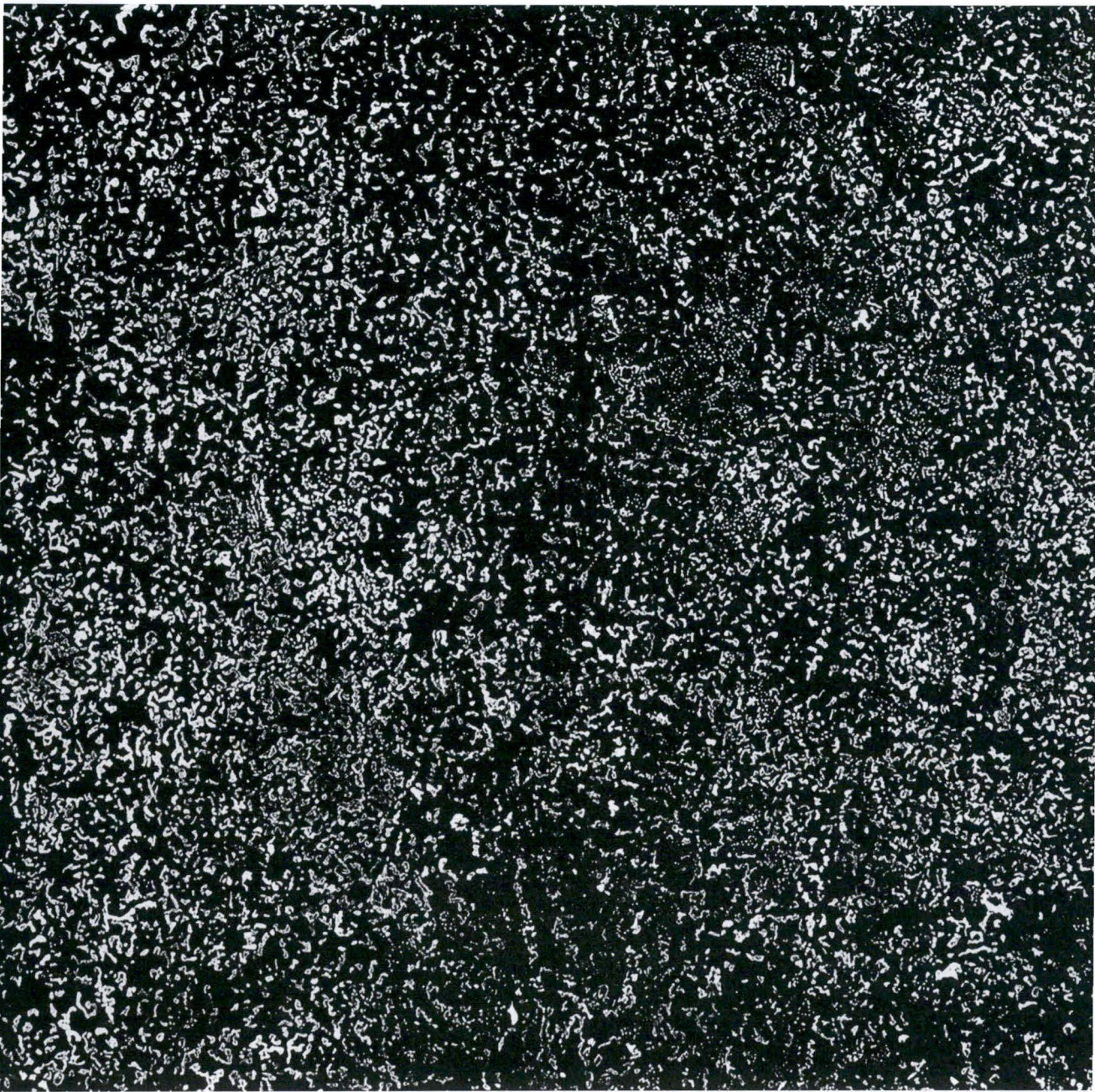


Jesse Gray, detail from *Stone Portraits #XI*, 2013, lithograph, 26 cm × 39 cm.

