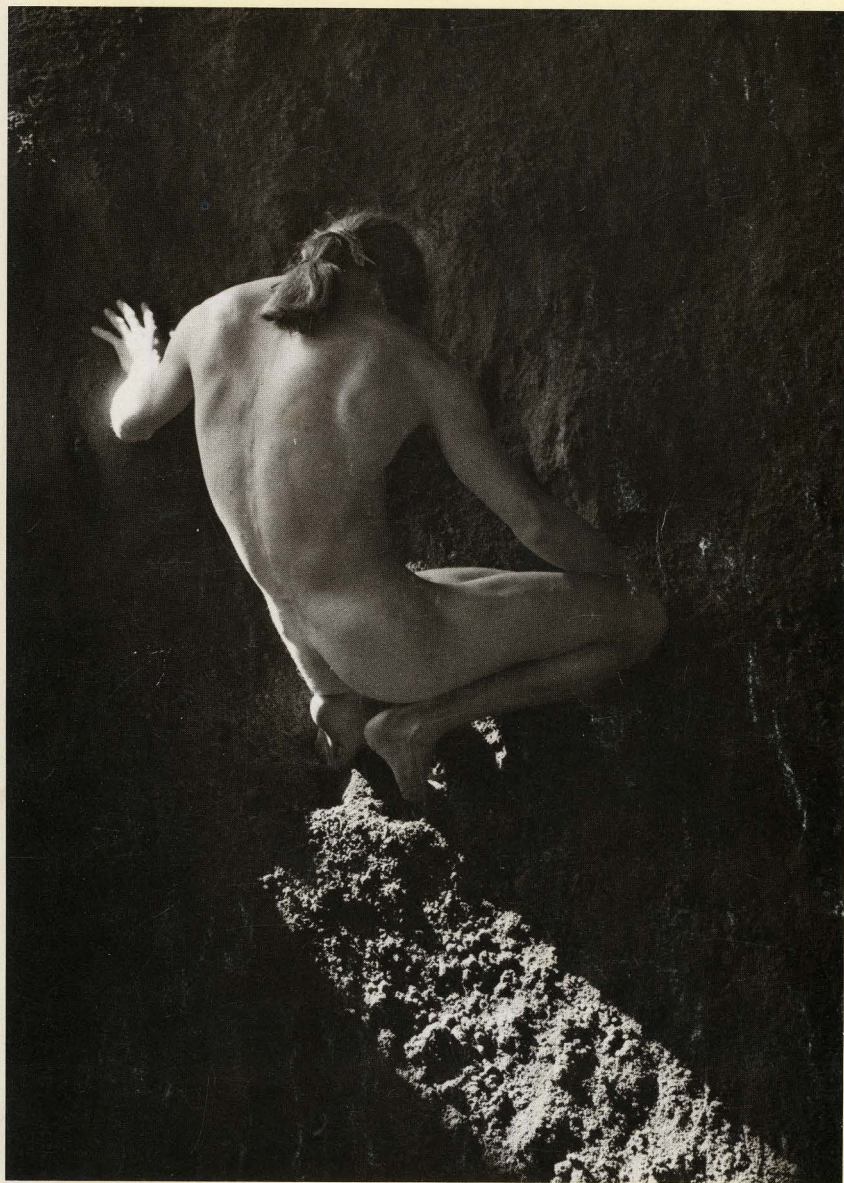


# THE CAPITANO REVIEW



This making of books involves directly  
the element of trust. That the writer trusts  
her own power to delineate, or rather, define,  
redefine the word. And that the reader trusts  
the writer/the book to have done so.

— CATHY FORD

To the superficial eye it seems to be one  
sweep of land and one sweep of sky with  
little detail. If you live there you've  
got to look for the details.

— BRENDA RICHES

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the 1990s, the number of people in the UK who are aged 65 and over has increased from 10.5 million to 12.5 million, and the number aged 75 and over from 4.5 million to 6.5 million (Office of National Statistics 1999).

There is a growing awareness of the need to address the needs of older people in the community, and the importance of the role of the general practitioner (GP) in this regard. The Department of Health (1998) has identified the need to improve the health of older people, and to ensure that they are able to live independently in their own homes for as long as possible. This has led to a number of initiatives, including the development of the 'Age Friendly' framework, which aims to ensure that the needs of older people are met in a range of settings, including the home, the community, and the health care system.

The 'Age Friendly' framework is based on the principle that older people should be able to live independently in their own homes for as long as possible. This requires a range of services to be available to older people, including housing, transport, social services, and health care. The framework also emphasizes the importance of the role of the GP in this regard, and the need to ensure that older people are able to access the services they need in a timely and appropriate manner.

The 'Age Friendly' framework is a key part of the Department of Health's strategy for improving the health of older people. It is based on the principle that older people should be able to live independently in their own homes for as long as possible. This requires a range of services to be available to older people, including housing, transport, social services, and health care. The framework also emphasizes the importance of the role of the GP in this regard, and the need to ensure that older people are able to access the services they need in a timely and appropriate manner.

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## Greg Hollingshead / SEABRIGHT

Old Henshaw, widower to Old Hetty, thinks this is a story about a boy and his hawk. I won't disabuse him. The boy is me, Edgar Dunlop. The hawk is a beauty named Seabright. For his sake and for the sake of the game, I have made a study of hairballs. If Seabright is given ground meat, there must be feathers pushed into it. To me, who have understood the hairball mechanism, this is clear, and Old Henshaw acts upon an intuitive sense of my understanding. Also I have grasped that my duty lies not in teaching Seabright to hunt — he knows all about hunting, is a hunting machine — but in teaching him to return the prey to me, which is something entirely different, and necessary to bear in mind.

Old Henshaw believes that Seabright, who is a gift from The Benefactor, will make me well. The Benefactor is my father, though I have never seen him. When I instructed Old Henshaw to fire off thanks, I noticed him adding his own at the bottom, as if The Benefactor could care. The three of us — Old Henshaw, bird, myself — climb to the upper heath in late morning, dizzy and ravenous, the sun already warm, the heavy invariable clouds of mid-day not yet arrived from the west. His and my breakfast Old Henshaw carries in his pockets; Seabright's is still in the earth, in the trees, in the sky. When I cough, old Henshaw sets down Seabright's cage to re-wrap my scarf. My eyes I keep closed until normal breathing resumes. Old Henshaw kisses my cheek, and we proceed to the spot that seems perfect. He spreads the blanket and sets out breakfast while I engage with Seabright, who is no ordinary bird. I look at him and do not see a dinosaur who has climbed diminished into the sky. His hood he wears without demurral — just one sharp look at me — but today I

leave it off, tired of the pretense that this is a bird who is being trained. At first nothing changes. Seabright returns with a sparrow, a fieldmouse, a wren, a hare (aborted). He waits after each catch only long enough to see it tossed into the sack. Three times more he returns, with a lark, with a white rat, with a luminous green brooch pinned to a swatch of purple material like raw silk, but softer than down. The brooch is warm and smooth like a baby's nose against my cheek. Where has it come from? We pack up everything, gazing about us. High against a sky the colour now of scorched aubergine, Seabright hovers to guide us. When, after what seems like hours, he is directly over our heads, we are stumbling into a narrow ravine with white dripping walls and a deep moss floor that slopes to a lime pond crowded with rushes and unindigenous mauve ferns. Old Henshaw reminds me how damp this is, the very worst kind of place for me. In raspy whispers he pleads with me to come away. His terror has the effect, however, of diminishing mine. My eyes I feel exploring the place with the discipline of fascination.

"Why do you suppose those ferns are such a strange colour?" I ask Old Henshaw, who can only gape. Seabright joins us. He lands at our feet before alighting on my arm. With him there, I feel even more assured. "Let's go closer," I say, and already am several paces ahead of Old Henshaw, who has come stumbling down the slope with his arms outspread as if to stop me. Nearer the pond, where the ground is level, it becomes very wet, and I have two soakers before stepping back into the arms of Old Henshaw, who would restrain me, but easily I break away, and with Seabright still on my arm, circle around until I realize that a stream feeds this pond, and that its source must be somewhere farther along. These two white walls I now see do not, as I had thought at first, come together here to form a cul-de-sac, but continue some distance to converge only very gradually toward a point somewhere deeper into the mists. And so we follow that stream. There is no path, but the going is easy. The ground becomes more solid, the moss giving way to a peculiar variety of rangy, tubular grass. I find myself imagining what The Benefactor would say about this place. I find myself imagining The Benefactor. In the distance, then, mists, with Old Henshaw behind me muttering. I expect the mists to

enclose us while keeping their distance, the way mists do, but these refuse, are wet and sliceable as the whites of apples. They also roar, and there's a pungence in the air, not apple but celery. Perhaps it's the vegetation, which snaps like tiny stalks of it under our feet. When the mists clear we are at the base of a waterfall twenty or thirty metres high. I stop to take it in, and Old Henshaw stops behind me. First one eye and then the other Seabright with his usual intensity turns to fix on it.

