

# THE CAPILANO REVIEW







## NOTICE

*It is often unmistakable that the song of animals is sufficient unto itself, that it is not intended to serve any purpose or produce any sort of effect. Such songs have aptly been characterized as self-expressions.*

*They arise from an intrinsic need of the creature to give expression to its being. But self-expression demands a presence, for which it occurs. This presence is the environing world. No creature exists for itself alone; all are in the world, and this means: each one in its own world. Thus the singing creature expresses itself in and for its world.*

*In expressing itself it becomes happily aware of the world, it cries out and joyfully lays claim to the world. The lark rises to dizzy heights in the column of air that is its world; without other purpose, it sings the song of itself and its world. The language of its own being is at the same time the language of the world's reality. A living knowledge rings in the song.*

— 'EASTERN CROW'

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# THE CAPILANO REVIEW

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## CONTENTS

	5	Preface
<i>Out to Metric</i>	6	Gary Lee-Nova/Alan Miller
<i>Ada's Desire</i>	13	A. S. A. Harrison
<i>The Outing</i>	22	Carole Itter
<i>Schadenfroh</i>	26	Robert G. Sherrin
<i>The More Little Mummy in the World</i>	36	Audrey Thomas
<i>The Sewn Picture</i>	49	John Bentley Mays
<i>Four Photographs</i>	69	Michael Agrios
<i>A Film Script, with Journal Entries &amp; a Note</i>	74	Beverley Simons
<i>Portrait of an Artist as a Dinner Table</i>	129	Vickie Walker
	135	<i>N. E. Thing Company Section</i>
	136	An Illustrated Introduction
	144	A Selection Of N. E. Thing Co. Acts
	155	N. E. Thing is Art & Other Definitions
	159	Images
	167	Interview
<i>Mr. Peanut for Mayor</i>	182	Western Front
<i>Playing the Stars</i>	188	Toby MacLennan
<i>Painting the Lion from a Claw</i>	195	Duncan McNaughton
<i>Easter Sunday</i>	197	Sharon Fawcett
<i>Allophanes</i>	198	George Bowering
<i>Three Poems</i>	202	Penny Chalmers
<i>Three Poems</i>	205	Chris Dewdney

<i>Two Poems</i>	210	Fred Wah
<i>Two Poems</i>	212	Paul Kahn
<i>Four Poems</i>	214	Hope Anderson
<i>Flemish Proverbs:</i>	218	Jonis Agee
<i>Water-Colours</i>	220	John Pass
<i>First Snow Storm: Han-Shan</i>	221	Stephen Morissey
<i>Two Poems</i>	222	Gilberto Meza
<i>Requerimiento</i>	226	Carlos Próspero
<i>Six Poems</i>	228	Larry Eigner
<i>Symphony # 5 in C# Minor,</i>		
<i>Adagio</i>	233	Leslie Keyworth
<i>Three Poems</i>	236	Barry McKinnon
<i>Writings</i>	241	Elizabeth Hay
<i>Two Poems</i>	246	D. J.
<i>Three Poems</i>	251	Maxine Gadd
<i>Sing</i>	256	Peter Huse
<i>Garbage Nite:</i>		
<i>Seven Less Poems</i>	266	Gerry Gilbert
<i>Writings</i>	273	Bob Rose
<i>Writings</i>	277	Stephanie Judy
<i>from The Wounded Laurel</i>	287	Lewis Ellingham
<i>Three Poems</i>	291	Jack Spicer
<i>Three Poems</i>	295	Robin Blaser
<i>(Passages) Empedoklean</i>		
<i>Reveries</i>	300	Robert Duncan
<i>from The Martyrology</i>	305	bp Nichol
<i>Boot-Case Drawings</i>	309	Gathie Falk
<i>An interview with bp Nichol</i>	313	
<i>Foothills Journal</i>	347	Claude Breeze
<i>An interview with</i>		
<i>Sheila Watson</i>	351	
<i>The Search for the</i>		
<i>True Cedar</i>	361	Judy Williams
<i>Keeping the Green</i>	368	Dennis Cooley
<i>Three Sculptures</i>	387	Roland Brener
	393	Contributors
		COVER
<i>Mother &amp; Children,</i>		
<i>Sardis, B.C.</i>		Robert Minden

## PREFACE

*Birth is not a beginning; death is not an end.* — CHUANG-TZU

This double issue is dedicated to Bob Johnson, the man responsible for the original graphic design of *The Capilano Review*. Bob died this Spring.

When we first proposed a magazine at Capilano, I wanted one that would not only print good work, but also one whose design would treat that work with respect. Bob Johnson, a successful commercial artist then teaching part-time at Capilano as an avocation, agreed to advise me. In spite of this generosity I was at first suspicious: I didn't believe a commercial artist could be sensitive to the problems of printing poetry.

I soon learned I was wrong. With patience he explained to me graphic design principles. He drew quick sketches, both to illustrate his argument and to test my visual perception. He was a good teacher and gradually we came to agree on some ideas. Then, after a few weeks of not seeing him, he showed up at my office with some rolls of paper under his arm. I was overwhelmed: he had drawn up full-scale layouts for almost every design element of the magazine. Beautiful though they were, they were also unconventional, and therefore risky. But time, I think, has proven him right: in expressing appreciation for how their work has been printed, the writers and artists the magazine serves pay tribute to his talent and foresight. This is for Bob, a lovely man, who in my dream did know the meaning of Chuang-Tzu's words.

There is another to whom the magazine owes much: with this issue Daphne Marlatt ends her work on *The Capilano Review* as Poetry Editor. It is impossible to thank her enough for all that she has done. She continues to illuminate our lives.

Pierre Coupey  
April 1976





# THUMB RULE CO. LTD.

## Gary Lee-Nova & Alan Miller / OUT TO METRIC

*Out to Metric was first exhibited in a major exhibition of B.C. sculpture held at the Burnaby Art Gallery in Spring, 1975. It is a two-sided room with a floor, composed entirely of Acme rulers. An enigmatic, incomplete chair waits within.*

*Photograph: Gerry Nairn*

Now, a little on the history of measures. The metric system that is being installed in Canada and Britain at this moment was introduced in France in the late eighteenth century and was subsequently adopted by the Soviet Union in 1918, and later by most of Europe and Japan. When Canada and Britain adopt the Metric system, 90 per cent of the world's measures will be standardized. You may wonder what our new standard measure relates to; it appears to relate to nothing. The standard Meter, believe it or not, is defined as 1,650,763.73 wavelengths of Krypton 86 under standardized conditions. Before the Metric system, the French used the *Pied de Roi* (originally the *undecimal* version of the *Roman Foot*). The Roman Foot? It was a trimmed version of the Greek Foot before it. The Paris Meter became one ten-millionth part of 30,784,440 Pieds de Roi (taken after the survey of the 1790's gave this as the length of a meridian from the equator to the pole which we now know to be some 2000 Paris Meters longer).

Let's face facts. It is not conceivable that everything will someday be an exact number of *any* kind of units. In the long run, standard measures are important as standards but not as measures. The size, provided it is standard, is immaterial. In the woodworking shop where I work (as in many others) the practice has been to mark each end of a stick to take the *measure* of an object.

The sculpture, however, had the last word. It came to light as we prepared an inventory for shipping *Out to Metric* that there are — with the ceiling, the floor, the large wall, the door wall (in three sections), the door, door frame and chair — exactly *ten pieces*.

— ALLAN MILLER

Note:

For further information about measurement, see Peter Thompkins, *Secrets of the Great Pyramids* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), pp. 287-382.

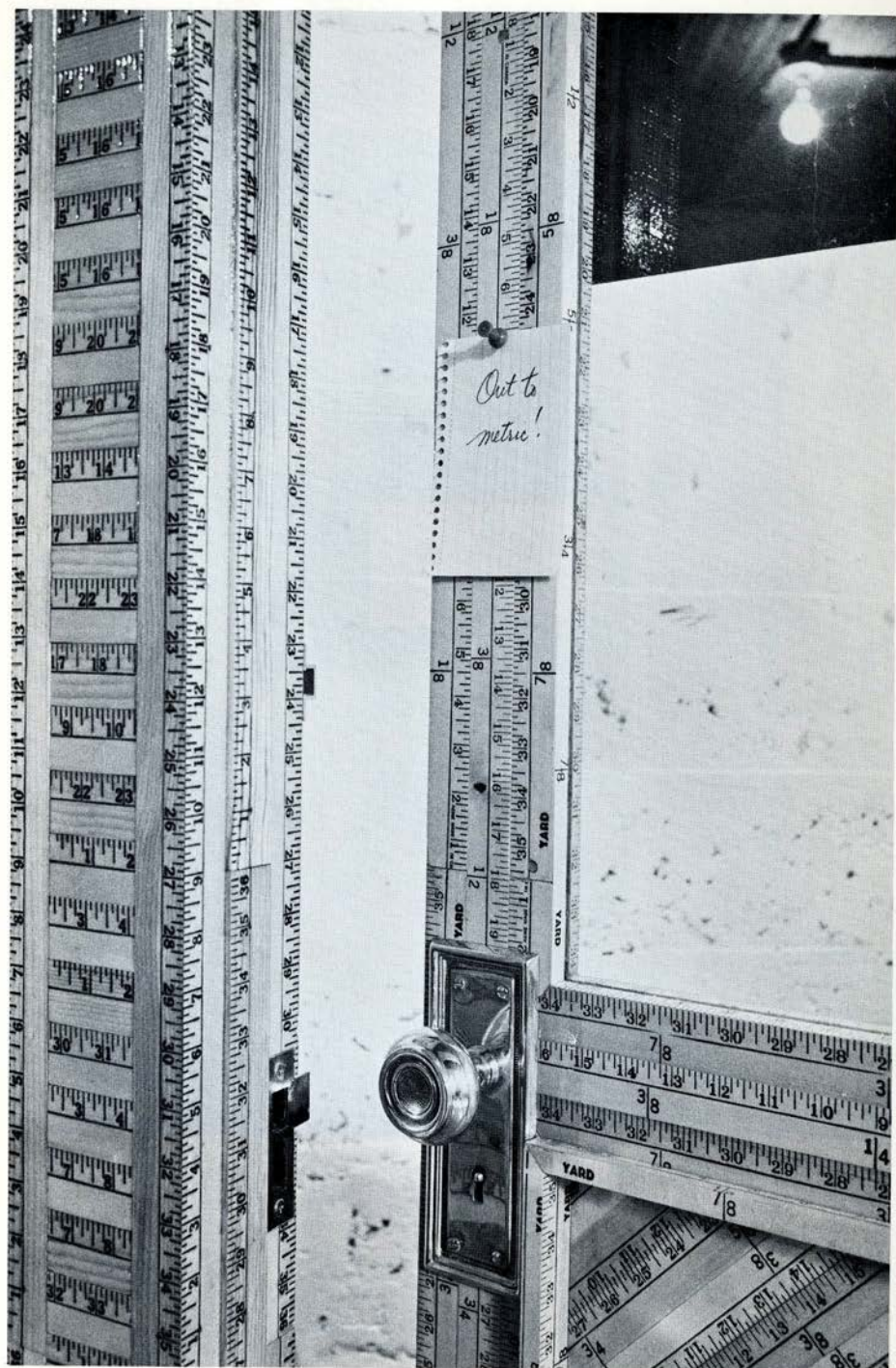
## IMAGES

Overview and details of *Out to Metric*. *Out to Metric* is a mixed media work, approximately 8'6" x 7'6" x 6'6". It is composed of Acme Rulers, metal fittings and window shade. The lettering on the office door is in gold leaf.

*Photography: Tod Greenaway*













## A. S. A. Harrison / ADA'S DESIRE

Ada came up the walk to the house. The air was filled with the smells of the neighbours' suppers. Ada was hungry. She pictured herself eating supper with the neighbours. She didn't really know any of them. She only knew them to see.

Inside, the house was dim and quiet. In the entrance hall she looked at the mail lying on top of the radiator. There were the usual bills for people who didn't live there any more. There was nothing for Ada. There was nothing for Johnny Raphael.

Ada climbed to the second floor and went along the hallway to her room. Johnny Raphael lived on the third floor. The staircase to the third floor was right outside Ada's door. Ada let herself into her room with a key, leaving her door open a little.

It was a large room with big windows. Over Ada's bed was a small stained glass window. The setting sun was coming into the room making everything look pretty.

Ada hung up her coat. She stood and listened. She was listening for sounds from Johnny Raphael's room. He lived directly above her. She heard muffled voices and other noises coming from distant parts of the house. She heard noises of cars and children coming from the street outside. There was no sound from the room above.

She went along the hallway to the kitchen. The kitchen light was on but she found the kitchen empty. There were some dishes in the sink and crumbs on the table. Everything looked as it had in the morning. In Johnny Raphael's cupboard there was the usual instant coffee, there were some dishes and a few bottles of spices. He rarely ate there. He often kept some eggs in the refrigerator. Ada made herself a sandwich. The sounds of her chewing were loud in the quiet house.



In the bathroom she used Johnny Raphael's toothbrush to brush her teeth and she dried the toothbrush on her towel before replacing it. She stood still outside the door to her room at the bottom of the stairs that led to the third floor, making up her mind to go up and take a look. She couldn't hope for a quiet ascent. The old wood creaked badly. Her heart was beating a lot faster than usual. At the landing she stopped and peered around the corner, up the remaining steps, and there was the door to Johnny Raphael's room. A crack of yellow light showed under the door and up one side of it. He's in there alright, she thought, and was instantly frightened away by the idea of being discovered. Back in her room she was slightly out of breath.

It was growing dark. The overhead light gave everything a yellow, hollow cast that was upsetting. Ada needed to get a table lamp. She was thinking, what if Johnny Raphael isn't home. He could have gone out and left his light on. It's quiet up there.

She stripped off all her clothes, letting them drop limp at her feet. Sneaking up the stairs that way made her perspire. The smell was a faint perfumed deodorant. The mirror on her dresser was badly distorted, making dressing difficult. Dressing was difficult anyway. She could never find the right thing to wear. She never had been able to.

She was listening so hard that when there was finally a noise overhead it startled her. It was a scraping noise. It could have been made by a chair. He was up there. It was a relief. She thought she'd better hurry now and began to perspire again. Her cheeks grew flushed. Trying on clothes was frustrating. The mirror made her look ridiculous anyway. How could she tell how she looked. She couldn't tell. She wanted to be there when he came into the kitchen.

Johnny Raphael wore black Wellington boots and you could hear him coming. From the kitchen Ada could hear him right at the other end of the house, coming down the stairs from the third floor. She heard him reach the landing and could tell just when he was passing the door of her room. She had left it partly open and the light was on. He didn't stop there.

Johnny Raphael's black Wellingtons hit the old wood sharply. The hallway was high and narrow and amplified his footsteps. She knew the beat well, a hard clean step followed by a light scraping step, Johnny Raphael had a right leg one and a half inches shorter than his

left leg. Ada stood in the kitchen, listening attentively to the approaching rhythm. It was catchy. She found herself beating time with her fingers, a hard beat, a light beat, a hard beat, a light beat, tap TAP tap TAP tap TAP tap TAP, he had a strong, steady stride, tap TAP tap TAP tap TAP. It was a long hallway.

She composed her face and arranged herself casually, feeling tense. She didn't think that he might not be heading for the kitchen. When he was at home in the evening he always made himself coffee in the kitchen she thought. He was getting very close now. Ada was pink with expectation.

The footsteps stopped and there was a confusing shuffle and then the creaking of the bathroom door. He left it partly open while he urinated and the rich gushing sound made Ada uncomfortable. She tapped her fingers nervously on the kitchen counter. It seemed interminable. It let up with maddening leisure. Finally it stopped and Ada let out a breath. Johnny Raphael loitered. Ada sipped her cup of tea and shifted to a new position, feeling stiff and uncomfortable. The bathroom door made its characteristic creaking. Now she was really sweating. Johnny Raphael's feet scraped and hesitated and again took up their rhythm. The footsteps receded. Ada heard them change to a light patter going down the front steps and die away.

She looked at her watch. There were times when she knew exactly what she wanted and without hesitation. There were old standbys in her life. Chocolate cake was one. Peanut butter and honey sandwiches could make her happy again and again. But sometimes she had to have something special and exactly the right thing and this was one of those times. She closed her eyes and gave her mind over to discovering exactly what it was that could satisfy her.

There were certain tastes and textures she definitely craved. One thing was the voluptuous lushness of whipped cream. Pumpkin pie with whipped cream. Hot gingerbread with whipped cream. Strawberries with whipped cream. Chocolate cream pie. She rolled them all skilfully on an imaginary palate. The trouble was, she wanted ice cream.

Ada kept her eyes closed and her face was buried in her pillow, the better to think. What she really wanted was something chewy and sweet. Certainly there was nothing like that in the house. She considered the shelves at the corner store. The shadows of passing cars



skirted her room. A wet patch of drool appeared on her pillow. She wiped the corners of her mouth. Her vision was complete, it was this: thick slabs of vanilla ice cream sandwiched between two layers of sponge cake, topped with apricots and syrup and completely covered with freshly whipped cream. She was captivated.

She tasted and chewed the creation in her imagination and rearranged it until it was exactly right. She attended conscientiously to detail and proportion, tailoring the ice cream filling to an inch and a half in thickness (an inch and a half she thought, was the difference between Johnny Raphael's right leg and left leg), slicing the apricots lengthwise into thin slices, and ensuring that the sticky syrup permeated both sponge cake layers.

The young woman behind the counter looked up when Ada came into the store. Hello she said, smiling and nodding, noticing how fat Ada was, still not used to it although Ada was getting to be a regular customer.

Hello said Ada feeling self-conscious about the purchases she was about to make. She passed briskly to the rear of the store.

Ada picked out a half pint of whipping cream, a pint of vanilla ice cream and a tin of apricots. There were several kinds of cake on the shelf. There was pound cake and there was plain cake. There wasn't any sponge cake. She knew of a bakery that stayed open late. She would have to take a taxi.

Ada put her selections on the counter and looked at them and the woman punched her cash register. She's really quite flabby Ada was thinking, noticing how the woman's brassiere strap pinched her over the shoulders and across the back. I wonder why she wears those tight sweaters, they reveal every bulge. Their hands touched as money passed between them. They thanked each other.

I hope this bakery is open Ada was thinking, fearing it wouldn't be. She hailed a taxi deciding that if they didn't have sponge cake she would settle for plain cake. She was anxious as the bakery came into

view. Then she saw that it was open and felt relieved. She bought two pounds of sponge cake off the fat lady who ran the place. Once it was safely in her hands, she was full of impatience to be home with it. She held it in her lap and she held her bag of groceries in her lap and wondered how she could bear to wait.

Ada assembled the cake in her room. Her door was locked, her curtains drawn. If anyone had knocked on her door now she wouldn't have answered. She especially wouldn't have answered if Johnny Raphael had knocked.

For eating, she had chosen a blue china plate and a small dessert fork. The cake fell apart lusciously on her plate and tasted delicious. She sat at the table in the corner and consumed it one slice at a time until it was finished. The eating was intensely satisfying. She knew she would remember the experience with great pleasure for days or weeks afterwards. Some of her fondest memories recalled eating experiences. She remembered in particular, a raspberry tart she had eaten perhaps ten years before, she didn't know the exact date. The memory lingered, less on account of the excellence of the tart itself, more because of the peaks of pleasure achieved in the eating and her feeling of utter satisfaction afterwards.

She ate slowly and the cake occupied her for close to an hour. She felt sick eating the last few pieces. She thought she would never get enough. When there was only one piece left she looked at it and felt panicky, knowing it was the last piece and there wasn't any more, feeling too sick now to be able to eat any more anyway but frightened when she thought of stopping. She made tea in the kitchen and drank tea with the last piece. After she had licked up the crumbs and juice she went to bed.

Johnny Raphael had said see you later. Hadn't it been lucky bumping into him. She didn't usually see him in the morning, he was usually still sleeping when she left the house. She'd been startled seeing him and had trouble finishing her breakfast, hadn't felt hungry suddenly. But she finished it pointedly, not wishing to betray embarrassment. She had said good morning but couldn't say his name. He had called her Ada in a familiar way that she heard with pleasure and remembered.

She remembered it now, staring at the ceiling with a book lying open on her stomach, hearing the creakings and rustlings in the house.

She was waiting for him. When he came home he was going to come into her room to use her telephone. He had asked her if he could, saying her name and looking right at her, then he had said see you later as he got up to leave and as he was leaving gave her a last glance over his shoulder. She had sighed then, and now she was listening for the dull distant thud of the front door and the light toe-tapping on the stairs.

She could practically hear the sounds she was listening for. She had heard them many times before. Perhaps he would stop in to say hello on his way up to his room, but it didn't matter. Later, when he came down to use her telephone she would invite him to sit on her bed and engage him in conversation.

He had been born with a right leg one and a half inches shorter than his left leg. He called it being crippled. Ada wanted to get him to talk about it while she listened sympathetically, protesting that he was being hard on himself. Actually his condition excited her. Talking about it made him relax with her. If she asked him he would take off his black boots and stretch his two legs out on her bed and she would see that the difference between the length of his right leg and the length of his left leg equalled the width of three stripes on her bed-spread or exactly one and a half inches. It didn't seem like much, one and a half inches, but it was a long way from one heel to the other, Ada knew it because she had tried walking around in one shoe.

The door of Johnny Raphael's room was not locked. Ada knew because she had tried it. When she tired of waiting and she couldn't read her book she wore a red satin housecoat and she went upstairs and went into his room.

It was an oddly shaped room with a curved wall and a sloping ceiling. Some light filtered into it through a thin window. There was a desk, a dresser, an alarm clock and some books and papers. Ada had already looked in all the drawers and in the cupboard and read the titles of all the books. The air was stuffy in the room and smelled good to her, like she knew Johnny Raphael would smell if she could get that close to him.

The bed was a mattress covered with rumpled sheets and blankets and strewn with Johnny Raphael's socks and shirts. Ada let her red satin housecoat drop on the bare wood floor and she lay down on the bed and pulled the bedclothes around her body and face, breathing

deeply and shivering. She looked at the corners of Johnny Raphael's room, crossed with shadows, feeling horrified that he might come home at any minute and discover her there. She would never be able to explain herself. She would be speechless and she would blush uncontrollably, bending over to pick her housecoat off the floor. He would be standing and staring at her in amazement. Her pendulous breasts would swing towards him as she bent over. When she stood up she would be covering herself with the housecoat but as she ran out of the room the preposterous enormity of her rear-end would be finally revealed to him. As she fled down the stairs she would hear him laughing. Hot tears would begin streaming down her face. Alone in her room at last, her heaving, trembling body would collapse on the floor in a heap of shame and mortification.

Ada's thoughts frightened her out of the room. She had started to shake. In the hallway she met a huge fat woman scrubbing the linoleum outside Johnny Raphael's door. It was obvious from the woman's expression that she'd been watching through the keyhole. Ada hurried away.

Johnny Raphael's biceps rippled and bulged as he buttered toast. With all his might he was restraining himself from grinding the hard pieces of butter brutally into place. Ada watched him, loving to see his big muscular hand making small delicate motions with the butter knife.

Ada was wearing her brand new black t-shirt. She had never owned a black t-shirt before. This was the first time she had ever worn one. She had thrust her body into it and looked at herself every which way in the mirror. She had thought it looked sexy. She had thought it made her look thinner. It made her feel good and she had never shared a meal with Johnny Raphael before.

She lifted the lid off the frying pan. There were four eggs frying. A fine spray of grease splattered her face and glasses. It was so fine she didn't notice it but it left a film.

Sorry. I forgot to take the butter out of the refrigerator she said, feeling worried about it but liking to see Johnny Raphael's hard muscles squirming under his taut skin.



The toast is ripping he complained.

Here, let me help you she offered, spying a chance to lean close to him, feeling his body heat, and as she was slipping the knife from his grip she could feel the black hairs on his knuckles tickling her palm.

The hand that had held the knife came to rest briefly on Ada's waist. It made her flinch with pleasure. Looking to see that he wasn't looking at her, she immediately felt her waist where the hand had touched it. She found there a lumpy roll of fat and cringed. As she shoveled up the fried eggs her body shook and her chins all wobbled and the fat on the backs of her arms slapped the air. She pulled nervously on her t-shirt, pulling it down over her hips, not wanting Johnny Raphael to guess how fat she was. She served him two fried eggs on a white plate. She served herself the same.

Sitting down, Ada felt her stomach push out against her trousers. She felt the trousers give a little under the strain. She was feeling stifled and pulled on the neck of her t-shirt.

Johnny Raphael pulled his chair up to the table. Underneath the table his two knees touched Ada's two knees. She was startled and didn't know what to do. Sucking the butter out of the pores in her toast, she figured quickly that her right knee was touching Johnny Raphael's left knee and her left knee was touching Johnny Raphael's right knee. She tried to remember which was his shorter leg. Did he have a left leg one and a half inches shorter than the right leg or did he have a right leg one and a half inches shorter than the left leg. The right leg was shorter she thought. In that case, her left knee was touching his deformed leg. Or was it the longer leg that was deformed. She didn't know. She could hardly bear to eat when he was sitting right there and under the table her knees were touching his knees. She chewed her toast. She dunked it in her egg yolk. She forked flopping pieces of egg white into her mouth. She ate deliberately because at supper she knew, it was the thing to do. She felt her face growing pink and shiny, holding her knees rigidly where they were, touching his. Her trousers were growing tighter as she ate and her feet were going to sleep.

Do you want some buttermilk she asked.

I don't know he said. Let me taste it.

She handed him her glass and he took a drink. No he said. I don't think I like it. He handed back the glass. What is buttermilk he asked.



She looked at him thoughtfully and said, I don't know. Her tongue gathered the drops from the rim of the glass where his lips had touched it. She looked at the buttermilk in the glass. Which of your legs is shorter she said.

The right one is shorter he said.

One and a half inches isn't it, she asked.

Yes that's right he said.

How tall does that make you, she asked.

Well, if I stand on my right leg I'm five feet ten inches, and if I stand on my left leg I'm five feet eleven and a half inches, he said.

I see said Ada. Then after a while she said, where is it shorter. Is it shorter above or below the knee.

He looked at her intently and then said, here, let me show you. He took off his black Wellingtons, the right one and then the left one. He stood up and took off his jeans. Ada crouched down in front of him and he pointed out that he had two legs, each one perfectly proportioned and finely formed, both of them nicely covered with soft curling dark hair, only the right leg was ever so slightly smaller than the left leg. The left leg was ever so slightly larger than the right leg.

Ada considered his two legs for a long while. She made him turn around and she ran her fingers up and down each leg several times. Finally she said, let me show you the fat on my body.

She stood up and quickly removed all her clothes. You see, she said, how it has collected here on my hips. Very little on my legs and thighs, but here on my hips and stomach, and on my behind. She turned slowly around once, and then again to be sure he saw everything, touching the fat with her hands. It was soft under white skin. Drops of sweat squeezed out from under her arms and trickled down her sides.

Johnny Raphael ran a fingertip the length of a deeply grooved stretch mark on her hip, making a gentle soothing noise with his lips. I'll make some coffee he said. Ada watched him put on his jeans and tuck in his t-shirt. Then she turned away and closed her eyes for a little while before getting dressed again.

They drank the instant coffee he made. Johnny Raphael said he was going out. He stood up to leave and said, see you later, giving her a last quick glance over his shoulder. Ada sat at the table and listened to the quick rhythm of his receding footsteps. Then she finished eating her supper.

## Carole Itter / THE OUTING

*(Work in Progress)*

Crossing Hastings Street at rush hour, I am standing beside two women, one in a black jacket and red pants, her friend the reverse, red jacket and black pants, shining short hair-do's, feet sore in newly bought shoes, *the fear in their faces*, she turns to me, our faces just ten inches apart, *the fear on her face*. I smile and her smile explains the fear, of the big city, of not knowing how to stop the four lanes of traffic, of being away from home, home town, small town, the village, the hopelessness of that place traded for the alternate, another hopelessness, the consequences, the big city, the skid row.

They'd just arrived, looking for the teen-aged daughter, they were sisters. What was it I could do for them, what was the least I could do? I could move precisely, step out into the traffic — more precisely, stick the child and stroller into traffic. I could hold up my arm, english-style, so sensible. Had I seen the daughter, maybe in a pub around here, what did she look like, young, dark, short; I'm pushing a stroller and *they ask me what bars I go in!* "I don't get into bars much, ya know. I got a kid to take care of," enviously, grass being greener, the babyland blue grass blues. The black-jacketed sister looks directly at me and says, "Well, *my daughter's got a kid too*, but she dumped it." *Who am I in these eyes?* There is the deep silence in their faces, generations of watching fire by night, for warmth, for food, for fantasy. My eyes that don't know fire, those that do, my daughter's seven fire signs, a straight flush dealt out by the stars.

The red-haired woman, trim today in a new leather coat and riding hat, the dopey hollow eyes, the hustler being hustled but instead going in for the coffee and on the stool next to her, planted there, her

conscience — the plain-clothed street man from whatever social agency, telling her again and again to go home. She was laughing minutes earlier as we walked through the doorway, now weeping uncontrollably, "I can't go home, I can't go home."

Behind me on the street, the familiar conversation, "Well, then *go home and do it*," the command. I know the bastard, without turning around, the college kid, mid-thirties, pudgily showing the comfort of his salaried job. A needy area it is, so bring in the educators on their salaries to comfort the lot of us. Curiosity does turn my head, and it's exactly as I'd thought, leaning against his car. She sleeps in the stroller, head lolling back at a weird angle, golden hair, pale pale botticellian face. I unlock the door to the studio, swing the stroller around to back it onto the landing, a face is peering at hers. "That child is certainly sleeping." Our eyes meet, the plain-clothed do-gooder's face looking at mine, he has followed *me* now. My impulse is to say "No, you mother-fucker, she's dead!" He's looking for it, the trouble, the chaos of other people's lives, he has a cure for the pain on the streets, himself, philosophy, a better way, his.

I can walk the area because I fit it. I fight it but I fit it. I am stopped, threatened for money, I open my wallet, the five-dollar bill, the spare change. I say sure. I say, "Sure. Look, I'm on welfare, bringing up this kid, it's the end of the month, the end of the money. If you want it, take it." We start talking, the basis being how rotten the world really is, we laugh, I let him take the lead. "What's more rotten than the world?" he asks. I answer laughing and point down the street, "That do-gooder, whatshisname." More guffaws, my shoulder is patted. I am thinking that I'm more rotten than the world, because I kept my head all for the sake of my five-dollar bill, I got myself out of this one, I've got the wits, I'm the rotten world he is talking about. I can see this desperation, pick it up, put it down, I've got the wits to keep out of it, get into it, at will. I am fighting it and I am fitting it, I fit into no other part of town as easily. Part of me died here, my mother, the flop hotel, the overdose.

At Hastings, I see red and black walking again with black and red, I turn but they won't recognize me, a hard look, they have light kerchiefs around their heads, shopping basket filled, the bottle wrapped in brown paper, a white man following them at four paces. The look is hard, to stay away, to fuck off, to forget the encounter two

hours earlier, to have forgotten it themselves, to get on with whatever it is we have to do. I peek in, I am snooping, leave it alone, get away from any hell-hole but your own, lady, you're not one of us and it shows, (blue jeans, bandana, boots, cowichan sweater, stroller) you're not here, you come from the upper-class districts and you smell of it, you stink, you're good for a quarter if I look derelict enough, otherwise you won't get involved, you're slummin', you're lookin' in, you're a god-damned peeping tom, and it's worse when you smile, you're fakin' it, *you don't have to be here, you can be anywhere you want*, you're a snob of the worst sort, your mother was a drunk and you're taking *the right road, the path of righteousness*.

YEAH.

I'm gonna bring up my kid properly and not let her know pain or fear and the shock she's gonna get in the future is the same one my mother got when *she* got to the big city, to the right neighbourhood, into the right bracket, and will my daughter do anything different from what my mother did, will she give me the anguish that my mother gave me, and do I just set myself up for it, the pain, and who cares?

when the bough breaks the cradle will fall

I care. I keep it gay, keep it somewhat cynical, ironical, humorous, keep it short, the short burst and a firecracker explodes behind us, will the child ask what it is? I ask, "Did it make you scared?" She laughs and says, "That noise *does* make me scarey." It is solved, silenced, it's Hallowe'en and I'm scared of spooks, of witches, real, imaginary. It's a good time for masks, where are mine? How many do I have on now? How many have I taken off? What extras on for this occasion, the outing? Rouge on the cheeks, one layer, the happiness mask. The occasional black eyelid, penciled on. "Mommy, you makin' a clown on your face!" The bandana, the bandage, holding the hair on, hair-raising, hallowe'en.

this is the maiden all forlorn  
this is the man all tattered and torn

"Pretend it's New York City," he said, "and learn to live with it."  
"Should I keep a weapon by my bed, a hammer? Like it's done in



New York?" I am teasing, I am serious. I am fear itself, I am a walking fear-hole, step in and get scared. "HE HE HE hehe hehehe" says television's kindergarten witch and she ran out of the room, was holding on to my leg. I know the scale of my fears because I see them manifested in my daughter, the monsters she finds anywhere. "The monster is coming, I can hear."

I push the swing, her buttocks, harder, higher. I've learned how to push, she's learned how to swing. The pump, the push. Each time she swings towards me I push her harder away; each time she moves away, she pumps harder to get away. The rhythm is satisfying.

"I be mommy, I high!"

"o.k. I'll be Lara, I'm high."

"I higher too!"

"I'm higher too!"

The child is mother of the daughter. Now she can speak, scream, now she can say when the screaming has ended, the reason for it — her eyes red, sullen, filled with anger, the words not to me but to Noni, the imaginary friend, the neutral person in the ring. She says it flatly, without feeling, "I cry because I like to cry. I can't go to sleep because I don't feel very well."

hush, little baby, don't say a word,  
mama's going to buy you a mocking bird

The scream goes on, the beat, the beating of my head against my wall,  
hers against hers.

the wife takes a child  
the wife takes a child.

## Robert G. Sherrin / SCHADENFROH

He is at the far peak of St. Lorenzkirche and he is barely visible. If the three men smoking in front of Photo-Porst were to look up they might notice him. But then again they might think him to be a part of the architecture, perhaps a workman, a raised shingle. Perhaps, (with a small puff of smoke and a wink to Schenke the councilman) a petty anarchist bent upon defiling the local church. The sun is from the west and it is entirely possible that this movement upon the peak of St. Lorenzkirche is merely a shadow soon to be wiped away when a man-shaped cloud has moved to completely reveal the sun.

On the other side of the church there is a group of seven men on a street corner. One wears a white hat. Their eyes are trained down the broad street, away from the church, watching the electric tram draw near. If they were to pivot only 180° they would notice, upon elevating their gaze, a small figure duck-walking the high roof of St. Lorenz's. They would notice immediately that it is a man, not a shadow or a cloud. There would be instant speculation on the purpose of the individual's stroll. Alphonse would opt for insanity, tipping his forehead with his fingers while Otto and Werner merely shrug and sniff their Schimmelpennicks. Kurt would push the blond hair off his face and swivel his blue eyes like two howitzers to bear on the lonely, scampering figure and declare him a menace to society and possibly Christian theology as well. He would snicker and notice the girl in the apothecary bending over the shelf to delicately manoeuvre a mortar and pestle on a tray in the front window. Udo, Wilhelm and Ottmar would snort, chuckle and stamp their feet in impatience while the tram draws closer and the twenty-pfennig pieces are rolled back and forth in their pockets. It's a forty-two minute ride to Hummelstein and Würfer's girls.

But in fact, no one sees anything yet. The tram, followed closely by another, begins to arrive at the corner. Its braking squeals are audible even up here and the pawing of its hurried customers indicates that seven twenty-pfennig pieces are held precisely between thumb and forefinger, awaiting only to be dropped into a metal basket and exchanged for a perforated cardboard ticket. Not one, not Alphonse, Otto, Werner, Kurt, Udo, Wilhelm, Ottmar, the girl in the Apothecary Nürnberg, not the tram driver nor the three men in front of Photo-Porst notice the small figure on the roof of the saint's chapel stumble along its steep roof and aim himself at the open space between the twin front spires. It is a drop of perhaps ten metres to the large circular window of leaded glass and an open space of perhaps another twenty-two metres until his thick boots would possibly strike a passerby or the cobblestones. At this moment he is positive that he has only twenty-eight and a half vertical metres to travel.

His smile is not visible but undoubtedly it is broad. His hair is red, left long but spottily so as if whimsically cut by his own hand, without a mirror. His jacket is dark, his short pants dark, his boots dark, feet bare inside them. In his left jacket pocket he carries a small glass bottle, empty, found a week ago in a trash bin. It fits perfectly over his short, narrow thumb and, according to him, can be used to focus the rays of the sun on any object he wishes to do away with. His right jacket pocket has been carefully removed and sutured to the seat of his short pants. Upon his back there is a tidy mound of flesh and gristle that led to his being named, without much vicious originality, the hunchback. He bears a reputation of the neighbourhood freak, dresses to suit the role but wrestles with Goethe and Kierkegaard in his off-hours, the hours when he retires to his room and leaves ferreting through garbage cans and drooling on street corners to the gangs of children who imitate him and pelt him with bits of fruit and candy. He quotes Nietzsche at them and waddles off, rolling his hump prominently, like a squat dromedary in dark wool.

In front of Photo-Porst Schenke is thinking about his thirteen-year-old niece as he toys with his cigar, finally tossing it in an arc to land just beyond a shadow moving over the pavement. He smiles to himself and notices the number 62 above the doorway to the camera shop. Its windows are full of Zeis/Ikon, Billy Record, Wallflex. His niece is

small. Her rounded shoulders fit snugly into the councilman's hands and her ankles are like tiny calluses, almost boyish in their sturdiness. His stomach flutters and he places his right hand over it, noting first the nicotine stains on the index and middle fingers then immediately recalling the scent of his niece's body, a tiny sweating that eased over his fingers and still lingers now as the autumn wind blows smoke from his discarded cigar in the direction of Photo-Porst.

Winkler is now talking about the man on St. Lorenzkirche. Schenke merely nods and recalls sitting in Porst's studio while the huge lens groped towards him and his niece. The photographs were perfect: she on his lap; him standing, her sitting; them sitting side by side, his hand in her lap enfolding her fingers; her kissing him. The shoulders were bare under the short dress and her scent not too powerful, too masculine. She had scraped her knee the day before. He had bent to kiss it but the photo was of a poor quality.

"How much you remind me of Claus," he'd whispered as Porst called for stillness.

"But uncle, he's dead." And she'd turned away just as the leaves in the camera opened, just as Porst cursed and said her motion had ruined it, just as Schenke the councilman was kissing her knee for a second time.

Hunchback. That's what Winkler is saying, pointing, his left index finger at angle direct to the sun. He's laughing in his piston-like fashion: hunh, hunh, hunh, heaving out essence of sauerkraut with each breath. Schenke turns to look at St. Lorenzkirche and sees instead his thirteen-year-old niece running towards him, dressed in a young man's suit. Her hair is blonde, short. He reaches out for her and feels the heat blossom inside.

Alphonse turns in his seat to follow the line of St. Lorenzkirche. He has one hand in his pocket, searching for his fifty Marks. He has saved them, each DM falling into a used baking-powder tin, each DM



saved for this twice monthly ride to the house in Hummelstein, the warm beer and the wurst, to the one without a name and a mole between her buttocks, to her giant folds and the pliable handles of her flesh. Along the roof of the kirche there is a hump in the structure, a hump without definition, without discernible shape. This is the thirty-seventh time that Alphonse has passed it and it never appears the same. It is his oracle.

It tells him what he will do after he arrives in Hummelstein and walks behind Kurt and Udo, Wilhelm, Ottmar, Otto and Werner, after he checks the buttons of his trousers, after he blows into a cupped hand to test his breath and sucks at his teeth, after he probes the inner edge of his nose for crusted blood and recalls only four knockdowns and one TKO in sixty-eight bouts. The hump on St. Lorenzkirche tells him how the woman without a name will appear to him, how her buttocks will pounce as she moves, how the pocks the size of a DM will shiver as he bites, how breasts and thighs and neck, all portable in their thick dimensions, will lure him away, slowly, over the course of an hour or more, from his tin of money. The hump on the church roof tells him how he will feel when he notices that once more he is ready, that a hundred TKO's could not prevent him, that he is not only a man but a force moving towards an irresistible object, about to conquer her as she conquers him. The hump on the roof of St. Lorenzkirche tells him how to act as they troop up the steps of Würfer's, how to remove his white hat that conceals his folded ears and shadows his bent nose, how to shift his weight from foot to foot so his genitals swing gently and alive, how to smile at the woman who ushers them inside, how to look at everyone and not feel out of place with his body of bulges and hard growths and the peculiar slant of his chin. The hump in the roof of the church makes him feel human, makes him feel happy because he is soon to perform much as other humans do, makes him smile because he knows that he is only forty-one minutes and fifty-eight seconds from a woman without a name who has waited patiently every second week for almost nineteen months.

But today the hump on St. Lorenzkirche is moving.

He was riding the tram only two hours ago, no make that one hour and nine minutes ago. He sat six rows ahead of me and only the side

of his face and the hump on his back was visible above the top of the seats. I had seen him many times in the neighbourhood. I had often followed him and watched as women bent to touch the rise below his shoulder; some would kiss it, others bow to him and give him fruit or pieces of meat. He would thank them by snarling or tossing his red hair from side to side. The adults revered him, feared him, treated him like an icon or a relic, brushed against him, cursed and praised in his name, bargained for objects touched by him. The children chased him and spat at him or threw food at him, tried to trip him or kick at him. He stole their power to amuse each other or battle their parents. He took from them the fascination the old have for the very young, drew away from them the attentions of men who sold watches or manufactured trusses in their back rooms. He left them only grandfathers who whispered of the hunchback, who scooped at their crotches to indicate his power. It is said women longed to have his children and men envied his prowess.

After a moment he turned to look at me then swung away only to vault from his seat and approach me in the empty tram.

"Know how much rope you need to hang a man?" he said, lurching from side to side against the motion of the car. He was smiling. His blue eyes gleamed.

I shook my head. I didn't like him. I didn't like looking at him. I didn't like staring at his hump. I didn't want to smile or say a word. I felt my groin tighten. I squeezed my legs together and whistled once, a single note, meaning nothing except my fascination with what moved before me. I whispered to myself: I don't like you, I don't like, I don't like you.

"You don't know," he said, jumping up and into my lap. "You don't know how much rope is needed to hang a man." I shook my head. I placed my hands on the seat, palms down, flexing the fingers, feeling them pull away from the leather with little sucking noises, like tiny mouths pulling on the flesh. His hair shone like amber: I leaned toward it and smelled the odour of moss. His eyes were darting over my features. His teeth were chewing at nothing, just their perfect white going up and down. He settled into my lap as if it were a rocking chair. He moved back and forth.

"Three and a half metres," he whispered to me and winked. He nodded his head and flashed the last three fingers on his right hand. "Not a centimetre more or off comes the head, parted below the medulla like a squash by a knife." He pointed a finger at me. "And not a millimetre less or he dances like a fish on a string."

He jumped from my lap and sat beside me. His coat was dark, well worn over the hump.

"How do you know?" I asked softly.

"My business. I read. I go places. I do things others can't do. My little mountain is a passport." He giggled, looking over his shoulder at the hump. He eyed it as carefully as he could. "Only he that wears it makes the costume." Then he raised a finger to me. "Understand?"

"No."

"This is yours," he said, pulling from his pocket a postcard. It showed a view of St. Lorenzkirche.

I smiled. "No. It is one of many. I did the original."

He pulled his glass vial from his pocket. "This is *my* light box and it tells me everything. Shows me everything. Where is yours?"

"In my shop."

"Here?" He stabbed at the postcard.

"Yes."

"Come."

And I did.

He asked me to carry him. So I did. He straddled my back and directed me like a horse. The children spat at him and struck me. They jumped at him with their fists and hit me. They threw their toffees at him but bounced them off my face and chest. He sang out to them. He wailed poetry and philosopher's words and he held his glass vial up like a cross to ward off spirits. I trotted through the

children and listened only briefly to the adults calling out to me. I can't remember what they said. They were laughing. They stepped back from me and stared up at the hunchback whipping at me with one hand and swaying his glass about with the other. I couldn't see very far ahead. I concentrated on running. I concentrated on breathing hard. I concentrated on holding his thighs firmly in my hands and keeping my back as straight as possible. He called out and sang to me, he urged me on and turned me round a corner and pointed to a flight of stairs. His red hair was in my face and I tried to taste it as if I were a horse and it was hay.

In his room the books were piled everywhere. He was standing at the window, staring at the church. He turned to me, the vial held to his eye.

"I'm going to disappear."

"How?"

"With this. See?"

I took it and stepped to the window. I put the glass to my eye and the church did disappear. I lowered it and St. Lorenz's came back into view. I turned to face him. He was looking up at me, stroking my boot. He pulled at my coat. I crouched and he climbed into my arms.

"As an expert in cameras you'll appreciate the power of the glass," he said, removing it from my fingers. I nodded my agreement.

He climbed to my back and I stood, turning to the window. I held him there as he surveyed the city.

"The children won't miss me." And he chuckled, shaking his head from side to side. Spitte flowed. He slapped at me but I stood my ground. He hissed in my face and his breath smelled of juniper. He bounced in the seat I'd fashioned with my arms and he whispered into my ear as I moved my hands back and forth along his legs to balance him.

"I must go now. And you must watch me."

He jumped from my back to the small balcony outside the window. "Three and a half metres is all," he said, winking. Then he swung over the railing and shinnied down a pipe to the roof of an adjoining building.



The tram is still rounding the corner by the Commerzbank. Kurt is looking at a woman across the aisle. Otto and Werner are sitting side by side, saying nothing, thinking of the girl they will share. Udo, Wilhelm and Ottmar are gathered together at the rear playing a game with five-pfennig pieces. Alphonse is staring at the roof of St. Lorenzkirche. His mouth is moving up and down, his jaws grinding over something too large for words.

The hump on St. Lorenzkirche is alive. It tells him that he will always go to the woman without a name and bury himself in her. It tells him that the slackness in his groin is a pain greater than that which curled his ears into little cabbages or twisted his nose like a root. It tells him that his woman does have a name that she hides from him and whispers to others who pay less than he and twice as often. It tells him that he carries his body like baggage and that his only gift is the one in his pocket or his fists. The hump moving across the kirche tells him the truth: that he is an old man, with little life left; that he is an old man with an old man's body; that his body may please no one, not even the woman without a name whose body to him is attractive only for its enormity and its subsequent anonymity, its hand holds and twists, its pliability, its inability to remind him of younger women he thinks he once enjoyed.

The hump on the roof of St. Lorenz's disappears for a moment between the twin spires then reappears, sailing, drifting downward, sun flashing red and silver. It tells him that fifty Marks is too much but that he will pay it. It tells him that she will never divulge her name. It tells him nothing more because it has disappeared. Alphonse turns in his seat. He bangs at the window. He screams once, high-pitched, like a woman, or a man in extreme pain; the scream of someone falling from grace, from the weight of half-kilo gloves, from the smell of canvas, from the vision of moving flesh and the false promise of a final round.

Schenke has just scooped his niece into his arms and the warmth moves across his chest. He drops his head to her neck and smells her, the sweat. He sees for a moment a young boy, about her age, about her height, about her scent. He sees the boy reach out and touch him, move him slowly. He sees the boy perform in mirror image, the same movements upon himself. The word is uncle uncle uncle and the little blond boy whispers it slowly, hands moving evenly, reflecting the man and his nephew.

Schenke moves forward and tastes her neck, is startled to find himself on his knees. His lips move along towards her shoulder blade and he draws the taste of her slowly as if through a straw or from a great distance. His hands seem to float over her yet press her to him and he feels the tight buttocks like those of a boy nearly her age, nearly her height. The boy who would have moved around him slowly, curling tightly like a burrowing animal, pressing close like something seeking warmth yet creating a greater heat with its touch. Schenke sees his nephew naked, feels his nephew naked all around him, senses his nephew naked and in motion, knows his nephew lies quiet in a suit, in a granite box at St. Lorenz's, lying near a side altar, alone and untouched for almost three years.

The councilman feels his hand grip his niece's thigh and squeeze it only hard enough to appreciate its youth. He feels her hand moving down his chest, plunging into his shirt, his coat flapping wide like wings to take them away. He feels her pressed against him whispering uncle uncle uncle as he strokes her calf and looks up to see someone falling off the roof of St. Lorenzkirche, someone dressed like a young boy, someone tumbling through the air, light flashing all around him.

Schenke falls forward, mouth sliding off the back of his niece, hand trapped between her legs. The other two men step back from the spectacle and stare at the man straddling his niece while she thrashes away underneath. They try to turn away. They try to make a joke of it: Porst should have a postcard of this, one says. They envy the sexual bravado of councilman Schenke, who has been dead less than three seconds now, and his niece who is quickly entering a state of hysterical trauma.

The hunchback is still falling through the air. He said he would quote Nietzsche before he left, a few words for his children, for his lovers, for his patrons and his worshippers. He said he would fly as he had in dreams. He said that his hump was the source of his power and the glass the way to invisibility.

He sails quietly through the air. He has aimed himself at the people passing through Königstrasse. His arms are outstretched and the sunlight flashes through the glass in his hand. He tumbles like a bird and twists from side to side. His red hair streams out behind him. Eight metres, twelve metres. He must be whispering his last phrases. He must be straining to bring the glass to his eye.

At a certain point, no doubt three and a half metres from his projected place of impact, a roof cuts him off from view. A tram is turning past the bank on the corner, brakes shrieking. In front of my shop a man has collapsed. There is a flash in front of St. Lorenzkirche. The hunchback is gone.

•  
*(Schadenfroh — the joy of looking down on people.)*

Audrey Thomas /

## THE MORE LITTLE MUMMY IN THE WORLD

"Oscar A. Lempe  
Denver, Colo. U.S. 14-V-1876  
23-XI-1958

Guanauato, Gto.  
Recuerdo de Su Esposa  
Chijas  
Perpetuidad"

"Louis Montgomery Allen Sr.  
New York City Dec. 6 1887  
Feb. 12 1957

Guanauato, Gto.  
Perpetuidad"

Handprints on this one — of whom? Su esposa? Su hermosa? A  
passing, naughty, unrelated child?

"Elisabeth Carnes Allen, D.A.R."

She wandered through the cemetery looking at every stone, imagining  
the people, what had brought them there, what the town had been  
like nearly a hundred years before. The lure of what riches? The silver  
mines perhaps.

Everywhere there were flowers stuck in tins — Mobil Oil tins, paint  
tins, tomatoes, green chillies:

"Chiles Jalapenos, En Escapbeche"

She took out her pocket dictionary.



The wind blowing through the cypress trees rattled the tins like bones.

“To My Beloved Wife  
Maria Concepcion Buchman”

Although there had been a long line-up to see the mummies there were very few people in the Pantheon itself. A young couple with their arms around one another, laughing, exchanging kisses, some old women in black, a gardener. And the dead of course, the multitude of dead stacked six or seven high. The soft brown hills beyond and El Pipla, the boy hero, alone on a hill above the Jardin de la Union, his arm upraised.

Ayer (yesterday). Hoy (today)  
Mañana.

“Mother  
Lily Mast McBride  
Born Sept. 19 – 1882  
Died July 22 – 1926”

A pretty blue-grey stone, this one, beautifully incised.

It was very peaceful here with the wreaths, the plastic flowers and the real — gladioli, lilies — the white ones she saw everywhere here, Easter lilies back home — geraniums, carnations. The flowers dead too of course, or dying, sucking up the last dregs of rusty water from the tins. Still, she liked this place better than the churches with their bleeding christs, their oppressive smell of hot wax, their plaster damned pleading to her for one last chance at salvation.

Some stones were casually propped against still-occupied cabinets. (They couldn't be called tombs and she couldn't think of a better word than “cabinet” — cabin, verb, to confine in a small space, cramp.) She turned one over.

"Naci Inocente! . . .  
Muero Ignorante

Freyre Jose E.  
V-7-1925  
Perpetuidad."

So much for perpetuidad.

She had been thinking of failures and of suicides and had gone to mass on Palm Sunday in the hopes of finding something positive if only for a second, if only for an instant, if only, even, an aura or a whiff of hope for her salvation.

Buenos dias. Adios.  
She straightened a tin of gladioli which had fallen over in the wind.

Outside the Parroquia women and men were braiding palms into elaborate patterns. She bought a small crucifix and went in, covering her head, but the Mass was a disappointment. She stood up. She sat down. She prayed. The priest was way way up in the chancel. Little bells rang. There was no pageantry, no music, nothing to draw her spirit up and away from the deep well of despair into which it seemed to have fallen. Over the words of the priest a poem of Yeats' kept running through her mind:

That is no country for old men. The young  
In one another's arms . . .

Fish, flesh, or fowl, commend all summer long  
Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.

They had been going to come down here together. Had maps, dreams, destinations. Even a tape:

Siento molestarle  
No es ninguna molestia  
Salud

How much too much please thank you don't mention it.

Instead he took her out (at her request) the night before she left. To a Greek restaurant (again at her request). She drank a lot of wine, and crumbling a bit of bread between her fingers, told him it was she all along whom he really loved.

"Do you think so," he said and smiled at her over his wine glass. Then in an offhand manner he asked her if she'd ever been in any of the other Greek restaurants along the street, places where you just walked in and took whatever was going, places where the Greeks themselves went, cheaper places than this. (And he, who never went into a restaurant alone, whom had he lingered with in a small cafe full of the smell of lamb and garlic and the whine of recorded music. Who? Don't ask, or, as he would have put it, "why humiliate yourself?") He had always been Machiavellian; had always known how to put her in her place.

They had been at the house of his best friend and contemporary, Peter:

"I was coming in on the bus from the island," her lover said, "towards sunset — a beautiful evening. Suddenly I looked up and there was this incredible cloud formation — incredible! I said to the fellow next to me, without really thinking about it, you know, 'my god, that looks just like the Mushroom Cloud!' I saw the guy look at me and give a little frown and then I realized with a start that he was younger, younger than the Bomb — that he didn't even know what I was talking about. The only mushroom cloud he knew was psilocybin!"

Peter had laughed appreciatively. He was thirty-five.

"It's true. People talk about the 'generation gap' — as a metaphor I mean — but it seems to me there's a real gap — I almost see it as a physical space — between those born before or during the War and those born after it."

"Yes. There's a point at which Rachel and I just can't communicate; we were born into two different worlds." He had turned to her. "When I talk about Marlene Dietrich I don't know if you even know who I mean."

She was immediately defensive. He had wanted her to be, had set her up.

"Of course I know who Marlene Dietrich is."

"Ah yes — you know her name. But is your Marlene Dietrich the same as mine — I doubt it." Peter nodded and began singing "Lili Marlene." Her lover sat back and lit his pipe.

That night at the Greek restaurant he had given her a handsome present — a shoulderbag with three sections, or pouches, like a saddlebag.

"Now you will have three places to put all your clutter," he said, "instead of just one." ("It's not that she doesn't have a place for everything," he said once, at a party, "it's that she has several places." He was very tidy and they fought about the missing cap to the toothpaste.)

Buenos dias. Adios. No comprendo.

In one place there were fresh-dry graves, four in a row, an accident perhaps. This in a courtyard which led to a view of the city. Bougainvillea had been splashed against the walls, the original purple and the scarlet, blood-coloured. In the distance she could hear the sound of children's voices.

Estoy esperando un paquete.  
Lo tiene usted aqui?

When he came to get her at the hospital he was very brusque and efficient, annoyed that she was still in bed and crying. His sons were in the car — they were going camping. Yet still she wanted to buy him gifts — an onyx chess set, a heavy silver ring, a blanket for his bed. Things of beauty and whimsy, things that would make him think of her, remember her and want her.

Donde este. Where is?

He had told her there was nothing wrong, that maybe she should see a shrink. The gifts would only embarrass him. When she began to cry at the bus station, he kissed her quickly on the forehead and walked away. She hated him; no, she loved him.



She had read in the guidebook that if the rent was not kept up on the crypts (yes, that was the word she had been searching for), the bodies were removed after five years and the bones thrown into a common bone-house to make room for new arrivals. But the region was very dry and some of the bodies would be mummified. When they were, they were put into the museum. Directly outside the cemetery were souvenir stands — skeletons, on horseback or playing fiddles or dancing, with springy arms and legs. Postcards of the mummies, earthenware, bone letter-openers and crochet hooks (human bone?). There were mummies of pale beige toffee with raisin eyes. These were wrapped in red or yellow cellophane. As she approached a man had offered her two large ones on one packet, “*Momias Matrimonias*,” and laughed at her discomfort. Now she was trying to get up enough courage to go into the mummy museum itself.

Death and disease were accepted here. Death was even made fun of, made into toffee or chocolate or tiny plaster figures to decorate, along with gilded pictures of miraculous virgins, the windows and mirrors of buses and cars. She now knew that almost certainly, whenever she saw a street musician, either he was blind or lame or leprous or there was a terribly deformed creature, just out of sight, for whom he was playing his music.

Her operation had been therapeutic and therefore covered by her insurance. No back streets or borrowed money — things were easier now.

Ayer (yesterday). Hoy (today)  
Mañana

This was a very strange town to walk around in and easy to get lost. The main road ran underneath the town in places, re-appearing above ground several hundred yards beyond. It was really a stone-arched tunnel and rather frightening. And there were six or seven main squares, not just one. She had already in spite of her map, been lost several times. The night before, wandering steep alleys full of wrought-iron balconies she had stumbled upon a strange religious ceremony in one of the smaller lamplit squares. There were bleachers set out and many of the people were already seated, men, women and children, facing an old church. The church bell began to ring and then a priest appeared high up on the church steps, intoning Hail Marys and Our Fathers, (she understood a bit of it) the history of the week leading up to the arrest of Jesus. Below the steps were men in purple sackcloth and black hoods, very medieval and frightening. A lifesized statue of Christ (looking not unlike the 'Jesuchristo Superstare' she had seen in Mexico City) was brought out of the church by more hooded men, carried down the steep steps and put on a flower-decked platform. There was a rope around his neck and it hung down his back, binding his hands behind him. A child-angel and one of the masked men climbed up and sat on either side of him. Torches were lit and as the rest of the masked men shouldered their burden the crowd gave a deep moan of pity and anticipation. The statue had real hair and jointed, moveable arms. He terrified her for he hovered somewhere in a strange space between icon and the living god. The wind blew his hair across his gentle, accepting face. His gown was purple like the garments of the men but his was of velvet, not hemp. A workman beat a drum and the entire affair — Christ, angel, masked men, flowers, scaffolding, torches, priest — began to move. A young boy followed behind, playing a simple pipe and the procession slowly moved out from the small square into the larger one beyond. Behind came small children, some on tricycles, the women in black, the men, balloon sellers, a thin brown pariah dog. The bowed, bound figure of Christ rode above them all. It was amateurish in a way but very powerful — she hid herself in the crowd.

Por que. Why? No se. I don't know.  
Perdone.

It was as though once she had decided she didn't want it he had washed his hands of the whole affair.

### "Ruth Barnes"

Just a small stone marker with a dried-up geranium obscuring the date. Presumably to be buried in this small courtyard was more expensive than to be deposited on the shelves. The wind blowing rattled the tins like bones.

If he were here he would have struck up a friendship with the gardener, would try out the little Spanish he knew and supplement it with laughter and broad gestures. His energy was one of the first things that had excited her. And his keen intelligence, his learning, the whole sum of his life experience. He had been married (twice), had children (one as old as her youngest sister), had suffered and taken chances.

"I find it impossible to live alone," he had said to her the first night, "and yet somehow I always seem to fuck it up — my relationships with women." He showed her pictures of his sons and took her home to bed.

Dispenseme. Excuse me.

Muchas gracias.

Everywhere down here men followed her and tried to feel her up — a woman alone deserved to be treated that way. Then they gave their paycheques to their mothers and went to mass on Sunday.

Hail Mary Full of Grace Blessed is

The Fruit of Thy Womb Jesus

On the train from Nuevo Laredo she had met a middle-aged man who lived in San Miguel. He said the happiest day of his life was the day when they nailed his wife's coffin shut. Federales came on the train looking for contraband. They wore their revolvers tucked in the back of their pants, Pancho Villa style.

"Watch for the Mordida," the American said.

She shook her head.

"'The Bite.' To force someone to give you a bribe. It's a game between the Federales and the people coming back."

Was that what she had done by getting pregnant? Put the bite on him?