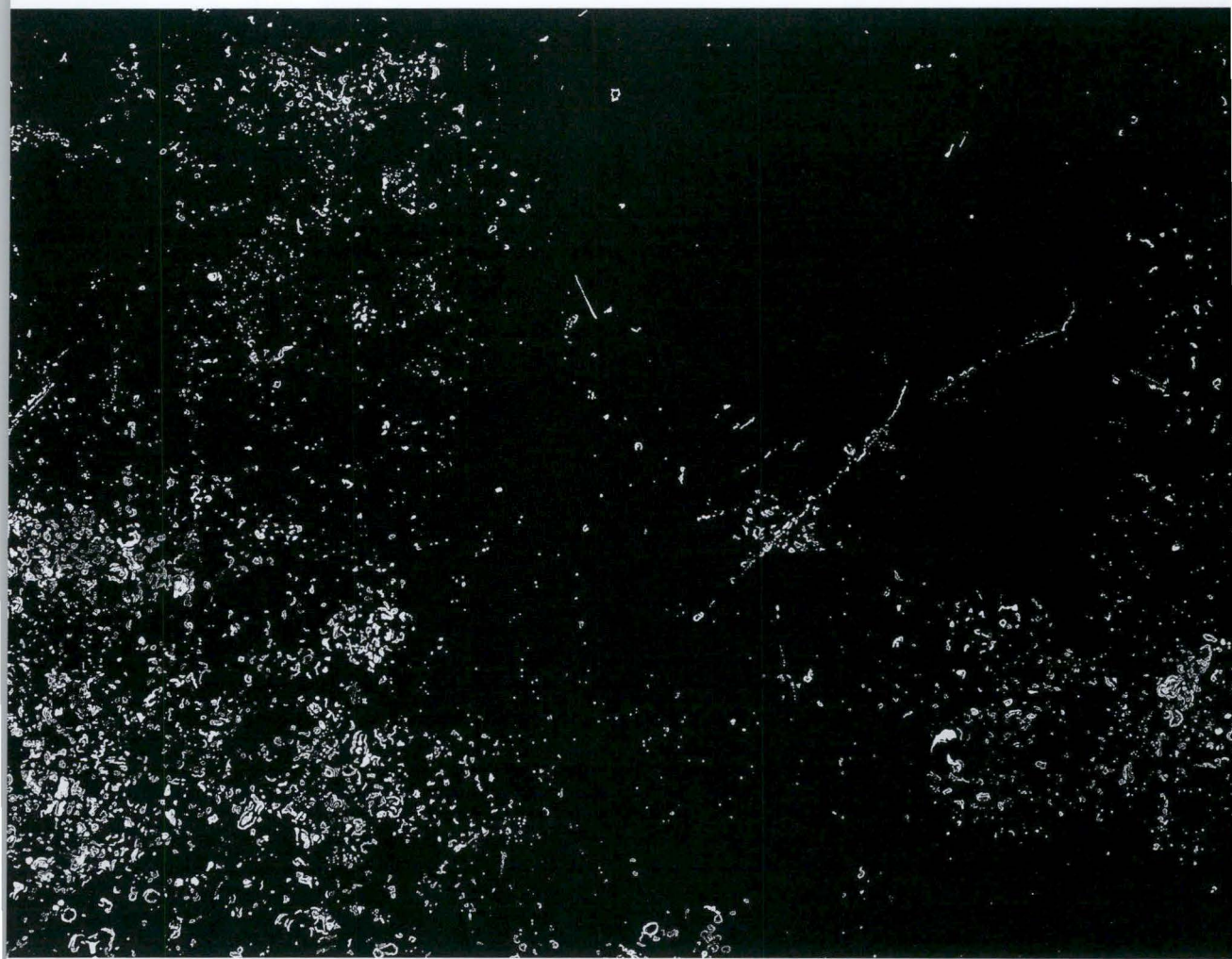


Jesse Gray, *Stone Portraits #12*, 2013, lithograph, 26 cm × 41 cm.





Jesse Gray, *Stone Portraits #33*, 2013, lithograph, 16 cm × 39 cm.



Jesse Gray, *Stone Portraits Portraits #35*, 2013, lithograph, 40 cm × 29 cm.

JESSE GRAY / Notes

On Until the Sun Goes Supernova:

Until the Sun Goes Supernova is a sculptural wall drawing based on a phylogenetic tree: a branching diagram used in the sciences for visualizing relationships between entities. In biology, it can represent these relationships on multiple levels—at the level of the kingdom, the species, or the gene—and can encompass varying lengths of biological time. This artwork mapped relationships between individual components pulled from old electronics. The components were primarily capacitors, but included LEDs and other miscellany found in obsolete technology. I spent six months gathering discarded VCRs, record players, computer towers, and other apparatuses, dragging them back to my studio, and snipping each individual component from its circuit board. I then sorted each piece by type (resistor, capacitor, LED, magnet, etc.) and subtype (shape/form, colour scheme, surface finish, possible degrees and kinds of damage, etc.).

Through the repetitive, monotonous labour of cutting leads free from their circuit boards, I became intimately acquainted with the aesthetic beauty of these tiny pieces of which I'd been entirely ignorant. The capacitors in particular had a kind of biological quality to them, with their terminals resembling "legs" and the many diverse colours and forms making up their "bodies." They reminded me of imaginary creatures, drawn characters, of microscopic images of eukaryotic organisms.

The tree came together as a diagram of the evolutionary relatedness between the capacitors. I made up genetic "rules," deciding which traits were dominant and which recessive (e.g. one shape or colour taking over from another), leaving room for mutation, sexual selection, and genetic drift. Some of the capacitors were missing "legs," or were conjoined, chipped, discoloured, or covered in glue. Often these were left at the end of a "branch," the last of their line, although sometimes they appeared at a node, or intersection, and went on to influence that lineage through to its end.

I'm interested in how our desire (and the desire foisted upon us by the forces of consumer capitalism, insofar as they can be separated) for smaller, more portable, wireless devices has merely displaced the bulky older technologies from our consciousness, while the physicality of these objects remains as solid as ever. The North American solution to the problem of e-waste is to ship it back to its country of "origin," typically China, where, to recover valuable metals, it is burned or pounded into toxic dust. *Until the Sun Goes Supernova* is a symbolic gesture towards interrupting this cycle of production, and, by representing electronic components using a rubric that indicates organic life, tries to complicate our relationship to the products of consumer culture.

On Stone Portraits:

Stone Portraits, a series of lithographic prints, grew out of a print-research residency at Malaspina Printmakers. Two types of stones are typically used for lithography: limestone and marble. I chose to work with limestone because of my interest in its sedimentary calcification process, which has both a biological and a geological component: the microcrystalline calcite (micrite) grains in the limestone *plattenkalk* are made up of skeletal fragments of marine organisms. A historical narrative of the fossilization processes is thus effectively written on to the stone pieces.