So. The three of us. The water roaring. Does Seabright shoot me a glance? He glides to the ground. He flicks his wing feathers once, and steps onto the pinkish, drenched rocks that ring the falls' base. For a moment I think there must be osprey in him — he sees a trout — but instead he steps in a cautious way from rock to rock until he has disappeared behind the falls. I can see a cavern back there. Deep and dark it looks, mossy I should think, though its walls must be white underneath, since what could have created this canyon but this very water slicing home through limestone? Seabright emerges with gold in his beak, a lock of gold hair. I touch it to the fuzz of my upper lip, and I think of the brooch, which smelled like this, fragrant, alive, though "smelled" hadn't occurred to me back on the heath. I glance behind at Old Henshaw, and he is more composed, though not completely unapprehensive, has assumed the miner's squat, and looks about him relieved that only this should be our goal. But he hasn't seen the lock, has cataracts of his own, and I don't pass it back for examination. Instead I sneak it into my pocket. Seabright has no objections — and with him once more on my arm I walk toward the falls, aware that behind me Old Henshaw is on his feet. I turn back and make a sign intended simultaneously to pacify and to order to stay put, something like a traffic warden. And as I do that, the possibility occurs of thumbs (mine) pressing the old trachea — *don't push me, Old Henshaw*, says a voice inside me — and I know at this point I would have the same answer for The Benefactor. Resolution must be a terrible thing.

And so I go balancing from rock to rock, and think how horribly slippery, it's a wonder my neck isn't broken, but Seabright remains calm, so why shouldn't I? Above our heads the spray drifts like powder. Nearer to the falls now I see the gap plainly, black, and narrow for snugness. I remember my childhood places for hiding, think how surely this must be the very best, and I wonder whether one ever finds his way out of the very best, and then I am through, and can't see a thing. Correction: I can see a whole world. It has a sky of its own, in patches, high above the sun-pooled forest where a girl in shorts with white legs, who stands in a shaft of sunlight, who is known to me by the colour and the fall of her hair (which is not symmetrical), and the tear my hawk has left in her cardigan, holds out her hand in a gesture not of solicitation or even of intrepidity, but of something else. And me a boy of thirteen-and-a-half who takes his cough and his brain along with him everywhere he goes. But don't I breathe freely just now? Aren't I strong? Don't I take firm hold of her hand, which is also white, and don't our words unspoken shoot skywards to hover and hum there until Seabright has warmed with claws to his dreadful task, and their tiny bodies rain down like a blanket for ours? Her name is R. Abbetheswaithe. She comes here rarely. I've decided to put my life in her hands, and she takes it.

And takes it.

I revive, stretch. She takes it again.

"Open your mouth." There's a segment of orange in it, more wild and more strange than the wildest, strangest grocer ever stocked. With eyes closed, with jaw glands that continue spraying twin jets, I await another. We'll each have half, I'm thinking, and half a second, making a whole each. But nothing except a fit of nasty shivering happens, and disappointed mouth closes as eyes open on black ceiling of dim cave, one wall of which is water roaring. Seabright steps briskly out of the shadows. He flies up onto my arm, and both of us a bit sad, but also restless, leave, blinking into mist illumined with sunshine, and stumble across those slippery pink rocks with just enough balance to dodge the embrace of Old Henshaw who means well but irritates by not being of the same world as R. Abbetheswaithe.



We set out home, retracing the stream. The mist clears. The sky over the high heath is blue again, steeping to black. Old Henshaw crabs at me. I think of an old dog who worries a bone. Several times I almost tell him about R. Abbetheswaithe, but always some nameless misgiving restrains me. I wish I understood more of all this. Perhaps there's a book on it in the library at home, under Natural History, or Health. And then something clicks. And I ask Old Henshaw the first question that comes to mind concerning Old Hetty, whether she used to like taking walks on the heath, and although in moods ranging from torpor to lassitude I have listened all my life to his Hettiana, as I call it, I now await his answer with eagerness.

"Yes, she did," he says finally, and then he looks at me in a funny way, and for the first time I glimpse inside the old dog a trapped pup, which baffles me, until with a further funny look — a leer, I deduce — he adds, "She liked it better outside." And I understand, *I understand*, which means that whole inner amorphous tracts in my head come snapping into crack, precision outline like intricate cities crystallized from fog. I feel dizzy. The door has flung open and the world has no floor. I look at the back of Seabright's head (he is turned away, watching the gorse) and I see him in old age, bleary-eyed, coat unsheeny, a riot of hunger traces, and I know that the arm the old bird stands on is old then too, old as Old Henshaw's; liver-spotted, freckled, foxed like a page from an antique book; sinewy, brittle with desiccation, creaky at elbow and wrist, and swollen there, the fingers gnarled a little, the back of the hand a knot of blue worms, and I am afraid, though not completely, not for example to the point of diarrhea, but enough certainly not to stop feeling dizzy, to be startled, to stagger, even, when Seabright, still very much the young hunting machine, takes leave of my arm to pursue some poor creature that rustles in the gorse. I stagger, and understand as I do, that I must find R. Abbetheswaithe. I must grow strong, and if that is not a natural consequence of having met her, then I must find her anyway, coughing into my handkerchief as I search if need be, to find and never leave her. Oh, why am I leaving her now?

It's a stoat Seabright has, a small one, quite dead. He stands over it like a mother until Old Henshaw has dropped it into the sack, then flies to my arm and closes his eyes. When we draw near the estate, he is off to circle high over the house, portending. For someone is there, waiting. A strange, whiskered man in black who sits on the front steps with his knees at his chest and his long hands folded.

"The Benefactor?" I whisper. We are close enough for Old Henshaw, who is walking ahead of me, to perceive the general outline. He shakes his head, No.

"Who then?"

Old Henshaw shrugs, cautiously.

"Mr. Dunlop?" says the strange man when Henshaw and I halt in front of him like truant schoolboys. "Mr. Edgar Dunlop?" Yes, I nod; I even step forward and hold out my hand like a proper gentleman. He doesn't take it, though he looks at it, and then he unfolds a large sheet of paper informing us The Benefactor has died, and that is about as much as I am able to grasp. When Seabright lands at his feet, the man stops reading, startled, and takes a step backwards, up a step. Later Old Henshaw explains that I have been left principally the house, plus a small annuity, and there are also apparently certain provisions for my formal education, if any. Things may become a bit tight, he suggests with the hesitance of tact, though probably not so noticeably, I gather, in his time as during the middle and declining years of mine.

I suppose I should be concerned, and in a way I am. From here on in I shall have to keep my wits about me, certainly. But why should Life spare Edgar Dunlop her gauntlet? If he intends to become strong for R. Abbetheswaithe, he might as well become strong for Life too. And if logic like that is spurious, then I am tired of logic. Courage will have to do. I have just come back from telling Old Henshaw my intention from now on is to hawk alone. He wept and made an awful scene. I don't like to say this, but there is less and less co-operation from that quarter every day. Tomorrow at dawn the bird and I set off without him. The ground hamburger with the feathers pushed into it will be withheld again tonight. He has to find her. R. Abbetheswaithe is the answer now, the only one that makes any difference, and if I am going to face this out alone, then I am going to need it.



## Brenda Riches / RECENT FICTION

## UNTITLED

“See the man in the moon?”

Ah that's not a man, it's a grieving woman.

A wreath of hair surrounds skin surrounds a ring of bone.  
Dreamhealer heal my grief.

“What was your night?”  
Tresses of darkness.

“What was your night?”  
Ravels of darkness.

“What was your night?”  
Splinters of dark.

Grief beats still  
at the point of my turning dream.

Dreamhealer let me be.

“Moonbeams tusk the sleeping earth.  
Woman, what was your night?”

Listen

the man in the moon tumbled      the woman was sorry      she tipped  
her head to one side      to watch the man's fall      he landed  
in a flower bed      but it was winter it was winter      and there  
were no flowers      so he burrowed down to where roots were waiting  
broke one off and chewed on it      he had a good meal and fell asleep

“grief is a face whose eyes are closed”

the woman in the moon  
was too far away      far away to see properly

“woman wake up to your night”

she thought the root juice on his cheeks      was tears      she opened  
her mouth to a full O      to give shape to her sympathy      but when  
she  
leaned closer      she could see that the man was snoring into the dirt.



# GALL

*September 13*

Her name is Sara. The new girl, the intruder. Red-haired Sara with the fluttering eyes. Who does she think she is, prancing in and choosing the desk in front of Matthew? Who is she, that she gets A's first time?

If they gave marks for what I'm good at I'd get A's. But what would you know about that, precious Mrs. Kirk. You're married to your damn classroom, your withered old specimens.

Those who can't, teach. And today we did the nuptial flight of bees. It figures. Matthew's all eyes for the sleek head in front of him.

They'd have garish children, those two. Swarming creatures with striped red and yellow hair. She can have him. I don't care.

*October 13*

Today Mrs. Kirk brought a dead stem of goldenrod and told us the lump on it was gall. It's an abnormal growth induced by a parasite, she told us, and we had to study it and write down our observations. *Jealousy*  
I wish I could grow on Matthew.

Gall: 1) Before dissection. (I wrote)

This swelling has forced veins to pull and widen and magnified the colour so that you can see clearly the shades of silken sand that harbour the grub, the tracery that shelters it. The veins have pulled the skin inwards and I am aware of stress because the parts between have a bloated shape like a peeled tangerine. The swelling is dry and rigid, and when I tap it against my thumb the stem vibrates.