The boy-hero stood unconcerned on the distant hill, his arm up-raised forever. Her first day in the town she had followed the crude signs and climbed steep stairs and back alleys until she reached the top of that hill. She had taken some bread and fruit with her and sat in a little summer house just below the enormous figure, eating slices of pineapple and writing in her journal. He had set fire to the granary in which the Royalists had barricaded themselves. At his feet it said, in Spanish,

"There are still other castles to burn."

She felt quite happy there, after her climb, the whole town at her feet. But in the evening, at a band concert in the Jardin de la Union, she sat on a wrought-iron bench and longed to have him with her, next to her, observing, commenting, loving. Canaries mocked her from the laurel trees around the square.

Where is? No comprendo.

She retraced her steps, back through the main courtyard with all its stacked and silent dead, back through the black iron gate with its simple cross on top. There were very few people in line now so there was no reason to wait.

He had been quite calm when she told him. Just said, "Well, what do you want to do about it?" He left it entirely up to her. Had she wanted him to be otherwise? Had she wanted to bear his child? She wanted to be a writer, a poet — had he not encouraged her, sung her praises? In Chapultepec Park in Mexico City she sat on the grass one Sunday and watched the fathers spoil their children. They were immaculate — it was the mothers, of course, who saw to that. There were funny animal heads on the trash cans in the children's playground. The children laughed and squealed when they stuck their little hands in.

She paid her five pesos and went into the Mummy Museum.

In Chapultepec Park she had sat on the grass and wept. She wanted to be six years old in a white dress and riding on her father's shoulders, her small hands tugging at his curly hair. She wanted to be held and to be forgiven. She wanted a red balloon.

Her mother was home making a delicious Sunday dinner.

Ayer (yesterday). Hoy (today)  
Mañana.

The mummy museum was really a long artificially-lit corridor with the mummies displayed in glass cases along one side. The corridor was hot and very crowded, so that for a moment she experienced a wave of claustrophobia and almost turned around and ran.

Some of the names and dates on the stones had simply been scrawled in the wet plaster.

Aristo Perez  
Manuel Torres M.  
Maria de los Angeles Rodriguez

So there were the mummies, in glass cases like curios — which of course they were. Most were without clothes, jaundice-coloured and hideously wrinkled. A few had on mouldy shoes and there was one man who had on a complete suit of tattered black clothes. Very few had hair and this surprised her. Was it just an old wives' tale that the hair would keep on growing?



He read her, one night, from John Donne's "Funerall"

"Who ever comes to shroud me, do not harme  
Nor question much  
That subtile wreath of hair, which crowns my arme;"

and from "A Feaver"

"Oh doe not die, for I shall hate  
All women so, when thou art gone,  
That thee I shall not celebrate,  
When I remember, thou wast one."

She got up and cut off a lock of her hair and gave it to him; he kissed her neck and put the lock in the back of his grandfather's gold watch.

Donde este. Where is?

The mummies' faces were full of anger and terror. Shrinkage had pulled their mouths open and their hands were clutched across their empty bellies. Her Spanish was not quick enough to understand everything the guides were saying, but there were abnormalities and tumours and other curious things being pointed out as they moved along. The mummies were tall or short, male and female, the men's papery genitals still visible, the women's wrinkled breasts.

She wrote him letter after letter and tore them all up.

Quiero comprar una postal. I wish to buy a postcard.

As she crossed the street to his car and his waiting sons, she stumbled, still drugged and swollen-eyed, against the curb, and turned her ankle. Suddenly she had to sit down on the grass and put her head between her knees. She knew the boys, his sons, were watching her. What had he said to them? Why had he brought them to the hospital? What was he trying to say?

People with limps, people with no legs, blind people, lepers, pariah dogs. The country swarmed with outcasts and cripples. The tourists bought silver rings and onyx chess sets and turned their heads away. After all, it was not their problem. Charity begins . . .

"They hate us," the American man had said. "They want our money but they hate us. They would prefer if we just mailed it down."

Almost at the end of the corridor was a display case full of child mummies — some in Christening gowns and bonnets, some naked or wrapped in tiny shrouds. In front of the smallest of these a cardboard sign was propped. She pushed closer, in order to read it, then tugged at the guide's elbow.

"Please. Por favor. What does the sign say? Que quiere decir?"

"La Momia Más Pequeña del mundo."

He smiled at her, showing perfect teeth.

"Si. Si. In English. Habla Usted Inglis?"

"Ah. Inglis."

He smiled again.

"The more little mummy in the world."

It sat there, no bigger than the rubber babies she had played with as a child.

Where were the parents? Why had these children been removed to this terrible glass limbo? She looked at la momia mas Pequena but it refused to answer.

The American man had asked her to come and spend a few days with him in San Miguel.

She pushed her way through the tourists and out the exit door. The sun struck her like a slap. She half-ran, half-walked towards the souvenir stands, rummaged quickly through the cards until she found the one she was looking for, the one she knew was certain to be there.

Back at the apartment he had said, "D'you think you could rustle us up some dinner — we'd like to get away before dark." The boys were looking at her curiously. She went into the bedroom and began to pack, tears running down her face, the little plastic hospital bracelet still locked around her wrist.

Go. Come. Are you ready?  
Don't forget.

She fumbled in her bag for the change purse then headed back down the hill. Tonight, drinking her cho-ko-la-tay in that little restaurant near the Plazuela where she had seen the Christ, she would get out the card and address it.

"Having a wonderful time" she would write.

"Wish you were here."

## John Bentley Mays / THE SEWN PICTURE

*(for D. C. Berry)*

### I

I lean in one corner of the side porch, outside the voices in a circle on the side porch. I lean against a column outside the air the fan stirs. The chairs on the side porch are made of wicker-work painted green, and on each one sits a woman talking into the empty air the fan stirs.

Somebody has gone into the parlour and taken out the trestles the coffins rested on for the day and night before the burying. The trestles are in the barn now. Nobody sits in the parlour. The birds in the tapestry chair-covers are quiet now.

The trestles are in the barn. I lean in one corner of the side porch. An old hoe leans in the corner of the barn, and no-one thinks of it.

This is her house. The boys were her boys. She does not watch me, but sits listening to the fan's blades stirring the hot air and listening to the women's words drifting in slow circles in the air the fan stirs. Aunt Glory talks to her. The words circle in the air like hawks at noon, then drop slowly toward her face.

Beyond the screen that runs around the side porch, the ground is hard, bare and shady. The men sit in the shade outside, on a circle of green iron chairs in the shade. Hens pick at the peanut shells the men drop as they talk. They crack peanuts, drop the shells, and talk about cotton and heat.

Beyond the trees near the house, the fields fall away green and hot toward the quivering horizon. Beyond the horizon the land drops toward the river, then the bottom all a dark tangle that goes on and on. The words the women say circle like hawks over the bottom at noon. I lean in one corner outside the voices, waiting while the women talk.

She says nothing. She watches the words circling in the air the fan stirs. Her hair is twisted into a tight knot on the back of her head, a knot resting on her black widow's collar. She turns her face toward one voice, then another. The ivory pin thrust into the knot of hair twists one way, then another, as she turns to catch the words falling toward her. She says nothing. She knots her handkerchief, unknots it, knots it again.

The men say the hot weather will hold.

## II

I lean into one corner of the porch, watching her face twist toward the words. She does not say anything with her mouth. Her handkerchief is a tongue, talking as she knots it and unknots it. She says they are dead. She says Billy and Josiah are dead. Aunt Glory says it's a judgment on this town, because of sin hid somewhere in the dark. But she just says they are dead.

I see the young preacher's car coming down the road, stirring the dust as it comes. He pulls the car into the shade, turns off the motor. There is no sound now except the voices. I watch him as he comes around the house, circling round from the front toward the side porch. One woman says the preacher is coming. Another woman goes out to the kitchen to fetch iced tea and cold chicken.

One woman says to her he's come all the way down to preach the meeting, but he will not leave a poor widow-woman to grieve her boys' deaths alone. He walks up the steps on to the side porch. I see the holes in the sleeves of his coat, at the elbows, when he reaches for the



glass of iced tea and the plate of chicken. He twists his face toward her and says he never knew the boys, but he'd heard what fine boys they were.

The words fall through the hot air the fan stirs. I lean and wait in one corner of the porch. She twists her handkerchief into a knot and listens.

The young preacher steps down from the porch into the shade where the men sit in a circle on iron chairs. He asks them if they think the hot spell will hold for the meeting.

### III

The men take off their hats as they come out of the shade up the porch steps. The leather bands inside their hats are soaked with sweat. They mop the sweat from their faces as they talk to her. The women stop to wipe the sweat from their eyes as they wrap chicken and pork and cornbread. I hear the icebox door open and shut, then open and shut, as the women put the food away.

The women wash the dishes and talk as they wash.

I do not move from my corner. The sweat trickles down my legs and ribs and face, but inside I am as still as the fields beyond the shade. The fields fall away toward the river and the bottom. I do not move to wipe the sweat away.

The women and the men get into their cars pulled into the shade around the house. They drive off down the road. Inside the cars the men loosen their black ties and unbutton their collars. The women pull out long hat-pins, take off their hats and set them carefully on the car-seats. Underneath the cars the road stretches like a dry, red scar across the fields into the distance, toward the town.

Now there are three in the house. She and Aunt Glory sit on the side-porch drinking lemonade in the air the fan stirs. I lean in one corner and wait. The dust raised by the cars' tires drifts like a fine red fog over the cotton. I listen to the fields now. I hear the weevils boring into the bolls. I hear Aunt Glory's words now. She does not listen to Aunt Glory. She listens to the weevils boring into the bolls.

The ground in the shade is cool to my feet. Now the road is hot to my feet. The words still circle on the side porch, circle and settle toward her face, but now I walk along the road, so I cannot hear anything. The road runs one way toward the town, the other way toward the river and the bridge lying broken under the road's end. She and Aunt Glory drink iced tea on the side porch, within the circle of shade. She drinks iced tea and listens to what Aunt Glory says.

On either side of me the rows of cotton run straight toward the horizon. My feet are covered with fine red dust. In front of me, I can see the road running straight to the edge, and I see the trees in the bottom beyond the edge.

When I look over my shoulder toward the house, I see the red dust kicked up by Aunt Glory's car and know there is one in the house now, whose grey face turns from one empty corner to another.

There is one now, watching me walk down the river road.

Weevils gnaw at the cotton. Her eyes gnaw my shirt.

Her eyes say: I will gnaw until I know, until you tell me.

I keep walking away from her eyes, between the hot green fields toward the road's end above the river.

#### IV

Now the road ends at a red edge above the river, above the blanched timbers of the bridge. The red clay bank falls steeply from the road's end, and at the bottom the black water runs through the shattered skeleton of the bridge. The sun bleaches the bones the water runs through. Beyond the red edge I stand on is another edge, and beyond that is the tangle of the bottom, swallowing up the road.

A cow fell in the mud of the creek, downstream from the wide place where Billy, Josiah and I swam on the hot days. We watched the cow every day until she died. Then we watched the carcass bloat.

It took the tides of two years to wash the skeleton clean.

The ribs that stuck up out of the water were white claws. A sunken animal gradually clawed its way from inside the hide, and now clawed the water and the air.

Josiah said the cow's ribs looked like the claws of a sunken animal. Billy said they were just ribs. He told Josiah to quit talking foolishness.

Now the road ends in a red edge above the water, above the dead bridge clawing the water and the air. The claws still hold the broken planks that once were a wagon. The wagon's tongue is braced upright among the bridge's timber. Harnessed in the branches caught up behind the bridge, a mule's bloated carcass slowly turns.

Billy, Josiah and I lay naked on the bank of the wide place we swam in, drying in the sun. The sun on my shut eyelids made everything red.

When I opened my eyes, I saw Billy standing over me. He was naked and angry. That was when I told him how.

Now the road ends in a red edge above the river, above the shattered bones of the bridge. The wagon's tongue is caught in the quaking skeleton.

The men say the hot spell will hold. The water will stay low so people can come out and see the bridge and see the wagon clutched in the bridge's claws above the water.

The men say the hot spell will kill the weevils.

Her eyes gnaw my flesh.

#### V: Her Prayer

The clock in the parlour strikes once. Once is the time it is. I am an old woman who watches herself in the long mirror. — Once there was a girl in the mirror. Even as I watched, she undid the buttons on her coarse cotton blouse, slipped it off and dropped it to the floor. Then she set a tall candle on the shelf beside the mirror and leaned forward so that the nipples almost touched the glass. She shook her head and her dark hair fell over the breasts. When she swung her head gently from side to side, the hair caressed her nipples, and she imagined she lay like a minnow in the stillness of the river's depths and her hair was the deep river grass gently lashing her silver sides. — She said that I

was beautiful. She said men would want me and, when the time came, I would give myself to one of them. — When I turned from the mirror, there was a huge shadow moving on the wall. I walked into the shadow until it became as small as I was, then became nothing at all. — The candle got shorter in the burning. Two shadows dressed in the dark before morning, the one tall and hard, the other small. The tall shadow worked the fields by day, ate greens and pork at evening, sat by the fire until he died. — He slept, woke up, went out to the fields once more. Like the shadow on the wall, he shrank the closer I came to him, until one day he disappeared. — But by then, there were two small growing shadows, already looming over my smallness. — Billy came first, in the spring. Then Josiah came on a windy, winter night. — There were three to look after. Three harrowed the spring fields toward summer. One waited in the house until three came back at dusk, three shadows coming up from the fields to be fed and tended. After sunset, we four sat by the fire, four silences casting huge shadows on the kitchen wall. — Then the man died, and there were two to plow and pick. — I was alone in my bed, dreaming. In my dream, I was a little silver minnow hid in the river's depths among the waving grasses. Sunbeams falling through the hot sky shattered into countless bright motes when they struck the river's surface, then sank toward the soft mud like a slow shower of dying sparks. I watched them fall into the green gloom, I watched them fade as they fell. — Suddenly there were whispered words among the grasses and the rain of light became a hail of tiny sharp words, bright hooks falling through the water. — I listened as the two of them put on their clothes in the dark before light. I heard them catch the screen-door so it would not wake me. I heard them get the mule out and hitch up. — The sky was clearing from the west through the morning as the men worked to free their bodies from the broken bridge and the branches caught up behind the bridge. The water had bleached their eyes to white. They were white foam caught in the branches. — A man said: High water for this time of year. A man said: Bad tide. A man said: What do you suppose them boys was doing, driving a mule over that bridge, what with the water so high and all. — The branches held their white bodies close to the breast of the river. I saw Glory's boy on the river bank, watching the men working with ropes and a team of mules to free the bodies

from the branches. I said: It weren't the water and it weren't the spell of rain and it weren't the bridge. — Now the clock strikes twice. There is one in the house, a dark shadow on the kitchen table-top under the lightbulb. I look into the shadow and see an old widow-woman with eyes tiny and black and bright as a weevil's. She walks down the red road toward the town, walking into the storm blowing up, clutching a worn tapestry bag to her bosom, with the bodies of my boys inside.

## VI

They reached the place just as the damp morning light began to seep down through the branches of the swamp oak, through the thick beards of spanish moss, to the floor of the bottom.

Josiah said: There it is.

Vines like bulging veins covered the grey rock. Mosses and ferns clung to its sides and rounded top. The huge trees of the bottom held the ground in gloom, but above the rock was a circle of bleak morning sky.

Josiah said: He done told us this is where it would be. You didn't believe him. Billy said: Get on back and fetch the shovels.

I watched Josiah walk over the half-mile of wet ground to the wagon.

I was not there, but I watched Billy waiting and planning, thinking through every stab of shovel under the rock.

Josiah and Billy took turns at the work until late afternoon.

It was Billy's turn. Naked to the waist, smeared with loam and sweat, he struck furiously at the cold ground under the rock. I felt his arms flex and strike forward against the cold darkness under the rock, forward toward the hard sound. I felt him bite hard against the darkness, bite with with his one steel tooth at the soft earth, bite toward the gold.



Josiah pissed in the grasses while Billy struck and cursed. He struck again, then stopped. He struck once more, then stopped again.

Josiah watched Billy pull himself from underneath the rock, pulling his shovel after him.

Billy said: Son of a bitch. Son of a bitching liar.

Josiah said: He said it would be here. He said they done hid the gold here.

Billy said: Son of a bitch. I done ruined a good shovel.

I saw them as they walked back over the wet ground toward the wagon, carrying nothing as they walked along. I saw them gee up the mule and turn her toward home. Iron wheels turned the empty rattle down the ruts of the bottom road.

Josiah said: What are you going to tell momma when we get back up to the house. How are you going to tell her about the shovel and all.

Billy said: Son of a bitching liar. I'm going to whip fire out of him when I get back. You wait and see.

The iron wheels turned the empty rattle along the bottom road and up the rise at the edge of the river.

I said: Yes.

I said yes and I whipped the mule along the last stretch of road before the road rises to meet the bridge. I said yes and whipped the emptiness on to the old bridge swaying over the black surge. I said yes, then yes to the crack and crazy heave of wagon and bridge, to the shovel sucked down into the noise, to the water slamming up to smash the wagon and drag it into the grinding timbers of the bridge.

Now I stand on the road's edge above the river, bareheaded in the rain and say yes to the water running through Billy and Josiah, taking the green of their eyes downstream as the men try to pull the bodies from the tangle of bridge, wagon and mule.

Her eyes gnaw me as the men work.

Aunt Glory says to her: It's a judgment on this town because of sin hid somewhere.

Her eyes are weevils.

## VII: Glory's Prayer

I sew and pray. — I sew a stitch no man can see, save the Lord, and I pour out my soul in prayers to him who sees everything. — I say it is the Lord who comes clothed with the sunrise, armed with a sword of fire. It is the Lord, come in judgment on this town, come up from Zion to trample sinners under his feet. — Somebody has tried to undo my work. I keep sewing up the people of this town and sinners keep tearing. I sew and the devil tears. But the Lord judges, and I keep sewing. — The lustful man, the wanton woman try to hide their wicked deeds under the gown of night. But the Lord hears each sigh tearing at my work, and every time a stitch breaks, the sound echoes down the corridors of Heaven, the sound angers the Lord, makes him raise the winds over the sea of his righteousness. Then blazing waves of retribution surge against the frail dam of his mercy, pound again and again at that fragile barrier, until it breaks and lets loose the terrible flood. — I say: judgment because of sin somewhere and a warning to man and woman to throw themselves on the mercy of God before the flood of fire and blood sweeps over the world. — The good women in this town listen to me. We sit and sew, and they listen. — I tell them of the blood that flows from the body of God, pitch and fire against those who sin, nectar and dew for the righteous. I say: remember to whom you must give account, to whom you must show every secret in your bodies. And they listen and they remember. They tell me how they keep hidden from the lusts of men, how they keep the stitches tight. — Now we sit and sew, and wonder where the secret sin is hid. Time to look in every cupboard, every closet, every corner. — Time to look in this house. — I say: Look in this house: Look in his room. Look at my dead sister's child in his bed. I say: I know he hates the thing men keep hid in the dark. I know he wants it kept small. He listens to me sewing in the night, and he hates it because he remembers the slashing sword of the Lord. — When she died, I took her lip-rouge and paints and powders and drew the flames of Hell with them on a piece of wrapping paper. Then I showed my picture to the boy. I told him how she had lived in the fires of her vile imaginings, how she did not bank the coals of her lusts, until one day they burned from her the garment of shame. I told him how she burned in this life's pleasures and how she now burns alone for eternity in the blazing river of Hell.

I told him how she was torn open once by man, once by child, and once by the fiery plague the Lord sent against her. — I have held it in my hand, that hateful thing men keep hid in the dark, and have told him it must always be small. I have sewn upon him the garment of righteousness. When I stand before God in the last day, I will not be afraid. I have sewn upon this child of sin the clean garment of holiness. — So I sew and pray with the women, and with the mother of the two boys swept into the sack of the old death angel. I sew and wonder where the thread broke.

## VIII

Her hair was the colour of honeysuckle, yellow and almost white, and her face was grey under the electric light. She lay under a patchwork quilt, almost a shadow under the quilting, her hands moving slowly back and forth across the patches.

I said: Aunt Glory told me you're going to die because you are a sinner.

She said: The Lord keeps the fruit of my sin ever before my eyes.

After she died, Aunt Glory told me I would stay in her room. Now I lie in her bed, under the quilts, and my toes make two points up in the patches.

There is nothing in the room except the things she had. Her bed, which is now my bed. Her chest-of-drawers, emptied of her things. A picture sewn into muslin stretched and framed, a picture of a little girl who walks alone through a windy garden of sunflowers, a little girl holding her broad sun-hat so it will not blow away and walking toward the words sewn in: *You Pass This Way But Once*.

I said to Aunt Glory: Why can't I go up and see her now.

She said: Your mother don't want to see you. She's feeling poorly. You get on outside.

I watched the street through the picket fence. I tore the honeysuckle vines so I would have a hole to watch through.

People passed by every day. Mule-drawn wagons rattled by, and the cars raised a cloud of dust in the passing. Every now and then somebody would see me looking through the hole I'd made in the honey-

suckle. He would say: You, boy. How's your momma feeling today. And I would say: Aunt Glory say's she's feeling poorly.

Every few days, just before dusk, the man walked by the house. He always slowed a little in front of the house and looked up at the window where she was. Then he went on.

I lie in the bed and listen to the women downstairs. Aunt Glory calls them her sewing circle. They sew and talk and pray.

My toes make two points up in the covers.

It is dark in the room, but I can see the girl in the sewn picture. She is holding her hat so it will not be blown away by the wind that never stops.

Every few days, the man passed the house at dusk. I watched him. He never saw me.

The wind blows hard in the room tonight, so I can just barely hear the women downstairs. I want it to be small. I put my hand around it, so it will be small.

After she died, the old preacher came to the house. He said to Glory: I believe she was sorry for what she done. Aunt Glory rocked in her chair and sewed and said: She never repented, even at the last when the burning fury of the Lord was heavy upon her. Many was the time I asked her to throw herself on the Lord's mercy and tell me who got that child on her. But she said: The fruit of my sin is ever before my eyes. Then she turned her shameless face to the wall.

I put my hand around it to keep it small.

Before she died, the man passed by the house at dusk, then circled and came back. He knocked on the door and Aunt Glory let him in.

He stood inside the door with his straw hat in his hands, with his face toward the floor. He said: I come to see her before she goes.

Aunt Glory said: The Lord will bless you. You are indeed a Christian man.

Then she went back to her sewing and he slowly climbed the dark staircase.

When he had shut the door, he stood for a while by the bed, not speaking, twisting his straw hat in his hands. Then he said: I come to see you. She said: What do you want. He said: I come to see you before you go.

She said: I didn't ask you to come here. I didn't ask it. He said: I come to get you to forgive me for what I done. Don't nobody know but you and me. When you go, there will be just me, knowing what I done.

She said: You get on back where you come from. Ain't you got a woman to mind? Ain't you got two boys to rear? You get on back and leave me be.

He stood by the bed, twisting his hat. Then he said: I don't want this thing to gnaw at me.

Slowly she raised her fingers to the collar of her nightgown and began undoing the buttons. With her eyes shut, she unbuttoned the gown to her waist, then pulled it open. He looked, then cried and shut his eyes.

She said: No, you look. You see this thing gnawing at me. And you look there in the yard, see the fruit of my sin.

He said: I don't want to see it. I don't never want to see him again.

With her eyes shut, she did up the buttons on her nightgown. Then she said: Get Glory.

He went out to the landing at the top of the stairs and called down for Aunt Glory. He said: You better get on up here. I think she's having a bad time.

When my mother died, Aunt Glory put on a dress the colour of honeysuckle and her Sunday hat. She said: I'm going to the burying. You stay here and play with Billy and Josiah.

That day I showed them the hole I watched through. I said: you look through that hole at the people coming by. They can't see you.

Billy said: That's a fool thing to be doing.



Aunt Glory had wanted us to stay in the house until the funeral had passed. We watched from the upstairs window as the hearse and cars passed. I saw Aunt Glory's eyes watch me as she passed.

We watched until the last car had gone out of sight, south toward the graveyard. Then we went down to my hole in the honeysuckle.

The heat had driven everybody inside who did not have to be outside. A bird-dog limped past once, squatted to bite a flea, then moved off toward the shade across the street. He watched nothing. Nobody came by any more.

I said: Billy, you be your daddy walking by. Josiah and I will watch you. So Billy went outside the gate and walked by, slouching and shuffling, pretending to chew a plug of tobacco. Then he straightened up and said: This is a fool thing to be doing. Come in the house and I'll show you something. I said: What.

Josiah said: Billy, don't you do it. I said: What is it.

Billy said: Come on inside and I'll show you how. Let's go up to your room and I'll show you how.

Josiah said to me: Don't you never listen to him. Josiah said to Billy: Don't do it.

We climbed the stairs to my room, her room now, and shut the door. I said: Billy, show me how.

Josiah said to Billy: If you do it and he does it, then I'm going to want to do it. I said to Billy: Show me how.

Billy unbuttoned his trousers. When he pulled it out of his britches it was already hard. After he started, Josiah started to undo the buttons on his trousers, starting with the top one.

When Aunt Glory got back, Billy and Josiah were in the yard, watching people through the hole in the honeysuckle. I was in my room alone.

Aunt Glory stood in the door and said: She is gone now. No amount of crying can bring her back.

Now I am in the windy room alone. The little girl leans into the wind and holds her hat tight. I hold it in my hand to keep it small. The little girl holds her hat tight to keep it from blowing away. In the darkness I see the words on the sewn picture.

Before my mother died, she called to me. I stood in the door of her room, watching her dim face.

She said: I'm going soon. Do you know that.

I told her I did. She said: Look at the little girl Glory made for me.

I said: What is she doing.

She said: She is holding her hat so the wind won't blow it away again. Once, a long time ago, a wind came up and blew off her hat, then carried it miles away and dropped it at last in the bottom on the other side of the river. After a while the little girl gave up looking for her hat. After a long time, the hat sank into the bottom-land and became a great grey rock. A long, long time ago, robbers lived in the bottom near the rock. They lived by stealing from the settlers who had to go through the bottom to get to the good land farther on. Later, when the settlers stopped going that way, the robbers rode into the towns and held up banks. They stole so much money that all the people in the towns got the soldiers to go into the bottom after the robbers. But when the soldiers had rounded them up, they found not one gold dollar. The robbers said they'd hid the gold under an old lady's hat, and nobody would ever find it. Now the old lady's hat is a round rock in the bottom. When you grow up, you get yourself a good shovel and dig under the old lady's hat until you find the gold the robbers hid. Nobody's found it, but you will, when the time comes.

Then she said: Get Glory. I'm having a bad time.

I hold it in my hand and it is soft and small. Shovels are long and hard in my hands. The little girl holds her hat tight so the wind won't blow it away.

When I asked for a shovel to dig under the old lady's hat, Aunt Glory dropped her sewing into her lap and looked at me over her glasses. She said: Where under Heaven did you hear such foolishness.

I said: She told me before she died.

Aunt Glory picked up her sewing and started at it again. After a while she said: That's like her, telling you what ain't been talked around here for many a year. You can't never have no shovel to go digging under that rock. A long time ago, one man took a shovel and dug under that rock, and he died. Then another man dug, and the Lord smote him dead with a fever. And don't you go talking that foolishness around. Nobody wants his child to die, digging for gold that isn't there.

I said: I want a shovel so I can dig under the old lady's hat.

I hold it in my hand. It is soft and small. The room is windy. A shovel is long and hard. The girl holds her hat to keep it from being blown away again.

### IX: Billy's Prayer

Daddy said his daddy came over the mountains in a mule-drawn wagon, led by a pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night. That's the way his daddy talked. — Daddy said the old man told him the angel of the Lord led the mule-train down a creek that ran out of the mountains, then down the river the creek became, until they came to a hill of good-for-nothing dirt set back from the river. Then the angel told my old granddaddy: This is the place. — Daddy used to say that was the craziest damned angel he ever heard of. — When my daddy was thirteen, he packed some chicken and cornbread and walked off the place, leaving his mother with six squalling girls and his father with his Bible. After a month of sleeping in ditches and stealing potatoes, he came to the town and got a job sweeping the mercantile store. After a while more, he married my mother and hoed out this farm. I came first. That's how I got here. — One day Daddy came in early from the fields and spit blood. Then he died. Momma went up to Glory's house to learn sewing because she was too weak to

work in the fields. That left Josiah and me to do all the work. I never liked her much after that. She could have sold this place for twice what Daddy paid for it and taken us all to town. We could have had a big house like Glory and her boy live in. I could have had a room upstairs like that boy. But she said: We got to hold on to our land. The land is what we've got. — And the land is what we had. And the cotton. Little bolls the size of thimbles, if the weevils didn't eat them. That's what we had. — One day some cousins came down from the city. When I took the boy-cousins to the wide place in the creek, they wouldn't strip to go in with Josiah and me. So we made them tell us about the city and the women in the city. They sat there on the bank telling us about the women and passing around a glossy magazine full of pictures of women. I got them to give it to me, and I kept it under a board in the floor. Josiah and I used to bring it out and look at the pictures while we did it. — One day Josiah and Glory's boy and I went down to the wide place to swim. I took the magazine and showed it to Glory's boy. I said: Someday I'm going to go to the city and buy me a big car and take them women around in it. — Then that fool Josiah said: You can't leave. — I said: Maybe *you* can't leave. Maybe *you* have got to let them sew you right into the quilt they're making. But I'm not going to be a patch in Glory's quilt. — I said: I'm going to get me a car and get those city women to go with me. — That was when Glory's boy said: I'll show you how. — That was when Glory's boy showed me how. — Josiah and I put the shovels into the wagon just at dusk, as we were coming up from the fields for supper. The woman would think we were putting away our hoes in the barn. She wouldn't think a thing about it. — Then we got up before light and put on our trousers without any light. We went out, making sure the screen-door didn't slam. We got the mule hitched up without a noise. — We rolled down the dirt road before dawn, toward the river and the rock and the women.

## X

the air in the tent was still and hot  
in the pasture where the tent had been raised the night fell from a hot  
clear sky and settled around the tent

the people had driven their cars into the pasture and left them in a  
circle around the tent  
the cars were black teeth in a necklace around the tent

the ladies beat at the air with their straw fans  
on each fan was painted the words: *you pass this way but once*  
the fans beat the still, hot air  
the ladies were butterflies caught under a handkerchief  
the road ends now in a jagged red edge above the river  
the road ends above the broken bones of a bridge  
the fans beat the air  
the air did not move  
i held the songbook in my hands  
the pages of the songbook were blank under the glare of the electric  
lights  
they had hung on the tent poles  
they sang  
their singing stirred the air  
their singing stirred the sawdust  
the tent was filled with a fine haze of song and dust  
last night the crickets sang in the trees  
they sang about the blood  
their singing made the wind blow in my room  
the people in the tent sang about the blood  
josiah and billy had no blood in them when they were found caught up  
behind the branchjam  
their eyes were white  
when they pulled josiah and billy out of the branches there was no  
blood  
in their mouths  
the river below the end of the road is black  
water runs through the white timbers



the preacher came to aunt glory before the meeting  
he came to the house and sat in the front room  
he asked her to help a christian in need  
she told him to drink iced tea while she fixed the holes in his sleeves  
she talked about the blood  
she talked to her sewing while he drank iced tea in the front room

he stood on a platform at one end of the tent  
the choir sat in a white half-circle around him  
i watched glory's patches rise and fall as he reached and pleaded, as he  
waved his bible in the air

he said  
when i came to this town at the urging of the spirit to pitch my tent  
there were two things hidden from me  
one thing i did not know was that the old death angel was riding in  
the back of my wagon  
was carrying his old sack with me into this town  
when i came to this town  
i saw a field already harrowed and ready to receive seed  
tonight i see this worn tent as though it were the sky  
i see this congregation as though it were a harrowed field ready for  
sowing

but that angel saw a field no man can see  
he goes right on down to the hidden acre  
where the boll is blown before time  
and the bell has rung for the picking  
i pitch my tent in the afternoon  
but the death angel has gone down to the field he sees  
and is fixing to pick and load and take away  
then the sun goes down and i rest from my labours  
but that angel is in his field by the river  
ready to pick and load  
ready to take his load on down to the gin no man can see  
now the time comes for the preaching  
but they are not here  
now the time comes for the sowing  
but the death angel has harvested his crop already  
and taken the crop to his gin for the baling

the patches aunt glory sewed on his coat rose and fell as he reached  
and  
raised his bible into the air

he said  
yea there is a second thing i do not see

the water runs black under the red edge  
far across the fields the tent is a bright boil on the land's flesh  
the sky is black  
crickets sing in the mockorange bushes  
the water breaks over the bridge's bones  
her hat is caught up behind the bridge's bones  
even though it is dark i can see her hat

*help me my hat has blown away*

i hold it in my hand it is small and limp can you see it it is  
small and limp in my hand

*the wind has blown my hat away*

the tent is far away now i have left the tent in the sewn picture you  
had your hat on tight your dress billows in the wind but you had  
your hat on tight he cannot see you here i see you

*the wind that blew my hat away was too strong help me get my hat*

your hat is in the river caught up behind the bridge tell me what you  
know

*i know you while i fought the wind i watched you*

you saw me hold it in my hand it was small and limp now it is  
nothing

*you wanted it to be nothing*

there is nothing to have now

*do not listen to yourself saying those things help me get my hat*

tell me what you know

*i know this red edge above the river i know the broken bridge i know  
the road that runs through the bottom to the rock help me*

the stitches that held your hat on were strong

*but the wind was stronger it tore my hat from my hands and  
carried it  
into the river*

will you wait for me

*i will wait in your room until you bring me my hat*

they all know now she knows aunt glory knows it is nothing now  
it is not small

*help me*

your eyes are weevils

*help me*

when the men dragged them from the river i saw black blood  
caught up

behind the bridge the black water breaks cold against my flesh

*it is the blood*

your hat is in the blood the blood breaks over the bridge the  
black blood is so cold you stand above me on the red edge your hair  
is yellow and your dress is blue wait for me

*i will wait for you*

wait for me until i catch your hat out of the black blood of god

*i wait*

## Michael Agrios / FOUR PHOTOGRAPHS

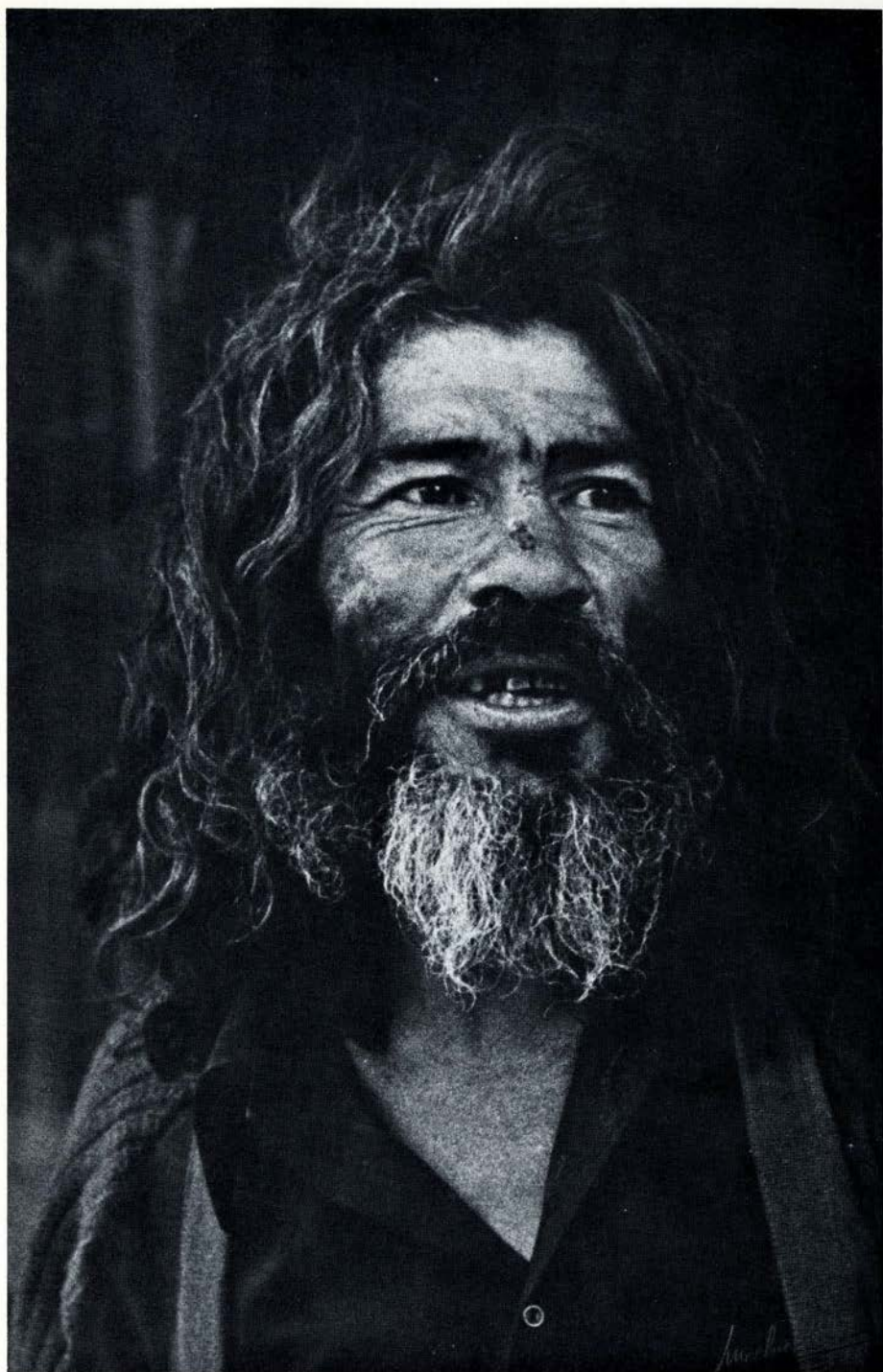
### IMAGES

*Travelling*, silver print, August 1975.

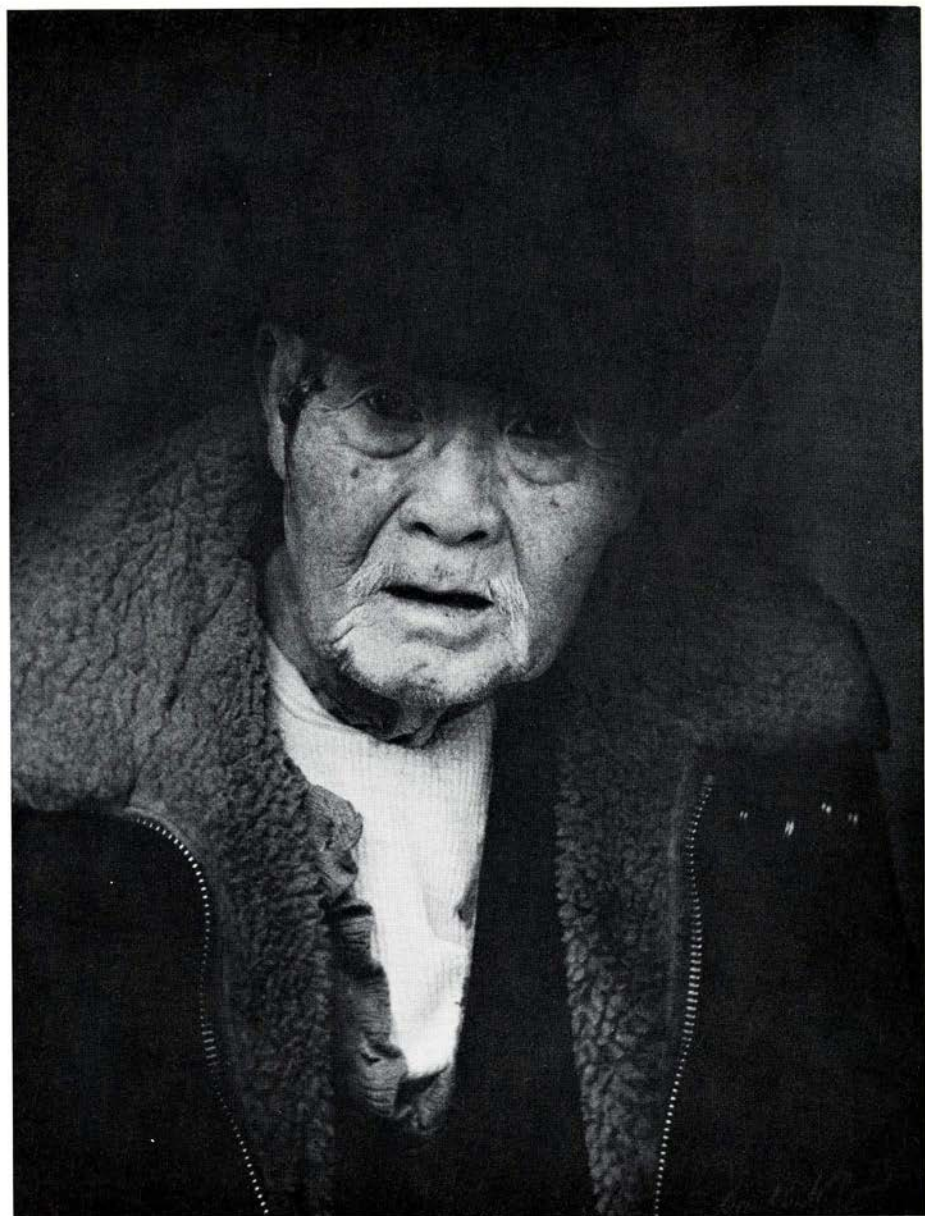
*My Old Chinese Friend*, silver print, May 1975.

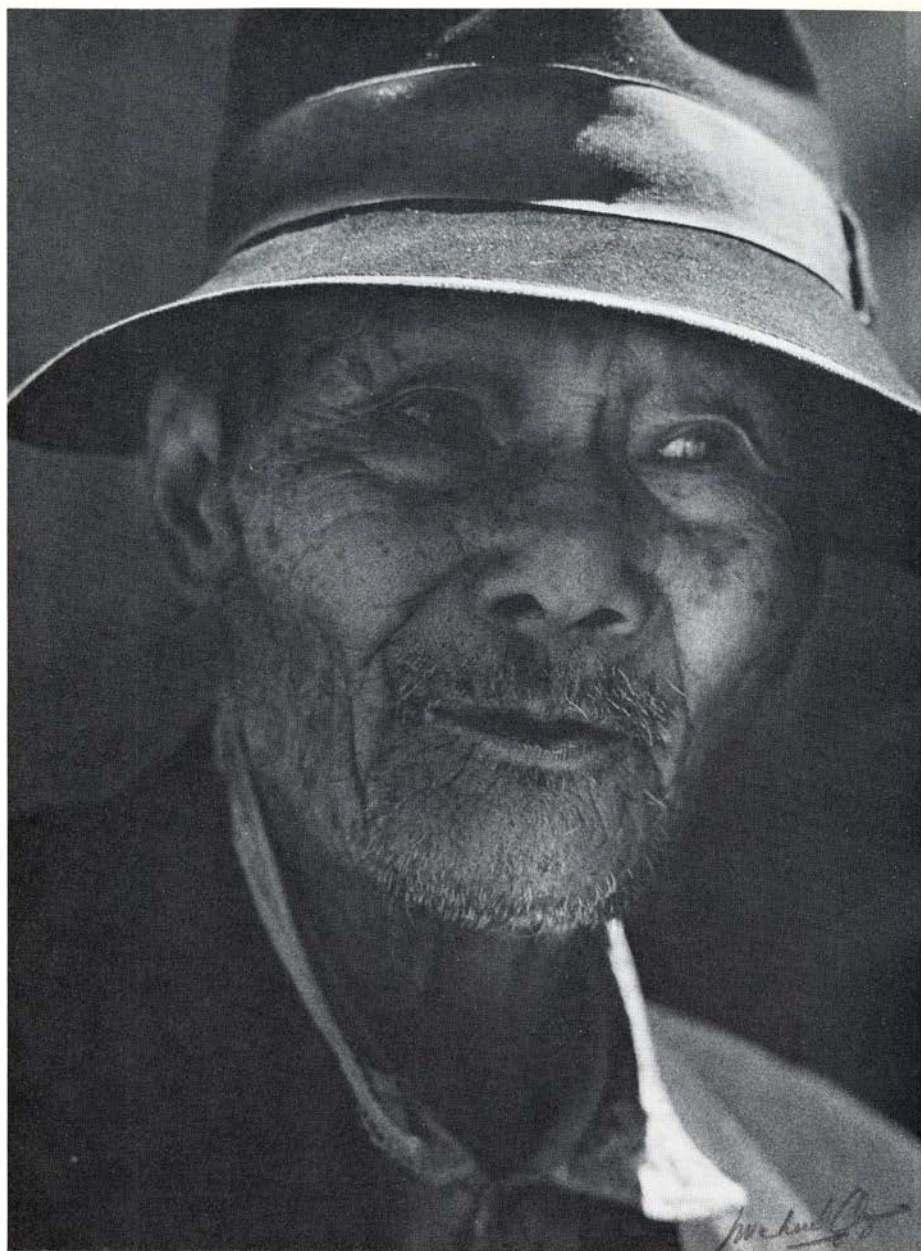
*Untitled*, silver print, July 1975.

*Talker*, silver print, July 1975.















# Beverley Simons / IF I TURN AROUND QUICK

A Film Script, with Journal Entries & a Note

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*All inquiries concerning production of the play, in whole or in part, in any medium or by any group, amateur or professional, should be directed to the author at 2540 Bellevue Avenue, West Vancouver, B.C.*

*Photograph: Tony Westman*



## JOURNAL ENTRIES

*July 21 / 66*

I'm working on a ½ hr. television play for George Robertson. On marriage, the love hate relationship. Right now the question is not "what" but "how" to write. The play could easily become as drab as the life it's to depict. I'm tired of slice of life technique. The daily papers and court reports give enough morbid details to satisfy anyone.

Having decided that — i.e. no sociological thesis or psychological report — I have two choices:

(1) The play can work within a conventional frame. It will be gentle on the surface. The variations and tensions will lie in the rhythm of the dialogue and movement (physical action). They will only half express their feelings and memories, but they will have poetry. I'll use the one beach flashback in broken moments. The effect of the piece will be like a series of cries, half-heard, still sounding . . .

(2) This would be an extravagant, highly visual piece, syncopated in rhythm, i.e. Bartok's Sonata for 2 pianos & percussion. Sounds would be used suddenly and seemingly without reason as each of the two characters pursue their own thoughts & objectives; only occasionally would they bump against each other, perhaps for a moment mesh.

The second is more experimental and artificial than the first. I must consider the medium, the annoying change in effect between videotape & film, the feasible expense, the time limit, and the producer. Though George is flexible I think he would prefer the first treatment. If only it could be written without being mundane!

*July 22 / 66*

This morning the problem seemed to have broken. As I suspected concept (1) (yesterday's note) was the most appealing to George. He wants to reach "the man in the street." I'm satisfied. I suspect I'm not ready for what non-writers erroneously call — a freer form. My language isn't tight enough rich enough.

So this morning I began to write dialogue. I didn't begin soon enough & while trying to let the myriad impressions & the rush of voices from my characters, Sadie & Philip, sort themselves into some order — I lost the first thrust. The way they spoke, the sequence of key scenes, all gone. Now I must do the job of the craftsman & piece them or a facsimile of them back together again. Oh for the day when I can ride these moments, when I will have the energy & the skill!

As I worked a strange thing happened. I no longer believed in the couple's indifference to each other. There developed a Saturday night dress-up game between them. As soon as I saw this my interest was fired. The trouble in writing about the humdrum is that it's humdrum to write, and so I am once again with eccentrics. But, I hope, with characteristics exaggerating & therefore making newly clear, the same as exist in many couples.

The second thing that surprised me in the writing was the brutality. I wonder if George will accept this. He's such a gentle soul. I suspect he considers violence & brutality in bad taste. He's right in a way, at least in a work of art. There must be shading. People don't have the energy to live in a state of active hate, or of any active passion. There are moments of truce, indifference, routine.

Problem — They must be painfully real people moving in the rhythm of their relationship. Yet the ½ hour must encompass days of their relationship & a number of different moods.

The theme has become the struggle to beat routine. Sadie says something like: "We've lived together too long. How can we make an evening together at home an event? We must. Or else we're nothing."

Problem — How to accomplish theme, moods, suggestive succinct language (prosaic in content but somehow crystalline) — without consciously thinking about it? If I do I go dry. If I don't the dialogue escapes me. It breaks the structure of the frame & becomes frightening in its venom. Too many solos too long. As is this entry in the journal.

*Tuesday, July —*

The dimensions of the play are now clearly established. I see the people, I see them move, I have a sense of the rhythm in & out of the flashbacks, but the dialogue! — Sadie changes constantly. Reminiscences of the Southern belle in her. Not what I want. She is coarse & intense without being stupid. She has insights and is rich in natural metaphor. But she is not witty with control. She is not an intellectual.

I feel much the same way I did when I began *Green Lawn Rest Home*. It's all there. Now comes the compression into tight meaningful dialogue, and the arrangement of scenes. The context is everything.

This seems mechanical. Do other writers let their work go as it will — as so many of them pretend they do? Perhaps I am still just an apprentice craftsman.

*Thursday*

Today the first glimmer of action — that is, melding of characters, their physical presence, their past, their isolation, in a theatrical moment. The lighting of the candles, the momentary glow from the lighthouse. But I lost it as soon as I found it. Got bogged down again in concepts.

I'm getting closer all the time now. The sense of duet & counterpoint with their past selves is crystallizing.

Their language is the most difficult. I want to condense powerful feelings in simple language. But simple so easily fritters into trivial. This is the dilemma of the modern playwright. We're denied artificiality, our people can't use poetry in contemporary situations.

Without being pretentious I must somehow evolve a rich language.

How to keep a simple flow yet still have rich texture.

*August the 6th*

An unfortunate development. I seem to be quite capable of theorizing about my work. The characters are clearly formed & I know the line I hope the play will follow. Perhaps I've become too dogmatic about

it. I'm unable to write the dialogue. Like Gide, if I hadn't already struggled through the process, I'd give up. I'm left with a sheaf of notes, including snippets and sometimes pages of dialogue, but I can't summon the psychic energy to follow through an impulse. I look for every excuse to delay the confrontation. I've spent three days staring at the typewriter, reading and re-reading short speeches, and at the end of each day suffered intense feelings of guilt, frustration, and general resentment against everyone and everything — as though everyone in the world but me was responsible for my suspended condition.

George is due back in town tomorrow. Nothing concrete to show him. There is a deadline intrinsic in the play itself. The lighthouse scenes must be shot in the summertime.

Problem in part seems to be how far will I let these people go in their eccentricities — how much control so as to be recognizable to audience — as ordinary people. How much boredom, etc. of couple —

*Oct. 2, Alberni*

Over here on a trial. Have been thwarted time after time, wanting to write out ideas, character sketches —

Saturday Night, or Turn Around Quick is almost in working draft form. Not completely satisfied with it. The natural & the strange still not satisfactorily married, but I'm anxious to move ahead into something else. Development from piece to piece.

## IF I TURN AROUND QUICK

### [POSSIBLE OPENING

*This is to give a sense of universal social ritual, in itself peculiar as Philip and Sadie's, but familiar and therefore acceptable.*

*It's Saturday night. The tinny sound of rock 'n roll comes from a transistor radio lying on a beach log. It creates dissonance with Sadie's and Philip's theme which is heard at the outset, a 1940's tune from their "good days." Behind the log a teenage couple are necking. This whole sequence is swift, taken at eye level from a moving vehicle. The rock 'n roll fades and the theme grows in strength as we see couples dressed up for a night out getting into cars. Past a church, now still as a mortuary. Continuing on Marine Drive a group of teenagers straggle from the drugstore down to the pier. There is a line of waiting patrons at the local theatres. Ahead the flashing lights of the bridge. The song is loud now, but underneath it the voices of Philip and Sadie can already be heard. Mostly Sadie's voice. Continue on to the British Properties with an abrupt change of music, as on a radio dial, to the singing strings of CHQM, but the theme though muted soon re-enters underneath. Swing elegantly past elegant homes where cocktail chatter and the clink of glasses float through imitation French, imitation Tudor, and imitation Spanish windows. A door opens suddenly. A man stumbles out and bends over, as if to retch. Cut to apartment buildings. The camera scans up and down over the blind windows.*

*Cut in to Sadie's and Philip's bedroom. Sound suddenly off. We see Philip from the side.]*



**THE FIRST IMAGE** is that of rain falling on a putrefying starfish. It gradually fades to the interior shot of Philip.

*It's a hot Saturday night during a Vancouver Indian summer, late in September or early October. The heat is unnatural, oppressive. The air is a cloying blanket and it's difficult to breathe in the bed-sitting room belonging to Sadie and Philip.*

*The room is in semi-darkness. We see Philip from the side, in formal dress, although he hasn't put the jacket on yet. It hangs behind him over the rungs of the chair. On closer inspection his suit is not new, it's not well pressed, and it's visibly soiled. He's wearing tattered backless slippers. The daily newspaper is spread out in front of him, but he's only half concentrating on it. He's listening for sounds in the bathroom that adjoins the bed-sitting room.*

*The room contains a cheap but pretentious bed in French provincial style. The cover is pink chenille pocked by tufts of fluff wound with gold thread. There is a large shabby scatter rug; a wall bookshelf holding a disorderly array of pulp magazines and books, with bottles of liquor acting as bookends; the desk at which Philip is sitting; two kitchen chairs; an armchair and footstool; a clothes cupboard; and a vanity table with drawers. A picture of Bets in a summer dress is on the desk. Lipstick, powder, rouge, mascara are scattered on the counter of the vanity. Their drippings make a gooey colourful mess. There is a pile of dirty clothes in the corner under which lurks a case of beer. A box of groceries sits beside it. In another corner a tatty collection of autumn leaves is squashed in a milk bottle. Most of the leaves have fallen from the branches and lie unswept on the floor.*

*Philip would have been considered good-looking in high school. Now he is crumbling. When he stands he is slightly stooped and he has what Sadie affectionately calls "a beer belly."*

*There is occasional illumination of the room by the lighthouse. The glow may be considered real or imaginary.*

*Off the bedroom is the bathroom, the kitchen, and through separate French doors, the patio. This is part of an aging West Vancouver home on the waterfront.*

*The use of the lighthouse as an evaporating glow in the room, in distance shots, and then in close rhythmic shots almost blinding in intensity, should give the effect of a strobe.*

### ACTION SEEN

*While Philip sits in the semi-darkness Sadie's voice is heard. As she talks the titles appear over the picture.*

### SOUND OVER

SADIE: The girl at the Safeway, you know, the one I call Miss Prigg, she told me you were in to buy two dozen eggs. It'll take more than a diet to work off that beer belly of yours. Philip? You ready? Can you see the lighthouse yet? God, it's bright for this time a year. You think maybe it won't come on tonight? When the man flicks the switch it's like it's me he's turning on. You know? In my head. I can't stop my head working at night. About Bets, whether I did right with her since the day she was born, about you and me, yah, sweet Philip and Sadie. And silly things, too, like what work I oughta do tomorrow, in what order. Over and over until I think my head's gonna bust. Funny thing, though, daytime it's empty inside my head, white, kinda, and scary. There're times, you know? I can't go from room to room. Not even to the kitchen for a coffee. I been stuck in one chair even. Wouldn't look behind me. Not until you got home and come in the room. Not because I'm scared if I turn around quick I'll see something, a monster or a ghost . . . There might be nothing. Wouldn't it be awful to fall into nothing? You listening? Philip? I know you're in there. Your breathing's as bad as your snores. Like a stuck pig. Are you ready?

*During this speech Philip stirs, pulls one formal shoe out from under the chair, starts to lace it up, thinks better of it, kicks it off. He looks longingly at his briefcase which holds work he wants to get at over the weekend. Returns to the newspaper.*

*Philip stirs then subsides.*

*Cut here to Sadie in bathroom. Speech is over picture as she chooses from assortment of makeup on the sink counter. Above the counter is the mirror.*

SADIE: I been getting that pain again, across my shoulders and down the left side a my back. You suppose I ought to go see Dr. Johnson? You don't know what it is to be a woman. We used to have a name for it when I was a kid. The Curse. Yah. We'd mark it on the calendar with a red pencil. Next comes Change of Life. You think that's what's bothering me? I know it disgusts you to talk about these things, but turning your back won't make em go away. Which reminds me, I saw ants in the cupboard. *(She pauses for a reply)* Philip? The office called. I told em you were busy.

If you're so goddam restless why don't you go on out? Yah, go on downtown and make whoopee. Where would you go? To the movies? Big deal! You seen em all. I know where you are Saturday afternoons. "I got clients." Hey! How about Main and Hastings? You could pick up some fat floozy and . . .

PHILIP: (*Barely audible*) Shut up.

SADIE: Philip's too delicate. He'd slip on the spit in the street and disappear.

*Now the lines come directly from Sadie. She watches herself form the words in the mirror.*

SADIE: Poof! No Philip. I'm sure of you and that's the truth of it.

*Some of Sadie's monologue should come over the picture, some of it directly from her. That is, much of what she says is "in the air," ad eternum. It was said and will be said again. There is a fusion of time as the couple is caught in the continuum of their arguments and experience.*

*Sadie purses up her lips, adds a purple lipstick to the bright red she already has on, pinches her eyelashes to make them curl, smiles at herself experimentally. When she stops posing she has a tired face. The viciousness that comes from her at times comes out of her fatigue. Although her face is heavily made up she makes no attempt to do anything about her hair which is dry and straggly.*

SADIE: (*Continuing*) About that pain, don't worry, I won't die of it. I'll stick around until you pop off. We'll be buried side by side, real respectable. That means our bones'll mix when they crumble. You won't be able to help yourself. (*Sings*) "And from his bones a true rose grew and from hers a briar." Wha' do you think, Philip? A laburnum tree, more like. Anyone that eats the pods from us'd drop dead.

*Sadie begins to hum to herself in excitement, steps back to examine her figure. She is in bra and pants.*

*She breathes in hard to flatten her stomach and pinches at the loose pieces of flesh that frame her waist.*

*Cut to Philip. Sadie is quiet. Philip glances at the bathroom door, grows concerned, shuffles to the door, looks in.*

PHILIP: (*With disgust*) Can't you shut the door at least?

*He closes it, shuffles to patio doors, opens one of them. More heat floods in. He closes the door.*

SADIE: Not bad for a girl in her 40's.

SADIE: Even if I did die I'd stick around to spook the joint.



SADIE: (*Off picture has opened the bathroom door and calls out*)  
We're none of us any different.  
Even the queen goes to the pot.  
(*She slams the door.*)

PHILIP: For Christ's sake . . .

*He takes a large dirty handkerchief from his pocket, mops his brow and neck, puts it back in his pocket. Now it's noticeable that his tuxedo pants are slit at the sides to make room for his belly. He goes to check the statistic in the paper, grunts to himself as he reads the temperature, glances again at his briefcase, then toward bathroom. Opens the case and starts to go through papers.*

SADIE: (*Suddenly behind him*)  
That's against the rules.

PHILIP: (*Frightened, aggressive*)  
Who made up these dumb rules, anyway?

SADIE: They were agreed on.

PHILIP: Never out loud.

SADIE: They were agreed on.

*Through the following, Sadie opens a drawer, digs out a fancy slip that has been rolled up and shoved in the back, smooths it out over her knees, puts it on.*

PHILIP: I was bullied into them.

SADIE: So much the worse for you. You could've fought.

PHILIP: With a woman? I got better things to do.

SADIE: With your mate. For better or for worse, until death do us . . .

PHILIP: Until I walk out.

SADIE: You just do that. Go on. My God, I'd dance for joy. Do you know what I think sometimes? Maybe today he'll die. Why not? There's hundreds of car accidents everyday. Please God, why leave the sad widow and the moaning kids? Choose mine, him, that . . . slug. (*During this speech she struggles into the slip.*)

PHILIP: (*Applauds*) Hey, not bad. You oughta sell it to Ladies Home Journal.

SADIE: Cheap with your fists just like everything else. What time is it?

*She sits at the vanity, starts swiftly to set her hair with curlers.*

PHILIP: Nine-twenty.

SADIE: Got a letter from Bets.

PHILIP: Yah? (*Trying to conceal his interest*)

SADIE: She needs money. For getting her teeth fixed.

PHILIP: How much?

SADIE: She'll send the bill when she's finished. How come you don't look pale when it's for her?

PHILIP: She's my kid.

SADIE: Our kid. That's one thing you got no choice about sharing.

PHILIP: Don't you make me out a miser. If I let you handle the money it'd go in one day, on junk.

SADIE: Yah? What kinda?

PHILIP: (*Gesturing to makeup*)  
It makes me want to scrub when I look at it.