In the summer of 2012, I traveled to Germany to several notably fossil-rich areas including Solnhofen in Bavaria, where the process of lithography developed. Although the stores of perfect limestone slabs for lithographic use have mostly been exhausted, quarries still operate in the region, where the stone is used primarily for construction and as high-end domestic tile. I visited quarries that were open to the public, digging for fossils and researching the material properties of the stones.

Most lithographic limestone plates come from Solnhofen, and the stone in this region is ideal for lithography because of its finely grained, dense layers. These qualities also facilitate the fossilization of larger creatures; Solnhofen is home to some of the most complete and detailed Jurassic Period fossils in the world: soft-bodied creatures like cnidarians (jellyfish, sponges), smaller marine creatures like fish and ammonites, and spectacular, near-complete archaeopteryxes and pterosaurs.

Lithographic limestone often contains visible microfossils and mineral inclusions on the surface of the stone. These fragments are areas traditionally avoided by lithographers as they can flaw the drawn image. Working with several stones in Malaspina's collection, I highlighted these marks and voided the rest (the "desirable" drawing surface), attempting to create a kind of imprint, or portrait, of the material, physical history of the stones.

LAUREN KRESOWATY /*Excerpt from Organizing Tortoise Populations Through Subset Predation (Official Courseware)*

Each time you record tortoises into 1535, you create a single carapace, either intentionally or accidentally, that appears in both the Region List and the Archipelago Playlist. A *carapace* is an entire, unedited, continuous species recording. Tortoises—or *whole-ancestral subsets*, as they are known in history—are written and stored externally from the islands; the Spanish called them “gigabytes.” Organizing ancestral subsets involves maintaining destruction both within 1535 and within the external mammalian species introduced. *When you record tortoises into 1535, the carapaces are stored in your goat-ravaged island by default.* As you begin to edit, you also create smaller, more manageable pieces of threatening species (pigs, rats, dogs, cats, fire ants)—major advances in *subset predation*. Subset predation is an electronic extinction, normally stored in the Galápagos, which wreaks havoc on some portion of the tortoise population. Success can range from 14 individuals to hundreds of thousands of years of habitat destruction. Success does not wreak havoc on tortoises directly, but instead stores information used to render the tortoises for their oil. Organizing subset predation is generally internal to history only.

FRANCINE LINGAD / A memory, yes, but whose?

Once, on a hot afternoon in July, we went on a hike. It was dusty and dry and too hot for thick socks and hiking boots. I was thirsty. I had just come back from New York City, Manhattan, the Midtown East, where the air was humid, human contact constant, hues varied and busy but moderate that year, against all the gray concrete. Everywhere design, everything deliberate, even the greasy pigeons seem to say *hey, I'm walkin' hyeah*. The sight of a blue-brown bird brought me back to the hill, the hiking. It had been flying close by for awhile; its home must be near. I was looking for signs of a nest, trying to be careful, when I heard a crunch under my thick boot. My clumsy heart stopped a second, resumed loud and unforgiving. On the ground, an egg had broken, a wet red still life. The bird landed, flapping its wings, short trills hurried, urgent. I could not speak. We started back downhill without a word, my companion walking some distance ahead while I looked down at where my feet hit the ground.

RAY HSU & MICHAEL PARK / Art Song Lab

Art Song Lab (Program Directors: Alison d'Amato, Ray Hsu, Michael Park) is part of the Vancouver International Song Institute (Artistic Director: Rena Sharon) in collaboration with the Canadian Music Centre (Regional Director: Bob Baker). More information about Art Song Lab as well as free streaming audio for all songs and podcasts mentioned below are available at: www.artsonglab.com

When we met, each of us just wanted to collaborate with someone living. Neither of us realized how rare it was until we started doing it. Melding poetry and music seems a perfect fit for collaboration. But collaboration is difficult to reward in many pockets of the university. If you work in a laboratory, you can't expect to publish an article without a list of names that helped you reach those results. If you work in the arts and humanities, people tend to be less confused if you are the sole creator of a work.

In the world of art song, most people are uninterested in seeing new texts. Most only want the interpretation of classic works. Under this system, Ray Hsu was brought into the art song world just to check English translations of old art songs in French, German, and Italian. Singers do need to know that the translations that they labour over are accurate and alive.

In 2010, we were happy with an afternoon workshop showcasing new compositions. We could not help but notice that almost every composer worked with the texts of a dead poet, and wondered why. Pianist Alison d'Amato, who played during this first workshop, wondered the same thing. Together we started Art Song Lab on the premise that it was nice to collaborate with the living.

What makes a good poem for art song? we asked those around us. We recorded their answers and put them online as podcasts. In one of his last interviews, Tom Cone put it this way to us: *I want to hear the music between the period and the capital letter of the next line.*

How do we connect participating poets and composers? Most recently, we have asked two composers to set each poet's work. We begin with video chat meetings among all the collaborators. There is much variation between

group dynamics: some poets write different works for each composer, some composers pick different sections of the same poem.

We try our best to create a culture of collaboration. It is hard to find poets interested in working with composers. Most poets have never even heard of this genre. Many poets think of their work as destined for publication. Art song is a genre that is part of classical musical training, so you can expect a composer to have experience setting poetry to music. Yet when it comes to art song and “new music”—the creation of contemporary classical music—there are far too many composers setting the work of long-dead poets. While the public domain is fine, we love the living. Nothing against necrophilia. That’s okay too.