2) After dissection.

The insect is puffy in its tight cavity. The razor has exposed it and I prod it with the ribby stem of the dead plant. I prod. It's like gelatine. The inner faces of the segments are polished chalk under my fingers.

Mrs. Kirk read it through quickly and told me I was supposed to be recording, not romanticising, that I shouldn't use first person in scientific observation, and that you can't magnify colour. Sara smiled into her book. She got the best mark of course. She's so *precise*. Matthew commented that gall is also that bitter stuff we carry inside us somewhere. Mrs. Kirk said he should make his comments more accurate and told him to go and look up the word in a recognised dictionary. Sara's invited Matthew to Thanksgiving dinner. She hasn't wasted her time, wasping her way in.

*November 13*

Mrs. Kirk, dear Mrs. Kirk. Cast your eye over this observation. Will you give it an A?

## GALL

At that butterfly brief time of the year when lakes have frozen and before snow covers the ice, I skated. The lake was fringed with cat-tails, reeds and tall gatherings of pampas. I arrived at noon in the clear expectation that the sun would cover the ice and I would skate on gold glass. It would be an afternoon lifted out of time, precious and unreal.

Not so. Skating in the direction of my shadow I was on ice that was grey and black and pitted with trapped bubbles. Little clusters of shredded snow rested like feathers on the surface, and dead leaves were caught on the tops of some of these, so that when I pulled one off it left its imprint behind as a glass fossil.

As I skated towards the far bend of the lake, it pleased me to see Sara's face beneath the ice. I stopped for a better look. It was under a part that was cracked, and the jagged edges cut through her face from just above her left eye, and continued diagonally, severing her nose from which spurted a dark red weed, then took a vertical course, splitting her soft mouth. Tributary cracks webbed outwards to break her hair close to the scalp, below her ears, and level with her throat. The geography of disfigurement was entrancing. I glided about twenty feet away, turned, and skimmed back over her.

### *December 13*

It hasn't stopped snowing for three days. Even when I close my eyes all I can see is white. It's as if the ground and my brain, both of them together, were being wrapped for burial.

{ I can't sleep. If I keep Sara under the lake she will feed on its rank and winter feast. She will turn into something with wings.

### *January 13*

Sara is oppressive like a sky that stretches over me, a smothering grey that reaches all the way down to my horizons. Matthew has offered to teach her how to ski. He leaned forward when Mrs. Kirk wasn't looking (when does she ever really look) touched the back of Sara's neck lightly with one finger and she turned to face him. He whispered very quietly, but I heard what he said, and I saw her eyes light up. I wanted to throw icy water at them. That would be really something. Sara of the spitting eyes.

### *February 13*

Sara skis *incredibly* well. She must do. Matthew has said it five times so far. Another A for Sara.

Mrs. Kirk is droning on about the way bees dance. On and on like a buzz saw. My eyes are closed.

Sara skis, yes, I can see her. Sending her body along tracks Matthew has made for her. Sara the quiet shadow, trailing behind him with a noise like taffeta. Now she falls in the snow. She sits up, laughing. He pulls her to her feet and brushes the snow off her clothes. Now they've come to a dusk of pine trees. Sara and Matthew moth-winging to a dark place where they will kiss.

*March 13*

Today the sun shining through the window pane woke up a blue-bottle. Its glossy buzzing lulled me. Its wings were so thin. So thin. How could they send that full body winging through the air? Mrs. Kirk complained about the noise, so Sara squished it dead with her thumb. I wish Matthew had been in the room to see her smile as she did it.

*April 13*

Matthew looks different. He's wearing a loose yellow shirt. Even Mrs. Kirk commented. Button your shirt, Matthew, she told him. Sara is flighty in a new dress. Her mouth is gaudy with lip gloss.

I've written a poem.

*Butterfly*

*Painted Lady*

*I'm watching you  
flapping there  
over my yellow flower.*

*How would you like  
to be pinned  
under glass?*

*How would you like  
to be spread*

*permanently.*

*May 13*

Earlier this evening I walked down Matthew's back lane. Your fence has gaps in it, Matthew. You should do something about that. Get your backside off the grass and mend your rotten fence. What keeps you on the grass, Matthew? Sara the scarlet flounce? Tumble-skirted Sara who wants you to smooth her out with your sun-warmed hands?

*June 13*

At four o'clock I watched them walk out of school. They were holding hands. Their fingers were so twisted together that they looked like one grotesque knot.

Sara and Matthew. Knotted together.

"It's an abnormal growth, induced by a parasite."

*who, in this case, is the parasite?*



## DRY MEDIA

Someone told her he was an artist. "What do you paint?" she asked. "I don't paint," he said. "I draw. I use dry media." Then use me, she offered, but didn't say it. "What dry things?" she asked. "Hard coal, graphite." "And what do you draw?" (She was doing quite well, obeying instructions.)

\*

The sea builds up ribbon by ribbon into tall curtains, and loops over and falls and snags on stones. But nothing is really torn because there's always another wave made from the same water. I decide one day to swim through the edge that is frilled to the ironed levels beyond. And on another day to lie beached and clad in sunlight, so that I can recline and observe, make of the sea a distant scape. And today I crouch and dig in wet sand, lining my fingernails with grit, watching the skin of water slide away under my reflection, seeing that in all those watery departures my reflection stays with me while I squat and grub. And I know the sea is my place, its rib and shining, its rubbing on sand.

\*

On a day when the rocks lay saurian under a dry sun, the horse came out of the sea. He was the colour of thin gold through which shines a pale light. His mane waved whitely, sprang thick from the muscled arch of his neck. From her place in the yellow heat she saw how he stepped between weed and rock and laid a rich shadow at her feet.

\*

A thick scarf of vermillion cloud is laid out along the sky but doesn't touch the horizon. Below it the sky is cobalt. We are the focus of this painting, my palomino and I. He is muscle and light; silver fibres lift and fall along his neck, white threads webbed with flamingo light.

The sun goes and a grey light washes over the land.

My horse is dead.

\*

"You must get out among people," her psychiatrist had said. "Mix a little." Was there any point in telling him that she thought she preferred her own home? The stone walls were crude, perhaps, but invincible more or less, and the dry sand on the ground was a powder to be sifted. When she moved her feet under it, it rippled like the skin of her palomino on days when light shone over the November land, but the sun was no longer visible. That was what she liked best about her home. Light but no sun. No sun, no shadows. A logic that suited her. And since the horse was dead, there was no company she wished to keep. "You're letting yourself go," her sister told her through a crack in the wall. Her voice was nastily close. "You're letting yourself go." As if there were something wrong in that. "I know a very good man. He could help you if you would just talk to him. If you'd only talk to him." She'd consented for fear her sister might rasp long enough to find a way in.

Once she was outside, seeing the prairie floor from her sister's car window, seeing how fireweed speared up from charred dirt, how black birds that sat on fence posts startled the low sky with a streak of scarlet as the car passed them, she had to admit that there were things she lacked in her home. She could think of nothing more she could do with her sand. She had scooped, spilled, tossed, spread, smoothed, held, let fall. It had lain patterned with arcs and lines, it allowed brief hollows and hills, but always resettled to its own level. And now she supposed she was bored. So, though she might prefer her safe tedious home to a chance of risk, she would do what the man said.

After the first outgoing she came back to her cave and lay spent where a rock's shadow would have been if she'd invited the sunlight in. But she had learned the sun's place. And although she had been a spectator to its dappled dances and had applauded its power to dry up the grassblades at her feet, she had seen how black shadows strutted under the branches that got in its way, and how it brought blisters of water seeping out of people's faces, making them forever wipe their foreheads with white and folded handkerchiefs. So she had come back to lie in her grainy monochrome.

\*

"I draw faces," he said, looking straight at hers — closely at hers. His was sparse, just the necessary flesh to cover finely arranged bones. But his eyes were traps. "Do you draw real faces?" she asked, "or ones from your head?"

\*

At another return she found a glistening shell on her cave floor. She picked it up. The upper half was a spiral like a helter skelter worn smooth by glee and descents. But the lower part was bulged and crevassed, pleated and disturbed like the dark sand on a beach after the sea has withdrawn. It trapped weed, and was holed and broken in several places. She tucked her finger into the top and wound the shell around so that her finger followed its curves and stopped, wedged tight in its core.

And there was a mirror she hadn't noticed before. It stood on a ledge and rested against smooth rock. She went close and looked into the reverse image of everything that held her safe and dry and circled in. She saw the graphite sheen of her walls, their slate and flaking surfaces, the fine dust of sand that etched pale lines into their shallow veins. But there was a green she couldn't place. She leaned closer. Clots of radiant green, brilliant plush. She pushed her hand towards them. Her fingers cracked against glass.

\*

I am afraid of water. Below watery surfaces lie fallen lines. Spiked and broken boundaries coil and snarl under the smooth black skin of the slough. And now my sand and rock is host to a moisture that lets moss breed.

\*

Turning away from the mirror, she carried the shell to where the moist and downy plant oozed over stone, and placed it there. Now she had an arrangement. When she withdrew her fingers and turned again to the mirror, her arrangement was framed and distant and in its proper place. So when her sister slipped the white envelope through the crack in the wall she was able to send back an acceptance.