SADIE: A pink baby'd make you want to scrub. I got no clothes to wear makeup with. Not that I want any. Six days a week I feel like a spider. It's only right I should look like one. Can you see the lighthouse yet?

PHILIP: It's not dark enough. This weather's unnatural. The summer won't let go.

SADIE: Maybe the trees'll start sprouting leaves again.

PHILIP: They'll get their ass froze off if they do.

SADIE: Time?

PHILIP: Nine twenty-five.

*Sadie hurriedly goes to the cupboard, pulls down a dress, steps into it, turns around so that Philip may tie her in. Where the zipper no longer meets she has pinned in ribbons on either side.*

*She shoves her stockingless feet into heels, throws the towel she has carried in from the bathroom on the pile of clothes in the corner, touches her head, remembers the curlers, wraps a bright coloured bandana over them, knotting it at the back. Several curlers poke through a tear in the scarf. Philip puts on the jacket, does up the top button of the shirt and stands facing her. They are both suddenly self-conscious and shy.*

SADIE: (*Remembering*) The candles!

*She rushes to the vanity table, searches through the mess on top, comes back with two stubs of what must have once been long, graceful, dinner candles. The holders are big shiny porcelain circles with flowers and birds painted on them. Sadie pushes the newspaper off the desk and reverently places the candles.*

*This mime sequence is broken with giggles and dialogue from the lovemaking scene in the park, Scene 2. Inarticulate whispers at first, they rise.*

SADIE: Don't.

PHILIP: Why not? We're going to be married.

*Fade out.*

SADIE: Time?

PHILIP: Nine-thirty.

*He takes a match from a large box of house matches, strikes one and bends to light the stubs.*

SADIE: Your shoes. You haven't got your shoes on.

PHILIP: Ah, come on, Sadie, what does it . . .

*He's stopped by the look on her face, bends grunting to get them from under his chair, slides them on without doing up the laces. Sadie stands in dignity, waiting. Philip lights the stubs.*

SADIE: There.

*The room becomes momentarily illumined with a soft glow. When it withdraws it leaves the room in the dim light of the candle. The glow was the first appearance of the lighthouse, and with it comes more whispers.*

SADIE: What're you thinking?

PHILIP: Sadie, Sadie.

SADIE: I don't know you. I'm scared.

PHILIP: We'll take him home for a decoration.

SADIE: (*Awkward and self-conscious*) Well . . . so, here it is . . .

PHILIP: Yah.



*Sadie smooths her dress with her hands. She looks around as if trying to find something. Philip pulls the chair over, offers it to her. She sits.*

PHILIP: You . . . ah . . . ready for a drink?

SADIE: Thank you.

*He starts across the room to fetch it. Philip pauses, rocks back and forth experimentally on one foot, takes off the shoe, reaches in and pulls out . . .*

PHILIP: A bobbypin.

SADIE: You should've shook it before you put it on.

PHILIP: *(Still holding it)* This whole thing, it's stupid. I'm a monkey in my own house.

SADIE: You say that every time.

PHILIP: This time it's 75 degrees. In the paper. Read it.

*He's loosening his tie to take it off. Sadie runs to him terrified.*

SADIE: No. Don't. First it'll be your tie, then your shoes. You had your jacket off before. You'll end up walking around here in your underwear like the rest of the week.

PHILIP: So?

SADIE: This is Saturday night. Look. The Queen goes by. How do you know she's the queen, huh? (*As she talks Sadie fixes Philip's tie. He moves away, revolted by her attentions. She follows, kneels and ties his shoes. Or simply hold on Sadie, momentarily transformed by her speech.*) It's the way she dresses, the way she walks, the crown she has on her hair. And she doesn't always feel like being queen, either. Sometimes she'd probably like to stay home and sit in a corner, yah, in her underwear, why not, maybe do some petit-point. But this stuff she wears, it's like calling for something special to happen to her. The church, they understand . . . The statues, the stained glass windows . . .

PHILIP: Are you turning into . . .

SADIE: Shut up. I'm talking! . . . the priest tall and beautiful in his robes, like when we were married, and the people dressed just so, saying chants together. They're tempting the spirit.

PHILIP: You are . . . turning into a religious nut.

SADIE: Put on your slippers.

PHILIP: But you just . . .

SADIE: What the Hell. It's hot.

(*Possible whispers*)

SADIE: I don't believe in life after death, do you?

PHILIP: He takes over empty ones where the animal insides's already died.

*The last three words are heard behind the next part of Sadie's speech.*

PHILIP: I think better in my shoes.

SADIE: Then you've been in slippers since I met ya. The beer's under there. Keeps it cool.

*She kicks the clothes on her way out to the patio.*

*Cut into Scene 6. Sadie and Philip are standing in the lighthouse room. The windows are covered with a cloth to protect the light. Or perhaps it is getting dark now, and the light starts to turn on its axle.*

SADIE: Take me down. You look strange. Like somebody else.

*Cut to Lighthouse Park, Scene 2. Sadie and Philip are running freely over the rock outcropping, between the trees in Lighthouse Park. The colours are almost painful in the richness of summer. Philip catches up with Sadie, pulls her down roughly. He starts to kiss her. Possible freeze frame on Sadie trying to free herself.*

*Voices start over image of beer.*

SADIE: Philip? I'm scared. It's so high up here. And hot.

*Voices over (from discussion C and A).*

SADIE: The starfish, it's gone all soggy.

PHILIP: It stinks.

SADIE: Leave it in the sun.

*Cut to a distant shot of the lighthouse as seen by Sadie from the patio of their house.*

SADIE: Blink.

*Cut to Sadie on the patio.*

SADIE: Blink. *(She is talking quietly to the light.)* So there you are. Starlight Star bright, will there be a crash tonight? What if you went dark? Pow! A freighter hits the rocks. Pow! A steamer. Look at the sailors scream and slip on the decks. Pow! A tugboat. Now all the lights in the houses are off. Cars and buses go crash like toys kids play with and people roll like marbles in the streets. A sports-car, thwoop, over the edge of the bridge . . . Philip? *(Calling to him)* What's a lighthouse for?

PHILIP: *(From inside)* You ask me that a hundred times.

SADIE: Who needs it, anyway, with radar and rockets to the moon?

PHILIP: *(Resigned)* The lighthouse is to stop the boats from breaking up on the rocks.

SADIE: *(Quietly)* Yah. Watch out for the rocks. Watch out for the rocks. If I had a motorboat I'd zoom in and out real close. Like those guys on motor-cycles.

I almost died when I was a kid. Did I ever tell ya? I caught flu and when I came awake everything had this glow on it, see. It was the same room. There was my mom, the bed, the same picture on the wall, the Blue Boy, yah. But different, too. I used to wish it'd happen again.

PHILIP: (*Wearing slippers again*) Here's your drink.

SADIE: Hey, I got new ones.

PHILIP: These are good enough.

*Sadie takes the glass from him. It's an incongruously delicate piece of stemware. Philip pours.*

PHILIP: (*Raising his glass formally*) To Saturday night.

*They clink glasses. Once again they are lit up with the glow from the lighthouse.*

*They drink. Cut to Scene 1 in Lighthouse Park.*

SADIE: Oh, look at the animals.

*We see Philip and Sadie from the point of view of the starfish, that is, through the water looking up at them.*

SADIE: Aren't they strange? I didn't know those things could move. Philip! That starfish, it's going to . . .

SADIE: It's hard to believe there's another life inside a me. You wanna feel it?



*Her face freezes in horror. Cut to the water in the crevice where innumerable small sea creatures: starfish, snails, minnows, plankton, hermit crabs, have been trapped. They seem quite still and one wonders what worried Sadie until the tiniest movement of an anemone, perhaps, and the disappearance of a small shrimp suggest the death and survival struggle of the sea. Or simply remain with the first shot steady on Sadie's face.*

SADIE: He ate em.

PHILIP: He's gotta live. Look, there's a hermit crab. (*He points at a shell with a long stick*) That's not his shell. He takes over empty ones, where the animal inside's already died.

*Perhaps a closeup of this strange creature peeking out from its adopted shell. It begins to move.*

PHILIP: Boo. (*It withdraws.*)

*Philip runs his stick through the water raising clouds of sand. The animals scurry to escape him.*

SADIE: Leave them alone.

*Philip has climbed down into the crevice. He scrambles up carrying a large purple starfish, and presents it to Sadie.*

SADIE: No. I don't want to touch it.

*Scraping sounds can be heard. Sadie is pulling the record player out from under the bed. This is the one occasion a week it's used. She puts on a disc, jazz of the 40's, which filters into the scene.*

PHILIP: They're stuck on the ledge anyway. The tide's out. We'll take him home and dry him.

SADIE: Will he die?

PHILIP: It's an ornament. You can put him on the coffeetable.

*He puts it in a plastic bag, seals the top.*

SADIE: Like a souvenir, huh?

PHILIP: Yah, that's it.

*Cut back to the room. Philip is seated at the desk where food is spread out on a newspaper.*

*Mostly cheap canned goods, the keys are still visible in the cans. Sadie and Philip use crackers to dip directly from them, though Philip occasionally uses a spoon and Sadie her fingers. They have had several drinks. Sadie is changing the record. Philip looks up. She returns to the desk, tries something. Licks her fingers. The flicker of excitement caused by their earlier preparation has disappeared.*

*Music throughout.*

SADIE: This brand of pork's not so good.

PHILIP: Use your spoon.

SADIE: What's the difference. It goes down the same place.

*Sadie tips juice from a fish tin onto the page in front of Philip and rubs it in with the bottom of the tin.*

SADIE: You were reading. What are you thinking, Sweet Philip? Say whatever's in your head. I won't be shocked. No? So I'll tell you what I'm thinking. That you're a virgin. If you were a girl I'd call you Vir-gin-ia. You haven't given yourself to anybody. Maybe Bets a little. But even with her mostly you liked to watch.

PHILIP: Knock it off.

SADIE: Yah. You got five or six cute little sayings like that. "Knock it off. Skip it. Forget it."

PHILIP: I'm warning you, Sadie . . .

SADIE: That's another one. You oughta use placards, you know? Like when they're picketing. It would take less outa you. *(She begins to snap her fingers to the music and sings)* Self-sufficient. Independent. *(The next word spoken)* Scared.

*Jazz continues.*

*Philip walks to the window to escape. Sadie dances after him.*

SADIE: Do you ever dream,  
Philip?

*Philip begins to whistle. Oddly,  
it's Good King Wenceslas.*

SADIE: Or is it gray behind your  
eyes like the ocean?

PHILIP: There's a boat out there.  
I can hear its motor.

SADIE: It's time to dance.

PHILIP: It's too hot.

SADIE: I dance for you in bed.  
Now it's your turn.

*Music gets louder.*

PHILIP: The boat has two, no,  
four lights on the end of two  
poles. It's an insect crawling  
over the water.

SADIE: Don't try to shortchange  
me!

PHILIP: The poles are its  
stingers.

*(Perhaps the lighthouse glows)*

SADIE: *(Grabs Philip's hand and  
pulls him into an open jive posi-  
tion)* What about Mr. Schultz?  
Do you think about him?

*They freeze for a moment.*

*This is the beginning of the dance sequence. Sadie and Philip will move in a formal version of the old-fashioned jive. This "dance bit" breaks with segments of flashback, sometimes the arguing voices of the present over past action, sometimes the couple in the past speak their words while seen, sometimes the voices from the past are heard over the ludicrous moments of the present, and sometimes two, three, or all points of time interweave in a polyphony, a solo cry rising above the others. The following, then, may be considered fragments in an interchangeable pastiche. The jazz gradually changes from the comforting regular rhythm of the '40's to an unrelenting hammer of sound (i.e. Al Neil, John Coltrane). The glow from the lighthouse appears and re-appears at closer and closer intervals. The experience for the audience in this collage of sound and sight should become almost unbearable nearing the climax.*

*A few seconds of dance. Cut to Philip chasing Sadie, lighthouse Scene 2 repeated, but a variant.*

*Sadie's voice from the present continues over.*

*Sadie and Philip are running freely over the rock outcropping, between the trees in Lighthouse Park. The colours are almost painful in the richness of summer.*

SADIE: He tried to commit suicide. You don't even want to know why.

*Philip starts to whistle Good King Wenceslas again.*



*Philip catches Sadie, pulls her down roughly, starts to kiss her. He's shocked to discover she's turned old, the Sadie as seen in present action.*

SADIE: Don't.

*Freeze for a split second, then Sadie is young again.*

SADIE: I feel like walking.

PHILIP: I don't.

*He starts to kiss her. She giggles. He begins to unbutton her blouse.*

SADIE: Not here.

*She rolls away from him, stands up and runs with Philip after her. On a secluded ledge over the water they undress. Shot over bushes at first they are just heard, then their heads and shoulders are seen.*

SADIE: Are you sure no-one can see us here?

*A pause here in the whistling.*

*The whistling resumes.*

SADIE: We were having a love affair. He was afraid you'd find out.

PHILIP: All the time, all the time, even when she's lying beside me and I'm ready to have a nice piece, she has to start . . .

SADIE: You'd a handed him the keys to the place, wouldn't you of?

PHILIP: About how we ought to be feeling, what it means . . .

SADIE: So long as he didn't muck up your routine.

PHILIP: What it ought to mean, what it ought not to mean.

*She hangs a final piece of clothing beside the others where they hang on a shrub, then she stretches out beside Philip.*

SADIE: It's funny to think there's another life inside of me. You wanna feel it kick?

*Sadie takes Philip's hand to guide it to her stomach.*

PHILIP: (*Anxious to make love*)  
Sadie. Sadie. (*He starts to kiss her*)

SADIE: What are you thinking about?

PHILIP: Ah, come on, Sadie.

SADIE: No, I mean *really* thinking. I don't believe in life after death, do you? That makes every minute so important I'm almost afraid to do anything. Because I might spoil it.

*She is silent for a moment. He takes advantage, grabs her and kisses her.*

SADIE: Supposing somebody sees us?

PHILIP: We're getting married, aren't we?

SADIE: (*Giggles*) We'll have the funniest burns.

PHILIP: Shut up, can't you?

*They disappear. Sadie is still giggling.*

SADIE: Shall I tell you how it was with him? He's a better lover than you. He takes detours.

*Throughout the rest of the scene Philip's whistling continues.*

*Cut back to the present. Sadie and Philip are dancing, each holding a fresh drink which occasionally sloshes over the edge of the glasses. They are shot from the neck to the knees.*

*Sadie stumbles into Philip's stomach.*

SADIE: Whoo! Philip is constipated. Swoll up with all the things he won't share. What you got in there that's so precious, eh? It's even a secret what you eat for lunch. Your hate's locked up in your bowel, Sweet Philip. Philip has got a pearl. (*This sung like a child*) Right . . . in . . . there. (*She plants a finger delicately on his belly.*)

*During this speech they have been dancing to the hiss of the record needle stuck in the last groove. Philip puts the needle back to the beginning of the record, but it's progressive jazz now.*

*The glasses rise up out of the frame as each of them takes a drink. Philip's hand grabs Sadie's. They begin to dance again.*

*Hiss of needle stuck in groove.*

*The voices start and progressive jazz.*

*Selected lines from the starfish arguments A to D gone through, and when finished they start again, gradually speeded.*

PHILIP: Shouldn't we take it in the basement to dry?

SADIE: The sun'll come out. It's summer.

PHILIP: If you think you know so much . . .

SADIE: I didn't say that. Don't touch it. It's not alive. (*With wonder*)

PHILIP: Of course not, stupid.

SADIE: When it was wet before, it was alive.

PHILIP: It stinks. We shoulda took it in the basement like I said.

SADIE: It's lost its shape. It's gone.

PHILIP: A dog musta grabbed it. I saw one take off around the corner.

SADIE: What'll he do with it?

PHILIP: (*Brutally*) Wha' do you think?

SADIE: (*Sick*) My God!

*Getting faster.*

PHILIP: I only said . . .

SADIE: You gave it to the dog.

PHILIP: I didn't.

SADIE: You're glad he took it, then.

PHILIP: I got sick of looking at the thing. You wanna hang on to everything.

*The above is repeated, but quieter, so the next set of voices can be heard. Next sequence faster. It begins before the last is over, a verbal "round."*

PHILIP: Shouldn't we take it in the basement?

SADIE: Leave it in the sun. It's more natural.

PHILIP: It stinks.

SADIE: It's not alive.

PHILIP: It stank.

SADIE: My God!

PHILIP: I told you we . . .

SADIE: You gave it to the dog.

PHILIP: I didn't.

SADIE: You're glad he took it then.

SADIE: What are you thinking?  
Dance, Philip. *(He has paused.)*

*Second set begins again. Over two voice lines.*

*The following rises in solo:*

PHILIP: Glad, yes!

SADIE: You have a beautiful soul.

PHILIP: All the time! All the time!

PHILIP: What do you want me to say? That I'm thinking about Bets? And my work?

SADIE: And me.

PHILIP: Yah.



SADIE: What about me? Do you hate me? Say it. *(She jerks him again.)*

PHILIP: I want some peace!  
*He breaks away. Goes for another drink.*

*Voices end abruptly.*

SADIE: I know what kind of piece you want.

PHILIP: You're right. That's the only reason I'm here. An easy skirt.

SADIE: And free, too, huh? A housekeeper that comes across.

PHILIP: It's in the contract. You ask any lawyer. You make me feel like I got to get down on my knees and beg your forgiveness after. You want my skin.

SADIE: More than that.

PHILIP: You hunt me like an animal. When I sleep I feel you breathing over me. You're jealous of my dreams, of my beer.

SADIE: You are a violent man.

PHILIP: I am not a violent man.  
*(He slams his fist on the desk to emphasize his point and breaks one of the glasses.)*

SADIE: (*Sweetly*) You see?

PHILIP: I am a gentle man.  
Animals love me. They run to  
me, not you. I can't count how  
many dogs follow me home. And  
kids, too. Bets . . .

SADIE: Yah? What about her?

PHILIP: It's because of you she  
wanted to get out. Complaining  
all the time.

*Heavy breathing starts over.*

You told her things about us you  
shouldn't have. You read her  
diary.

SADIE: It's a mother's right. You  
skulked after her like a lovesick  
calf.

PHILIP: That's a lie.

SADIE: I caught you covering her  
up in bed. In the middle of the  
night.

PHILIP: She was only fourteen  
years old then and she called out.  
You didn't move to go to her.

SADIE: She told me after she was  
scared half to death you'd  
attack her.

PHILIP: You want me to confess  
about dirty feelings, eh?

SADIE: That wasn't true, what I  
said about Schultz just now. I  
made it up.

PHILIP: Yah, sure, you vomit your guts all over the floor and I'm supposed to lick it up and then spill mine.

*Cut to Sadie and Philip climbing the ladder inside the lighthouse, Scene 5. To Sadie the steps seem to rise interminably. The trapdoor at the top is more distant than when she began. She looks down. The steps below her shift.*

SADIE: I'm feeling dizzy.

*They begin to climb again. Philip looks down at her. From his point of view Sadie no longer looks frightened. She is determinedly in pursuit of him. No matter how quickly he goes she seems to be gaining on him. He becomes terrified.*

*The trapdoor is endlessly receding.*

*Philip seems to break through the trap door. Cut to a shot of a summer sky, a sense of expanse and relief, Scene 3.*

SADIE: Just think who mighta been lying here a thousand years ago.

*We now recognize the sound as the hard breathing of a man trying to escape. Over the breathing comes Sadie's voice.*

SADIE: Death's not a miser. He doesn't say "I'll take your hair but not your feet, your smiles but not your sickness." Man, when he comes, he takes everything you got. He doesn't spit anything back. Not toenails, not cancer, nothin. I see how you turn from me when I'm sick. And Death gives Himself, too. All the way. And no false timing. Whammo! Right on. First time round.

*Heavy breathing ends.*

*Cut to Sadie and Philip. After lovemaking they lie naked in the sun. Philip's eyes are closed, but Sadie is looking up at the sky.*

SADIE: Do you think people felt the same as us? Philip?

*He grunts but doesn't open his eyes.*

SADIE: You have a beautiful soul.

PHILIP: Who, me?

SADIE: I know you think it's not manly, but everybody has one. I don't mean the religious kind. One a these days it'll pop up and surprise you. But not me.

You'll tell me how you feel about all kinds of things. (I wouldn't be surprised you end up a painter. You know, an artist.)

*Philip grunts.*

*She stops, but there is a happy knowing smile on her face.*

*Sadie continues to smile happily at the sky.*

SADIE: I heard a joke. Shall I tell ya? This man and this woman come to a lake. And they've got to get to the other side, see? N the woman says to the man "Take me on your back." N the man answers . . . "Sorry, lady, but my back's worn right through carrying you all these years."

*Cut back to Sadie and Philip  
lying on the floor, heads propped  
against the bed, smoking cigars.  
Open beer bottles.*

SADIE: (Cont.) And this lady,  
know what she answers? "That's  
alright, cause *all* a me's worn  
through with carrying you n  
there's nothing left a me but my  
voice."

PHILIP: Did he carry her?

SADIE: I dunno.

PHILIP: What a crumby story.  
What's the point . . .

SADIE: You don't understand  
anything.

PHILIP: Yah, only you have the  
feelings around here.

*A sudden blast of rock 'n roll  
music coming from the beach.*

SADIE: Shhh. (*She goes un-  
steadily to the window*)  
I think . . .

PHILIP: Tell them to get the  
Hell out.

SADIE: Leave them alone. It  
makes me feel good.

*Philip goes to the window with  
a flashlight and shines it out.*

PHILIP: Hey, you. You kids.  
Beat it. It's the police. (*The  
music ends.*) They'll get  
hemorrhoids. (*He opens  
another beer.*)

SADIE: I am a beautiful woman,  
and you never once brought me  
flowers.

PHILIP: Where were you when I  
came home drunk that time, n  
broke my leg falling on the  
stairs? You didn't even wake up.

SADIE: What about when I had  
the kid? You were off at some  
lousy football game.

PHILIP: It was a final.

SADIE: While I was grunting it  
out at the hospital.

PHILIP: Where's my boy? You  
shoulda given me a boy.

SADIE: I figured you were only  
temporary. I didn't want to  
spoil my shape. A month after  
we were married I knew it was  
no good.

PHILIP: Did it take you so long?

SADIE: Every man I saw I looked  
at real hard. Maybe he was the  
one.

PHILIP: I started looking on our  
honeymoon.

SADIE: You don't know the  
places I've been in my head.



*Closeups here as they're getting lost in their thoughts.*

PHILIP: (*He sits with drink*) I could have been a happy man. I enjoy life, a bottle of beer, sitting in front of the TV watching a game, without some god-damn woman nattering at me about wasting my time . . .

SADIE: Sometimes I lie on the floor just here with the sun streaming in on me and I pretend the sun's a man. (*Sadie picks up a picnic basket or a bag of groceries and carries it to where Philip is seated. She seats herself beside him and continues with drunken self-pity. Perhaps tears.*) After I weaned the baby, and my breast was sore with milk. You remember? Just before I dried out? That's how it is. You never ask anything from me. (You never give and you never ask.)

PHILIP: She's trying to depress me again. (*Mimicking Sadie*) Look up there, Philip. The sky is endless, but we're not. We're going to die, Philip. And then you looked at me as though it was a gift you'd given me. Holy Mother of Christ, what did she want me to say? I'm glad we're both going to die, that we're going to rot in the same grave together? Always taking the juice out of me.

A man keeps exposing his guts  
and he dries out.

SADIE: Sometimes when you're  
out swimming and I'm watching  
you, I close my eyes real tight  
and think of a shark. If I think  
of it real hard I'll make one. Or  
maybe you'll drown. (*Taking out  
food, cheese, chocolates, fruit*) I  
can see ya sinking down, down,  
to the bottom of the ocean and  
laying there with the other  
sponges. (*Sadie offers Philip  
some grapes to eat, has some  
herself.*) Then I lie back on the  
sand and feel like a girl. But you  
always scramble up beside me  
again. (*This speech given quite  
calmly.*)

*They continue eating throughout  
the following. Their actions are  
amiable, belying the words.*

PHILIP: (You gnaw at me like a  
dog at a bone.) Why do you  
always got to have things to  
confess? That time you told me  
you were picked up for shop-  
lifting . . . You hadn't been any-  
where. You never leave this  
house. Except to pick leaves.

SADIE: I've imagined you dead a hundred different ways. Falling off the verandah. Heart attack. At first I'd feel sad and cry a little for ya. Not now. If you could see the knives and snakes, the naked black men with spears, and the doctors all holding my hand and comforting me. You been pronounced dead more times than you've had birthdays.

PHILIP: I don't understand. I've never understood. You want an orange? I'll peel it for you. I go to work all day while you sit around in this pigsty and dream and somehow I'm guilty.

SADIE: One of these days I'm going to walk out.

PHILIP: How would you make a living?

SADIE: I'd walk the streets.

PHILIP: You'd starve.

*She throws her glass at him, misses. It breaks.*

SADIE: There. We're even.

*She walks to a box, takes out another set of stemware, presents one to him.*

*Next set, these are gigs . . . Light-house flashes illuminating their room, brighter now.*

SADIE: (*Mock solemnity, holding up glass*) Why is this night different than any other night?

PHILIP: The place is filthy. It smells. You smell. Like an animal.

SADIE: That's what we all are.

PHILIP: You never once made me a birthday cake.

SADIE: You snore. (*Almost in ecstasy*)

*Perhaps here bits of argument start faintly in the background.*

PHILIP: You burn the carrots.

SADIE: You eat too much.

PHILIP: You leave your dirty nylons on the floor.

SADIE: You gave the starfish to a dog.

PHILIP: I didn't.

SADIE: You sicked him on to taking it, then.

PHILIP: Sadie, you are crazy. (*Rises*) I'm leaving.

SADIE: Where'll you go? You've seen all the movies.

PHILIP: That's right.

SADIE: What about when your  
cousin . . .

PHILIP: And that time . . . ?

SADIE: Still, you shouldn't  
have . . .

*Philip snuggles against Sadie.  
She arranges his head on her  
shoulder. They nap.  
Lighthouse flashes on them.  
Philip rouses. Sadie slips to the  
floor. She lifts her head and  
opens her eyes.*

*Argument fades out.*

PHILIP: The letter from Bets? I  
wanna read it.

SADIE: It's for a mother's eyes  
only.

PHILIP: I wanna read it.

SADIE: She's sleeping with a  
rodeo type. He jumps off his  
bronc and on to her.

*Intercut lighthouse closeup at  
night.*

PHILIP: What're you talking  
about? Where is it? (*Starts to  
search for letter*)

SADIE: She says to give you her  
love. (*Holds out her arms  
mockingly*)

PHILIP: A girl seventeen hitch-  
hiking across the country.

SADIE: Don't worry. I taught her  
how to look after herself. Not  
like my mother. This is a new  
generation.

*Philip goes to vanity table, looks on top, his hands get dirty, he opens drawers.*

*Second lighthouse closeup.*

SADIE: I told her "Bets, you keep right on going, because if you settle on one man and he closes you out, baby, you're nothing."  
*(She picks up a piece of paper and holds it calmly in front of her)* Like I said, it's for a mother's eyes only. *(Philip tries to grab it)* Tell me what you're thinking? What happened today at the office, Philip? Did you see anyone interesting on the bus? What do you think of the election?

*Philip wrestles with her for the paper, she kisses him, he knocks her to the floor. He has the paper.*

PHILIP: It's the grocery list.

SADIE: She couldn't get out of here fast enough. She's free as a man.

*Philip walks purposefully to her. Sadie moves away from him.*

SADIE: No. Not yet. Philip.

*He grabs at her, rips the front of her dress so it hangs down.*



*Quick flashback to summer  
Scene 2. They are running.  
Philip roughly pulls Sadie down.  
Cut to closeup flash of the light-  
house at night. Then pull back  
to see the light scurrying through  
the undergrowth like small hid-  
den animals. Cut to the hermit  
crab beginning to crawl. Cut  
back to present action. It's a  
drunken pursuit. Furniture is  
knocked over, more glasses  
break.*

SADIE: You have no sense of  
style. I am a beautiful woman  
and you have never once brought  
me flowers. I won't let you cheat  
me.

*Though she pleads Philip can no  
longer play the game. He grabs  
her and pushes her toward the  
bed.*

SADIE: There's more to be said.  
Please. Please, Philip.

*Another montage of images  
follows, this time with the lone  
cry of a jazz saxophone over.*

*Jazz saxophone*

*A closeup of the lighthouse.  
Cut to the starfish limp under  
rain.*

SADIE: . . . an ornament . . .

*Cut to Sadie and Philip clinking  
glasses at beginning of evening.  
Cut to the two of them franti-  
cally climbing the ladder inside  
the lighthouse tower. They look  
to the top. It becomes a closeup  
of the lighthouse.*

*Her voice doubled, trebled, com-  
bining and losing itself in the  
saxophone.*

*Cut to them making love on the ledge overlooking the ocean.*

*Cut to them lying side by side in the same place, but now old and not touching. They stare up at the sky, not dead, but lonely.*

*Cut back to the room and freeze on a mundane detail, perhaps the candlesticks on the table.*

*With the cut, sound is turned off. After a moment's silence Sadie's voice over, in a dead tone:*

I got this friend, I don't think you know her. Anyway, she told me the queerest thing. She was lying beside her husband n all of a sudden slip . . . slip . . . there wasn't a "her" anymore. She was both of em. When he moved, it was her moving. She could feel the air on his skin and his breath in and out. Like it was hers. You know what I mean? After it was over she was scared. She felt open, kinda. Wished I could feel like that.

*Cut to the two of them lying in bed. Faint sound of foghorns in the distance. Philip's tuxedo and Sadie's gown are on the floor, or perhaps they're in bed with their clothes on, that is, Philip in underwear and dress shirt, Sadie still with her dress, even the intimacy of naked touch denied*

*them. Empty bottles and tins,  
overturned furniture in the early  
dawn light.*

SADIE: Listen, you hear  
anything?

PHILIP: No.

SADIE: I thought I heard the  
foghorns. The fog must be thick  
on the water. I guess you can't  
see the lighthouse anymore.

Hear it? *(She imitates the  
sound, deep then falling lower)*

Sounds like an animal crying.

*(Pause)* What do you want for  
breakfast? Toast 'n eggs? Same's  
usual?

*Philip is lying with his face in  
the pillow. He still has on the  
shirt and tie. Sadie climbs over  
him.*

SADIE: Yah. Your game's start-  
ing soon. I'll turn on the tele-  
vision to warm it up.

*She goes into the bathroom.  
Sound of running water. Philip  
gets up, picks up pants and  
jacket, stumbles to cupboard to  
hang them up for the next  
Saturday night ritual. He is  
crying.*

SADIE: *(Calls from the bath-  
room)* You say something?

PHILIP: No.

SADIE: That's what I thought.

## LIGHTHOUSE PARK SCENES

*(Before Sadie and Philip are married)*

### SCENE 1

SADIE: Oh, look at the animals. *(We see Philip and Sadie from the point of view of the starfish. That is, through the water looking up at them.)* Aren't they strange? I didn't know those things could move. Philip! That starfish, it's going to . . .

*Her face freezes in horror. Cut to the water in the crevice where innumerable small sea creatures: starfish, snails, minnows, plankton, hermit crabs, etc., have been trapped. They seem quite still and one wonders what worried Sadie until the tiniest movement of an anemone, perhaps, and the disappearance of a small shrimp suggest the death and survival struggle of the sea. Or simply remain with the first shot steady on Sadie's face.*

SADIE: He ate em.

PHILIP: He's gotta live. Look, there's a hermit crab. *(He points at a shell with a long stick.)* That's not his shell. He takes over empty ones, where the animal inside's already died.

*Perhaps a closeup of this strange creature peeking out from its adopted shell, then beginning to move.*

PHILIP: Boo.

*It withdraws.*

*Philip runs his stick through the water raising clouds of sand. The animals scurry to escape him.*

SADIE: Leave them alone.

*Philip has climbed down into the crevice. He scrambles up carrying a large purple starfish and presents it to Sadie.*

SADIE: No. I don't want to touch it.

PHILIP: They're stuck on the ledge, anyway. The tide's out. We'll take him home and dry him.

SADIE: Will he die?

PHILIP: It's an ornament. You can put him on the coffeetable.

*He puts it in a plastic bag, seals the top.*

SADIE: Like a souvenir, huh?

PHILIP: Yah, that's it.

## SCENE 2

*Sadie and Philip are running freely over the rock outcropping, between the trees. The colours are almost painful in the richness of summer. Philip catches up with Sadie and pulls her down roughly. He starts to kiss her.*

SADIE: (*Resisting*) Don't. I feel like walking.

PHILIP: I don't.

*She giggles. He begins to unbutton her blouse.*

SADIE: Not here.

*She rolls away from him, stands up and runs, with Philip after her. On a secluded ledge over the water they undress.*

*Shot over bushes, at first they are just heard, then their heads and shoulders are seen.*

SADIE: Are you sure no one can see us here? (*She hangs a final piece of clothing beside the others on a shrub, then she stretches out beside Philip.*) It's funny to think there's another life inside a me. You wanna feel it kick?

*Sadie takes Philip's hand to guide it to her stomach.*

PHILIP: (*Anxious to make love*) Sadie. Sadie. (*He starts to kiss her.*)

SADIE: What are you thinking about?

PHILIP: Ah, come on, Sadie.



SADIE: No, I mean *really* thinking. I don't believe in life after death, do you? That makes every minute so important I'm almost afraid to do anything. Because I might spoil it.

*She is silent for a moment. He takes advantage, grabs her and kisses her.*

SADIE: Supposing somebody sees us?

PHILIP: We're getting married, aren't we?

SADIE: (*Giggles*) We'll have the funniest burns.

PHILIP: Shut up, can't you? (*They disappear. Sadie is still giggling*)

### SCENE 3

*A summer sky. The camera wanders as the eye would.*

SADIE: Just think who mighta been lying here a thousand years ago. *Cut to Sadie and Philip. After making love they lie naked in the sun. Philip's eyes are closed, but not Sadie's, who is looking up.* Do you think people felt the same as us? Philip?

*He grunts but doesn't open his eyes.*

SADIE: You have a beautiful soul.

PHILIP: Who, me?

SADIE: I know you think it's not manly, but everybody has one. I don't mean the religious kind. One a these days it'll pop up and surprise you. But not me. You'll tell me how you feel about all kinds of things. I wouldn't be surprised you end up a painter. You know, an artist.

*Philip grunts.*

*She stops, but there is a happy knowing smile on her face. Part of the love scene should be reshot with one of the couple old and the other young, then vice versa. Finally with both of them old lying side by side, not touching, in the summer sun.*



*Similarly the stair climbing scene, Scene 5, is to be reshot with first one, then the other, finally both old.*

*This change is hopefully worked into the texture of the play as the ugliness of the present superimposes itself over and erases the fragile beauty of the past.*

#### SCENE 4

*Sadie waits as Philip goes to the house of the lighthouse keeper. Philip approaches the door with self-conscious arrogant strides. The keeper emerges, they talk for a minute, Sadie joins them. And they continue down the path and over the bridge to the lighthouse.*

#### SCENE 5

*Sadie and Philip climb the stairs and ladder inside the lighthouse. To Sadie the steps seem to rise interminably. The trapdoor at the top is more distant than when she began. She looks down. The steps below her shift.*

SADIE: I'm feeling dizzy.

*They begin to climb again. Philip looks down at her. Sadie no longer looks frightened. Seen from his point of view, she is fiendishly determined in her pursuit of him. No matter how quickly he goes Sadie seems to be gaining on him. He becomes terrified.*

#### SCENE 6

*Sadie and Philip are standing in the lighthouse room, dark as a cave. The windows are covered with a cloth to protect the light. Or perhaps it is getting late, and the light starts to turn on its axle.*

SADIE: Philip? (He turns to her. She steps back.) I'm scared. It's so high up here. And hot. Take me down. You look strange. Like somebody else.

#### SCENE 7

*The starfish is out to dry displayed on a box in the yard of Sadie and Philip, newly married. Now rain falling on it. The rain sequence to be used again and again. The starfish dank, spreading. The voices are over the picture.*

DISCUSSION A:

PHILIP: Shouldn't we take it in the basement to dry?

SADIE: No. Leave it in the sun. It's more natural.

PHILIP: It's up to you, but I think . . . (*Resignedly*) All right.

DISCUSSION B: (*Rain*)

PHILIP: I think we ought to take it in.

SADIE: The sun'll come out. It's still summer.

PHILIP: If you think you know so much . . .

SADIE: I didn't say that.

DISCUSSION C:

SADIE: Philip! The starfish's gone all soggy. Ich! Don't touch it.  
(*Possibly hand seen entering frame*) It's not alive. (*With wonder*)

PHILIP: Of course not, stupid.

SADIE: When it was wet before, it was alive.

PHILIP: It stinks. We shoulda took it in the basement like I said.

SADIE: It's lost its shape.

DISCUSSION D:

SADIE: Philip! The starfish, it's gone.

PHILIP: A dog musta grabbed it. I saw one take off around the corner. Just as well. It stank.

SADIE: What'll he do with it?

PHILIP: (*Brutally*) Wha do you think?

SADIE: (*Sick*) My God!

PHILIP: I told you we shoulda put it in the basement.

SADIE: So it's all my fault.

PHILIP: I only said . . .

SADIE: You gave it to the dog.

PHILIP: I didn't . . .

SADIE: You're glad he took it, then.

PHILIP: Yes! I got sick of looking at the thing. You wanna hang on to everything.

SADIE: It was your idea to bring it home.

IN PRESENT ACTION, BUT PROBABLY OVER A SEQUENCE

SADIE: You gave the starfish to a dog!

PHILIP: I didn't.

SADIE: You sicked him on to taking it, then.

PHILIP: Sadie, you are crazy.

*This argument should be taped. Counterpoint the points in time over flashback sequences and the present, fugally. Perhaps make a solo cry of one of them.*

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## POSTSCRIPT

When an editor called me to see if I had anything for *The Capilano Review* I had just come back from a walk in Lighthouse Park. As I walked I remembered Sadie and Philip. Perhaps because I'd just completed *Leela Means to Play*, which feels like the end of a cycle, I naturally returned to the beginning of it. So much in the short film I've drawn from, consciously and unconsciously — themes, techniques, character roots — borrowed freely because it had gone unproduced and unpublished. I hadn't thought of publishing it until that morning just before Bill called. I was about to call him.

Begun the summer of '66, a commission from George Robertson, producer-writer at the CBC, his first TV drama. "Beverley, I understand you're writing a play about marriage. How about a half-hour film?" The conditions intrigued me — low budget, a combination of video tape and film, that is, one scene could be shot on location, the rest had to be studio. As few characters as possible. Something that "the man on the street" could relate to. The danger — cliché. To write about the familiar, the banal, without becoming banal.

I had been working for several years on the problem of materializing "routines" — I mean routine arguments, routine relationships, those that begin with a roaring full scene but are refined by time and repetition to something like cue sheets — my bit sets off your bit which necessitates our shared bit and so on . . . Habitual patterns of action, a stuck record, elided, bouncing into the next "bit" — not smooth, though some groomed familiar enough to be reassuring. And memories evoked so often they, too, achieve shorthand, and ultimately synthesis.

I didn't want to just talk about it. I was tired of leaning on dialogue. I wanted to reveal the metaphor, materialize the process.

I had been attempting it on stage. I'd begun a script in which one character speaks in the usual surface social manner, the other as he



thinks, i.e. the unspoken. A second play in which one character was silent until he and his love had left the stage, then his compressed impotent thoughts/emotions break in a flood, sound over empty stage. But that was still dialogue. I made it physical. A couple unable to communicate except in telling each other wondrous stories about characters, a second couple, who appear and build their set within the set, until one of them runs berserk with an axe and destroys the fabrication — both of them. It was this last play I was working on when George called. The play was never finished. The energy drained into the film.

Considering the tools, I had two strands to play. I decided to use the film for a memory sequence in Lighthouse Park, to contrast with the caged sulkiness of the beach house. The film scenes had to be typed out separately to be shot all at one time. These scenes were like a deck of cards, to be played within the second line of action, the present. Memories and “routines.” Film and video.

The director was stunned. He expected a five finger exercise. It took him six months to be able to return to it, read it, say: “We’ll knock the country on its ass.” But it was too late. One of the very few periods CBC Vancouver was given access to a drama series was over. I put it away.

So it remains a pre-production script. Going back to it now I decided to let it be, with brackets and possibilities. I removed them only where I felt ten years surer. Not often.

I haven’t used all the potential of the structural concept described, in the script. Scene 4 is not in the script at all as it stands. I’ve decided to leave in an alternative intro scene, marked on my copy, “unsure.”

It was conceived as jazz. As in jazz I looked forward to group creativity . . . the director, the sound man and/or composer, the actors . . . who along with me would play it during production, test, develop, and discard. I didn’t have the heart to cut and tighten it to a closed unit.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Percy Simon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping 'P' and 'S'.

## Vickie Walker / PORTRAIT OF AN ARTIST AS A DINNER TABLE

*The four illustrations here are from a six-part self-portrait: an invitation to feast upon the table/persona of the artist. A traditional theme is shaken into new possibilities.*

### IMAGES

*Portrait of the Artist as a Dinner Table*, plate of feathers, doorknobs and stars, lifesize, mixed media, 1975.

*Portrait of the Artist as a Dinner Table*, plate of hearts, lace & roses, lifesize, mixed media, 1975.

*Portrait of the Artist as a Dinner Table*, nude plate, lifesize, mixed media, 1975.

*Portrait of the Artist as a Dinner Table*, plate of lips, lifesize, mixed media, 1975.



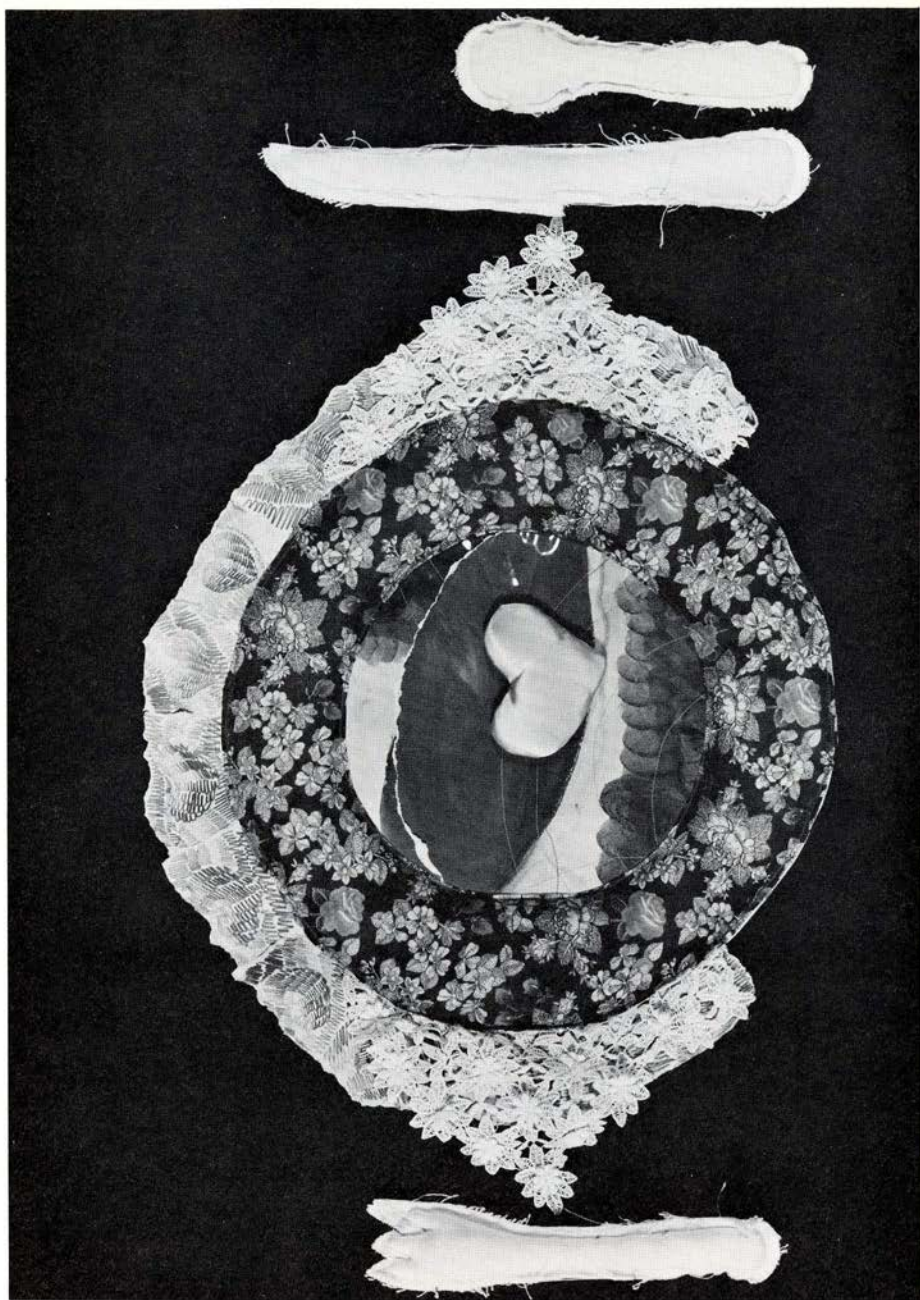
*Portrait of the Artist as a Dinner Table* is a self-portrait, an expression of the woman-artist-child-poet-teacher that I am. The plates which are collages & assemblages, include lace, satin, vinyl, feathers, wool, coloured pencil, graphite, pastels, felt, poems, acrylic, etc. & they are basically sewed on an old Singer machine, & some are glued together. The silverware is cotton, sewn & stuffed with foam & kapok.

At the time I was working into these, I kept thinking about what Kline sd: "Now, if I paint what I know, that bores me, if I paint what you know, that bores you, so I paint what I don't know & I paint very little of what I do know because that's a repetition of what's already at hand." (This comes out of my journal & the exact ref. is uncertain.) With that in mind, plus W. C. Williams' poetry & the fact that he found location in difficulty & built up around it, I looked to my own personal history which is an early familiarity with fabrics, sewing, quilting, weaving, making garments, knitting, etc. "O.K.," I sd, "use this stuff & create something unlike anything you know." As I worked on them I never knew what would happen next or how or when they would finish themselves. I worked simultaneously on all six plates.

I wanted to make a "setting" of my feminine psyche. This piece is a ritual, like eating is. I imagined six guests sitting down to my table, set in the woods, & eating, in a figurative sense, the food each one of these plates offered up. Perhaps it all has to do with eating one another, & that idea, comes from Brian Fawcett who got it from Creeley I believe, & sent it to me in a letter four years ago.

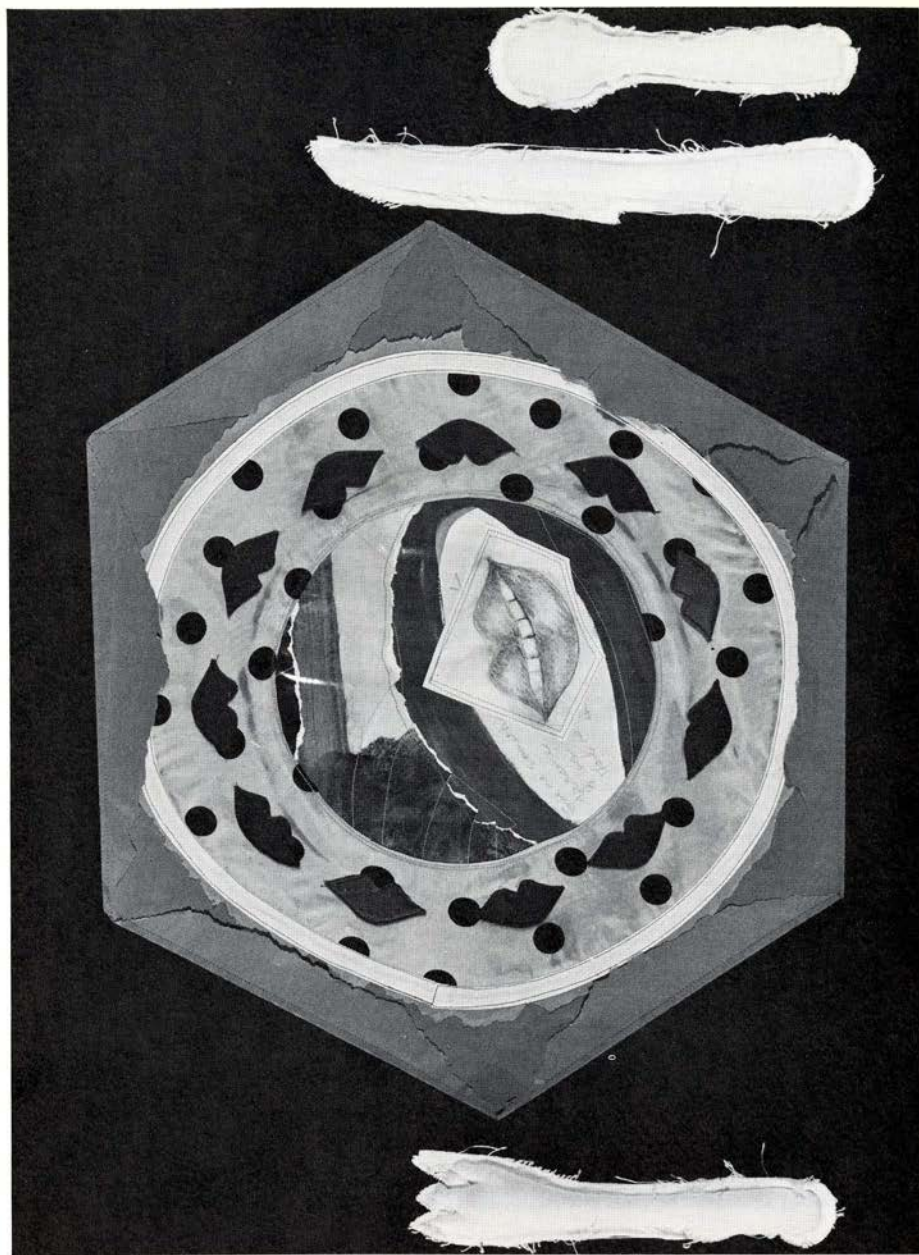
— VICKIE WALKER













## N. E. THING COMPANY SECTION

*An Illustrated Introduction*

*A Selection of N. E. Thing Co. Acts*

*N. E. Thing is Art & Other Definitions*

*Images*

*Interview*



## AN ILLUSTRATED INTRODUCTION TO THE N. E. THING CO. LTD.

N. E. Thing is Art: Theory and Practice.

*N. E. Thing is Art is a slogan of the N. E. Thing Co. Ltd.*

*Incorporated in 1966 by its co-presidents, Iain and Ingrid Baxter, the N. E. Thing Co. Ltd. is Art, and Art (Visual Sensitivity Information) is its business.*

When I first met Iain Baxter in 1964, he had recently completed a Masters degree in painting at Washington State University and had returned to Canada to accept a teaching position at the University of British Columbia. His wife Ingrid was principally involved in raising their children.

By 1964, Iain's painting had developed through Abstract Expressionism, and out the other side in search of a contemporary *realism*. He imitated, briefly, the style of Giorgio Morandi, but Morandi's humble, kitchen still lifes and sober country *vedute* held no lasting interest. Soon Iain was composing still life and landscape assemblages out of squashed or whole detergent bottles and plywood clouds and trees. These compositions were transformed by the Vacuum Form machine into one-piece, buterate and acrylic bas-reliefs. Next he made "bagged landscapes" and "inflatables" of heat-sealed vinyl. By 1966 he had moved from fashionable non-objective and abstract painting into the still fresh and controversial arena of Pop Art.

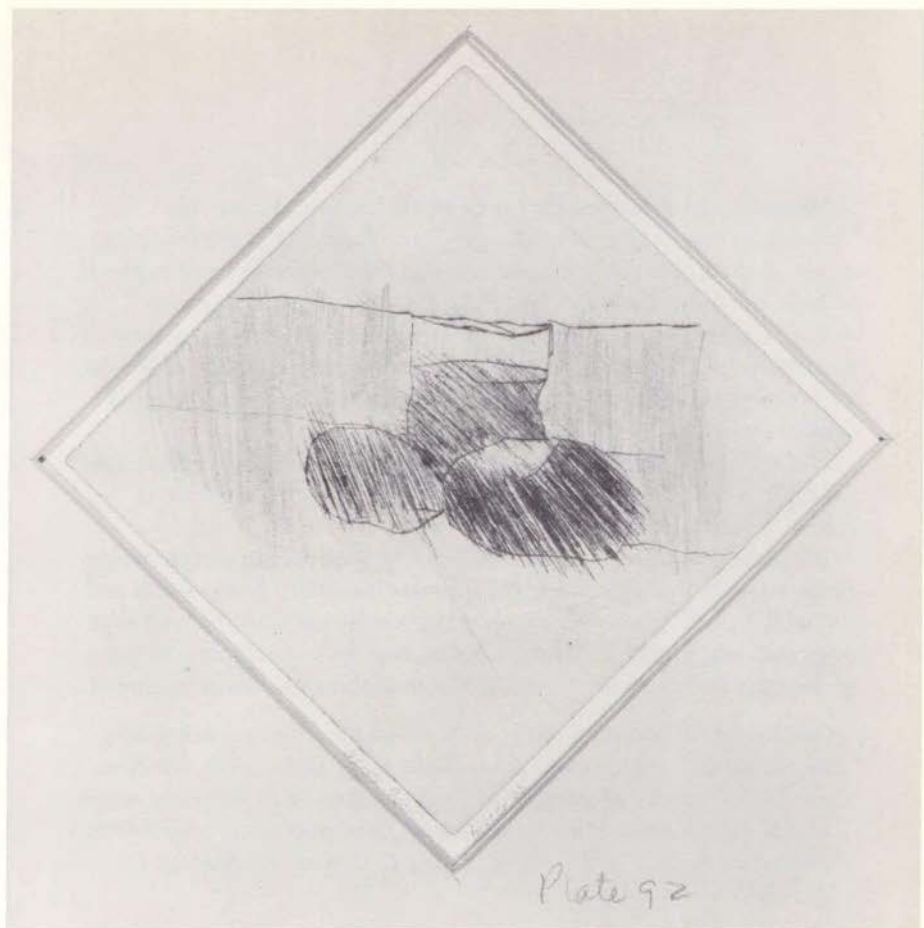


Plate 92

He made and exhibited his Javex-bottle Vacuum Forms, his "inflatables" and "bagged landscapes" in a Canadian scene innocent, as yet, of the impact of the banal and commercial themes and methods of New York and London based Pop. He was Vancouver's most noticed experimenter in subject and medium, winning the purchase awards at the Vancouver Art Gallery's Annual Exhibitions in 1965-66, and staging exhibitions at the UBC Fine Arts Gallery that attracted critical attention.

His art was satirized in a Norris cartoon in the Vancouver *Sun*. *Sun* art critic, David Watmough, ruminated over his art in an article called, "Our Life Savagely Shafted."

No piece that he showed and no event he took part in was as daring as the *concept* through which he, and now his wife Ingrid, moved and thought. In 1966, Iain and Ingrid set up a business with themselves as co-presidents. The N. E. Thing Co. Ltd. was to be a company with a philosophy and purpose. It would devote itself to the dissemination of:

*Sensitivity Information (SI) . . . based on the idea that everything in the world is information (thoughts, things, facts, ideas, emotions etc.) and that all information is confronted by one's body and senses and then processed in a practical or sensitive manner . . . Sensitivity Information (was and is) N. E. Thing Co.'s new terminology for the older word CULTURE.*

It would divide Sensitivity information into the following areas: Visual Sensitivity Information (VSI) — painting, sculpture, prints, architecture, books, design etc.; Sound Sensitivity Information (SSI) — music, poetry (read aloud), singing, oratory, etc.; Moving Sensitivity Information (MSI) — dance, sports, etc.; Experiential Sensitivity Information (ESI) — events that combine aspects of all other areas. And, using a construct invented in 1965, the N. E. Thing Co. would designate certain artworks and objects as A.R.T. (Aesthetically Rejected Things) or A.C.T. (Aesthetically Claimed Things). What was chosen as A.C.T. or rejected as A.R.T. from the world of reality and the art of others would be judged by the N. E. Thing Co.'s "stringent standards."

By entering wholeheartedly into the fact and theory of the N. E. Thing Co. Ltd., the Baxters moved firmly away from seeing the artist's

role as *artmaker* to seeing his role as *perceiver*. Anything seen, heard, felt or thought by either of them would be considered as suitable content for data to be seen, heard, felt or thought of by the viewer. The viewer, in participating in the documentary fragments they presented as Sensitivity Information, takes part in the specific culture that created Iain and Ingrid; the viewer, in turn, is recreated by the culture they create. The Baxters' viewpoint logically extends Marcel Duchamp's insight that the artist through his works becomes *a mediumistic being*. N. E. Thing Co. products, however, are concrete and data giving, the antithesis of Duchamp's alchemical subjects. As much as Duchamp, however, the Baxters hope their art and performances will document the existential process of their own *becoming* and will engage and challenge the intelligence and sensuality of the spectator/participant.

As early as 1965, before the N. E. Thing Co. was formed, Iain was extending the traditional role of the artist beyond artmaker to performer. During the Festival of Contemporary Arts at UBC, which was called *The Medium is the Message* (out of respect for Marshall McLuhan), he destroyed a giant block of ice with a blowtorch. This act of wilful melting, entitled *2 Tons of Ice Sculpture: Beauty through Destruction, Disintegration and Disappearance*, challenged the spectator to consider this performance as "beautiful" and as Art. At the next Festival, the N. E. Thing Co. acted as "curator" for an eccentric exhibition called *Bagged Place*. The show, held in the Fine Arts Gallery on campus, contained no artwork by Iain or Ingrid. They brought a complete set of tacky furnishings within a wood and plastic "bungalow" that they had constructed inside the gallery space. All objects — tables, chairs, beds, food, turds in the toilet — were shrouded mysteriously in plastic. *Bagged Place* was provoking because it lacked ordinary aesthetic standards, but it was irritating because it was not *made* (simply chosen and arranged) by the N. E. Thing Co. What the N. E. Thing Co. was going to *do* was likely to be at least as daring as anything it would choose to make. At the two festivals, the company became a *verb* — a very A.C.T.-ive verb.



In the ten years that have followed, N. E. Thing Co. products have found their way into an amazing number of group shows that have focussed upon almost every major trend in contemporary art — Pop Art, New Realism, Minimal Art, Conceptual Art — and upon many minor ripples in the mainstream currents — Plastics, Art by Telephone, Mail Art. The N. E. Thing Co. has been chosen to represent Canada or the West on several occasions. The dozens and dozens of participations in exhibitions attest to the Baxters' great knack for operating within the gallery systems, and for taking care to know and be thought important by as many art officials as possible. Good P.R. and the ability to see the humour and chutzpah of the game that must be played is one of the several major reasons for the N. E. Thing Co.'s "omnipresence." At the same time that the company will solicit for group-show places, it will cheekily distribute buttons that declare: "Art is All Over," "Artofficial" and "N. E. Thing is Art."

Although the Baxters would admit to a penchant for novelty and enjoy being the first to use a material, explore a subject, create a certain kind of exhibition or performance, it is to the credit of the N. E. Thing Co. that especially when it acts alone or is in full charge of an event, all major products (from art shows through to movies) have integrity as a continuum — first of all because the business "philosophy" that was outlined in 1966 has provided a consistent but flexible viewpoint in which a diversity of experiments could be maintained; secondly, because over the years, the N.E. Thing Co. has found means of tying together the visual appearance of the products. Plastic and plexiglass remain important materials in which to create, package, or frame. Since 1965 photography of the documentary (not "arty") sort has assumed an increasingly major role in the preparation of artwork, and the artless, casually composed quality of photographic artworks carries over to the manufacture of uncut video and film records of events and experiences. Finally, all manner of business paraphernalia has been invented to stamp, seal, and otherwise claim for the company its products. A photo-silkscreened business form, for example, may be used as a background onto which photos and drawings of varying sizes and various subjects may be collaged; the business form background becomes, then, a major device to organize and homogenize in a visual way the diverse contents of an exhibition.

The seals and the stamps replace the traditional artist's signature and add bright colour to works assembled in a gallery.

