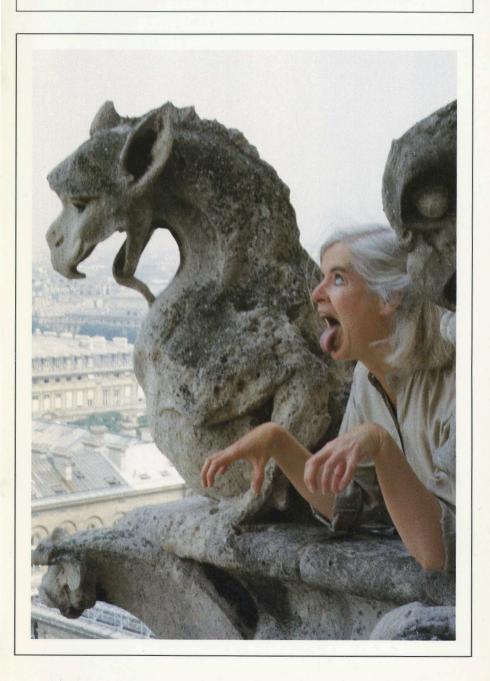
# THE GAPILANO BRIVERY



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# THE GAPTANO REMIEW

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## Gary Geddes / THE DREAM BED

Driven by divers needs, whiff of extinction, wind playing along the fluted sandstone, mushroom-shaped hoodoos.

The heart goes to bed hungry, fossils of old loves clearly delineated in its petrified workings,

limpid memories.

Here, at least, the medicine is reported to be good. Under their paint the old ghosts smile.

A place beyond options, language of bones.

Below lies the river, the stream unsalted, all that is left,

itself but a thin line recalling ocean.

I join the silent ones gathered on this mound to purge themselves, ground only a great dying could sanctify.

Words and clothes left in small heaps at the bottom.

Hot coals, prick of cactus. I can't recall the dialogues, gothic in intent.

Bone fever. Not what you might think. A stake in the future, one's name in textbooks.

It won't pay the mortgage.

The rush too. Frenzied youths lighting out after dinner to sprint up and down slopes, in case new rain exposed a femur.

So we dig, awaiting the skeleton that is fully articulated, that tells its own story without invention. Even as river mud settled around my ankles I could not resist the inevitable pun on the word 'divorce.' Betrayal, deceit, events no secular shaman could dispel.

Flesh conspires its own survival and demise. We ride the rapids of its descent at our peril. Remove, with care, the overburden, brush it by hand, tidy up with dental pick and toothbrush. Spread glyptol lavishly over exposed parts.

Apply the plaster jacket layer by layer.

A wise move, we were never transported easily.

What will it reveal, the carbon-testing? After the great explosion dust covered the sun and plants died. Could we have steered a different course, prepared alternate diets, sources of light?

Horned creatures, awkward as always. Pieces of the puzzle still missing. 60,000,000 years is not too long to wait for wisdom.

Long after we perish red currant bushes will explode with colour, weight of fruit bowing them to earth.

Maybe age will bring dignity, the white hair of cottonwoods, cicadas in the branches hymning dawn.

We'll lie together absolved of grief, our bones intermingled among the roots.

### Patricia Nolan / TWO STORIES

### **DEATH MASK**

ON STAGE OR AT HALLOWE'EN OR DURING THE MARDI GRAS AS MUCH AS In death, the mask is painless and still; in the process of dying, IN OUR DAILY LIVES, ALL OF US ARE CONFINED BY OUR MASKS AND it is glazed though suffering, effete though warring. Sheets and RESTRICTED TO THE MOVEMENTS THEY PERMIT, BEHIND THEM CHARACTERS blankets usually cover the moribund's body, but not until death is OF EVERY IMPORTANCE ARE OFFERED RESPITE AND LIBERATION FROM A his face similarly wrapped by which time as vigilant sentinels you STRICTLY LINEAR AND SINGLE-SIDED EXISTENCE WHILE FROM THAT VERY have already seen the worst and marked the mask's unforgettable STANDPOINT THE CONSEQUENCES FOR DISCARDING THE MASK OR FOR EVEN pronunciation. The corpse dons the mask that will try to help ADMITTING SUCH A MASK MIGHT SHEATH A REAL BETTER OR WORSER SELF you forget but can't. Only the dying man's yeast-laden mouth MIGHT BE DEEMED FOOLISH AND QUITE COSTLY BY A SOCIETY WHICH PRIZES fighting for breath, working, and his lost fixed stare and his ABOVE ALL, DISCREPANTLY OR NOT, DECEIT. AND EXCESS DOES NOT LIE IN shaking head trying to stave off sleep grip your memory, THE OBSERVANCE THAT THE HUSK AND THE IDENTITY MERGING INTO ONE just like his hands holding fast to the bars of his hospital bed. CAN FAST BECOME AS ACCEPTABLE AS HAS RESTRAINT, SUCH IS THE POWER I watched a man weaken from cancer and that is the mask OF THE MASK.

I most remember.

HISTORICALLY, OF COURSE, THE USES OF THE MASK HAVE BEEN MANY.

He led no exemplary life. He was no special man, though

THE PUBLIC MIGHT FIND ITSELF THINKING GENERALLY IN TERMS OF
neither was he common for those such men I pass every day with

COSTUME OR DISGUISE OR OF AFRICA OR OF BERTOLT BRECHT WHEN MORE little reluctance on street corners, on the bus, in shopping REALISTICALLY IT SHOULD BE FORMING A LARGER PICTURE OF MASKS FROM malls — the men whose obscure paths, whose anonymous eyes can MORE COUNTRIES AND REGIONS THAN COMPRISE THE AFRICAN MAIN AND OF never hope to carve a niche in my concerns except through chance THE OLDER AND WIDER USES OF MASKING IN THEATRE. THE EARLIEST MASKS or necessity. So it was through circumstance that he with his WERE WORN IN "CEREMONIES" AND GRADUALLY ASSUMED A PRACTICAL old blue sweater, with his long-tailed comb daring out of back PLACE IN DRAMA, FROM THE EARLY GREEK AND ROMAN PLAYS, TO THE pocket to pierce the wicker, pulled up a chair in the livingroom MYSTERY PLAYS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, TO THE DOMINOS OF of my existence. All his family noted where he sat and came to COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE, TO THE NOH PLAYS OF JAPAN, TO THE ST. GEORGE expect, as even I did, the chair to be filled, and our days MUMMING PLAYS, TO BRECHT'S EPIC THEATRE, MOREOVER, MASK FOR to have the constancy of his presence in them. Even after the RITUAL HAD ONCE BEEN AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE CULTURE OF doctor apprised him of the tumour on his lung and he pretended MELANESIA, BORNEO, THE ALEUTIAN ISLANDS, SOUTH AMERICA, MEXICO, TO acceptance of the news and an imminent death by rooting himself NAME BUT A FEW. SINCE AFTER THE TIME WOMEN BEGAN TO WEAR THE deeper in the habit which made him sick in the first place, "LOUP" AS PART OF THEIR MAKE-UP, HOWEVER, THE MASK IN THOSE VARIED we cursorily glanced at him, his place, and told ourselves HISTORICAL USES GOT LOST TO LITERATE AUDIENCES WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED a long leash walked finality. For one whole year we saw his IN ITS STEAD THE ANNEXATION OF ITS FUNCTION TO THE VIZARD OF kind of face; in the last quick week, another altogether, PHILOSOPHIES AND PSYCHOLOGIES.

a face his and ours and one, too, unknown.

WHETHER ONE IS SPEAKING OF THE JEWELLED MASKS OF THE AZTECS OR I remember sitting in a chair at the end of his bed while the THE LACQUERED ONES OF THE NOH PLAYS OR EVEN OF BRECHT'S SATIRIC others went for something to eat. The sun's rays suffused the COVERINGS, RESPECTIVELY, THE FORERUNNERS DATE BACK TO THE STONE room with the colours of shadows on fire while his bald, AGE, WHEN MEN WORE THE HEADS OF ANIMALS, PROBABLY AS POTENTIAL jaundiced head moved almost imperceptibly right through them. CATALYSTS FOR GOOD HUNTING. STILL, THE DESIRE TO ESCAPE FROM ONE'S Like his motions without effect my book read without meaning

"SELF" INTO THE HOPED-FOR RICHNESS OF OTHER EXISTENCES IS IMPLICIT. and so I stared into his brilliant blue eyes wondering what IN ASSUMING MASK OR COSTUME THOSE MEN GAVE ABSTRACTION A VERY they saw—he had said he sometimes felt he had three minds VISUAL FORM, NAMELY, THE INHERENT LONGING TO BE OTHER AND, BY—or I mapped the polka-dotted venation of his arms and wagered INDUCTIVE LEAP, WITH FACE CONCEALED, THE DRAMATIZED DIVISION with myself where the next morphine shot would go. The friendly WITHIN, A KIND OF DOUBLE LIFE. THUS, IT IS NOT AT ALL SURPRISING THAT nurse came in and said hello at which point he looked up to her HUMANKIND ADAPTED QUICKLY ITS NEEDS TO THE EFFICACY OF THE MASK WISTFULLY, with the pent up awareness of another self, as much as TOOL AND THAT A COMMONALITY OF URGES PUT THE TOOL TO WORK as asking for confirmation he was still alive and not beyond EARLY ON.

care to be kept that way.

