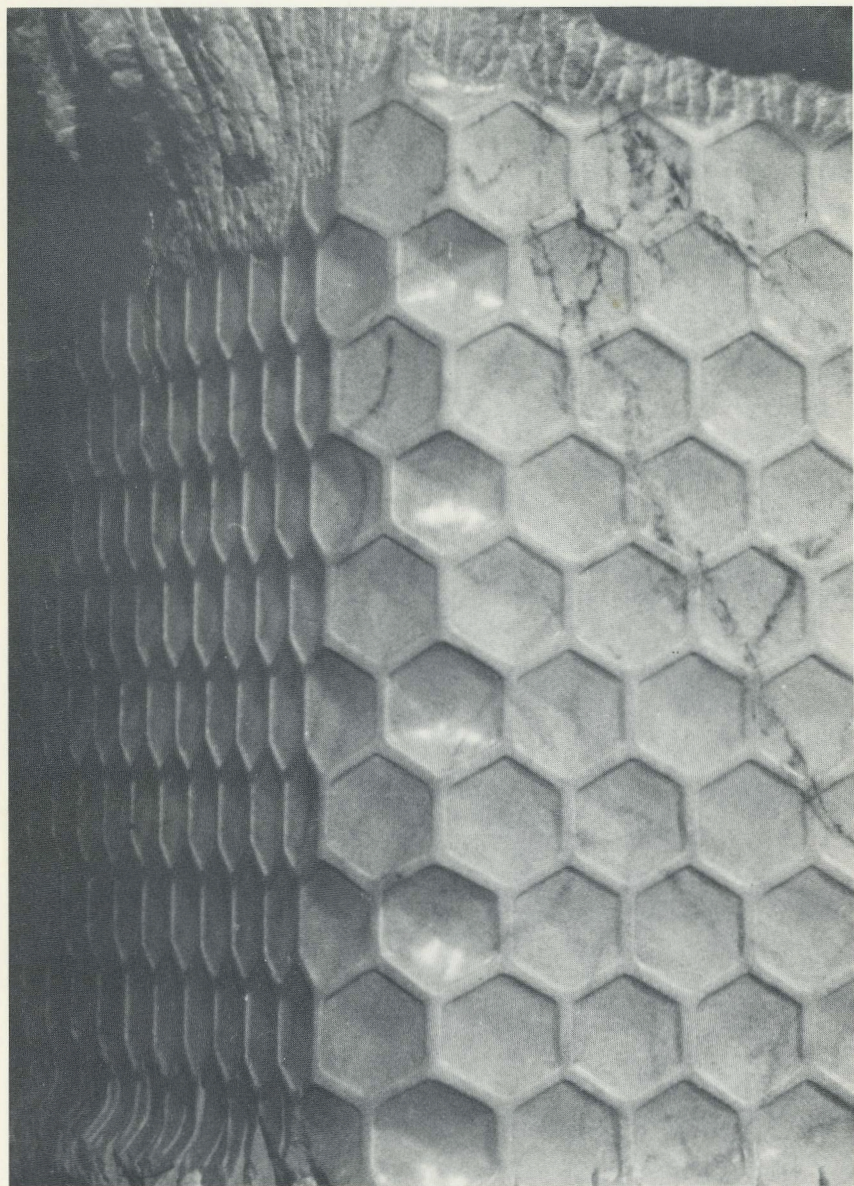


THE CAPILANO REVIEW



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THE CAPILANO REVIEW

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Detail from *Pyrolith*

COVER
George Rammell

Raymond Souster / FOUR POEMS

HANLAN'S POINT HOLIDAY

Those two summer weeks of my boyhood
at Hanlan's Point, western gem of our islands,
flew by swift as seagulls, with that thin strip of sand
becoming my stamping ground, my personal kingdom,
each square yard of it known to me, it seemed,
like no-one else had known it or ever would,
all mine, all mine.

In my adaptable cruise-ship,
a flat-bottomed punt powered by two ancient oars
and my firming back-muscles,
I rowed alone or took along my mother
up the wide channels, then turning off continued
my dead-end wanderings down lagoons
bird-noisy, choked with weeds and water lilies,
each a mysterious stretch of green light and sunshine,
and once overbold I even ventured out
around the ferry docks (and was almost caught
when the *Primrose* appeared from out of nowhere,
its wash bobbing us like a cork, almost doing us in)...

Each day seemed to have its new sights, sounds, surprises.
Among the most strange the first time I heard the coughing
chug-chug
in the lagoon hard behind the house, ran back to see in
amazement
that low strange shape of the weed-cutter moving into view,
its miniature paddle-wheels churning jewels on the morning
water.

All day it floated out there with its twin hidden knives
hard at work, all the shining weed-mass floating on the
surface
to prove it by mid-afternoon, when a small scow appeared
with men wielding long-handled rakes to haul it in.

Every morning an hour before breakfast
my father, brother and myself,
dressed in our bathing-suits crossed the sidewalk running
south
along the western beach, our feet sinking instantly
in sand not fully cooled by the night. Then lake water,
with only a few small stones before it turned
all sandy bottom, still almost luke-warm
from yesterday, as warm as it would get that summer.
Then, after we'd cooled ourselves off,
it was back to the cottage to change from our bathing-suits,
and our morning walk began. That walk led us
down the concrete sidewalk past cottage after cottage,
to finally skirt the Lakeshore Home For Little Children,
which we were told opened up every June with patients
from the Sick Kid's Hospital, though we saw very few of them
at any time around the grounds; then a change of direction
and due east along the boardwalk, still close to the lake
till we reached the Gibraltar Point lighthouse
(supposed to be haunted yet by the ghost
of its first keeper murdered by some drunken soldiers),
which at least in daylight didn't look very spooky.

With the Light reached it was time to turn back,
leaving the boardwalk now for the hard sand
close to the water's edge, then following the lake's
curve-and-straighten game with the shore all the way back
to the cottage, where it was usually stick my nose
in a book until lunch-time. After which there was the punt,
always more lagoons to explore, ending sometimes in a walk
after supper to the amusement park,
where there were a few rides left—Drive Yourself, The Whip—
and of course the roller rink, some games of chance
under the deserted Stadium, where floss candy also came
in a giant ball big as your head on its cardboard stick,
and the smell of mustard and hot-dogs incensed the air.

Then when darkness slipped down, when a thousand twinkling
lights
blinked from above the amusement park, it became my magic,
my fairyland world, unreal, glittering, loud,
and I hated to be told it was time to go home,
to have to leave all those noises, lights and laughter,
for the walk through the darkness (streetlights hung
with seething swarms of insects not too much help
in guiding our footsteps), crickets loud all around us,
and at last the front gate, in a short time bed,
with always the promise of a yet more beautiful morning
waiting to wake up along with us
when we came back again from dreaming.

THE HOUSE AROUND THE CORNER

The house around the corner
and halfway down the block—what has possessed it
to turn its back on the world,
to retreat among the darkest shadows,
to sit mourning like a grief-stricken widow?

For it's covered its whole front with weeds,
fouled its porch and steps with at least a year's
faded newspapers, rain-smeared handbills,
allowed its wood to rot, its gutters
to leak and spill over.

Standing outside it right now
I feel eyes behind dusty windows
staring out at me.

How could anyone live inside?
Unless, as it sometimes happens,
a stray ghost has taken possession,

so my brief, imagined glimpse
of a hand quickly ruffling the curtain
could be real, could be ghost-fingered,
icy-cold as death.

PLAIN FACT

My arms have never
been clever enough, wise enough
to know how to grab off
half your love for me.

DECLARATION

Although I've already got it written
in the largest of squeaky chalk capitals
on the freshly-brushed blackboard of my heart,

some night I'm going to gather all my guts together,
take my paint spray-gun down to a certain large city wall,
and by some miracle will have no trouble at all
with what my brain is telling my hands to do
as I work away in the bat-dark shadows.

Then, in the morning, the first subway passengers
riding east for the short two hundred yards
of the open cut west of Keele Station will see
so plain on that impossible-to-miss, familiar showcase
of a hundred love messages a fresh one staring out
in gleaming-bright colours at least two feet high:
RAYMOND LOVES ROSALIA FOREVER AND FOREVER,

and no doubt some will still be shaking their heads
at the strange, show-off antics of young lovers
as their train passes on from light into that flashing
darkness
where no time shall ever measure how long or how short
forever is.

Marion Douglas / ANDREW AND THE BEASTS

Although I had known about Andrew for years, it was not until I was ten years old that I got a really close look at him. He was an object of some discussion in the community, which held him to be “not right.” There were medical problems too, people said, one kidney, a hole in the heart, aneurysms, the speculation never ceased. When Adeline was living she had kept a close watch over Andrew, confining him to a paddock in the orchard, the barn and the house. People saw him in the screened-in front porch making bird noises or arranging things in rows or triangles or squares. The Avon lady told my mother once that when she pulled into the yard to deliver Adeline’s moisture cream, Andrew had run out and sniffed the tires of her car.

Andrew was the only child and people used to say that Adeline read to him every night—*The Little Prince*, or *Alice in Wonderland*—even though Andrew did not seem to hear. Adeline was small and pale and resilient like a mushroom. People treated her with delicacy. Perhaps they were afraid that with her burden she might break under the strain of exposure to rude comments and gossip.

Adeline died in the winter, leaving Eugene and Andrew. Without Adeline’s benign presence people came to their farm only on business. And most of those people were strangers, hunters and trappers who drove around the country blocks in their pickup trucks, ignoring the road signs and shouting, as if the normal rules of civilization did not apply in places where there are a lot of trees.

Eugene was a dairy farmer but his passion was taxidermy. He had a dark, earthen-floored shop where he practiced his ghoulish art. There were specimens here and there, an owl on a shelf and a pig lying on its side in the corner, as a joke on the goons as he called his customers.

Eugene kept to himself. He did a lot of hunting and regularly word would get around that he had shot a fox or a deer. It seemed logical that he would stuff these creatures. Eventually some folklore sprang up about Eugene. The story went that in the attic of his house he had designed and created a murky and violent forest scene, with a pack of wolves and a black bear. At one time, when no one had heard from or seen Eugene for weeks, it was believed that he had had an anaconda shipped in from Brazil and was planning a change to a torrid South American jungle motif. People joked that soon Eugene would be wanting humans for his tableaux. His attic light was seen on at ungodly hours.

With Adeline dead, Andrew began to roam around to neighbouring farms. Eugene had no time to look out for him. "He's a teen-ager now, he needs his freedom," Eugene said once to my brother and me. And, "When he doesn't come home for a meal, that's when I'll call the cops." It was inevitable then that he would show up one day, apparition like, in our yard. I watched him from a distance as he stared at the dog, a grotesquely fat German shepherd breathing wetly in the summer heat. Andrew had one hand outstretched toward Shep, his fingers so tense they curved back in thin white arcs. I thought of the sprouts growing on the potatoes in the lightless basement. He stood that way until the dog got up and began sniffing at him. Andrew then raised both arms above his head and looked up into the tree with an expression of gratitude and dopey sublimity. You might have thought it was Christmas morning.

My younger brother, Peter, and I came closer. Andrew's chin was fuzzy and his two black nostrils were like sinister little passageways that led to the brain that was not right. I stared into them as Andrew gazed at the branches of the tree, ignoring us completely. The tuberous hands fluttered. Nothing else moved. So Peter, uncomfortable, threw a stick for Shep and in flawless symmetry both Andrew and the dog took after it. For me, this moment was no less miraculous and supernatural than the time when, alone in the barn, I had attended the birth of a two-headed calf.

We took turns throwing the stick. Each time Andrew barked madly after, Shep always beating him. Andrew became increasingly excited by the game, taking on more and more convincing dog mannerisms. As he waited for the stick to be thrown he got down on his hands and knees or crouched with his chin in the grass. He snarled, then feigned uninterest. But soon Shep tired of it all and

padded off to his water dish. And as abruptly as Andrew had joined us, he departed, his body becoming flaccid, his face egg-like. Away he went, over the fence and across the field.

This was not the last we saw of him. Andrew began to make regular appearances, always in the guise of some animal. He never sought us out. We would simply come across him. Or sometimes we would walk to his place and sit in Eugene's disgusting shop with him. One time Eugene said, "Andrew's got about as much sense as that owl over there," gesturing toward the dead and turgid bird. "Now the clock," he went on, "the clock has more sense, though it's cuckoo too." At this Andrew put his hand over his eyes and made a funny inward whistling noise, like a calliope. Peter and I looked at one another. The bright and wooden cuckoo bird popped out and I wanted to smash it. Eugene was angry then also. "Now get outta here before I stuff you all," he shouted and we scurried off.

Andrew never spoke to Peter and me. Eugene claimed that he did talk at home, that occasionally he would recite books that had been read to him, entire passages of *Alice in Wonderland*. Eugene said it spooked him because it was like hearing Adeline, the same words, the same inflections, the same comments she would interject like, "Andrew, you know what a caterpillar is. We see them on the tomatoes in the summer."