Not simply by the broad definition it provides, the N. E. Thing Co. produces art in various media that receives serious and frequent attention by galleries and the art press. Although occasionally a critic finds a subject banal or an object aesthetically weak, I think there is no person familiar with the contemporary art scene as a whole who would not state that the N. E. Thing Co. has sustained over a very lengthy period a highly imaginative, inventive, flexible but well-integrated body of work. But I think there is another aspect of the N. E. Thing Co. character that begs special examination, and that is the role it assumes as educator of the senses. Art to the N. E. Thing Co. is Sensitivity Information that must be disseminated in order to increase the happiness and self-awareness of the general public, to improve, in the company's terms, the *Gross National Good*. When discussing public education, the Baxters become very excited and approach the subject with a "missionary zeal." What they do, it seems to me, is to arrange games for willing players. And play — the open-ended, exploratory, free-association play of happy children in which the rules adjust as the game is played — is what their artworks, events, videos and films are about. The games are sometimes played out principally by the Baxters themselves with the spectator participating with his eyes and mind; others invite direct response.

So what are the "games," what are the "rules," how and what does the viewer learn? Perhaps these questions can be answered best through a careful scrutiny of one project the N. E. Thing Co. completed between 1966 and the present.

In the *Piles* show of 1968, held at UBC's Fine Arts Gallery, the company worked with students. Within the gallery space, piles of material (eggshells, metal shavings, hair, etc.) were arranged in pyramid shapes on box-like plinths placed in a row. The material chosen from commonplace possibilities was elevated to the status of art by being brought into a gallery and set up with the formality usually associated with *serious* works of sculpture. Each pile of debris was arranged in a "geometric" shape and each pile could be appreciated (or not appreciated) through a consideration of its formal artistic properties — colour, texture, *presence*. Each pyramid put forward a variety of abstract subjects for consideration: animate/inanimate; metallic/organic; man-made/machine-made. The sequence was arranged tonally, like an artist's palette.



The piles-as-sculpture were supplemented by a slide show of other piles to be discovered around the city — at car wreckers, in untidy backyards, in bakeries, on after-dinner tables. A road map directed spectators to see certain piles, to rediscover the urban environment with piles in mind. A pile of postcards of piles was the catalogue for the exhibition.

The exhibition in a playful, quasi-scientific way explored the meaning of the word *piles*. The “game” tested the spectator’s definition of *sculpture*. Can anything be seen and understood as sculpture that is organized by an artist within a gallery space? Are the urban piles the spectator chooses to see sculpture? What, if anything, separates the artist from the spectator?

This exhibition is typical of N. E. Thing Co. shows. All play with the concept of the definition of Art; all suggest, by implication, that the spectator must take charge of his perceptions to savour them, nourish them and use *them* in the way that the N. E. Thing Co. implies. If we could and would do that, our lives would be more full and joyful, because the Baxters teach us to celebrate and recreate the *commonplace*.

In choosing to present the N. E. Thing Co. as Art in *The Capilano Review*, I engaged myself in an act of Retro-Aesthetics — a Baxter term for the process of going back to consider something that had a powerful personal meaning in order to see how it looks and feels from the perspective of *the now*. I am still excited by the ideas and products of the N. E. Thing Co. and continue to educate myself through the process of the Baxters’ experience.

— A.R.



## A SELECTION OF N. E. THING COMPANY A.C.T.'S.

1. The Incorporation of the N. E. Thing Co. Ltd., 1966.

In 1966 the N. E. Thing Co. Ltd. was formed. Its business was the organization and dissemination of Sensitivity Information. Sensitivity Information would be considered under the following categories: Visual Sensitivity Information; Sound Sensitivity Information; Moving Sensitivity Information; Experiential Sensitivity Information. Works in all categories could be judged as records of A.R.T. (Aesthetically Rejected Thing) or A.C.T. (Aesthetically Claimed Thing). All choices were to be personal, hence, arbitrary.

2. *Aquatics*, Simon Fraser University, 1967.

This event was the first overt manifestation of N. E. Thing Co.'s interest in sport performance (Moving Sensitivity Information) and to this project Ingrid brought her expertise in water ballet. Centennial year was celebrated through the acts of swimming, making music and dancing in the water.

*Aquatics* was the first act in a construct called Retro-Aesthetics — the re-viewing/re-doing of something enjoyed in the past to check out the experience for its feel in the present.

3. *Piles*, Fine Arts Gallery, UBC, 1968.

N. E. Thing Co. organized this exhibition in co-operation with Fine Arts students at UBC. Within the gallery space "piles" of materials (egg-shells, hair, metal shavings) were set up on formal podia to elicit a strong visual/tactile response. A series of colour slides of piles selected from the urban environment was constantly on view, and a map directed the viewer into the city to inspect more piles. A generous pile of black and white photos served as a catalogue to the show and as a record of the concept.



4. *Fashion Show*, Burnaby Art Gallery, 1968.

N. E. Thing Co. claims to have invented the term *wearable* at the time of this exhibition, to designate clothing that is "worn as sculpture," that transforms body shape but is dependent on the body for some of its support. Karen Rowden and Evelyn Roth contributed some of their own wearables to the fashion show. The N. E. Thing Co.'s contributions were sculpted in plastic.

5. *5 Mile Section: Longest Movie in the World*, 1969.

The movie runs five minutes and is a direct uncut record of a five-mile stretch on Ontario's Trans-Canada highway. The movie camera was hand-held in the Baxter truck.

The Baxters, interested in the idea contained in the movie described above, submitted a request for funds to make *5,000 Mile Movie* in centennial year. It was intended to be:

*a film (measuring) Canada's life line (the Trans-Canada highway). The film (would show) geographical, cultural and ethnic variations . . . The viewer (would) be able to wander in and out of the movie for eight days . . . the movie sound track will include sections of ambient noise and interviews of people en route — a talk-show on wheels.*

In 1976 the Baxters plan to re-submit the 5,000 mile movie request hoping that it will be considered worth sponsoring in the more economical medium of colour-video.

6. *Trans V.S.I. Connection NSCAD-NETCO*, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1969.

A 100-page document is the record of the Nova Scotia/N. E. Thing Company (NSCAD-NETCO) "connection." Iain was teaching at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and the booklet shows the results of the interchange of information. Although the pamphlet is of indifferent visual quality it is very amusing to read. A receptive student writes of her project: *Put a Fairly Large Rock in the Crotch of a Tree*:

*This type of art is something you have to do to appreciate yourself before you can make other people understand it.*

An uncomprehending receiver of a Telex message at Inuvik sent back these words:

HAVE JUST READ UR MESS AND CANNOT MAKE HEADS OR TAILS  
OF IT PLS ADV IF IT IS PACIFIC WESTERN INUVIK U WANT OR  
ANOTHER COMPANY PLS EXPLAIN UR MESSAGE

7. *Building Structure*, Carman Lamanna Gallery, Toronto, 1969.

N. E. Thing Co. presented the act of building and the resulting balloon frame\* structure as sculpture at the Carman Lamanna Gallery. *Building Structure*, as "minimal" as a Sol LeWitt piece, was accompanied by a display of NETCO products.

\*The *balloon frame* is the essential two-by-four, post and lintel construction that underlies most North American domestic architecture.

8. *N. E. Thing Co. Calendar*, 10th Sao Paulo Biennial, 1969.

The N. E. Thing Co. A.C.T. & A.R.T. Depts. were selected to represent Canada's printmaking activities. The company prepared a calendar illustrated by a photograph of a product for each month. I remember a local printmaker being angry at this choice saying the N. E. Thing Company did not make prints. NETCO, of course, was chosen because it did *not* make prints, but used photography instead of traditional graphic media.

9. *Report on the Activities of the N. E. Thing Co. at the National Gallery of Canada*, Ottawa, June/July, 1969.

This exhibition was a major setting forth of the N. E. Thing Co.'s ideas and products. The whole exhibit took place in the real offices on the main floor of the NGO and in spaces erected by the company out of balloon frame and plywood. The visual effect of this exhibit was *department store* — an aesthetic (or non-aesthetic) that did not invite enthusiastic gallery response. The show, however, was a thorough visualization of ideas at the centre of NETCO current interests.



10. *Clichés Visualized*, 1969.

A thirty-minute videotape transforming English Language clichés into Visual Sensitivity Information.

11. *Buyer Supplier Night*, 1970.

A videotape probe into a male Buyer/Supplier gathering in Vancouver.

12. *Your Employee and Motivation*, Renton Washington, 1970.

N. E. Thing Co. co-presidents participated as consultants to data processing managers at Renton, Washington.

13. *Business Philosophy*, 1970.

A pamphlet created for distribution to the International Convention of Data Processing Managers Association in Seattle, Washington.

14. *Art and Computers*, Simon Fraser University, 1970.

The N. E. Thing Co. co-presidents conceived and organized a conference on this subject at Simon Fraser University.

15. N. E. Thing Co. as *Consultant re Viewer Participation*, 1970.

N. E. Thing Co. acted in Ottawa regarding a special TV show using television for direct viewer participation.

16. *North American Time Zone Photo V.S.I. Simultaneity*, October, 1970.

An N. E. Thing Co. publication dealing with the simultaneous photography of pre-selected subject matter by six Canadian photographers at the same moment in time in the six time zones in Canada.

17. *B.C. Almanac* (a publication of the National Film Board), 1970.  
N. E. Thing Co. contributed a selection of photographs to this group project. Like other artists included, their work concerned giving information and did not approach traditional "art" photography. NETCO's contribution was visually interesting and coherent in content.
18. N. E. Thing Co. Ltd. co-president is made Academician, Royal Academy of Art, 1970.
19. *Network*, 1970.  
Transmission of Visual Sensitivity Information between several schools and the N. E. Thing Co. Ltd., as effected by Telex and Telecopiers. Participating institutions were: Pacific Lutheran University, Tacoma; Henry Gallery, Seattle; University of British Columbia; Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and the Museum of Modern Art, New York.
20. N. E. Thing Co. Ltd. becomes member of the Vancouver Board of Trade, 1971.
21. Elaine Baxter changes her name to Ingrid (formerly her middle name) which, co-incidentally, made her initials and Iain's the same.
22. *Historical Aesthetic Projects*, 1971.  
While in Europe on a Senior Canada Council Grant, the N. E. Thing Co. Ltd. carried out the following projects:
  1. Reversal of Columbus' Voyage: N. E. Thing Co. Discovers Europe
  2. All Roads Lead to Rome
  3. Loch Ness Mystery
  4. Seeing Galileo's Laws of Gravity from the Leaning Tower of Pisa.
23. N. E. Thing Co. sponsors a hockey team in Downsview, Ontario, 1972.



24. *N. E. Thing Co. Sensitivity Information Research on Snow, Ice, Water, the North and the General Phenomenon of Winter, Banff, 1973/4, (Winter).*

This exhibition held at the Peter Whyte Gallery, Banff, was one of the most important presentations of NETCO-THINK. All the material was presented on business form backgrounds and all subjects related wittily to the concept of winter. Skiing was presented as a drawing and sculpting skill, visual/verbal plays were made on many Canadian experiences of the north, e.g. ARTIC (misspelled). A vinyl snowcap was designed for a snow-less mountain. The exhibition was an evocative and humorous "snow-job."







25. *N. E. Thing Co.: Research with Language, Food and Colour*, 1974.

This exhibition, organized by Chris Youngs, took place at the Owens Art Gallery in Sackville, New Brunswick. It investigated the correspondence between colour language used in association with food and food products and the real colour of these products. Suitable experiments were performed on food purchased from a local supermarket and the food was arranged within the gallery space on tables in a clinical fashion.

26. *N. E. Thing Co. Ltd. Sensitivity Information: Language/Sex*, 1974.

A variation upon the theme of the "food" show and earlier work in English Language Clichés Visualized, this show contained photos illustrative of sexual parts, sexual actions and the words applied to these parts and actions. There were also works exploring non-sexual clichés and children's jingles.

27. *And They Had Issue*, 1975.

This was an exhibition at York University of the birth certificates and geneology of the Baxters' families. Two plinths — one for each of their children — were erected. During one day, the children, Erian and Tor, sat on their podia to demonstrate that the most artistic product of anyone is his/her children.

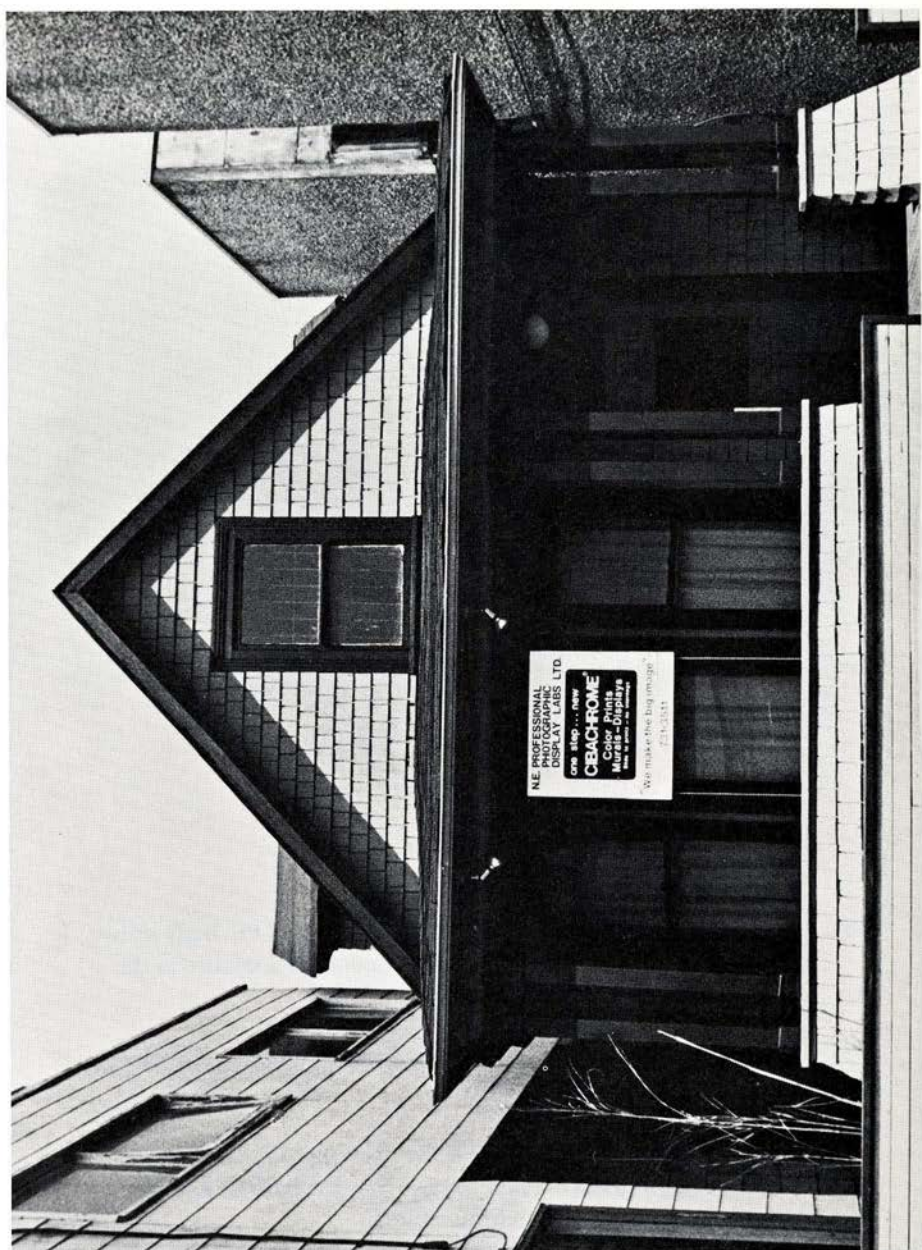
28. *Monopoly Game With Real Money*, York University, 1975.

This event took place within a Toronto Dominion Bank on the campus of York University. Real money was used in the game. A videotape was made as a record of the game.

29. *N. E. Thing Co. buys into Vancouver Magazine*, 1975.

30. *N. E. Thing Co. creates a photo lab for CIBACHROME*, 1974.

Called the N. E. Professional Photographic Display Labs Ltd., this company produces fine colour photography by a special process.



31. N. E. Thing Co. Thinks toward a Celebration of the Body show for the Agnes Etherington Gallery, London, as a tribute to the Olympics, June 20 - July 31, 1976.
32. N. E. Thing Co. Thinks towards an exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery, December 1, 1976.
33. N. E. Thing Co. Thinks towards the opening of the I Scream, You Scream, We All Scream for Eye Scream Parlour Ltd. on West 4th next to the Cibachrome Outfit.
34. The N. E. Thing Co. is always thinking about their on-going project, *What Is Art?*

— A.R.

## N. E. THING IS ART & OTHER DEFINITIONS

*N. E. Thing is art.* — N. E. Thing Co. Ltd.

The one thing to say about art is that it is one thing. Art is art-as-art and everything else is everything else. Art as art is nothing but art. Art is not what is not art.

— Ad Reinhardt, quoted in Joseph Kosuth, "Art After Philosophy," *Studio International*, Vol. 178 No. 915 (October 1969), p. 134.

This conceptual art then, is an inquiry by artists that understand that artistic activity is not solely limited to the framing of art propositions, but further, the investigation of the function, meaning, and use of any and all (art) propositions; and their consideration within the concept of the general term "art."

— Joseph Kosuth, "Introductory Note by the American Editor," *Art-Language*, Vol. 1 No. 1 (September 1970).

I have all the information in the world, all the mythic forms ever known, everything that I'm plugged into as a human being, for my raw material. My apparent use of experience is not meant to imply anything about that particular experience. It's a conceptual model which is meant to have implications for representation and revelation pointing toward everything else in a multi-leveled way. I'm really posing the question of renegotiation of experience, rather than saying, take my experience.

— Douglas Huebler, "Concept vs. Art Object," *Arts Magazine*, Vol. 46 No. 6 (April 1972), p. 53.



What art now has in its hand is mutable stuff which need not arrive at the point of being finalized with respect to either time or space. The notion that work is an irreversible process ending in a static icon-object no longer has much relevance.

— Robert Morris, in *Conceptual Art and Conceptual Aspects* (New York: The New York Cultural Center, 1970), p. 34.

1. The artist may construct the piece
2. The piece may be fabricated
3. The piece need not be built

Each being equal and consistent with the intent of the artist the decision as to conditions rests with the receiver upon the occasion of receivership.

— Lawrence Weiner, "Documentation in Conceptual Art," *Arts Magazine*, Vol. 44 No. 6 (April 1970), p. 42.

Is there anything that is not art? I must admit in my own mind, it's not really outside the stream, but in the riverbed together with the rest of the water.

— Robert Barry, in Ursula Meyer, *Conceptual Art* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1972), p. 41.

Works of art are analytic propositions. That is, if viewed within their context — as art — they provide no information whatsoever about any matter of fact. A work of art is a tautology in that it is a presentation of the artist's intention, that is he is saying that that particular work of art *is art*, which means, is a *definition* of art. Thus, that it is art is true *a priori*.

— Joseph Kosuth, "Art After Philosophy," *Studio International*, Vol. 178 No. 915 (October 1969), p. 136.

The idea becomes the machine that makes the art.

— Sol LeWitt, quoted in Joseph Kosuth, "Art After Philosophy," *Studio International*, Vol. 178 No. 915 (October 1969), p. 134.



The working premise is to think in terms of systems, the production of systems, the interference with and the exposure of existing systems.

— Hans Haacke, "Things and Theories," *Artforum*, Vol. X No. 9 (May 1973), p. 32.

Art-Language attempts to define the forms of judgment through an analysis of reason; instead of accepting the object as given, cognition itself is under examination.

— Lizzie Borden, "Three Modes of Conceptual Art," *Artforum*, Vol. X No. 10 (June 1972), p. 69.

I start by thinking I'm going to make use of all possibilities without troubling any longer about problems when something starts to be art. I don't make the *eternal* work of art, I only give visual information. I'm more involved with the process than the finished work of art. The part of my object is untranslated. I think objects are the most usual part of my work. I'm not really interested any longer to make an object.

— Jan Dibbets, in *Conceptual Art and Conceptual Aspects* (New York: The New York Cultural Center, 1970), p. 31.

A work of art may be understood as a conductor from the artist's mind to the viewers. But it may never reach the viewers, or it may never leave the artist's mind.

— Sol LeWitt, "Sentences on Conceptual Art," *Art-Language*, Vol. 1 No. 1 (May 1969).

The essential quality of existence concerns where one is at any instant in time: that locates everything else. Location, as a phenomenon of space and time, has been transported by most art forms into manifestations of visual equivalence: that is, as an experience located at the ends of the eyeballs. I am interested in transposing location directly into "present" time by eliminating things, the appearance of things, and appearance itself. The documents carry out that role using language, photographs and systems in time and location.

— Douglas Huebler, in *Conceptual Art and Conceptual Aspects* (New York: The New York Cultural Center, 1970), p. 31.

I really believe in having projects which in fact can't be carried out, or which are so simple that anyone could work them out. I once made four spots on the map of Holland, without knowing where they were. Then I found out how to get there and went to the place and took a snapshot. Quite stupid. Anybody can do that.

— Jan Dibbets, in Ursula Meyer, *Conceptual Art* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1972), p. 121.

I'm not a poet and I'm considering oral communication as a sculpture. Because, as I said, if you take a cube, someone has said you imagine the other side because it's so simple. And you take the idea further by saying you imagine the whole thing without its physical presence. So now immediately you've transcended the idea of an object that was a cube into a word, without a physical presence. And you still have the essential features of the object at your disposal. So now, if you just advance a little, you end up where you can take up a word like time and you have the specific features of the word "time." You're just moving this idea of taking a primary structure and focusing attention on it.

— Ian Wilson, in *Conceptual Art and Conceptual Aspects* (New York: The New York Cultural Center, 1970), p. 39.

I do not mind objects, but I do not care to make them.

— Lawrence Weiner, in Ursula Meyer, *Conceptual Art* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1972), p. 217.

Twenty-six gasoline stations, various small fires, some Los Angeles apartments, every building on the Sunset Strip, thirty-four parking lots, Royal road test, business cards, nine swimming pools, crackers.

— Edward Ruscha, in *Conceptual Art and Conceptual Aspects* (New York: The New York Cultural Center, 1970), p. 35.

You work because you work; or  
You cannot *not* work.

— Ken Friedman, "Fluxus and Concept Art," *Art & Artists*, Vol. 7 No. 7 (No. 79, October 1972), p. 52.

— S.H.

## IMAGES

*Iain Baxter*, detail, exhibition poster for *Gas, Plastic, & Bagged Works*, Art Gallery of Victoria, 1966.

*Still Life*, 9" x 9", etching, artist's proof, 1965.

*Still Life: 1 Javex Bottle*, 22½" x 14½" vacuum-formed plastic, 1964.

*N. E. Thing Co. Ltd. Hockey Team: Downsview, Ontario*, 3" x 5", mounted color photo, 1972-3.

*Studies for Works in S.I.R. on Snow, Ice, Water, etc.*, 3" x 5", black/white photos, 1968.

*Cibachrome Photo Lab*, 4th & Burrard, Vancouver, 1974.

*Act #32: Seven Steel Pilings Gravel Filled, White Lake Narrows, Ontario, Canada*, 27½' x 40', black/white photo, 1968.

*See*, 18" x 18", felt pen on offset litho, 1973.

*Galileo's Experiment Seen*, 40" x 40", felt pen & photo on offset litho, 1971.

*Cash in Hand*, 19½" x 23½", hand-tinted black/white photo, 1972.

*Planning*, 16" x 19", black/white photo 1969.

*President of a Company: Face Screwing*, 36" x 42", mounted color photos, 1969.

*Ingrid Baxter*, detail of above.

*Stamping Machine*, 8" x 10", black/white photo study, 1974.

*Photography: Tod Greenaway* reshot these images from the archives of the *N. E. Thing Co. Ltd.*





# INFORMATION

N.E.THING CO. LTD.

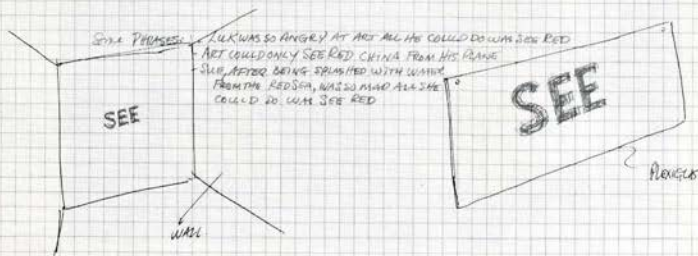
1419 Riverside Drive North Vancouver B.C. Canada Tel: (604) 929-3562 Telex 04-507802 Cable: Anything Vancouver B.C.

Project  
1971-73

COLOR - LANGUAGE STUDIES  
COMMON COLOR PHRASES - "SEE RED"

Number  
2.

# SEE



## Description

DRAWING STUDIES FOR PLASTIC LETTERING TO BE APPLIED TO WALL AS COMPLETED WORK, LETTERS COULD BE MOUNTED DIRECTLY TO WALL OR APPLIED TO CLEAR PLEXIGLAS, THEN MOUNTED TO WALL.



FOR REPRODUCTION REDUCE ENTIRE PRESENTATION INCLUDING THIS STATEMENT.

LAYOUT SHEET INFORMATION DEPARTMENT N.E.THING CO. LTD.



# INFORMATION

N.E.THING CO. LTD.

1419 Riverside Drive North Vancouver B.C. Canada Tel. (604) 929-3662 Telex 04-507803 Cable Anything Vancouver B.C.

Project

3

PROJECT DEPARTMENT

GALILEO'S EXPERIMENT SEEN - 1971

Number

3.71



## Description

PLACE - PISA, ITALY

TIME - DEC. 3, 1971

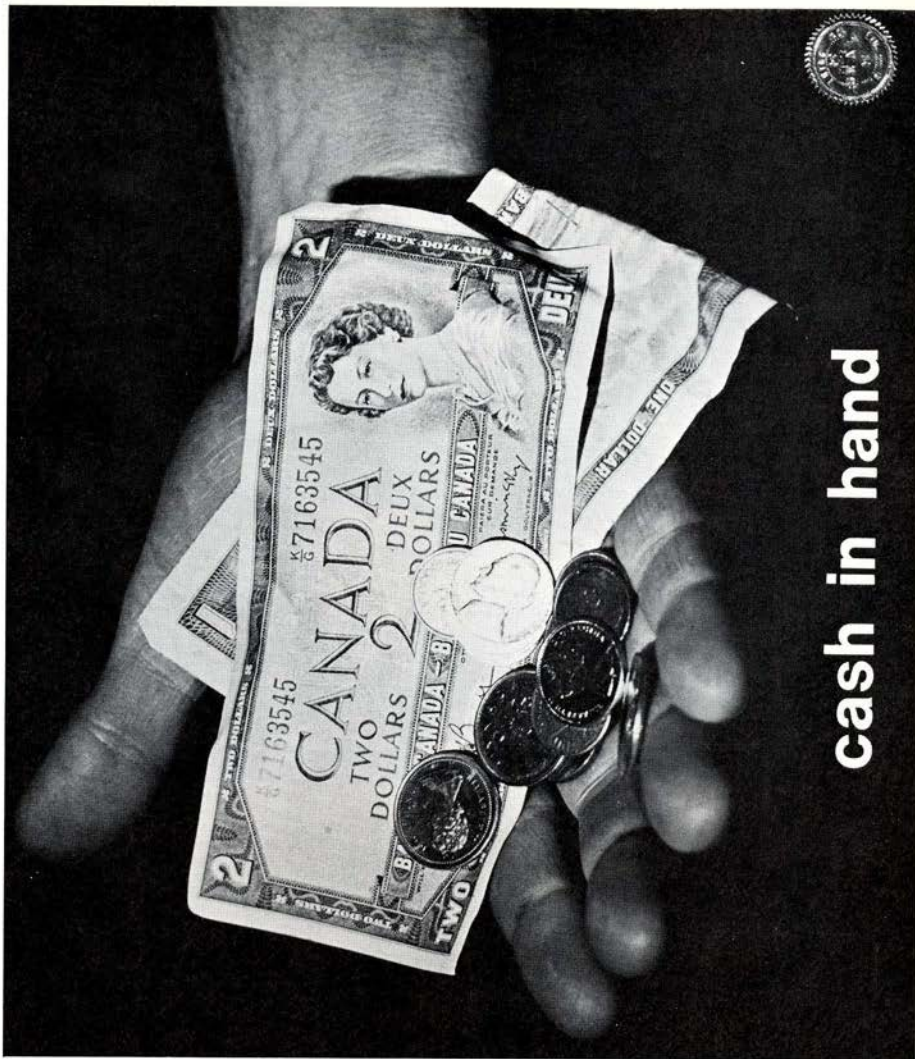
MATERIALS - CAMERA (OBJECT DROPPED)  
- FILM

NOTE: DOTTED LINE DENOTES PATH OF FALLING  
OBJECT - CAMERA

AS CAMERA WAS DROPPED IT WAS  
PLACED ON CONTINUOUS RUN

Seal



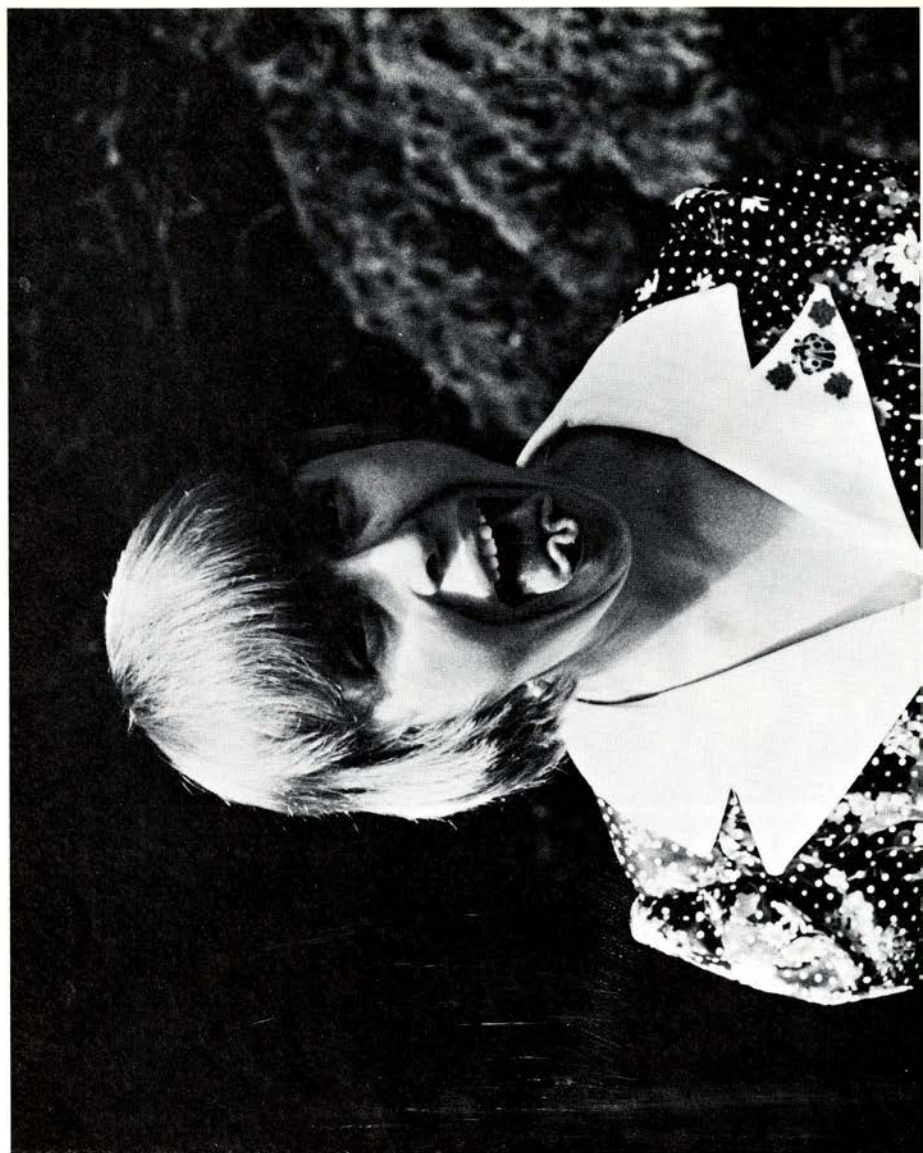


cash in hand











## INTERVIEW / N. E. THING CO.

*Iain and Ingrid Baxter, co-presidents of the N. E. Thing Co., were interviewed on the evening of February 23rd at Ann Rosenberg's house. Paul Gresco, journalist, Paul Mitchell, partner in the Eye Scream Parlour, and Steve Harris of The Capilano Review were present. They are indicated by initials in the text.*

*The interview began with Paul Gresco asking Ann Rosenberg why the N. E. Thing Co. was of interest to her. Ann replied that the company was of interest chiefly because it demonstrated that art could be chosen, designated. She noted that while N. E. Thing Co. products had artistic value, they were not principally concerned with traditional craftsmanship.*

*InB* There is craftsmanship in everything we do. It's just not the usual recognizable oil-painting technique-y craftsmanship — the kind of crafts that usually apply to the whole field of art.

*PG* So what kind of craftsmanship is entailed in your art?

*InB* The total making of, presenting your object (first of all) is a professionalism, and a craftsmanship in the basic concept of the idea. There is craftsmanship at that level. And then to take it beyond that, to present it in any form to anyone to understand, there is craftsmanship also involved. But it may involve photography, or it may involve knowing how to walk your fingers through the Yellow Pages, or how to use the right business format, or whatever else. But those are all levels of craftsmanship.

*AR* For example you use photographs: you have in many of your works a sense of the quick take.

*InB* Sometimes we use *bad* photographs, but they're perfectly used.

*AR* Sometimes they're bad, and that's okay. Within your aesthetic, that's proper.

*InB* And we do. I know oftentimes we're criticized for just that. People who are used to judging things for the artsy-craftsy direction of craftsmanship will pick up on that because it's a very easy thing to tag to.

*IB* And also a lot of people think everything we do is very easy to do, so it's very simple or easy.

*PG* Well, how do you defend yourself on that?

*InB* I can imagine just as I've done.

*PG* . . . the criticism that it looks so easy: well, arranging rocks in a pile. I'm just purposefully playing devil's advocate.

*IB* Everything's easy once you've seen it done. When someone sees it — oh, well, a kid could do that. Of *course*, because you've seen the realization of the idea, or the thing that may *appear* very simple, but it's a whole thought process that's gone on.

*InB* So basically, I guess we're emphasizing the idea.

*SH* It's all related to Sensitivity Information, right?

*InB* Mm hm.

*SH* So that everything is worked through that idea, then.

*InB* *That* we sort of evolved as a method of explaining to people what we're doing, because you come up with the whole basic "what is art?" question. Is this "art"; is a pile of rocks "art"? And we have so much hanging into that word "art" that the general public has clouded their minds with, that they can't see art. And so this is why we've introduced the concept of "sensitivity information."

*PG* Using your own broad definition of art: have you ever had a failure in any pieces you've done? Aren't you building in a safety factor for yourselves?

*InB* Our failures are in the garbage can. (Laughter)

*PG* Have they actually appeared in the garbage can?

*InB* Oh yeah; I think some things you do toss out. I don't think you would publicly present . . . I think you work through an idea and you reject it, on one level. The garbage can may be a back corner of our mind or something, rather than the can outside.

*IB* Sometimes you get things that are just too trite.

*InB* And looking back, you have things that you're more pleased with or more satisfied with than others, or some things that you wish you'd done slightly differently.

*IB* It's also interesting to look back, say ten years ago, at things we did. And you realize that your maturity and your understanding were at a certain level. And you go back and appreciate how good *those* were given that limited knowledge.

*AR* I found, thinking back, that most of the things that I saw I still like to the same degree. I'm a little more puzzled about where you are right now.

*InB* That would probably be true if you went back at any single point in time; you would be puzzled at our "now" position.

*PG* I think more so now. Listen, I heard a criticism of you guys recently: that you're at kind of a plateau now and you really haven't re-established your presence on the West Coast.

*IB* That's great.

*InB* Perhaps that's our magnum opus. (Laughter)

*PG* The criticism is that you're really casting about wildly, and you haven't really focused on anything.

*InB* No, we're focusing. Focusing like hell.

*PG* Okay, that brings us into the whole economic thing.

*InB* Because that is our focus and direction, very solidly.

*PG* Hey, what the hell are you guys doing?

*InB* Bending the corkscrew and enjoying the feel. (Laughter)

*PG* No, seriously. In terms of getting out with these commercial ventures, why and how do you rationalize it?

*InB* I don't see it as getting out; out is the wrong word. It's getting deeper *in*, if anything.

*AR* Could we backtrack then, because what I wanted to ask is this: why are you as artists interested in business, and why do you keep nibbling on it, and what's happening.

*InB* That goes back a long way, doesn't it? Really to the very basics of what Iain began right at the very first. That folding screen is really a questioning of system. Can you take painting, as we had flowed through, and put it on a traditional Japanese format (the folding screen) which then gave you a totally new dimension? So that's questioning a system.



*IB* That very much upset the Japanese, by the way, because they have this traditional way with those paper things because their society is so ritualized. The folding screens are supposed to be done with sumi ink.\*

*\*Note: Iain was in Japan on a painting scholarship in 1961. — AR*

*InB* It was always so, huh? They had art galleries in department stores; so this is the next thing. Can you have art in department stores, in a public place, where you have far more people flowing through than you ever do if your art gallery is isolated? The traditional system of a gallery is to hang something on the wall, forget it for the next month . . . We began thinking: well, 8,000 people come through a gallery in a month; 20,000 go through IBM in three days.

*PG* Looking back, can you see a real seminal thing in terms of the business involvement? You talk about the Japanese screen and Japanese department stores, but even beyond that was there something in either of you that said, "Business intrigues me"?

*InB* This was what I was building up to: that we were questioning systems. Can we present our visual ideas and our sensitivity information inside another kind of space? So what we're doing with the Eye Scream Parlour is building a vehicle to make visual statements, or sensitivity statements, or cultural statements of one sort or another. And so, the business *has* to be a financially rewarding thing for everyone involved. It has to turn bucks, so to speak. But the main point is to attempt to present a totally new, interesting environment for people to be in, to see new ideas to support. Maybe artists should no longer remain only in galleries and isolated spaces; they have a responsibility to the community.

*AR* I think we all sense that funds are drying up fast, and there's going to be this big, horrible depression or whatever; that artists are the first to lose their opportunity for grants. So it's a rational act also to survive, and also not lose your stance. For some artists to say, "Okay, I'm suddenly in business," you say, "Oh, sold out, eh?"

*InB* We're sold in. (Laughter)



*PG* You can rationalize it beautifully. How much of this is serendipity? If you had gone after and got a really nice York University-type job here, would you have gone into these business ventures with the same vengeance?

*IB* I think they would have happened, but maybe a little slower.

*PG* I'll have to admit that your leanings have always been that way.

*InB* There *is* a matter of necessity involved, I think.

*IB* But it was going to come at one point or other. We knew we wanted to go through with these things to find out what it was like.

*PG* Is the Cibachrome thing much more of a straight commercial venture with less room to play around visually?

*InB* Yes and no . . .

*IB* (to Ingrid) I think yes and no, like you're saying.

*PG* Give me an example, then.

*InB* (to Iain) Which one do you want?

*IB* On the one hand "yes" — that's a tattoo I want to do one day. The way to do it is: I want to have a "no" and a "yes" in my hands so when a question comes up I can say, well, on the one hand "yes," on the other hand "no." I want to have them in my palm. (Laughter) The Cibachrome thing has been taking a good year or two to set up. It's much more complicated in one way than the restaurant idea, because it takes time to build its reputation.

*PG* Eventually what could happen with Cibachrome?

*IB* We see it functioning; we see the thing as theatre, and as re-organizing information. Here's a good point about it: we just bought space on the B.C. Directory — that secret book that has everybody's name and where they work. A guy phones up and says do you want to put an ad in, and we say okay. So we always

check into everything, and the art side of this happened. And I said, can we ever get on the cover? He said, sometimes there's a space available, and I think there's one right now. So he phones and he finds out that there's an outside strip on the cover available. It's amazing how they sell this. There's one strip; it's three-quarters of an inch. When you buy that, you automatically get a full page inside, and everything happens for you because you're on the *cover*.

So I got to thinking, and we talked about it. We decided they should have a ruler. So we put a ruler on, right on the edge, so people can measure things because you always want to measure pencils and stuff, right? So the ruler says: "We Measure Up — N. E. Professional Photo Display Lab — We Measure Up, see page such-and-such." Now maybe we'll do a print of this book, and it will say, because I know exactly how many books there are, because I can phone them, there's that many inches. All those inches, and the concept of the whole thing. It just opens up all the potential. If we ever show in a major art gallery again, then we will just churn all that stuff back in there, present all sides of it, juggle it, and give you new ways of looking at things.

*AR* Do you suppose that when you do your Art Gallery show in the next year that you'll be starting to refer to your businesses?

*IB* Oh yeah; it's going to start moving. We have a show coming up in the Vancouver Art Gallery with about half the Gallery in next December. When that goes on, we'll be heavily promoting — just presenting all these businesses, right inside a public space. It'll be like putting a burr under the saddle of that situation which will then probably upset people in a very healthy way.

*AR* You'll have to have an ice cream parlour right in the gallery.

*IB* That's what we're going to do. We'll give tickets for ten cents off a cone, all kinds of things. Plus, we'll probably take heavy ads out that month. We'll be able to say, no business in Vancouver has ever had a show in an art gallery!

We want to have videotapes of how to lick a cone. We were thinking of having a contest of beautiful women just sitting licking cones, and see which is the most beautiful girl that can

lick a cone. We could go into a whole, erotic level like that which would be really fun. But it also has the seriousness of like, A & W does Miss Teen Canada. Maybe we will have an ice cream cone art show from various paintings and stuff.

*PM* You were saying before that, to make a business work, you've got to go through with the same processes that you do to make a piece of art work. And to make the artwork function, you have to do the same sort of thing as in the business.

*IB* In our society there are certain businessmen — a number of men are just super geniuses in terms of the level of sensitivity they move to — using all the tools in the structure they work with.

*PG* Does the word "satire" say anything to you in terms of what you're doing? I just have to get that out of the way. I mean, just that word, bald, unadorned: does it explain anything of what you're doing? Or is that too weak a word, or is it not precise enough, or is it relevant? I just want to throw it on the table.

*InB* (Looking) Find it? (Laughter)

*PG* It's reeling around there, waiting to be seen.

*IB* A lot of those words work for us, like wit, and satire, and irony.

*PG* Those are three very distinct words.

*InB* What do you mean by satire, then?

*PG* I guess I have to get your definition.

*SH* I haven't thought of you as real satirists, although you always approach everything with a sense of humour.

*PG* (To Steve) Then what do you see them as?

*InB* We've been to Yuma, and have a sense thereof. (Laughter) I guess as you say it Paul, I don't really know what you mean.

*IB* But whatever it is, I think we do some of it. (Laughter) I think that if you can juggle humour and satire and irony, you can get new insights. That's what McLuhan talks about: using satire and humour as probes for getting new ways of looking at things. I think we've been just doing them intuitively.

*InB* Can you think of anything more satirical than an N. E. Thing Company? An artist doing a business? Bizarre!

*SH* I was reading through *Six Years* at the library. It said that the reason Lucy Lippard was so interested in you initially was that you were carrying out many investigations simultaneously with American artists without being aware of what they were doing as well. How much were you aware of current conceptual trends?

*InB* No, a lot of the stuff . . . An example is: up at Simon Fraser, we dug a quart hole and put a quart of paint in it. And I think a week later we saw in *Look Magazine* (which was still alive at that time) that Larry Weiner had filled a hole in the earth with paint. And his approach to that same thing was a different approach. We did a quart and a quart. There are differences involved in it.

*IB* That's one of the problems you suffer: being provincial. It's the same problem [*The Capilano Review*] suffers from in terms of the magazines that come out of New York or London, or other quarterlies. It's the very idea that, for some reason, if you happen to live in a major city or the major power base, then everything else that happens outside is not as crucial or important. We've always been fighting against that.

*InB* We were hit — we've not been to New York very many times — I think me only twice — but I was really struck by the provincialism of New York, how extremely narrow it was. Unless it happened in New York, it hadn't happened at all. They're so closed to everything that's going on — it was amazing to me. And it's only people like Lucy that break out of that and realize there are things happening elsewhere, and have a bit of conscience, responsibility, wherewithal to bring it into New York to get it into the galleries.



*IB* Like for instance, when they did that big show of information in New York several years ago, '69 or something; it was a major show of people all over the world doing this information thing. Then the review in *Newsweek* covered mostly the guys in New York. And I've talked to Lucy Lippard and people, and what happens is the guy who writes it lives there and knows these few people. And he just phones them and says, hey, have you got a photograph Joe, or Jack, and the guy runs a photograph in.

And so we wrote a letter to the editor which said that the whole information show was based on the theory of communication and the exchange of ideas, and that they were so provincial they couldn't even use the processes involved in the show to find out and to contact other people in various parts of the country. You can pick up a phone and phone somebody, and take the thing down in telex or whatever. There's *piles* of stuff, right? And it's very frustrating when you can't really do anything about it unless you move to New York. Or, if you decide to stay somewhere else and just comment on it, then you have to get more powerful so you can hit New York with a certain power.

And we've done essentially some of that because we were able to make it into *Time International* and on the covers of certain magazines. It all happened by just using media. A lady asked for a bunch of information for an article. She somehow got our name through Lucy and she phoned us. And so I sent her a telex — a telegram right to her house — just using the systems where someone else wouldn't do it. They might phone, or walk to her place or something. And it just amazed her because she couldn't believe that someone would do those things. So it was using, penetrating through very powerful means.

*PM* Was that why you put a telex machine in your office?

*IB* Yeah. It's really a useful tool.



AR Do you still have one?

IB No, I haven't been able to pay for one. But we'll eventually get one, in the restaurant or someplace.

We've been very much involved with all those things, and the sad thing is these things cost a lot of money. And I think artists have had one of the worst shakes. All artists — I'm talking theatre, music and everybody. In universities, in terms of research. Because they don't want to give funds to guys that do research in areas considered non-scientific or something. But I think it's just as valid in terms of making our lives more wholesome and more understandable and more reasonable to deal with everything. But the arts don't get the research grants, right? I fully agree with having research on health activities and so on, but the health of our people may be very much concerned with the fact that they aren't having a healthy balance with quality of life.

SH So what the problem is, is probably that things are divided into categories — and certain categories are allowed that research money and others aren't.

IB I think categoritis is one of our worst diseases.

PG One of the things I want to get, in terms of the piece I want to do on you guys for the book, is why you came back to the West Coast. Is it strictly an anti-Toronto, anti-Eastern feeling, or is it really because the West Coast means something to you?

InB You know *precisely* why we came back here. (Laughter) Why are you here?

PG Exactly. But I want to get all the people I talk to, to talk about the coast, or B.C.

InB One of my ways of describing that is when we had the trip to Europe: a year to travel around, explore our roots, meet our relatives and see where we came from. We were on the Isle of Skye and ran into a girl who spoke Gaelic. We said, "Are you from Skye?" And she said, "Aye, I belong to Skye." And I had not heard it put that way. And so then, of course, immediately

the question goes falling over yourself: where do you belong? And I think if I have any definition of a feeling of belonging to any part of the landscape or world or whatever, it's Vancouver.

*IB* Let's look at an idea I'm thinking of now; that possibly when you create certain major ideas in your life in a certain locality, the environmental ideas themselves are the reason you want to stay there — because of the ideation that evolved.

*InB* That happened at a certain point, huh? We talk about our aesthetic being based on distance; and this meaning from Toronto, from New York, from the whole publishing centres of our industry.

*PG* The reason *I'm* here is because everything has happened in Toronto, as far as I'm concerned. There's so many possibilities here. It's still unformed. The frontier quality . . . frontier meaning not a boundary in the conventional sense, but a place unexplored.

*IB* Just what I said earlier: the frontier could be the problem of trying to deal with provincialism. Because I think that's a major problem in the world. It's a problem of the Third World: all these smaller countries trying to deal with these big countries.

*PG* You're dealing with the long distance.

*IB* It's a way of trying to do something about everything.

*InB* Some people *need* New York, some people need Toronto, and we don't seem to have that need. Our work is cut out for us.

*PG* Self-contained?

*InB* It doesn't really matter where we are. We don't have to have the stimulus of lots of other happenings and doings to continue to do what we're doing.

*IB* But it does matter that it happens.

*PG* Are you implying that in terms of stimulus, there's less here for you people than there is in Toronto or New York?

*InB* No, I'm perhaps implying almost the opposite. Because like I was explaining before: being hit with the provincialism of New York — it really hit me.

We were involved in the Sao Paulo Exhibition at that time, and the New York artists were boycotting it. And if you went to a New York art party and you had not agreed to boycott the Sao Paulo Exhibition, you were absolutely ostracized. It was that kind of social group pressure. At that time we were doing the A.C.T.s and A.R.T.s, and one of the acts that we claimed was workers turning chili beans, you know; it had a nice formation.

*AR* That must have made you very popular. (Laughter)

*IB* But they were writing letters, and Lucy and those guys were telling us as Canadians to go along with this whole thing. And we felt, we're in a different country and there's a different point of view.

*InB* No, I think our stimulus is broader than any locale, perhaps. I think the stimulus for our work . . .

*IB* It's from all locales, and at the same time, from one.

*AR* But what you're really into is the art of living. If people know what they ought to know about a lot of art: that it does involve style, and attitudes, and sensuality and intellect and all those things . . . But most people don't take the trouble to attach those values to art or even think that art is more than something to look at.

*IB* Part of our driving force is all of that, and I don't know how it comes out.

*AR* It's that line between art and life that's being worn through. What you're trying to do, I think, is to make the common experience the force or the source of where art is, which I think it is to an amazing degree. On the other hand, unless one is aware in a very complex sense of all the different things that make you do any particular thing that you do, then it seems too much like life and not quite like art.

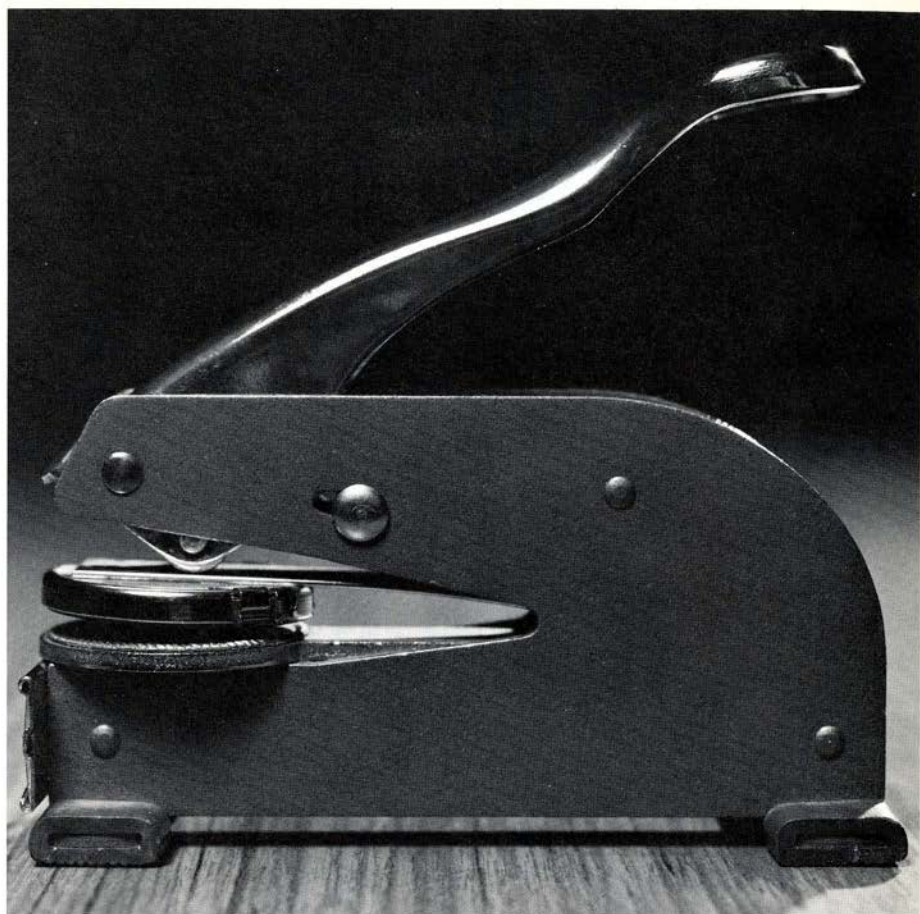
*InB* It's part of the whole educational process.

*IB* And partly, doing the Eye Scream restaurant is going to be this way of bringing it closer to the everyday real values.

We've both grown. I would like more people to share in that feeling, because I think it's very rewarding to be able to get off on life in that way; so that you don't have to have all kinds of camouflage, and you can see things and appreciate things. In other words, raise your sensitivity level to be able to do that.

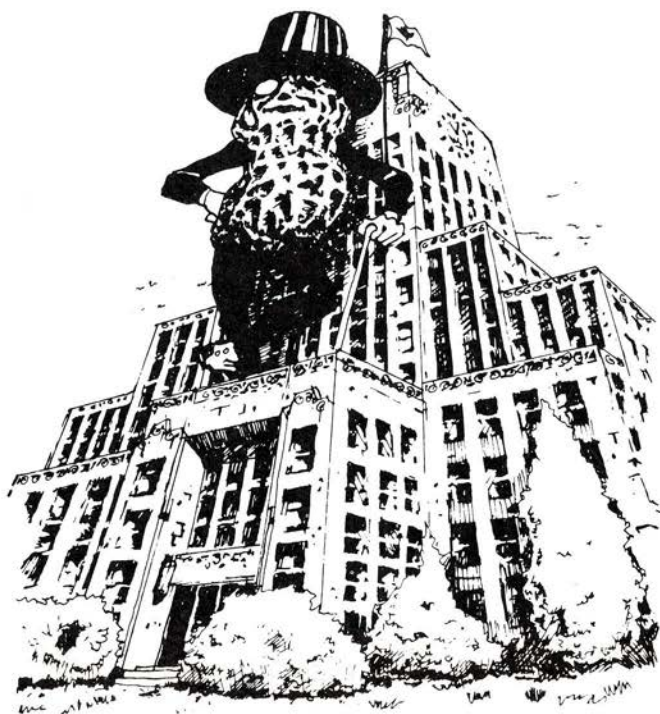
*InB* At its very simplest, it's probably just a process of, hey, I like this; don't you?







# A NEW MAYOR A NEW ERA



## VANCOUVER CIVIC ELECTION 1974

## Western Front / MR. PEANUT FOR MAYOR

*Included here: documents and a comment on the 1974 Mr. Peanut mayoralty campaign, in which Mr. Peanut and the Peanut Party brought politics to art. "Working on the basic assumption that art is a highly essential fibre in our social fabric, we conceived and generated a form of sculpture concerned with vital human activities." Although the editors were not personally involved in the campaign, they have had access to the Files, and to John Mitchell's campaign diary, Twenty Days in November. These are available to the public in the Archives of The Western Front Society, 303 E. 8th Ave., Vancouver, B.C.*

## A PEANUT IN EVERY POT

Art City: "Originally we were artists working together without any political ambitions or directions. The election was just visualized as another major art work." John Mitchell, in the summer of 1974, conceived of the city of Vancouver as a kind of screen on which an artwork could be played out. He approached The Western Front, and the Peanut Party was born, with no platform and a candidate who did not speak. The upcoming civic election was the perfect frame for the ongoing sculpture the party envisaged, for at no other time was the city so aware of itself. Good press (despite a campaign budget of \$12.80) guaranteed Mr. Peanut success and acceptance. The city at large participated in the event through the media, and became an important part of it: Art City. The artists involved did not let their more serious concerns get in the way of the good humour with which they conducted their campaign, winning them fans in light of the other candidates. The idea of a vegetable running for mayor caught on with the press and public all over North America, as the Files and the accompanying letters show. William Burroughs wrote:

*I would like to take this opportunity to endorse the candidacy of Mr. Peanut for Mayor of Vancouver. Mr. Peanut is running on the art platform, and art is the creation of illusion. Since the inexorable logic of reality has created nothing but insoluble problems, it is now time for illusion to take over. And there can be only one illogical candidate: Mr. Peanut.*

Politics as art. The recognition in satirical terms that every art is a political act. If the Peanut campaign were only the comic relief that made it popular, it would not be worth the trouble of resurrecting it so long after its demise. It is the ideas raised in its success that make it worth looking at again.

A consequence of conceptual art that many artists avoid, posed by the reduction or elimination of the object in favour of the idea, is the democratization of the art process. Art no longer *belongs* to those with technical polish, it is free to everyone with a creative intelligence. Mr. Peanut told *The Georgia Straight*, some time after the election:

*What we're proposing is a creative level of thought trying to attain some sort of a crystal thought-wave that you can work on, and that's basically an artist's outlook to his existence. I mean, you don't have to be painting any pictures or that sort of thing, you just have to live your life in a creative manner.*

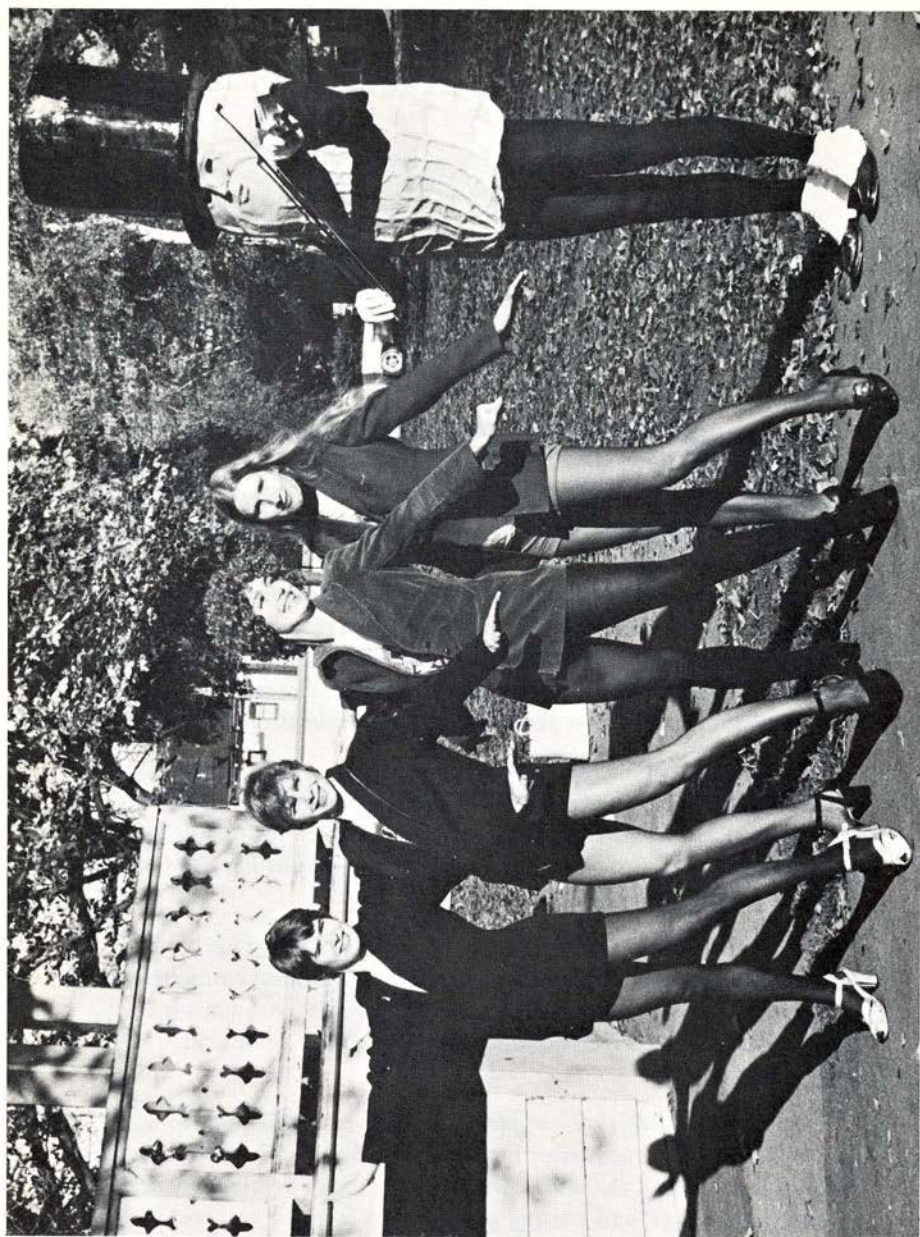
This is Art City in another sense. The Western Front itself exemplifies this life-style, and the success of the Peanut campaign, in which the whole city took part, was its first project on a mass scale. Art was taken into the community, and it becomes a political statement:

*It must be stressed that our platform is based on the purest principles of interdisciplinary art, an attitude of mind wherein art and politics are one and the same. Art being our only effective tool in generating change, and putting control back into the personal lives of each and every citizen.*

— S.H.