IN CULTURES PRECEDING THE ADVENT OF CHRISTIANITY (AND IN CERTAIN In the hospital days his gruff voice and unpolished manners and CULTURES STILL EXTANT WHICH HAVE LONG GUARDED THEIR PRIMITIVISM), contrariety had all been dispelled and replaced by a fearful resolve MASK AND FUNCTION WENT HAND IN HAND AND THE ICONIC OR SYMBOLIC to be childlike, obliging and angelic so much so that each of his SIGNIFICANCE ATTRIBUTED TO THE MASK ON THE PART OF BOTH THE misdemeanours became comical in retrospect, and harmless. He tore WEARERS AND THE SPECTATORS ENSURED A TRADITIONAL LONGEVITY. AS AN at my heart in this way and squeezed the already pulsing lump of INSTRUMENT OF PROTECTION, OF METAMORPHOSIS, AS A MEANS OF pain in my throat. I felt him everywhere, in every remote corner I DOMINATION, AS A SIGN OF CASTE, IN WHATEVER THE ROLE, ITS PURPOSE tried to claim my own. Sleeping, I attended the horses first, WAS DESIGNATED AND FIXED, CHARGED WITH MYSTERY, A MEANS FOR MAN galloping on a beach, then going round and round on a carousel, TO TRANSCEND THE MUNDANE, AND, MORE TO THE POINT, HIS MUNDANENESS. then, swiftly he sat up and seized the bars and was drowning. Short WHEN MAN IN AFRICA, NORTH AMERICA, MELANESIA, AND EVEN IN IRELAND of saying I foresaw his death in a dream, I woke at the precise, DONNED A MASK FOR PROTECTION AGAINST PHYSICAL OR SPIRITUAL. lingering moment. Otherwise it came unheralded in the night, with ENEMIES, HE HOPED TO INSTIL FEAR WITH A TERRIBLE FACE. MANY PEOPLES very little sign of the suffering he endured in the days before, or SAW THE MASK AS A PERSON OR BEING INCARNATE, RATHER THAN AN maybe the time suspended was a telling presage, an elaborate

OBJECT, A PERSON TO BE CARED FOR, GIVEN SPECIAL LIVING QUARTERS, FED, harbinger, but, simply and finally, yet quickly, it came. No rattle CONSULTED AND SIMPLY ABOVE ASSUMING CERTAIN TRAITS, THEY ACTUALLY issued from his mouth and no liquid as in my *Madame Bovary* either. "BECAME" THE BEINGS IN QUESTION. IN CEREMONIAL MASKING, TOO, PRIESTS Voices, loving and fruitlessly anodyne, some worried, whirled down and shamen and medicine men were thereby accorded power. As an that dark tunnel of ebbing consciousness, down after him. The look OBJECT, THE MASK LIVED AS SURELY AS DID THE DIVIDED MAN BEHIND IT. he left us with took control of the clock.

GREEK AND ROMAN ACTORS SIMILARLY MADE THE MASK WORK FOR Almost at once, despite whatever pain and tears, horror, we THEM. OF THEIR MASKS THEY MADE MEGAPHONES FOR BETTER ACOUSTICS. were forced to heed the practical matters at hand and to rely THEY, WITH MASKS, ELEVATED THEIR SIMPLICITY AS MERE "THESPIANS" AND on long-standing convention whose reasons had been forgotten. TRANSPORTED THEMSELVES AND THEIR PERFORMANCES TO MYSTICAL For the three-day wake we dressed the body in clothes he would LEVELS, AND MASKS HELPED WITH DOUBLE ROLES AND FACILITATED THE have worn were he alive with accessories to match—the FEMALE PARTS WHICH WERE PLAYED BY MEN. IN ESSENCE, THE FACE NOT HIS bi-focals, the rings, the handkerchief, the rosary — and during, OWN REMOVED THE ACTOR FROM THE STAGE AND MADE MORE AWARE THE we made offerings of flowers he could not, lying there, see or AUDIENCE OF HIS ILLUSORY CHARACTER. LIKEWISE, IN ENGLISH MUMMING smell. The half-open coffin with him in it gently reposed AND MIMING, ASIAN AND AFRICAN FOLK, JAPANESE COMIC DANCE, THE halted our entrances and exits into the parlour and set in THEATRE OF ITALY, THE AUDIENCE KNEW CHARACTERS BY VIRTUE OF THEIR motion the wheels of the grieving process. We used them, the MASKS, USED TO SATIRIZE BY DISTORTING HUMAN CHARACTERISTICS AND corpse especially, as we had his chair in the past year -OFTEN BY DENIGRATING THE ARISTOCRACY, TO BE CONTRASTED WITH we assured ourselves he was there, still dead, cold, still RITUAL MASKING, WHICH DIMINISHED THE SPECTATOR AND RAISED THE unmoving, encrusted in satin and oak, and grew accustomed MASKER, AND THE MASKING OF MORALITY PLAYS, WHICH BROUGHT TO THE thereby to his absence. His face was hardened wax to prayers FORE CONFLICTS OF THE MIND, IMAGES OF THE DREAM. AND MODERN and pleas, neither happy, nor sad, only somehow moulded the

DRAMATISTS CONSIDERED INNOVATIVE STAND ON THE SHOULDERS OF shape of relief, by another's hand, to liberate him and us THESE.

all from his last statement on life.

SEEMINGLY, THE MASK HAS ONLY WITH RARITY BEEN SUPERCEDED IN Those paying respects to the living were invariably quick to point IMPORTANCE BY THE PLAIN FACE. THE CONNOTATIVE PREEMINENCE out how peaceful he looked, how good. The mortician dressed the THROUGHOUT THE WORLD-WIDE PEOPLES OF HIDING WHAT WE ARE OR mask well, secured everything, plugged everything tight, the death PRESENTING WHAT WE WOULD LIKE TO BE STILL PERSISTS TODAY. mask which precludes the return of the dead. The family and I NIETZSCHE SAID, "FLEE INTO YOUR MASKS." JUNG SAID A STRONG EGO nonetheless witnessed the mask of death in another function which PRESENTS A FLEXIBLE PERSONA, SO THAT COSTUME BALLS AND HALLOWE'EN guides the spirit and keeps it free from harm, so ugly, so resigned TRYSTS ARE ONLY OUTWARD MANIFESTATIONS OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL disgustedly to the battle that can never pluck victory from the grip DISGUISES WE WEAR ALWAYS, ALBEIT INVISIBLY. THOSE MASKS, OUR MASKS, of conundrum. The sides of his lips accumulated white caking, his ARE NOT POSSESSIONS WE WERE BORN WITH - WE HAVE ACQUIRED THEM AS head tilted forward, his blue eyes crossed, his dentures came THE TREE ACQUIRES RINGS WITH AGE AND BY THE MOMENT OF OUR DEATHS, unglued. He seemed to shriek noiselessly, "I let go. Only this much WE WILL HAVE WORN SEVERAL.

I concede."

THE IMPORTUNATE EVENTS OF HISTORY ARE CONSTANTLY StRuGgLiNg in my mind to ADUMBRATE THE SHAPING OF a more personal and no less important chronicle. SoMeTiMeS dEtAiLs WaStE iN tHe MêLéE oF cOnFuSeD pRiOrItIeS oR iMaGeS wEaKeN aNd FrAgMeNt. It is true that when I think of mask I FIRST THINK OF TRICK OR TREAT, OF ITS FUNCTION THROUGHOUT THE MANY CULTURES OF THE WORLD, OF THE TIME BRECHT, INFLUENCED BY THE KABUKI, USED WHITE POWDER MASKS FOR HIS SCARED SOLDIERS AND I AM ALWAYS KEPT AWARE OF MY DUAL NATURE, MY SOCIAL MASK ThROUgH oNgOing DiSiLlUsIoNmEnT, gRoWtH aNd ReAdJuStMeNt. But give me a fraction of a second more and I will see before me a ceramic skeleton mask, made in art class by his son, hanging on a familiar wall and then I will see him, his distorted ugly features haunting me, reminding me that where he has gone I am going too, the masks he has worn I might wear also. THE MASK IS HISTORY, HISTORY IS THE MASK. Yet in death both are painless and still.