Every day we watched for Andrew. We looked for him or waited some place in the sunny shafts in the barn. Once we were sitting in the oats in a flat, mysterious oval; it was like being in a basket or a straw boat. I looked up and there was Andrew with his back to us, the sun shining through his black spikes of hair. His skin was always very white, like those powdery fungus plates that grow on dead wood.

The challenge then was to guess what animal he had on his mind. Sometimes he would tell us right away by an action or a sound. And sometimes he made us think. Sometimes we never divined it and he went home with his arcane knowledge.

The favourite was cow. Usually on those days he would moo and low and nudge us with his head. Then it was essential for me to get a rope and tie it around his neck and lead him to a stall in the barn. There he would make urgent cattle noises until we gave him hay or oats. He insisted on straw to lie on; kicked at us if we got too close. Once I kicked him back and it felt good and shameful at the same time.

One day we found him crouching in a shaded little corner between the silo and the barn. There was a hole there that Peter and I had aimlessly dug. Andrew squatted, looked at us and moved his nose. We were at a loss. Finally, on a hunch, Peter went into the house and got a carrot. Andrew ate it and then we knew. He looked so scared that I began to stroke his back, as if it had fur. I did this for a long time as my father rattled around and around the field, swathing. The dust just sat in the air. Peter and I eventually went into the house for lunch and when we came back Andrew was gone.

Another day Andrew was a pig. It was clear that day what he was. He walked right up to us in the barn where we had been waiting and emitted several remarkable, high-pitched squeals. He headed over to the pig pen and looked in. The pigs were all lying in the straw snorting intermittently in a bored, flabby manner at the flies. With two startling calls Andrew marshalled them all around him. In a moment he was in the pen on all fours, being examined in a friendly, curious manner. Peter and I watched with renewed amazement. The pigs were not conspirators as we were but actually seemed convinced of Andrew's authenticity. After a few seconds of ecstatic hesitation, we jumped in and began cavorting with Andrew.

I think maybe that he had fun with us that day. At least once he knelt next to my brother and rested his head on Peter's back. Pigs do this occasionally; it's a familiar, almost intimate gesture.

After that though we worried that things had gone too far. What if my parents or older brother had come across us in the pig pen? What kind of looniness was this? Pretending to be animals with this funny boy who never looked you in the eye. We laid low for a while. Peter and I drank chocolate milk on the front porch, catching glimpses of Andrew now and then ferreting behind the wood pile or barn. We ignored him; rode our bikes out the lane.

Andrew stopped coming over. Peter and I watched his red brick house across the fields, expecting it to move or wink or signal in some manner. This did not happen so one afternoon in late August we tramped through the stubble to his house. Eugene was in the shop listening to the radio and playing solitaire. It was a garishly blue day and there he was in his gluey salon. "Don't know where Andrew is. He doesn't usually inform me of his plans. Ha ha... Maybe with his rabbits in the shed, talking voodoo at them."

He wasn't there. We found him in the barn leaning against the whitewashed walls. A couple of flies manoeuvred around his forehead. I shoed them off. Andrew was holding some harness that he had dug up somewhere. He did not seem to see us, did not look at us, but for the first time he did speak. He had a robotic voice, directed at no one. It was a radio commercial for the local harness races. "And they're off," he said, "with today's favourite Delta Dawn taking an easy lead." He ran through the entire commentary, then handed the harness to Peter. We stood for a moment in the wet, buzzing passageway. The windows were opaque with dirt and fly specks but the quality of the light reminded me of church.

We went out to his paddock. There was an oval course around the perimeter of the field. It was apparent that Andrew wanted to be the horse. But at the same time he was still using his radio voice. He was changing channels, going up and down the dial, producing static and disjointed messages. "Left to mourn his passing are... Hot today and very humid... So come on down to our Chev-Olds dealership."

For the first time ever Andrew was staring right into my eyes. His skin was whiter than usual and his brown eyes shone with some idea. More channels, "Interment to follow at... The Motown sound of... Donations to the Cancer Society gratefully accepted." He kept getting stuck on a programme I recognized called In Memoriam. It was sponsored by the local funeral homes and was a recitation of the week's deaths, giving details of where remains were resting and where burial would follow. Up and down the dial he went again. I was getting the creeps. Even Peter, standing near the gate, looked like some sort of changeling waiting stupidly in the heat. Andrew came back to the harness races, then In Memoriam again. I couldn't stand it any longer so I looked him in the eyes and yelled, "They're off."

He took off with the harness on, Peter being dragged by the reins. I stood in the middle of the paddock shouting, "C'mon, c'mon, faster, faster." Andrew ran and crackled radio talk. He ran and his baggy old brown pants sloshed around him, trying to fall off. Peter laughed for a while but then he stopped. More sodden running. The radio voice turned off. And that is when Andrew fell. He simply stopped running and fell in the soft dusty path and rolled and the harness dug into his cheek.

Peter ran to get Eugene and I stood over Andrew. I was horrified by his stillness but I looked. I knew that he was in a peculiar state, someplace far away, although I didn't dare think how far. Wherever it was, he had left the disguises behind, the animals and machines, and now looked like a regular boy whose hair blew in the wind.

When Eugene arrived he put his ear against Andrew's chest, then announced, "It was his ticker, never was any good." He picked him up and carried him to the house. Still, we did not know that he was dead. Peter asked, "Will he be all right?"

"No son. You two run home now."

The funeral was held and afterward there was a gathering at Eugene's house. All the neighbours came, some out of curiosity but most out of respect for Eugene. People stood and sat everywhere eating the sandwiches and cakes they had brought and drinking tea. There was nothing exceptional about the house. I had expected to find a stuffed grizzly bear in the livingroom but there were only chairs and a worn out couch which Eugene called the chesterfield and Adeline's good dishes in a china cabinet. They had tiny violets on them. I hovered in a state of giddy chaos, my stomach a sack of uncooked eggs.

Repeated trips upstairs to the bathroom were necessary. Each time I stood in the hallway, then ventured a bit closer to the foot of the attic stairs. I tried not to think the horrible thought that bubbled up and down, fish-like in my mind, but there it was anyway—there is no control when it comes to thoughts. What if Andrew was stuffed up there with the wolves and the bear? The entire situation began to feel so distant and unreal that I decided to take the insane risk of snooping in Eugene's attic.

I ran up the stairs, opened the door and there I was. My head felt as if it were filled with all the flies from Andrew's barn, buzzing and screaming and walking out of my ears. The room was grey with the light from one small gable window. Of course, Andrew was not there. But there were beasts, not anacondas or bears, but rabbits, maybe a dozen, and three foxes and a deer standing behind an artificial Christmas tree. They were all placed in a way that Andrew would have arranged them, in perfect triangles and squares, nothing haphazard, except for the deer who watched it all, empty-eyed and slightly askew.

Four of the rabbits sat in a square, looking outward. I knelt and touched one of them. It was white and stiff like Andrew's funny, useless fingers. I lifted it and held it next to my cheek and moved the three remaining into a triangle, all facing one another. It seemed like the right thing to do. Then I stuffed the white rabbit under my sweater, slipped down the stairs, out the front door and ran across the fields to my home.

George Rammell / WORKS
IN PROGRESS

CATASTROPHE

Catastrophe was my first marble carving and the central work of my exhibition at the Burnaby Art Gallery. The piece began as a four ton block requiring fourteen months of concentrated carving.

The title denotes the Greek creation myth, describing the transition of celestial bodies into human deities. This event is called a catastrophe or catastorphism.

NOTE

This photo of the 1977 piece, *Catastrophe*, is included as an example of a work which has been exhibited and photographed in its complete state.—B.C.

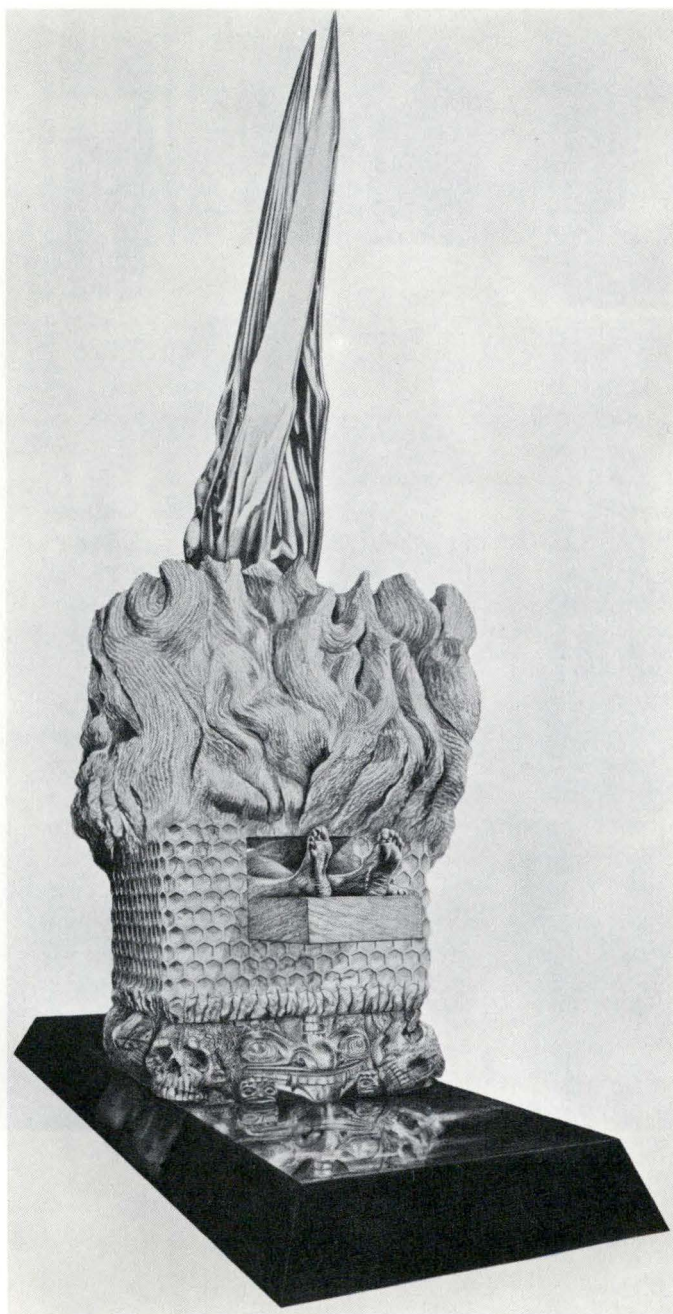


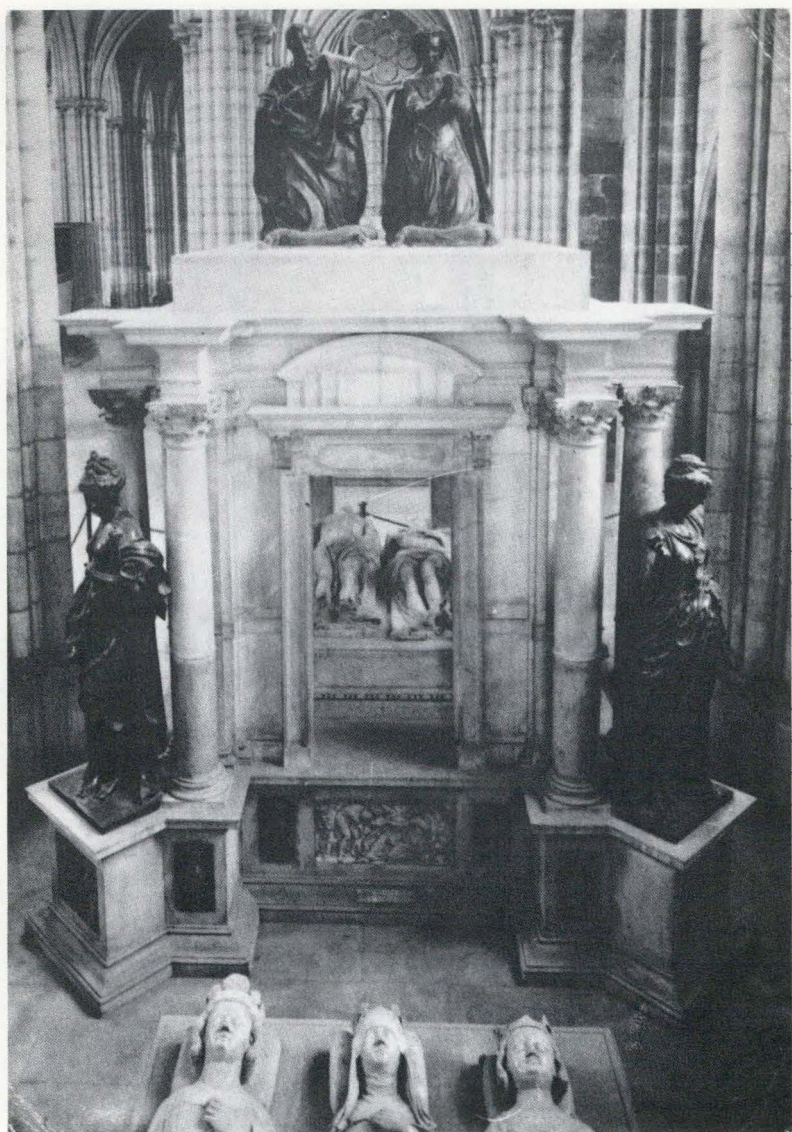
PYROLITH

Pyrolith (1980-1985) grew out of my need to create the image of a ritual that incorporates images of my own ancestral origins and the rites that belong to the people indigenous to the area of the world that I call home. Perhaps this is an impossible notion, but a sense of ritual and belonging is important to me. The tombs of medieval European cathedrals, which I toured in 1973 and again in 1976, when I visited the tomb of Henri II of France by Germain Pilon, and the shamanistic mortuary art of the coast are the two art forms I feel the most affinity for. From our mosaic culture I've composed various forces in an iconographical drama. The piece began with an eight ton marble block which had sat since 1900 in an abandoned quarry on Nootka Sound, Vancouver Island. When I first saw the stone, I peeled off the thick moss and felt the importance of this curious volume from a chapter of the last century. In it I saw the grain spiralling up like smoke rising in the wind. The work began in 1979 and required over six years to complete, an anachronism these days, when spontaneity is the norm. Employing cultural associations through the use of ancient media demands a major commitment, but I feel satisfaction in knowing my work functions through an incarnate system. These concerns connect with ancient works, which captivate us through their primal mysteries. Rather than a portrait of the past, this piece is my reaction to the self-destructive forces within us. I aim for beauty, but the beauty I achieve is in a state of its own demise. Our collective nature controls all individuals. A conglomeration of deities fuels the present; the phoenix makes its descent into chaos, like a heron caught in a burning oil slick.