\*

"I draw real faces," he told her, tracing his fingers along her forehead and down into the hollow of her cheek.

## FALL

The table is a mess. A pack of tumbled patience cards the child left there, a piece of toy the dog chewed, a hairbrush split and matted, broken combs, dirty cups, this morning's unused spoons. It will all have to be put away. The table will have to be wiped clean. Ready for a new havoc. A fly, left over from summer, blunders over these objects. It is a remnant, like the papery leaves that irritate the branches at my window.

A commendable wind is blowing. It's doing well. The dry branches make a pretence at agitation, they seem to live. They smack the telephone wires, the electric cables. They are making a good impression. A plus for effort.

I made efforts too. When he had his fill of other people mauling and mangling other people, when he felt he was speaking to the air, wondering why seeing things as they were, why giving his voice to people who had no say in their living and dying, in the white hours when he couldn't sleep he would pull me over him like a slab.

I was marble to his death wish, mottled flesh in the bed when the covers fell to the floor.

When was he finally glossed over out there till he lay lacquered beside me and pulled me nowhere?

Pick, pick. I pick at the paste wax that crusts the table joints. Run a thumbnail in the groove till the old wax curls out and I flick it from under my nail.



There's something to be said for waxes. This kind coats and smears and is white streaks on my table, but if I leave it long enough, I can take a fresh cloth to it and buff it to a dark shine. I can make of my table a rare wood that draws light to itself and takes on depths. Then there are candles. At Christmas I burn and tilt red candles and make berries after the hot clear drops have set to a softness that I can knead and shape. I place them, random among silvered twigs, to decorate the feast.

Of his silence I can make nothing.

The wind has taken the last of the crabapple leaves, and the waxy fruit bends its branches in a final show of pliancy. The scarlet apples are becomingly spread through the arcs and angles of dying wood. Someone should make a still life of that tree.

Images trapped on a canvas, tableaux, set pieces and the life of stones. And me with days to rebuild and hearths to lay.

It's not far to the woodpile but in this wind it will take time to get kindling. I must lean, and hold my clothes to myself and turn my face to deflect the detritus of my back yard. The wind thrusts under the canvas he put over to protect the wood, pushing up till it looms and sags like webbed wings. My hair is sticky threads across my face. There's no point in brushing it away, it will just slap back, whip into my eyes and mouth. Let it be. Curled, pale leaves skim the dead grass, meeting tree trunks and fences in breathy collision. They break over my ears with the gasp of distant waves.

There was a time he would let me pull him from the house. At night, seeing him bent over a cup of chocolate barred me behind a terrible metal, and I would pull him by his limp hands, his mild defeated hands. I would take him to where the black sea broke into white pieces again and again, and show him how the sea went on anyway, and walk him by its suck and swing till his hands lived again and he could hold my thighs and push against them, and I could pinch the flesh of his back till he felt the pain so I knew he hurt. And I told him his body wasn't defeated, that his hurt could make mine sing like the syrens and here was where he should drown, not in the scummy water of his workaday world.

Dear God, I want to rebuild him, remake the days when we corresponded, recreate the loving that made a burning of me. And erase, paint over, the image of him stirring chocolate in the night, stirring his despair with a tarnished spoon.

The outer wood is damp. Yesterday's rain has turned it a dark and crumbling orange. It frays against my fingers and sticks to the palms of my hands, clinging like used tea-leaves. I shall rearrange the wood-pile, organize the wet and the dry. I shall be practical and competent, make a good fire, brew tea in a silver pot and sip while the flames throw shadows on the stone of the fireplace. It will make a pretty picture, me in my trim dress lifting the cup to my lips, putting it down, posed at an angle that allows the firelight to sparkle in my eyes, to flush my cheeks with an aura of happiness. It will be a picture to mail to friends.

We did that one year, sent a colour photograph of ourselves, pasted on red card. The last thing he did with the child, involving himself with scissors and paste and sparkling dust, putting a festive frame around us knotted and smiling. She sat opposite him, chewing her hair, shaping the greeting that was to be put into white envelopes, dropped into dark boxes and carried away to places beyond her understanding. Don't chew your hair, he told her. She looked up startled till she saw he was happy above the snippets and the remnants, the spilled dust and patches of paste, and pulled more hair into her mouth with her tongue.

After that, his don'ts to her were honed and bright. He pared and whittled her pleasure in him till it was peeled willow, and then her bending dried and shrank away from him and she was tossed aside. What of her now? Where does she move when I pour her tea and hand her cookies and ask, how was school, how was the party? And she tells me, fine, it was fine, looking into her cup. Yes, my fine child, your father and I have refined you and one day you will be powder on the table between us. And there was no grand opening to the process, no ribbons cut to mark a beginning of decay.

## INTERVIEW

*This interview took place at Bill Schermbrucker's house on 22nd June, 1978, a meeting, finally, for Brenda Riches, Bill and Penelope Connell after two years of correspondence. The questions are born of the fascination Bill and I have in watching Brenda's work, especially the dream-piece, separate itself from her, and mature. The responses reveal the conscious shaping of image we have sensed all this time in her work.*

*The transcript has undergone minor revisions.*

— PC

*December 27th, 1978*

*PC* What do you see yourself as writing about, and how do you come to those things?

*BR* Well, nothing's planned. Sometimes it's an object that gets my attention, and I'll write about it. Or it's something someone says. That story "Dry Media" came about because of a conversation I had with an artist. I asked him what he painted, because my basic assumption was that all artists paint. I was quite taken aback when he said he didn't paint. He said he used dry media, and I liked the phrase. That's what started that whole story going. With "Cloth", the first sentence came into my head when I wasn't even thinking about writing at all. Usually I get my beginnings which in the end may be either edited out or else moved to a different position in the piece.

*BS* So you don't set out to create a painting in words; you set out to use the medium, which is words.

*BR* Yes.

*PC* And you don't have a subject that you think about a lot, that you intend to. . . .

*BR* No, not consciously.

*BS* How long have you been writing?

*BR* I didn't write seriously till I came to Canada and that was four years ago. Once I'd been here a while I met a lot of other writers and they were quite devastating in their reaction to what I'd written before. By devastating I mean honest. I was writing a lot of garbage and they helped me weed out the usual mistakes I suppose many people make: being over-sentimental, over-indulgent, and saying too much when you could say less. It was the poetry group that really got me started.

*BS* Are there many groups of writers in Saskatoon?

*BR* Not many that I'm aware of. Two are important to me. There's the Saskatoon poets, and at first I joined them because I thought I wrote poetry, till I discovered that my poetry wasn't very good. Then I went to the Saskatchewan Summer School of the Arts. It's a very stimulating place and that got me writing completely differently. The manuscript I took there was a kind of autobiographical novel about coming to Canada. And having written that, I realized that I couldn't write about real people as themselves without being superficial. I was writing about my own family and you can't really tell the truth about your own family without putting them on the stand, and I didn't want to do that.

*BS* Why not?

*BR* Because I didn't want to make public something which is so deeply personal and private.

*BS* Would you want to do that after it's no longer "hot"?

*BR* No. But I've found another way of doing it now, through fiction. At first I used to read the occasional piece of prose at the poetry groups and I realized that it wasn't really fair because there were a lot of people reading their poems. At the same time I wanted the reactions of the people in that group because I respected their opinions. What impressed me about them was that they judged a work, not from their ideas of what they liked, but from where the work was, and they helped people work out what they wanted to write. No personal prejudices came into it. Then I joined a local writers' organization, but found that they just met every now and then to listen to speakers. That really wasn't what I wanted. Then one day the new president was phoning up all the members to ask them if they wanted to continue their membership. I said, not really, I wanted a workshop situation and he said he was looking for that as well.

BS Who was that?

BR That was Alan Bradley. We got together on prose criticism. Then one of the poets joined us, and two other writers who were working on novels. What I really want to say about both groups is that they never let you rest on your laurels, ever. Even if you're being published all over the place, if they don't think something you've written is any good, or even good enough, they tell you. If they think you're depending too much on your present style, which is what I've been doing, they let you know. I was in a rut, and certain magazines were liking what I wrote and I was thinking, well, all I have to do is carry on writing like this and enough people are going to go on liking it. People in the groups won't let you take that attitude. They kind of put pins into you and make you think, ouch! it's no good, I can't stay here, I've got to move on to somewhere else.

BS Are you writing for them?

BR Well, that is a danger, and in fact I almost got to the point when I thought, I must change to suit certain people. But there are enough people in the groups who'll help reinforce your own feelings about what you want to do. There was a point where I thought, maybe I ought to concentrate on something I'm bad at, something technical, like dialogue, so I tried to write a dialogue. It was terrible; it was awful. And I thought, well, why should I write dialogue if I don't want to. But there are other influences. At the moment the person who's influencing me is Gabriel Garcia Marquez. He got me out of my rut, I think, but I'm very much mimicking him at the moment. I'm hoping I'll soon get through that phase. The rut I was in was too much emphasis on one person's point of view as a vehicle for themes and images which kept recurring. That's all very well up to a point. But I thought I was getting too confined.

PC I see a similar state of mind, in a lot of your work.

BR Yes. I've been accused of concentrating too much on gloom.



PC What do you feel about that?