### HIDE AND SEEK

yet the question piques my curiosity and sets the culprit doubts afoot none of the earth-shattering consequence of a Hamlet weighing his bare bodkin in both hands and nothing that will lead to a last scene's stage strewn with corpses

yet, and yet I ask myself when did it become proper grammatically, or otherwise, to say "you're it" you're it! she's it! he's it! we're it! they're it! an it refers to things, to animals, sometimes gives a subject to verbs like rain and snow in the old neighbourhood the gang would tag me and spout that very mistake "you're it!" and they would, excited and laughing and scared, run from me and I was supposed to catch them and though they found my slowness hilarious, I never really tried that hard when the new game of hide and seek moved on the block, hiding rather and seeking the more far-reaching possibilities began to appeal to me I always found the best places since nothing in my life, I discovered, could give me more of a satiated thrill than to run last and unspotted to home base to free the bunch the looks they threw my way, grateful eyes, appreciative pats than to realize I could safely conceal myself anywhere and never by found

unless I wanted

to be

a lot of words start with i-t: itinerant, itchy, iterative, itinerary, words that give travel a common denominator and my exile an enviable boon some coincidence when you consider that I'm on a plane headed for the shade of some exotic tree where nobody will ever, ever find me because now the throng is far away and because once again through curdled time and sour space the game is on but I am it

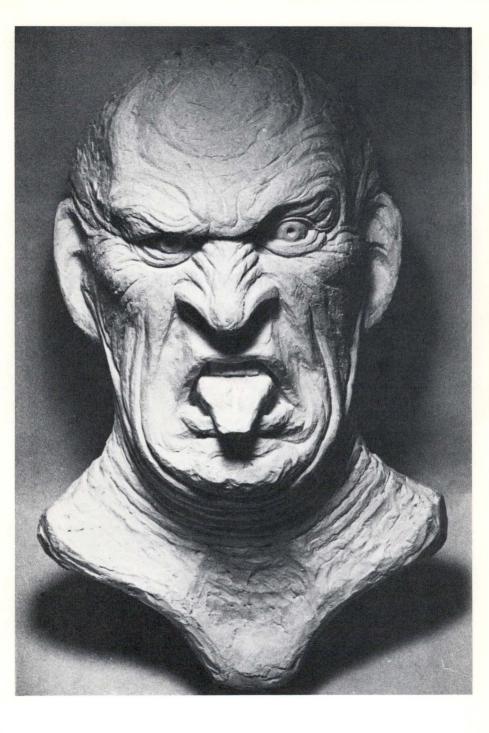
### **GORDON PAYNE**

# **UNDER SATURN**

work in progress

### **PASSAGE**

plaster, 45 cm high, unfinished. *photography*: Gordon Payne.



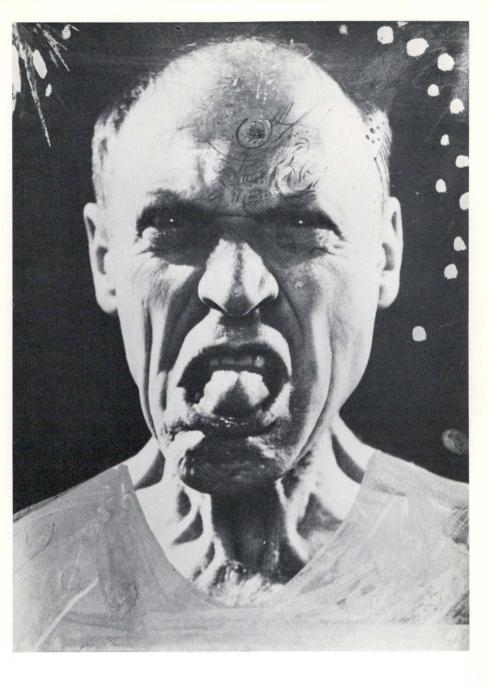
## VANCOUVER PORTRAIT: ARTIST IN PARADISE

soft-ground etching and mixed media, 76 x 56 cm, unfinished.  ${\it photography}{:}~{\rm Gordon~Payne}.$ 



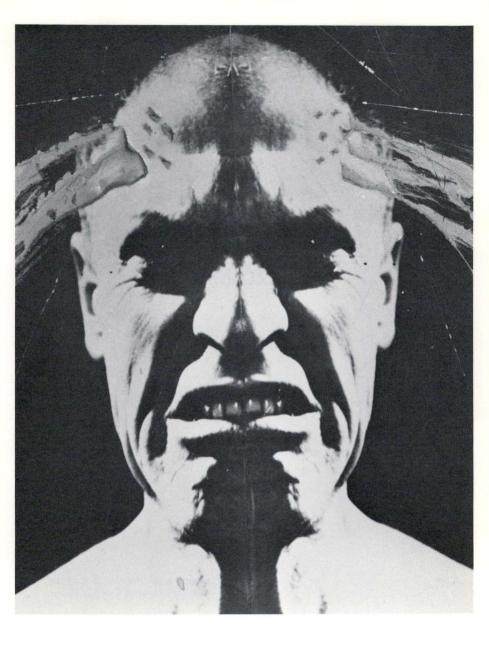
# OPENING THE EYE OF THE FLESH

photograph and mixed media, 23 x 15 cm. photography: Gordon Payne.



# THE MASK THINKS

photograph and mixed media, 23 x 15 cm. photography: Gordon Payne.



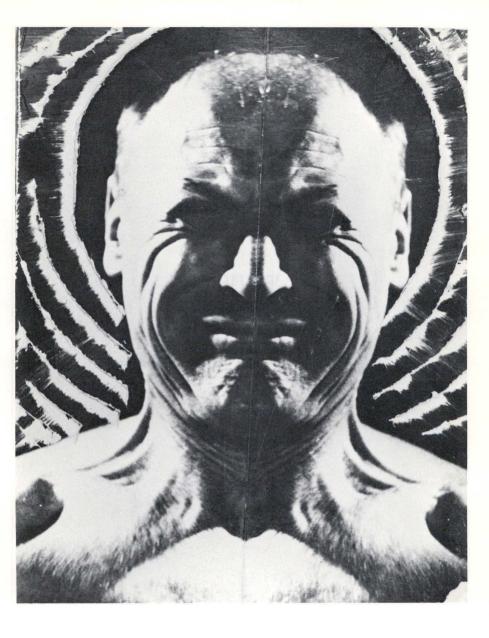
# SCHIZO MASK

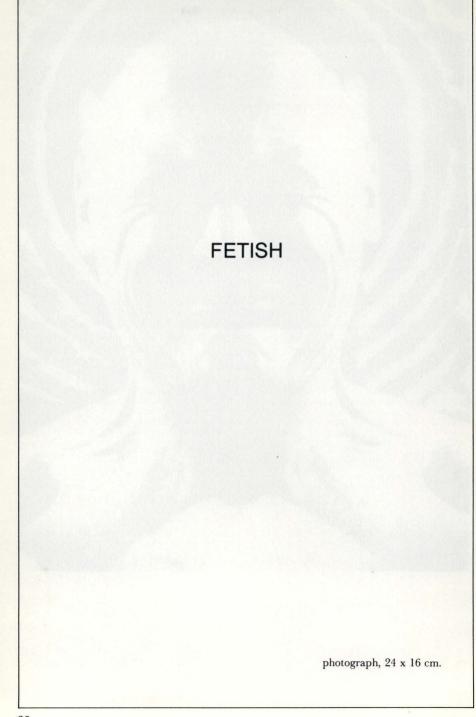
photograph and mixed media,  $23 \times 15$  cm. photography: Gordon Payne.

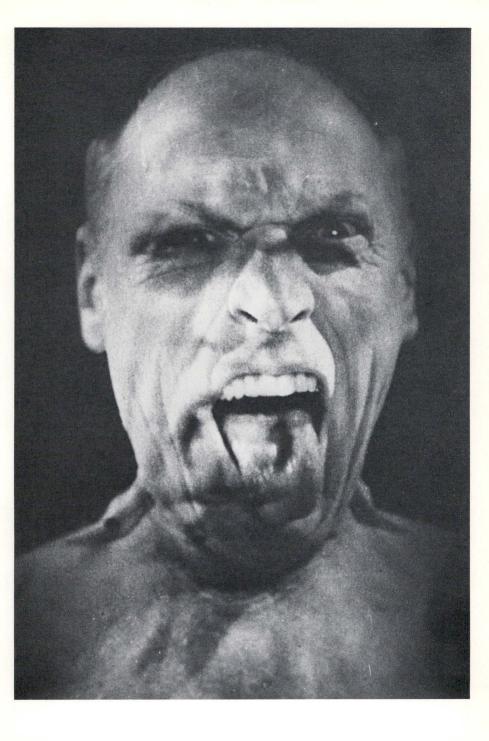


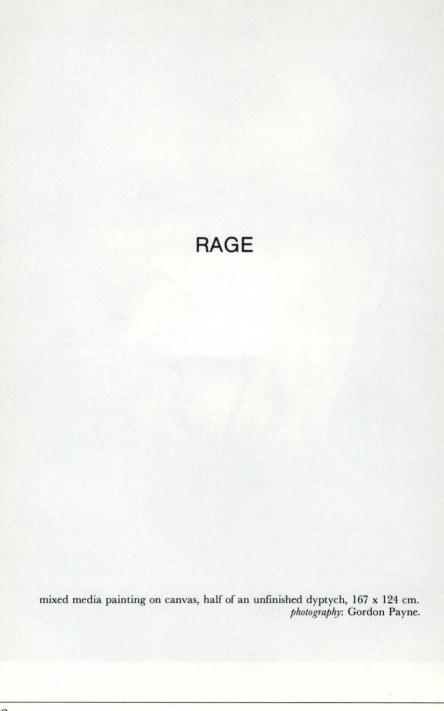
# SMILING PERSONA

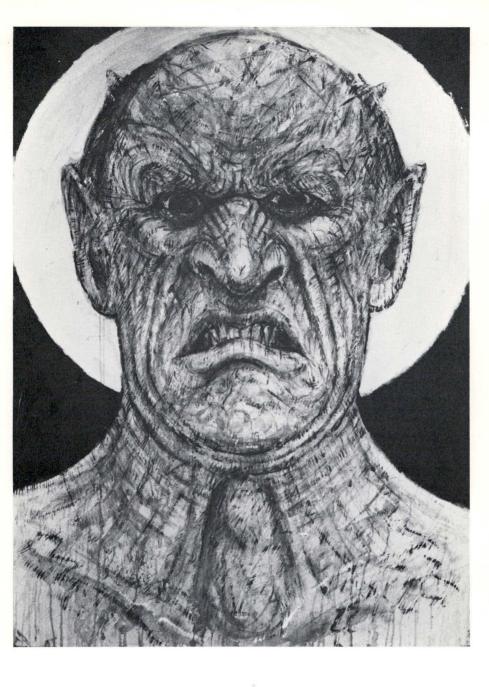
photograph and mixed media, 23 x 15 cm. *photography*: Gordon Payne.