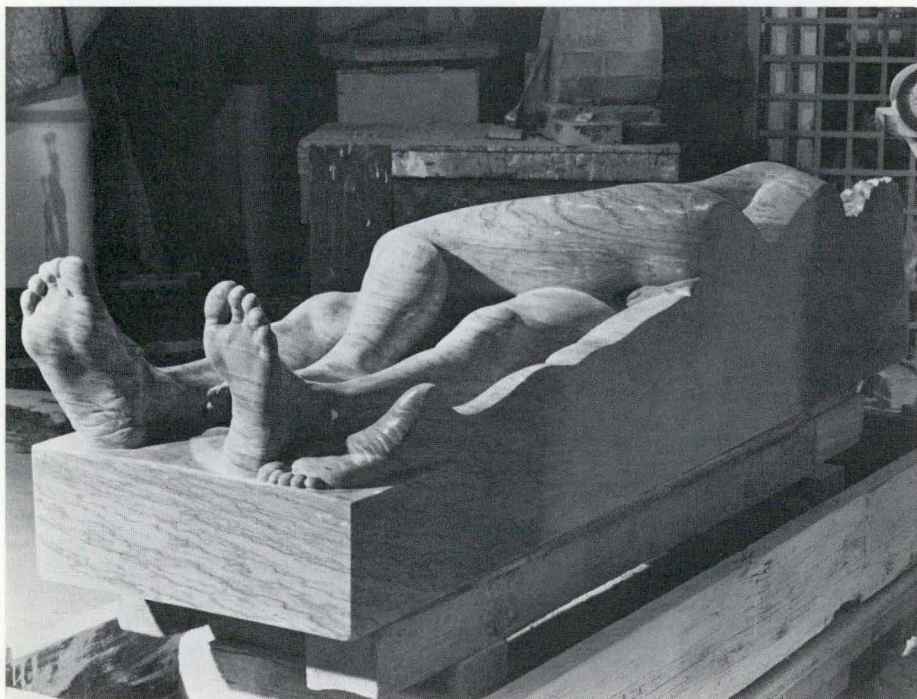
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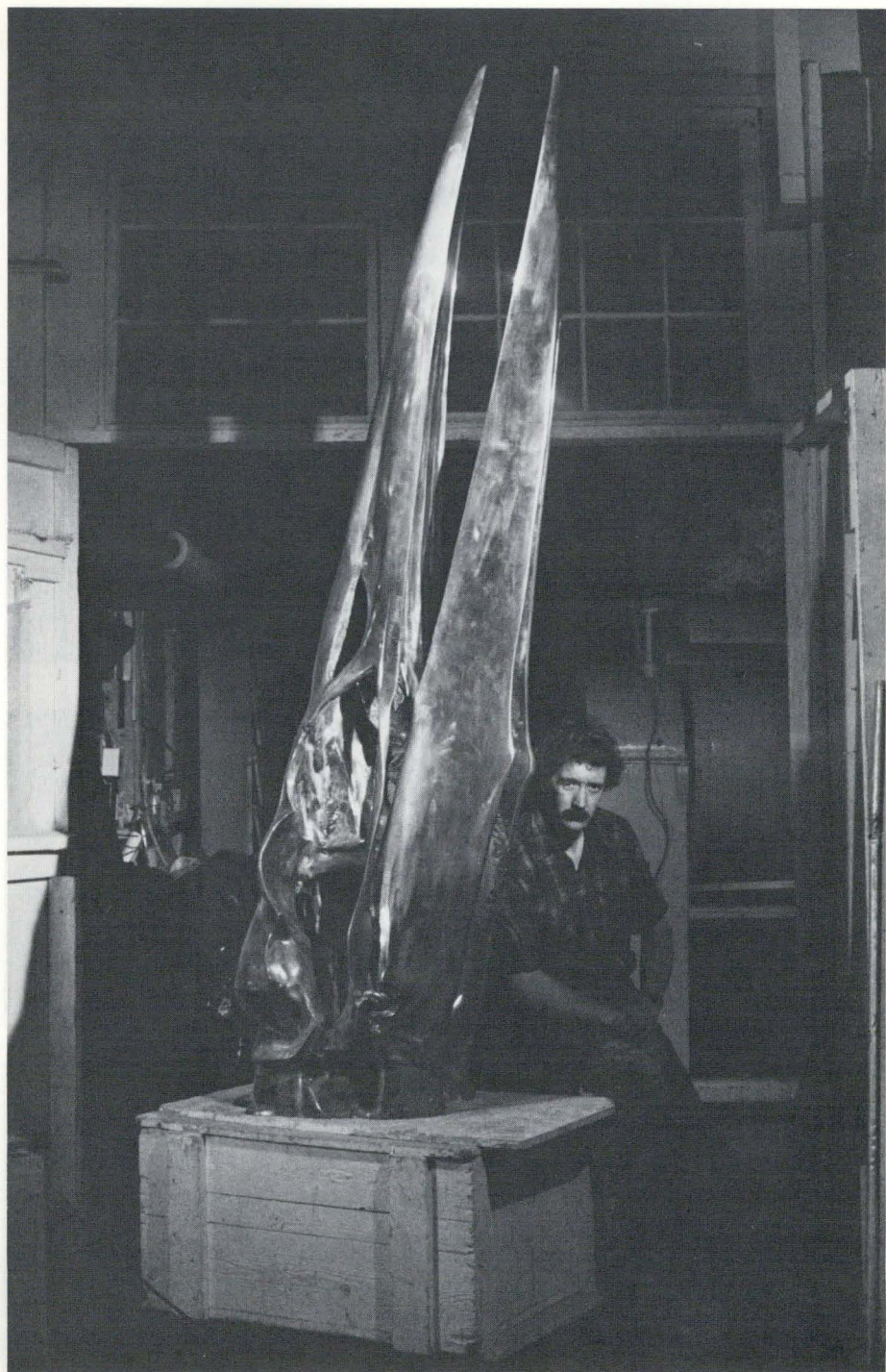
Pyrolith is completed, but due to considerations of weight and scale, it has never been completely assembled. The assembled size will be 17' x 10' x 4'6"; it is made of Nootka grey marble, Vermont blue marble, bronze, cast brass, and black granite.—B.C.

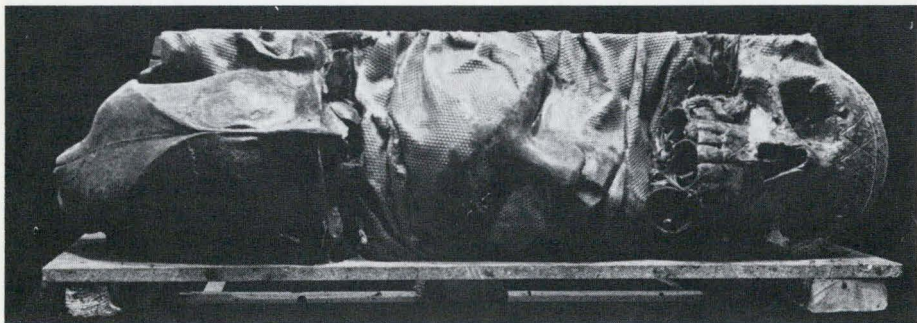
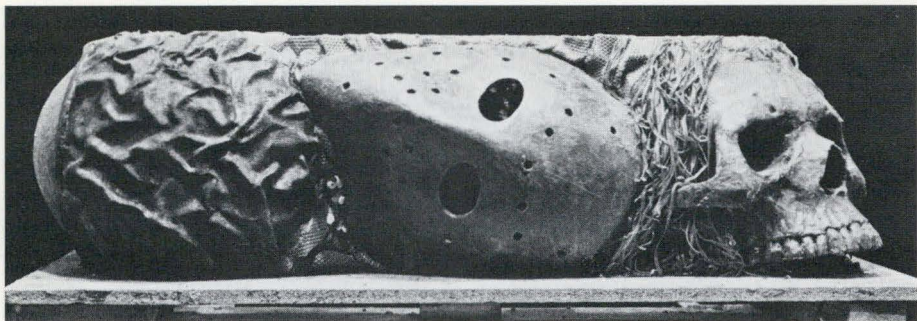














BLACK WAND

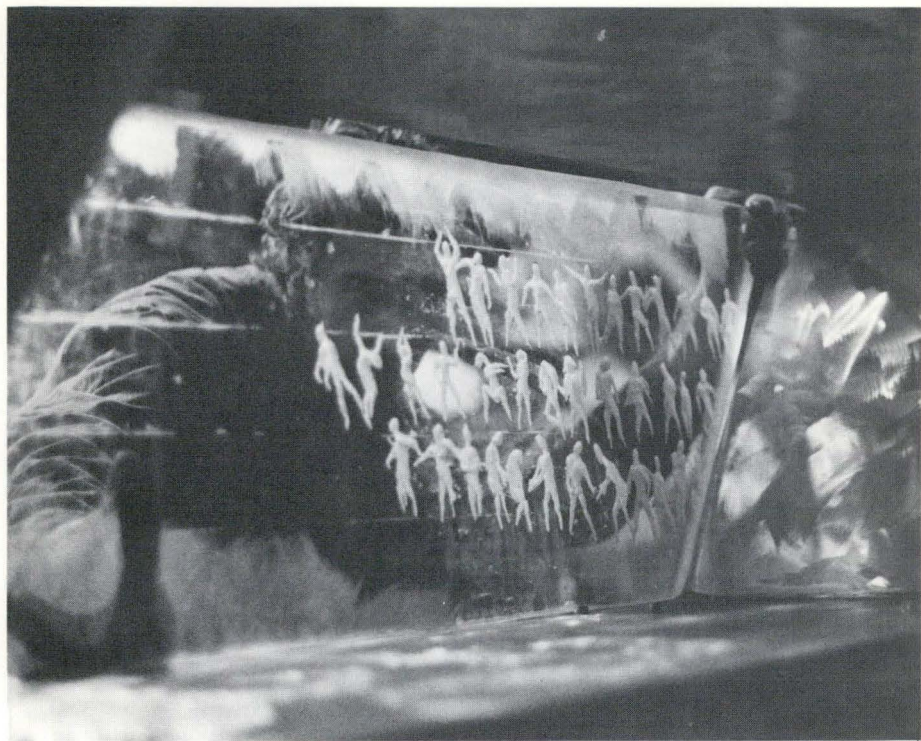
Black Wand (1984-1987) developed from a small marble piece I carved while teaching a workshop in Anchorage, Alaska. The art centre was within view of a nuclear missile base on the outskirts of town. This high technology was contrasted by the Aluet participants carving their traditional icons in stone. This dramatic contrast seemed to me synonymous with Wilson Duff's writings from his book, *Images Stone B.C.*, of "slave-killers" and "images of power." This piece is my reply to these pre-historic carvings which appear to describe a culture structured on procreation. I have contrasted old and current power symbols: the bird head is cantilevered from a menacing black missile; the phallic form of the ancient club is disguised as a new device of control. Yet this is a weapon which exhibits the images of its own victims or slaves. The trapezoid of glass panels is the conscience of the weapon.