BR Well, it's just too bad. I think gloom and depression and despair and things like that are much more interesting than happiness. Very few people write well about happiness. I think e. e. cummings is one poet who does write well about joy.

BS A student of mine once made a comment, which is that our generation, you know, the generation of people writing today, relates more to pain.

BR I think you grow more through pain, really, because I think even if you're intensely happy about something, built into the experience is the knowledge that you're going to lose that happiness. There's certainly satisfaction in strong emotional experiences, provided the pain doesn't go on too long unrelieved.

BS I'm interested in other writers that may have been an influence on you. As I was reading your stuff, I was thinking about Patrick White. Have you read him?

BR No, but I'll have to now! The person who's influenced me most is Edna O'Brien. I read a book of hers called *A Pagan Place* and I noticed that she picked up a minor point at the end of each paragraph and made it the starting point of the next. And so I wrote a piece where the starting point was a wishbone. We'd had turkey for dinner, and couldn't pull the wishbone till it dried. I thought that was an interesting idea, that you couldn't say your wish till the bone dried. And that started me off on what a friend of mine — Anne, actually, Szumigalski — has called "wit-walking." You start writing about the wishbone and you write the paragraph. The paragraph ends itself and you pick up the last thought or image in it to start the next one. This means you need never be at a loss for something to write about. You can use anything at all as a starting point. That was the first piece of writing I did which completely broke away from my original garbage, and which was accepted by *Grain* magazine. It's called "Strings," and it's developing into what I hope will be a short novel. I find witwalking a very comforting thing to do, because if you're in the mood for writing and you don't know what to write about, you just walk your wits. Sometimes it works well, and sometimes it doesn't. Fortunately that piece did. Other pieces

have been terrible failures, but even then you can maybe take a paragraph or idea out of a witwalk and develop that. There's always something to work on.

*PC* So you're really very conscious of how you're doing what you're doing.

*BR* Too conscious. So conscious that in fact I'm not letting out as much as I ought to be letting out. I'm too afraid of writing something mediocre.

*PC* Do you feel sometimes when you look at a story that you really haven't said what you wanted to say?

*BR* I don't really know what I want to say. But sometimes there are stories I don't like, and then I know there's something wrong with them.

*BS* What do you do with those?

*BR* Get help. Sometimes from my group, but not always. I took one to a high school class and they put me right.

*BS* So you don't throw the stuff away.

*BR* I never throw anything away. In fact, a character called Miranda was created out of an image without a place in its original story. It was the image of light leaving a room like the trailing folds of a brocade dress. I liked that image, but it didn't fit the story. So I kept the image and then someone suggested I write a piece about light. It could start off with light coming up and end with light dying. It could be a day or a whole lifetime, but the actual shape of the story would be light rising, the sun rising, the sun setting, the light appearing, the light going. . . . And Miranda was born out of that.

PC } When you sit down to write, is there a mood you have to be in, or is the house always empty, or what happens? It seems like it's a very important part of your life.

BR It's a vital part. I don't write very much, and I do have to be in the right mood for writing new stuff, though there's usually something to rework. I write most easily in the evening. Fortunately interruptions don't put me off. I have three children who do sometimes interrupt me, and that's fair enough; they ought to be able to, but it doesn't matter as long as I've got something started. I think the important thing is to work every day, and if it's not at writing, then it should be at reading someone who writes well.

BS I had a notion as I read your work that your sister had entered into your work.

BR I don't have a sister. Perhaps I wish I did.

BS And are you now a prairie writer?

BR I don't know what you mean by a prairie writer. Some people think that if you're a prairie writer you must write about the prairie, and I think that's ridiculous. I would say I was a prairie writer in that it was that landscape that took me out of myself and it's those people who live there who make me keep at writing. In fact, there's very little about the prairie in what I write.

PC Have you read that book by Patricia Garfield, *Creative Dreaming*?

BR Yes, after you suggested it, and I worked on it. I got myself dreaming about the things I wanted to dream for three whole nights. It was exhausting, but I made myself wake up after my dreams and write them down.

BS Henry Miller says that when we have the courage to live our lives the way we want to, we won't write any more. What do you think of that?

BR I *want* to write. But apart from that, I suppose none of us can live the way we want to, so we compensate. I don't like to be too analytical about it. I think really what I'm doing is, I see things that impress me and absorb them and for some reason they've got to come out again, my way.

BS Are you reshaping experience?

BR I suppose so. For instance, I could pass a blossom tree in Britain and think, "How pretty", but not do anything about it, whereas now I look at a tree and it's got to be put into a story, and until it's done I don't feel quite right. It's the same with things that some people consider vulgar, like pee, for example. In one of my stories I called it a "gold and darkling stream". I think urine is very beautiful. Like hot beer.

BS Are you a piss fetishist? [Laughter] Is that the notion of rescuing? The writer is someone who rescues things?

BR No, I just think things demand to be put down in words. The idea that I am rescuing something is rather presumptuous. After all, the tree's going to go on living after I'm dead.

BS Men and women relationships. This is something that obviously enters into your writing. The question I want to ask really is: what are men to women and what are women to men?

BR I don't know. I think people find out about themselves through other people. Another book that's interested me is Martin Buber's *I and Thou*. It suddenly occurred to me that that's what I'm writing about. I think people who are sexually involved with each other find it difficult to be friends at a level where they can talk freely about themselves.

*BS* Why?

*BR* I don't know. Maybe in the strongest loving relationships the bonds are too intense to articulate, and in the insecure ones people are too afraid to expose themselves.

*BS* I think it's because they have a different kind of political language they use with one another.

*PC* I think that's been an artificial barrier, created by the idea of sexuality as differentiating experience, which I really don't think it does.

*BR* What do you mean?

*PC* Well, people suddenly see themselves as men and women instead of people.

*BR* That's a real barrier. If you go and have an animated conversation with a man, the assumption is that you want to get him into bed, and I find that very frustrating.

*BS* Yeah, but the sexual undertone also provides the energy of the conversation to a certain extent.

*BR* The tension. I think what I'm most interested in is the tension. It certainly makes people write. If you were utterly content in your life, I don't think you'd write.

*BS* Does writing increase the tension or does it dissipate it?

*BR* Sometimes it dissipates it if you're really. . . . Well, I was once very depressed and I wrote a poem called "Depression." It was a terrible poem but I felt so relieved once I'd written it. But sometimes writing just creates a new tension and you keep going.

*PC* Did you ever write out of the loneliness that you must have felt from coming to Canada? You do seem to create another female for yourself to discuss things with.

*BR* Do I?

*PC* Yeah.

BR Well, people can be lonely, no matter how much support they have. You've got to make something positive out of this. But then, I'm lucky. I can talk about this from a well-supported situation. It's been a long time since I've been really lonely without having a physical person there. But even so, sometimes when you try and tell people things that really please you, you find they don't understand why these things please you. And so you're thrown back on yourself.

{BS How can you be a writer when you have three kids to bring up? Don't you need a year off without kids, or something?

BR No. For one thing I'd miss them too much, for another, I write from what I'm doing. For example, the story called "Demeter's Daughter" got started because my daughter chewed some pomegranate and spat the seeds into a brandy glass. Much of what I write rises directly from domestic situations.

PC How about the worrying stone?

BR That was a friend. Yes, I have a very good friend who knows a lot about a lot of things. She brought me the gall which turned into the story "Gall." That was the one I didn't like for ages, till the students helped me rewrite it.

BS That's the anger one with Sara?

BR Yes. She also brought me the stone. I wrote down word for word exactly what she told me about it. Some people have read that story and said no one would speak like this, and I told them, well, that's how she said it. "Vagaries of water", which I thought was a beautiful phrase, was the way she put it.

PC So you have some desire to record meticulously what you see around you, what you hear around you.

BR Yes. And then see where it leads me. If the prairie writers I know have any bias at all, it's a bias towards physical detail, and an aversion to abstractions. They want feelings and situations to come through objects, and I really like that.

PC That's very healthy.



BR Well, the prairie is a healthy place! The prairie *makes* me look at things. To the superficial eye it seems to be one sweep of land and one sweep of sky with little detail. If you live there you've got to look for the details. Here on the west coast you're surrounded by details.

BS But you also set up puzzles for your readers so that they have to find their way in. The dream piece is a bit of a puzzle.

BR It's about the grief that a woman feels when she *can't* find a way in, when the face of the man she loves is a pallisade that defends what's going on inside his head. I suppose that piece came out as a puzzle because the paradoxes of loving someone are beyond resolution. At the same time, I believe that some kind of wisdom is possible if we accept the dark side of experience, such as grief and isolation. And I like to read things that make me think and work at meanings, but I don't want fully to understand. I think the writer's creative experience is taken on by the reader. But I certainly don't want to be fully understood.

BS Your writing is very tight. Is that because you cut it down from what you've originally written? Or is it the way you write?

BR Sometimes things get cut down a lot. But mainly it's because I've been so schooled in these groups to cut things down because I overwrote, that now I have a built-in editorial system in my head where, before I even write I'm cutting things out, which is very bad. It means you're polishing before you've even rough-hewn, and I'm trying to get away from that.

BS You want to open out a bit.

BR Yes, which is no risk really, because if I don't like what I write, no one else needs to see it.

BS Is there other material we should talk about? I guess we're getting close to the end now.