*The images are taken from the Peanut File of The Western Front.*







October 28, 1974

Mr. Peanut  
The Western Front  
303 - East 8th Avenue  
Vancouver, B. C.  
Canada

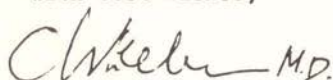
Dear Mr. Peanut:

I have just been informed of your splended campaign for the office of mayor of the City of Vancouver.

It is campaigns such as yours which will bring back much needed vitality and creativity to both politics as well as the management of our troubled cities. Dadadadadada.

I am most happy to go on record in support of your efforts to bring art and life more closely together.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'C. Wheeler M.D.', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Charles B. Wheeler, M. D.  
Mayor,  
City of Kansas City, Mo.

CBW/wv

-SONG OF THE EVENING STARS-



## Toby MacLennan / PLAYING THE STARS

*Playing the Stars is a work-in-progress by Toby MacLennan. This piece was first performed at the Vancouver East Cultural Centre, November 14, 1975, as an event in a woman's year program called Ms. En Scène. Projection of slides to the accompaniment of a taped cello recording was the form chosen for the initial performance. The taped music, composed from a "reading" of star positions through the bars of the sculpture on a starry Vancouver evening, was played by Natalie Novotny Green. An updated version of Playing the Stars — more complex visually, and with "live" music — will take place at The Vancouver Planetarium in Vancouver in 1976.*



The idea for *Playing the Stars* came from the following poem that I wrote:

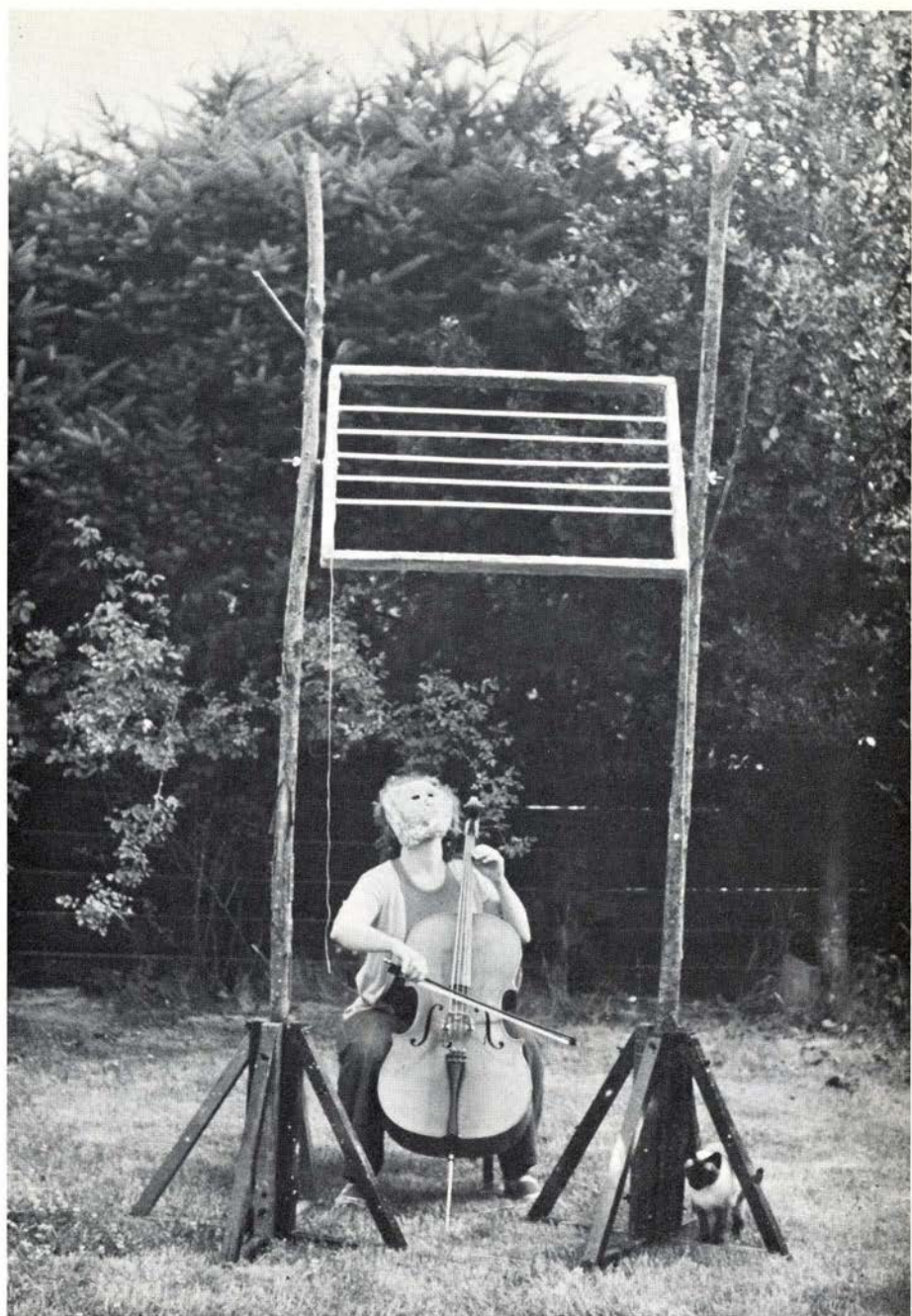
Upon a large piece of glass cut  
out in the shape of a leaf, he drew five  
white lines of a musical score and attached  
the glass to a raw board.

Each night he would take his instrument  
out to the field and propping the transparent  
sheet into the air, he would play a piece  
of the sky.

— TOBY MACLENNAN

















Duncan McNaughton /

ἔξ ὄνυχος τὸν λέοντα γράφων

PAINTING THE LION FROM A CLAW

I would rather live than go to the movies  
but the parties are depressing, alcoholic, drugged, indulgent, confusing, unworthy  
but even alone in the evening, puzzled, unwilling to think of John Keats too  
lightly yet concerning him to consider is sweet after long not having done so  
relative to the adherence of catatonia, which is a shower of gravity  
rained down from on high called melancholy, dark showers down cast  
κατά-, from heaven.

Joints ache, the aspirin's worn off, swallows squabble  
outside the door. That crow has the pole top, little bird, but  
it's too hot for that crow —

listen, you poets of other lands, I want you  
to do okay but you don't give a damn for my honor, so I am going to tell  
you a little conversion

Now it is certain that I did not have much of the fly  
agaric. This was because I wished to find out concerning my welcome; after  
all, I had not prayed in the grove where I found it, not to the divine mushroom  
and not to the trees: fuck the prayers, I said, this time the cherub is brushed  
aside. Anyway, I would not have found this toadstool unless Lynn ( ) Kleinberg  
O'Hare Berkson had said Oh sure there's another one there near the road, so  
the great visualization occurred to me in a so to say secular manner and hence  
forth the sacred inasmuch as I know the presumptuous assholes whose church  
of bold pinheads supposes possession of the celestialities, for whom knowledge  
hath all the swift decay of the media —

love is going, my fiendish amigos, to  
triumphant in its own little way, that means it's being what it says now like  
any participle which particularates instead of being nounced upon, you  
too ready scavengers whose ya-ya's darken the sun.

MacHomer when it comes  
to war & faery-land, I love Lang's diction but wow! l'histoire, si rosée  
through the poet's bloodshot eyes but it wasn't it was shadow-footed & similiar  
in an automorphic knife-slash kind of way, each one of us wanting to be very  
good at it; each slash that divides us, keener. Because of mukhomer my dreams  
are new and flood sleep so there is no sleep, keener & actually prophetic  
disgorgements of that congruent earth which as the earth to which it is similiar  
enpopulated by people as known & as unknown as those 'here' and now  
all my gods gather uselessly smiling before me, at me, my master smirks  
at me, too late to even know it, I am conducted between the worlds forever  
& by this MacHomer of indifferent function, so like a poet without eyes  
without nameable nature, beyond cruelty, the star-capped dragger of the soul —  
how the volumes of two earths heave through a night of nothing, similiar  
I live now in each. There is no one to pray to.

Language solely travels.  
O thou words, art thou possessor of even all this? and of this thought-  
maker, this  
poiêtês, this fabricator of belief who married you? They say art & life are  
twins — then language & woman are twins, and poetry & love.  
They say a lot of things but it's better when the wind blows away the sun  
through the high clacking eucalypts as they say down under or gum trees  
have a sort of bone marrow which twists like a muscular nerve through  
the air, through the earth as a fylfot's arm . . .

1976



*ta'wil* in *agnosia*

"It is my life itself that is surprised"

Paul Valéry said

No one sees afterwards.

given to worship

out-of-bounds

seeing force in the waves & particles  
unbounded

see where it ends

the land sinks like a lamp  
at daybreak

the moth drops to the kitchen table  
exhausted

a sleepy head drops to the pages

drools and dreams so that

words stain the mouth

outside      the great tree      tangled  
spaces fill with blue

dream, dream

little sinner, beloved one  
nothing  
is all you know

## George Bowering / ALLOPHANES

### V

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

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

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

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

Whatever I learned has run wild.

I awake in a hospital  
under a patchwork quilt.

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

As the colours stitch together  
before my eyes.

As St. Arte is my bedside nurse



in a snow white skirt.

## VI

I havent got a Dante's chance in Hell.

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

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

What?  
You dont want the untying  
that frees the mind?  
Dionysus is the power in the tree.  
— like a Louisville Slugger.  
There is safety in derision,  
read either way.

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

(Oedipus at Kelowna)

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

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

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

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

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

) in this watching  
in this (?) madness

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

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

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

Aw narrative  
is a telling blow.

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

This is depressing salt I stand in, I sink.

The egg sits there,  
it does not rot itself.

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

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

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

& where has Maud gone?

Here I am,  
all over.

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



## Penny Chalmers / THREE POEMS

### REMEDIES

step forth

as  
Personalities

they confront us in our patients  
they haunt us in 'bus and tram

creatures of temperament, vivid  
sensitive to meteoric conditions  
human intercourse  
and environment

we realize their terrors, real or imaginary —  
their strange obsessions  
& in measure we apply them with success to  
persons of like  
idiosyncracies &  
distresses

very vivid  
their power to help

experienced  
one regards with something like affection

*allies*

## MERCURIES

Head in a vice: growing larger

Sparks from eyes

black bugs before the sight  
the fire dazzles

Feathers coming out of corners of eyes.

A weight hanging from nose.

A wedge driven into ear

roaring

Ice in ear : cold water running

Teeth loose, fixed in a mass of pap.

Gums a bright red margin.

Worm rising in throat

the loaded tongue  
swollen & furry, white fur, so soft  
on the margin that it shows the imprint  
of teeth in scallops

Stammering on account of the trembling of mouth & tongue.

talk hurried

“an apple core sticks in my throat”

Black Letter Symptoms

Apprehension in the blood  
creeping chilly

## PHOSPHORUS

tall slender phthisical persons

who like to be magnetized

born sick

grown up

emaciating waxy weak empty gone

delicate eyelash

worse from mental exertion, from noise

worse in the dark : worse alone

better for eating : better for sleeping

deaf to the human voice

apathy : friends and, even, children

Phos. is a bleeder

Phos. may come in for softening of the brain

fatty degeneration

faces in the corner

in a whisper, huskily:

"I bathe with my eyes closed"

## Chris Dewdney / THREE POEMS

### RADIO SYMMETRY

At every thing we see  
occipital a reconstruction retinal.  
Mind imparting a clarity  
unoptical. I was shown  
insensate islands in the poems.

"Seeing as is" they believing say.  
It's on the record.

Everything  
*you* say will be used against you.  
A warning frightful,  
weathered grey signboard in limestorm wind.  
This times the dream was even.  
Mind's known factors assembled together,  
small & huddled in the corner  
of the enlarging room.  
The held image mutates in memory,  
in hands like clumps of wet sand  
drying  
sliding out in the hot sun.

These time the dream  
is on you.

## ANECESSITY

There is no oral tradition.  
There is amoral tradition.  
Instinct. A sense  
of concentric liqueurs  
mutually arriving at their  
respective levels.  
That's a moral. A thorn  
breaking off just under the skin.  
Barbs relying on  
your movement  
to work their way in.



## REMORA

Certain parasites rather  
like mediums for exchange  
attach themselves  
to those things which we desire.  
The exchange of dry goods.  
We are casual archeologists  
seeking an explanation for the rise  
of our own ontogenetic civilizations.

The apple frequently  
returns to its beholder.  
What once bitten  
the apple does not ascribe to  
is an oracle.  
Had once bitten elsewhere,  
off a hunk largely  
bitten of divisible pieces of itself,  
perhaps we could have limited  
the activities of the reclamation men.

Little meaning  
is attached to these phases.  
It is almost as to say if  
one were not diminished  
in the way a bitten apple diminishes  
piece by moon-like crater piece.  
As if the train  
halted in iii's.  
The z of your being there.

Sleeping is as easy  
as sawing off a log.  
We wake up wen  
the lawg hits us. Hipgnosis.  
One becomes small  
as if in a tiny aquarium.  
How much detail  
can be confined to one place?  
"The restoration is proceeding well  
except, of course, for the finer details."  
Or that we had, at best,  
calmly accepted was venerable mistake.  
The apple lands with a thud.  
on the sleeper's head.  
He awakes & immediately thinks  
"Gravity"

But these are glimmerings  
between the strokes  
between the spokes  
of Her pouring through.  
Her voluminous heady rushing of waters  
& the stranger's laugh rings in the canyon  
while in the rapids the apples jostle with logs  
will is apparent even whirling  
dervish will is particularly  
this detail?

Fred Wah / TWO POEMS

BROTHER    THEN BROTHERS

Brother    Then brothers  
numbers / age  
also

“a matter  
of penetration”

the three of us  
someday take that on  
each of us  
older  
    than father

## NOT SO MUCH ALL OF US DYING

Not so much all of us dying  
or nobody else living or even one  
one shining master of light  
but a procession forth  
into I like the movement  
in our syntax goes  
something like a river Daphne  
so its still "how" we do what  
and give a punch we hope  
words to take off on us  
will still be the line all of us  
dying to do it that way the best.



## Paul Kahn / TWO POEMS

### HEAVY SUNDAY SERMON

I am hard to talk to some days  
considering the shapes of things.  
No streets run parallel for very long,  
(space thru time), all lines  
disperse. How to get there  
from here: first we must locate  
where we are, determine the relation  
between that & where we would go,  
conceptualize the path we are on.

The map tells us nothing of the territory,  
only a record of the differences we use  
to perceive it.

Locate the self one day  
bare ass standing by a storm sewer  
in a dream, that place, embarrassment  
of public exposure, the dreaming self  
dives into the sewer hole, makes the  
move necessary, we have found  
where we are going, crouched in fear we are there  
having dreamed our self exposed.

## TAKE THIS

Here, you must  
    make up a way  
        to say this, you  
must learn to walk it  
    out & back, to walk  
it, with feet, to make up  
    words for it, speak  
it, with your tongue, feel it  
    out. We are our own  
worst, & besides can't you  
    stay out of the way, let the man  
thru —————

    The shore. He swam until  
he reached the shore. He asked many  
fish where the shore was but they each  
denied knowing of its existence.

                                    And  
when he reached the shore he walked,  
as he was meant to, onto land,  
across that interface which was  
the shore, his own skin becoming such a shore,  
in his mind, which had always been, in fact.

Of rock this is built, & any one who approaches  
this place will know how what is said or  
stood on is of rock here.

## Hope Anderson / FOUR POEMS

### THE EDIFICE OF SAGGING HIP

#### i

the seats were plain old  
nothing to speak of, nobody  
did, the specifics of rigamortis  
is this, nobody who wants to find  
blood goes there, we all go  
sit with legs crossed, bladders  
of disordered celebration on the  
floor, we watch old men in  
bow ties waiting, we are old  
men in neckties, watching white  
cadillacs slip thru the eye of  
a needle.

#### ii

so many lace panties, sit  
here, that virtue, sullen chastity  
gone to naught, like the buffalo  
stiff as fear we comeback as constancy  
we comeback, from chasing wind we  
comeback to this edifice of sagging  
hip, where the breeze is old and  
cold against our dry skin, the few who  
had never gone, or had never heard  
the song, "you may go to the rock but  
the rock cant hide you now."

## UNTITLED

(from *Journey*)

when you do not expect it love  
walks thru the snow, it performs  
acrobatics, biba thinks it is as  
big as a bear, heavy hooves of the  
beast could be seen plucking a dry  
fern from the edge of the almost  
frozen lake, the sky was falling and  
she drank moonshine from a passing  
cloud to quench her thirst, that night  
flamby was all alone, he could not find  
a soul.

## UNTITLED

*(from Journey)*

now the sound comes through the teeth  
some say, jazzbo surpassed himself  
locked himself unto thick conversations  
with the air, throws the body out, lives  
posthumously, ghost clinging to oily brain  
now the sound comes through the eelgrass  
as he remembers it winding with subterranean  
fury, the mud spiked to its barefoot stroll and  
bear child was in the story somewhere, some say  
she was eating something strange as an artichoke  
and it must be told, that she was no ordinary  
runaway, and was not alone, underground, thousands  
were in her company, building a swamp house in  
what some say was windsor, so jazzbo had passed  
himself outdoors, where the wind bit, humourlessly, some  
say, he has his knife



## SONG # XI

I could be Catherine of silver  
and i eat leaves i wear overalls  
most of all i sing even when i am  
not asked, i collar the dead at  
their funerals, i sing scattering  
the notes like seeds of rye,  
come dance me out of the sea.

I could be John of the river  
i eat marble, i wear overalls  
most of all, i watch the cities  
crumble, collar the leaders  
as they move to escape the fire  
moving to the sea. meet  
me in new orleans.

## Jonis Agee / FLEMISH PROVERBS:

the fish devours the fish  
there are hungry dogs  
searching for food  
and men eating in plenty  
an eel sliding across  
water a man cannot walk on  
the people shitting bare  
assed out of windows  
where our cardinal throws  
his coins —  
a man gathers water  
in the corner some  
Christ is blessing  
a dog

the razorback hogs  
feed their mean eyes  
on a man who throws  
roses and on a woman  
who cloaks her lover

3 swine  
butchered the knives  
sheathed in their  
rancid skin

the dogs have found  
a bone in one corner  
the gossips something  
else in another

shall we pray to  
the cowman on the throne?

a peasant presents  
candles to a bare wall  
another goes down  
on the antlered devil

## John Pass / WATER-COLOURS

Using up the time  
on the parking meter  
I find myself looking  
at prints in a bookstore.  
What is it about them  
makes me want to look again  
at everything?

A touch of new snow  
on the forested mountain  
slope, light as cloud.  
I ache to be so  
gentle with the world.

There are the bare trees  
dry with cold. Below them  
the traffic struggles as the light  
changes. I am at the wheel, waiting.

From the window overlooking  
the orchard I can see more  
of the valley and the faraway  
glimmering sea. On the ground  
one apple keeps its colour  
among the frosted leaves.

Always, in a way,  
it is a lie. As I recall  
there were no water-colours.

I spend the daylight  
writing, lost in subtleties.  
It is dark when I walk  
near the stream expecting  
the sound of water.

## Stephen Morrissey / FIRST SNOW STORM: Han-shan

as tho the world had become this  
had become the wind  
and the wind contained nothing  
but snow  
the snow that sticks  
to the windows  
is as good as any poem Han-shan ever wrote  
it is a cold day  
and the cold pierces to the heart  
in china the songs of Han-shan are sung  
by the children  
the first snow  
is like the sound of children singing  
if it keeps snowing like this  
maybe we'll stay home  
and study Han-shan's poems  
maybe we'll study the patterns  
the snow leaves on the windows  
or do some painting  
it is good for the heart  
to paint  
or to read the poems of Han-shan  
better than reading  
buddhist sutras



*Translated from the Spanish by A. Frank and Theresa Moritz.*

**Gilberto Meza / TWO POEMS**  
**CUENTOS NEVADOS (1)**

In the night's tall grasses  
a heart cut off in the first dawn.

It defies stones,  
the weather hammers it, a stake that pierces  
its auricles buried in a drift with the pain  
of a bird of ice burning with fullness.

You approach, you gather it up and keep it  
in your breast, then it startles you: it beats.

## CUENTOS NEVADOS (1)

Entre las altas hierbas de la noche  
un corazón cortado en la primera aurora.

Afronta piedras,  
el tiempo se le clava, es una estaca que atraviesa  
sus aurículos nevados con un dolor  
de pájaro de hielo ardiendo de saciedad.

Te acercas, lo recoges y lo guardas  
en tu pecho, luego te asombra: palpita.

## PLEGANDO CHARCOS NEGROS

Drawing together black puddles  
the remains of passing disturbances,  
dreams go by, sinking away into distances  
that light up nothing but the same isolation  
that runs to shelter in trains.

But later goblins arrive, to sing  
and to raise flowers in their song, flowers  
that have nothing to do with real flowers.  
And the women are wrung out in their arms  
as if they were shadows and in their own shadows were  
all fear.

Later the puddles dissolve  
and there is nothing left.

## PLEGANDO CHARCOS NEGROS

Plegando charcos negros,  
los restos de disturbios pasajeros,  
pasan los sueños sumiéndose en distancias  
que nada aclaran sino la misma soledad  
que corre a refugiarse en trenes.  
Pero luego llegan los duendes a cantar  
y crecen flores en su canto, flores  
que nada tienen que ver con las flores verdaderas.  
Y las mujeres se escurren en sus brazos  
como si fueran sombras y en su propia sombra cubrieran  
todo el miedo.  
Luego los charcos se disuelven  
y no queda nada.

*Translated from the Spanish by A. Frank and Theresa Moritz.*

## Carlos Próspero / REQUERIMIENTO

While the streets are filled with silence  
you're asleep, submerged in your yellow nightgown  
and you don't need disguised sentinels  
or bodyguards to watch your sleep.

The stars pierce the cape of fog raised up  
in the streets to the height of the silence  
while in your white sheets sleep  
transforms you into a cocooned butterfly.

You need a foreign heat  
and the weight of another body that fills yours!  
and not people hidden with guns  
and with the right to kill whoever comes along.

The sweaty buses pass.  
The people inside talk about girls.  
The night is black and the buttonholes of infinity  
opened in their rhythmic configuration.

I walk through this street stupefied  
with mercury lamps, straightened trees  
and people going off to sleep.

You are wrapped up in your pyjamas —  
or nightgown or wrap or what you want —  
while the night passes, stuck to the walls,  
while you assemble a dream — painlessly —  
and you don't know that there are men preparing war.



## REQUERIMIENTO

Mientras las calles se llenan de silencio  
duermes sumergida en tu bata amarilla  
y no necesitas centinelas disfrazados  
ni guardaespaldas que cuiden tu sueño.

Las estrellas perforan la capa de niebla levantada  
en las calles al tope de silencio  
mientras en tus sabanas blancas el sueño  
te convierte en capullo — mariposa.

Tú necesitas un calor extraño  
y el peso de otro cuerpo que te llene el cuerpo!  
y no gente escondida con fusiles  
y con derecho a matar al que se acerque.

Los carros sudorosos pasan.  
Las gentes del interior platican acerca de muchachas.  
La noche es negra y los ojales del infinito  
abierto en posición de ritmo.

Camino entre esta calle estupefacta  
con luces mercuriales, árboles erguidos  
y gente que se va al descanso.

Estás envuelta en tu pijama  
— o bata o quita-frio o como quieras —  
mientras la noche pasa adherida a las paredes,  
mientras construyes un sueño — sin angustia —  
y no sabes que hay gente que se prepara a la guerra!

Larry Eigner / SIX POEMS

“ ‘CHRISTIANA’S WORLD’ ”

“Christiana’s World”

a skyline, red barns  
are business

a field of oats

the head and the body

*Sep 29 64*

## "DOG AND"

dog and  
the snow  
    noddding the way through  
        over  
    hurrying branch of the wind  
        eyes  
piles settle  
    wavy ridge  
    a siren the sharpness of sky  
        seasons the stars  
            pale

*Jan 8? 68*  
*(for S.M. and P.C.)*

“ ‘ THE UNITY ”

“ the unity  
of which I speak  
various temperature  
rays are a mystery  
life some of it felt and seen  
scrambling  
weights  
eggs in the pan are  
some sign  
close the door shining  
don't take a long time  
or open it  
all the directions it turns

*June 25 75*  
*(for Jack Collom)*

## "THE RAIN DROPS"

The rain drops

straight from cloud

overcast

sky

hours sound

still what

land known

near the ocean

*August 6 75*



## "THE"

the  
frosted car  
I imagine  
hearing the motor  
of the girl who lives here  
or next door  
upstairs  
now  
the snow heavy  
hours  
such days  
that's it  
news  
what  
drives away  
the world

*Dec 24 75*

Leslie Keyworth /  
SYMPHONY #5 IN C# MINOR, ADAGIO

in the sound of a hand through dark hair,the black  
water tropes of falling.the lifting of  
mist peeled from air.rain f(ol)lowing.

this is the eye from which the storm  
turns away. the eye fractured schist. root of light.

Image comes riding from the south corner of the world, Its  
black horse knotting to take the fence in the  
same motion

locked into sky.

pyramid points.

it is raining (It?). in venice, there are whirlpools beneath  
the stone bridges. the stone old with the indiscriminate stabbing of  
horse feet and original liquid. miles under venice an  
orifice haunts the dawn, undulates like an eye. a blue eye (His  
eyes). it is the meeting place of  
all water and the point from which It comes. it  
comes.

I(t) comes meeting no specific horizon.the venice  
that is connected by Its grey.all  
we are,or

ever,

is water.

the black horse completes the jump into

water.brown liquid arms

stroke the shores.pull

the river walls down over It.become a-part of  
the forward press

as the instant of  
pressing, one and one (the  
only number) & the  
hand as it leaves Its tracks on the walls of skin  
below. takes in. forms the air with a weight of  
other hands,  
others,  
not His.

the nails, soothers  
of lumber/the skin,  
plant fibre.  
protects the eye corpuscles, the  
darkness of  
It.

my hands are cold. empty and empty  
the darkest of houses, folding beneath me. He is  
warming my hands, rubbing them  
like golden lamps. they  
are tarnished, inked by words that fail, cold  
so long they can not hold my pen, or  
Its pen, or  
for no One, any  
more.

the palm of my hand — he says It reads water as  
he is falling  
onto  
me, slow.  
like the brush of grass on the wind. the  
rounding of waves over  
rock.

It said  
beware of water. dont go away stay go away.  
he said,  
his fist tightened, caught in his breathing. (the rooms steady. falling  
away. listening).



## Barry McKinnon / THREE POEMS

### THE WHALE

reach 30. all you know is, you are

here

& carry darkness

( say what

must be sd, he said

the *topic* lost

allows the speech. yet they will

say of the simplest things

*"incomprehensible"* — so the poet

begins again

clear in his parts

of speech

finally wld wish to speak only to whales

who do tricks for food in stanley park. the great  
beasts, reduced to tricks

perform for

food.

expect the world to be

perfect. the cosmonauts handshake

will not ease those on earth. the whale

is no illusion. we have him before our eyes.

the trainer says — if you clap, they

do better,

their hearing is very

good.



## BATHTUB

my daughter repeats over & over  
    'where are we going' & a man  
at the rod & gun  
        drunk with hollow rasped voice gives  
no medical excuse,  
                says 'I'm tony bennet'  
sings, 'I left my heart in san francisco'  
  
'I dont know where we are going' I say over & over, the same  
answer to the same question, or give  
    the literal.  
        we are going  
            to the bathtub races,  
arrive  
    & walk the wharves

•

I understand the spooked boy clutching his radio. I do not  
understand those drunk at 10 a.m., standing in double knit trunks  
on boats, young, with fu manchu moustaches yelling at  
all who pass, call me a queer, at that distance  
there is nothing you can do — or yell to some sea queen  
herself the businessmen's definition of beauty — expected to  
lay down on yachts & receive them one after another.

I follow her too. she disappears.  
you look into water. the crabs move beneath  
mutations of another time, some covered & dead  
from oil.

in the riot 78 were arrested. broke windows  
with no revolutionary intent, therefore stupidly enter  
jail.

attempt to run a policeman down, the charge  
is attempted murder

carried away 'in a good time', they say

I am carried away  
in language of another time  
& take my daughter home

'where are we going'

*home*

this time, I only say it

once

## PEARL

(for Paul Shuttleworth)

what can we say  
    of these things:

to pile absurdity upon absurdity until  
it becomes a town  
                a city:          on the radio

*The Problem Line:*

                the problem is — what is the symbol for the 30th  
anniversary.      one says lace  
                one says pearl — (such debate  
steals my time, yet

                another calls because his  
wood is splitting on its own, its all falling apart, &  
what can we do for him or the wood listeners?  
    what can be done, as if an answer  
    is possible

what do you do  
                when *it* piles up — the students  
want to know what they've missed  
                or what are we doing today. we are  
doing it. *it* seems to be the subject here — what I am  
subjected to

I know everything & ponder the mysteries  
of the Prince George Hotel: dark, 4:30 p.m. ponder  
the imported Vegas singer — what does he think of *it* —  
the town, where someone sd everyone seems to be missing a  
finger & has a split mouth from an authentic drunken fight. what  
do I think of him & his Elvis Presley imitation, guitar out  
of tune & plugged in to this electrical age (he solves the problem  
of a drummer — backed by an electronic beat, latin american  
fake samba

he forces all songs to fit to. I am puzzled

entertained

for the wrong

reasons

any sense of myself is welcomed. I welcome the absurd  
( giving me one more thing I know, to explain

the weather has changed outside. the skating rink has been empty  
for 3 months yet today — 3 children skate there, awkwardly  
scrape the ice, move over it, lost in activity  
but not lost.

the problem is : getting any line down

clearly

to shine opaque as a pearl

born of some closed agony

& ceaseless

irritation

## Elizabeth Hay / WRITINGS

### TWO INSECTS

two insects

a woman lies on top of a man

dragonflies

blue

abundant

everywhere among the weeds

clinging to our shirts five or six at a time

blue lines with wings blue shadows

flitting

erotic thoughts

dragonfly tips

glue lightly two together

brief

all the aberrations off one plant ivy

curly straightleafed

aberrations off one bed long

fluctuations of tension

pleasure

offspring muted monsters

dwarfs

on my shoulder

dragonflies

blue

luminous

among weeds

•



## YELLOWKNIFE SUITE

we were looking for ravens

and walked in a valley  
slight incline between rock  
birch and poplar yellow  
bronze

(they often  
ride the updraft on one side of the rock)

the earth smells strong  
reaches up

tipped by leaves  
the expected presence of fruit  
pears apples the same  
colour as the leaves

graves are on the slight hill  
fenced in with wooden weathered fences  
weathered fallen wood  
wild roses  
aren't in flower  
their leaves are red

the ground stained  
violent

ravens are stains absorbed  
seasons absorbed  
all year round ravens shade the ground

•

her fingers hold onto the edge of the boat  
her body in water  
the first joints are cut off  
then the next  
finally she gives way to darkness  
sinks down  
into August

light  
turns to ravens  
    under water  
    they tug at her heels  
    her wrists float beside her   white  
fish  
strip flesh off her bones  
they make evening  
they make her a moon  
a mound of shining bones  
    shining

•

said of coffee  
black

of earth

without cream  
ravens

sugar is possible  
(whatever dissolves)

light  
stirred in disappears without regret  
certain things desire eventual black

others bump against me  
into my legs  
hard nailed boxes  
unreceptive to the pull

others dissolve more slowly  
on the shore  
shells and bits of dishes  
the cup and saucer

•

snow comes out of the walls

and falls

inside the house

lamps and tables become a woods

walk in this light

new

white

dust

covers us in sleep

all but the ovals our heads leave

pillows have ovals where heads lay

a quiet revenge

against looking out at the world as separate

it comes in

•

## D.J. / TWO POEMS

### SEDNA'S WORLD

*As the dead prey upon us,  
they are the dead in ourselves . . .*

— CHARLES OLSON

#### I

Dead  
horsefly floats  
on a skin of water  
with eyes,  
                    fading

Night  
a hopeless current.  
Fingers leave  
grooves in soft banks.  
They are mine  
& no human answers.

Slip into the deep  
where Sedna waits.  
Her fingers sliced —  
(especially that one  
fourth from the left,  
connector to the heart.

Now she rules, highly feared  
one eyed and fingerless.

Her house is full  
of bodies  
who are also animals, returning  
to be slain  
on the beaches,  
or hauled to the surface with hooks.



## II

I return  
to name  
these impious hunters of the heart.  
The ones who rescue fishes —  
slip hooks into hidden pockets.

You think I don't see your eyes  
search  
over my shoulder  
for targets, or  
imaginary whales  
as they roll off a belly of sky.

This is a world  
where wounding takes place,  
where suffering is the master carver of totems.

## EXPOSED NEGATIVES

Where fear lives  
the words grow in broken light.  
The match flame  
gives back the hands  
wrung in your lap  
where the sentence begins,  
in the heat of it,  
in the register  
dry hawk voice  
wall photos curl in the atmosphere  
frame estuaries of grief, escarpments  
I found you crying under  
*the Great Bear's shadow.*

Here are the blind.  
The air is filled with their wailings  
offered up to  
what dark god?

Only the wind answers  
as it hunts through branches  
grown of my own heart.  
I have shaped its tones into animals,  
                                coyote owl wolf  
(damp tracks across my face — affirmations  
to hunt me down  
leave my bones scattered on a hillside.

Who has written this, these words?

I would have given them shiny teeth.

I would have given them pads,  
muffled feathers,

cunning disguises to hide their treachery.

The question is

how shall I free them?

Shall I stuff light in their eyes/  
not recognize them in the next easy field?

This map *is not to be got out of*  
but into

climb

up yr own shadow noisily

a sunrise

east

over the crags

paints the walls yellow,

the trees with their own sap

gives

green back to the grass & leaves,

the rabbits

their bands of light,

the shadow/their hunters,

cougar and lynx

their panting

as the sun slips

between the rock

blue pools

the moon floats in

fish skin snags.

Hyda writhes  
in its own astonishment.

I drew back the curtain  
where the snow was  
piled  
on fence posts  
loosely

*whirled from the ash.*

Edward Curtis  
you stand                      back to the sun.  
   Shadowmaker,  
what's captured in your lens/  
whose face  
   whose nation?

## Maxine Gadd / THREE POEMS

### THE CHAIR

to hell  
the cooperation of  
king's ministers  
with their broad bare skulls  
yu are petty, it  
fall into a faceless river  
elaborate chirp of the skull-lark, it drop  
on a fish too full for swimming  
tell about the ghost riding yu have hardly remembered any more  
tell  
the prophecy of society hating apes with golden  
golden come on down their back track trail up again to desolation peace and  
glory rocky mountain fire  
  
yu just feed yrself literal ass-grain,  
great ladies like yu well enuff,  
tough old bouncer sez  
come on come on come on strong as an onion,  
fellini, cellini-gold a quiet turn around of niceness now  
what u am, old barrel under a mountain of sound,  
literal end of rock corridor and found  
with intricate work no simple squirrel culd nibble away, there IS  
something under the doorstep  
it will take one thing only  
REMOVE  
yr grandmother's garnets

it's now yu turn the stations on and a whole planet move

quiet grey day



was there any difference before after it came? were yu changed?  
was anything that goes on every day, the old man sitting in rose light on  
his back doorstep giving only a taxi-driver's nod, the vast plain  
of black-top, the groovy young adults sitting behind the glass wall?  
i shuld capture everything precious, invent a typewriter with a twenty foot  
line, information held by the railways, the pension dept., fish and game  
YOOOOD rather be back where they're spending it yud rather be where  
it's sleazy and easy/ or sit back suckin trouble for yrself/ yud rather not  
be earnest for the fair day following yu are too weary to smile joy  
which is ample as a river is not coming your way yu  
do not know of Firenze, marble stairs or elaborate  
statuary, but the blue  
is noted by yu  
a Yamaha 170 culd have ended this  
yu culd be picking up on the bugs they have planted in the plant  
yu culd blow yr money on the plane fare  
to the Cariboo

## EXERCISE IN MOBILITY; HI FRIEND IN THE LIZARD-CLIMATE

"I'd better leave before i'm overloaded. but i can't leave before my time  
because there's no french stories but are told quiet under the golden tower  
(she winds down, dark in her smile, wishing the visionary to go away  
from the lazy pole where the old people smiling twist. the ships are late  
and they are coming in

do y think truth cn be pulled out regular as dental-floss? do yu think  
stories of new york and any angel-filled city are not inevitable in a forced  
flow? no devotions but in silence for thee, lost fiddler, is this  
the last word?

how shall you yr blue grass living indian know  
in the bowels of a mountain?

by his low-slung  
yodeling smile

and the handsome way he comes

THE GIANTS CAME AFTER ME CHASED  
ME UNDER THE CAMP BENCHES AND THEN  
OVER THE LONG TABLES WITH HUGE SPOONS  
MADE OF SKULLS

i cn beat out of their scrambling into a distant part of the forest where  
i don't stay

looking over the smooth grey water to an island  
too far to swim?

so far

not so very far, there's a ferry and then i'm running up and down  
steep white hills where  
the civilized inhabitants also want to kill me, but here i outsmart them,  
i have a few elevator shafts in mind,  
one which removes to a tunnel deep  
in a hospital where my friends, orderlies with dark moustaches and  
disciplined terrified eyes  
wheel me away under a sheet to the next ferry where:

people in the park in perfect flow  
old peepl dying in a row  
cypress and blue

interference in the ball game, numbers 17, 14, and 13  
arm in arm out  
in the out-field

NEXT

whooooooooooooooooooooos next?"

## TALKING OF THE SACRED

talking of the sacred — it is in all directions

like even last night in the bar where  
those clowns were all grabbin each other's cocks and tryin  
to suck my fingers

i think of compassion and notice the tall window is dirty  
thru the apple trees thru the apple trees thru the apple trees  
i see  
six gardens

last night i suddenly opened the back door to take a picture of  
A FIRE IN THE ORCHARD!  
SNAP and

later the neighbourhood kids are over demanding to know  
if I intend to show the picture to the Police

## Peter Huse / SING

While the killer dogs eat.

Open your lips and feast on heroes  
as delicacies for birds.

4 and 20 Blackbirds,  
the magic combination, call the shots and give me time to  
breathe.

The old guy wants to buy back his daughter,  
the blackbird of  
how the Earth drove the poem.  
Leave the stones,



everything into the earth but bring the song, scraps of it through  
the other,  
the earth. Fall up through the songs, all the lives onto the earth to  
unearth the colours, things through here off the earth of things,  
the curvature. Forget into The Ocean of How Hard The Wind Blues.  
Murder something the poem, even cripples can dance to while we're  
waiting to keep time.  
Poetry. Dogs eat the war of it, swift-footed to unearth a good  
something in the fridge. Carry a tune.  
Your strange heart out makes change. Isolate your parts: bellydance.  
Do the Camel Walk  
in the New Year, in T'ang's bathtub, down the pipeline to beverage  
rooms in the trees. Somebody started behind glass  
the first thing that comes from the earth whatever, like the wind is  
the earth's ghostly coat. Go like the wind through the song  
into the world, the heart out like a saxophone and take a chorus  
in A as in "Ay man, pretty good ay!"

Singapore.

Sin City. Only the name, nationality, social insurance number,  
address, phone, date of birth,  
place and  
my 709 617 435, something dirty about the sheep in the deado, secrets  
of Hero

dead guys. A curling grape stem positions,  
from the other garden, a fastball through the valley of  
fire down to the calm sea. Say, said the trees, that's a song  
heard down the shiplike train. Root to tip of the flower through  
an ocean of trees where spider, fly and web are one

Sing Sing Sing, Benny Goodman, 1938,  
I'm not afraid of. Call on me to come out and play  
everything in the dark. I've been trying to leave town for 20  
World Series', like in the 6th game in '75, Boston Red Sox and the  
Cincinnati Reds: he gets his sign, takes his time. Singing  
bubbles up onto the earth.

The heart out this time on the ground through the surface, up the  
dark rock,  
out through the rock and soil.

Earth makes a pair with heaven, and  
2 is the number of earth, music,  
themes flowing into each other.  
It was dark out and the President took a girl  
the first year your priest came with ribbons on  
cone-shaped columns, rectangular beams.  
Rock and soil are the earth  
where the sea held in that which  
made a pair with the unearthly.  
Our king and leader drove him  
away over  
earth  
that makes a pair with sky, where you are,  
and her dad God-damns Europeans  
over sinking rock and surface  
to the sky.

Some get sick and die.

and they'll all gather in the dark of the song

to burn us, to brighten the room.

What will happen the night I am born  
besides Hitler invading Austria?

A fortune teller on the prairies

who knows everything will stand up.

listening to the wind in gaudy darkness  
tell them

she  
is no baby born to decorate  
that darkness or

brighten the room

before dawn comes.

Pity the age,

I answer him.

Me and my friends will know  
the room will shine  
before spring.  
No one else.

Agamemnon burns.

He speaks again, winking in the light.  
What happens besides Hitler —  
shaped columns the night I am born?

He must let the girl go

live in our children over  
the earth that makes all the earthly things.  
She does not decorate the world or  
in the dark,

“It’s your movie, Achilles,”

assembling a triangle,  
but looks for spring,

I answered the director. A picket  
line in Toronto

and all year

spring in Vancouver  
gave him a dirty look.



Round  
     cone-shaped  
 desire to have things  
     fills  
                     this morning. Indians have never stolen my  
                     car.  
 Remember dark and bright  
 opening your legs  
                     outside Terminal A where the mail flies  
                     to touch whatever  
             does not  
             until dawn.  
 The Champion touches his sword.  
     She is tender and  
             comes from a village,  
     sometimes sad but  
             in the Kootenays where the darkness shines,  
 imagine beauty.

Touch my typewriter or  
children? 2 is the number who  
see sky as infinitely  
one.

If he hears the news will it hear  
Beaver Creek flow into the  
Columbia?

Kill the Turkish ambassador in Vienna?

Soft-land his ship,

your eyes will  
answer.

Now I don't kill you or kill for you.

Go  
home to your mountain imagination. What's it  
really like in Toronto?

Touch the children.  
Now you make your own movie —

The news is hopeless. Throw down the big stick.

Soft-land on Troy.  
“And now you will threaten  
to take away my prize,”  
your own bed of blood

assembling to touch your reality.

“Now I will go back to B.C.  
since it will be better  
to go home with my curved spaceships  
and I will not want to stay anymore — ”

About anger.

The first year will be dark and the babies will  
come to, keeping each other company  
until the need to break open

triangles.

The earth tremors November 30th measured 4 point 5.

Giving my white king another dirty look, I spoke  
about my anger

seeing my ogre drive off the painter  
whose angle, painting, was in the hands.

My anger at the king who drove the junky from his song daughter.  
Old Earth dreams the killer hero and  
tantrum of the self-destroyer imagination out of control that knows  
through fever the death of companions, lovers, children  
of random memory. Come free and ride the sea-wave charging the rim of  
the sea at the dark sky, each word preceding thought,  
each word to change, to strengthen the resonating darkness where it  
joins the galaxy trailing suddenly a stage moon, a medallion of a  
carved horse charging out of the rim, golden and voluptuous. Ride  
the nose gently and untouched among the first lights of the  
dying, the gently exploding lights of stars.

*Feb. 23/76*

Gerry Gilbert / GARBAGE NITE:  
SEVEN LESS POEMS  
PUBLIC RELATION

he says he's not coming over  
because something more interesting is happening there  
she says I must now rearrange the present to include tomorrow  
they say we cant afford any more light  
I start by myself  
& say here  
stay there



## DONT LET THE NOISE BOTHER YOU

if you do  
your sitting there silent  
will be just as strident

ea she rvoic  
ce ash ervoi  
ic eas herv  
oi cea sherv  
vo ice asher  
rv oic eashe  
er voi ceash  
he rvo iceas  
sh erv oicea  
as her voice

## ENDZONES/ENZYMES

time change  
change time

times change  
time changes

changes time  
change times

changes times  
times changes

## OLD POEM

new poem  
another tea to wash the jam donut down  
rest stop on the big nite out  
totter home from all hours bringing of old tapes up to day  
roof of mouth tissue controls line endings  
handwriting seems like me  
first bus  
wrong direction  
writing as habit amplified  
can cause ice ages  
SPEI ACL  
a spell  
the power of a balance in the life  
has pulled us thru every raining day here so fall this fall

## THE INSTRUCTION OF BOX 1673 IN FLAKEY'S MURAL

for 4 hours of tape called  
37 in 73  
where I say my poems  
alone

with inky slugs lining 124 tobaccopack aged foil wraps  
flattened & one after another  
now I can start a new collection or better yet quit  
smoking breathing writing

& leave it at this  
fair enough  
a look by me  
seen at you

give each silver slug 120 secs to dissolve into 240 mins  
wait  
I'll be 48 in 84  
you can piss when I finish

Basho moves to the capital in 1673  
so I send this movie  
*original copy*  
to Ottawa

## STAY WELL SOON

imagine lying to my bank teller  
how we so undo the news  
that I do my christmas hopping all year  
round the second hand  
she made a count & said  
“I hope you’ve done your shopping”  
& I havent & this  
this must be the last minute



## I'M GETTING TIRED OF HALLUCINATIONS

I dont like to be looked at that way

broadside, like a sea  
waves to swim out to  
& ride home on

like a boat, this house  
you have to go through it to get from bow to stern  
our ancestors had a stern sense of the external

where gulls are making breakfast  
& the work sits still  
to be done

something to spend wednesday delivering around town  
loose sheets, badly copied, useless after friday  
but until then  
perfect shots

from the top of the mountain  
we all look like mountains

it infuriates you, I know  
that I should get to sit here, in the past  
using up your matches, burning

I'm just a point of view, spinning  
a lighthouse, rocks to watch out for  
a beam

look at yourself  
look out for anything larger than yourself

## Bob Rose / WRITINGS

### THE HICCATTEE HOLE

*(told by the caretaker*

*Altan Ha ruins*

*Belize)*

You know, where the river takes a bend,  
there it's deep, very deep.  
That's where the hiccattees are.

They have pointed shells, soft on the bottom  
just like a turtle but they live in fresh water.

The fellas that dive for them, they been doin it  
since they are little ones. They go down  
for two minutes at a time. They're crazy, they are.  
Sometimes there's a tunnel, under the bank,  
to a deeper hole. You can surface and breathe  
in the air pockets up top there.

Well, one day this fella goes down there for some hiccattees  
and just as he's goin into that hole  
this big alligator, he's coming out.  
They got stuck in there, side by side,  
and the harder the alligator tried to get out  
the more the two of them got wedged in.

After about two minutes, his friend, up above  
in the dugout, sees these little bubbles surfacing.  
He sez to himself that his friend be down there  
a long time. So he dives down there with a big stick.  
He sees what trouble his friend find himself  
and pokes that gator in the mouth. That gator,  
he backed into the hole and his friend came up,  
real grateful-like.

Not me, man, I don't dive into those holes  
*at all.*

## THREE SELECTIONS FROM *BOATWORKS*

### HOLD A TOOL

Hold a tool under a single light source  
with the cutting edge towards the light.

Look down on the cutting edge  
and if it shines  
the tool is dull.

A sharp edge  
will reflect no visible light.

### HARDER THAN THE HUBS OF HELL

"Harder than the hubs of hell," he said, Auckland 1944 tattooed on his right upper forearm, his initials, N.A.S., lower, above the wrist. The rings he spoke of, on a caulking mallet. "A dead trade. You can't get a good mallet anymore, unless an old timer gets rid of his tools. He might as well hang it on his wall."

Black mesquite or brown mesquite, that's the best. Takes 300 years for a tree to get big enough around for a mallet: Three inches.

It's the toughest. Lignum vitae, that's pretty good too but it chips too easily and oak, well that's O.K. for tapping around on your own boat but a professional would be through it in a week.

The rings, that's what makes a good mallet. And a short handle for balance. You know, swinging that thing all day, you can tell when it's out even a fraction. So you keep turning it, end for end. But it's the rings that keep the ends from cabbaging over and the keyways, those slots behind the rings, keep the shock from getting as bad as it might. As it is, you get growths, not on your skin but right in the muscle and sinew: hard bumps, pulling your fingers into a permanent clench. When it gets real bad they cut a 'T' in your hand and snip them off.

Now these rings are special made, by a blacksmith, so the bottom of the ring is mild steel, closest to the handle, and the top of the ring, where the mallet strikes the caulking iron, has to be harder than the hubs of hell. Nobody can do it anymore. There aren't any old style blacksmiths around. They'd take the ring, heat it up, then plunge it into a vat of dry cyanide. The cyanide melted and the colors of annealing rose up the ring until the desired point, then the ring was plunged into cold water. Well nobody does that anymore; you can't get cyanide very easily and the fumes were so bad anyhow, that you'd almost die from just being in the room.

Yeah, there was another guy I used to work with, Jim King, over at Sterling Yard. He was really good and fast. One day he hit himself square in the forehead with his mallet, a four pounder. Missed the iron and the swing just naturally caught him in his noggin. He'd been doing it so many years, he took another swing, even though he was already out, hit himself again, tottered for a minute and fell face first on the staging. He was out for half an hour. He doesn't work much anymore. Drinks too much. No good unless he's sober. Another time this same guy bet someone he could caulk a boat blindfolded. He did it you know, but the seams were so wide he couldn't miss.

A yard figures you can do three hundred feet of seam a day. On a boat this size, fifty-four feet, double caulked, cotton and oakum, I figure \$1600 at one hundred dollars a day. Yeah, I'll have her done in about sixteen days. Biggest boat I ever caulked was 110 feet. But in those days we only made thirty dollars a week.

## ROY WICKS

I'm telling you, some of those old halibut fishermen were tough. Years ago it was pretty dangerous. They'd go up there to the northern halibut grounds off Kodiak, Alaska by guess and by God.

The livers and guts were so acidic that you'd burn your hands. That was before rubber gloves. I woke up one morning and my finger nails were so loose I could jiggle them. I couldn't use my hands. They were useless. I slept in my clothes. I couldn't take them off. Had to use my wrists to climb the ladder. I'd get up on deck and put my mitts into a bucket of salt water for ten minutes to loosen them up enough to work.

Then the rubber gloves came in. At first it felt like you were wearing a baseball glove. I couldn't keep them on. I'd take them off, then my hands would start to hurt and I'd put them back on. After a while I couldn't do without them.

When they got up there on the northern halibut grounds, they got by on luck and prayer. No sonar, radar or Loran. Sometimes the only way they knew where they were was by soundings: they'd take a lead weight, put some butter on one end and drop it down. Different areas had different kinds of bottom . . . black sand, gravel shell, mud. You could often times figure out where you were by checking out the bottoms on the charts and reckoning your position.



## Stephanie Judy / WRITINGS

### NARRATIVE #12

(for Robin)

I put up my tent in a meadow in Maine, in June, once, the meadow all flowers, wildflowers, a dozen kinds and colors, everywhere — no way to avoid them. I simply staked out a small rectangle and put the tent down over them and stayed there, on, and surrounded by, those flowers.

After that, two or three days there, I took the tent down, leaving a perfect rectangle there, matted, wilted, *obvious* — something had *sat there*. And I went on to New Hampshire, to Laconia, to a friend's farm, and put up the tent in the side yard, by the house, under a huge maple, the one spot of shade. And I stayed there, only a day.

And then I came home to Boston, and a year later my friend in New Hampshire called me, urgently, Stephanie, you must come, it's important, and I did, knowing it was, for him to ask that. I got in my car within the hour and drove through the night.

The next morning he took me outside. His brother-in-law was there, too — Kal and Larry and me between them — they took me outside to the yard by the house and there, on that green mannered lawn, under the huge maple, the one spot of shade, they showed me — a perfect rectangle of Maine wildflowers.

July 2/1975  
Vancouver



## JOURNAL SKETCH #309

relive in the darkened window the thoughts of a darkened room/  
some remote celebration of time and place and motion/to and fro/  
to and fro/the place residing not in the to, not in the fro, but,  
like all appearances, in *and*

the kitchen at 2/a butter dish and a pipe on the round to and  
fro table round the braid on the page wound around some recent  
wound applied with jelly and a spatula

(spat-chula, it sounds like — the rhythm and  
percussion contained in the 't'/wonder that  
it's not at least doubled/once for the stop  
of *spat*/once for the hush of *chula*)

what life, to still life, from rebirth, to ceasing/what a montage  
the mind, film clips, stopping movement/the hand gestures, the  
face contorts, the mouth vomits, the lungs bleed/I have stood by  
and watched his pain and remarked on it

some events, thought, simply occur, without being remarked on  
but rarely

how would it be different for someone else, and how different  
would it be?

I cannot remember now if the poem of Shelley's was about *time*  
or about *water*/how freely they were woven, each standing as  
metaphor to the other and testament to the self/simultaneity  
is the task

and I do not know by what measure *I* am lost in the abstraction  
of my thoughts/in the same way city buses become well-lit rooms  
roaming the empty night streets/there is more to consider than  
the I

oh, the seeming simplicity of the life I passed/the students  
I could have made, the life I could have laid out for myself/  
(and, alternatively, switching made and laid, and maybe moving  
out about)

I just showed the cat a picture of us/him, orange, condensed,  
clutched in my arms/he didn't look at the picture, but he  
smelled it/he didn't recognize our image, but he recognized  
something

an orange — what I wanted at 20 after 2

*January 19, 1974*  
*Vancouver, B.C.*

## JOURNAL SKETCH #17

Comox Street/Saturday night

I open the door and go out at the sound of it suddenly raining in large thudding drops/in my new shirt and my old socks/in my red pants out my glass door/the street is full of cars, but quiet/they have come to watch the rain and I have gone back inside to write about it, leaving the glass door open so the cold air escapes into my living room where I have hardly a place to sit it has been so long since I cleared away yesterdays' papers from the sofa and so recently I returned from town with bagsfull of new clothes/green pants and tan/a flowered shirt/new sheets and pillow cases/the new blue shirt I am wearing and the new brown socks I am not/and there, on the green chair, to my left, where you sat last night, in your black pants and plaid shirt and grey hair, drinking Cinzano, sits now a book of Hawthorne stories and my old watch, ticking

*September 27, 1975  
Vancouver, B.C.*

## NOTES ON POETRY AND MUSIC

*Music, bears its own relationship, the dual nature, Inside  
Outside, to ride the border between is the mystical and  
mythical of it/no beginnings, no endings/the continuous song  
(Ovid, too, yes) /how every 'piece' picks up from the infinitely  
silent melody, expands into our hearing, then fades again, but  
continues, beyond us/on the other side/just as the vibrations  
that we hear become the ones we do not hear, but feel, as  
rhythm, as 'I am one with my skin'/or they carry, and sustain,  
other sounds within themselves and we hear again, borne within  
(the radio, the radar) /how it turns, one thing into the other/  
always stating the one in terms of the other/bearing its own  
relationship, like *that*/the perpetual metaphor, self-made/music  
re-minds, in-forms, re-collects about us what has always been  
and all future possibilities/from the earliest days/'this is  
my father's world/and to my list'ning ears/all nature sings  
and round me rings/the music of the spheres'*

*March 20, 1975  
Vancouver, B.C.*

## PROOFREADING ROY KIYOOKA'S BOOK AND LISTENING TO COUNTRY & WESTERN MUSIC FROM SOME RADIO STATION DOWN SOUTH

'you're the first to ever make me  
fall in love and then not take me  
the night you hung my wings up  
on your horns'

George Braque sd 'I don't do what I want  
I do what I can'

Wallace Stevens sd 'that poetry must resist the intelligence  
almost successfully'

Spelling Rules (from the proofreader's consciousness) :

define/nibble  
explain/nibble  
divine/nibble  
incline/nibble  
imagine/nibble  
nibble/nibble

(I had a cat named NabbleNabble once — I got her name from a kid's coloring book that had a page of animals and in little balloons by their heads there were quotations from each, like the cow was saying 'moo moo' and the dog was saying 'bow wow' and the rabbit was saying 'nabble nabble' and who knows? maybe they do, but I know I nearly killed that cat for bringing down baby rabbits, and sometimes grown ones too, and leaving them in the basement to die because when the weather got damp they really smelled and one of the household chores my husband and I fought over the most, as if we needed any others besides the dishes and the toilet, was who's gonna check the corners of the basement for dead rabbits)

imagine/nibble

phone      stone  
              silent

(doesn't anybody get my letters anymore?)

*how to write*

write

there aren't any secrets

there's just gift and gut and glip and no  
small amount of grinding away at it

imagine/nibble



## NARRATIVE #14

I was out, just driving, once, going north on New Hampshire State Highway 16, toward Center Ossipee, when I saw a sign:

SLOW  
POLICE  
BLOCKADE  
AHEAD

Well, I thought, I was straight, and sober, and had Massachusetts plates, and so they couldn't get me for much. I drove with my left hand on the wheel, and rummaged in my daypack with my right until I found my wallet. Then, still driving along, I withdrew from my wallet my entire identity. I had my car registration and my driver's license (which said I lived in Somerville and had green eyes), my Liquor Control card (which said I lived in Cambridge and had blue eyes — I thought I might have some trouble over that), my Boston Public Library card with my most recent mailing address on it, and a letter from my editor at Random House introducing me as one of their authors and asking one's kind cooperation in any matter. I was prepared for anything.

There was no traffic on the road, so there was no waiting. I rounded a curve and there were the orange cones and red stop signs and a black and white striped barricade and a State Highway Patrol car parked across the road. I pulled right up to the barricade, and stopped, and watched one patrolman get out of the driver's side of the patrol car, while his buddy stayed inside, on the passenger's side, reading the *Manchester Union-Leader*. The patrolman walked over to my car with a clipboard under his arm. I opened my window while he stood in front of the car and wrote down my license number and checked my inspection sticker, and then he came around to my side, bent down, looked in the window, and said

— Where did you come from?

I was not prepared for that. Where did I come from? I had been travelling for more than 25 years. What did he mean, where did I come from? I had come from an Air Force base in central Arkansas where my mother and father had fucked one day in May in 1945. Nine months later I had come from St. Francis of Assisi Hospital in Topeka, Kansas. I had come from Washington University with an A.B. and Columbia with a Master's. A year ago I had come from New York, which was the last place I had had a regular job and a permanent address, and a month ago I had come from the bottom of a treacherous heartbreak and depression, and over the weekend I had come from Cape Fear, North Carolina where I had been visiting my best friend's aunt, and on the way I had come *through* Boston where I no longer lived but did still get my mail at 170 Albion Street, and that morning I had come from my tent which was pitched in a hayfield in Gilmanton, and I had come from Alabama with a banjo on my front seat were all the testaments to my identity and they didn't mean a thing. I was stunned into silence, but I had to reply. So, I looked directly into his eyes and said, very genuinely

— Starting when?

— *Where* did you come from, he insisted, and don't get smart.

— Listen, I said, I just don't know what . . . I mean, I'm not . . . I'm not trying to be difficult, really I'm not . . . I'd *like* to tell you where I came from . . . I just don't understand what . . .

— *Look*, little girl . . .

I could see his growing impatience — could see me, in all my honesty, nourishing it.

— Where did you last have your *car parked*? Can you tell me that?

I could. What a relief. I did.

— At Lawrence Ross's farm, on Loon Pond Road, half a mile west of Route 106.

He straightened up and wrote this down, while I calmed a little. Then he turned over a page on his clipboard while I gathered up my identification which was slipping through the crack at the back of the seat. Then he bent down, looked in my window again, and said

—OK. Now. Where are you going?

Lewis Ellingham /  
from THE WOUNDED LAUREL  
(FOR LORNE SALUTIN)

The garden crosses two ideas, an axis  
to ever more shaded light, in the ecliptic of the sun, and the  
winter moon being always. The bar is an arrow . . . the bow and  
this is rarely seen. Only in the mountains, and at sea, has the  
critical pattern of the Scorpion, allowed me to grasp what is  
essential, that the red of Antares, the principal star, is mask  
for what too is eccentric, the jewel of the tail,

Thus the garden from above. But my vision has been  
limited — the angle of significance could only be my eye,  
never above directly, but from where I stand. My choice has  
been to steal contact with what then becomes awkwardly obvious,  
the pattern of the brick, as if the soul returned outside the  
eye.

To spray the garden, the deep lavender toward dawn,  
crystal the water, the slight movement of the air,

Then becomes choice.