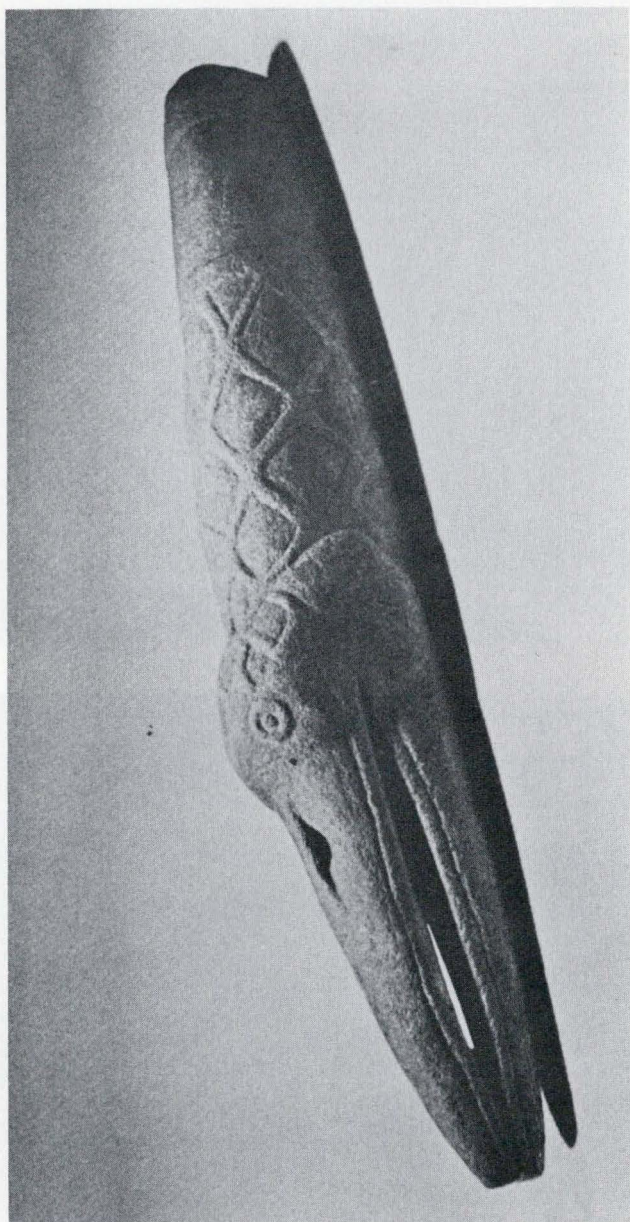
There is a subliminal suspense in the piece evoked through the authority of its weight. Current artists who work with stone emphasize the intrinsic gravity of the medium. Earlier sculptors have, conversely, used gravity to create illusion, as in old Inuit reflection images which appear to possess their own orbit of existence.

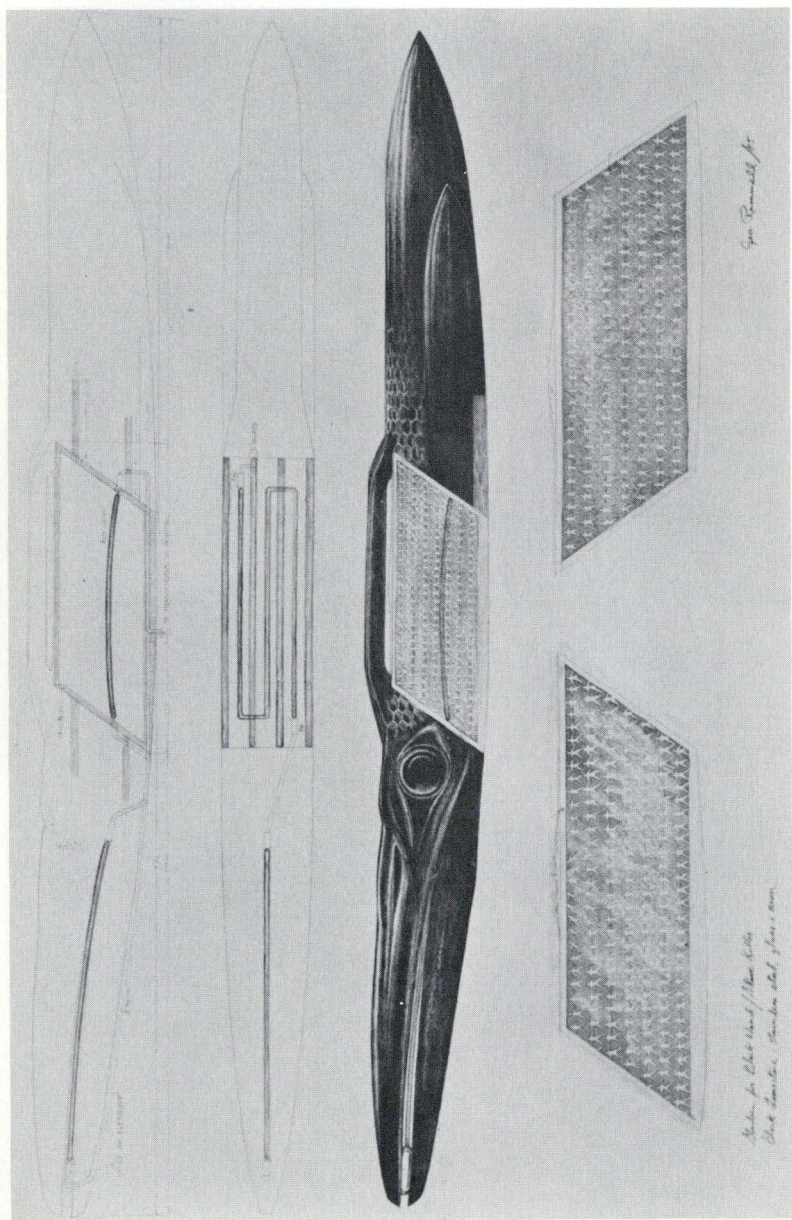
My original intention was to let the piece rock freely, but this proved to be far too dangerous, so I've made it stationary, like a displayed club or sorcerer's wand, concealing its potential.

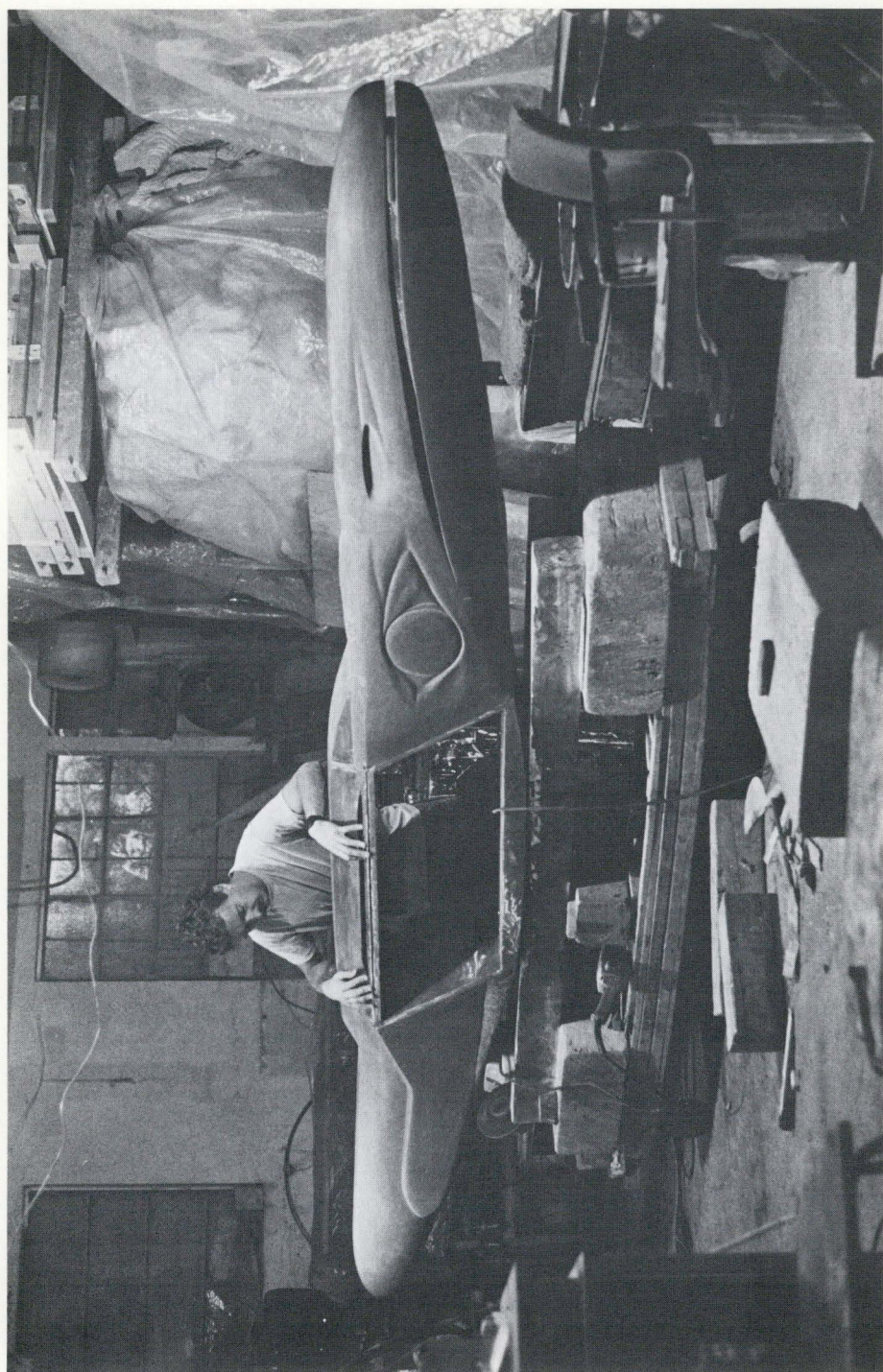
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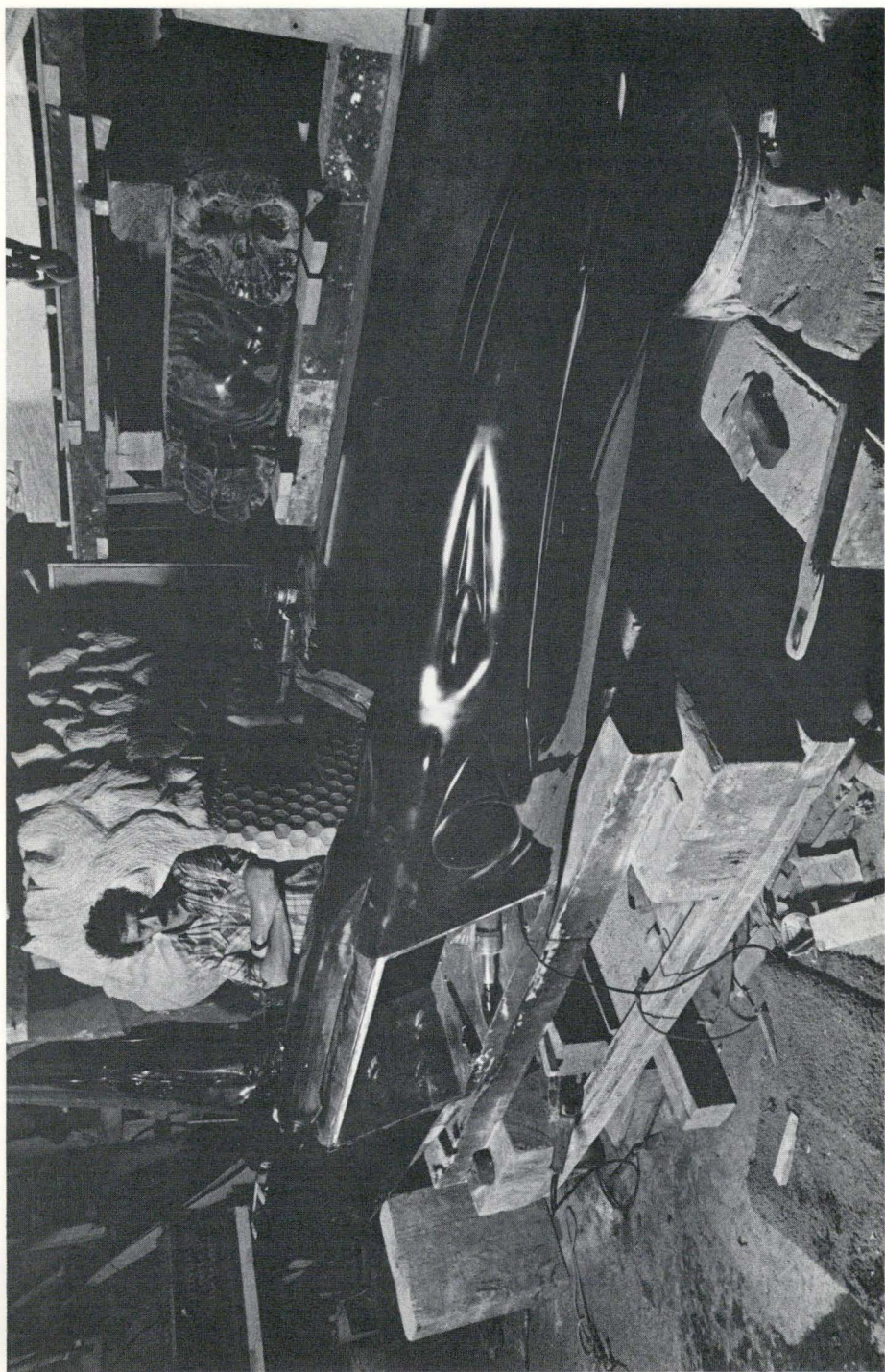
Black Wand/Slave Killer was started in 1984 and is now nearly complete. It is of black limestone, stainless steel, 1½" thick green glass, red neon light, and lead. When complete, it will be 1'8" x 16' x 1'6".—B.C.