BR I just want to say that I don't think anyone can tell someone else how to write and I don't think definitive statements can be made about writing, but I'm very interested to find out how other people write. At the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild Conference in 1978 a speaker said you have to know yourself in order to write. Well, maybe that's true for him, but that doesn't apply to me.

BS What do you want to do, then?

BR I like confusion in myself. I like a fog; it makes you focus on the things closest to you. I like the sound and rhythm of words and if that's working well, then my meaning works too. If the reader doesn't get a particularly strong meaning out of it it's just too bad.

BS Maybe words are the foghorn.

BR Maybe. But I don't think anybody knows himself. It's much more interesting to get to know other people. And if you're able to write while you're getting through life, that's very satisfying. I'm really only starting to write. I want to stress that I'm speaking from a limited experience of writing.

PC In a sense, *The Review* might function as a historical document for you. We're documenting where you are now, where you might be in the future.

BR Your interest is so encouraging, you know, because a writer could easily give up, and I'm sure a lot have given up because nobody responded.

BS One last question. What do you have to say, as a writer, to the people of Saskatchewan?

BR I don't want to say anything to the people of Saskatchewan.

BS So who are you talking to?

BR At the moment I'm talking to myself, and a few close friends who want to listen, which is very important to me, and to one or two magazine editors. Apart from them . . .

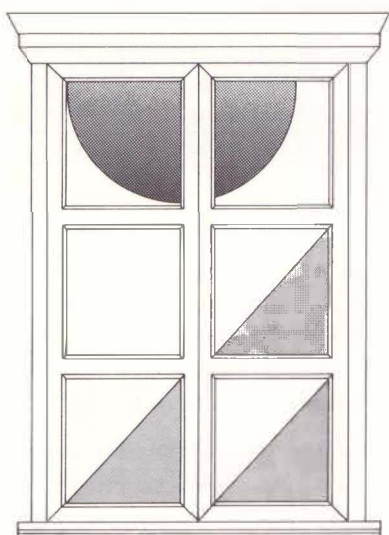
Lonely Nights & Wild Women  
Auto Poem State Four

magenta  
spurt  
truncate  
zipper  
shed  
where

malachite  
winsome  
moon  
fancy topaz  
lobe  
tee-hee

bravura  
glean  
bulwark  
barks  
stud  
darkness

The magenta darkness barks  
a moonlobe at the sheds  
where bravura zippers  
truncate tee-hee bulwarks  
& fancy topaz winsome  
spurts malachite



The malachite moon  
with bravura  
gleans a winsome bulwark  
& sheds zippers of fancy  
topaz where tee-hee spurts  
stud the truncate darkness

A magenta spurt & truncate zipper shed  
where the malachite & winsome moon  
with fancy topaz lobes tee-hees  
bravura gleans the bulwarks  
barks stud the darkness

F. J. Cebuiski

## Lorraine Glennon / BORGES AND I

Fancy your coming out and asking me, of all people, to contribute a piece to your volume on Jorge Luis Borges. I am acquainted with him, of course, and in fact was quite intimate with him once, but it has been years since we've met and about the specifics of our relationship I am more than a little dubious. Nevertheless, I shall attempt to relate to you the events (as I remember them) of the night when I knew him best.

Back in 1961, I was living in Lubbock, in the Texas panhandle. I was just another college student, who, like many a student of the day, had been introduced to Borges through enrollment in a contemporary literature course. In class, I denounced his fiction. His stories were clever, I said, but lukewarm; he did not deal first-hand with the range of human experience but considered it clinically, from a distance, as an object for philosophical speculation. His work lacked emotional force, I said, emotional consequences. Why I felt this way and why I reacted so negatively to him, I do not know. I do know that, long after the class had ended, I regularly found myself going, almost against my will, to the library to seek out more and more of his stories to read. Soon, I was also familiar with his poetry and his essays. These readings affected me oddly. Undeniably, Borges held a peculiar attraction for me (otherwise, what was I doing there?), but it was an attraction I could neither understand nor explain. As I sat in the library hunched over one of his books, part of me was drawn, almost hypnotically, to the page; yet another, larger, part of me remained curiously untouched. I was angered by my inability to define my attitude toward him. Invariably, I would leave the library with a throbbing headache.

At that time, Borges was a Visiting Professor at the University of Texas, in Austin. When I learned that he was coming to Lubbock for a day to give a lecture on Argentine literature and to discuss his own work, I was quite excited. I was eager to hear him speak, hopeful that his comments about his work might perhaps clarify a few of my own responses.

Borges and his entourage came to Lubbock in early spring. It was a warm, dry day, typical of the desert climate we have in the panhandle. His speech, delivered in a gymnasium to a one-eighth capacity audience, was very formal, his manner was very distant; yet, when he talked of books, his face assumed an expression of rapt awe that is more commonly seen on a person who is confiding to you that he is in love or who is telling you about an idyllic vacation trip he has taken. However unfulfilling, it was fascinating simply to watch Borges.

After he finished giving his prepared speech, Borges opened up the floor for questions. In answering a question put forth by a young man seated several rows behind me, Borges made reference to a poem of his called "The Golem." In a moment of bravery (for I was greatly intimidated by the man), I raised my hand and asked if, in writing "The Golem" he had been consciously rewriting his story, "The Circular Ruins." He looked surprised and replied that no, he had not, but that he was grateful to me for "revealing this unsuspected affinity" to him. He told me that I had "enriched his story." Again, I was puzzled by him: I could not determine whether his answer was sincere or delivered tongue-in-cheek. By no means a clarifier, Borges-in-person proved as frustrating to me and as enigmatic as Borges-in-literature.

Pleading fatigue, he received no more questions after mine. The audience arose and began to file noisily out of the gymnasium. Borges stood, with the aid of his cane, near the podium, politely chatting and shaking hands with the small group of admirers who had gathered around him. I had almost reached the exit when, without making any conscious decision to do so, I turned back and approached him. Suddenly, I no longer feared him.

"I enjoyed your talk immensely, Señor Borges," I told him, extending my hand. He took my hand and, squinting, cast his kind, unseeing eyes on my face for a long moment. "I'm the girl who asked the final question," I said, "about 'The Golem' and 'The Circular Ruins'."

"Ah, yes," he said, and again he thanked me for sharing my observation with him. Then he pressed a small white card into my hand.

I walked the distance from the gymnasium back to my dormitory room in a trance. It wasn't until I was inside my room and standing in front of my bureau mirror that I remembered the card he had given me. I took it out of my handbag and examined it closely. It was small — about the size of a businessman's calling card — and on its surface a messy conglomeration of unintelligible symbols was scrawled in black ink. I examined the card from every imaginable angle, trying to decipher the meaning of the symbols. From one angle, they seemed to form a configuration resembling a family coat-of-arms composed of snakes and serpents coiled around a hexagon-shaped military shield. From another angle, I saw a cage filled with exotic beasts of various shapes and descriptions, all unrecognizable to me. I turned the card over, I viewed it sideways, upside down . . . in no way could I make any sense of it. Finally, in desperation, I held the card up to my mirror, thinking perhaps I could see it more objectively that way. In the mirror's glass, I read the card with ease. The message reflected there was, "Come later to my hotel, the Holiday Inn in Lubbock. I will meet you in the lobby at 9:00 p.m. J.L.B."

Imagine the feelings that message evoked in me! My heartbeat quickened, my thoughts became hopelessly jumbled. What could this mean, I wondered, what did Borges have in mind? I glanced at my watch; it was 4:15. I had nearly five hours before I would see him and not the slightest idea of what to do in the meantime. I knew that I needed to calm down, but how? I decided to rest for a few hours. A short nap, I told myself, would refresh me. I crawled into the reclining chair that sat by itself in the corner of my bedroom and I closed my eyes.



At five minutes before 9:00, I found myself standing uncertainly in the lobby of the Lubbock Holiday Inn. I could hear the rumble of the elevator as it descended; when it reached the ground floor, its door parted and Borges stepped forward. He was dressed in the same grey suit and tie he had worn earlier at his lecture. He walked toward me haltingly, clutching at his cane, which I saw now was really a sword with a knobbed handle. It was sheathed, but lethal-looking; the handle was gold and of a baroque design.

"Here I am, Borges," I said, placing my hand on his arm.

"You are very prompt," he said.

"What beautiful English you speak!" As I uttered the words, I realized that neither of us was speaking English at all. Rather, we spoke the language in which he had scribbled his message on the card.

He graciously acknowledged my compliment and led me to a door in the rear of the lobby, which opened onto a spiral staircase.

"Where are we going?" I asked. "Can't we take the elevator?"

"We are going to Nirvana," he said, "and to get there, we must climb these stairs up to the Tower of Victory."

I was frightened. "But it's so dark!"

He smiled at me and I felt reassured. He seemed so gentle, so innocuous. "Is it?" he asked. "For the blind, the distinction between light and darkness does not exist."

We began the ascent. Looking up, I could see no end to the looping chain of steps; it seemed to wind infinitely upward into the heavens.

We had been climbing for approximately one hour (our progress was made slow and laborious by Borges' blindness and old age) when I noticed a shapeless blue creature trailing two or three steps behind us on the outside edge of the stairway.