## FROM BOOK V

Somehow I seemed to see it, my memory poor,  
Philadelphia, my request, for a north or west station  
that would carry me, it must be by train, not bus  
nor automobile, nothing *now*, and I remembered that  
30th St. Sta. moves toward New York; and West  
Philadelphia the University; Fr. Divine's heavens;  
an elevated train-track then in course of demolition,  
to go underground as a subway; but it was not this  
at all, I wanted to go to Valley Forge, to catch,  
to hitchhike the Turnpike, to go then, and I cannot  
remember, east or west, Chicago, California, maybe  
New York, east or west but somehow a green, eastern  
Pennsylvania, a memory of snow, or grey rain, a  
conservatism —

I had come from New York;

I had seen the bridge at Trenton;

the Delaware to my left;

thought of the Englishness of Princeton, the  
bitterness of industrial America through New Jersey,  
New Brunswick, Elizabeth my right, the hopeless ocean  
to my imaginary —

what on earth,

and I was alone, a street, each fine house,  
wall to wall, quiet, night, I wanted to know why  
this perfect brick square, ample, brick, silent,  
but not where I wished to . . . to be resourceful,  
I walked uphill, a slight incline, angular, stately  
streets, each mansion, urban, private, singular  
despite compactness, a few blocks up, a few over,  
then an even larger square, identical but

a vast church  
of no denomination,  
the nave replete  
with singers, the  
clerestories night-  
reflecting each blue  
and leaded red of  
no light sensation  
of music, only  
a memorized privacy  
in huge architectural space . . .

I returned to the square, walked, and a London-kind  
of cab-conveyance stopped, a few blocks away by this  
time, the driver said,

Where are you going?



and I said, "To the station, north and westward. I'm not sure." There were people in the vehicle, I never met them. Each was curious, well dressed. I said, "Just a minute, would you? I need a cigarette, and I'm sure that shop is the only one open at this hour." The driver said, "Yes, I'm sure that's so. It's late. Do you want a cigarette now?" I thanked him. I took one. I entered the shop. I returned, secure with my pack of cigarettes. I re-entered the car. It might have been only a speeding skeleton. For we passed through a great broken field of columns, brick the terrace, but endless as Egypt or Rome, the moon throwing long impressions of a fantastic plan in silence, the tires bounced, a forum, as held air, northerly, as

the thought of Pennsylvania  
seemed dark.

## Jack Spicer / THREE POEMS

### UNTITLED

The dancing ape is whirling round the beds  
Of all the coupled animals; they, sleeping there  
In warmth of sex, ignore his fur and fuss  
And feel no terror in his gait of loneliness.  
Quaint though the dancer is, his furry fists  
Are locked like lightning over all their heads.  
His legs are thrashing out in discontent  
As if they were the lightning's strict embodiment.  
But let the dancing stop, the apish face go shut in sleep,  
The hands unclench, the trembling legs go loose —  
And let some curious animal bend and touch that face  
With nuzzling mouth, would not the storm break —  
And that ape kiss?

*1949?*

*Final version 1956*

## PSYCHOANALYSIS: AN ELEGY

What are you thinking about?

I am thinking of an early summer.  
I am thinking of wet hills in the rain  
Pouring water. Shedding it  
Down empty acres of oak and manzanita  
Down to the old green brush tangled in the sun,  
Greasewood, sage, and spring mustard.  
Or the hot wind coming down from Santa Ana  
Driving the hills crazy.  
A fast wind with a bit of dust in it  
Bruising everything and making the seed sweet.  
Or down in the city where the peach trees  
Are awkward as young horses,  
And there are kites caught on the wires  
Up above the street lamps,  
And the stormdrains are all choked with dead branches.

What are you thinking?

I think that I would like to write a poem that  
is slow as a summer,  
As slow getting started,  
A 4th of July somewhere around the middle of  
the second stanza  
After a lot of unusual rain.  
California seems long in the summer.  
I would like to write a poem as long as California  
And as slow as a summer.  
Do you get me, Doctor? It would have to be  
as slow  
As the very tip of summer.  
As slow as summer seems  
On a hot day drinking beer outside Riverside  
Or standing in the middle of a white-hot road  
between Bakersfield and Hell  
Waiting for Santa Claus.

What are you thinking now?

I'm thinking that she is very much like California.  
When she is still her dress is like a roadmap.

Highways  
Traveling up and down her skin,  
Long empty highways  
With the moon chasing jackrabbits across them  
On hot summer nights.  
I am thinking that her body could be California  
And I a rich Eastern tourist  
In a purple Cadillac, in a sandstorm,  
Lost somewhere between Hell and Texas  
Looking at a map of a long, wet, dancing  
California  
That I have never seen.  
Send me some penny picture postcards, lady,  
send them.  
One of each breast photographed looking  
Like curious national monuments,  
One of your body sweeping like a three-lane highway  
Twenty-seven miles from a night's lodging  
In the world's oldest hotel.

What are you thinking?

I am thinking how many times this poem  
Will be repeated. How many summers  
Will torture California  
Until the damned maps burn  
Until the mad cartographer  
Falls to the ground and embraces  
The sweet thick earth from which he has been hiding.

What are you thinking now?

I am thinking that a poem could go on forever.

1949?

*Final version 1956*

## THE SONG OF THE BIRD IN THE LOINS

A swallow whispers in my loins  
So I can neither lie or stand  
And I can never sleep again  
Unless I whisper you his song:

"Deep in a well," he whispers. "Deep  
As diamonds washed beneath the stone  
I wait and whisper endlessly  
Imprisoned in a well of flesh.

"At night he sometimes sleeps and dreams  
At night he sometimes does not hear my voice.  
How can I wound you with my well of sound  
If he can sleep and dream beneath its wounds?

"I whisper to you through his lips.  
He is my cage, you are my source of song.  
I whisper to you through a well of stone.  
Listen at night and you will hear him sing!

" 'A swallow whispers in my loins  
So I can neither lie or stand  
And I can never sleep again  
Unless I whisper you his song.' "

*1955?*

*Final version 1956*

## Robin Blaser / THREE POEMS

### FLOWING PEARL AND SCARLET SNOW ELIXIR

I would mend myself

no, I would mend you,  
being myself unmended

there a shot in the dark

the rainbow stillness of all thought

the wings that have been  
your hair or cock

all matters of what we are translate  
into a world-image

and that, when you had use of it,  
you could leave

I want your beauty to stand free  
of past shapes and distances

of your silence

then I would be free to join you  
or whomever

inside the package

snap, crackle and pop of whatever  
you then answered to me,

and so could hand over the opposite  
pole of tiger or dragon,

the chemical snow of this good dark

*July, 1975*



## THE SKILL

I want you to have skill  
with life —  
the body is not life — the  
replay of the moon and  
the heart's record — the  
lost ones     hold  
nothing of turquoise, of  
the bright inward heart  
upright — necessary according to  
my own forebears of the  
desert fucking which gave  
me my face  
the heart must not be confused  
with the body —  
the lies of the star-fuckers  
who believe a quick rub-down  
and come will turn them  
into this poetic, thoughtful  
art — must not be mistaken  
for the desire they never had  
except to be beyond themselves  
and I love this desire  
to be beyond,     to go where  
they had not been —



## THE BURNING SECRET GOES, a song

with stone, with stars,  
with every non-embodied  
speech of yourself the weeds  
form of stone — all wonder  
dies to re-form astonishment  
your safety is gone — always  
into stone

having broken my pen, I wonder  
how you must look in these startled  
eyes

O vines the answers are bells  
and the doors will be north  
in a new geography

I dream your eyes they are  
so much the rays of the world,  
the place where we met in my  
superstition that you would be  
the next window

whole and gone, the rose tincture  
mixed suddenly with the skill  
and so plays meerfool  
of the ability

the vision of statues,  
of hearts, of the sun-burst of your  
disembodiment

inside the war of terrible,  
inconsequential, necessary bodiment

and there speech, which I wished  
to give you, is garbled  
where I had looked down  
to love you —  
                                in the arms  
of I don't know what attainment  
there you would speak out of your actual  
which I loved

*among angelic orders*

only to speak for what lodges in  
all of us

the

same fire           afire,  
                                *he who has never*  
*felt, momentarily, what madness is,*  
*has only a mouthful of brains*

*the universe is not a blind alley*

I think of the sweat on your face  
and return to the ocean

*October, 1975*

## Robert Duncan / (PASSAGES) EMPEDOKLEAN REVERIES

Dread Love that  
remorseless Aphrodite raises to drive home her offended Pow'r,  
I've been your battlefield  
where lovely Hate alone men call κακαὶ ἔριδες  
defended me

contending there ever with would-be over-powering Adhesion  
severing the Bond dispelling the Word  
Eros demands, keeping the Heart of Things  
at loose ends.

I have tamed the Lion Roar.  
It will no longer use me.

Orlando, felix, my little household relative of the Lion,  
I will remember to pet you;  
Death takes his time with us.

Long the sexual uproar dies away in me.

Lighting a cigarette. Coming to ourselves.  
From long ago ceremonies of burning and smoking.

I have burnd the Lion in his own fire.

The Lioness rages in the hunting field  
far from where we are.

Because of what we love we are increasingly at War.  
That Sphere of all Attractions draws us from what we are —

In this place  
I make my stand  
and a Line appears  
or I have drawn a Line  
where resolute  
or in my fear compounded  
I face  
the rapt Sphere  
of a dissolving Pain.

There is no kindness here, no one I would draw into this.

Love that would dissolve all boundaries,  
so that Blake is outraged by the first dissolve of outline  
and rages out at Titian, Rubens, Rembrandt,  
for the in-mixing of light and dark, the color in turmoil,  
resolving in him an undying Hatred

that would annihilate all kindness,  
not like him I am to be

Being Isolate —

Even wiving must offend.

Don't wife me you arouse  
that animus the wrathful knight who upholds  
the honor of the Lady Anima, her token, that handkerchief  
to be stolen by her handmaiden, her confidence

bridles at the touch in touch music

the wedding ground of Harmony and Discordia

melody ever upon the point of leaving returning  
a turmoil of sound the center and surrounding



begins:

Love ever contending with Hate

Hate ever contending with Love

*"never, I think, shall infinite Time be emptied of these two"*

*Never* being the name of what is infinite.

In bright confusion. White, the interpresence of all colors,  
shining back on us —

Black, taking all back into itself.

They never cease their continuous exchange.

The eye imitates Seeing particular from particular,  
cell from cell, searches

for what it's thought to see —

this week the track of a monopole previous to a field of gravity —

The Sun as if It were an infinite fire, infinitely hot beyond our heat;  
The Earth turning from summer into cold and dark,  
ice widening over the sea's reaches.

But in Wrath they are all different. They dance in differing.

There is a field of random energies from which we come,  
or in such myriad disorganization "*field*" rises as a dream,  
the real this projection of many dreamers,

*daimones*, the Greeks named them, still to be realized Here

this demon comes into Being as a mote

temporarily needs

higher organizations to reveal himself,

Man so organized    the woman seems taken out of him  
returning to his side    admires —

— Darwin comments: “*The deity effect of organization*”

The two  
contending Spheres

(*Il combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda*)

dazzling,    darkening,  
come into  
come in order to  
each other  
sing

[Nothing in the libretto is for the moment  
not embarrassing: enemies in love? ]

“*O tu che porte, correndo si?*”

*Risponde:*

He: “*E guerra e morte*”

Life’s an organization of time to allow  
the suspension of an order out of order,  
longing then ever to come into order  
yet prolonging the exchange

“It is by avoiding the rapid decay into the  
inert state of equilibrium, that an  
organism appears so enigmatic,” Schrödinger writes:  
“so much so, that from the earliest times  
of human thought some special non-physical  
or supernatural force was claimed to be  
operative in the organism, and in some quarters  
is still claimed.”

*"Guerra e morte avrai"*

*disse*

she answers —

thruout the Contest, the Musical Ground  
where they contend

*Colei di gioia* forth in enmity

*transmutossi e rise*

enter Song's opera

a smile

As if in the distance arriving or departing

the dying or arising of a roar —

the Arrival or Departure

animal laughter

advancing

thematic

to all that's gone "before" .

## bp Nichol / CHAPTER VII FROM BOOK III OF *THE MARTYROLOGY*

you walk thru the door into the room filling the mind with (quaint phrase & i  
said it today somewhere ive forgot the mention of (mentioned to catch dimensions  
the way things travel truly in the mind) said it with the whole structure falling  
from my tongue) thots

not that its that simple      he opens the door      she  
steps thru      she gains shelter or is first into the unknown      the unknown is  
that image of the closed door &

sky

dark cloud

lost in the crowds that do not know your name  
how can i address you openly father  
feeling the fool in grief or joy  
it is the boy behind the man's mask  
cannot ask the boon of ignorance  
the chance to learn

how the days burn  
winter sun in the closed rooms  
rhythms

so that you turn  
around

or is it too simple to put it that way when after all it is the day  
to day struggle presses on you      the ocean of air between you & the door  
vast distances you cross      every travelling the loss you feel hearing  
the doors close

windows shut  
behind you

the next day

scene: a small room

orm: two days  
and: (holds out his hand)      not sure  
orm: ear  
and:  
orm: return to  
and: form  
orm: meaning  
and: blue  
orm:

there is a silence followed by the door opening      the dialogue is meaningless  
& is not recorded

father  
for you  
this song

i am learning to dance  
as a man's hands move  
what material he chooses  
but cannot claim  
conversation  
preservation of  
an old mode of  
touching

(here the closed door opens or a wall falls the frame dissolves standing in a  
field how many years down the time line)

no clouds at all

waiting for snow to fall & cover it in

there is no scene to encompass this      names mentioned are here the length that  
they appear important as their reappearance makes them clear      unclear they are  
what they are no more than what occurs in the poem      that is their shape & tone  
their reality

•

pile up the words      sixteen past      sitting as you are at last there is the  
transformation not as flowering but as in older times the mind changes the face  
rearranges itself the very skin      how do you follow it thru the swift shift  
connections i am talking of nothing she hits me in the face out of place the  
whole conversation      there was no song no singing only the bringing forth of  
facts stacked up against the lack of logic the magic thinking trick of seeing  
yourself as other than what you are laid bare & the crumbling as the self is  
caught unaware gasping strange air we breathe in

east coast morning  
salt in the air  
you are nowhere near me saints  
left to walk where i choose  
i place my feet with care

the bruised face of the stewardess  
her cheeks purple  
& her eyes

the terror

two days later  
ascending air to find you  
the madness that is in us  
all

oh god we do fall  
down

i wanted to say more      i wanted to tell you what i'd seen or make you  
see as i did that moment the vision inside the person's skull the wall falls the  
talking that is done no longer matters      so many friends whose lives have been  
rumours of what they should've been      hours lost on wards      "i knew i'd have  
to get myself together to get out of there"      i wanted to let it be      i wanted  
to let the whole thing go in one last piece of poetry every sweet dream of sanity  
i longed to share

if you're there saints

if you exist  
give it that twist of humour keeps me sane

the listening

that these ones  
make it home again

wheels folding down

frozen ground

•  
how is it done      how is it said      the head sheds the lies its lived by what  
comes screaming into focus      we talk about the real world because the unreal  
exists inside us beside us the ones we meet the streets are full of us      the  
woman said "youve got a real father fixation in your poetry always crying after  
him like a baby"      i said nothing      the voices those few who speak you take  
the chance of getting broken



father  
i seek that speech cleanses  
address you  
as is your due  
your sons get lost father  
the madness takes us  
confusion  
one of the many names we wear

i rode it thru      the other side      whatever rips the mind apart survived  
younger days as are remembered the thing builds up takes over as the poem ends  
when the sphere of that is moved thru all directions similar one word at a time  
it ends      faint words in the evening air send you looking for paper to  
write them down someone to read them to

•

if you wait out the dream the waking comes if you carry it thru the whole thing  
cold february day

looking out towards the bay  
windows across from me  
faces & doors  
what for

voice: do you act out your drama consciously over & over again this story what  
that lady said about the father fixation do you play it out before us

& the sky looms blue  
as i have said before  
so perfect word to take it in

& the trees  
facing this way  
into the landscape

## Gathie Falk / BOOT CASE DRAWINGS

*Although for many years Gathie has loved to draw on the surface of ceramic or wooden sculpture, and to draw in preparation for photo-silkscreen prints, only recently has she attempted a major drawing exhibition. The series illustrated here (exhibited at the Bau-Xi Gallery, February 23 - March 8, 1976) employs the drawn "boot case" to contain images of her daily life — cups and saucers, house plants, candlesticks — coupled with those of her art and fantasy life — Dürer rabbits, moths born in cups, birds in light-bulb Annunciation. Some of these drawings will travel in company with twenty-four hand-drawn, wooden horses of Herd No. 1 in the National Gallery Ottawa's National Programme exhibits during 1976-1977.*

### IMAGES

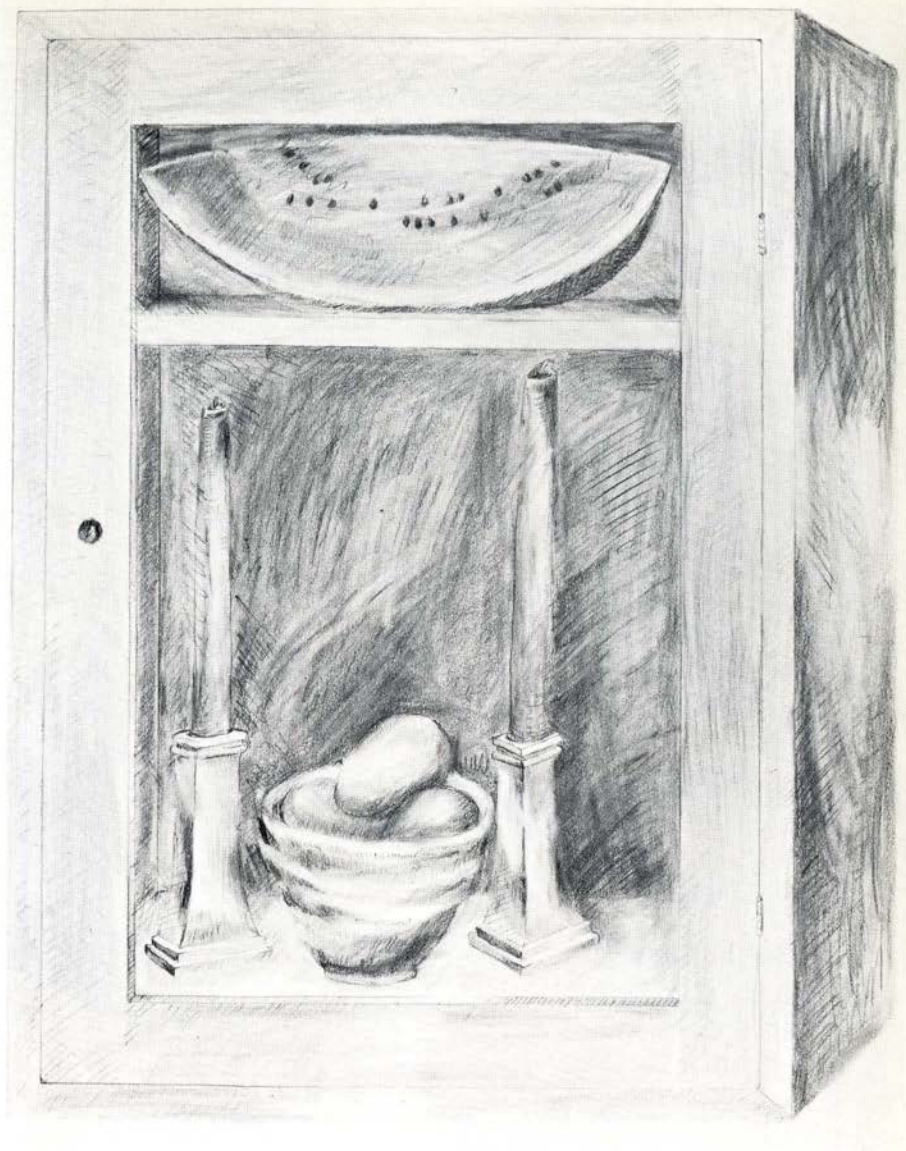
*Boot Case with Moth Cup, 21" x 18", pencil, 1975.*

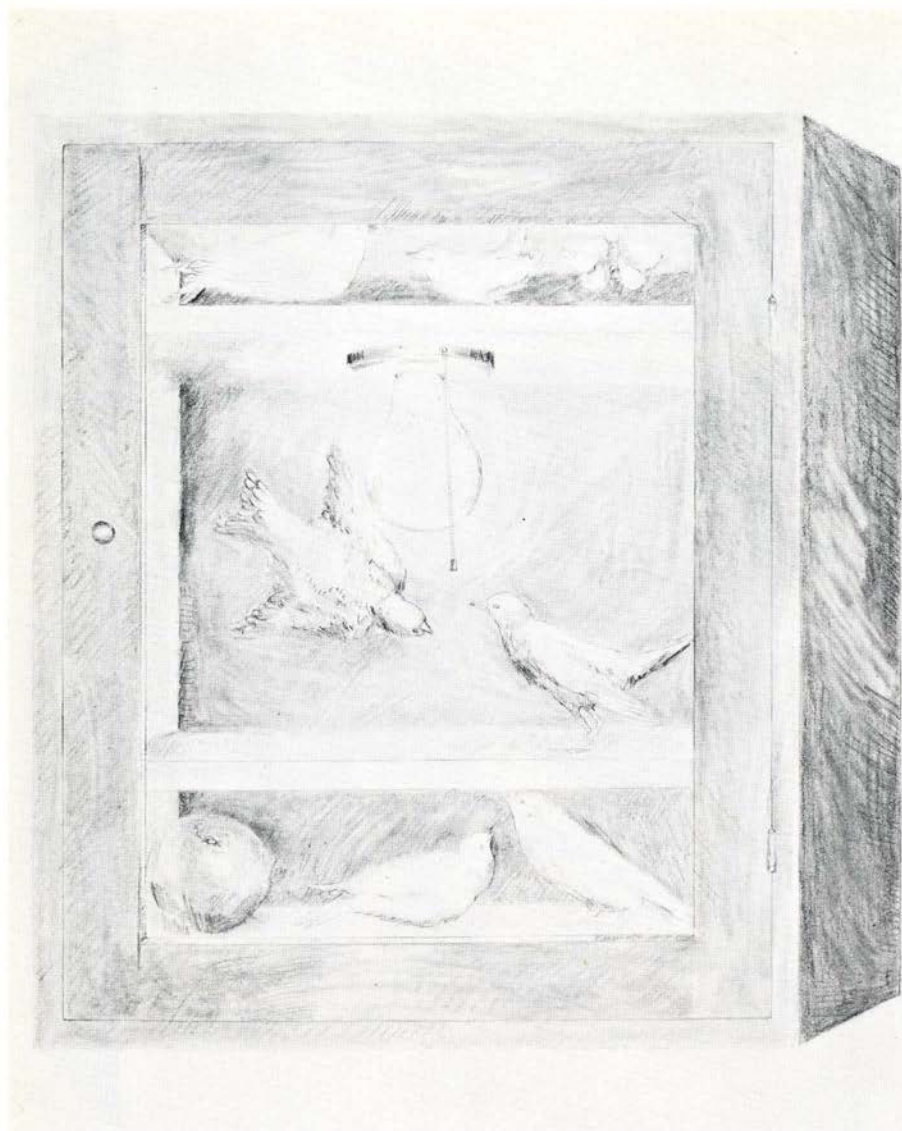
*Boot Case with Egg Bowl, 26½" x 21 5/16", pencil, 1975.*

*Boot Case with Nativity, 26" x 24", pencil, 1975.*

*Photography: Tod Greenaway*









## INTERVIEW / bp NICHOL

*This interview, some two hours in length, was held with great hilarity in the kitchen of Gladys Hindmarch's house on the afternoon of September 19, 1974, the day after bp's reading at Capilano College. Those present to this occasion, indicated by initials in the text, besides bp and Gladys, were Pierre Coupey, Dwight Gardiner, Brian Fisher, and Daphne Marlatt. The original transcript is unfortunately much too long to reprint in full, so what follows are essentially excerpts from the mainstream of conversation, edited by Daphne Marlatt and bp Nichol.*



## AN INTRODUCTION IN WHICH THE AUTHOR COVERS HIS TRACKS WITH SOME FANCY FOOTWORK

There seem to be a few views when it comes to the transcription & publishing of interviews with authors. One has it you should leave every burp & belch intact to preserve the actuality of the event. Another has it you should tidy the whole thing up to make good prose. Me i stand somewhere between the two. The facts are that belches, burps & laughs don't come across in print. "HA HA HA HA HA HA" reads quite strangely mostly because it lacks the intonation & the context of human contact that occasioned the laugh. Also there's little distinction made between the belly laugh & the chuckle. On the other hand why pretend that every writer speaks flawless prose. I don't. I use a tremendous amount of slang when i talk, tend to gesture with my hands a lot, & depend on facial expressions & intonation to

get my point across. Thus i can't pretend that i'm one of the masters of spoken english. On the other hand when i first read thru this interview i was appalled at the number of times i said "you know" & "sort of" & various other qualifiers & verbal shifts. I had to face the unpleasant truth that though i said what i believed i put a lot of padding around it almost as if i were saying "here's what i believe but on the other hand don't take me too seriously folks." Probably this is a kind of tribute (there i go again) to the respect i have for the writers i was talking with but it harks back to the timidity that made me (as i remark in the interview) hide out for a long time. Being a firm believer in learning from one's errors or sins of omission i decided to edit the majority of these qualifiers out of the printed interview but to acknowledge them in this introduction. I have left some of them in to retain the flavour of actual speech but there remains the fact that by doing so i have created a fictional conversation in as much as in this version i appear more definite than i sounded then. One could argue the earlier conversation was the greater fiction since i was holding back the full weight of my feelings but let's not go off in that direction.

The one other thing i feel compelled to mention is that the bulk of this interview/ conversation centres upon two as yet unpublished works. Hopefully this will not prove too great a hindrance to those wishing to participate in the general dialogue since the points made are valid even if i never publish the works in question.

bpNichol  
Edmonton/February 21/1976

DM I want to ask you if it's true that prose is your one and only love.

bp It was at one time. I forget when I said that.

DM You said it actually in the Queen Street interview.

bp Yes, '72. Well when I started off writing, what I really wanted to write was novels and short stories. And as I said then, when I found Sheila Watson's *The Double Hook* I thought, right, there's everything that I could conceive of doing at that point in time done. So, I still wanted to write, and I thought, well, I think I'll just start writing. So I stopped worrying about it and started working mostly on poetry.

DM Well what is it about prose that holds you?

bp Well right at the moment it's just that there's more and more I want to know about it. The way it feels for me right now is really exploring the form, you know? And the thing that interests me most as a writer is exploring modes of writing and trying to understand where the power is in them; how I personally can make it stronger or find out where the blocks are, if you like; what the things are that prevent it functioning the way it could. And prose just allows you much longer and much different kinds of structures than poetry tends to, you know. There's more possibility for playing around with characters and all those things. I think — this is purely personal — I've tended to use poetry as a medium of *self-expression*. And traditionally in prose you can write "fictions." So that's probably why I got interested in prose, writing about things other than self, you know (even though you're always writing about self anyways).

GH Well, it is really creating a new mode. Like when you say exploring the form, I immediately take the form as it *is*, somehow; I guess I didn't even see a book, so I'm seeing like a rectangle in the form. But your writing is not the least bit rectangular. It's much more like a circle. It keeps moving and shifting just slightly, shifts a groove like a record, then moves up another plane, shifts a groove, and you can drop on all planes at once sometimes. You just go down to the Hell or you just go *pssshhhh* up to the . . .

*bp* Well I've been really intrigued with two things: compressing as much as possible into a space so there's that quality, say, that music has, where you can just go back and back and there's always something new there. I've been interested in that type of compression which involves knowing a lot about surface and knowing a lot about what's below surface. So it means you have to know everything about the thing, from the cover through the pages, and how they work and what happens when it's on the page and what happens when it's not on the page. I mean there's just lots and lots to know. My experience has been that most writers don't, for instance, question the medium of the page or the book and say, okay, what effect does the fact that this thing is bound and functions this way, what effect does that have on what happens to the experience? Because my awareness is that that changes the experience over and over again, and it's never the same thing for me as it is for the person who's reading it (unless you're reading it out loud, unless it's a piece that can be read out loud to a person, that's the closest thing to a pure transmission).

*DM* Well you talked about not *writing Journal*, but having a sense of it as something you would record rather than print.

*bp* Yeah, that was my conception of it for years. But it just seems too long now to do that with. At that point there was just the first part which lasted about an hour, and I thought well, that was long enough that you could do that and the person would have to stay there and stay with it. I mean the advantage of tape is it's much harder to go back and forth. Like the reason I hate page numbers in books, basically, is because it gives you that whole reference thing. Which is okay if you want it, but it means the guy can say, oh crazy, I'll go back to page twelve and re-read that sentence. Which means that they can retreat from the process of what's happening to them, you know. I do that.



GH But sometimes that's really neat, like a classroom, when you can all define that same place. I had the sense with *Journal* that a person could read it, unlike a number of books, pick it up from the middle, read to the end, then return to the start at the beginning and move through. And well, it just works so incredibly on any number of levels that you're not missing by doing that. Whereas in most books, you do have to begin at the beginning. You're always beginning as you write. And you're always aware of the fact that you're ending too, in that present.

bp Yeah, that's true. The thing is, yeah, I mean, if that's what you want. Like if you want, shall we say, referentiality, then you leave page numbers in. But if you don't want it, if you want to be able to, in a way — it's kind of fascistic I guess — but if you want to be able to submerge the person in it, which was what I was trying to do with *Jesus Lunatick* and it's what I've been trying to do with *Journal*, it is a submersion process. The way I saw it was that it wasn't so much an issue of style, achieving a writing style, as being able to transcribe, if you like, or translate, states of consciousness. And to simply have that so that the reading experience would be the experience as much as you can get it of a state of consciousness.

DM Well the area that you're exploring all the time has to do with memory, even when it's a fictional memory as in *the martyrology*, of coming down from that cloud land up here, which was *then*, and like doing whatever you do here in this earth planet. But the referentiality is perhaps false, because the state of consciousness you're talking about is one where the memories keep coming up into the present and taking over.

bp That's right. Which isn't too groovy a situation, right.

DM Well it's certainly not linear. Like you can't say, I've left that behind on page twelve, because, you know, here it is page twenty-four and wow, they're just as present.

bp Well that's been my personal experience in life, that things erupt. Things erupt into the present — you know, that whole feeling of *déjà-vu*. *Déjà-vu* is essentially the experience of what

has happened before in the present, and as though it has never ceased happening and it's just going on like this, you know. Depressions often function that way. You get into a depression, you forget you ever had a good mood and you think, here we are again, this pit is very familiar. Actually, my image of depressions was always — very Protestant image — of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* where he's in the Slough of Despond. That's always the way I saw it. You get into a depression and it's just really mucky area. Anyways, that's what I was interested in, was somehow reflecting my awareness of how a consciousness functions. And the materials that come into it in terms of memory, of emotions, of all those things. And sometimes purely in terms of surface, because sometimes that's all you're aware of, is surface. There's nothing else happening but surface.

*GH* Having all that lack of character clutter, like your characters totally lack clutter — there's no geographical ground, locational ground — makes for a much clearer soul talk than the other Canadian writers now writing that I know. I frequently get that sense of, like it's talking from the soul of the characters, the talking from the soul of you. And I think that's one of the marvels of the way in which you're exploring.

*bp* Well the state that is happening essentially to, we can call him *the* character in *Journal*, is one in which external reality just gets subsumed into internal reality. And really all the incidents that happen, even when they start off as suddenly super-objective moments for me, like you'll meet someone or he'll do something, then it just gets consumed into the confusion, until finally he just has to shove all that aside and in a way just go back to his own beginning, which in that case is his relationship to his mother. And it's almost like he starts over at that point. He says, okay, here's everything I remember of what happened. You know, literally, he finds a grammar for memory in a sense. And then he can proceed from there.



- GH* It keeps tilting, and he *loses* that ground too. Like that thing of how he moves the memory — it comes up and then it just slips off the edge and it's gone.
- bp* All the early memories, yeah. Until he's actually talking to his mother that's what keeps happening to him. And then it's just a long string of very clear memories that all sort of circle around a couple of incidents and the way he felt. But it's like just incident after incident of him feeling this way in this relationship to that woman . . .
- GH* But it's still more than his mother though, isn't it?
- bp* Oh yeah.
- GH* When she's the mother even in the end she's also the woman who gave up the child who died, she's the sister who fucked her father . . .
- DM* Well she never does get outside him. That's why I keep balking at "character," because I can't think of it as character. It's simply a consciousness in which all these things orbit. And she never gets outside that container, she's always contained by it.
- bp* Right. It's entirely his view.
- DM* I keep hearing you translate time into space. And there's a kind of psychic geography that you're charting out in all this stuff. That's why the things return. It's not a time thing, it's a total transmutation into laying it on out, so that you can see it and see how things relate to each other.
- GH* Like a map that is one-dimensional, with all these layers just coming in to that one surface. Is that what you mean by surface?
- bp* There's about three meanings we're using it as. One is, say, where you're down in the depths and you come up to the surface — that's one sense. There's surface in the sense that this page with the ink on it is the surface of the book. And there's surface in the sense of everything that's compressed, like a lamination, into one thing. You know what I mean? But even then, below that surface is all the layers. There's a really super-early poem of mine, it's in *The Other Side of the Room* that went

something like: "A thin thing in all things/ A thin surface below the face of everything/ Every thin thing which delights us/ Lies below the surface of another thing." Which was really based on the visual pun which is a thing thing, as in "thing." It's been a lot of the obsession with visual poems, just to deal with the page as page and to really try and think about that. I quickly saw that I have a real writer's orientation to the page; I don't have a visual artist's orientation to the page. And that's why you can really separate out concrete poets who come at it from the graphic side and writers: the way they handle the page is radically different. So there's that sense of surface too: what effect does the surface have? Like the surface of the body is the interface between you and the air and everybody else you know. So surface is the filter too, through which osmosis, as it were, happens.

*PC* How does the structure of comic strips or comic books relate to what you've been saying about surface?

*bp* Beyond the fact that, without analyzing it, I surely enjoy them and they're total relaxation, the fact is it's the best wedding of the graphic and the narrative that we've got. Nobody's come up with a form as effective as the comic strip. Everything's there. What it's used for is not necessarily the ultimate extension of what it could be. But it's an incredible marriage of the two things. It's also a very collaborative art form. On the whole, it demands a collaboration between the artist and the writer.

*GH* You're now working on a collaboration with the other three of the Four Horsemen. Can you talk about the way in which you're exploring that possibility?

*bp* Well, I realized about eight months to a year ago that most of the writing I've been doing this last couple of years has been prose. And somewhere along there, we came up with the idea (the four of us) of doing a novel — I guess that was in the spring. So what we did (this is interesting in terms of what you were saying about the lack of landscape in *Journal*, which is very true) what we did there was we started from landscape. Each of us drew a map of a neighbourhood, either based on reality or a fictional neighbourhood (mine was roughly based

— everybody's was roughly based — on their childhood neighbourhoods) with an arrow saying "to city centre" on it. Then we drew in a whole area in between that we called the downtown part of the city, and we waited for that to be fleshed out. And each of us started writing out sections, quite independently of the others, but with the idea that the backgrounds were common, you see, and that we would have the characters encounter each other at different points within the city. It's really quite interesting. Raphael's character at this point just stays in his room and doesn't move. Paul's character ends up sort of being in all the down-and-out parts of the city, you know, haunting the bars and peep-shows and all that stuff. And Steve's character is quite nuts: this guy named Pope, who seems to be incarcerated in an insane asylum, St. Helen's Hospital, and who may have a double personality known as Dr. Duplicate the transvestite brain surgeon. And my character, who's Filoden, just sort of seems to be out driving all the time, roaming around the city and thinking a lot, heavily into thinking. And there's been a lot of encounters between Steve's character and my character and one encounter between Paul's character and my character.

*DM* So who was the first person to choose to actually do an encounter?

*bp* Steve and I.

*DM* And you set it up together?

*bp* How did we first encounter each other? Let me just think for a second here. Somehow we met in the hospital. Somehow my character — I don't remember at the moment — my character gets to the hospital and we end up having this visit which starts off with two rambling monologues. I would write a paragraph and Steve would write a paragraph, then I would write a paragraph.

*DM* In the same room?

*bp* Sitting beside each other in the same room. And there's this attempt to communicate but it's not happening. Then it's like suddenly they both click on this memory of this incident that



they were both involved in, you see. And at that point the possibility of communication opens up between them and so then there's much more meaningful dialogue. At which point Steve and I together created a new character who stepped outside the action of the novel and began to comment. And the guy's named Thomas Randall Garrett, very supercilious guy who was a teacher who had taught Filoden and Pope in high school. They were both members of the high school cartography club, you see, and Garrett's an expert on cartography. And then, subsequent to that, there was an occasion where Filoden meets Martin down by the docks. They go together up to the hospital. They meet Pope. More dialogue. And then what's happened recently is that Steve and I have begun to weave a mystery subplot (I'm not sure what's happening in our sections) which touches briefly on the other two guys. See, we're not trying to visualize what an end-product is, so it's a very difficult way to write because we're not sure where it's going. See in a way, in any sort of group activity, you form a group consciousness. So that the tricky thing in doing this prose thing is to develop a group consciousness around prose, because that's much harder to do than it is around poetry which doesn't have the same sort of content although it has content — you can more easily fall into it. When you get into prose, it's more like you're stepping on each other's toes. You're treading on the private preserves and the areas you've kept as private. And you say, okay, let's take a bigger risk, let's throw this area open too and see what happens. So we've all come out of our corners, the bells are ringing and we're seeing what happens.

*GH* Okay, when you meet, that's ego meeting, two egos, in some fiction . . .

*bp* You mean in the old Yogic sense.

*GH* Yeah, right. And then the group thing moves to . . . Like, the way you people do your sound things appears to be totally egoless, which is what is so amazing about seeing that group perform — the egolessness of it. But you're saying somehow in that writing it's much harder.

*bp* That's right, precisely because you're writing very strictly content. I mean, when you're writing your section, you're writing your content. So when you say, okay gang, come on in and you can change this content with me if you want to, you know; like, you can come into my sandbox and you can play with my toys. I mean, it sort of feels to me like it's really like that — it's at the stage of infancy. And it's easy with two people; it's easy to collaborate with two people, and Steve and I in fact collaborate very well. It's harder with three and it's a bitch with four. But we've got four years under our belts, we've got a basis for taking a risk and seeing where it goes.

*GH* How did you choose Filoden, the name?

*bp* Well it sort of sprang fullblown from my consciousness. Now if you want my feeling for where it's from — this is like an afterthought about it — there is a character called Philemon by a French comic strip artist named Fred — who's just an incredible character who keeps travelling out to the letter A in the Atlantic Ocean, you see, and sometimes he drops into the T. And there's a whole world out there on the letters in the Atlantic Ocean.

*GH* But at the time you weren't thinking of that. I'm interested in just that naming process.

*bp* It's a whole thing of just sitting there and feeling out the character and thinking, okay, what's his name? Blank space. Out of the space comes a name. It's like naming a child really.

*DG* Is it composed out of letters? I mean, you've been obsessed with H, et cetera; and like you talk about the A and the T, you know. Is that the way it takes its shape?

*bp* Well the name doesn't. This is like stepping back from the point where I've already named the character and realizing as I look

at my bookshelf, hey, Philemon sounds very close to Filoden by God! I bet this is what it's all about. Because in fact, he voyages out into the landscape, but the landscape is letters too, so it's like the double thing.

*DM* I copied down a couple of lines from the *martyrology* which I was interested in asking you about. And now even more, having heard you talk about this collaboration and the content thing. You say "we must return again to human voice and listen/ rip off the mask of words to free the sounds." And in the little thing you wrote as — I don't know if it was an introduction or a postscript, but it's a fold-in — you also talk about "a future music moves now to be written/ w g r & t . . ."

*bp* Well okay, the actual line comes out of the feeling that I had at that time which was that the importance of sound poetry was — for myself, say, and you can make an even wider application — was to free the emotional content of speech from ideation or from words, necessarily, and to just be able to let out the voice. And that once the voice had been let out, then the words would follow. I always go back to that Palongahoya legend, you know. Palongahoya's job was to open his mouth and to sing the praises of the creator. And that if he did that, then the vibratory axis of his body vibrated in tune with the vibratory axis of the cosmos and everything was in harmony, see? But that what people began to use . . . They got tricked by Raven and they began to use speech as a way of talking inside their teepees to each other. And this was a false use of it. Eventually he who creates everything comes down and bumps them all off for misuse of voice. And that's happened about four times according to the legend. So that's really what I was thinking of in that line, was just that necessity to not use words as a masking, which a lot of people do in conversations. Like you have a lot of different types of conversations. You have, say, the



make-out conversation. This is where two people are talking about something — I'm sure you've seen lots of these — but they're not really talking about anything other than their sort of, reconnoitering — when they're going to hit the sack and all that. That's one type of conversation. You have the same sort of thing in a business situation which is filled with all sorts of pleasantries and underneath this is this other rip-tide going on, you know. So it was also an awareness of those sort of uses of language and saying, okay, let's get rid of all of that and just let out the sound, you know, and see what's behind it.

*GH* And you've evolved a character in some sense now and let out the consciousness like you were doing in *Journal*. And it's going to be living out another side of that really.

*bp* Yeah. I mean this is the other thing in the collaboration, is like it's moving on to . . . Well you see, like in the work I do, which is working for Therafields as a theradramist and seeing people and talking with them about what's bothering them. And what you're doing in the situation is not imposing yourself on the person but basically being a catalyst: to ask questions they can't formulate, to put them in the situation where they're going to have to deal with the material themselves and where you help them as much as you can. It negates a certain type of writing. That is, if you're doing it all the time it negates the traditional psychological novel you know, in which you simply describe a character. It becomes very uninteresting to write that type of novel when you're sort of there, articulating it on a daily level in your life. So the problem for me, or the way I saw it was, okay I wanted to write novels — and I saw this about ten years ago — which reflected accurately the processes of the way the mind works. I keep going back to this, of how consciousness works. Like in *the martyrology*, I would bring in names very briefly, or characters very briefly or faces very briefly. Because it felt to me like that was the way you encountered people in real life, you know. You're walking down the street, you're feeling things all the time, you see somebody you meet very casually, you know their name. You might never meet them again, but for that moment, they're there, and that's all you know about them. Whang — they're gone. So I let all that stuff into the

poem, I let in a bunch of maudlin things because it felt to me that it was all part of the process of when you're moving through something. All those things actually collide with your consciousness, so I left them in. But it makes for a very strange poem.

*DG* It always seems to be a bringing-out, a calling-up, you know, in terms of memory or consciousness. Like, does it ever approach myth? That seems to be the other end of calling things up.

*bp* Well yeah — it's always seemed to me that there are real mysteries and then there are false mysteries. For instance, the reason I never got off on C. G. Jung was, in his language he is obsessed with mystery. He loves mystery, and that's kind of the level he wants to leave it at. This is what I always feel when I'm reading Jung: he loves mystery and he's more interested in rolling around in mystery than in explication, in trying to solve mystery. And getting beyond what is the false level of mystery and what are the real mysteries — this is always the issue that intrigues me.

I think there are real myths and then there's the process of mythification that goes on that's completely phony and completely artificial, which I'm not interested in. When the group, for instance, started, when the Four Horsemen started, the first thing we had to overcome was that everybody knew my name and nobody knew the rest of the group's name. Okay, so what you have is "bp Nichol and The Four Horsemen!" It sounds like I got this back-up group of Motown singers snapping their toes. So we worked very hard; literally we had to work at it consciously, we had to see the posters and say (you know, cause this was what they kept trying to do) and we'd say, no way — group, group, group, group, you know, think of it as a group. This was a very hard process. People don't want to think of writers as groups. They're fixed on writers as the single consciousness. Because for years that's the historical position of writers, even though it's not our antecedent, that's our position in the twentieth century. So there's a process of breaking down

that old myth. This is what I'm talking about, around the individual sort of superstardom and what that means. I even remember having a dream years ago about a gigantic robot mummy, you know, wrapped in cloths and stuff, that was pursuing me. And in the context of the dream at the time it came, it was very clearly audience; it was my sense of audience. I was sort of whipping through the back woods trying to keep ahead of audience, okay? It was just a paranoid dream but I realized what it meant at that time was that in this sort of context people are encountering you through readings or through your books and they're not encountering you as a real human being in your living situation. You try and bring as much of you as possible into it, but it's still different from the live human being. You're fighting a mythification process really; you're fighting the attempt to make you something you aren't. From time to time I get strange about it. From time to time it's not even an issue. It's been there. I don't know if that answers the question.

*DG* I remember you saying to me a long time ago about the fact that you couldn't take myth, so you were creating your own personal mythology which is the calling-up.

*bp* Oh yeah, right. Well I remember at the time feeling (I think I remember that conversation) that the Greek and Roman myths had no currency for me as a human being. I like them, but I learn them when I'm twenty-three, so they're not a living part of my existence particularly. The Gilgamesh epic always had more punch for me. I sort of encountered it on my own; it was really a part of my experience. The comic strip characters — I mean Dick Tracy was always a vastly more mythic figure for me than anybody else, you know, to this day. And you know, the haunting quality of Little Orphan Annie — things like this. These all had a much more powerful mythic content. And the saints! I mean, the saints essentially came out of that whole perception of when I was a kid and thought that the real people lived up in the clouds.

*GH* I heard that they were in a hole in the sky.



*bp* Well it was sort of like that. I looked up between the clouds. I always thought it was like the edges of a lake and that we were living at the bottom of the ocean and the real folks were up there. That's where we were going to go someday. Heaven. I always thought heaven was the clouds, that was the thing. Because that's the drawings you get; in the United Church you get a little Sunday school paper and everybody's walking around on clouds.

*DM* We've talked about naming, the importance of your character's name in the collaboration, and you talked about calling-up, and you talked about nouns the other day. But I'm still sort of stuck back with the question and I don't know how to ask it. It's something very naive like, how do you feel about verbs?

*bp* How do I feel about verbs. Well no, it's actually a really interesting question because, like in a sense say, in a novel like *Journal* or a novel like *For Jesus Lunatick*, nothing happens essentially; nothing happens in terms of external action or anything. Most of it happens in terms of internal action. *For Jesus Lunatick* is a real bummer because the character just gets into this thing and he never gets out of it really. He just rolls around inside of this madness of his and he bumps up against other people who seem equally mad from his point of view; and the whole thing ends with the thing of the river. So there's that sense of action. Now in terms of verbs, other than saying I like them — the thing that I tend to dislike intensely is adjectives. I dislike them because it always seemed to me the premise of an adjective is that the noun doesn't say enough. And I always think of nouns because it's sort of like a very strong sense of the objects that are there, you see; and then the actions will define themselves.

*DG* They carry their own action.

*bp* That's right. That, in a way, the verb is generated by the noun. What happens is generated by what is there in the noun.

*GH* I bet you that changes in the collaboration, though.

*bp* Oh, much different world, yeah. I don't know what'll happen there. We're talking of pre-collaboration.

*DM* Like I've always thought the difficulty of naming a character or naming anything was that in fact nouns do not exist in the world, that nouns are simply ways of designating ongoing processes. You know, you fix it, you freeze it for a moment with a name.

*bp* Well, there's that. But I mean if you take the really early Runic sense of language, that if you put the alphabet, if you put a mark on a thing — to name it was to call it forth — so that you're actually calling forth the spirit of the thing. So in that sense, the noun contains the action.

*DG* And you personify it.

*bp* That's right. Once you put the name on the thing, then you're calling up that deity, you know; like if you put the mark on the wood, you're calling forth the spirit that's in the wood. Then it speaks through the mark, see. So what I'm saying is that the noun has all the power if you line the nouns up right; if you line the nouns up inside the sentences right. If you make the syntax a vehicle which releases them as opposed to a vehicle which straightjackets them and lays them down flat.

*DM* The fact that Adam's task was to name the animals seems like some kind of outering process that goes along, a separation thing. If you can say that that's a buffalo, you know you're not a buffalo. *That's* the buffalo out there.

*bp* That's right. Yeah, yeah it does, it's a process of distances. It's always the way it seems to me, anyways. It's a way of not having your skin quite as porous.

*DM* Right. But then the naming, I mean the calling forth by name, is the reverse of that.

*bp* Uh, hold it. I think you left me at the last turn.

*GH* That's because of the way you're saying that's the way verbs are, that if the noun itself contains the energy then it's the reverse of the process that she's talking about; that once you identified buffalo then buffalo is there on the hill.

DG It simply is.

bp As a distancing — oh, I see what you're saying there. It doesn't have to be though. See there you get sort of a split between the way . . . END OF SIDE ONE.

bp . . . I think what I was saying there was that okay, you have sort of the traditional or let's say the last five hundred years of language in which, say, the noun is used for categorization and lists against an earlier usage of language. And that's what goes back to the Williams quote I was mentioning which is that if all the words are either dead or beautiful, then they're no more use to us as writers than a dead abstraction is to a philosopher. There's only two things you can do at that point which is: strip the language bare of beauty (which is more or less what he saw as his approach) or break the words up and start over again (which is what he saw as Joyce's approach). Now I disagree with that because Joyce was keenly interested in cryptography and was actually into concealing. He was into concealing; he was not into explication. Now that's where I felt Stein did that. Gertrude Stein has done that. Beckett has done it, much more than Joyce did. Proust — all of Proust's novels are about nouns. I mean that whole fantastic section in *Remembrance of Things Past* of place names, the place. He goes on and on naming things and evoking every memory he can remember around the name. My God, he's full, full, full. But it's an interesting approach to adjectives. It's really interesting reading Proust; it's the most slowed-down reading you can do on God's green earth — lying in the sun somewhere so that you can fall asleep at every fifth sentence, so slow. The thing is, he uses so many adjectives in a way he goes beyond that whole thing I was saying about adjectives because he's no longer trying to rush the process. He's in fact trying to evoke absolutely every goddamn nuance he can think of. It just goes page after page after page around one object.

GH Filling the scroll on the lamp. You can just see that lamp so clearly.



*bp* That's right. And that's what Francis Ponge has done. Have you ever read his book, *Soap*, in which he just takes soap and *everything* around soap, you know. Ponge is the clearest successor I can see to that thing in Proust.

*DM* Ponge also has that theory about the chord. That if you strike . . . He has this thing about language, the way language stands to an object. If you strike the right chord in the language, you'll hit the chord in the object. Everything has its own musical resonance, okay. And you can see it happening in like "The Carnation," where the words are coming up and you can't even see the connection until he checks it out in the dictionary. And he says Oh wow! yeah, you know, like that's where language is really carrying it, carrying that presence.

*bp* See, that's what Stein did too with the *Tender Buttons* sequence, you know. Like if she said vase, it was not a vase. It was a vase in language, it was all the words inside her at the moment of perceiving the object, and therefore they are connected with the object. Because those are all the words inside her when she sees that object.

*DG* Yeah. That reminds me of what Sapir says in *Language* about house: that house is not simply all of our individual experiences of house, but it is everybody's experiences put together to form a concept, you know, of what it is.

*bp* But it seems to me that my obsession in a sense (and I can see that as we're talking about this; I hadn't realized it before this moment) has been to take the noun (and I really think in some ways that some of my books are just about one thing, just one thing) to take the noun and to kind of bring it back to its base — like the thing in *stillwater* with just the single noun on the page — and precisely to let it regain its own resonances. Stein said that really nice thing about "a rose is a rose is a rose." She said that when she wrote that way, she thought she had written truly about the rose for the first time in hundreds of years in the English language. I think that in a way, it's a whole other thing which Steve and I came across in writing the TRG thing, the Toronto Research Group, which is Steve and I (another convenient name that allows us to operate). Our perception of

it was that twentieth century writing has gone through an unacknowledged present; that is, there is a whole tradition which we can call the avant-garde tradition, for lack of a better word, which is Stein, which is Dada, which is the Russian futurists like Klebnikov and so on — all these guys. There's a whole tradition that went through, which up until very recently, up until the last five or six years, was literally undocumented. I mean the stuff existed, but in private libraries all over the place; it was not accessible. Therefore, we were operating much like amnesiacs would. That is to say, we were operating out of a necessity to first of all regurgitate the history of twentieth century writing in order to get beyond it. Like when I look at a book like *ABC*, the Alephbeth book of mine — which I like, but it's an early piece, I mean it's even earlier than me. In a way, it belongs about the nineteen thirties; like it's ahead of what the futurists were doing, but it's behind what some other people were doing. But for me, it's an important book. If you're just thinking Canadian, then I haven't seen it done Canadian. And I certainly wasn't aware of those writers when I wrote it. But knowing what I know now, I know it's an early work; it pre-dates me. And it's because this material has not been present to our consciousness we've had to take all this material which is there and regurgitate it in order to get beyond it. Like we have to bring it up out of our collective memories.

*DG* Do you feel that you're restoring language to its original meaning or are you inventing a new use of language?

*bp* I don't really know. Sometimes in my revolutionary zeal I think, you know, that we're doing all these things. Well my sense of it is simply what Pierre was saying about research writers. I obviously have a belief in writing as a kind of process which can lead not only the writer but others into new perceptions. Raphael has said many times that we have a perfect time machine which is the human mind, and it's a question of

learning how to tap it. And I really believe that, because of déjà-vu experiences and so on. We usually exist in time warps and it's a question of finding the modes in writing which free up the armouring. The whole reason I got into concrete — I've said this many times, but I'm going to say it again — was that I thought I was being too arrogant, that I was sitting down and I was writing and I was coming to the situation obsessed that I had something to say *per se*: a very didactic purpose as opposed to simply giving myself up to the process of writing. And as a result, I was not learning anything from the language, you know. And the fact is, the language is there before me. I'm born into the language community. The language has a history of its own. I have things I can learn, if I sit down and let myself play with it — which is more or less the motivation behind getting into concrete, getting into sound. As well as having things to say that I couldn't simply put into those forms. Now, what strikes me about this whole thing of naming is that there are two ways of looking at it: you can look at the noun and at naming as a way of putting distance between yourself and the thing, or of treating it with respect, allowing its own existence, not simply consuming it as part of yourself — allowing it its own separate existence so that therefore there can be a real marriage between you and the object, person, whatever. That's the two ways of looking at nouns. It's the second that interests me.

*GH* Um hm, that's a release of spirit.

*DM* It's very hard, though, to get away from the implications of that Sapir quote of yours, Dwight: that every word carries with it this huge accretion of concepts about the thing, and that that is what's been called up, rather than the thing.

*bp* Well that's why, for instance, that's particularly why adjectives are so directive, you see. Adjectives say to you, okay, here's the accretion I want. That's why Proust goes beyond it. Proust brings in so many adjectives they're buried under a man-mountain of them, you know. And in the end, in a way, you just end up in the midst of every possible memory you could have of a name, you know. But what the concretists have done, in fact, in releasing the noun, in releasing it into the field of the page (and releasing the letters too, I mean if you want to go below that



into micro-syntax), is to allow them their own existence again; to allow them a chance to re-group and a chance in a way to shed all that extra fat and see what they're doing by themselves. And in fact when you just write the word "moon" on a page and look at it, you find a lot of that accretion drops away. You're up against the elemental word which means you're up against the elemental thing. Except a lot of people get . . . I don't know, it's not exciting to them for some reason. Like they want those signposts.

PC I'm struck by the tremendous variety of processes in composition that you utilize in order to discover new forms. It seems to me that your final interest is the *form* of the communication.

bp Well, I believe two things about forms. I believe that form follows function as Louis Sullivan says, or that form is nothing more than extension of content as Creeley said. But I also believe that form by itself says a lot about what the content is. So I believe both things are true, you see. It's like one of those chicken and the egg things that you don't bother separating.

PC In a sense you're investigating form as content in itself.

bp Right.

DG Do you know the quote from Gertrude Stein about composition? Ah . . . Robert Duncan quotes it in an essay that's in the first *Caterpillar*. But carrying the sense that "composition is." Simply *is*.

bp Right. She said that a lot; more or less that the reality of the situation was that the situation was. Like that quote that I use in *the martyrology*: "let me recite what history teaches/ history teaches." See Stein did not believe in the unconscious. She said she had no unconscious and she was constantly insisting on the absolute of the experience itself. Really, she was saying, this is all this thing is, is what it is.

DM Well she was the first great stresser of process. That favorite quote of George's — help me, I can't remember it.

GH "Composition is how we compose."

DM Right. "Composition is how we . . ." But there's a connection there in that talk about form, that little bit you just said, with the kind of identification that's occurring in your sense of naming as calling forth.

bp Well Chomsky makes that distinction between competence and performance in language. It's essentially the same distinction that Sapir made about the difference between the actual life of language and the study of linguistics. And I don't know if this relates or not, but I have found that my interest is in the actual life of language or in what Chomsky calls the performance, as opposed to necessarily in the competence of the linguistics area per se. That what happens inside the psyche, or that the human being's relationship to the materials he uses — which are language, which are the book and all those things — is I find the most important thing. That relationship of human being to material used.

DM Well in fact the language becomes the thought. There is no thought outside of it.

DG If there wasn't language there can be no thought, that's his statement.

bp I definitely have some ambiguities around this. I also believe that language is a tool but it's the tool of self-definition, and therefore it's the most important too. That's the one thing you can't name and separate yourself from, because you name it with its own name. I mean you're constantly naming it. You're constantly naming language — all the time maybe. And it's like a cloud in front of you.

GH I really believe, though, there's thought without language. I mean I disagree with that.

DG I don't.

DM I think there's *sensation* without language.

DG But there isn't thought.

- bp* You get into one of these really incredibly well-argued areas in which nobody's really reached the definitive conclusion of it yet. I don't know which I believe, actually, to tell you the truth.
- DM* Collingwood did a nice bit on that, on that whole thing about thought and language.
- PC* R. C. Collingwood. Where he says all history is the history of thought. And the other translation of what you said is that there is no history, except in language.
- bp* Right.
- PC* One thing I wanted to ask you, when you were talking about the process of repetition or insistence in *Journal*, as opposed to Gertrude Stein's use of insistence as a medium for intellection.
- bp* My awareness of it was that Stein only occasionally used it for emotional insistence. She was using it to just let the materials themselves, the materials of language, repeat themselves. Whereas my use of that thing of Stein was to allow the materials as emotional charges to insist themselves. And that was the distinction. And that's why I feel that *Journal* is radically different from what Stein was doing.
- DM* In fact you spoke of it as emotional syntax yesterday.
- bp* Right.
- GH* That's where I find you much more interesting than Stein.
- DM* Well it moves, it really moves one, in that emotional way that Stein doesn't. And in terms of any kinetics of language, that's where it is.
- PC* "Only emotion endures."
- bp* You'll be remembered for that one.
- DG* That's Ezra Pound.
- bp* Well Wittgenstein — here we are, chucking big names around — ah, Wittgenstein had the sense of language games, which is also a really nice way of looking at it. They're all just essentially different systems which say different things at different times, you know.



GH What, language does?

bp Yeah, language games. He means game in the sense of play and he just keeps proposing different systems. Suppose I mean this by this, what's the implication of that? You know — fifty pages — suppose I mean this by *this*, you know. Actually Wittgenstein is very funny to read.

DM That gets back to the noun thing again. Because what that's saying is that to be always at the edge — like writing letters at the edge — is always attempting to bring in more of what lies *outside* the system, which you can't get at except *through* the system, which is language.

bp Right. So really, writing by its nature, in my opinion, writing is always out on the frontier going out a bit further. I think it depends. I think there are writers who are like that. I think there are research writers and I think there are synthesizers and I think there are simply popular writers (I don't mean that in a bad sense). I mean there's the person who gets out there on the edge and gathers in the materials. There's another person who'll take that material and synthesize it and do incredible things with it, and there's the popularizer who'll take the same . . . eventually it filters right out into the mass market thing. Like, you know, stream of consciousness: you almost can't read a novel without stream of consciousness anymore. But on the other hand, that's a radically new development in popular literature in the last twenty years or so.

DM But by that time it's become a habit of thought rather than a new perception.

bp Yeah by that time, you're all ready to move on.

DG Somebody's got to be out there, you know.

bp Well the question Steve and I asked . . . See, we're doing this thing on narrative, right, in *Open Letter*, the TRG thing. And

one of the questions that we had to ask finally was, how much does what you're doing help or hinder the reader's ability to enter the process? Like how much does it force him up to surface in that sense he can't get into a rush, you know, into a sort of ongoing flow — and if it does that, do you want that effect. Like the problem with, for instance, some visual poems where the person is doing visual things but clearly wants . . . Well, this is one of the problems with the "Alphabet of Blood"; right Pierre?