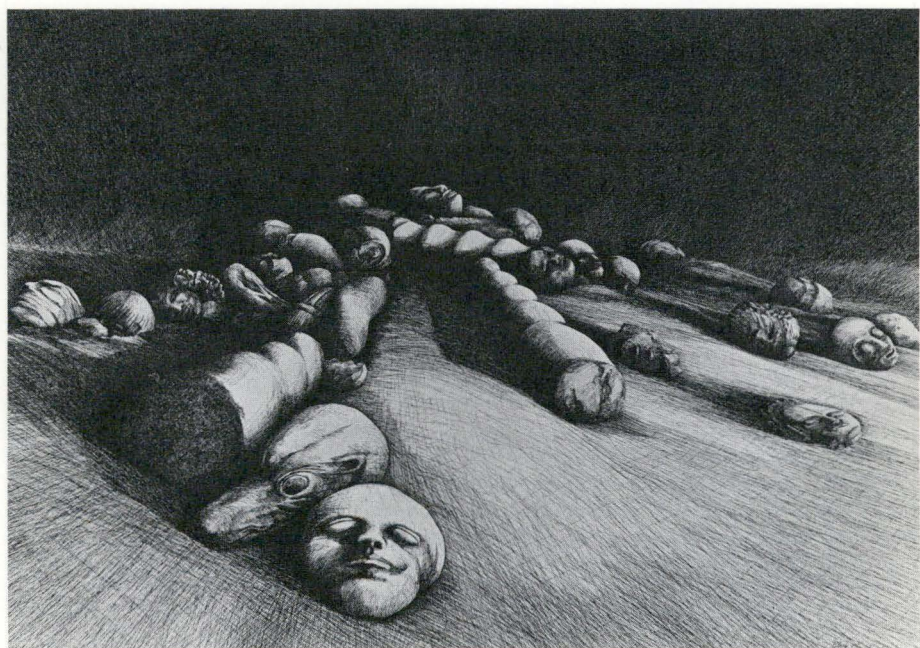


BLACK MOUND

In all my work there is a feeling that the subject presented is being controlled, destroyed or consumed by a force infinitely larger than itself. One could speculate on an abuse of power, or chaos itself taking over. In *Black Mound*, the ravages of this phenomenon have won against a cluster of mythic heroes. Yet it is quite indiscernible whether these are shards of sculpture or remains on a deserted battlefield. Whatever their state, these heads are not at all lifeless. They sit like seeds, skulls of ancient ancestors watching for a chance to escape their fate.

NOTE

The photograph opposite shows a concept for a large granite and earthform sculpture of an as yet undetermined specific scale.—B.C



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Kathleen Miller / THREE STORIES

CROWS

There was something she needed to tell him. But she couldn't remember what. She couldn't even remember what she had ordered, just minutes ago. He touched her hand. Anything wrong? There was real concern in his voice. There always was. She smiled and shook her head.

He began planning out loud. He drew one of his plans on his serviette for her to see. She looked, pretending to understand the crosshatch of blue ballpoint lines shredding the nubby paper. He had plans to renovate, plans to add on. Plans for himself and plans for her, too. Sometimes he would steeple his fingers and look long and hard at her. Then he would make a suggestion: she should try this, take a course in that, get a job doing something else. She was a remarkable person, he would insist, his eyes very earnest behind their square lenses. Her potential was awesome.

She allowed herself, on occasion, to laugh at his plans. But gently. Sweetly. Carefully.

This morning, she did not laugh. She sat pretending to listen, watching his mouth move. Part of her was still trying to remember what she had ordered. The other part was trying to feel the shape of the thing inside her.

It was, she decided, like a large, round, smooth stone. Its surface was like glass. No, like marble, for she couldn't see inside it. Looking at him, smiling at the right times, making the correct sounds, she kept coming back to it. She touched it with inner hands, examined it with inner eyes. It was sitting just below her breastbone, bobbing slightly like a buoy.

He had stopped talking and was looking at her. She felt a flutter of panic, wondering which smile she had mistimed, what inappropriate sound she had made. But his eyes were warm and teasing. She had something on her mind, didn't she? Sure she did. He could tell. What was it? Come on!

Her mind screeched in fast forward and reverse, searching for something to say. When she found it, she continued to smile. But part of her backed slowly away, appalled at what she was about to do. She took a deep breath and told him she had been remembering something from her childhood. He nodded encouragingly.

One spring, she began, when she was very small, she kicked an eggshell with her foot. She thought it was just a blue-grey mottled stone. It tumbled a little way in the grass, then stopped. She saw then that it was in fact a bird's egg, broken, with a baby bird sticking halfway out. The baby bird was all scrunched up and bald, with bulging purple eyelids, like a beaky-nosed little old woman. She picked it up carefully and put it on a flat rock in the sun. There, she reasoned, it would stay warm until the mother and father bird could pick it up and take it back to the nest.

And sure enough, two big black crows flew down in a little while and examined the baby bird. They bobbed their heads and strutted, ruffling their feathers, as if wondering what to do. A third big black crow joined them. That seemed to help them decide, for one of the first pair suddenly stabbed down with its beak. It flew with something clamped there up onto a wire, where it swallowed jerkily and cawed. Then it flew back down to the rock where the other two were rhythmically stabbing and tearing.

The waiter brought their food. She looked down at her plate and saw two poached eggs with bloodshot rims of smoked salmon and an iris of sliced black olive in the middle of each. Then she looked up into his eyes. He was bewildered and blinking, his mouth softly open.

She reached out and covered his hand with hers. She said she was sorry for telling him that awful story. For upsetting him, putting him off his brunch. She even managed a tear. She was just tired, she said. And crampy. And bitchy. When she had denigrated herself enough, he forgave her and dug in.

She wondered how long he would go on accepting the usual excuses. Still, it was true about being tired. Last night they had given another dinner party. Just after the soup, she had smilingly excused herself and gone into the kitchen. She had stood as far away from the closed door as she could, still hearing the talking and laughing and clinking and chewing. Then she had squatted down, knees to chin, and had scream-whispered shut up! shut up! shut up! into the pink-tinted darkness of her palms. She had stood up and dropped her hands just in time. Half a second later, he had poked

his head around the kitchen door. What was keeping her? They were ready for their fish.

First like a fish, they said. Then like a bird. A scrunched-up, featherless, purple-eyed bird. And what now? What did it look like now?

Steam rose from the yellow eyes on her plate. She tried to concentrate on watching him eat. He always ordered the same thing, and ate it with a little boy's gusto that usually made her smile. She watched him spread his potato pancakes with sour cream, then chop up his side order of sausages, then attack his fried egg, scrambling it up...

He pulled one of her hands away from her face. There WAS something wrong! Did she want to go home? No. Sure? Yes. She just couldn't eat. She'd just have her coffee. And she'd be fine.

Over the rim of her cup, she saw a tiny speck of shell in his egg. She should have told him about it. She watched it slide onto his fork, travel up into his mouth, be chewed and swallowed. She really should have said something. A person could choke on a speck of shell.

Choking is a possibility with a general, even if one eats nothing beforehand. Having told her this, the doctor had steepled his fingers and suggested she have a local. The discomfort was minimal and the procedure a fast one, thirty minutes at the most.

They'd have to be fast, he said, wiping his mouth. They had a lot planned besides picking out the prints. He motioned to the waiter for more coffee. Then he drummed his fingers, waiting.

Her eye traced his profile, his boyishly tousled hair, the important-looking thrust of his glasses. Where, she wondered, had her feeling for him gone? Had it been sucked up by the thing inside her? Everyone told her how lucky she was to have him. He got As in all the right categories. In those magazine surveys—"Quiche-eater or Caveman: Rate your Mate"—he would get a tick in the best box every time. He dressed well. He had a diagram of different knots taped over his tie rack. Before they went out, he always asked her anxiously if his knot was straight. Knowing he did not want a frivolous answer, she always took her time replying.

Just as he had taken his time before replying to her question. He had cleared his throat, taken his glasses off and cleaned them with his handkerchief. He always had a clean handkerchief. Then, his face neutral, he had sat at the table across from her and had folded his hands. He had answered, looking at his hands the whole time, that it was entirely up to her. He claimed no rights in the matter. It was her decision. It was hers. Then he had cleared his throat again, and assured her that, naturally, he would not leave her. Should she. Decide. To.

She had reached out and covered his hands with hers, saving him having to finish. She had seen his knuckles turning white.

He raised a finger for the bill, then asked the waiter for a coffee to go. For her, she realized. Because she had not been able to finish hers. He did little things like that. Saw her little needs and filled them.

She rose carefully while he held her coat, again aware of the thing bobbing beneath her breastbone. She knew, suddenly, that it was hollow. And she knew, of course, that it was not actually beneath her breastbone, but somewhere in her head. Everything happened in her head. She had an orgasm in her head. The stone in her shoe hurt in her head. She knew that. Still. She moved carefully, imagining the thing knocking against the red-ridged inner walls of her body.

The waiter brought her coffee and set it on the table in front of her. It was in a styrofoam cup with a fitted plastic lid. The lid was fogged with the heat of the contents. She stared at it. There it was. The forgotten thing she needed to tell him. That it was kept—not thrown out or burned right away, but kept in a covered styrofoam container. To be examined. The pieces identified. The results noted down. The procedure justified, its tangible results seen to be. Perhaps if he knew that it wasn't just gone, that it was somewhere, that it WAS...

He was shifting his feet impatiently behind her. They had to hurry. They had plans. She thrust her arms back into the sleeves of the coat he was holding. He had not noticed her looking at the cup. He was not aware that she left it behind.

Outside, the spring wind was fresh and clean. He grinned at her, his tie flapping crazily, his hair parting and reparting all over his head. He grabbed her hand and swung it. He told her the wind had rosied up her face, and that she was beautiful, and that he loved her.

Some moments, she knew, were the hooks on which she hung her life. She tried to fill herself up with the spring wind, right down to the bottom. It was going to be all right, she told herself. That covered styrofoam cup—surely she could just...

Just keep in mind what we want, he advised her. Take your time choosing. They had arrived at the print shop. They had a horizontal space to fill in their livingroom, and a vertical space in their bedroom. Their colours were grey and cream. Their accessories were brass.

She began flipping through a rack of prints, trying to think only of grey, cream and brass. That covered styrofoam cup... She would just tuck it inside. Inside the hollow stone beneath her breast, where everything else had gone. Her inner hands ran over it again. No cracks. No openings. And not a stone, after all. Her inner eyes saw the smooth, blue-grey mottled surface. She was flipping very quickly through the rack, not seeing the prints. How could she tuck the covered styrofoam cup inside if the egg had no opening?

But she had needed a general. She had needed to be knocked right out. The doctor with the steepled fingers had told her the pain would be worse, after, if she had a general. Best to stay awake.

But when she had wakened, there had been no pain. None. She had braced herself for it, had searched carefully within herself for it. Her inner hands had finally been stopped by the smooth walls of the egg.

The egg contained thirty minutes of her life. Had she just lain there? Had she even once screamed at them to stop?

She stopped flipping through the prints. He came up behind her to see what she was staring at. Van Gogh's *Wheatfield With Crows*. A long, thin, drawn-out painting of glaring yellow wheat and angry black crows in a too-blue sky. He let his breath out testily. Yes, he liked Van Gogh, too, but so did everybody else. And *Wheatfield With Crows* was ubiquitous, even trite. Besides, it wasn't in their colours. It wouldn't fit in with their plan.

Naturally, she agreed. And naturally, she loved the subtle, delicate Japanese prints he had found. They would be perfect for the horizontal space in the livingroom and the vertical space in the bedroom.

While he took the prints over to the framing table, she wandered back to the rack that still stood open at *Wheatfield With Crows*. She began thinking mad thoughts about slipping it out of its plastic envelope, rolling it up and sneaking it out of the shop under her coat. Hanging it anywhere she wanted, and letting it scream and scream from the wall. She was so absorbed that he had to call her three times to come see the frames he had chosen.

THE LURE

First, my father lifts the fish flip-flopping from its prison pail, then hits it on the head just behind the eyes with the butt of his hunting knife. The fish stiffens in his hand, the eyes becoming the smudged glass eyes of a doll. Then he zippers the knife point down either side of the backbone and peels the silvered skin down to the belly, exposing the grey-veined, bloodless flesh. His blunt fingers begin a delicate exploration for the natural divisions as he separates flesh from bone. He stacks the fillets on a piece of waxed paper and balances it carefully on my out-stretched palms.

"Take that in t'your mother."

The day belongs to my father. These three weeks are his only holiday all year, my mother reminds me as we walk the road behind the cabin. That is why her holiday and mine must fit around the edges of his.