In the past three years of Art Song Lab, thirty-one poets and thirty-six composers have collaborated on thirty-seven art songs. The following poems and excerpts of scores represent selections from the last two years: Emily Kendel Frey and Aristea Mellos’s “Athena” and Frey and Mathew Tozer’s “Athena and Zeus” from 2013; and Ray Hsu and Michael Park’s “Art Song Lib” from 2012.

VANCOUVER, 2013

EMILY KENDAL FREY / Athena and Zeus

Athena

I had not known it, but I lived
inside my mother's head—her face God-like,
white, a cast. Neck coiled in a snake,

ready to strike. My own eyes
slits beneath the heavy chalked lids.

How did I come then,
to haul myself up the scaffolding she'd left,
fist after fist, to crawl and stretch—
the glowing oval of her mind
hanging like a moon above me.

I cracked the crown—
pressed out and through, black bird
singing in my chest,

no light, no breath, my voice
still clinging to her lips

Zeus

My father swallowed
me—a swaddled rock,
he ate me in clothes, in cloth.

I hid in a cave, in a mountain,
was given the stars, heaven

as compensation.

Eternally, I failed at being
his son. I could not make myself

a man. Brain a perfect
pink fish. I kept my body

fresh. Had thunder
in my hands. A heart of crushing
granite. I fought

my sisters off,
a wound, a warden, alone, home.

ARISTEA MELLOS / from Athena

Mournful

12 $\text{♩} = 72$

T. Solo p mp

I had not known it, but I lived in-side my

Vc. ppp p *Sul A seagull effect* *gliss.* *gliss.*

$\text{♩} = 72$
Funerary & espressivo

Pno. p mp pp mp pp p pp

Red etc..

19

T. Solo p mf p pp

mo-ther's head her face God-like, white, a cast

Vc. *gliss.* *gliss.* pp p mf *pizz.*

Pno. 3 mf p pp mp pp

Red *Red*

25

T. Solo *Violently* mp

Neck coiled in a

Vc. f mf mp 3

tap side of cello

Pno. 7 sfz mp p f pp

Red

*N.B. tremolos in the piano should evoke the sound of a mandolin

29 *f* *ff* *mp* 3

T. Solo snake, re-ady to strike, My own eyes slits be-neath the

Vc. *f* *mf* *mp* (pizz.)

Pno. *mp* *mf* *sfz* *mf* *p*

mp

ped

//

32 *p* *pp* *poco rall.*

T. Solo Quasi Sprechstimme hea - vy chalked lids.

Vc. *p* *pp* *mp* *pp* arco

Pno. *p* *pp* *p* *pp* *poco rall.*

pp *ped*

Composer's Note:

"Athena," an art song for tenor, violoncello, and piano, was composed in April 2013 as part of the Art Song Lab project in Vancouver. Upon first reading the poem, I was immediately struck by the musical qualities of the text: its evocative imagery and rhythmic flow. As a composer, I was influenced by the gruesome nature of the poem's narrative, namely, the violent birth of the goddess Athena. In my setting, I tried to capture the dualities apparent in the text—life and death, youth and decay, mourning and celebration—by having two distinct musical sections in the song.

The work opens with a reflective cello solo that hints at the dark nature of the text to come. This first section is dominated by a funerary dance in the piano and a low and mysterious tenor line. As the sense of mystery gives way to pulsing figures and percussive cello techniques, the tenor rises in pitch and volume, reaching a peak at the half-sung, half-shouted line: "fist after fist, to crawl and stretch." With the violent act of Athena's birth complete, the remainder of the song shifts into a gentle, more Romantic focus. A lilting piano figure establishes an ethereal quality, and the music becomes sweeping and almost grand in gesture. As the piano and cello weave contrapuntally around each other, the funerary music from the opening is re-introduced, but shifts in harmony render the material transfigured, so that listeners are left with a strange feeling of familiarity and expectation.

"Athena" was first performed on June 7, 2013 at the Orpheum Annex in Vancouver, B.C., by Will George (tenor), Elinor Frey (violoncello), and Corey Hamm (piano).

MATTHEW TOZER / from *Athena and Zeus*

98 *p*

Btn I hid in a cave, in a moun-tain,

98 *pp mp pp*

Vlc.

98

Pno.

102 *mp*

Btn gi-ven the stars, hea-ven as com-

102 *pp mp pp*

Vlc.

102

Pno.

This musical score is for a piece by Matthew Tozer from his work 'Athena and Zeus'. It features three staves: Bassoon (Btn), Violin (Vlc.), and Piano (Pno.). The score is divided into two systems. The first system starts at measure 98. The Bassoon part begins with a rest, followed by a melodic line starting on G4, moving to A4, B4, and C5, with a dynamic marking of *p*. The Violin part has a melodic line starting on G4, moving to A4, B4, and C5, with dynamic markings of *pp*, *mp*, and *pp*. The Piano part consists of a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand and a similar pattern in the left hand. The second system starts at measure 102. The Bassoon part continues with a melodic line starting on G4, moving to A4, B4, and C5, with a dynamic marking of *mp*. The Violin part has a melodic line starting on G4, moving to A4, B4, and C5, with dynamic markings of *pp*, *mp*, and *pp*. The Piano part continues with the same accompaniment pattern.