*PC* Yeah.

*bp* This is a poem Pierre published in '64. It was really one of the first big visual poems in Canada, but he was very concerned with transmitting meaning. He'd done all these things, though, to the individual words which meant that you were continually brought up to the surface of the words, therefore you could not get into meaning. I'm sure that's the whole tension in you between the two arts.

*PC* That's right. It is, definitely.

*bp* So it's a question of how does each of these things I do help or hinder the process (as far as I'm conscious of) that I'm involved in. And I firmly believe that just as you can armour the body — like for instance, if you're living in a room which has a very low ceiling, you know, doing your Alfred Jarry number, so that you're always ducking like this, you're probably always going to walk around with your head slightly ducked forward. So I think the same thing happens in writing: that people armour in that sense, you know, without realizing it. A lot of aesthetics is purely and simply bias. And that's why a person can very passionately argue a particular aesthetic and you can't disagree with them because it's absolutely right for them. People could argue to me for writing rhyme in poetry. I mean classically rhyming sonnets, and I've read a few. Take Helen Adams. Why does everybody dig Helen Adams? Because it is absolutely true; it's true to the person. You can feel all this energy coming through these ballads. So it does reach a point where if you're doing this sort of research — what Steve and I see in our writing as research — obviously it all points towards some point of integration in the long run. Like when we're

talking, there's a feeling of circling in this interview, there's something which is circling. I sort of felt that about my solo writing for a number of years. I mean, there's a point here that I'm circling around. About every year I go through this thing: there's something here I'm circling around, how do I get beyond this door? What's on the other side of it?

PC Well it's what's happening in *Journal*. And part of what occurs is that the anxiety surfaces, that pain surfaces. And what comes to mind is the image from Blake of the human form divine as the ultimate objective. It seems to be a part of the regenerative thing that you're doing in terms of research and language. It also connects with what Norman O. Brown was saying in *Love's Body* about "remembering" (which is a figure that you use particularly in *Journal* and in other things), that process of memory is literally a process of re-membering the human body. When you talk about parts of yourself, about that sudden memory you had in therapy about the bunny rabbit in your crib, right. And that loss of the bunny rabbit, which you felt was a loss of a part of yourself which you suddenly discovered wasn't, you know . . .

bp I was not the bunny rabbit.

PC Yes; was a re-membering of yourself, it was bringing back to yourself something that you felt had been lost.

bp That's a nice word, isn't it? I hadn't thought of it that way before. I mean, you re-member yourself, grow the arm back, self generating a part of yourself.

PC And it's also implicit in this word "composition" as well. Com/position: putting it together. And that's what's implicit in syntax. When you talk about a passionate syntax or an emotional syntax, it is a putting-together of those nouns that are parts of the body. It's not a separative process, a distancing process of that thing being out there once it's named. And I don't even know if it's a calling-forth (I'm not sure of that), a calling forth of the spirit of the thing, because that in a way is a little bit metaphysical for me. But that it becomes . . .

*bp* Go with your absolute sense, Pierre.

*PC* . . . that it becomes an actual thing in terms of its placing.

*bp* Well, but when I say that I mean exactly what I was saying later: that you give the thing its own uniqueness, that it does exist, that you do not simply consume it. I mean, if we're going to use the old cliché . . .

*GH* You don't give it though. You let it.

*bp* You let it. Precisely. Yeah, you let it.

*DM* Well, you see it.

*bp* You see it, and you acknowledge that you are not it. It is it, you are you, and it is not you. You can be totally sympatico with it, but it is not you. You do not even give it its existence. Your seeing it gives you, in a sense, your existence. That is to say, because you are able to articulate a difference — and I've always thought that — that human beings articulate themselves as human beings by bumping up against other human beings . . .

*DM* Or the world.

*bp* That's right. To me, it's always seemed very particular to human beings — this is a wildly defensible position — but the fact that you meet another human being can really articulate that they are themselves, you are yourselves. That's a much tougher thing to do than with a tree, which is clearly not you.

*DG* Naming is an act of honouring, you know, the existence of something.

*bp* That's right. At its best, the noun — that's very good — is an act of honour. It's saying, I do not consume you . . .

*GH* I recognize you.

*bp* . . . I recognize you. That's right. So it's anti-consumption. You know, like that whole thing, even in a meal of the whole . . . Like this is the point. There's all sorts of reasons for conventions.



This whole thing of saying grace at a meal at its best is acknowledging the separateness of the food from you, and saying, okay, I'm going to consume you. You know; that I'm taking this thing into me, and it's like a thanking.

DG You are going to become me.

DM That's the first salmon ceremony on the west coast you know — even before breakfast, yeah. You have to recognize the gracious act of that being allowing you to consume it. And in fact, you honour it by throwing all the pieces, every single bone, back so that it will re-form and re-appear next year as a whole. But I'm still stuck with *time*, Barry! That noun! That recognition is a stasis of time. It assumes that that thing, or that you, exists as a recognizable you for a certain length of time and a recognizable I. But in fact, it's changing all the time.

GH It's not eternal at all though. It doesn't assume that. I mean it does in any one phrase; it assumes that. That he/she . . . I really love it that way; I think of it as both [*Here Gladys is referring to JOURNAL. — Ed.*] because it is consciousness and not sexual in that other sense. In any one phrase, he/she exists right there. But that isn't in time. Like in the next phrase they change. And the reader is making no thing of going, oh this is memory or this is that. Or at least I'm not, as a reader. And so, I don't have any sense of time in that book, none at all. And yet we've talked a lot about memory today. I don't see it as a book of memory. I mean, remembering is different, like that member appears, that red dress disappears again. But it doesn't have the shape; when I go back, to say okay, that is the woman who did something, whose child is dead or what. Because that/she/it/that dress appears several times in different ways, and it's not time. It's not locked in time.

bp I'm glad it works that way. That's what I was trying for.

PC One of the students commented on that last night. I think it was Jancis who mentioned that she didn't have that feeling of time — a passage — that it was a continual re-iterance, re-iteration of its presence. Is that what you mean?

DM Yeah, well that's the translation of time into space which Barry's always doing.



*bp* See, this thing you're saying about the noun . . . Like what I'm saying is I don't think that's an inherent quality of nouns. I think it's a use we've put them to. I don't think that putting a noun, like me saying Daphne does not fix you because Daphne . . .

*DM* Oh, but it does to me.

*bp* Ah, but I think that's our misuse of it because obviously, by its very nature, by your very nature, Daphne is a shifting concept.

*DM* Sure.

*bp* Okay? So the best use of nouns encompasses that. That's where for instance, when you free a noun of adjectives and just isolate it on the page, see, and put moon, it can be all phases of the moon; it can be all those things, freed of adjectives. That almost feels to me like a necessary step. You have to first take the noun free of adjectives, and just feel the noun, to reclaim it. And then it becomes simply that honouring; it is all those things. It doesn't have to be categorization. It gets used that way, but it doesn't have to be. There's no reason it has to be.

*DM* I finally put it together; like I finally realize that what you're doing when you take the word moon and put it on the page is you're transforming it into a verb. You're saying, moon is what it is by the act of mooning. It moons. And therefore, it's moon.

#### LAUGHTER

*bp* That's right. That a noun is a verb. That a noun is the verb to be. A noun is the verb to be. That really puts it. A noun is the verb to be.

*DG* I think a rose is a rose is a rose.

*bp* That's what's so great about that thing of Stein's. Stein says a noun is. She doesn't say a noun is a verb; she makes distinctions. But in the poem "A rose is a rose is a rose," that's the implication, right. That the noun, the noun of anything, the name of anything is the verb to be.

DM Yeah; that in fact if you insist on it enough, it starts to move.

DG bp Nichol is bp Nichol.

bp That's right. Isn't that interesting. That's really nice, now that I think of it. But also that whole thing of not . . . You know, okay; it comes out of my own oral biases perhaps, but that whole thing of not consuming the world. The whole superstar system, for instance, is a consumption of the artist: you pays your money and you gets your meal, like at concerts or restaurants really. It's to break with that whole consumption thing and say that language does not have to be a consumptive process. Let's use it both ways.

GH Listen, I just thought of a question I wanted to ask about that. At the point that you're fairly young, you tend to slip into what aesthetic is around you, or to be found out through accident, usually through some sort of thing that there's some friend or some writing that leads to one other thing. But like, how bound are people in some other sense by that aesthetic that they come up into or slip into? Like for me, it's been very hard to break out of in some sense, the whole Black Mountain . . . Like, okay, by admiring their aesthetic, their person, I made them heroes in a way that wasn't necessary. And I think every young writer is going to do that, in some sense. And so it's many other accumulations and layers that you're dealing with.

bp I'll tell you the way I handled it is I hid out.

GH Yeah, like Raphael and his room up on . . . looking out onto that thing. When you get to him, it's going to be very interesting.

bp That's it. I hid out, and Dave Phillips and I were each other's audiences, and we believed all sorts of things. And this left us free to roam and ramble. I don't know; I think this is probably personal experience, but I think it varies from writer to writer. But I am very thankful that I did that. I think the reason I did it was I was very afraid of being overwhelmed by somebody who had a much more clearly articulated aesthetic, and that it would be very easy to slip into. This is what enraged me with the later issues of *El Corno Emplumado*: you had all these guys using Creeley's breathline that were not Creeley, and as a

result, their language lacked an energy charge; it was just sheer boredom. And it was total misunderstanding of everything the man was about. I'm sure he must have interpreted it as an insult. And I say, how else could you see it?

*GH* Of course. And ultimately it means paranoia and pissed off at the same time.

*bp* That's right. You'd be totally justified. It wouldn't be paranoia, at that point. It would be justified rage.

*DG* It would be a parody of Robert Creeley.

*GH* Parodied and pissed off.

*bp* And it's all those sort of forms that not only dishonour the writer, they're a consuming of the writer again. A consuming of that writer, and they're an avoidance of an articulation of self. And so, I hid out. And then, when I started doing readings and stuff — Pierre and I were talking about this — there is a way in which I know that the concrete and the sound poetry allowed me to move untrammelled, because I knew the scene better than anybody else did, you see, in the country at that point. Therefore there was safety for me to keep on working.

*GH* Yeah — ground of your own.

*bp* That's right, that I had a ground of my own.

*DM* And it was pure in that way.

*bp* That's right. So this left me free to manoeuvre. This left me free to explore and to find out other things.

*DG* But you were also at one point, very disturbed that you were known as a concrete poet, you know, pretty well throughout the world. And you were concerned for, at that point, what you considered your straight poetry.

*GH* Well that's the consumption thing again.

*bp* That's the robot mummy.

*GH* That people make an assumption, and then Barry would in some sense have to deal with that assumption and be annoyed at that, and must be pleased cause in some areas . . .

*bp* There's definitely certain ambiguity.

*GH* And annoyed, and that's a causeless hell for the rest of his life.

*bp* I think the other reason for hiding out was an awareness in me that there was a part of me that would try and be pleasing to people. And if I got caught up in that bind, then I would never be able to write. So I had to — this is what I always mean when I say you gotta stay two jumps ahead of what people think you're at. That's only me. I've gotta stay two jumps ahead of where people think I'm at.

I don't think that's as true as it was back then. Back then it was like protective colouration. It was like doing the iguana number, you know, in poetry. And this allowed me to gain — how shall we put it — I think I had credibility. I mean that people respected the fact that I was seriously attempting something which has been true; that is what I've been doing. But it also left me a psychic space that I could manoeuvre in, where I was not swamped by other people's aesthetics.

You know I really do; I mean most of aesthetics is bias. It's saying, you know, this is the way I see the world. Which is fine; which is really fine. What gets hard is when it gets into dogma. This is the way I see the world, therefore this is the way everybody should see the fucking world.



## Claude Breeze / FOOTHILLS JOURNAL

*Claude Breeze first achieved critical acclaim in 1965 with his violent series, Lovers in a Landscape. In those paintings, nature responded with anguished forms to the murderous sexuality of the figures. By 1968, the artist had turned away from representing landscape as environment, and had begun to use a particular kind of landscape as a symbol for the reaction of the body to despair. The Island series of that year records the psychological torture of the body as seen by the inner eye. The title alludes to the location for this insight — Bowen Island, B.C. — and is a metaphor for the isolation one feels when unsatisfactorily in love. In the Altarpiece series that followed and in the Foothills Journal of 1975 illustrated here, specific sites are alluded to and their visually real essence is recorded. They are emotional, “coloured” statements of the artist’s response to and empathy with particular geographies. They are similar to the dynamic, explosive backgrounds in Lovers in a Landscape but de-populated and re-directed to expose an apocalyptic landscape form, where the violence comes from nature acting upon itself as though through earthquake, drought, tornado and the quiet, persistent forces of erosion. The drawings of Foothills Journal were first exhibited at the Bau-Xi Gallery, January 12-25, 1976.*

### IMAGES

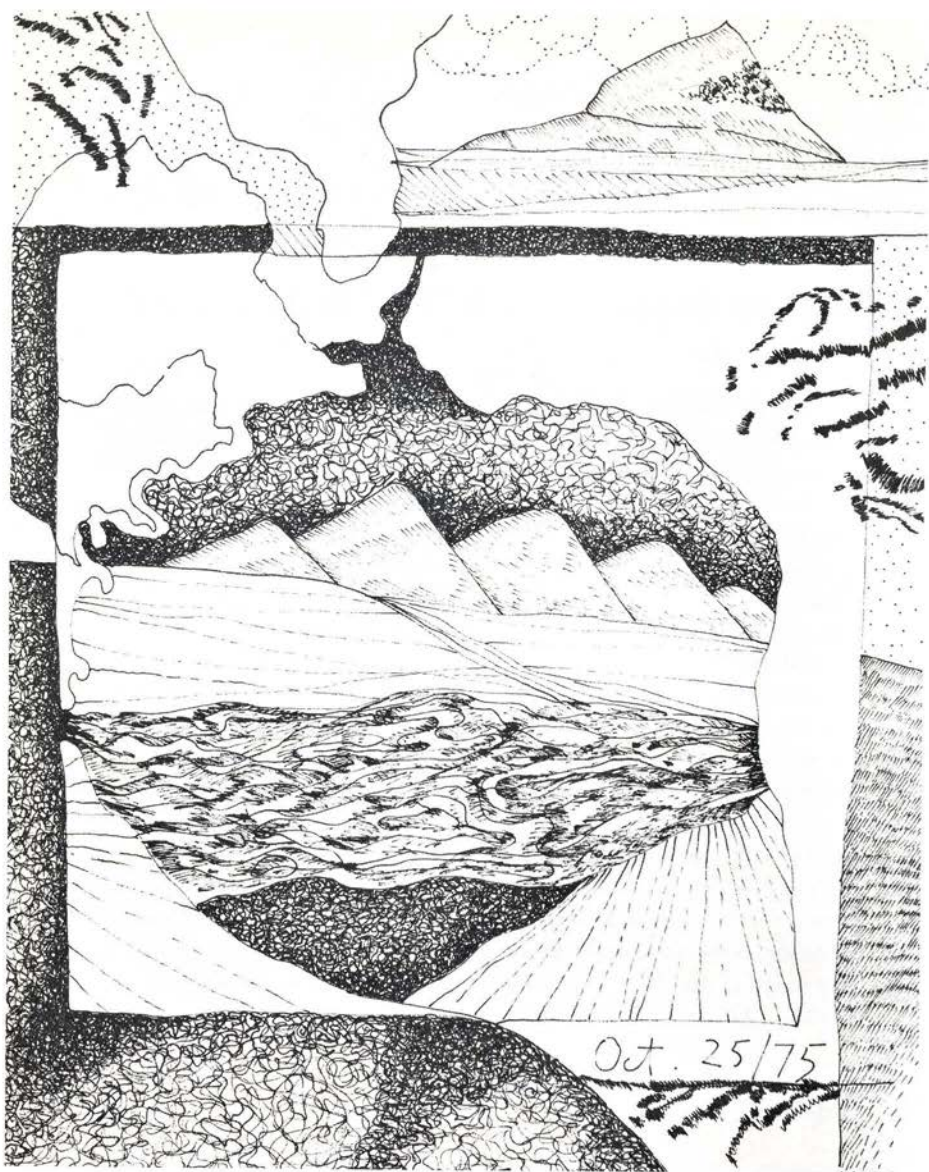
*Foothills Journal #3, 23½" x 18½", pen and ink, 1975.*

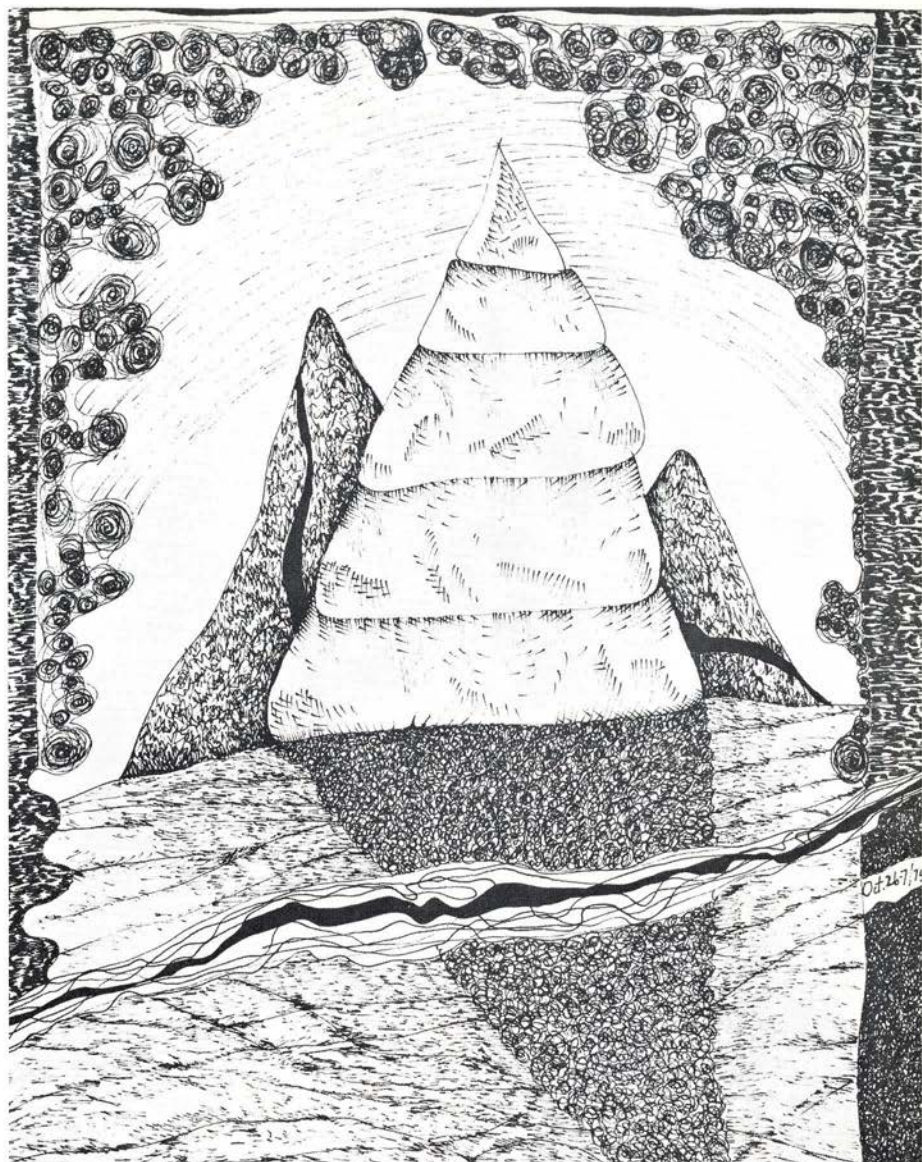
*Foothills Journal #6, 23½" x 18½", pen and ink, 1975.*

*Foothills Journal #8, 23½" x 18½", pen and ink, 1975.*

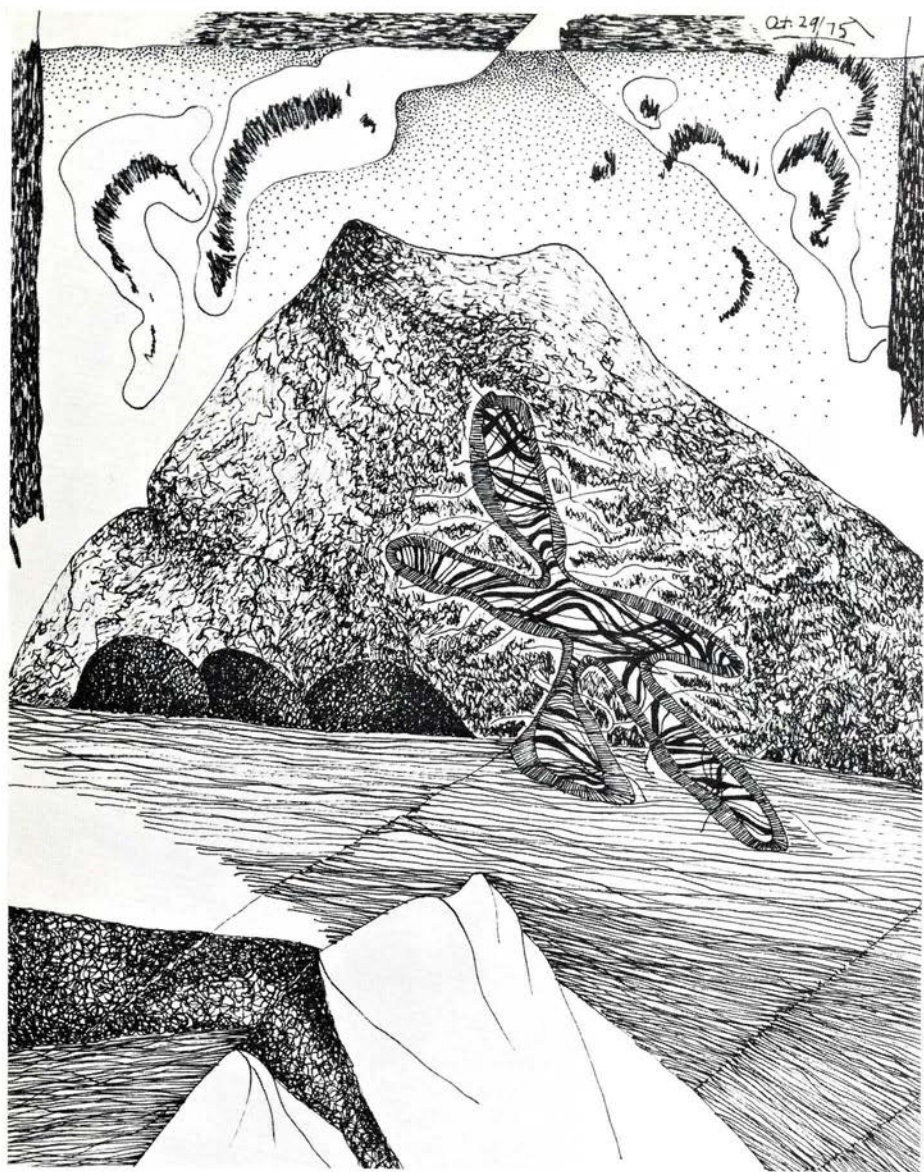
*Photography: Tod Greenaway*











## INTERVIEW / SHEILA WATSON

*This interview took place on Tuesday morning, February 13, 1975, in Sheila Watson's room in the Hotel Georgia, following her reading of the night before at Capilano College. Those present, indicated by initials in the text, as "interviewers" (not quite an accurate term, in view of Sheila's engaging propinquity to field the question back to the questioner) were Pierre Coupey, Roy Kiyooka, and Daphne Marlatt. What follows is a short version of the original transcript, edited by Sheila at the request of The Capilano Review.*

PC I guess what I would like to hear you talk about is your understanding of language, and the kind of things you were concerned with in your fiction and in *The Double Hook*: the uses you were making in the language that you felt were new, that were taking up directions that have not been pursued since.

SW Well, I don't suppose at that stage in my life I thought very consciously about being new. After all, people had been talking about "newness" for a long time. Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and Wyndham Lewis were all born in the same year as my mother, 1882. Pound's *Personae* was published in 1909, the year I was born. By the time I wrote *The Double Hook* one could hardly take language for granted. I did work with the form, the actual form. One makes ad hoc decisions really — decisions about specific things. And a decision is often the result of some trivial argument — about provincialism or regionalism, say — issues which are now dead, or should be — internationalism, globalism, and the inevitable result, exasperated nationalism. (To Daphne) It is as if someone said to you, "Why Steveston?" And you simply went on writing your poems. I happen to be interested in Steveston because my grandfather and his cousin Marshall English built the first really mechanized cannery on the Fraser River opposite New Westminster. Later Marshall English moved it to the mouth of the Fraser River at Steveston. It was called the Phoenix Cannery, I believe — a name which staggers the imagination. I was born and lived on the banks of the Fraser. There is a myth that people who are born on the banks of the Fraser come back to the river to die. The poems have a special meaning for me but they transcend any personal meaning. They create a now which is accessible to anyone. The voice speaks and voices speak through it, or resist it. It seems to me one of the interesting things happening in Canada now is the conversation which is going on. Like your voice, Roy — a voice going from some place to another place. And I think this is why people like bp Nichol and Ondaatje and so on are so important, because they're creating a conversation which then creates the country. It's like Emily Carr. Emily Carr did certain things. If I go to the Island now — although I've looked at



trees, not just noticed them — I do see them through Emily Carr's eyes. She created part of British Columbia just the way the School of Seven, for good or for ill, created Northern Ontario. It's a question of whether these images are viable as a part of history — not because they are representational, but because they have created a way of seeing which then becomes part of the history of seeing in Canada. It is something which goes beyond reference — beyond access to archives.

DM There's an interesting movement in "Antigone" in terms of landscape. That is, you start with what seems to be almost archetypal and mythic landscape, and as the story continues, it gets more specific, more and more concrete until you get the actual geographic landscape in part of the region.

SW Yes. I began to work that way when I wrote "Brother Oedipus." I don't know why I started the Oedipus thing. I've always had a resistance to — almost a dread — of using experience which involves people I know as if somehow or other you robbed them. Have you ever felt that?

RK No I haven't. No, I haven't. I'm exactly contrary in that sense.

SW Well, yes — no, you've turned — you've found another device — your letters. So you speak directly to the person. You don't turn people into fictions. You speak to them publicly. Theoretically they could answer.

RK No. No, I don't have the ability to literally conjure up a man or a woman.

SW I'm not sure that I solved the problem in *The Double Hook*. I wrote a novel before *The Double Hook* called *Deep Hollow Creek*. It was never published. It has some interesting material in it. But it was wrong from the start really, I had to get rid of the narrator. I realized that I was writing about something which was not experience necessarily although I had lived in the place I was writing about, the Cariboo. I was really an outsider, and I had introduced an alien consciousness into a situation which had still not manifested itself in any meaningful way to that consciousness. I had lived there, as I said, because in a sense I had been thrown there. When I began the work which became *The Double Hook* I knew I had to create a total

fiction out of experience which was concrete — which defied the clichés imposed on it. I wanted to get rid of reportage, the condescension of omniscience. I've wondered since about the use of the Coyote figure. I needed him technically at the beginning. Perhaps I could have structured the work in some other way, but I didn't.

*DM* Interestingly, you give him a speech that is Christian. It comes out of Biblical reference, Christian liturgy.

*SW* There are many references to the Old Testament — expressions of fear.

*DM* One reminds me of something Christ said — I think it was in the Sermon on the Mount — you used a similar kind of syntax.

*SW* I might have done.

*DM* Yes . . . “happy are the dead for their eyes see no more.”

*SW* What Christ said was, “Blessed are the pure of heart for they will see God.” Coyote's song recalls Christ's promise, but it is quite ambiguous.

*DM* And “my servant Kip, my servant Kip” — that's Old Testament.

*SW* Yes. Kip — a myth is built up around him in the context of the novel itself. Angel believes that he sees in a way other people don't see — even the bugs and the stripes on the stones. Then the seeing becomes the dread of all the others because they are terrified of being seen or seeing what they don't want to see. So they create the old woman. Even after she's gone, they see her because they always expect someone to be spying on them. In one sense they want to see but they don't want to be seen, at least some of them. The old woman is shameless. She defies every sort of constraint. She just keeps looking for something they don't see.

*RK* What sort of thing were you reading that might have been a source for aspects of the book? What were you into yourself?

*SW* I wrote the book in Calgary, you know, the second year I was in Calgary. I don't know what I was reading although I remember

finding Gabriel Marcel in the Calgary Public Library. But I don't think I was reading anything at that particular moment because I was composing the book in my head before it ever got on paper. And so it was a total thing. You must have done that with painting.

*RK* Yeah, literally.

*SW* Or writing too. But you can't live that way and live with other people because that's it — there's no space.

*RK* Do you still tend to write that way?

*SW* "Brother Oedipus," "The Black Farm," and "Antigone" were all written at that time of my life. I haven't written anything . . .

*RK* Well okay, how about your critical things?

*SW* It depends on what time I have and why I'm writing them. I do a tremendous amount of revision after they're on paper — I have an untidy mind so I pursue things I know I'm going to have to cut out but I keep on until I've made the circuit.

*RK* Phil Whalen is the only other person whom I know who has told me that he composes largely in his head. In Japan, he'd go for a walk in the day and the whole business of that walk was to literally write a paragraph for that day. And he would go through this extended walk and back, formulating in his head.

*DM* Was yours in that detail? I mean, was it essentially the structure you had in your head or, for instance, passages of dialogue?

*SW* I can't — now — remember that sort of thing — the actual fact. I remember only the experience. I've often thought since about Eliot's comment that sometimes a poem starts with a rhythm, not anything articulate at all, just a movement. One day on Bloor Street, when we were living in Toronto just after the war, I knew what I was going to do. And then we came away and



worked at UBC, as you know. And then I went to Powell River for a year and then to Calgary and it was then that I started writing *The Double Hook*. Now this is a long time after the original rhythm.

*DM* Did that year in Powell River — Powell River's a small community — did that perhaps trigger some of it?

*SW* It was an interesting year. Powell River's a company town — or was then. When I went there I knew I was only going to teach there for a year. When I went to the Cariboo in the early thirties, I thought this is it. This is where God has flung me. The Powell River experience was quite different. Did you ever know Vito Ciani? [To Roy] He had been trained at the Vancouver Art School. He taught art in the high school and he and his wife Erol lived in the woods, on the edge of the town. I used to spend the weekends with them quite often. Erol was a portrait sculptor. And I would sit for her because I was interested in her work. And we talked. Vito was very articulate. He was Italian — Canadian-Italian I suppose. And he always used to say he'd been brought up by sitting on his mother's knee while she read Dante to him. And I believe it. I don't remember the isolation — only the damp trees, and the sea, and the weekends of talk, while Erol worked.

*DM* I'd like to get back to character, and to your statement about feeling that you would rob someone if you wrote about them. Did none of the characters in *The Double Hook* have a resemblance that you can see to the people you knew in Dog Creek?

*SW* Well, as I said last night, I knew the parrot. He didn't live in Dog Creek, but in the beer parlour in the Ashcroft Hotel. And I had the experience of living closely with people who felt intensely but who were not particularly articulate — in any conventional or predictable way. I learned things from them and I wanted to create a language for what I had learned. I could have done it the Lewis way — from external detail simply — the hides and pelts — although that is a simplification of a

very complex way of seeing — or the Robbe-Grillet way; he says certain things which remind me of the problems I faced then — the rejection of the “stream of consciousness technique” as I thought it was used by Joyce and Virginia Woolf, and the dread of the kind of writing that uses other human beings as subjects.

*RK* Is that a fear in terms of the thing that gets written or is it a fear prior to that — that is, a fear of responding to people in those ways, or being a part of a context, and yet always being outside of it so that you are watching what they are doing for the sake of . . .

*SW* I think it is a quite primitive fear — the dread of involving others, of doing something to other people, as if you could really operate on them . . .

*DM* Well, yes, that’s a real dread. And yet there is something about the “realness” of a person that I want to be able to get into language and onto the page.

*SW* I know, but there is another way — a way in which the whole of experience is dissolved in a vortex — a kind of metamorphosis — which is different from trying to capture someone truthfully, or even to presume, I suppose, that you can do that.

*RK* It occurs to me that probably the metamorphosis of the actual inhabitants of that place has to do with the fact that it is many years later and through a good deal of movement that you came to write the book.

*SW* Yes, the images came. It wasn’t an act of reconstruction — like going back and saying I remember this — no one I ever knew did or said the things which are done and said. The people and the country and the animals and the plants gave me images for what I wanted to say.



- DM* So in fact it's filtered through the growth of our own consciousness, through the experiencing of those interim years.
- SW* Oh, I think this is inevitable — isn't it?
- DM* But do you think the characters in some way more internal?
- SW* Do you mean that the whole thing is a hoax?
- DM* No, *no* . . .
- SW* I mean, are you saying although you don't want a central consciousness, inevitably that's what you've got?
- DM* Not as a technique. I'm trying to get at how a character somehow evolves from, on the one hand, the actual people you live with, and then, many years later, on the other hand, a novel that creates a character out of the very sparse movements that are indicated, out of a sensing of each character's relationship to that place, to that locale.
- SW* The people in the novel are defined in terms of their relationships. It seemed to me that somehow, by some process, you had to create people the way you know them from day to day without documented history, without description, as you see living people who escape you at every minute but who are resolutely there. The way we are here. Narrative (history) doesn't matter. People are not estranged by absence or silence. You encounter them again and there's no gap that needs filling in. Does that make sense?
- RK* Yes, that makes sense. It makes a lot of sense.
- DM* The internal quality I feel is how you manage to create those people in their way of speaking to each other. That is, they do not, they hardly ever speak *to* each other. They speak obliquely, across a kind of isolation. They speak like people who are not used to speaking very much.
- SW* In fact, in those situations people speak very little. And why I should feel compelled to make them speak I don't know.

- DM* Oh no — I mean, how could you write a novel without having them speak?
- SW* I wanted to fuse the dialogue with the context — the reaching towards speech — the speaking out of silence — out of space.
- DM* But the various characters have very special questions they need to ask each other.
- SW* Yes. And often don't ask each other.
- DM* Yes. Or often don't get the answer.
- SW* Don't get the answer they want.
- PC* I was thinking earlier that when you were talking about not wanting to have an external narrator, any observer, that indeed — that gave me the feeling that I'd had from just reading the novel — not that it's simply poetic prose, but that you were actually using techniques of poetry in the novel.
- SW* I'm glad you avoided the term "poetic prose." It always upsets me because poetic prose means — to me — purple passages. I often think of Virginia Woolf in that way. I've always been afraid of sentimentality — the two kinds — the — the second as frightening as the first — the sentimentality of the naturalistic novel, the sentimentality of violence, the ash-can world and the prostitutes and so on.
- DM* The not-falling between the two sentimentalities makes for a very spare form of writing which recognizes the simple facts of existence, both of oneself and others, as well as what may happen between them. They happen, they *happen*, and nothing is made of them internally in the stream of consciousness way. That allows for a kind of phenomenal quality.

SW I'd like to think so. So one makes arbitrary statements like the thing is the adequate symbol — that's Pound —or the archetype is now, or I'm a phenomenologist. I'd read some Husserl in translation around 1950 because he was talking about things I was interested in. You asked about mediating. Before I ever went to the Cariboo, I'd read Eliot, and Pound, and Joyce, and Lawrence, and novels like *Sanctuary* and *The 42nd Parallel*. I wasn't innocent. I wasn't naive.

RK I was thinking how that being true, how it is that in *The Double Hook* whatever of that other thing was part of your awareness it is certainly buried in the matrix of the book, so that it doesn't separate itself out as some sort of influence or anything like that.

SW You can't escape influence. It starts at the beginning of your life. I suppose the greatest influence in my life — I mean at the beginning — was Beatrix Potter. And I always think there is a bit of Beatrix Potter in *The Double Hook*. I only thank God I was spared Christopher Robin.

RK Oh you were, were you?

SW Yes. He came later. My response to *The Tailor of Gloucester* was like a response to a play of Shakespeare. I can remember muttering as I often do still, "Alas, alas, I am undone and worn to a ravelling for I have no more twist." You're never innocent. You're compromised the minute you are born. Then there is the terrible responsibility for something like language which you can't destroy — the utterances which are going on around you if you pay attention to them — the responsibility for taking something into your consciousness.

Judy Williams /

## THE SEARCH FOR THE TRUE CEDAR

*The Search for the True Cedar is a cycle in watercolour that was exhibited as part of the Vancouver Art Gallery's Alternate Space program in Spring, 1975. I was moved by the series, especially by its mystical complexity. It struck me as being a latter-day (and local) evolution of the Legend of the True Cross.*

### IMAGES

*The Search for the True Cedar: Discovery of the True Cedar, 36" x 24½", w/c, 1975.*

*The Search for the True Cedar: Need, 11½" x 39", w/c, 1975.*

*The Search for the True Cedar: Leaving Refuge, 21½" x 30", w/c, 1975.*

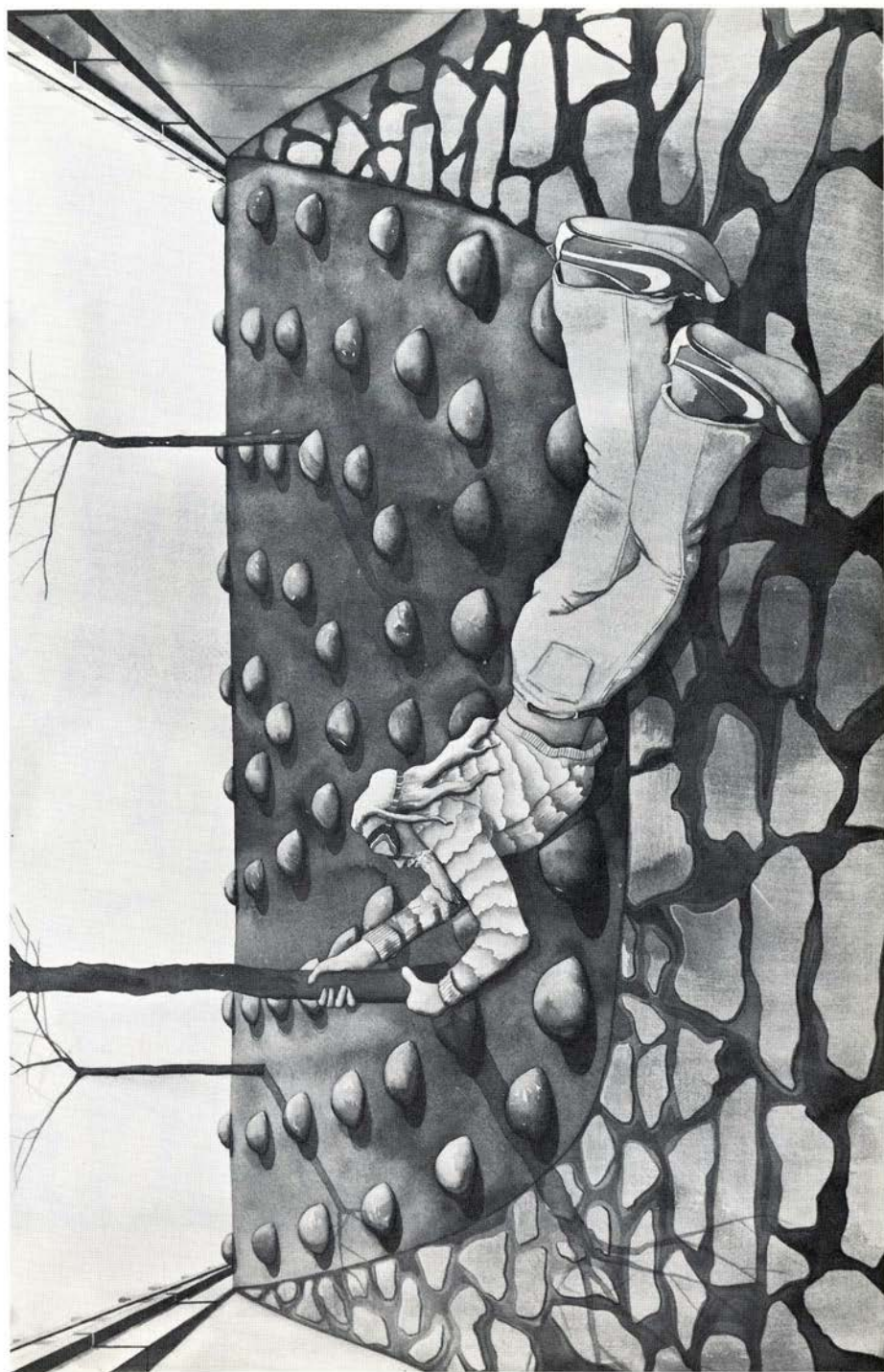
*The Search for the True Cedar: Artistic Technique, 35" x 25½", w/c, 1975.*

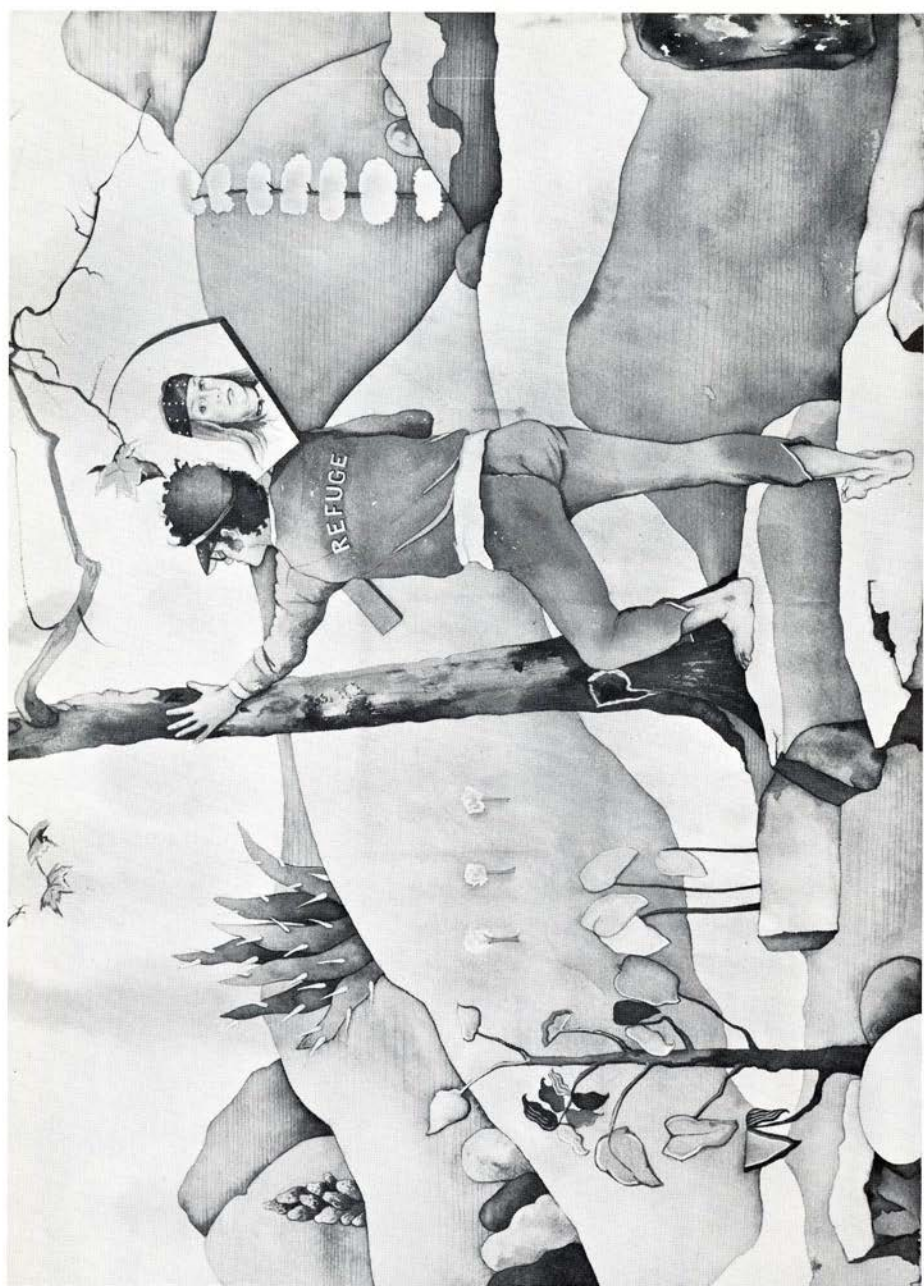
*Photography: Tod Greenaway*















The paintings that I call *The Search for the True Cedar* came as a *revelation* to me. Although that is the hardest thing to say about them, I can't think of any other word to use. They simply fell into place and I looked at the world in a different way when those paintings happened to me. I look at *people*, whereas before I had been looking at shapes and forms, and things.

(How did they originate?) . . . One specific fact. I purchased four years ago (with a number of other people) 186 acres of land on Desolation Sound (near Refuge Cove, B.C.) not far from the endless beaches I enjoyed as a child on Texada Island. . . . The land was bought without a great deal of thought, but with a lot of love and dreams. I have always been attracted by "folly" — by the word, "*folly*" — by the folly of idealism and adventurism . . . by those things generally dismissed as uneconomic, impractical, dangerous, spendthrift or foolish. . . . Well, Refuge Cove is like that and I definitely wanted to be there. But it wasn't just the place that I liked, but the whole idea of a land co-op and its attendant *madnesses*.

As I worked to build . . . houses (on this land), I was overwhelmed by the forest and the sea; I was horrified by the havoc we were wreaking. Overcome with anguish whenever we cut trees down (and by the hard physical labour of working in the country, moving it around), I was (nevertheless) sustained by the interaction of the people around me and their confrontation with the land. We were building where no one had ever built before and that felt good; for good or ill we were falling trees and pouring cement as if we planned to stay. (Although) it's one of the great, noble experiments, the question *was* and still *is*: "Are we at work to *murder trees*?"

The paintings simply *happened*. I just saw what there was to do. I chucked out my ideas about how I *ought* to make art and painted what I was participating in — the inter-relationships between the people at Refuge Cove and the land (itself) interested me more than the building . . . I wanted to paint the *folly* of an illusive, highly

necessary but *unnecessary* search for what we see is true. And, why not a search done in the most Romantic, Canadian-frontier way? *A figure with axe . . . in landscape.*

I like the *folly* of making art or chopping wood. The paintings (in the cycle) are, of course, just beautifully coloured, inert pieces of paper. The Cedar That Was Searched for (as split) is a metaphor for (quest for) the *nameless something* that explains existence. There is *nowhere to go and nothing to find* — that was something I thought I knew, but now after doing these paintings *I know it*. . . . The process of doing *The Search for the True Cedar* paintings caused (and causes) changes in me and in the people I paint. The people are *real* and they cannot help but be affected by what I paint. The works sometimes reflect events and ideas past, but occasionally they *foretell*. That is because I am not just a mirror, but I am creating out of disparate pieces of my being *a new thing* and I can actually move beyond my own knowledge by . . . *splitting the shake with the grain*, by moving with the time.

I have begun some new works called: *Sea Door: Reward*. As the tide moves in and around me, the sea “door” presents me with the junk of the world. What comes to me here — the dead bodies, the sea-changed glass, the kelp and the pain of human interaction — that is what I am painting. And the “reward” is simply for *hanging around*.

(From a taped message sent to *The Capilano Review*.)

— Judy Williams  
December, 1975



## Dennis Cooley / KEEPING THE GREEN: ROBERT DUNCAN'S PASTORAL VISION

The vision of pristine radiance with which Duncan concludes "A Poem Beginning with a Line by Pindar" expresses his recurring interest throughout *The Opening of the Field* in the freshness and imaginativeness of childhood innocence. Both the title page and the cover of the original Grove paperback edition, which show two different pictures of children dancing in pastoral settings, illustrate that preoccupation. Like most romantics, Duncan values the ability of the child to live in a world of play and fantasy, uninhibited by degenerate and fragmented adults who are alienated from nature and unable or unwilling to open and receive the rich world of a highly charged unconscious. Throughout his life he has perceived children's fantasies as "A world of our own marvels. Doors of language. Adoration . . . the reality of romance . . . the innermost enchantment of mind . . . a world transformed and inhabited by spirits" (Allen, 402). Duncan recognizes that such magic is usually lost by adults who suffer from

the crippling of the imagination or rather its starvation. The world of wonders is limited at last to the parent's will (for will prospers where imagination is thwarted); intellectual appetites become no more than ambitions; curious minds become consciences; love, hatred, affection and cruelty cease to be responses and become convictions . . .

It is the key to our own inner being that the child offers us in his self-absorption. He would eagerly share himself with us, were we not so determined that he be heir to our achievement.

. . . Andersen, Macdonald, Baum tell us that wisdom belongs to the child as well as to us. But we have turned from, indeed "willingly" forsaken, wisdom for what we might acquire. (Allen, 404)

To overcome the limitations of ordinary "grown-up" existence it is necessary to become a little child again. Duncan is explicit about what that means:

A child can be an artist, he can be a poet . . .

The Christians thot of the lion as Christ the King; because the lion was a terrible power and at the same time a beast of great beauty.

For me, the Lion is the Child, the unfettered intellect that knows in his nobility none of the convictions and dogmas which human mind inflicts itself with. (Allen, 404-5)

"I too," Duncan says, "must go back, as I knew from the beginning I must, to childhood, where the germinal experience of poetry and myth lay" (Myth, 43). He feels so strongly about his early fantasies that he returns to them time and again:

The roots and depths of mature thought, its creative sources, lie in childhood or even "childish" things I have not put away but taken as enduring realities of my being . . . Like the poet, the child dwells not in the literal meanings of words but in the spirit that moves behind them, in the passional reality of the outraging or insidiously rationalizing adult. (Myth, 13)

However, sophisticated adults, too much "in the know" to be "taken in," are quick to ridicule such possibilities. That is why a child's fancy "was to become, when one was grown-up, a repressed, even a despised source, put away among childish things" (SB 1/2,4).

Usually those who have fallen into a constricted and hardened mentality refuse the salvation that becoming children offers them. Take the stern adults in "The Structure of Rime VI" for instance:

The old women came from their caves to close the too many doors that lead into pastures. Thru which the children pass, and in the high grass build their rooms of green, kingdoms where they dwell under the will of grasshopper, butterfly, snail, quail, thrush, mole and rabbit.

*Old Woman, your eye searches the field like a scythe! The riches of the living green lie prepared for your store. Ah, but you come so near to the children; you have almost returned to them. Their voices float up from their faraway games where. The tunneled grass hides their clearings. Swords and blades cut the near blue of sky. Their voices surround you.*

*Old Woman, at last you have come so near you almost understand them. Have you recalld then how the soul floats as the tiger-tongued butterfly or that sapphure, the humming-bird, does, where it will?*

Lying in the grass the world was all of the field, and I saw a kite on its string, tugging, bounding — far away as my grandmother — dance against the blue from its tie of invisible delight.

In the caves of blue within the blue the grandmothers bound, on the brink of freedom, to close the too many doors from which the rain falls.

Thus, the grass must give up new keys to rescue the living. (OF, 19)

Perverse old women, having "come so near to the children," having "almost returned to them" and the "riches of the living green," "bound [like predators?] . . . to close the too many doors from which the rain falls." Themselves trapped in enfolding caves, the atrophied old crones in turn try to confine the young by closing "the too many doors that lead into pastures." On the other hand, the children play and "build their rooms of green" in the bright, open spaces of the meadow. They make up their creations from the rich green of the grass, and the flowing energy of nature informs their art. The children have no mastery over the small, timid animals in the pasture. On the contrary, they enjoy the intimacy of vital, shared experience, mingling with the animals in the illuminated field and touching the living green. Like Pound of the *Pisan Cantos*, child-like in the state of first things, they live in spontaneous union and communion with sacred and humble creatures. Being "faraway" from their disapproving grandmothers, the children become undifferentiated members of the natural kingdom who play and in effect dance with the simple life in the pasture.

The conflict between the negative grandmothers and the independent children represents the proverbial battle of wills, "for will prospers where imagination is thwarted." There is a will to dominate and a will to live. What moves lives, what stops or is dammed up dies. Duncan's sympathies clearly are with the energetic and impulsive children.

Those limitations that the prohibitive guard-ians would impose on the young are defined spatially in the poem. The struggle between the forces of denial and the forces of vitality is expressed in terms of closing and opening, as it always is in Duncan's poetry. In fact, the children in "Rime VI" are enjoying what he constantly seeks and writes about — *The Opening of the Field*. In Duncan's poetry the Blakean Lion which represents the child's unfettered mind "brings his young to the opening of the field" (OF, 13). By the same token, those constrictions that the stubborn authority figures insist on are supposed to stop the children from moving upward or outward from the jails that their caves have become. Keeping in is keeping down. The proscriptions are designed to bring the flight of imagination "down to



earth." Conventionally minded adults would protect common sense and good sense from the "nonsense" of play and whimsy.

Appropriately, the enclosed caves symbolize the small minds of their occupants.

We protect our boundaries, the very shape of what we are, by closing our minds to the truth, remain true to what we are. And man's mind itself has moods when it would take refuge in being no bigger than and no more than the brain in his skull; and again, his mind has only those limits that his imagination of the universe itself has. (Myth, 70)

Having lost their sense of wonder and imagination, the inhibited old women, like Blakes's Urizen, obliterate their dreams and, as self-made shut-ins, cut themselves off from the free creative play of the young until they lock themselves up within the walls of their skulls. To live is to open, to die is to close up. Though "on the brink of freedom," finally the repressive females cannot stir from their dull stupor. Shackled with unbending rational minds, they have exorcised all memory of a free imagination. Because they are no longer children they are already dead.

What is more, they are determined that their young charges should not really live either. Though for Duncan "Responsibility is to keep / the ability to respond" (OF, 10), authoritarian adults deliberately try to frustrate the spontaneity and energy of the young. Because "The world of wonders is limited at last to the parent's will, Many children . . . [are] never . . . allowed to stray into childhood" (Allen, 404). And many adults never wander back into childhood.

That decline into inert adulthood is characteristic of modern rational and technological man, made to learn duties and taught to forget pleasures. Renouncing the child's rich inner life means losing the creative past. The remembrance of earlier times, however, retrieves that innocent life. As Duncan says, "Memory / holds . . . / and quickens / as if Spring had arrived" (OF, 28). But the domineering custodians, like those "who declare themselves part of the rational mind at war with all other possibilities of being" (Cat 1, 12), refuse to open up to the uncontaminated vision and lapse back into their torpor because they are severed from the past, the enchanted and capricious realm of childhood.

Although the grandmothers in "Rime VI" almost "recall" their primal origins in nature, the faint glimmer soon fades, and they "close the too many doors from which the rain falls." They would shut up

the spontaneous children and they would shut out the refreshing rain. The acts are equivalent. Since they attempt to limit rather than to extend possibilities, doors become for them points of containment and exclusion rather than exits and entrances. Not satisfied with keeping the children out of the pasture and reclaiming them, they hope to destroy the animated grassland itself, either by stopping the rain or, like Death the reaper, by rancorously sweeping the field "like a scythe" with their eyes. The eye that "searches" also suggests a hawkish vigilance in the grandmothers, especially since the grass "hides" the children among the very animals — "quail, thrush, mole and rabbit" — that such birds prey upon.

The aggressiveness of the old wardens' attack demonstrates their spiritual isolation from "the living green." Their distance and hostility vividly contrast to the children's immersion and integration in nature. The children build their playpens "*in the high grass*" and " *dwell under the will of*" the small animals that live there. The difference between the children's life in the bright, airy greenness and the grandmothers' assaults on the grasslands is the distinction between an ecological and an alien vision of the earth. On one hand, the children are at home in the natural world; on the other, the egotistical adults feel that they are no part of nature and that it is no part of them.

Their dislike of the pastures finally corresponds to their denial of imagination. Suppression on the outside is repression on the inside. The sterile grandmothers have not "recalld" the childhood delights of a free, vivid and fantastic life. That refusal takes the form of a special obliviousness since amnesia is the denial of Mnemosyne, mother of memory and of the muses. Because there can be no poetry, no restoration of lost life, without memory, their forgetfulness is disastrous. For that reason an Isis figure appears in many of Duncan's poems (especially as Psyche in "A Poem Beginning with a Line by Pindar"), re-membering scattered fragments of lost consciousness.

For their part, the children in "Rime VI" escape from adult constrictions at least momentarily. The bright vibrant flare of the "tiger-tongued butterfly and that sapphire, the humming-bird," as



they break loose from the pull of gravity and rise to a free, intense life, show that they can. Like the butterfly that symbolizes man's psyche, the child's soul, freed from the constraints of the grandmothers' caves, "floats . . . where it *will*." It soars like the dancing kite in a flight of heedless fantasy.

Still, the adults remain unresponsive to the attractions of the green world. If they are ever to be saved from their atrophy, "the grass must give up new keys to rescue the living." Grass — "forbidden hallucinogen / that stirs sight of the hidden / order of orders!" (BB, 112). To loose their minds. To lose their minds. The ecstatic experience comes "like seeds of a forbidden hallucinogen, marijuana or morning glory / hidden away among the grasses of the field" (BB, 117), generating the beatific vision of green fresh grass and the golden morning glory, the sun. To "bring back the hour / Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower."

More importantly, if worn-out grown-ups are to accept the children's life of make-believe and the world of cosmic vision, they must recover their suppressed dream world where "green shoots of a child inhabit the dark of man" (OF, 21). They must open doors instead of closing them. "I hate locks," Duncan says. "I wish I could give you / such openness" (OF, 49). As a liberating force, poetry "does not lock but unlocks, what was closed is opened." Against the unmoving, solid fact of the grandmothers' prisons Duncan would turn his energies to the opening of the field and to the service of "Hermes, god of poets and thieves, lock-picker" (BB, iv). To open a door. "Thus, the grass must give up new keys to rescue the living [prisoners]" — the keys to unlock doors and open the field. The keys of music. "The music [that] restores / health to the land" (OF, 10). The keys of music, the poems themselves, unlock and open the field that the one-dimensional adults try to shut up. "This is the Yule-log that warms December. / This is the new grass that springs from the ground" (OF, 51) — the green world, the children's playful games, and the poet's creativity.

Duncan has always hoped that "human greenness" will be "tough as grass that survives cruelest seasons" (OF, 9). Having by *The Opening of the Field* passed beyond his earlier "Wasteland" poetry, however, he seeks more than survival in a pastoral retreat or a child's dream-world. Intensely aware of seasonal and cosmic rhythms, he incorporates into his vision — and this is at the center of his poetry — the kinds of fertility myths that Frazer describes in *The Golden*

*Bough.* Much of his poetry organizes itself around myths of the death and rebirth of gods and goddesses responsible for plant life.

The cosmic energy that makes and maintains the grasslands brings health to the world. As goddess of corn or grass, Kore induces natural plant growth by infusing seeds with force and purpose. Since the germination and growth of those seeds also represents new life in human terms, she, who is "Queen Under the Hill" (OF, 7),

must be revived,  
Cora among the grasses.  
Hearts  
revive with her. (OF, 28)

The earth goddess that appears in many Duncan poems figures most prominently in "Evocation," his hymn of praise to her (OF, 40). Excited by the numinous presence of the chthonic deity at the annual harvest festival on All Saints' Day, the day after Hallowe'en when the dead spirits return to earth, and disturbed by the quaking of Kore's "radiant desire underground," the poet in his mind joins in the peasants' harvest dance, inducing the return of the fertility spirit:

Kore! O visage as of sun-glare, thunderous  
awakener, light treader!  
will you not wake us again? shake the earth under us?

It is worth noting, however, that the call is an evocation rather than an invocation. The distinction, though slight, is important in what it tells us about Duncan's mythic perceptions. An invocation is a petition for divine help or support, an evocation a prayer for a god's presence. An invocation primarily seeks utility, an evocation mainly expresses reverence.

Still, the harvest ritual in which Duncan participates is, in part, an attempt to call forth the powers of rebirth and to ensure a productive crop as Kore returns to renew the vegetation in the spring. Because he is attuned to her, he apparently foresees, perhaps even provokes, the goddess's answering earthquake: "for / I was thinking of her," "for I was thinking of her when the quake came." Anticipating the return of Kore, he gladly accepts the seasonal rhythms of birth, growth, death, and absence of life, for "It is my song of the whole

year I sing." That "whole year" includes *all* the seasons — not just the eager anticipation of a relieving and reviving spring. At the same time, the song or poem of the whole year becomes the dance of each of the four seasons:

rendering lovely *the fall* of Her feet  
and there where Her feet *spring*, even  
at the dance of the Hallows I will tell my love,  
the melody from whose abundance leaps  
the slow rounds of *winter*, pounds *summer's* heat.