The dirt of the road is a soft, dry powder for my bare feet. Behind us is an unbroken trail of dust suspended in the hot air, marking where we have walked. While we pick daisies and black-eyed susans, we can always catch sight of my father fishing alone in his boat in the middle of the lake. The flowers bend mournfully in the dry dirt by the side of the road. The surrounding grass is sere. I keep thinking of the vase of cool lake water waiting in the cabin for the thirsting stems of the flowers we pick.

By the time my mother and I have gone to the little highway store for ice cream cones, and have come back to the cabin crunching the last points of biscuit, my father is sitting at the picnic table, cleaning the day's catch. I give my flowers to my mother and go to sit across from him, watching.

For these three weeks, the three of us live in one of eight cabins that cluster around the owner's white house like chicks around a hen. My parents sleep in the bottom of the bunk bed, and I on the top, my face inches from the slanting wooden roof. Every morning I creep down the ladder past my sleep-rumpled parents, take a towel and bar of soap from the counter and go down to the shore to wash my hands and face in the lake.

There is a small sanded inlet where we go in to swim. The lake nudges gently, probing the shore with a finger. Its morning ripples are tiny. Even the minnows are still in the shallows. The lake in the morning is my own huge, gentled beast.

But by day, it belongs to my father. It carries him along as he cuts its surface with oar and outboard motor. Then it swallows the anchor he throws overboard and rocks his boat gently while he sits still as a monument, fishing.

I am fishing with him today—something that has never happened before. Last night he lit a cigarette and, along with the smoke, exhaled the words,

“Go out’n th’lake with me t’morrah?”

His grey cut-glass eye fixed on me. My mother did not turn around from the two-burner hot plate where she was frying fish. But I could tell she was waiting. So I nodded that, yes, I would go fishing with him.

I didn’t want to. I wanted to lie on my top bunk and read Nancy Drew, or dress and undress Barbie, forever surprised at the sight of her identical nippleless breasts. But I nodded.

And this morning, earlier than ever, I surprised the lake in its dawn smoothness. A perfect mirror for its ring of perfectly straight green pines. And no minnows at all in the shallows. Nothing. It had been waiting for me, but not as the gentled beast would wait. If I watched its centre long enough, surely a silver sword-tip would pierce the surface, held by a white hand on a white arm, slender as lake weed.

I shook my head and marched to the shore, where I spoiled the clear surface of the lake by washing my hands and face. I squatted for a long time on the bank, my face in the pink-tinted darkness of my hands.

Now, when the boat speeds up and the breeze turns to wind, my face begins to feel chapped. The joints of my right hand are water, for my father has let me handle the tiller of the outboard for the first time. Guided by his own square, freckled hand, the nose of the boat swings with grace. But under mine, it jerks and bounces and bucks. I can’t get used to pushing the tiller left to go right and right to go left. I am relieved when my father cuts the engine and drops the anchor, a rock-filled paint can with wire mesh at either end open to shed water.

The lake is choppy now, its dawn perfection the fading memory of a dream. It bobs our boat as hands would a balloon. Each of my father's cigarette butts makes a soft hiss as it hits the water. They form an escort for us of tiny yellow-brown vessels. To them, and to the water skimmers frantically rowing, we are an ocean liner.

Every few minutes, my father casts his line out and reels it part way in. I do it too, adopting his rhythm. I like to cast. My wrist knows how to send the fly in a perfect arc, and my thumb knows exactly when to release the button. I do not remember being taught this. Surely, if I had been taught, I would remember his rarely heard words, his even more rarely felt hand on my wrist.

Between casts, he sits with both forearms balanced on his knees, the wrists hanging. The right hand holds a cigarette. The left, with deceptive gentleness, cradles the fishing rod. Yet at the first dipping of the rod's tip, that hand will clench into iron.

"C'mon, ya bugger!"

When my mother is with us, she says a reproving "Bill!" and is ignored.

Usually, when she says his name, she puts a question mark after it—"Bill?"—as if she must first awaken him from a kind of sleep. He lifts his head and looks at her, and this is her cue to begin. She has developed a stream of unanswerable prattle to fill the hole of his silence. I try to think of what she says, but can remember only the rhythm and melody of her voice, not the actual words. She is as comfortable on the periphery of his silence as he is within it.

I am not comfortable. Nancy Drew always says bright, chirpy things to her lawyer father, who steeples his fingers and comes back with precisely the bit of wisdom she needs at the moment. But I can't think of anything to say. I strain against the silence, wondering if he is straining back.

This is the longest I have spent alone with him since the day he took me with him on his rounds in the company car. Peterborough, Gravenhurst, North Bay, Sudbury. Names barely mentioned over supper, when my mother manages to get out of him where he's been. And now I was seeing them. At least, I was seeing the corners of them he visited.

They were identical islands of noise dotting the long, silent miles we covered. Dusty offices flimsily attached to dustier factories. Screen doors that banged. Plants quietly browning in curtainless, sun-drenched windows. Chipped arborite counters with men behind

them whose eyes widened when they saw my father. They called him "Bill!" with an exclamation mark.

And my father pushed his hat back and leaned his elbows on the counter, his hips cocked at an angle. He talked loud, saying "This here" and "Not nothin'." His grin was fixed and fierce. He barked a laugh that would have made my mother look away and sniff.

To explain me, he would boast, "Got muh sweetie with me!" or "This here's muh honey!" I would stare warm-faced at the scuffed floor while roars of "Hey, hey, hey!" or "Ain't she a cutie!" crashed like waves over my head.

Then a great to-do would be made about what was to be done with me while business was conducted. "She kin sit right over here!" "Yah! She'll be fine, wontcha Honey?" One of the behind-the-counter men found me a dusty, cellophane-wrapped sucker.

Then I would sit, hearing but not comprehending their loud talk. It was like being in a strange house, or even a strange country. I could not speak the language, and could offend by simply being. So I sat perfectly still.

It was the same as standing perfectly still beside my mother while she talked over the backyard fence to Mrs. Kiraja. They both stood with their laundry baskets balanced on one hip, sometimes dabbing at the front of their hair in a token tidying gesture. They called each other "Mrs." and spoke in hushed, courteous tones, looking directly into each other's wide eyes. Though they might shift their laundry baskets from one hip to the other, they would never put them down on the ground, for to do this would be to suggest they actually had the time to talk.

A man, he works from sun to sun,
But a woman's work is never done.

My mother sometimes said this to me, along with,

A son's a son till he takes a wife,
But a daughter's a daughter all her life.

She liked poems that rhymed, and she liked hymns. Sometimes, in the middle of the day, in her housedress, with dust motes boiling up from the keys, she would play the piano and sing,

And He WALKS with me and He TALKS with me
And He tells me I am His Oooowwwnnn...

Or "Jerusalem," or "The Old Rugged Cross," or "Onward Christian Soldiers," all in her high, uncertain soprano.

It was on a Sunday, in church, that it came to me that my mother was actually a happy woman. On Sunday, she was the chooser of shirts, the straightener of ties, the whitener of shoes and the mender of gloves. In church, she bloomed while my father looked artificial.

Through the week, the house was her country, from the laundry tubs in the basement, up through the kitchen, into the farthest corners of the bleach-smelling linen closet, and up into my room, where she poked under my bed with her mop, dragging out grey tumbleweeds of dust. Only certain powers she conceded to my father when he came home. She would say "Bill?" then tell of a faucet dripping, an oven that stayed cool, a sewing machine in need of oil.

I doubt she ever came with my father on a typical day's run and sat where I sat in the dusty offices. I doubt she ever wanted to. Listening to the men feeling acutely my difference, I tried to imagine myself holding a laundry basket, talking over a fence to a neighbour lady. I could not. I could not seem to put my face into that picture. So I looked again at the men, and wondered what would happen here if I were a boy.

Would my father say, "This here's muh boy," or even, "Wantcha t'meet my son"? "Son" had a ring to it. Shimmering, like the sound of cymbals meeting. Would there be handshakes, and then would I stand beside him, peeping over the counter, listening to the hard talk, learning?

It didn't matter. I was a daughter. All my life.

The lake tickles the sides of our rocking boat, making whispering, kissing sounds. Beneath us, the water is deep and dark. When we set out, the lake bottom dropped away with alarming speed, its innocent green weeds becoming sunken logs with branches thrust up like dead men's arms. Now the water is black. Only a few inches of wood keep it from me. I draw my feet up and away under the wooden seat.

He notices, and asks if I am uncomfortable. I know he is asking if I want to go to the bathroom, and I shake my head. He then goes down the list: am I too hot? Need a hat? Thirsty? He has a plastic bottle full of water. When I shake my head to all of these, he relaxes and casts again, his eye following the fly in its flight to the water. As he reels in, he intones, "The vorpal blade went snicker-snack."

Then he does the whole poem, his diction intact for once. He glances at me now and then, but looks away on:

And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!

Nancy Drew would grin and recite the poem with her father, then clap her hands with glee and demand to hear it again. But all I can manage is an embarrassed smile.

At one time or another he has told me his version of *Moby Dick*, *Mort d'Arthur*, *The Odyssey*—books he read before he was fourteen and had to quit school to work. I never see him read anything now but the sports section and the comics.

But I have found his books in the house and put them on my own bookshelf in my bedroom. The print is archaic, the pages faintly browned on the edges. They smell of dust and damp rags. On the inside front cover of each, in ink-bottle ink, is my father's name, school and classroom number. I try to imagine him in a cap and plus-fours, but cannot.

I should be able to. Sometimes when I am at my desk, I hear his slow step on the stair. He ascends cautiously, as if crossing a border. Perhaps he is planning what he will say. Once in my room, he pulls out my white-and-gold painted dresser chair and straddles it like a horse, his elbows resting on its frail bentwood back. I put down my pen or close my book. He stares at the wall. Then he begins,

"Y'know, in the east end, when I was growin' up..."

I have never seen the east end. It is filed in my mind with Troy and Xanadu. If I were to see it, I would probably be shocked by the absence of horses clopping by, bobbing their heads in rhythm with their feet like clumsy dancers.

My father left the east end for the talk-filled offices dotting the road, for the country of my mother where he is silent, and for my country, where he speaks without interruption. His own country is his basement workbench, where he whistles tunes like "Flow Gently, Sweet Afton" and "The Last Rose of Summer." He whistles slowly and mournfully, so I know the songs are sad long before I hear their words.

Sometimes I stand on the edge of the dim, unfinished part of the basement, and watch him as he stands haloed by the one hanging yellow bulb, his undershirt a white Y against his freckled back. His hard brown arms shoot out to left and right. Bits and pieces—each, however tiny or dusty, compartmentalized in a dirty cardboard box according to specific use. Jars filled with nails in exact gradations. Potions in bottles—paint, turpentine, varnish, oil.

He carries his magic into the country of my mother to oil the sewing machine or fix the oven. He has entered mine to paper my room in Robin Hood wallpaper. That was when I was seven. Last year, when I was eleven, he painted it all over pink.

Sometimes, in my room, he examines his own handiwork during one of his long, smoke-filled pauses. Or his eye might lock onto something of mine—a pyramid of bristly curlers on my dresser, or a pink plastic hand whose splayed fingers are to hold rings. He will stare at it silently for several seconds. Then he might pick it up, turning it quarter-inch by quarter-inch, perhaps taking it apart and putting it back together. I never tell him what these things are for. His investigation lends them a dignity far above the actual. To reveal that they are for curling one's hair or displaying one's baubles would somehow disappoint him.

And he seems a disappointed enough man. Without knowing its source, I sense his disappointment as one senses the lip of a hole just beyond one's feet.

Now, in the boat under the hot sun, he sighs deeply and reels in. I do the same. We have caught nothing. He mops his brow with his scrunched-up hat, unscrews the lid of the plastic water bottle and drinks. He passes it to me and I drink, tasting cigarette on the rim.

"Let's drift."

When he pulls up the dripping anchor, the lake takes us over, nudging us toward a bullrush-choked shore. I begin to notice the tips of weeds poking through the water's surface, tickling the boat's underside. We are heading for the bullrushes, inch by whispering inch.

I look at him. His shirt is unbuttoned, his head back, eyes closed, throat exposed to the sun. I think of things to tell him, but my mouth dries at the thought.

I could tell him that I have compartmentalized my desk, and everything in it has an exact use. Or that last year, I saw a pink-and-white girl's room in a magazine and didn't want it, but was scared that maybe I should want it. So I asked him to paint over

my Robin Hood wallpaper. And when I saw it all finished, I was filled with panic.

I could tell him that the panic had no name, no sharp edge, until he came to my room and told me *Mort d'Arthur*. When he got to the part about pulling the sword from the stone, his fist clenched and his face became rigid.

I don't know whether it was the story, or the way he looked when he told it. But after, I could never get the thought of a cool, jewelled hilt out of my mind. I kept thinking about finding it, going up to it, reaching for it. Imagining the moment before the tug. The fear that it might not move, or that it might. Or the worst fear—that before I even touched it, I would hear laughter.

My mouth is so dry it feels as if it has been sealed up. My father's eyes are still closed. I feel the moment swell and die like a wave.