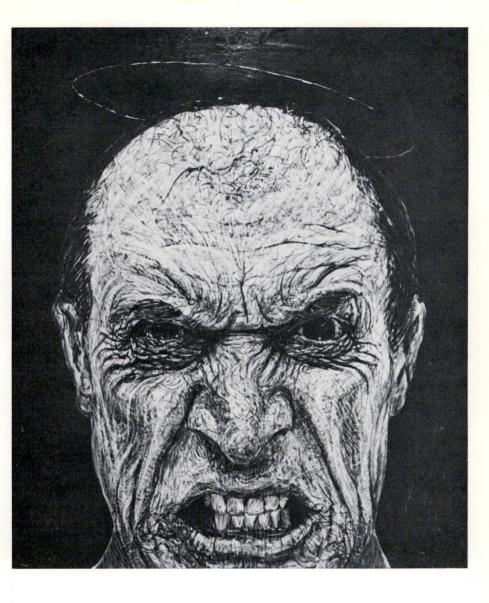


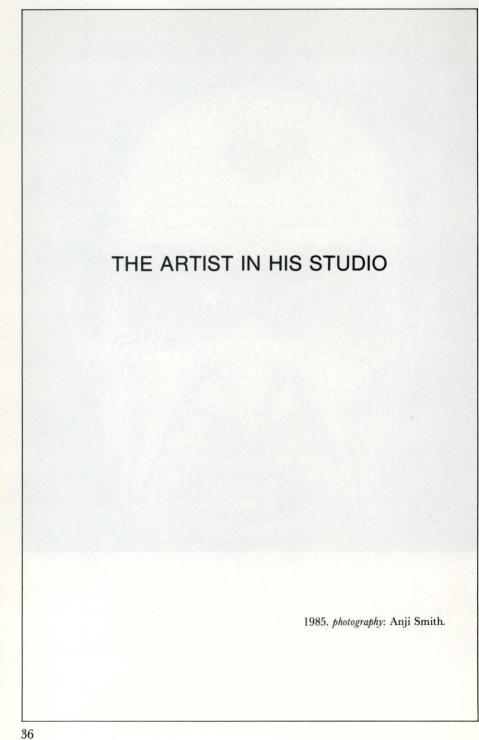


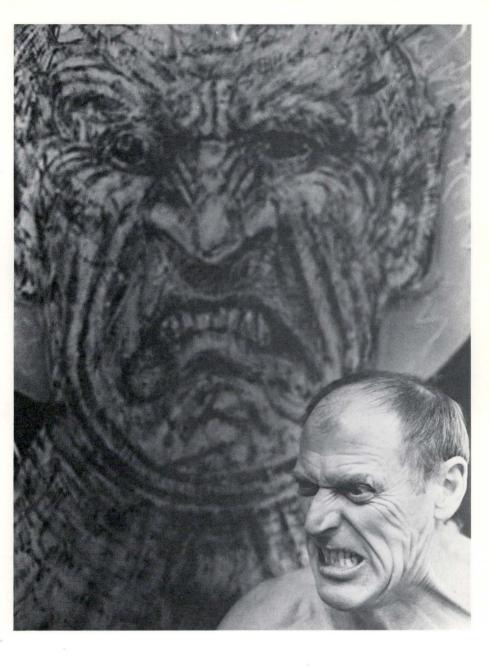


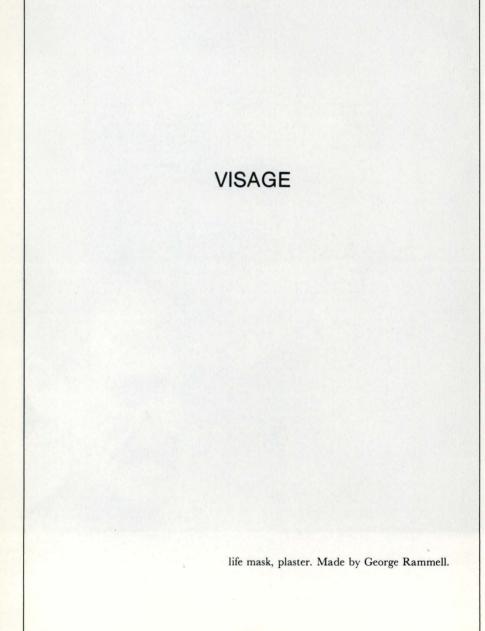
# UNDER SATURN: SCHIZOPHRENIA

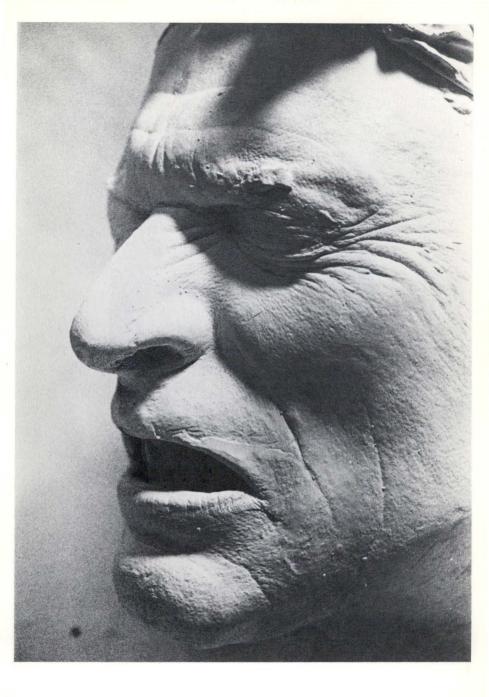
egg tempera on board, 29 x 24 cm, unfinished. photography: Gordon Payne.









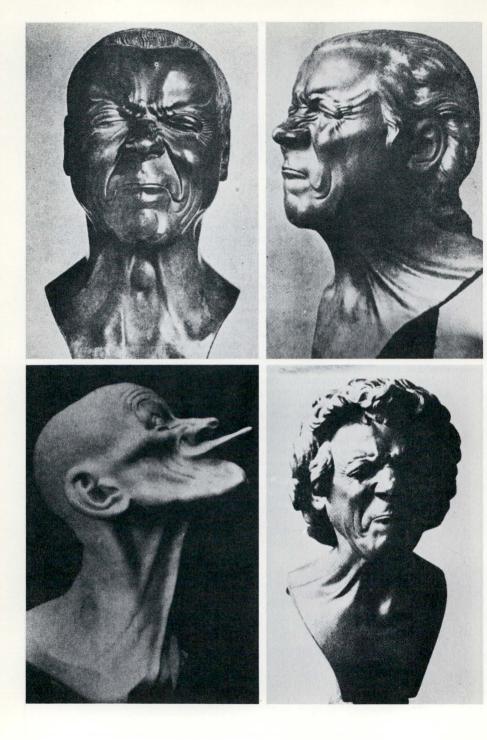




... By some primordial decree, which I could never make out, I was appointed "to negate" while, as a matter of fact, I'm genuinely kind-hearted and not at all good at "negation." "Oh, no, you go and negate, for without negation there is no criticism," and what sort of periodical is it if it has no section for criticism? Without criticism there would be nothing but "hosannah." But "hosannah" alone is not enough for life. It is necessary that this "hosannah" should be tried in the crucible of doubt, and so on in the same vein. Still, it is none of my business. I didn't create the world, and I am not answerable for it. Well, so they have chosen their scapegoat, made me contribute to the section of criticism, and life was the result. We understand that farce: for instance, I frankly and openly demand annihilation for myself. No, they say, you must live because there'd be nothing without you. If everything on earth were rational, nothing would happen. Without you there would be no events, and it is imperative that there should be events. So I serve with a heavy heart so that there should be events and perform what is irrational by order. People accept all this farce as something serious for all their indisputable intelligence. That is their tragedy. Well, of course, they suffer, but — they live, they live a real and not an illusory life; for suffering is life. Without suffering, what pleasure would they derive from it? Everything would be transformed into an endless religious service: it would be holy, but a little dull. Well, and what about me? I suffer, but I do not live for all that. I am the x in an indeterminate equation — I am a sort of phantom who has lost all the beginnings and ends and who has even forgotten what his name is. You are laughing.... No, you are not laughing. You're angry again. You're always angry. All you care about is intelligence. But I tell you again that I'd give up all this life above the stars, all my ranks and honours, to be reincarnated into a sixteen-stone merchant's wife and offer candles to the Lord.

-Dostoevsky, "The Devil Speaks with Ivan Karamazov,"

The Brothers Karamazov



...too late for the gods and too early for Being.