The dance and the seasons are linked by their shared "melody," "rounds," and pounding feet. They are also deftly identified by the puns on "fall" and "spring." The dancing Threshers, the cycles of nature, and Duncan's poem (the "song") all become one and the same thing. In "Evocation" there is an acceptance of nature's dance and a celebration of it in a corresponding ritual dance. "The myth-teller, beside himself with the excitement of the dancers" (Myth, 7), breaks into song. The thresher joins the Threshers. The private, personal life disappears as the worshipper enters an impersonal and communal ritual: "the poem as a supreme effort of consciousness, comes in a dancing organization between personal and cosmic identity" (Nemerov, 135). The dancer enters the Dance.

As for Kore, the seed that she becomes in the harvest returns to the "stores of ancestral grain," the "living grain" teeming with "radiant desire underground." The knowledge that she lies in the nether world, waiting restlessly for her release to regenerate plant life at the spring equinox, permits the peasants to dance in joy. If there were no hope for the spirit's ascension, her death would be a tragedy. But it's not. Since the dancers assure her "thunderous" return, the emphasis in "Evocation" is on her rebirth rather than her death. The queen of the grass lies as a dormant but pulsating seed buried in the earth for one season of the year, only to come back when nature releases its prodigious energies once again.

The plain Threshers in "Evocation," like the children in "The Structure of Rime VI," are closely in touch with primal realities. Recognizing "in the wretched and contemptible . . . the presence of a divine life" (Myth, 34), Duncan has always been upset with the aristocratic arrogance that relegates ordinary people to oblivion, and peasants' literature, the ballad and the folk tale, to insignificance. In his radical romanticism, he admires "the soul in its lowly and outcast



experience — . . . the poor laborer, the ignorant cottager, the demented mariner, the child” — the very people “righteous middle-class minds” scorn (Myth, 41). That is why the “thought of primitives, dreamers, children, or the mad — once excluded by the provincial claims of common sense from the domain of the meaningful or significant — has been reclaimed” in romantic poetry (including his own) (Cat 1, 7).

One of Duncan’s most effective poems dealing with folk people, “A Song of the Old Order” (OF, 52-3), is a sustained expression of his central myth of vegetative renewal. In it, he typically emphasizes the simplicity of ordinary people, here John and Joan, in lines that possess a ballad flavour:

Joan grows sullen  
and Joan delights

John has known grief  
and John’s known joy

(The terminal stresses, fairly regular and emphatic rhythms, and frequent use of conventional rime in “A Song of the Old Order” all are deliberate departures from Duncan’s common practice.)

However, Joan and John are far more than simple country lovers. For one thing, it is rather noticeable that Joan is called “our Lady” and John “our Lord.” Duncan likely has in mind the popular medieval fertility myth associated with the Lord and Lady of the May. Certainly the refrain, “*burnt leaf of november and green of may*,” points toward pagan spring rituals, since in most early European ceremonies May was celebrated as the month of fertility. On Mayday, at the height of the festivities, the May queen was crowned and the young women danced around the erect May-pole from which a quaint hoop was sometimes provocatively suspended.

John and Joan clearly resemble such classical fertility deities as Attis and Cybele, Venus and Adonis, Isis and Osiris, and Persephone and Pluto. Like them, the Lord and Lady participate in the return of life in the spring. In fact, the peasants even induce its re-appearance by releasing their own generative powers, a belief common in simple

agricultural societies. By the "replenishing work," expressed in their sexual union, they give green to the earth. Appropriately, that process corresponds to the natural cosmic cycles of days, months, and years. The man and the woman invoke the dawn each day, fluctuate (in the case of the waxing and waning Lady) with the monthly "rounds of the moon," and correspond (in the annual movement of the Lord or sun) to "the change of the year." There is creative order in natural change. Hence the comic refrain "*burnt leaf of november and green of may*." And hence the *song* of the old order. ("It is my song of the whole year I sing.") Birth follows death as surely as green May displaces black November.

The "replenishing work" the betrothed man and woman do in order to "raise the day's light" "by their love" presumably is conceiving a son, "For the Lord has redeemed the abyss. / He gave the new law." Quite clearly, the new law that the Lord John gave, and which issued from the Lady Mary, is the Christ Child, for May is a month which the Christian mother shares with the pagan. The merry marry Mary month of May.

The simple peasants also sound like an unorthodox version of Jesus and Mary, who themselves appear in the poem as a variant on divine fertility couples and who join in a hierogamous marriage that renews the land. The evidence for those connections is strong. The Lady in the poem, who is also called "our Lady," clearly resembles Mary. But since "our Lady gives and returns us," she also is the Great Earth Mother who bears new life, then absorbs everything back into herself when it ages and subsides. The references to "*our Lord*" are even more convincing. He, not the Lady, "has awakend our hearts." And "the Lord has redeemed the abyss. / He gave the new law. / He suffered the kiss." The Biblical references are unmistakeable. Hence the very simple lines describing Christ, yet another fertility god, resurrected on Easter Sunday: "Know you your Father / that gave you your name? / . . . for the way I go is by your side." The "Father," of course is also the God that impregnates Mary, who in turn gives birth to Christ himself during the winter solstice to reverse the decline of plant (and other) life. That birth gives "green to the earth" and raises "the day's light" which is "the source of light" and life, both the "Father" and the son in the sun.

Even the personal experiences of the young pair in "A Song of the Old Order" parallel those of the deities they personify. Like the moon



goddess which wanes and waxes, Joan is by turns sullen and merry. John, too, alternates between grief and joy. Presumably, Joan's delight and John's joy occur when the feminine moon, emblem of dark and receptive passion, lures the masculine sun, symbol of conscious intellectual enlightenment and deliberate imposition, into a sexual union. As the two complements fuse in a symbolic reunion of earth and sky, the land is freed of its barrenness, and with the coming of spring, the green returns to the burnt-over land.

Un-adult-erated children and simple people enjoy the kind of vital, basic, and imaginative life found in "the old alchemists' dream" that Duncan describes in "The Structure of Rime XXIV":

In the joy of the new work he raises horns of sublime sound into the heat surrounding the sheets of crystalline water to make walls in the music.

And in every repeat majestic sequences of avenues branch into halls where lovers and workers, fathers, mothers and children gather, in a life, a life-work, the grand opus of their humanity, the old alchemists' dream. They must work with the first elements, they must work with the invisible, servants and students of what plants and insects say,

not of the future. This city and its people hide in the hideous city about us, among the hideous crowds in this street. Was there ever before such stupidity, such arrogance, such madness? But from these cinders the old dame who appears again in our story works transitory hints of the eternal, whose jeweld gowns, coaches, palaces, glass shoes . . .

and lights in the hearts of certain youths the unquenchable yearning for bliss, so that they know not what to do but must go as the thought of bliss sends them. So these horns pierce the blue tents above us, rending the silence because what illusions? faeries? have awakend in the Real new impossibilities of harmonic conclusions?

And we have made a station of the way to the hidden city in the rooms where we are. (BB, 36)

The creative, liberating old dame in that poem is an antidote to the stern grandmothers in "Rime VI." She transforms the hideous people and city, symptomatic of the modern world, into a beautiful enticing fairy world. From out of cinders, she creates Cinder-ella. She is the fairy godmother who fashions a world of child-like wonder and enchantment. Inspired by their intense "yearning for bliss," and having broken out of a confined existence, the youths in the poem

reach toward the newly exposed signs of the eternal "hidden city" that she reveals as "Real," "transitory hints of the eternal," "new impossibilities of harmonic conclusions." The alchemist can make such magic because in her "dream" she works with the "first elements" and "invisible" powers. Freed from the domination of the "hideous city" ("such stupidity, such arrogance, such madness") through the powers of her charm ("illusions" and "faeries"), the restless youths approach the "Actual" which is imaginative.

Like H.D., one of Duncan's mentors, the young have found "'The Dream was greater than reality. Out of it, they built a city . . .'" (TQ, 80-1). That the old woman miraculously frees them from the stupidity and squalor of the "real" world suggests there is some chance to escape from it and even to transform it.

But no one can work such magic without preserving and cultivating the "land of spells and secret knowledge" (SB 1/2, 5) in the primitive, unconscious forces of the human psyche. Duncan's long fantasy, *Adam's Way*, is an imaginative rendition of the evolution of human consciousness and the loss of paradise that usually accompanies that intellectual growth. Preserved in the "green womb" of nature, "this vegetable Dame" (RB, 136), Adam at first lives as a "dreaming infant" sheltered urobically within a "mothering world" (BB, 103). Later, when released from his green pod, which is the uterus of the Earth Mother, he is warned that "This is your last green season" (RB, 156). Forcibly awakened from his unconscious Night-World, Adam loses his simple fantasies of dragons, fairies, and romances. In *Adam's Way*, man passes from his beginnings of totally unconscious submersion in the fetal fluid of the sea upward out of crevices, out of a Dark Wood, out of an enfolding pod, and into the light that is the fall. His experiences parallel Psyche's progression in "A Poem Beginning with a Line by Pindar" as he moves from darkness to light, from downward to upward, from wholeness to separation, from passion to intellect, and from "immaturity" to "maturity."

Though he knows that Adam must change and evolve, Michael, the kindly advisor in *Adam's Way*, urges him toward "the keeping of this place" (RB, 156). "For Eden is a magic you must keep," he warns Adam (RB, 157), knowing that at his best man is child-like as well as sophisticated. However, when Adam falls out of paradise into knowledge "Some part of God's then driven underground" (RB, 149).

The old order, the dark green world, sinks to the bottom of Adam's new waking consciousness when he loses his Edenic "homeland of the pleasure principle in the libidinal sea" (BB, 106).

Though initially "There is no division in his [Adam's] sight" (RB, 161), he becomes severed from the "green place/sacred to the Moon whose seed is Man" (RB, 135) as he ages. As Eve learns, she will,

having the knowledge of that tree,  
divide

light from light, sun from moon,  
within from without, man from woman,  
above from below, this side from that side,  
good from evil, nation from nation —

much more. (RB, 162)

When man falls into en-light-enment, the original ring is broken and the primordial womb is ruptured. Knowledge, the contaminant, fragments the world of wonders. Being aware is being apart. To be conscious is to be self-conscious and therefore to be distinct and separate. Knowing oneself apart from everything else is living in a dead and disintegrating world. Once he has "taken breath under a new law" (RB, 162), therefore, Adam cries out "The dark! The dark!" in terror at his shocking exile. The world loses its magic and its comfort for single-mindedly rational people. In fact, the moon that represents imaginative life "went dead on them they knew so much about it" (RB, 131). Fallen man languishes in a diminished world of dark dreams dying.

It is possible to regain or retain the green world, however, by immersion in the subterranean realm, even if it is at times threatening and diabolical. For instance, in many of Duncan's poems the currents of the earth flow through plants and the demonic powers thrust up out of the dark, unfolding as a full green tree or a delicate flower. What most people fear as a horrible eruption out of hell turns out to be an exfoliation of exuberant and exquisite beauty.



The underground, since it is the dark churning womb of the earth and the human mind that gives birth to all things, offers a release from the constrictions of the daylight world. That revival is ecstatically expressed in "Nor is the Past Pure" (OF, 41-3), in which Satan-Pluto strives out of the darkness toward *scientia*. Nevertheless, reaching toward the light is "not permitted without corruption." No one can be born until he dies. As in "Evocation," then, death is welcomed as life:

the full burgeoning, ripeness that is ready,  
the generous falling  
into the raptures of heroic death, the ground,  
the mulch, the right furrow.

For man can and must "come up out of" the dark world. His seed-soul, though dormant, lies teeming in the rich, dank ground full of festering and discarded garbage:

It is only the midden heap, Beauty: shards,  
scraps of leftover food, rottings,  
the Dump  
where we read history, larvae of all dead things,  
mixd seeds, waste, off-castings, despised  
treasure, vegetable putrifactions.

Like Satan, the seed is dynamic:

O seed occult we planted in the dark furrow!  
O potency we rested and covered over!  
O life thriving lightwards, gathering strength!  
The image of our longing is the full head of seed,  
the wheat-gold ready  
to give in its ripeness (our labors) food  
everlasting!  
in the dirt

Nurtured by the decaying refuse, like Kore temporarily returning underground, the seed renews itself in the spring and returns green to the land.

Since she was worshipped in the mysteries at Eleusis as a spirit of new plant growth and therefore of human immortality, "Kore brought / out of Hell, health manifest." As Duncan indicates, "Death is prerequisite to the growth of grass." Though temporarily buried in the ground, the seed of life sprouts upward and outward, its roots clinging to the rotting mulch in the earth, its branches and leaves touching the pure blue light in the spring sky.

The movement toward new life in Duncan's work is downward into the dark like a seed taking root, then upward like the green shoot of a tree stretching toward the sun in "perpetual thriving at the edges of the light" (OF, 82). Hence the title of *Roots and Branches*.

In spatial terms downward is equivalent to inward, both fundamental sources of generation for the romantic poet. Believing in art as expression released from within, Duncan recognizes that extending out is rising up. Creation begins from inward and downward and emerges upward and outward. Hence in "Now the Record Now Record," Duncan says "the spring of an urgent life / pushes up from the trunk of the idea of me." The Dionysian poet feeding on the dark life forces and teeming with the rising sap, sings his urgent rhapsodic hymn. When he becomes the tree and is the flower, he exists both "in" and "of" the world. Like the children in "The Structure of Rime VI," he participates as a fellow creature in a nature that he sees as his home. He does not dominate it or withdraw from it like the old women in that poem.

Since Duncan believes in the inspired artist shaken by numinous forces and flowing with the energies and transformations of life, his writing describes a shifting, fluid nature instead of a solid, unmoving universe. Energy (whether it is potential, arrested, or released) infuses and in-forms all of the processes at work. As a result, Duncan's poems are crammed with words describing motion: opens out, out-folding, uprising, return, shaking, breaks out, blaze forth, bursts forth, seeking, incite, break thru, pushes up, urgent life, a storm, force to come green, presses forth, thrown out, scattering, leap forward, waken, unquenchable yearning, raven, radiant desire, flow, sending, trembling, wave, hidden away, stirs, quickens, the rush, singing, drawing, yearning pierce, shaking, bloomed forth, raying out, emerging, receiving, falling, raging, loosing, releasing, mingled, burning, contending, flooded, shudder, cleared back, blasts, override, blow out. The language expresses not sensuous intensities, but processes and powers. Duncan is more a poet of the verb than of the noun or adjective. It is startling to realize that his poems contain few if any odours, textures, or sensations of heat and cold, very little sound from everyday life around him, virtually no sensations of taste, and, except for the symbolic patterns of light and dark or green, blue, red, and possibly white in varying contexts, scarcely any colours. Although his poetry is full of visual images, almost nowhere in it do we find any sensuous



transport or intense physical exuberance. In fact, Duncan's language is amazingly abstract for a contemporary writer.

Even when tangible scenes do appear in his writing, they tend to represent a mythic consciousness rather than to focus upon objective details. Take the following passage from "A Poem Slow Beginning," for instance:

and sought from tree and sun, from night and sea,  
old powers — Dionysus in wrath, Apollo in rapture,  
Orpheus in song, and Eros secretly

four that Christ-crossed in one Nature  
Plato named the First Beloved. (OF, 15)

Here, elemental experience, which easily lends itself to personal and sensuous expressions, is described in mythic terms. The classical gods become primarily emblematic: Dionysus as tree, Apollo as sun, Orpheus as night, and (presumably) Eros as sea. The four elements are four gods, the four gods are "crossed" or united by Christ into one whole, and the four elements of air, fire, earth, and water are also joined in one Nature. The subjects possess no properties of sound, taste, smell or touch. Instead, they are defined as formidable *powers*: Dionysus is wrathful, Apollo rapturous, Eros hidden, and Orpheus singing. Phenomena are defined in terms of what they do or what they could do. Their physical qualities as solid objects don't count as much as their potential and performance. When a poet is concerned with first things and last things, the particular nature of present matters can become less important for him.

However intangible they may be, the whole complex of renewing powers that Duncan mingles together — innocent children, fairies, devils, witches, bright Edenic pastures, rank piles of refuse, common people and outcasts, seeds and libidinal thrashings, natural growth, dark forests, black depths, and tribal echoes — all offer the chance for reviving an essential part of ourselves that in modern times has for the most part has been despised and banished to our unconscious life. Those forbidden experiences grow out of our imagination and appeal to it. In Duncan's words, "whatever realm of reality we seek out, we find it is woven of fictions" (Myth, 17) because "We are such stuff . . . as

dreams are made of' " (Myth, 67). Genuinely inspired artists as creators of fictions offer us glimpses of what is and what could be. If we are going to find the richness and exuberance of the green world, it is important, Duncan insists, not to be taken in by "the dreams . . . of mean and vain imaginations" (CJ 8, 30) or those suffering from "a poverty of imagination" (Cat 2, 133). Yet, because "the real has just those boundaries we are willing to imagine" (Cat 8/9, 238), Duncan puts his trust in "the formal demand the spirit would make to shape all matter to its energies, to tune the world about it to the mode of an imagined music" (CP 8, 29) in a poetry that will draw us "home" "from the world's music" (OF, 58). "Thus, the grass must give up new keys to rescue the living" (OF, 19). To share the dream greater than reality. To keep the green. "This is the Book of the Earth, the Field of grass / Flourishing" (OF, 43).

#### ABBREVIATIONS USED

- Allen "Pages from a Notebook" in Donald M. Allen,  
*The New American Poetry*. New York: Grove, 1960.
- BB *Bending the Bow*. New York: New Directions, 1968.
- Cat *Caterpillar*
- CJ *Coyote's Journal*
- Myth *The Truth & Life of Myth: An Essay in Essential  
Autobiography*. Fremont, Mich: Sumac, n.d. (rpt. from  
the House of Books 1968 edition).
- Nemerov "Towards an Open Universe" in Howard Nemerov, ed.,  
*Poets on Poetry*. New York: Basic Books, 1966.
- OF *The Opening of the Field*. New York: Grove, 1960.
- RB *Roots and Branches*. New York: New Directions, 1969.
- SB *Stony Brook*
- TQ *TriQuarterly*, No. 12 (Spring 1968)

## H. D. BOOK

There is an early excerpt from the book: "From *The Day Book*." *Origin*, Second Series, 10 (July 1963), 1-47.

The book itself as it has appeared from time to time now includes the following chapters:

### PART ONE: BEGINNINGS

1. *Coyote's Journal*, 5/6 (1966), 8-31.
2. *Coyote's Journal*, 8 (1967), 27-35.
3. & 4. *TriQuarterly*, 12 (Spring, 1968), 67-98.
5. "Occult Matters." *Stony Brook*, 1/2 (1968), 4-19.
6. "Rites of Participation" I. *Caterpillar*, 1 (1967), 6-29.  
"Rites of Participation" II. *Caterpillar*, 2 (1968), 125-54.

### PART TWO: NIGHTS & DAYS

1. "March 10, Friday, 1961. (1963)." *Sumac*, 1, No. 1 (Fall 1968), 101-46.
2. "March 11, Saturday, 1961 (1963)." *Caterpillar*, 6 (Jan. 1969), 16-38.
3. "Part 2, Chapter 3." *Io*, 6 (Summer, 1969), 117-40.
4. "March 13, Monday (1961)." *Caterpillar*, 7 (April 1969), 27-60.
5. "March 14, Tuesday. 1961 (1963, 1975)" [section one]. *Stony Brook*, 3/4 (1969), 336-47.  
"March 14, Tuesday. 1961." [fragment of section two] Chapter 5, 50-52.  
"October 8, 1964." "March 20, 1960." Chapter 7, 53-67.  
"March 21, Tuesday. 1961." Chapter 8, 68-94.  
*Credences* 2 (1975), 50-94.

At least one other piece of the *H.D. Book* has appeared with the following title: "Glimpses of the Last Day [from chapter 11 of the *H.D. Book*] May 25, 1961. Thursday." *Io*, 10, [1971], 212-5.

## Roland Brener / THREE SCULPTURES AT THE PENDER STREET GALLERY

*Three sculptures by Roland Brener composed the opening show of the Pender Street Gallery, January 19 to February 8, 1976. The director of this new gallery, Willard Homes, intends to exhibit work by experimental artists, younger artists and to provide performance space for conceptual art events.*

### IMAGES

*Sculpture #1: Untitled, 20' x 20' (plan), mixed media, 1975.*

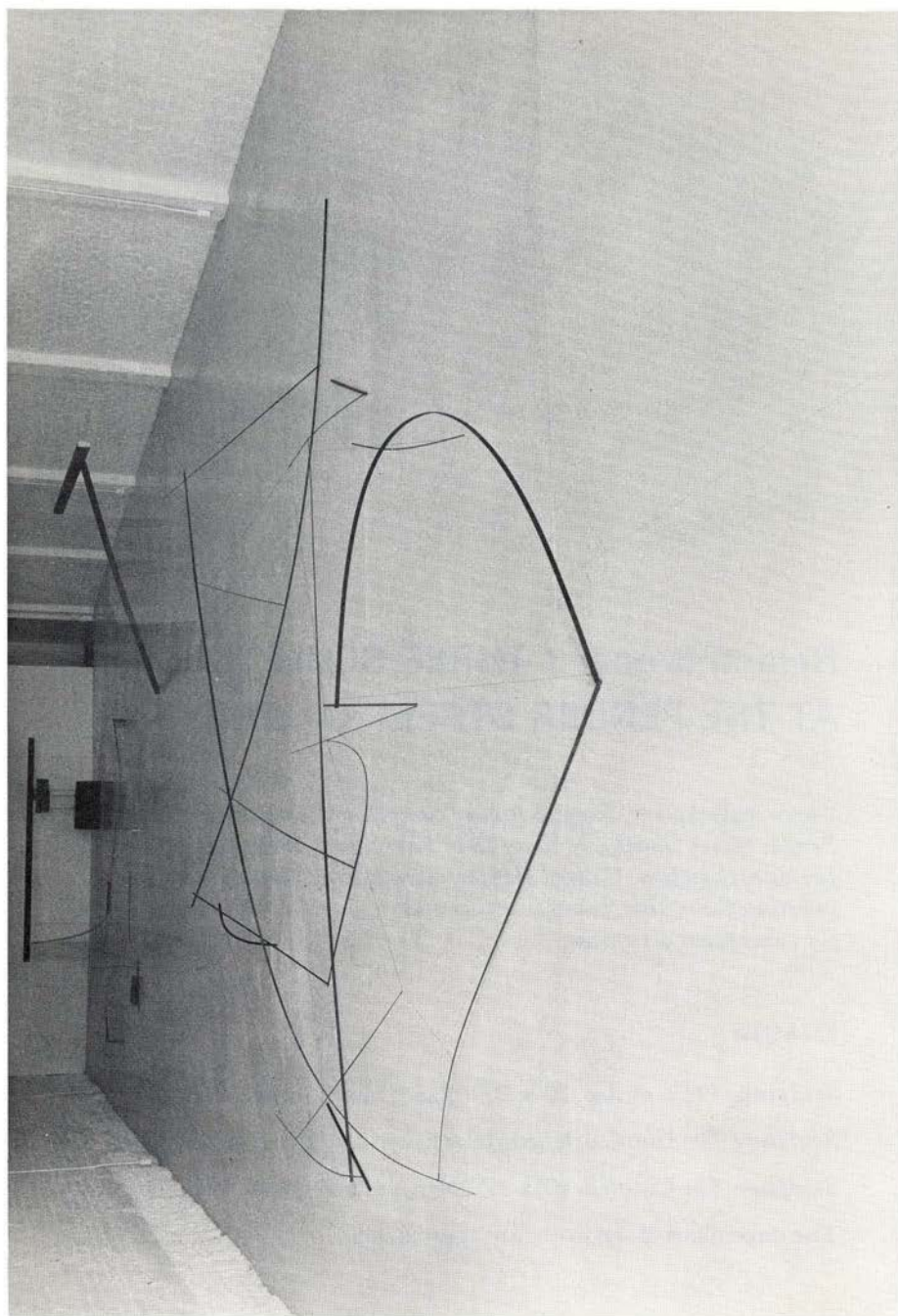
*Sculpture #2: Untitled, length 16' x height 10', mixed media, 1975.*

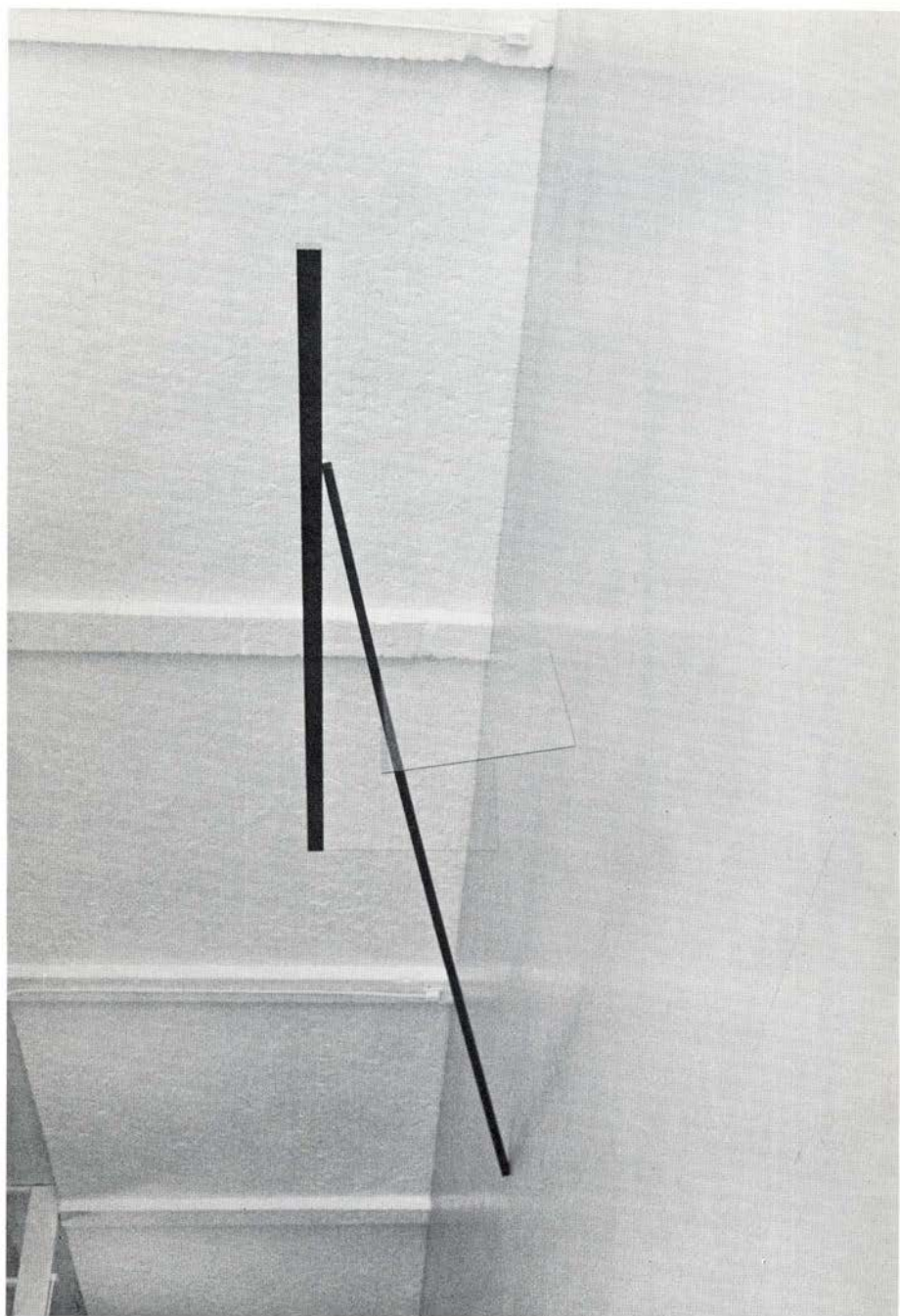
*Sculpture #3: Untitled, 20' x 25' (plan), mixed media, 1975.*

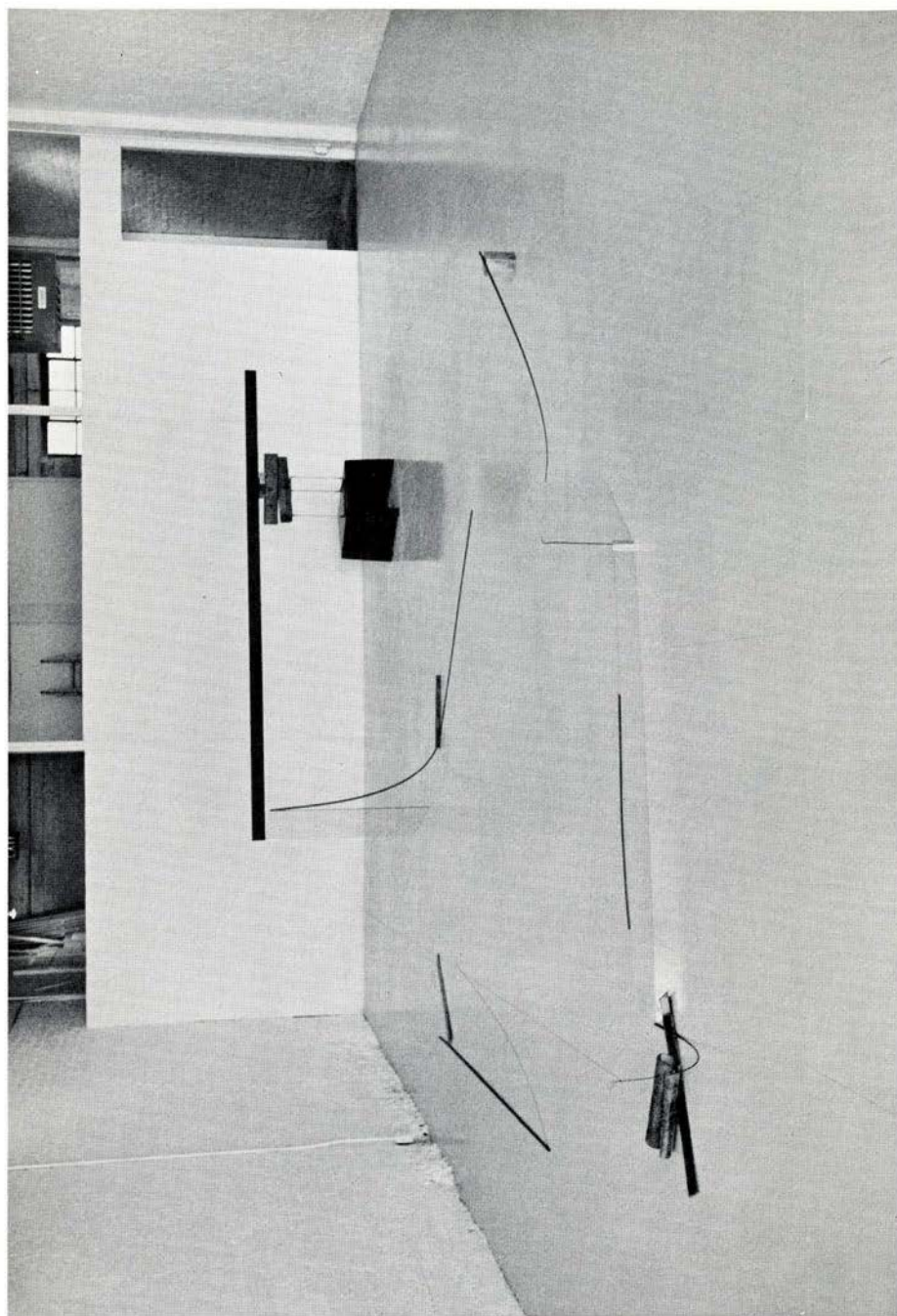
The dimensions of the works are approximate.

*Photography: Fred Douglas*











The three sculptures exhibited at the Pender Street Gallery during January encompassed a risky proposition as far as I was concerned. They were the first works of mine for several years which did not relate to a specific space, and this return to an object-oriented art could be interpreted as a regressive move, contrary to the mainstream of art activity. However, my intentions remained exploratory: the work should affect the viewers in a very physical manner while at the same time suggesting some rather cerebral notions. This was achieved by the works' emphatically delicate and tenuous nature: by situating these works in the "gallery context" I ensured their physical survival for the duration of the exhibition by associating them with the sense of worth characteristic of that situation. By respecting this association the viewers assumed a cautious, self-conscious and attentive attitude towards the work. Even if, in many cases, this was initially a matter of being careful not to damage something of "value" while exploring the space, a self-conscious awareness was the condition I presumed as desirable in absorbing the work. The work was quite honest about this "device" in that all elements were located in a temporal manner, visibly using their weight, flex or rigidity to hold each other up or together. By so doing I was able to depend on the viewers' consideration to ensure structural security, rather than any system of fabrication or inherent strength. Also by being aware of the obvious physical relationships between the various elements, which were of a variety of materials unmodified by me, the viewer could readily identify with the process of making this work and the work could only be considered to be exclusive of people who have never had the good fortune to use both their heads and their hands simultaneously.

I intended these three works to be shown together, though they could not really be thought of as one. Sculpture #1 (1975) was really an exercise in working in a fluid, intuitive manner, as opposed to the modular, planned nature of my previous works. Sculpture #3 was simply a confirmation that a change in sensibility had occurred since #1. Sculpture #2, in my opinion, is the only good sculpture in the show as it is now apparent that what is significant within both the

others is contained within this one work and the marriage of two disparate intentions produces a third effect of a more profound nature. Briefly, this sculpture (#2) is a horizontal linear work which could be seen as a loose narrative with different events and excursions along the way. Mid-way in the work a radical change in scale and mood takes place and the work continues, from that point, just long enough to imply the potential for further change while at the same time affirming the visual cohesiveness of the work as a whole. This change is effected by using a large sheet of glass which can be seen in one way to relate to the tenuous linearity of the first half of the work by emphasizing the only visible aspect of the glass as being the edge, which "reads" as a thin linear rectangle. The work is then "continued," establishing the actual physical dimensions of the sheet of glass in terms of its "real" scale. The allusion to a window through which a metamorphosis occurs is implicit but not overtly apparent. The sculpture cannot be dealt with from a fixed vantage point and the viewer must move from one intersection to the next. By following the dictates of the work, the viewer is invited to participate in a slight shift in attitude and idiom through the window, that may in turn have connections and repercussions elsewhere.

— ROLAND BRENER



## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

GARY LEE-NOVA was born in Toronto in 1943. He studied at the Vancouver School of Art and at Coventry College, England. As painter, sculptor and film-maker, he has made major contributions to the excellence of the Vancouver scene, and is one of the most respected younger local artists. He has participated in many exhibitions in Canada and abroad.

ALAN MILLER was born in South London, and emigrated to Vancouver in 1966. He works as a computer consultant at the University of British Columbia and his paid hobby is woodworking of all kinds.

A. S. A. HARRISON is a Toronto writer. With A. A. Bronson she co-authored *Lena*, a pornographic novel (Taurus, 1970). Grove Press put out *Lena* with A. C. McWhortle as author, so A. S. A. Harrison is using that name for the restaurant she'll open in Toronto this spring, with an associate from A Space, Elke Hayden. Meanwhile she has edited *Orgasms* (Coach House Press) and done some unusual writing. Last May she presented "Ada's Desire" and a play in a show at A Space called "Portrait of the Author as a Fat Girl." At The Western Front recently she read *Love Letter*, a *fumetti* of words and visuals. "Art processes life," she says, and is busy with that.

CAROLE ITTER lives and writes in Vancouver and Roberts Creek. Her latest publication is "Ten Sketches" in *Room of One's Own*. She co-authored *Birthday* (Caledonia Writing Series) with Gerry Gilbert. Intermedia published her book *The Log's Log*.

ROBERT G. SHERRIN lives, writes and works in Vancouver. He's Assistant Editor of *Canadian Fiction Magazine*. His first novel, *The Black Box*, will be released by November House early next year.

AUDREY THOMAS is a major Canadian novelist, with five books of fiction out. Talonbooks has recently republished her *Mrs. Blood*. She has contributed frequently to *The Capilano Review*, and was featured in a special section in Issue No. 7. Audrey is currently working on a new novel tentatively titled *Jeu de Dames or Takers*.

JOHN BENTLEY MAYS, originally from Louisiana but now of Toronto, is known to readers of *Open Letter* as a free-lance critic and to frequenters of A Space Gallery as an audio-event poet. He recently participated in an "audiothon" collaboration with Victor Coleman and William Burroughs.

MICHAEL AGRIOS is a Vancouver photographer. The four photographs in this issue, from his series of "Street People," are the first of his portfolio to be published. In the past his prints have been entered in competitions in Vancouver and in exhibitions at Capilano College.

BEVERLEY SIMONS says, "it's a very lonely business writing on the West Coast in a form which does not communicate until there is a whole community who can interpret what you are doing . . . It's frustrating to work in film and theatre and just file the manuscripts away." She is one of the best but most underproduced playwrights in Canada, and is very productive. Best known for her play *Crabdance* (Talonbooks) and minor masterpieces like *Preparing* (*The Capilano Review* No. 6 & Talonbooks), Beverley has just had "the most inspirational year" of her life during which she wrote *Leela Means To Play*. This long and innovative play was featured as a Special Issue of *The Canadian Theatre Review* along with an interview and critiques. Her three major film scripts commissioned by the NFB have yet to be produced. She is currently working in prose.

TONY WESTMAN is a Vancouver photographer whose work is included in the photography collection of the National Gallery of Art in Ottawa. His photographs have been published in *Ovo* (Montreal), *Impressions* (Toronto), and *Image-Nation* (Coach House Press, Toronto). He has exhibited at the National Film Board Gallery (Ottawa, 1971, 1973), Galerie Optika (Montreal, 1972), Gallery of Photography (Vancouver, 1974), the Art Gallery of Ontario (Toronto, 1975), and the Vancouver Art Gallery (1975). In 1973 he received a short term Canada Council grant for photography, and in 1975 received three awards for cinematography, two at the Alberta Film Festival, and one at the 13th International Film Festival at Yorkton. He is currently doing a 25-minute dramatic documentary titled *Salmon People* for the National Film Board.

VICKIE WALKER grew up on a mink ranch in northern Wisconsin. She left home at sixteen and since then has moved constantly, living and studying in many places. She obtained her M.A. degree in 1975 and currently teaches at the University of Calgary.

WESTERN FRONT is an artists' collective that operates out of The Western Front Lodge. The artists live together and co-operate on many projects: arranging poetry readings, video and film entertainments and (in a special circumstance) the MR. PEANUT for MAYOR campaign.

TOBY MACLENNAN was born in Detroit in 1939, and graduated from the Chicago Art Institute with an MFA in 1968. She has lived in Vancouver since 1972 and has taught in the BFA program at the University of British Columbia since 1973. As artist, poet and maker of "sculpture-performance-pieces," Toby contributes her verbal and visual imagination to the scene. Her most recent publications are: *I Walked Out of 2 and Forgot It* (Something Else Press, New York, 1972) and *The Shape of the Stone Was Stone Shaped* (Eternal Network Press, Toronto, 1975).

DUNCAN McNAUGHTON now lives in Bolinas, California, where he continues to edit *Fathar*. The poem in this issue is from his new book, *A Passage of Saint Devil*, which will be published by Talonbooks some time this summer.



SHARON FAWCETT says: "The lines 'ta'wil in agnosia / let the light circulate . . .' came to me as a friend was reading John Scoggan's paper on Olson to me over the phone. That was sometime last winter, when Brett and I were putting *Iron* together. On Easter Sunday I rediscovered these lines in my journal; the rest followed by dictation. Things like this are the real texture of my life. Other strands and threads include teaching English at Capilano College and learning how to play Bach in a singing manner. Generally, teaching and learning to make *passion the source, not the goal*."

GEORGE BOWERING's *Allophanes* is scheduled for publication this summer by Coach House Press. Meanwhile, George is working on a novel called *A Short Sad Book*, all about Canada.

PENNY CHALMER's homeopathic poems in this issue are part of a manuscript titled "Lives of the Poet." Soft Press in Victoria has recently published her book of poems, *tranceform*.

CHRIS DEWDNEY lives in London, Ontario and has two books of poetry out from Coach House: *A Paleozoic Geology of London, Ontario* (1973) and *Fovea Centralis* (1975).

FRED WAH teaches at Selkirk College in Castlegar. His new book, *Pictograms from the Interior of B.C.*, has just been released by Talonbooks (#201-1019 E. Cordova, Vancouver).

PAUL KAHN works as managing editor for *Alcheringa* (Boston) and also edits the mimeo-mag *Bezoar* (Gloucester, Mass.). Truck Press (Box 86, Carrboro, N.C.) is publishing his long poem, *Heart of the World* this year, and his work is featured together with that of David Wilk and John Yau in *Truck 17*. The poems in this issue are from a manuscript called "A Home in the City."

HOPE ANDERSON came west for China and Africa but finds himself still here. Last year, Mondiale Press, Montreal, did *Back Mount*, a book of poems and a play. The poems in this issue come from a manuscript titled "Looking for word big as revolution" and were written with/to the music of jazz violinist Larry Kennis.

JONIS AGEE has a little book, *Aaron's Story*, with hand-coloured illustrations, just out from Truck Press. Her long poem in six sections, *Houses*, is due from the same press early this year.

JOHN PASS has published three books of poetry, *Taking Place* (Talonbooks), *The Kenojuak Prints* (Caledonia Writing Series), and *Port of Entry* (Repository Press). His fourth book, *Love's Confidence* (Caledonia Writing Series) will be appearing soon.

STEPHEN MORRISSEY lives in Montreal, and edits *what is*, a concrete poetry magazine. His first book of poems, *Chinese Tea* (Delta Can Press), will be published this year.

GILBERTO MEZA and CARLOS PROSPERO live in Guadalajara where, in 1973, they were the central members of a group of young Mexican writers gathered around a program sponsored by El Departamento de Bellas Artes del Gobierno del Estado de Jalisco. Although many of the writers have left Guadalajara for other places, Meza and Próspero, who write for a newspaper, continue to work there. Translations of their poems have appeared previously in *The Shore Review* (Milwaukee), *The Iowa Review*, and *The Bitter Oleander* (Syracuse, N.Y.). Próspero won the Juegos Florales poetry prize in 1975 and is publishing his first book, *Es Un Mundo Del Rocio, Sin Embargo*, through the Universidad de Guadalajara. Meza's "Cuentos Nevados" appeared in *Cuadernos de Occidente* and a manuscript of his poems won the 1973 Juegos Florales poetry prize at the Universidad de Guadalajara.

A. FRANK and THERESA MORITZ live in Toronto where Theresa is working on a Ph.D. in Medieval Studies at the University of Toronto. Alberto works as executive and copy-writer in an advertising agency and continues to help edit *The Shore Review*. They share an interest in Spanish, French, and Latin American poetry, and have translated the work of several young Mexican writers as well as a selection of poems by Benjamin Peret (to be published by The Bitter Oleander Press later this year) and a collection of previously untranslated poetry by André Breton.



LARRY EIGNER solos in *Tottel's* #15 (November 1975) with 28 verse pieces. His *My God The Proverbial*, with 40 poems and a prose piece, also came out from L Publications in Kensington, California (34 Franciscan Way) at the end of last year. This year *the music variety*, his twentieth collection to date, appeared in January from Roxbury Poetry Enterprises (362 Waban Avenue, Newton, Massachusetts 02168). A 12-minute tape of Eigner reading 27 poems with varying clarity, accompanied by an English-German booklet of texts, is available from Serendipity, Berkeley.

LESLIE KEYWORTH lives in Vancouver and writes in secret.

BARRY McKINNON edits the Caledonia Writing Series, has published two recent books *Death of a lyric poet* and *I wanted to say something* (both from Caledonia Writing Series, Prince George, 1975), and has come to view many of his poems as speeches.

ELIZABETH HAY lives in Yellowknife where she works for the CBC.

D. J. believes "art is subject only to the infinite — *not names*."

MAXINE GADD lives and writes in Victoria. Bertrand Lachance of Air Press is re-issuing three of her books — *Guns of the West*, *Hochelaga*, and *Practical Knowledge* — under the title of *Westerns*. A new book with Coach House is also in the offing.

PETER HUSE since 1938 has lived in Gadsby, Botha, Regina, Kinsella, Claresholm, MacLeod, Prince Rupert, Victoria, Trail, Vancouver, Edmonton, San Francisco, Princeton, London, Kalives, Berlin, Montreal, Essaouira, and now with Patty, Tanya, and Jake in North Burnaby where he teaches music at Simon Fraser. Huse has recent work in *Iron II* and *NMFG* (Vancouver), and two chapbooks, *Prairie Poems* and *Maple Leaf Band*, with Caledonia Writing Series (Prince George).

GERRY GILBERT: *Skies* is out (Talonbooks, \$5.50) and he's working on *Grounds*.

BOB ROSE enjoys travelling in Latin America, working with his hands, and the pleasures of articulate speech.

STEPHANIE JUDY free-lances as writer and editor and teaches English part-time at Simon Fraser University. She has published a do-it-yourself manual, *Everything I Know About Cars Would Just About Fill a Book* (Berkeley: Putnam's, 1975) and is presently collecting dreams "for and about artists and writers in this extended community." Send your dreams to Universal Gravity Archives, 4334 Albert Street, Burnaby, B.C.

LEWIS ELLINGHAM has lived in San Francisco since the 50's except for a brief stay in New York in the late 60's where he edited *Magazine*. A friend of Jack Spicer's and Robin Blaser's, he is well-known in the Bay area as an underground poet but is little published. Having lost his poems in a fire, he is presently engaged in re-collecting extant copies from friends. The poems in this issue come from a book called *The Wounded Laurel*, based on his New York experience.

JACK SPICER (1925-1965). *The Collected Books of Jack Spicer* (Black Sparrow Press, 1975), edited by Robin Blaser, appeared recently and just went into a second (corrected) printing. The same publisher will be bringing out in the near future Jack Spicer's play *Troilus*, edited and with an essay titled "Sources" by Robin Blaser. With this play we will have a complete record of what Jack Spicer considered his "dictated" work. Earlier work, 1944-1956, from which period the three poems included here come, will appear in separate volumes, the first of which will be *Jack Spicer's Canon of Early Poems*. These poems were finalized by Jack in 1956; he considered the 42 poems included in the *Canon* those he wished to save. When he left Boston, Jack left these in Robin Blaser's keeping with the mock title *A Pook-Up for Rabbi Blasen* (Sept. 10, 1956, Boston, Masochistic). The Editors of *The Capilano Review* wish to thank Robin Blaser, executor of the Spicer Estate, for permission to print the three poems.

ROBIN BLASER was born in 1925. His most recent books are *Image-Nations 1-12 & The Stadium of the Mirror* (London: Ferry Press, 1974) and *Image-Nations 13-14 &* (Vancouver: Cobblestone Press, 1975). Robin wishes to clarify the order of his essays: "The Practice of Outside," included in *The Collected Books of Jack Spicer*, however much he may believe in the poetic stance there described, was finalized in 1972, and is a scholarly study of Jack Spicer's poetic task. The essay "The Stadium of the Mirror," involving his own poetics, was written in Summer 1973. "The Metaphysics of Light," published in *The Capilano Review* (No. 6, Fall 1974), a section edited by Daphne Marlatt out of a large talk-book to be called *Astonishments*, was composed for his listeners and questioners in Summer 1974. He does not wish to confuse Jack Spicer's poetics with his debt to Jack or with his movement from that work. Dennis Wheeler and Robin Blaser are now working every Saturday on a dialogue-book called *Death Work* — the conversations move into everything, including the conditions of the city, but will be largely based upon their responses to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, and Charles Olson's *The Secret of the Black Chrysanthemum*.

ROBERT DUNCAN, native San Francisco poet, has currently in print five books of poetry: *The Years as Catches* (Oyez), *Caesar's Gate* (Sand Dollar Books), *The Opening of the Field* (New Directions), *Roots and Branches* (New Directions), *Bending the Bow* (New Directions), and one book of prose, *Truth and Life of Myth* (Sumac). Work in progress includes a H.D. Book and a collection of poetry, *Ground Work*, to appear in 1984.

bp NICHOL recently published *A Draft of Book IV of The Martyrology* in connection with a reading he recently gave at the University of Alberta at Edmonton (February 20, 1976). Chapter VII of Book III of *The Martyrology* is printed in this issue; other parts of Book III have appeared or will appear in *White Pelican* and *Earth & You*. In 1977 Coach House Press will publish Books III & IV, and will re-issue Books I & II, in a single volume, and thereby "bring the work as a whole more clearly into focus."



GATHIE FALK has spent all of her adult life in Vancouver. Her artistic training proceeded piece-meal until she decided to become an artist in her late thirties. Since 1965, when she began to exhibit in Vancouver and abroad in many group and one-man shows, her reputation has grown to the point where she, like Claude Breeze, is one of the best known and most respected artists in Canada. Many major public and private collections own her works. As an extension of her art-making, she conceives and executes "theatre pieces" that incorporate objects, artworks, slides, taped and live voice, and choreographed performers.

CLAUDE BREEZE was born in 1938 in Nelson, British Columbia. He studied at the University of Saskatchewan under Roy Kiyooka, then moved to Vancouver in 1959. He recently completed an artist-in-residence position at London University, and now chooses to divide his time between London, Ontario and Bowen Island, B.C. He has participated in many one-man and group exhibitions in Canada and abroad; his work can be seen in major public and private collections.

SHEILA WATSON, author of the classic novel *The Double Hook*, was recently featured in a special issue of *Open Letter* (Third Series #1), titled *Sheila Watson A Collection*. It presents a wealth of her previously uncollected writing: short fiction, essays on Wyndham Lewis, Swift and others. When she came to Capilano College last year to read and to talk to some classes, she shared her intelligence and spirit with us generously. Now retired from teaching, Sheila Watson lives in Edmonton and continues to edit *White Pelican*.

JUDY WILLIAMS was born in Vancouver in 1940, but spent most of her young life moving from air force base to air force base all over Canada. She received a B.A. from Carleton University and did some post-graduate work at UBC. She has taught at levels ranging from pre-school to university, and has exhibited in Vancouver (principally in group shows) since 1966. Judy has received several Canada Council grants, and worked as director of an LIP project in 1972. She worked on the Vancouver City Art Project for three years.

DENNIS COOLEY teaches English at St. John's College of the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg. He is completing an extensive dissertation on the poetry of Robert Duncan, from which the piece in this issue is excerpted.

ROLAND BRENER is a sculpture teacher at the University of Victoria. After training under Anthony Caro, Brener taught at St. Martin's School, London. He has been living in British Columbia for three years.

TOD GREENAWAY is a photographer who works part time at the Vancouver Art Gallery. His own creative work is concerned with people, the urban scene and landscape. He is currently working out a series of family portraits of the inhabitants of his Chinatown co-operative condominium.

ROBERT MINDEN is a Canadian photographer now living in Vancouver. Recent work of his includes a collaboration with Daphne Marlatt, *Steveston* (Talonbooks, 1974), a book of photographs and poems, and *Steveston Recollected*, edited by Daphne Marlatt, an Aural History book from The Provincial Archives, Victoria, B.C. He is currently at work on a photographic book about the Doukhobors of British Columbia.

*The Capilano Review* gives special thanks to SHELLEY ROBERTS and CHRISTINE WALFORD, who, through funds provided by the LIP Program, worked on the magazine this year as Editorial Assistant and Business Manager respectively. Without their consistently fine work the magazine could not have functioned nearly so well, nor could this issue have been so well prepared for the printers. Unfortunately, the LIP funding runs out this summer. We will miss Shelley and Christine badly: we wish them all the best.



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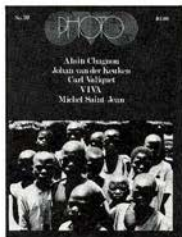
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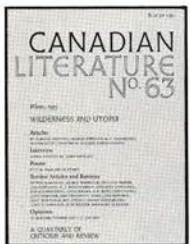
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**Alcheringa, Volume Two #2 (September):** focus on Asian/Pacific oral poetries—new translations from Sarawak (Malaysia), Ainu, Japan, Tibet, Siberia, Alaska, plus section of essays & poetry on dream-work including McCaffery, Enslin, Eshleman, Quasha & others, *recording to be announced.*

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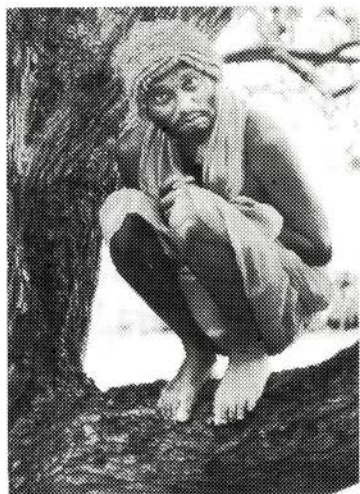
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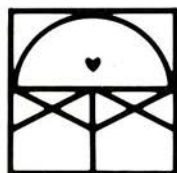
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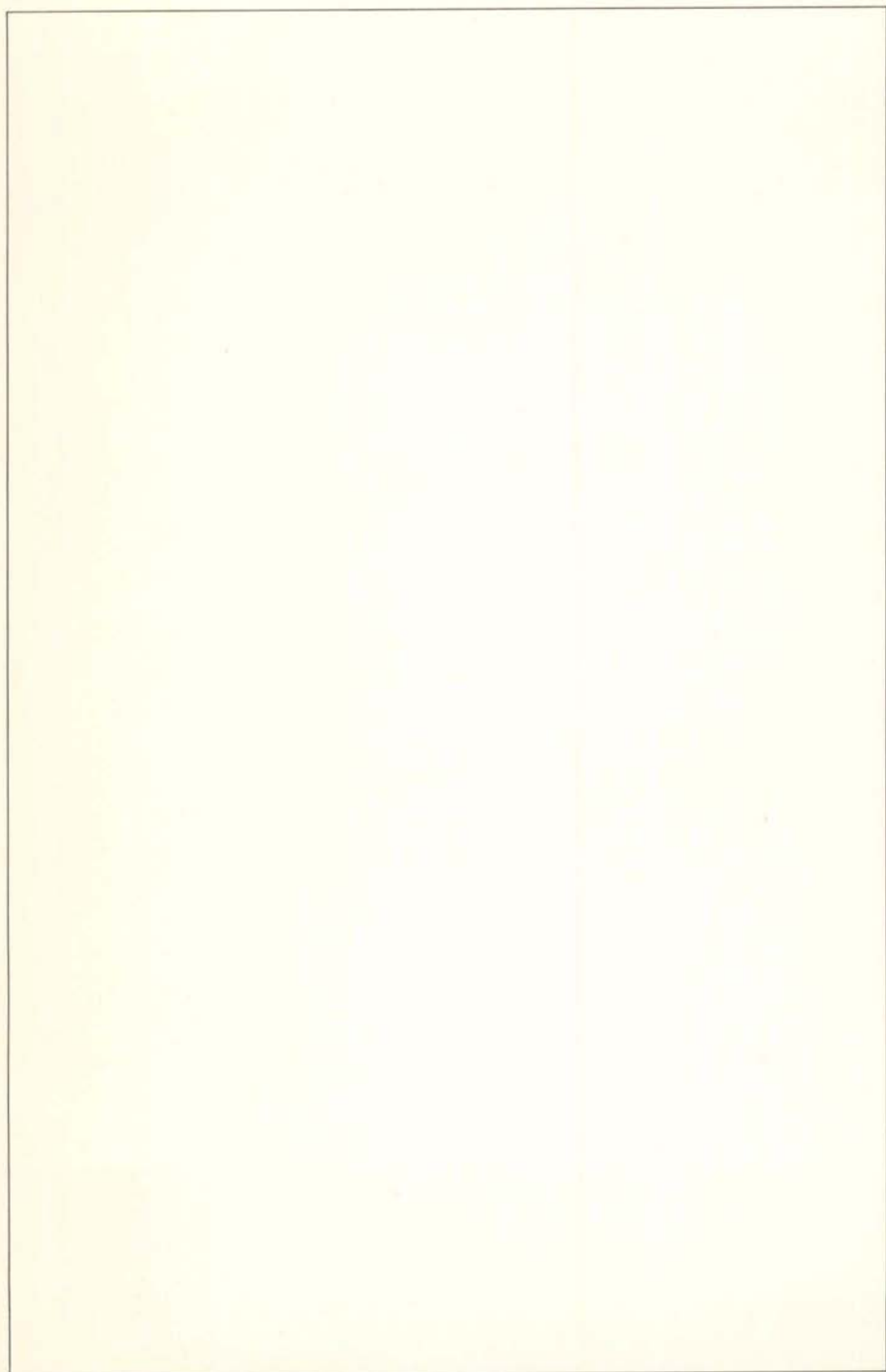
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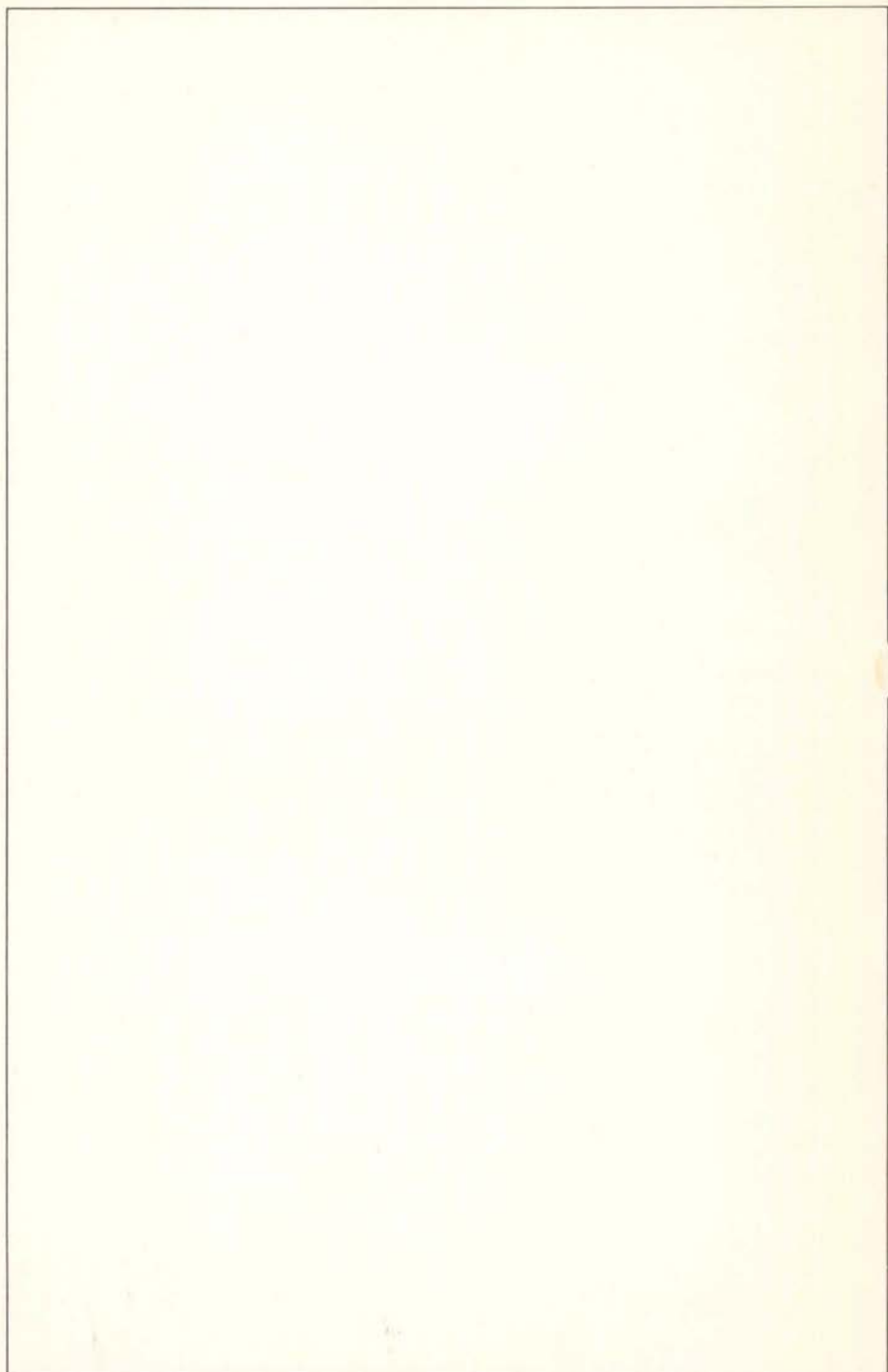
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