We are in very shallow water now, butting against a wall of weeds. Something glitters on the end of a swaying rush, and I reach out and lift it off. It is a piece of fishing tackle, an oval silver medallion, shaped like a fish. A three-pronged hook holds it to the rush's bushy head. Pulling it away, I leave a wound in the brown velvet surface that leaks seeds.

I lay the treasure carefully on my palm and extend my hand to my father.

"This was caught on a bullrush."

My voice sounds as dry as my mouth feels. He is not asleep. He turns his head and looks directly at my hand, as if he had been watching all along what I was doing. He lifts the lure carefully, so as not to snag my skin with its hook.

After examining it from every angle, he says,

"C'd get lake trout with that."

The moment is now. I say,

"Let's fish again. And if we catch anything with that, I want to clean it. I've watched you. I know how."

His eye fixes me, the eyebrow cocked. After a time, he nods. Then he straightens up, drops one oar into the water and begins poling us out of the shallows.

IN THE BLOOD

Everything speaks at last. Everything finds its voice. The crocheted antimacassar has draped my typewriter silently for years. It is my threadbare link with the notorious. And with Maria. (Me an' Mree-ah! Me an' Mree-ah!) When my own three-year-old voice woke me up a few nights ago, I knew at once why the antimacassar took so long to speak for itself.

Until then, I did everything I could to force it to tell its story. I read and re-read every account of the Kidd murder I could find. I even steeled myself to study the police photographs of John Kidd's body, a body sawn into bits by the man's bride and her lover. Checking the dates, I reflected that I was just turning three when the young Mrs. Kidd was running the table saw they had used. (Actually, she had used it all by herself. Her lover had collapsed ashen-faced in a corner.) But it was the dozens of newspaper photographs of Ruby Kidd that I studied the longest. Hers was without doubt a beautiful face, dark-eyed and dark-mouthed like a doe's.

Headlines, which she dominated for weeks, called her The Black Widow. Of her lover, the papers had surprisingly little to say, considering his equal guilt. Perhaps his complete nervous collapse shortly after his arrest made them lose interest. At any rate, they lingered lovingly over Ruby Kidd. It was not only her beauty that held them, but her utter lack of remorse.

When caught, Ruby Kidd immediately volunteered the name and whereabouts of her lover. When driven to the spot where the largest pieces of her bridegroom had been found, she cheerfully described rolling his torso down the hill and covering it with leaves. Of the still missing head, she said with a shrug, "Oh THAT. I burned it. Made a helluva mess of the inside of the chimney." Back at the station, she smiled brilliantly at a young policeman, then asked for a cigarette.

Ruby Kidd crocheted the antimacassar in prison. It was part of our household lore when I was growing up—established, unquestioned. Aunt Irene's embroidered runner. Grandma Stacey's tablecloth. Ruby Kidd's antimacassar.

It is an exquisite piece of lace, round, with a pinwheel design in the centre. I can see her small fingers, the nails starting to shed the last coat of red polish they would ever have, wrapping the white cotton thread round the silver hook and pulling it through. Wrapping it round and pulling it through. The outermost edge of the antimacassar is bright red. I can see her yanking a handful of thread from the red spool and working it round, while the square jaw of a watching prison matron sags in surprise. I believe this is Ruby Kidd's signature. For it renders the thing vulgar and vaguely disturbing. It makes it look as if it has been held daintily by two fingertips in the centre, then dipped in blood.

The torso of John Kidd was found in our neighbourhood shortly after my third birthday. Children played near the spot where it lay, barely hidden. Maria may well have been one of those children.

Me and Maria. My earliest memory is of my feet in their new white shoes rising before my eyes as Maria levers my stroller up onto the curb. Hers is the first human voice I remember hearing: "Fold over, and over and DOWN." In Maria's sun-browned fingers, a piece of white paper becomes a little boat. A flat-bottomed boat with a pointed prow. Perfect. So perfect, I put both my hands behind my back and will not so much as touch. But Maria takes one of my hands as we walk the dusty road to the bridge over the brook. In the other hand, she holds the little boat. I watch it the whole time we walk. It nestles in Maria's hand, saved from the launching wind by her thumb crooked over its paper prow.

Then we are on the bridge, looking down through the rust-speckled railing at the impossible distance the boat must fall to the water. On the way down, it could blow in the wind and snag on the shore, there to lie slowly soaking up the damp among the orange peels and mud-caked Coke bottles. In the water, it could brush against one of the cold, gleaming stones dotting the brook, and spin helplessly upside down for ever.

It could. I press my hands into my eyes, suddenly wanting it all to be over. But Maria's arms come around my shoulders from behind, and her breath is warm in my ear: "Look!" And I do look, and suddenly she and I are standing together braced against the wind as the paper boat carries us along through the cold, clear water, navigating the boulders, turning the shores into clean, green blurs, faster, faster, while Maria chants in my ear, "You an' me are goin' to the SEA! You an' me are goin' to the SEA!"

It stops there. When I try to remember what happened next, I find I have come to the edge of something, and am looking down into nothing. Maria lives for me now in coloured fragments. Were I to piece them all together, I would have merely a larger fragment, for most of them have dissolved with time.

In one of the few that remain to me, I am running across a ploughed field toward some cows standing behind a barbed-wire fence. Their white faces watch me impassively, as if they know what will happen. I reach up and grab the topmost wire, and feel something burn my palms. When I try to pull my hands away, the fire in them flares unbearably, for they are both impaled on barbs. I hang there and shriek, hot urine bathing my inner thighs, while the cows blink and chew.

At once Maria is there, carefully lifting my hands off the barbs. I suck in my breath and look at my palms. The cuts are ragged, and so deep as to be black in their centres. My breath comes out in a wail more of horror than pain, and I close up my hands, never, never to open them again.

But Maria takes one of my balled-up hands in each of hers and says softly, her face bent so low over them that I can smell her sun-warmed hair, "Open. Open. Open. Open." My fingers hear and obey, uncurling like small animals waking up. Maria's face bends lower over one of my hands, and I feel her lips press softly into the palm. Then she bends to the other one and kisses it as slowly and gently as she did the first. When she raises her head, a sparkling thread of saliva stretches between my palm and her lips.

Perhaps my parents invited her along on a family picnic. That would explain how we came to be in a field. I have so few facts about Maria. All I know for sure is that one day my mother heard a tap on the screen door and looked through it to see a thin, tanned girl of eight or nine. She had shiny black bangs cut straight across her forehead and a crooked smile that produced a dimple on one side and a slight narrowing of one thickly-lashed eye. She said her name was Maria and that she lived over there with a man and a lady, and could she please look after the little girl? She had seen her playing in the front yard, and wanted to look after her. No, she didn't want any money. My mother, who had herself tapped on doors as a child and begged to be allowed to look after toddlers, studied Maria sharply for a moment, then nodded.

I have no sense of time in all of this. My time with Maria could have been a year, a month, a week. But I do remember now how it

ended. That much came back to me the night after I finished going through microfilmed newspaper clippings on the Kidd murder.

I had flipped to one of the dozens of sob-sister articles that had attempted to drum up sympathy for Ruby Kidd. It must have been like trying to strike sparks from an iceberg. This particular one had apparently given up on Ruby, and had taken a whole new angle:

Mrs. Kidd has only one visitor besides her lawyer. Once a week, on Sunday, an eight-year-old girl is driven by her foster parents to the Stinson Street jail. There, she is frisked and ushered into a room containing a long, narrow table with wooden chairs on either side of it. Under a sign that reads KISS ONCE OR SHAKE HANDS HERE, she kisses Ruby Kidd, then sits down with her, her hands clenched on the table. Mrs. Kidd smokes during the visit, laughs often and calls the girl "Kiddo." The child is usually silent. If, as she often does, she brings Mrs. Kidd a present, it is first opened and examined by the attending matron. Should Mrs. Kidd ever give her anything in return, it will also have to be examined before the child will be allowed to keep it. On her way out, she is frisked again. Her name is Mary. She is the illegitimate daughter of Ruby Kidd. When Mrs. Kidd's trial began, Mary was placed in a foster home and her name altered.

I sat in the library until the lights were flicked, the microfilm cassettes scattered before me on the long table. Why had I never questioned the presence in our home of an antimacassar made in prison by a murderess? Why had I never questioned my own hoarding of it since childhood? Perhaps I really did have all the facts.

"Me an' Mree-ah! Me an' Mree-ah!"

The last time I saw Maria was the day she had promised to take me to visit the house where she was living. I had a song for the day, and was chanting it as I jumped down the stairs from my room, one jump per syllable: "Me an' Mree-ah! Me an' MREE-AH! ME AN' MREE-AH!"

It was a time when people hit their kids. This surprised no one, least of all the kids. But though my mother's hand was more noisy than painful, I drew in a huge breath at the injustice of it. Before I could let my breath out in a bellow, my mother showed me her palm and asked, "You want more? You know how to get it?" I certainly did. I sat on the bottom step, hands clapped over my mouth, breath coming out in squeaks.

I could see her standing near the front door, staring through the screen as if waiting for someone. Sunk in the utter desolation of a child fallen from grace with her mother, I thought about how angry she had been with me, for days now. Ever since Maria's last visit.

Maria! I lowered my hands from my mouth, allowing myself to start blubbering. Maria! I had been saying Maria's name! That was the bad thing! I ran into the livingroom, my steps breaking my rising wail into hiccups. I wanted to bury my face in my mother's apron and tell her I would never, never, never...

But she was propping open the screen door and calling to someone. Her voice was high and tight and strained: "Go home! You hear me? Just go home! And don't you come back here!" Maria was standing on the sidewalk, staring at us. I clutched my mother's apron and stared back. My mother's voice grew desperate: "Go AWAY, Maria! We... don't want you anymore!" Maria shifted her weight from foot to foot, her black-lashed eyes fluttering.

I saw my chance. "Don' WANT Mree-ah!" I screeched, then smiled expectantly up at my mother. She pushed me behind her, closed the screen door, then swung the inner door shut. She leaned her back up against it and whispered, her eyes shut, "She won't be back." Then, very slowly, she walked to the couch and sat down. Just as slowly, she lowered her face into her hands and began to sob. She knew I was near her without looking. Her arms shot out and grabbed me, and she rocked me, moaning, "Oh honey baby, I'm sorry! Oh darling sweetie pie, I'm so sorry!" She rocked me and cried and said she was sorry until my father came home.

That night, when I should have been asleep, I lay awake listening as she said over and over to my father, "I HAD to. You know what her mother is. And it runs in the blood. I mean, if ANYTHING had happened, I could never have forgiven myself, knowing what I know now. It runs in the blood. Doesn't it, Bill? Doesn't it run in the blood?" Up in my bed, separated from them by a whole storey, I could still see my father's silent, barely perceptible nod.

And now, though I have no facts to back it up, I can see Maria on her last visit to our house, shyly handing the antimacassar to my mother. I can see her looking up into my mother's face, suddenly sure that here was someone she could tell, even though her foster parents had warned her never to. I can hear her saying softly, "My mummy made this." And I can see my mother noticing for the first time Maria's dark fawn eyes. The promise in her face of great beauty. I can hear her asking, "What is your mummy's name?"

Maria, Maria, I did not see you walk away from our closed door. I do not know how long you stood there on the hot pavement, waiting for it to open. But I hope that your paper boat has reached the sea, and that someone along the way has kissed your hands.

Gerald Lynch / ONE'S COMPANY

Here, one neither smiles approvingly nor nods promptly when you pause. Such company is bidingly solicitous. Such company is (if one may be permitted the frank expression) after something. You may act so yourself under exacting conditions, which is fine and as it should be. But one neither concurs nor flatters by grunt or grin.

One sits silently as you talk. To maintain one in dumb witness to your discourse, you have but to buy one's beer. When details of domesticity or profession steal centre stage, you need suffer no apprehension at their cuing interruption. You can concentrate solely on such things as the progress of a pregnancy, the miracle of acquiring language/syntax/grammar, the security of your job, the rewards of your work that surpass material gain, etc. You can, in short, learn to couch your self-obsession in other-referential terms. This is fine and as it should be.

One has no home, no family, no wife, no job. One's company is, as it were, one's company. One skittishly harbours no tales to talk of, so he will not obstruct the ascent of your anecdotes to climax. One was once wont to reflect and expound on his life at length and brazenly to fashion all manner of meaning between what was, what is, and what shall be. At the omega of time and space, there rested a musing one. But some time ago one's life gave up its ghost of meaning. One admitted that his tales had been told before, and better. As a teller of tales, one began to distrust his paling persona. Words soon ceased to have significant reference. To make a long story short—*Amen*. (Words to live by, those last seven.)

Ahem. Here, then, and now, one pours instead the foundation of trust for our acquaintance: what one was is of no further interest; what he is he will remain, silently so. To repeat, you have no call to concern yourself about distractions along these lines. Here, you may speak, or you may eavesdrop on others.

One appears here each day to pass his time from noon till six-thirty. People like yourself come to know one, to sit with him when they are alone and buy his beer. But one waxes self-indulgently.