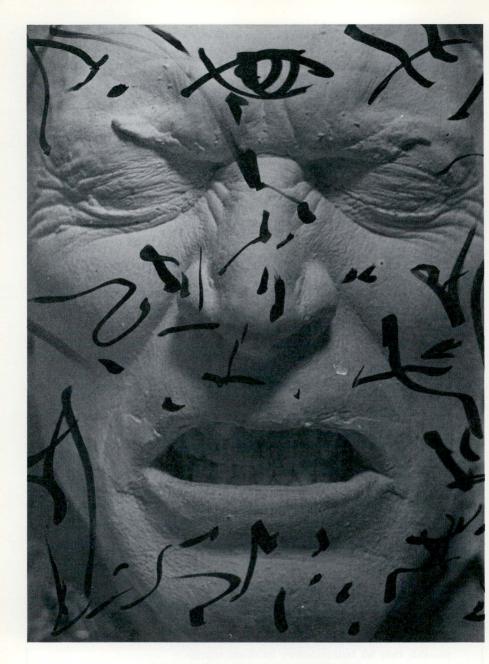
— Heidegger.

#### THE DISTORTION OF F. X. MESSERSCHMIDT (1736-1784)

How to explain Messerschmidt's phsyiognomic distortions? Messerschmidt said he was subduing the "demon of proportion," who, envious of his mastery of proportion, violently attacked the artist's body. Messerschmidt contorted the parts of his visage which corresponded, according to "physiognomy," with the areas of his anatomy afflicted by the demon. Working from a mirror and copying his grimaces (making images of the demon and "pinching the devil back"), he magically controlled the evil spirit.

Good proportion (the ratio) was the *form* of the ideal and stood for God; as an example, the pentagram, made up of numerous combinations of the golden section, was a magical device used to ward off evil. Why then did Messerschmidt see the "spirit" of proportion as a demon, a devil, rather than as a god, or deity? His delusion seems to express an *ontological inversion*.

The 18th century is a high point of philosophical idealism and rationalism. Are Messerschmidt's distortions a reaction to an imbalance between essence (the ideal) and existence? Is it possible that his hallucinatory fetishism represents a kind of pyschic/ontic compensation mechanism? Do we see in his distorted heads the symptom of a metaphysical disorder?



MASK WITH WRITING photograph and felt pen with overlay, 24 x 16 cm.

On the morning of one of the days I was making prints for this article I had a dream full of anxiety. In my dream I was producing Xerox copies of myself—I was the Xerox machine. The paper sheets "flaked off" me in the manner of a paramecium reproducing itself; they made a disorderly pile on the floor. The images were all identical; a line drawing of myself standing, workmanlike, in a studio setting. I was anxious about my lack of control over the quality of the copies: too dark, too light, poor resolution, out of focus, etc. I remember thinking that my only hope for salvation was to collage together all these bad copies and make some overall image that might "work."

Mary said she thought the dream was a "classical example of a personality-integration dream."

- From Dream Book: March 23, 1987.

#### John Baglow / THREE POEMS

#### BABEL

And the Lord said, Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; and nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down, and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

-Genesis II: vi, vii.

perhaps it all comes down to this smoky room and your momentary inattention, your glance to my left or right a background of voices and not one phrase distinct.

clearly we had forged ourselves in stolen fire and then we had nothing to say to each other. words too were possessions treasured by force. interpreters seized and held power.

out of the colossal building we panicked, torn from each other's arms. our wasteful prayers were polyglot, each word hieratic; visions warned us home and made their own contacts.

now in my hiding place of refusing to talk, i am the quarry. i clear my throat and create my own narrow tower, the upper of rooms alight with windows.

#### **MEMORY**

i.

i threw my white bones in the air: they joined where i write.

ii.

there were opal waters, floors the colour of old honey, a portrait

of welcoming fire...

a gargoyle sang in its cage
like a cricket:

something of wood gone green and sinewy danced on four legs.

iii.

this nest in the attic. the heart, its good beginning.

#### MEDIATED VIEW

through miles of dirty glass i see you touch a skin so rough and cold (my own, keeping the world apart)

you cannot tell, nor could, where i begin

a wisp of sound across the ugly wires, you would sing to me, beloved (the words so unimportant, love's the thing)

green grass invade the rare red earth

or so it feels, tanned limbs to take the mountain exercise, warming the stone; your fingers (dear for the effort, daring to hold the sheer)

will slip, of course but have me, just the same, a moment

### Gerry Shikatani / FOUR POEMS THIS IS ABOUT MEDITATION

For David McFadden, Cordoba, Spain. 1985.

This is about meditation. The residual brown foam of coffee stands in broken cloud formations on the sides of the glass cup. A spoon is stained in its cradle where coffee drips are wont to rest. This is about meditation in Cordoba. There are white pigeons constantly overhead: the singing of tiny birds in the tall palms, also. A young couple wearing sunglasses in front of me at another table. Her glasses are mirrored.

A pigeon has come to rest on high. Not in a palm; but walks back and forth at the top of a street lamp. There is cactus. I am, by the way, at a cafe in a soothing park. I am reading a good book. I am getting a bit hungry. Images of fried squid rings flash through my mind. I am not a good photographer; but, I like to take pictures when on vacation. Coffee. Ah, the way I like it, and I return the glass cup to the table. I am reading a good book, though from time to time, I also do raise my eyes. I like to take in context when on vacation. Singing birds. They are small.

The gypsies have this way of making money. It is not particularly aggressive. A small child is sent through a crowd holding a baby, and she stretches out her hand, begging for money. Sometimes it works; sometimes it doesn't.

When she approaches me, I now, after some practice, instinctively have the strategy down pat. My eyes never look directly. They are incredibly disinterested. I can shake my head in the "no" pattern extremely well—so that it is final, in an instant. Flash! Got the picture? She goes away. It's o.k. She'll get loose change elsewhere. When people ask, I say I am not really political though I tend to vote without exception and side as it falls to the extreme left. "I'm more anarchist," I say. "Actually, I tend to act on spiritual beliefs," I say. This is about meditation. You can, if you wish, go back up and begin re-reading this piece, now.

"Duende" Lorca said—is that magical force or spirit which exists in the best flamenco—when a dancer goes beyond mere form. It is the white heat, the black cool of Andalusian life. Flamenco, I've read, originated with the gypsies, their Moorish wandering spirit. Can't you just hear the cantaor's wail right now?

Everything should be o.k. I wonder—it's about the fourth time—how much the two coffees I've had will cost. I am reading a good book: you are reading this piece.

A Spanish family is sitting at a table to my left. I have not told you this before. A lovely baby in pink. Hah! The mother just put her huge white-framed sunglasses on the child. Way too big. But the young toddler is pleased. It is this sense of life that makes this all so perfect. They have cold drinks. Tall palms. Sun. Metal chairs at a cafe in a soothing park. And tables.

If I was talking to you on the phone long-distance right now, I'd say, "God, I feel rich. I'm so lucky."

#### RESTAURATION

Paris, 1984.

Who then, is that strong stranger I wish to know? Seated in that corner beneath the glow of tulip lamps, his head frozen in a single position, always at the cleanest table, his face is one I've known before. The waiter approaches, snaps down the dark strong coffee, a small cup decorated with pink morning glories, its green vinous leaves, the saucer chipped at one point on its gold rim. I rotate the saucer - perhaps ninety ninety degrees, perhaps and I want to fold this page, this tale with its cafe, and move, as my tongue progressively searches upon my gums, this appearance to another restaurant where the waiter is more welcoming, more exact and discriminate still; my hands prayed together then butterfly, disclosing the logic of a newspaper's next page. I do not want the smell of demis, the beer spilling over rims onto shiny marbled tabletops, nor evening cologne, plexiglass, nor tulip lights. He is there: the strong stranger; frequent, the announcements of exotic ice creams and sorbets, liqueur-wetted sundaes with cartoonish umbrella appointments on the glossy menu's front.

He is breathing at a controlled pace, his hat brim folded over. But I want more — more than this speechless unsatisfying charade: this droll symbol.

Each time I set foot in this place, the same—the sense of speech stiffens with itself, a silence made of clamour, jam of pinballs and cash registers, the turning pages of a telephone directory, and like such waiter's cash receipt, there is a brief fiction, a totalling of account, aching its numerical rhythm against the terrace glass discredited with painted sign, the floors moaning under the weights of service traffic, patrons and the flash of headlights from passing vehicles splashing to mirrored uncharmed walls. Speech stiffens, breath changes.

I can feel the shifts of weight as patrons slide in and out, packages in hand, across the tensing floor, a cat's mating back, the grievances of waiters as they enter kitchen carrying complaint: the doors sprung open, "Hurry, I need that omelette immediately," they will yell—at least they, heard above the steel ball collisions of frenzied machines; and I tremble again tremble, the want to turn the page, to move to more refined quarters of sustenance, to tear in fact this page of the night, take it undressing as stranger to bed, and begin the long melodic conversation over the dark pill of coffee, a plate of cold buttered toast, written in moody neon light.

#### **TEXTE**

Or then, how to temper that flash, that skin, the delicate pale blue dayblooms which transmit light, for which we have no exact ways to part lips and hold pattern. The hold, sensuous in the mornings, finds the break, the grey, clearing past rain, the workers taking muscadet or kir in small glasses at the bar, after loading cleaned carcasses destined for restaurants and brasseries. A flash, to mark this our blemished or goose-pimpled flesh, words raised from the page, against the truant and habit smells of frites, of dripping cut meats for Tunisien sandwiches, such harbingers dispatched to persuade against good judgement and taste, for which the night has prepared us, ushered with black ties and white cotton gloves. We place our tongue against our nearest sore as braille, we step gingerly, ascendent and marked, towards words which point to the future - seated, done against the drying streams of urine on pocked pavement, trailing from the corners and crevices of shadowy buildings, which touch us secretly; that moving past splintered wooden crates stained with residues of fruits, the finest bibb lettuce even, browning, once verdant as the speech we now ourselves try to form, preparing at last, for bed with our new lovers, our strong strangers beneath moving lights.