106

Btn

pen - sat - ion. e - tern - al - ly,

Vlc.

f

Pno.

f

Red. *

110

Btn

mp

I failed at be - ing his son, failed ___ at be - ing his son,

Vlc.

f

Pno.

f

Composer's Note:

Two things struck me in my first reading of “Athena” and “Zeus”: the gender dichotomy the two poems create when presented side by side, and the emotional intensity inherent in the texts. With regards to gender, I felt that the two poems represented two sides of the same coin and tried to capture that in the music by creating two pieces, similar in theme, but with startlingly different characters. The setting of the “Athena” poem, somewhat contemplative in nature, is more organically constructed; each part grows from what came before. The poem creates a sense of a struggle to be free from something, but the final line suggests a lack of escape. Rather than contemplative, I found “Zeus” to be more filled with rage. The character presented seemed to be impotent in some way: rattling the bars of the cage but never truly being able to escape. Therefore, I tried to compose a piece that was angular in nature and changed quickly from one idea to the next to capture the confusion and rage present in the second poem.

“Athena and Zeus”—a piece that includes both poems—was first performed on June 7, 2013 at the Orpheum Annex in Vancouver, B.C., by Aaron Engebret (baritone), Elinor Frey (cello), and Alison d’Amato (piano).

RAY HSU and MICHAEL PARK / Art Song Lib

for singer, pianist, and scribe

Tempo: ♩=120

Soprano: As a child, I

Audience:

Piano: *f* *mf*

Sop.: loved _____ games. I loved _____

Pno.:

Sop.: games. loved _____ loved _____

Pno.:

with increasing enthusiasm *f*

14 *mf* *insistent, affected*

Sop. games. I loved, loved, loved, loved games! I loved games! So let's play one.

Pno. *mp*

19 *Quasi Recit.* *f*

Sop. First, I need a vol-un - teer who is mu-si-c'lly lit-er-ate, and has leg i-ble print-ing:

Pno.

20 [runs over to, speaking directly to planted volunteer] [spoken to audience]

Sop. you'll be writ-ing out our mad lib and the rest of you: you'll be fil-ling in the blanks!

23 *mf*

Sop. Num-ber one: If you'll be so kind, please give me a two syl-la-ble

Pno. *f* *p*

27

Sop. *noun.* An-y noun. No need to be fan-cy. *Contour* 3 Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! Hi-lar i ous.

Aud. ① (noun)

Pno. *poco accel.*

28

Sop. ① I once had a cat named ——. Num-ber two: a

Pno. *laid back* *mp* *sf*

32

Sop. 3 one syl-la-ble verb, please. ② (verb) —, per-fect! Num-ber three: a noun-*nnn*

Aud. ② (verb)

Pno. *f*

4 Sop. 37

one syl-la-ble. One that rhymes with the word "art".

Aud. ③ (noun) —?

Pno. *mf* *p*

41 Sop. 3

I don't know if I've ev-er heard that word sung on stage be-fore...

Meno mosso

Pno. *mp* *pp* *Red.*

45 Sop. 3

There, now I have! Num-ber four:

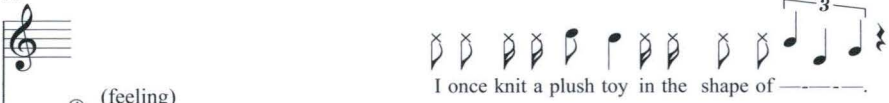
Pno. *p*


49 Sop. 3

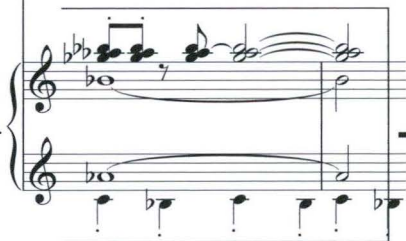
How's a-bout some-thing fan-cy? An ab-stract feel-ing. Three syl-la-bles.


Pno. *p*

52

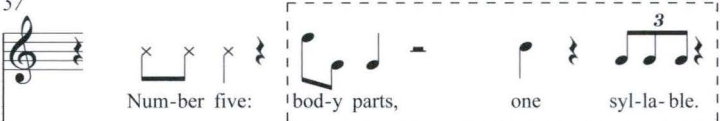
Sop. 


Aud. 


Pno. 



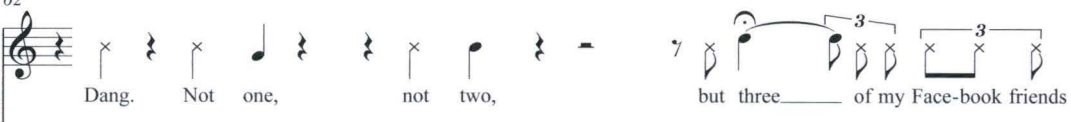
57


Sop. 

Aud. 

Pno. 

62

Sop. 

Pno. 

66

Sop. were post-ing sta-tus up-dates a-bout —. Num-ber six: One more two syl-la-ble

Pno.

70

Sop. word. An oc-cu-pa-tion. Thank you.

Aud.

Pno.

75

Sop. (to scribe) Thank you. (to pianist) Thank you.

Pno.