You come here for rest and relaxation. This is fine and as it should be. Though expectations will also be met. There is no call for concern over being seen to enjoy yourself alone when one is present. For example, you may laugh as freely at your own jokes in one's company as you would snort fearfully at your discontinuous life in lonely circumstances. But you must not expect one to laugh while you are here, as he has heard most jokes before. By way of illustration, one offers the following:

Some time ago, an old mailman asked himself at one's table, "Why do dogs lick their own genitals?" He paused too short a time, but let that pass. "Because they can!" he shouted and howled freely. After he left, one retired to one's nondescript room above. There, the humorous insight of the joke appeared quite striking: the inexhaustible (it must appear) incongruity between aspiration and achievement, the (as it were) bare-balled somatic deflation. (You see already that one is not entirely without a sense of humour.)

You may choose to bring some of your many superior friends here, to slum, as they say. One used to caution with vain looks against such indiscretion, but one has come to tolerate this perfectly human foible. (The unfaithful spouse is compelled to arrange to see the unimaginative mate in the same room with the accommodating lover and so forth.) A few conditions in the event of such daring-do:

- 1) do not feel anxious
- 2) do not shirk
- 3) do not covertly signal
- 4) do not indicate your and your friends' natty attire.

Nor should you secretly send a draft or pitcher to one's table. Nor should you drop a five-dollar bill when you pass on the way to the men's room. Unexpressed affront has been taken at such presumption. One is neither fool nor whore . . . though both can be found here.

If one is sitting alone when you arrive with your well-to-do friends, that is fine. You should consider that one is not here. If another customer is sitting at one's table, that is at it should be. You should use the other's presence to assist the obliteration of one from your considerable conscience. Should a member of your party look about this empty room and notice one, he will turn to you and say some such thing as, 'You've been in this hole in the afternoon before, you said? Do you know that one over there?'

You must feel free to look in one's general direction and say, 'Who? I see no one.' Then slap the table and laugh gregariously as you hurriedly shout your order to the bartender. Such behaviour will promote camaraderie in your party and may assist a sale or purchase. This is fine and as it should be.

Should a member of your party then order a conciliatory beer sent to one, that, too, is fine and as it should be. One will lift the gift glass to him only. Thus one makes sympathetic acquaintance.

Should you return alone after your business with your friends is successfully transacted, you must act as though nothing happened between us. Ideally, nothing did. When you order our beer, simply shout at one, 'What'll yours be? One . . . ?' This is fine and as it should be. Your voice argues volumes for your sociability: you could *choose* to be alone. But one does not answer, of course, let alone order preferences. Whatever beer you drink, order two. Similarly, if you must buy our beer in pitchers, order two pitchers. If, after two or three glasses, you feel absolved and eager to be off, do not concern yourself about waste. Simply joke about the shame of leaving good beer . . . what with all the thirsty children in the world! Laugh, burp loudly if you wish, and leave. One will drink what is left in your pitcher after you have gone.

But if you should choose instead to relax and drink pitcher after pitcher, or thirty glasses of draft, or fifteen bottles, that is of course fine and as it should be. The beer here is inexpensive, promptly served, and passing cold. You must feel free to get as drunk as you feel inclined. One will stay with you. Nobody, but nobody, has ever been taken from one's table and ejected for simple drunkenness. Allow one to illustrate:

Once upon a time at one's table, a male nurse on the day of his forced retirement threw up beer and partially intact pepperoni sticks. He felt that he had wasted his life in a traditionally female occupation and that "they" should not have been allowed to "boot him out on his fanny, anyway." Pathetic? Tut, tut. He was allowed to persevere in a raw drunk, and he proceeded to bounce some memorable good times off one.

Another time, a middle-aged gentleman whose assets had been put in receivership silently left one's table. He cut his wrists with a broken bottle in the men's room. He was back the following afternoon with a detective, a psychiatrist, and an officer of the Salvation Army. The detective demanded to know with whom the gentleman had been sitting the previous afternoon. The bartender answered, "With no one." To the apparent dismay of the Army officer, the bartender then agreed with the psychiatrist that brighter colours would help; however, he insisted that his clientele prefer it here as it is, though he did not look to one for confirmation. The Salvation Army officer was allowed to tape up a poster in the men's room. The poster, barely a pencil sketch, depicted a huge and transparent Jesus Christ standing back of a bank of telephones that were manned by Army personnel. For purely business reasons—for the sake of one's company—one removed the poster to his room above.

The draft glasses here are filmed. You are well advised to drink from the bottle.

(Incidentally, you, too, may choose to consume pepperoni sticks or pickled eggs or microwaved corned-beef-on-rye. Such nutrients may well be bracing for the time of late beers. But one, in his relentless thirst, does not confuse his stomach with food. Never badger one to accompany you to an eatery.)

If you are a frequent binge (i.e., therapeutic) drinker, you will soon exhaust your impressive store of lore. May one presume here to present a list of subjects and idiomatic segues for the time of middle-to-late beers? One directs you to the first column, though you might find some of the second engaging. In fact, feel free to browse, to read up-and-down, across, or both, or not at all.

<i>Unwanted</i>	<i>Untitled</i>	<i>Unbearable</i>
Unions once filled a need, but now they don't.	Creative financing temporarily saved the housing market/your ass.	Post-modernism, post-structuralism, and the Spasmodics
Dad was a tough old bugger, but principled.	The old man saw it all coming, but would he help you?	Androgyny and <i>fin de siècle</i> decadence
The school of hard knocks	You could have been where <i>Ms. M-B-A</i> Armstrong is, but for the kids.	A business degree from Harvard, and they kicked him out on his fanny at sixty-five.
<i>Playboy</i> was better when it stuck to big knockers.	Some of that stuff you can rent is pretty hot, but they keep the hard-core for their own parties on inventory day.	If the big guy can afford to let you go, you may take early retirement to write a novel.
Women don't really want equality.	Statistics show that a Black woman wearing knee pads can waltz into the exec.'s can in 3.7 years.	Look at Germaine Greer. Or better not. Haw-haw.
Vasectomies shrivel 'em up like two sunkist raisins and cause leukemia.	You'd cut it off for a key to the exec.'s can.	Youth is wasted on women.*
More men have hemmies than will admit it.	Ballbreakers gave you the bleeding ulcer.	The big guy's collection of flagellation imprints is quite striking. But some of that stuff you can rent...
You're doin' all right, thank you.	And of course they're off "sick" at least three days a month.*	The young negress in purchasing
Let's get serious for a moment.*		See "Untitled," item five.
*Order more beer.	*Laugh and spray martini as though you don't mean it.	*Do not smile or fiddle with your swizzle; one sits still for the aphorism.

The time of late beers will bring on the tender feelings, and the confusion of beer and sentiment will prove, one knows, a breeder of bathos. Nonetheless, you must feel free to turn to one of the three walls that protect you here and cry silently and manfully. You will then talk freely of old loves, of those you hurt with the ambivalence of your pure passions. One will listen and understand what a lover you were in your day—and are yet. Power and passion will salute the unworthy world in the way you toss back your beer and lift your eyebrows. Do not cock even a fleetingly self-conscious eye over the rim of your tilted glass and read irony into one's enduring silence. One does not judge. You, on the other hand, must feel free for the sake of flagging monologue to assume that one holds any number of incendiary opinions.

As you consume more and more beer, you will talk of death, of course, of those who are gone and to whom you never professed your love. Somewhat like one, you will determine the uselessness of words and conclude with a concession to impenetrable mystery. That is all that can be said, is fine and as it should be. One's silence in this respect should be gainfully employed as mute testimony to your common sense. Who in his right mind, and after so much beer, could be expected to see, let alone to concede, the uselessness also of, uh, "impenetrable mystery," was it?

Fortified so, you will then revile life, rant, condemn, rave, curse, and resolve to rutting indiscriminately. No, indeed not! A growing family and a mortgage do not constitute psychic emasculation or the death of your, uh, "dream."

In the morning, when your throat is raw from singing and smoking and snoring and . . . ? No-no, no need to scurry blindly like a crosseyed cockroach in a suddenly lighted toilet. Forget those wet images from the previous afternoon that sit like a bale of waterlogged tobacco in your belly. You must feel free to return here, to sit with one and proclaim that you are on the waggon. One has been known to forget himself more thoroughly and toast such resolve.

You may of course inquire if you did anything foolish in the time of ultimate beers. You will selectively recite what you choose to recall and end by exclaiming, "Jesus H! Imagine! Singing those old Beatle songs! I'll be damned. . . . Uh, I didn't. . . .?"

Tut, tut. That is all you need bother to remember. All is all right. We were both too drunk to remember. Memory plays tricks; a drunk's memory plays drunken tricks. Sit still for Christ's sake! . . . Pardon please. This is fine and as it should be.

Between such low and high spirits—in mid-cycle—you will have time only for a quick beer. In this event, you should consider lending one some money, ten dollars, say. You see, one has neither low nor high points. One rests outside vicissitude, so one must have his beer. It is disconcerting to one and all the way one's memory can be jarred by thirst and/or financial stringency. One remembers a generous man who resented his third child, a fleeting acquaintance who had to be coaxed and who loved only his first wife, a stingy stranger who covertly cheated a powerful friend, a . . . But pardon, please. One again reflects self-indulgently on his a-history.

As you move out of these periodic troughs of restorative mediocrity, the number of beers you allow yourself will increase dramatically. You will come then to realize more fully the relative inexpense of one's being here—especially so when again you enact exactly the same routine of singing and crying in precisely the same detail. But this, too, is fine and as it should be. And yes, it must have been the solitary drunk at the far table who cried lonesomely. One makes no claim to perfect recall.

To conclude this introduction: aside from the small matter of remuneration, you must never imagine that one can be offended. You can always be certain that one has seen much worse (if one may so designate such justifiable exposure): the male nurse and the bankrupt businessman, to name but the two previously mentioned. One could mention others, but they are living still, generously so.

Finally, when you move from this city, there is no call to inform one. One disdains the artificial scene. If you lend more than is customary for you, one will forget, naturally.

But one *does* reflect overmuch. Already you are reading one's thoughts. Yes, *do* sit down. A quick cold one? Yes.

Edward Mycue / TWO POEMS

THE VOICES AND MARY LOUISE

"I let my love run away with me.
And the news spread rapidly. No.
The doors were locked. Even Rhoda
reached away from me. Her greyish
look did not consign me to heaven.
Once, when Charles read to me a
love-letter type of poem from an
old magazine called *Experiment* by
a William Empson, from another time,
the first line was like schizophrenia.
'AND NOW SHE CLEANS HER TEETH INTO THE LAKE...'
I cannot speak from myself in other
kinds or systems of ideas. They
speak through me. At time, love bids
and then I know I am back inside me.
Mostly I am the expression of a mass-
unconscious. When I was at college
my friend Humphrey showed me a painting
he had, by Magritte, of a cannon pointed
at walls, cubicles, trees, parts of
people—at the symbols of our time. To
me, the merest spoke: image grew a voice.
Ever since the Holy Shroud has spoke.
My voice takes shapes and goes astray.
I could not live with Charles' dream
I left him for I fell in love I remember."

THE VAPOUR ZONE, GOOD MORNING

and come with me on this great
American bus ride. Meet the
girl with the ratted hair; meet
the tattooed grandmother; meet
the man who growls; and be
warned that, eventually, every-
body smells. The windows never
open. Let's make a pact: let's
not ask for addresses. I'm
Margie and my daughter tried
to kill me with her boyfriend
in the car. I'm going far.
Hello, I'm Mr. Eric McKutchen
and I'm never going back home.
I'd rather roam. Hello, I'm a
runaway, says the fourteen year
old; got his ticket with what
he's sold. Himself. He wants
to be held so he can sleep. In
the morning at the back, the head
smells. We're gathered there at
back, emptying our guts all night;
to hear and to be heard on the
long back seat in the two rear rows.
In the vapour zone, smoking by the
head, we spill 'em. Good morning.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

RAYMOND SOUSTER was born, educated, raised, and is still living in Toronto. He recently published a book of poems, *It Takes All Kinds* (Oberon, 1986), and is currently working on two books, *Loving You*, a book of love poems, and *Asking For More*.

MARION DOUGLAS moved from Ontario to Alberta five years ago. She works in Calgary as a school psychologist, and, when her two children are in bed, she writes.

GEORGE RAMMELL concentrates on producing large, very labour-intensive sculptures. The three works shown here and another work-in-progress, tentatively called *Bear Temple*, will be exhibited in the near future. He has taught at Capilano College, at ECCAD, and at the Visual Arts Centre of Alaska.

KATHLEEN MILLER is a Toronto freelance actor and writer. She has published stories and articles in *Flare*, *The Globe and Mail*, and *TCR* (#23), and has four times been a finalist in the CBC Literary Contest.

GERALD LYNCH teaches English at the University of Ottawa. He has published numerous stories, essays, and reviews, including a story in *TCR* #23. Other stories are forthcoming in *The Dalhousie Review*, *Canadian Fiction Magazine*, *The Canadian Forum*, and *The Wascana Review*.

EDWARD MYCUE lives and writes in San Francisco.

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