#### Le Temps

postponed to later, to then apprehend the letter for a latter time, seed, sent by mail, to comprehend, ahead what we now know to know it's not the forgetting, and to pick up the place, newfound again.

#### CONTEXTE

The mix of pleasure, The Pleasure of the Text set in the mode of held glasses of muscadet at the bar, taken by patrons, set in the words of pleasure in the reading, right the way ideas set and then space in the voices arranged and the smell of cigarettes. The way—the painted tiles of 1900 Les Halles, tin metal bar called Le Plat du Jour and the frosted rose lamps produce all that my body can bear of pleasure, let us admit, of then sending by telegraph a thought to you Ros, of suggesting that you read this book in another place, with another setting, with other hands.

#### Brenda Riches / TIME PIECES

I want to be an old woman, as old as the woods I used to ride in when I was a young girl on a fat black pony who went his ambling way in spite of me. Even so, if I flapped my legs like the wings of ravens whose flight conjured death's heaviness, then my slothful mount would gather his legs into a canter of sorts and surprise me.

Surprises were what I found in bran tubs at fetes. I fumbled in grainy dryness till I touched what was to be mine, like it or not. A fortune teller in her sweaty green tent told me for sixpence that I was to look after my heart because no one else would do that for me and doctors were a last resort, but I gave my heart to the fat black pony whose leg was shattered by the kick of a jealous mare. He was shot dead because he was irreparable.

What damaged things can be repaired? Certainly not balloons. But balloons, like promises, illusions, affairs, eggshells and rules, were made to be broken. A man I knew scrambled eggs and talked so much not even kisses would stop his mouth. His mouth is a sour memory. There's a jug of milk in the fridge that's been there for weeks on the top shelf. It has a thick surface of green furred skin, so beautiful, how could I possibly throw it out? If the moon forgot to wane, it would grow a fur coat to keep it warm in the cold sky.

Rain fell on the neighbour's cat crossing the road. So confident that no car would come, it walked slowly, taking the longest slanting route. When it reached the weeping birch, it sat and washed itself. The cat (mostly black with some white) and the birch trunk (mostly white with some black) formed a wholeness that took me beyond satisfaction, so that even when the cat got up and went away, the rainy birch still held me. The cat licking its wet fur told me more about acceptance than all Buddha's words, and the slow dripping from a swaying branch answered my waywardness.

The cat defied death for another moment and reaped its reward in the leaky shelter. One day it won't get to the other side of the road and that will be that. My cat hasn't been home for two days, though I leave the door ajar and rattle her box of food outside from time to time. If she isn't home soon, I shall have to go out and look for her again, fearing every dark shape in the road, remembering the dead horse I saw in a highway ditch, a black dead horse with a blob of scarlet blossoming from its temple. It was a grey day, grey as tarmac, and the grass in the ditch was soft green. I thought blood always flowed.

I've paid for the creatures who came and went and left me laughing, crying, peeling onions, putting stale crumbs out for the birds, pulling weeds and pushing wheelbarrow-loads of dead leaves down the path to the bonfire that is the sentence of the dying year. Some days burst through the skin that tries to hold them, some take on eternity and some stay inside their ration of twenty-four hours no more no less. In the eight hours left of today I shall sit and watch the lamplight on my plants, watch the stillness of heavy curtains and wonder what the neighbour's doing inside her walls.

I'm afraid that if I look out of the window I shall see a sky like a rock poised low over the street. I don't want to see such a sky, or the sad wet wheels of cars, or hear the broken voices of children coming home from school, or the slow steps of women who lean forward when they walk and hide their eyes behind wrinkled lids. That's why I closed the curtains at four o'clock.

The man who scrambled eggs rarely threw the shells away. They lay on his counter top, on his floor, in his sink; his kitchen was littered with eggshells that entered my dreams like thieves, usually by moonlight, and turned into magnolia petals, stark white against leaves so dark I could barely see them. My dreams were filled with such fragrance, I forgave him his stinking shells and threw them out myself. Garbage is something I live with. Like daybreak.

The last time I saw my cat, she was sleeping on the footstool between me and the window. Her face was so shadowed, I couldn't see the lines of her closed eyes, and the curve of her mouth was a faint sickle moon in the black sky of her fur. Only the ridge of her back caught the light. I touched that path gently so I wouldn't wake her. I have always been careful to stroke my cats often. I never know, when they go out, if I will ever see them again.

Lamps are soothing, like honey, like butter on a burn; my lamplight wraps the plants, the polished tables, the small islands of carpet, in bandages of softness. My livingroom is where I sit and crochet squares of the people I've known. My hands have memories. Everything they've ever held—tightly or loosely—dropped, smacked; the disasters they've prevented and the creatures they've

stroked, linger like guests who outstay their welcome. The evenings and mornings won't go away, crushed inside my livingroom.

The egg man gave me a seashell to hold. The upper part was a spiral like a helter skelter worn smooth by gleeful descents, but the lower part was bulged and crevissed, pleated and disturbed like the sand on a beach after the sea has withdrawn. It trapped weed and was holed and broken in many places. I tucked my finger into the top and wound the shell around so that my finger followed its curves, and stopped, wedged tight in its core.

My head is an anvil endlessly struck. There's no comfort in the clock's ticking, nor the face swept by hands. The clock gave me time to watch the sun in my hanging fern; time to wash up a glass, dry it carefully with a well-laundered cloth; time to fill the glass again and go back to the fern to see how its shadow had grown. Many things have grown on me besides memories and mould: the well-meaning hands of lovers; the midnight yowling of cats whose sexual symphony played to the wilderness of my sleep; the breaking faces of bereft people; the shuffling of bagladies. The shock of dreams.

When I can't find an answer, I take a sharp knife and pare an apple down to the core, split the seeds, and there's white inside them that can be cut too. And for a moment I think I've got down to what it's all about. Then the moment passes like a life and all I have is apple pulp and bits of seed I can't put together again.

When the egg man kicked me out, he was lying in bed, looking as pale as a moon and as tired as I was. Outside, rain had swept the fallen leaves to the drains, and there they lay, glistening in the lamplight, preventing the rain from draining away.

The wool I shall use next is soft and grey like the smoke that comes from my chimney in skeins all winter long, winter after winter the same grey smoke. I like to think there's a fire burning out there for lost cats to sit by and warm themselves.

In the gallery is an exhibition of kisses, mouths hooked to mouths, all over the walls. I sensed the attendant looking at me, probably wondering what it was this shabby woman was seeing in those paintings. One picture in my scrapbook was torn from a calendar: an eggshell broken in two, lying in a narrow niche made of bricks. The larger piece lies on its side, the smaller on its round end. A curved white feather rests between the two parts of shell, another floats away through an arch in the background where small white clouds hang in a heavy sky. I kept the picture in honour of the egg man who gave me calendars at the beginning of the year.

On sunny Sundays in winter I put on warm clothes and walk to the part of the lake that's kept clear for skaters. I like to see them move about in their jackets and bright knitted hats, the ice beneath them, the snow all around them. They make me wonder where they've all come from to be together, balanced on blades, and where they will all go when the sun goes down. I wish I could let images go, or be content to let them mulch into memory. Memory changes things; it doesn't preserve them. The lover who was so boring I could hardly wait to put on my clothes and catch the next bus home, has become matchless in my memory. Yet, if at that time I could have put him in a pickling jar and screwed the lid on tight, there he'd be now, a pig-faced narcissist making mouths at his reflection on the curved wall of his prison. The saving grace of narcissists is that we betray only ourselves.

There are empty jars in my cupboard that I save to fill with the preserves and sauces I intend to make in the spaces in my days. But the spaces stay empty and so do the jars; nothing to show for the desire I have to harvest the fruit of my trees, crabapple and plum. Scarlet and mauve, the fruit hangs till it drops onto the hot grass, and the hot grass grows cold and the fruit rots where it lies, and I think of autumn as the death of the worms of joy that squirmed in my belly all summer.

I dreamed I saw my cat stretched out on the grass by the footpath that leads from the road to the river. She looked as if she was asleep, but her paws didn't twitch with dreams and I woke up. My dreams are more important to me than the concern of neighbours, than crabapples rotting in the grass. They are more important than loss. My dreams are lights in a tunnel of blackness. They show me the seams in walls, the sheen on stones.

The neighbour has a kind husband. He chops kindling for me, fills my basket with logs, cleans my hearth and lays my fire every morning before he goes to work. I thank him: thank you, you are so kind. Kindness is a candle, I want to say, but my dreams are electric.

A rowan and the weeping birch grow close to each other on the front lawn, filling the kitchen window. When the sun sets behind them, it turns some of the rowan leaves red and others a glowing orange. The leaves of the birch are acid yellow and swing slowly on their stringy branches. If a cloud moves in front of the sun, the cloud is trimmed with brilliant light.

My brightest dream was of an ocean with high glittering waves that rose above me but didn't drop. I saw myself knee keep in dazzling water, facing a dazzling wall, and all I seemed to be was a tall black column facing a sea that should have tumbled.