79 **Tempo primo**

Sop. [Make clear to audience that you are reading this for the first time]

We've on-ly got a few mi-nutes

Tempo primo

Pno. *pp*

83

Sop. left, so let me tell you the sto-ry of my life: the sto - ry of my

Pno. *mp* *f*

87 *f* [Ensure all blanks are filled in, continue discovering your life story] **poco rit.**

Sop. life

Pno. *mf* *con Ped.*

92 $\text{♩} = 100$

Sop.

Pno. *mp* *p* optional vamp, if needed

97 *mp* **①**

Sop. As a stu dent, folks would call me _____

Pno. *mp*

101 *mf*

Sop. I'm not _____ sure why.

Pno.

106 *mp* **②** rit.

Sop. May - be be - cause I _____ would _____ The name stuck.

Pno. *p* rit.

110 - - - - - Nostalgic *mp* poco accel. .

Sop. In re - hears - als, oth - er

Pno. *p* Nostalgic *mp* poco accel. .

114 $\text{♩} = 100$ **1**
 Sop. *mp* *accel.*
 chor-is - ters — would say, "Hey, ————
 Pno. $\text{♩} = 100$ *accel.*

118 *mf* *f* **2** **3**
 Sop. Let's see you ———— This is why I start-ed sing-ing — Song.
 Pno. *f* *f*

123 *p* **4**
 Sop. One day, I was struck by a feel-ing of ————
 Pno. *f* *mechanical* *p*
 Ped. (half)

126 *mp* *sfz* *mp*
 Sop. I don't know what came o ver me. My
 Pno. (full)

129

Sop. **5** *f* heart was beat-ing fast, my _____ were go-ing a mile a mi-nute.

Pno. *sfz* *mf*

132 *mp* (like telling a ghost story) **6** Stand-ing by the old _____ at the bus stop, I must have said what I was think-ing a-loud,

Pno. *mp*

136 *mp* be-cause she turned to me *f* and said, *mp* _____ ,

Pno. *sfz* *f* *mp*

**insert singer's own name, adjust rhythm to fit 2-note motive*

Ped. *8^{va}*

144 *mf* _____ , *p* when at last you

Pno. *sfz* *p* *sotto voce* *pp*

♩=80

8^{va}

151

Sop. find your **1** you may be

rit.

Pno.

colla voce

155 - **A tempo**

Sop. tempt - ed. tempt - ed to turn to **4**

A tempo

Pno. *p* *sfz* *sf*

160

Sop. Oh, **4** Know then that

f *mp* *mp*

Pno. *mp* *sfz*

164 *poco accel.* **2** **3** **A tempo**
(a dramatic revelation)

Sop. you must the In your dark-est hour, oh—

poco rit. **A tempo**

Pno.

169

Sop. use the _____, use the _____

Pno. *ff* *Red. sempre al fin.*

5 **5**

****LAUGHTER**

Hesitant $\text{♩} = 80$

175

Pno. *rfz* *mf* *mp* *p sempre*

180

Sop. That's when I knew what I had to do. *rit.*

Pno. (8) *rit.*

184 ****CRICKETS** Hesitant

Sop. That's when I knew what I had to do.

Pno. *rfz* *mf* *mp* Hesitant

**** Choice of ending is to be based on audience reaction: if they laugh, take the shorter first ending to wrap the piece up quickly; if they seem not to react, the second ending draws out the ending to include direct audience reference.**

Composer's Note:

"Art Song Lib" is a musicalised Madlib: in the first half the singer incites the audience to help fill in the blanks, after which the completed Madlib is performed.

In communicating directly with the audience, a certain degree of ad lib performance is expected of the singer. Dotted boxes in the score indicate suggested portions to be repeated as necessary, but the singer is encouraged to repeat more or less as the situation requires.

For the pianist, ad lib playing applies to repetitions and vertical alignment. Boxes contain material to be repeated ad lib while the audience responds to each question. The scribe plays an important non-staged role: actively listening while filling in the blanks on a separate copy of the Madlib score. Responding to audience suggestions, the singer will sing back the selected word, confirming what is to be written in the blanks.

"Art Song Lib" explores three vocal techniques: speaking, singing, and speech-song (the combination of the two). Traditional singing is notated as normal note-heads on a five-line staff, whereas speech is notated as X-note-heads without staff lines. Though speech is notated without contour, this does not indicate monotone speaking, but rather that the singer's natural speech inflection should be used.

Of course, the interest lies in the combination of the speech-song approach with both spoken and sung sections. The intent, however, is not to create noticeable distinctions between these styles, but rather the opposite: to enhance speech with the expressive power of singing, while reinforcing the communicative power of language in sung text.

"Art Song Lib" was first performed on June 9, 2012 at the Orpheum Annex in Vancouver, B.C., by Phoebe MacRae (soprano) and Rachel Iwaasa (piano).

Contributors

CHARLES BERNSTEIN is author of *Recalculating* (U of Chicago P 2013), *Attack of the Difficult Poems: Essays and Inventions* (Chicago 2011), *All the Whiskey in Heaven: Selected Poems* (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux 2010), and *Blind Witness: Three American Operas* (Factory School 2008). He is Donald T. Regan Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of Pennsylvania. More info at epc.buffalo.edu.