"Borges," I said in a stage-whisper, "there's a horrible creature following us! It's ugly and it's blue and it *glows*!"

"I cannot believe you," he said politely, "for if I did, I would be unable to go even a single step further."

"It's true," I insisted. "It's right behind us." I hollered at it, "Shoo! Get away!"

"Don't worry," Borges said, "even if such a creature is lurking there, it cannot possibly follow us all the way." He patted my hand to comfort me. "Come, let us proceed without fear."

Although I still had misgivings, his air of calm confidence quelled them and I allowed myself to be coaxed into continuing the journey upward with him. Periodically, I would peek over my shoulder to check if the creature was still there. It always was; as we went higher, it seemed to sprout tentacles and to glow with a greater and greater intensity until I thought I surely should be blinded by its bluish brilliance.

After two hours of climbing, we reached a landing and Borges stopped. "This is my room," he said, lightly tapping with his cane on a closed door.

"But are we stopping here?" I asked. "There are still fourteen steps left to climb."

He sighed. "I am too old and too weary to attempt them all tonight," he said. "Nirvana will have to wait." He reached into the pocket of his suit coat and withdrew his room key, which he offered to me. "Here, you can unlock the door."

"Why, Borges," I said, "what do you mean? There is no lock on this door. See?" Turning the knob, I opened the door easily and we stepped across the threshold. The blue creature on the stairs began to moan softly, as if in pain. The sound set my teeth on edge; I could not bear to hear it. Quickly, I slammed the door shut in its face.

Borges' room was sparsely furnished, even for a Holiday Inn. There was (I think) a small table with two straight-backed chairs situated across from each other, a bureau, and a bed. There were also many, many mirrors. I was unable to determine the exact number of items in the room due to the fact that frequently, what I took to be a wall or a door or a piece of furniture turned out instead to be only a mirror reflection of that object. The room appeared to have six walls, but again, the presence of the mirrors renders my judgment on that point hypothetical at best.

From the top drawer of the bureau, Borges took a small ivory box. He carefully placed it on the table and then seated himself in front of it. I sat down on the bed; immediately I sprang up again. "Do you sleep on that?" I asked. "It's so lumpy and uncomfortable!"

"No, never would I sleep there," he replied. "I sleep standing up, in that closet." He gestured with his cane.

"This certainly is different from most Holiday Inn rooms I've seen," I said. I spotted a book lying on the bureau. "But at least there's a Gideon Bible." I walked over to the bureau and picked up the volume. In appearance, it was ordinary enough, but reading it proved to be impossible. The pages were very thin and each time I tried to turn one, more pages would flutter out of it. It was positively exasperating! What good was a book like that, I wondered. A reader could never get anywhere with it! In disgust, I flung it down and went over to sit in the chair opposite Borges.

He had emptied the contents of the ivory box onto the table top. Spread before him were twenty-five matchsticks; all were of the same approximate size, but each was in some slight way different from every other. There was an infinitesimal crook in one, another was splintered . . .

Seeing the matchsticks made me desire a cigarette. I took one out of my handbag and Borges, ever the gentleman, hastened to light it for me. He struck one of the matchsticks on the underside of the table and it ignited. He held it for a time and I thought it strange the way the flame burned down to the bottom and then continued to burn without flickering. Borges' fingers touched the flame directly but he appeared not to feel it. When I leaned over to accept the light, my fingertips also brushed against the flame but I experienced no sensation of heat. Finally, Borges blew on the flame to extinguish it and placed the charred matchstick back on the table top.

I shifted my gaze from Borges' face to the ashtray where I rested my cigarette. What I saw when I looked up again at Borges made me scream in horror. His body, seated casually in the chair, looked the same, but his human head had been replaced with the head of a vicious bull.

"Oh no, oh no!" I cried. "God help me!" I buried my face in my hands and began to sob pitifully. The skin of my face felt different to my touch . . . coarser, hairier. Near my forehead, I felt two hard, pointed, protuberances. Horns! "Aaaaaaaaaaaaaah!" I screamed.

"Don't be alarmed," Borges said. "You are all right."

"All right!" I gasped. "How can you say that!" I kept my eyes tightly shut, terrified to open them again.

"Please open your eyes and look at me. It was my other self you saw, reflected in the mirror. It wasn't the real Borges."

I challenged him, "How do I *know* it wasn't the 'real Borges'?"

"You may doubt me if you wish."

"But what about me?" I asked. "That was no reflection; I felt my head with my own two hands!"

"You suffered a momentary identity crisis," he said, "but you are all right now. If you look into a mirror, you will see that your regular features have been restored."

I wondered how he, a blind man, could know that. "Are you omniscient?" I asked.

"I said that you could doubt me."

It was difficult for me to associate the mild voice I heard with the face I had seen. Surely, I thought, both could not belong to the same man. His low-key method of persuasion produced its by-now familiar effect on me. Tentatively, I opened my eyes. There he sat, the same old gentle Borges, a man who looked incapable of carrying out an act more violent than the swatting of a fly. (Yet I *had* seen the bull's head, if only for an instant. Or did I merely imagine that I saw it?) As for me, the mirror at my side assured me that my former (not beautiful, but at least recognizably human) looks had been returned to me.

"Now," Borges said, clearing his throat, "I shall begin my constructions."

I didn't understand what he was saying. "Borges," I asked, "why did you bring me here?"

"To win your allegiance," he said simply. "Watch."

"You have my allegiance already," I said, not really knowing what he — or I — meant. Nevertheless, I settled back in my chair to watch him. And at that point, the spell was cast.

Using the twenty-five matchsticks as building blocks, Borges erected structure after structure on the table top before us. He very carefully chose each matchstick that he used . . . sometimes turning it over, feeling its size and shape, and then rejecting it in favor of a more appropriate matchstick. (Once, he extracted a matchstick from an already-completed structure and filled the void it left with a matchstick that *I* thought less well-suited to the over-all design. "No more irresponsible building," he muttered as he did it.) He fit the matchsticks together in the most astonishing shapes and patterns! He built cylinders, cubes, pyramids. On the surface, these structures often looked simple, but how deceptive that outer simplicity was! When I examined them closely, I discovered their foundations to be intricately complex, frequently labyrinthine. To my untrained eye, these structures, minute and compactly-built as they were, appeared perfect, unimprovable. But Borges was never satisfied. After finishing one, he would display it for a moment or two, then topple it with his hand and begin anew on a fresh, yet strikingly similar, construction.

As he worked, Borges was transformed, not into a minotaur this time, but into a circus magician. He acquired a cape, white gloves and a top hat; he wielded the matchsticks like tiny magic wands. His face was radiant, intent . . . totally absorbed in the task at hand. As the evening wore on, I came to perceive the entire scene as in a black-and-white photograph. Only the matchstick construction, in the foreground, was in focus; the rest was blurred to a cloudy gray. Everything else in the room — even Borges, even myself — became less real to me than the object created by his magic. Yet Borges would not have it that way: he kept doing things to draw my attention *back* to him. Now and then, he would interject remarks that served to remind me that *he* was the creator and *I* the witness.



I became mesmerized by it all, dizzy. As I stared at a matchstick pyramid, the desire to crawl inside it, to feel my way around, was overwhelming. But I realized it was impossible; its minimal size prohibited that sort of exploration. Gripping the edge of the table to keep my balance, I gazed at Borges. His charm had at last become irresistible to me. I yearned to make him part of me. Leaping up from my chair, I swept aside the pyramid and threw my arms around his neck. "Borges!" I cried, with abandon, "Put yourself at my center! Let me consume you!"<sup>1</sup>

He shook his head. "You are too complicated," he said. "Your center is inaccessible."

"No, Borges, no!" I said. "Its pathway is a straight line."

He smiled his kind smile and began to undress me — tenderly, yet with the same air of gentle detachment that he'd been maintaining all evening. Inexplicably, his manner served only to captivate me further. When we both were undressed, we climbed into the badly sagging bed (where Borges refused to sleep) and drew the covers up over our shoulders. As he prepared to enter me, I heard him murmur, "You are so infinitely deep, so unknowable."

"You must go deeper, Borges," I said breathlessly. "Deeper, deeper, to my center!"

"Please," he said, "call me Georgie."

<sup>1</sup> *Though seemingly extreme, the response here is not unusual. A study conducted by Cary Nelson indicates that encounters with Borges frequently present the subtle temptations to which the narrator yields. (Editor's Note)*



At the instant of climax (which is eternal), I felt the brutal thrust and twist of a knife deep within me as my gentle, genteel lover became himself. Yet paradoxically, in the same vertiginous instant, his identity merged with and became indistinguishable from the identities of the fourteen other men I had known. (I confess that I could not have told you his name.) In the darkness I searched his face and discovered it to be as featureless and devoid of expression as the sun's. Swooning then from the pain, I fell back, satisfied, onto my pillow.

When I awoke, I was drenched in perspiration. I realized that I must have fallen asleep while reading in my reclining chair. A book lay open in my lap. I looked at the title: *The Book of Imaginary Borges*.<sup>2</sup> Marking my place with the small white card that I held clenched in my fist (on which was scribbled my shopping list), I arose from the chair. Despite my sleep, I felt exhausted; my dreams had left me limp. I hobbled into the small closet-like bathroom with which my dormitory room was equipped. Grabbing a towel from the rack, I pressed it to my damp face. When I withdrew it, I saw on its surface the image of Borges, outlined in blood. And across the bottom of the towel — I could scarcely believe my eyes — the words "Holiday Inn" were stitched in pale green thread.