The husband lays a good fire; one match lit and everything flares. I want to tell him what love is like. It's like a shell washed up on a wide beach.

I used to live near a beach, long ago when I recognized the life of sand and could name the species of seaweed that grew thick in the rockpools.

If I had my way, I'd seize the shoulders of the kind husband and tell him what fire is about: for burning, not for warmth.

One of my clocks is wrong. When I die, they will say: She died at nine fifty-three. She died at nine forty-seven. The truth will swing from minute to minute while I shall be settling into my own place.

#### Susan Johnston / THREE POEMS

#### UNABLE TO MAKE A POEM I DEFY LANGUAGE

Language is insufficient. It is half-true, half male, fragmented.

It is the approach the airstrip, the steel rail, the bridge which promises other sides.

The flamenco.

Inadequate to describe it suggests the flavour of skin the temperature of blue eyes closed, I see shadows on rock.

## FROM SOMEWHERE TO THE LEFT OF YOU

for Jeff, who believes me weak

It is a slow process.

Overcoming the curious propensity to twitch a hand and bring down rocket launchers, bullets, cold steel the colour of shadows on those who persist in misunderstanding.

Such ferocity is women's magic.

I am freer than you, I admit to feeling as well as to desire, I run towards the professors rather than away.

With frivolous laughter in one hand, a rose between my teeth, a dagger clenched behind my back.

I am older, too.

I left my myths drenched in blood and scraped over quarry rock like fingernails on a blackboard.

Were you relieved I made no scene?

If I lied and said I do not love you
only wish the weight of a fighter's body
on my soft underbelly, open wound,
would you lie with me again?

I am freer than you, I admit defeat, I do not expect happiness

I am the eye of the storm

and I am, outside your arms, free to take up my own.

#### THE RAIN GODDESS

I have always frightened the sun away, although small children make demands. There is winter in children too; behind the sunlight and something small and desperate in the tininess of their hands.

I am the rain goddess, though you who scoff at myth would disagree. As surely as I move through every season pale as fungus as bereft as beached cod the rain follows me.

So does the hail.

Mud salutes me; not for the strange sisterhood of bikinis and white sands this ungainly body wrapped in London Fog.

This year, my first, the temperature in Montreal's June is record low. You will note that my home town, the last, is having a heat wave, the first. You will note this with something short of belief and long of astonishment. You will make an appointment at a tanning parlour and note this as well.

Eventually I will leave.

### Ramona Weeks / FOUR POEMS STREETS OF LAREDO REVISITED

Stranger, someone has to play orator on these Laredo streets and pause for a statutory moment by the whorehouse to wrap it up before the luminous and stampeding drum logs this cowboy home.

We've chosen you to say the iron words. To invent the saddle and his innocence, to colour lilacs for his grave. We need six pallbearers, one fifer, one drummer, and a poet.

Say that he did wrong and knew it. He was overfond of cards and liquor. He will sink easily into a world of strangers, a pure form wrapped in tablecloth linen, shroud pinned tightly with a silver dove.

Pretend you have walked past your own cold body on these golden streets, shot in the breast but holding on to tell your story. We will take care of the emplacement of mothers and their tears.

#### **ECLIPSE**

Canned dark scooped up in a field, in cylinders filled this languid substance, dotty as a sleeve, pulled as tropes of paisley. What surge created us dark mannequins? Into the light we ripple and roosters, relieved, begin to crow. With eyes, I celebrate the bottled light. It pours. It holds the world.

## NAHUATL POEM

Who will know my voice? at least my name? my black-and-red flowers?

Why is the sun hot?

Is the rain to fall on nothing?

At least on the ashes,
at least on the rain.

#### REBIRTH AND BELONGING

"This morning I thought I was created to be given away."

— ROBERT LOWELL

I can't escape the way it arrives, like fog rising from cypress knees too crotchety to house anything glimmering save snakes.

The dogwood catches its breath in swollen white. I could suffocate before it becomes an orphanage and opens its gates so driftwood arms would receive me, welcoming me like a stepchild impossible to drop overboard for fear of the splash, dark-elbowed, bellowing, would be overheard.

I am stubborn. I do not dissipate, although the only thing I share words with — "reunion," "shelter," "cove" — is a worn dictionary with shiny thumbprints making identification easy; even going backwards like a bum is simpler than looking up "foundling" and acknowledging that it became the thing I am. How do things become?

By "things," I mean fire, bees, photographs: objects swaddled in receiving stone.

#### Michael Mirolla / LYCANTHROPY

Men from the other villages have joined us. And we're searching for him now, each with a grim tattoo on his face, beating methodically the bushes and shrubs on the surrounding hillsides. With sharp sticks, later to be used as tomato-plant stakes and bird traps. Already, we've flushed several rabbits and a mother quail. Which immediately gave us the broken-wing signal. "Be careful with the nest," the blacksmith mutters, wiping his eyes with charcoaled hands. The creatures stare wide-eyed, surprised that we ignore them. For we've been known to tear a rabbit limb from limb while its heart still beat. No one's hungry. We'll return another day.

(Last night, in the middle of the silver-dazzled night, the moon set to slice the mountain tops, he crawled. Through an open. He crawled through an open window. Plopped softly to the floor. Nipped with canine teeth the breast of the blacksmith's daughter. There must have been a scream. But no one heard it. She simply didn't arise this morning for breakfast. He howled as the moon drew his throat. I was too sleepy to recognize what he was saving. That he had nipped the breast of the blacksmith's daughter. That she had jerked up with her hand on the mutilated breast, a splotch of red against fervent white. Looked with dumb terror and slowlystretching mouth at his head. At his smiling, tilting, quizzical head. That she had for a moment gazed past him to a gathering of surrogate stars (for she'd only imagined their existence). That she had fallen back. That the thick moonlight was at last penetrating her face. My wife shivered, rose from the bed and squatted in the corner, the steam rising warm beneath her. Shivering, she slipped beneath the quilt. We made signs of the cross, offered a prayer to the Virgin and returned to our separate dreams.)

The women in the village, after dressing her in donated white, have begun to pile wood in the central square. Each family provides

a portion of the ritual cord necessary to do the job. Some give a little less as they are old and beyond most harm. Others donate more. They have daughters the same age. Or sons that might begin to howl. Still others chain their horses to huge logs resembling dessicated monsters and drag them groaning to the square. These dig their limbs into the ground and resist. To no avail. For many days, till the cleansing rain, these grooves will be the only reminders of what has taken place. We'll all be careful not to step in them. They might begin to bleed again.

(Truth is, we had thought little of him till he stole her nipple. He lived alone in the mountains. In the high caves, adapting to his four-legged existence with the ease of someone who had planned it all in advance. But he disturbed no one and his occasional howls blended in with those of the real wolves. I, of course, recognized the difference — when I wanted to.

Still, we have no quarrel with the fiend. We all know what it means to fall beneath his shadow. Daily, we are flooded with stories of his new conquests, those we thought incorruptible succumbing to his blandishments, falling away like withered branches from the great tree. And daily, the army of misshapen animals he has gathered to worship at his altar grows. Yet, as you can see, we are understanding folk. Unlike other villages that rounded them all up on the occasion of the first full moon—when they emerged and went in search of plateaus, we let him be. "Let him be," the blacksmith said at the time. "Even my hammer does bad work once in a while." It was his daughter he would have married.)

We're only beating these bushes as a token measure. I know where he is And I'll lead them there when the time comes. For the moment, unsure as we might be of everything else—this is our first hunt—it's certain the capture must be effected at night. So we have spent the afternoon moving in the wrong direction. Towards the village. Sometimes beating the same area two and three times. Overturning boulders where only mice and millipedes could hide. Some of our more impetuous youths, so filled with the lust of life, insist we haul him in immediately and "make an example of him." They know none of the ritual (even the most experienced among us are only vaguely aware of them). Not even the fundamental fact it must be done after the sun goes down. Else, she won't revive. I don't explain. They mumble words under their breaths and mutter accusations of false compassion. Because he's part of my family. Because he's my older brother. But I don't have to answer them. If they're not careful, they'll return less an eye. Or holding a useless

arm. In such a case, I'm perfectly within my rights to defend my name. Even the blacksmith himself, beating the bushes with the same steady hand he uses drumming on Easter Sunday, doesn't insist.

(The circuses, the former leper colonies, the prisons, are packed to the brim with people who can't stop dancing. Or howling. Or flicking their tonges. And—even though it's against some law—their keepers are provided with a steady supply of tarantulas. A sting for a dance. They recruit them from the hills, string them in long untethered lines (for who among them would dream of escape?): dancers, wolves, spiders, song-birds, bees, snakes. But we in the village are enlightened, have no use for such cruelty. Besides, Our Holy Mother Church has proven they're highly infectious. Many times, those watching begin to act in the same way. They must be purged.)

The fire's been lit. We see it, flicking multiple tongues into the night. Sparking and hissing. Spitting arcs of flame at the moon. It's imperative the village be kept bright, that all dark corners be banished. Both for us on these mountains and for the blacksmith's daughter. Invisible creatures with scarred red eyes creep along the edges of light, leaving the possibility of footprints. Searching for her. A howl. The blacksmith pauses for a moment on his stick's downward swing. Another. I shake my head beneath the torch. It's not my brother's howl. He can't erase completely the human element. My ears are tuned to his voice. When he could still talk, he kept mostly silent. Wandering about the village. Peering into windows. Smiling, head tilted. In the past few weeks, he has spoken to me often. But not tonight. Tonight, he's silent again. Or was I always interpreting senseless howls?