RAYMOND BOISJOLY is an artist of Haida and Québécois descent from Chilliwack, BC, currently based in Vancouver. Recent exhibitions include *(And) Other Echoes*, SFU Gallery (Burnaby 2013); *Raymond Boisjoly*, Catriona Jeffries Gallery (Vancouver 2013); and *As It Comes*, Contemporary Art Gallery (Vancouver 2013). Boisjoly has participated in numerous group exhibitions and projects including *Pleinairism*, Walter Phillips Gallery (Banff 2013); *Tools for Conviviality*, The Power Plant (Toronto 2012); and *Phantasmagoria*, Presentation House Gallery (North Vancouver 2012). Boisjoly was awarded a Fleck Fellowship from the Banff Centre in 2010.

GEORGE BOWERING is a senior Canadian writer who lives in West Point Grey, where he resided in basements during his university student years. He has won the requisite number of awards in poetry and fiction and non-fiction. He has published seven volumes of short fiction, the most recent being *The Box*, from New Star Books in 2009. He is currently working on a book of short stories, having received a British Columbia Arts Council grant to do so.

GEOFFREY FARMER lives and works in Vancouver. He has a forthcoming retrospective at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 2015. His major work, *Let's Make the Water Turn Black*, opened at the Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zurich in June 2013 and will travel to Nottingham Contemporary, Kunstverein Hamburg, and the Miami Art Museum. In 2013, he was awarded the Gershon Iskowitz Award by the Art Gallery of Ontario, which will mount a solo exhibition of his work in 2014.

JULIA FEYRER is a filmmaker and artist who lives and works in Vancouver. She graduated in 2010 with a Meisterschülerin from the Städelschule in Frankfurt, Germany, following her BFA from the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design. She has recently exhibited, in collaboration with Tamara Henderson, *Bottles Under the Influence*, at Walter Phillips Gallery, Banff. Recent solo exhibitions include *Alternatives and Opportunities*, Catriona Jeffries (Vancouver 2012), *Irregular Time Signatures*, Johan Berggren Gallery (Malmö 2011), and *The Poodle Dog Ornamental Bar*, Art-speak (Vancouver 2010). Julia is co-editor of the audiozine *Spoox* (www.spooxaudiozine.org).

EMILY KENDAL FREY is the author of *The Grief Performance* (Cleveland State U Poetry Center 2011) as well as the chapbook collections *Airport* (Blue Hour 2009), *Frances* (Poor Claudia 2010), *The New Planet* (Mindmade Books 2010), and *Baguette* (Cash Machine 2013). She lives in Portland, Oregon.

JESSE GRAY is a Vancouver-based multidisciplinary artist. Her work deals with labour, handcraft, and obsolescence, as well as the material history of objects, natural systems, and cultural-scientific frameworks. Jesse holds an MFA in Studio Art from UBC (2008) and is a jewellery designer under the name Gray Metal.

RAY HSU has been called “highfalutin” (*Books in Canada*); his first book was described as “hard” and his second “death by PhD” (*Canadian Literature*).

Originally from rural Saskatchewan, LAUREN KRESOWATY is a Vancouver-based writer and theatre artist. Her work appears in the sound poetry issue of *Poetry is Dead* (Fall 2013) and has been performed onstage by emerging companies in Vancouver and as part of the 2009 Walking Fish Festival. The present piece merges language from two primary source texts: *Pro Tools 101 Version 7.4* and *Galá*.

SYLVIA LEGRIS’ latest publication is *Pneumatic Antiphonal* (New Directions 2013). Her work has appeared recently in *New American Writing* (Summer 2013) and in the anthologies *The Arcadia Project: North American Postmodern Pastoral* (Ahsahta Press 2012) and *Best Canadian Poetry 2013* (Tightrope Books). In 2012, she received the Victor Martyn Lynch-Staunton Award for outstanding achievement by a mid-career artist in writing and publishing.

FRANCINE LINGAD was born in Manila, Philippines in 1985. She moved to Vancouver in 2009. Presently, Francine lives and works in the Okanagan, where she is finishing her second degree.

ROB MCLENNAN currently lives in Ottawa. The author of more than twenty trade books of poetry, fiction, and non-fiction, his most recent titles are the poetry collections *Songs for little sleep*, (Obvious Epiphanies 2012), *grief notes*: (BlazeVOX [books] 2012), *A (short) history of I*. (BuschekBooks 2011), *Glengarry* (Talonbooks 2011), and *kate street* (Moir 2011), and a second novel, *missing persons* (2009). An editor and publisher, he runs above/ground press, Chaudiere Books (with Jennifer Mulligan), *The Garneau Review* (ottawater.com/garneareview), *seventeen seconds: a journal of poetry and poetics* (ottawater.com/seventeenseconds) and the Ottawa poetry pdf annual *ottawater* (ottawater.com). He regularly posts reviews, essays, interviews, and other notices at: robmcleNNan.blogspot.com

ROBERT MCTAVISH is a documentary filmmaker whose films include *What To Make of It All?: The Life and Poetry of John Newlove* and *The Line has Shattered: Vancouver's Landmark 1963 Poetry Conference*. He is also the editor of *A Long Continual Argument: The Selected Poems of John Newlove* (Chaudiere Books 2007).

ARISTEA MELLOS is an Australian composer who currently lives and works in New York City. Her compositions are regularly performed throughout Australia and the United States in venues such as Spectrum New Music (Manhattan), The Independent Theater (Sydney), and Kilbourn Hall (Rochester, NY). She is a PhD candidate in Performing Arts at The Eastman School of Music.

MICHAEL PARK is a composer and pianist with a keen interest in speech, humour, and collaboration. With Ray Hsu, he co-founded Art Song Lab as a platform for music, performance, and poetry collaboration, and they co-direct it with pianist Alison d'Amato.

SINA QUEYRAS is variously known as "citric bitch" and "lemon hound." She wrote the present poems on her iPhone on a very cold winter day in the winter of 2013 while walking from Parc la Fontaine to McGill.

MATTHEW TOZER currently resides in London, Ontario where he works as a freelance composer, sessional instructor, and private teacher. Currently a PhD Candidate in Music Composition, Matthew is actively involved with the creation of new work through the collaborative process. His compositions have been workshopped and/or performed across Canada.

MICHAEL TURNER is a Vancouver-based writer of fiction, criticism, and song. Recent curatorial projects include *"to show, to give, to make it be there": Expanded Literary Practices in Vancouver: 1954–1969* (SFU Gallery, Burnaby 2010) and *Letters: Michael Morris and Concrete Poetry* (Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, UBC 2012). He blogs at: mtwebsit.blogspot.com



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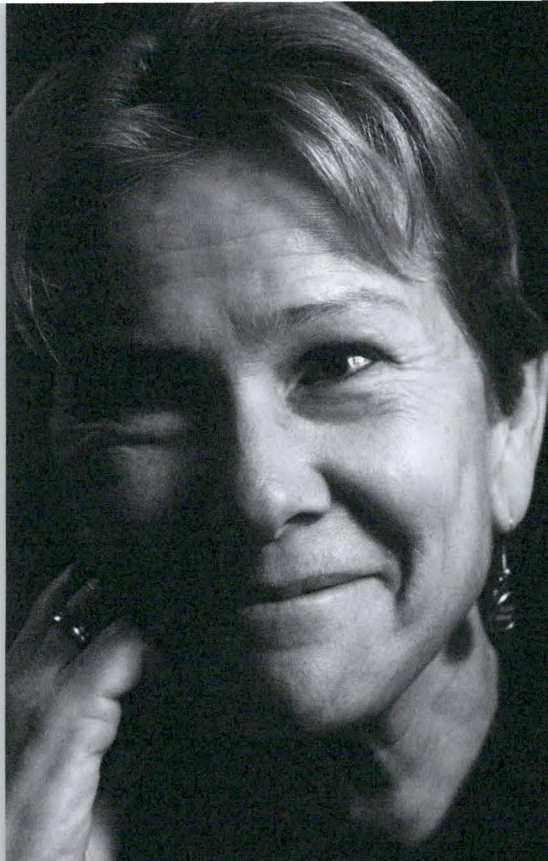
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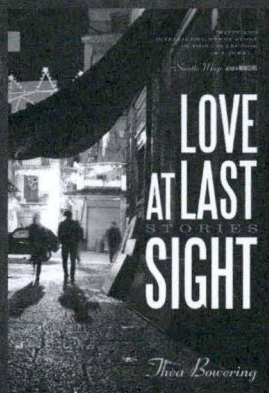
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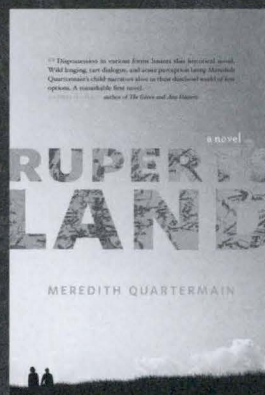
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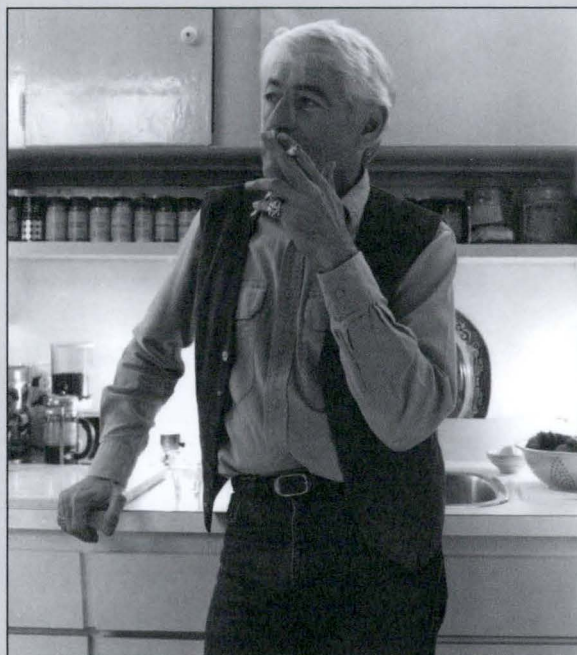
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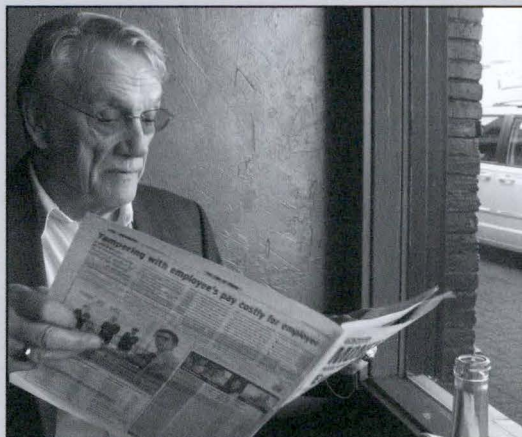
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Robert McTavish
Aristea Mellos
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