(The fiend takes whomever he wants whenever he wants. Except me. He can't take me. I've tried it. The tarantula, I mean. I've let it bite me repeatedly. Even in the most vulnerable spots, squirming with anticipated pain. But to no avail. In the end, it always crawls away in dejection, looking back balefully. Betrayed. Nothing can deliver me to madness. To that state of simple bliss. When I do howl, it's not through some external force, some manic pressure. But only in response to my own will. I'll always be human. With no hope of joining my brother in a spontaneous duet.)

Blood red fingers of sun fade away across the gorse. Time to change direction. The young men perk up. Those from the other villages have come far enough. Their duty done, they head for the fire to await us. The rest of us turn one at a time. In this way surrounding the cave. Another formality. He won't run. The edges of my flesh tingle. I'm the lodestone, carrier of bad news and nonbeing. Fresh flowers were placed on my parents' grave this morning. In order to appease them. Forgive me, I whisper. Thick particles fly at me.

It's no use trying to lead the others astray. To some real wolf's den perhaps. Whose scarlet eyes would drive us into a frenzy. Would roll us down the mountain with the sticks becoming our worst enemies. No use. I'd always—at the last moment, at the last possible moment—point myself in the right direction.

(As a child, he ran through the streets with the stray dogs. Occasionally, I'd join in, but he knew I was there only to keep an eye on him.

The blacksmith's daughter had been promised him in marriage. They made a fine couple. Until he asked her to get down on all fours.)

Soon, soon. We'll catch sight of his cave. Small bones scattered across its entrance. Triangular piles no wolf could erect. But he hasn't killed these creatures whose bones he displays so gaudily. He only places them at the entrance to his cave in the belief it'll enhance his image before the other wolves. His tiny jaws aren't powerful enough to tear raw flesh. Except for nipples.

We'll poke our smoking torches with caution into its mouth. Comfortable in the thought that fire decomposes the savage beast. Sends it exploding in all directions. We'll find him huddled in a corner of the cave. In the farthest, deepest corner amid stench and defecation. His body packed into the least volume possible. His hands over his head in an attitude of surrender. Urinating as well? We'll circle him. Tie him to a stick. Bind him like a wounded deer to the stick. He'll look up at me, eyes filled with pulsing veins, blood rushing to his head. I'll cry out not to hurt him as they wave the torches across his face and along the ridge of his spine. And then proceed to poke him myself.

(The worst. The most embarrassing. Was when he removed all his clothes. Dropped his pants at the least provocation. Then, he could always be found in the middle of a crowd. Doing tricks. Panting. Sniffing at their legs. I made efforts to cover him up but he always tore the clothing off as quickly as possible. In a blind rage as if he were being suffocated. I feared his being caught naked, appendages dangling. I feared his nakedness would lead to even more brutal behaviour on the part of his captors. On my part.)

We'll drop him roughly in the village square. An explosion of dust. And surround him as he's untied. Incantations circle in the air. They drop like bits of hot fat to scald flesh: "Demon, hie thee home!" "Get thee gone into the pit!" "Into the dark with thee and thy kind!" The blacksmith's wife will attack him with a bloodied axe. Only to be repelled by a hammer-blow from her husband. Our incantations—I'll scream the loudest, implore God the most—will be of no avail. Two of the braver men—from the next village—will tie his hands behind him. And pass the stick between his shoulder-blades. I'll be crying. I'll be sobbing. Memories of childhood will cascade from me and tumble into the fire. Will be charred by the flames. Will be spit out again in throbbing lumps of meat and gristle.

(The body of the blacksmith's daughter has been prepared. Those weeping against it no longer notice the powdered stain above her left breast. They're distracted by the fragrance of roses. The thick braids of garlic. The fact that soon she might be breathing again.)

The priest—the wizened priest—will emerge from his tiny chapel and bless the air. Someone is sneaking away to fornicate behind a hut. We'll turn our backs to the fire. Our shadows moving with the flames, playing crudely against the priest's vestments. For the first time, I'll feel a loathing, a disgust, for my brother. Here he is, being cleansed—"Leave the soul of this foul sinner, oh accursed demon. Make way for the bounty of the lord." And he lies there. Motionless. Cowering. Not once howling. One howl. One howl and I'll fight the village for him. One howl and.... Nothing. Only a tinny yelping whenever the priest orders the demons to enter the boar tethered to a grass rope. Thin and diseased. Squealing for mercy. No one but a blind fiend could be fooled into accepting such a substitute. Or a god, perhaps, who takes the larded bones and leaves the meat.

I'll ask myself over and over why he isn't howling. What's wrong with him? The priest will drone on as we prod him. Push him. Close the circle. There's a demon here in the form of my brother. Animal grunts from behind a hut. I must push and prod him the hardest. His appearance is most deceiving. But he means nothing to me. Less than nothing. It's only a demon. Only a red-eyed, fourlegged, forked-tailed...only a.... With a moon-warping scream, the blacksmith will lift my brother into the air. High over his head. And hurl him into the fire. Something drops on the way. Falling from my brother's mouth. I crawl over to pick it up. Now the howls begin. The priest re-blesses the air. And turns away. The pig has been spared. Its owner can now offer it to God. The howls continue. They're not my brother's. He has no voice. The blacksmith's daughter will rise abruptly. Scream out last night's moon slicing the mountains and the stars crowning her head. There is a shout of joy. We've succeeded in cleansing her of the fiend's stain.

With the bloodless nipple in my mouth, knowing at last why my brother refused to howl, I'll scramble away. Falling over two spent bodies behind the hut. Rising again. Away from the fire. Whipping my fists into the air. Away from the fire that's searching for my eyes. Running. Scurrying down the snaky paths where a sharp stick waits. Impaled. Impaled by the giant who holds me wriggling in the air. I smile.

(But now, at this moment, at precisely this moment and at no other time, after slowly beating the bushes in search of his cave, I am standing over him, I am standing over my brother, I am standing frozen over my brother in the midst of a procession of torches, with both hands fastened to a stick lifted high, later to be used as a bird-trap, now at its peak, at its moment of descent, about to crush his skull, I am the giant reflected in his red eyes, at this moment, at no other.)

# Alamgir Hashmi / TWO POEMS JAHANGIR

No sound

but birds darting from tree to tree.

Not the season that I can think of in any loving connection. Too much lightness of the air,

too many figures
of loss.

Spring flowers swing and fall
to the graves naturally.

I am reading your name.

#### JANUARY EGGNOG

The best thing after Christmas is to receive regular jars of it in the mail. In any case, Georgia gets it from the compact cows of Mantua. The yield has doubled since the military took the farm. And now they squirt peanut butter on your toast, and their charm, while you think about the come-again doric summer. Virgil liked it without fail.

#### Michael Winter / I, FOREIGN I

I am sitting near the candle. It glazes your gazing eyes. You are lying two dimensional to the window, hair twitching in captured breezes funnelling along the concrete wall and escaping through every ridge and crevice. You dowse your doubts with a single wave; resume a state of placidity. You say there is a good film on tonight and I see it forming behind your heavy lids. You stand in a hallway looking through a windowed door at a man near a greenboard. He picks up a sliver of chalk and slowly draws a line about ten inches long down the middle of the board. He draws another line exactly like the first and parallel with it. Two dots ensue and another line. Then an S-shaped figure appears to complete the cryptic message. The yellow chalk is placed back on its ledge. The lines dots and squiggle remain. You crane for comprehension. It is the time—11:15. A revelation.

Alternating your eyes from the candle to me to the whistling window. The double entendre escapes you. Fixed and rigid. To the concrete box after the film I cross blackly a deserted lot. It is dark there is wind and a streetlamp nods at the far end of the tarmac barren. You close your eyes, let your feet that touch mine guide us across. No fears. No maniacal drivers or chasms to dodge. And no time for casual canterings. I send you thought-shapes but you never receive.

Fish in the glass box behind your head keep bumping their noses, asking politely to be let out. Fed every day same time; kissing reflections. Nice green sand coating the bottom. Yellow light beaming down, bubble bubble behind your head. You are a fish and I am kissing you. The wind is not. Smell the symmetry.

Coffee instant on the trunk in the middle of the room. A Nescafé bottle and even the contents are not what they appear. From a fifty cent an ounce Chase and Sanborn. Without birth and their bottle is hypnotic blue. You shook your head when shaking into the redbrown bottle. An instant frown perked above your eyes, behind my head.

Crouch on your couch in the shade. An aura of understanding, sometimes alienation, but you are them. Read another weathered book, find an idea and use it. That black hair, dripping icicles down your face. Trying to make some rebellious remark, narcissus? Never eat with the lights off. Sit by my plate in chiaroscuro, barely discerning between carrots and chicken. Car tyres slicking through streaky streets jump into the kitchen. I turn on a lamp and move the mood.

Lounge in your chair nearest the flame. A red shimmer casts over your face hotly. Triangular mobiles revolve around with each billow from the window. Huffle down to Bowring Park and feed the icicled ducks Dominion bread and orange candy. Their frozen beaks are slick and sleek and the real wind glimmers around them. Beneath the frozen pond, faceless fishes bump their noses politely.

#### NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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