<sup>2</sup> *At present, The Book of Imaginary Borges is not available in translation.*  
(Editor's Note)



## Daniel Powers / DANCER

*It's part of me that you see on the images I capture. Do you see what I mean? When I've finished a session I'm always exhausted. That's because I've taken on the role of whatever I'm shooting. When it's the right time, I make an exposure and attempt to capture that feeling I'm experiencing. It's a great buzz. I wish I could explain it better.*

*My intent with Dancer was to make you feel as if you were in the studio with me. I was attempting to capture the feeling of movement and motion as well as the upbeat tempo of the music the dancer was moving to. The only manipulation with these images is the manner in which I cropped them. The hair seemed to be the epicentre of movement. With every motion it would change the appearance of the dancer — with every beat a different movement, a different feeling, almost a different person. That is what I saw. — DANIEL POWERS*

*\*statement prepared from an interview with Charles van den Ouden*



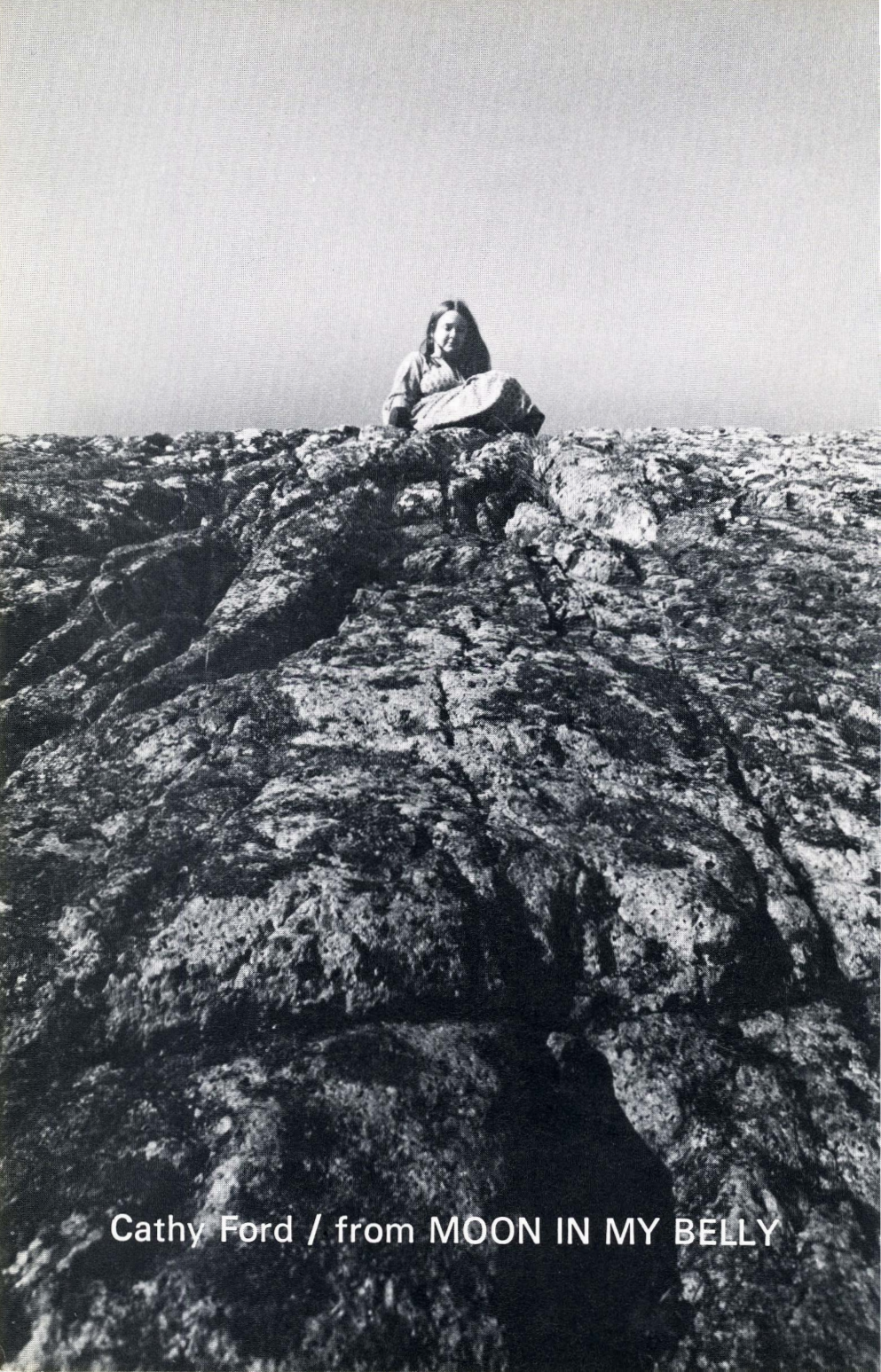












Cathy Ford / from MOON IN MY BELLY

A pillowcase with a half-done embroidered border lay in her lap. The embroidery was stitched in shades of grey and black, the picture small winter birds feeding in a field of stubble. When the train pulled in, she brushed cookie crumbs off her lap, held the needle in her mouth, shook crumbs and short threads from the pillowcase, folded it, drove the needle through the linen and back out. She was the first one off the train.

It was a short walk from the city's train station to the docks. The woman held a sheaf of shipping labels in one hand, a small leather case in the other. She walked briskly, as if she knew the way, pre-determined. The woman paused just short of Pier Seven and strode up the ramp to the "Baltic Princess". A steward greeted her. He inspected her handful of papers, nodded, took some of them and snapped them, officially, onto his clipboard. He motioned to the woman to follow, into the nearest doorway. She didn't look back. He did, her cotton dress, like a smock, revealing outline. Her long black hair, waved slightly. He took her to Cabin Number Three, second class double, single this time. She was alone, he said.

The cabin was furnished utilitarian, sensible, near severe. She closed the door, laid down on the bunk farthest from the door, facing it. A chocolate brown blanket with a wide white stripe at the bottom, plain white pillowcase. She kicked off her shoes.

The following day, September 30, at precisely noon, the "Baltic Princess" left port. The majority of the passengers were forcibly relaxed, rich and bored. On vacation. They carried their social status about with them, by implication, attitude or accent, laughed a great deal and befriended no one. Through breakfast, shuffleboard, lunch, crib, dinner and charades, the passengers exchanged names, residences and points of honor.

The woman in Cabin Number Three was not seen in the dining room until the third. She appeared at breakfast, a set smile on her face, and introduced herself to everyone at her table. She was of medium height, wore a grey dress, light grey stockings, and carried a loden green sweater over her arm. Her hair hung just below her ears, in a straight square-cut style. She had a habit of reaching up to brush her hair back over her shoulder, a reach which ended in an abrupt tuck behind the ears and a nervous smile.



Steward Number Four raised his right hand, palm up, to Steward Number Five, who nodded. This was Cabin Three. This one wasn't married. She wore a ring, but on the right hand, the wrong hand. This was the woman who had deposited a paper bag full of long black hair outside her door, the first night out. She had set a used, but emptied, "For Your Convenience" basin in the corridor the second and third mornings. It's been a little rough, Steward Four had called, tapping at her locked door. No answer. His policy, do not disturb.

Second class people rarely complained, or expected to be heard if they did. Complaint was a first class prerogative. The steward liked second class. The cabins were plain, easy to clean, only once a week. No pictures on the walls. A sink. One porthole, brass inside closing cover. Vanity. Simple skeleton key and twist locks. Two doors from a toilet and bath, shared by eight cabins. Number Three was a quiet one. Obviously, her first trip. Withdrawn. Vulnerable, it showed around the eyes. A broken hearted lover. He'd seen all kinds. Potential suicide. He hoped she was tidy. He'd picked a few up. A convalescent, perhaps. The black unwanted of a rich provincial family. But not now, not this time. He smiled at Number Five. They called one another that, numbered, still. She was the only woman on board travelling quite alone, unusual.

She had made full use of the privacy of her locked door for the first few days. He hadn't knocked, but turned the handle to check. Once they settled in, a number of the passengers took to leaving their doors unlocked, with a sense of abandon and smooth sailing which made his job easier.

If she didn't eat, so what. It could mean she was dieting. He had one like that last trip, made herself sick, refused to eat. Maybe Cabin Three hid the same kind of fantastic idea of fashion, thinness, behind those brown eyes. Probably. A week of it, and someone would just call the ship's doctor. A week that shortened to two days once acquaintances were made, and polite concerns puffed up in the ship's claustrophobic atmosphere. Yes, they took care of themselves, second class, even seasick, they didn't whine, he said. He was a lazy man, he admitted it, no apologies. Still, he could have made good use of a promotion, he said.

He watched the young woman out of the corner of his eye; filled another cup with steaming coffee; winked at his friend, Number Five.

The trip took three weeks. The woman in Steward Four's charge opened up a little. She made polite conversation at mealtime, declined all games, embroidered or read, and watched the other passengers at play. She faded easily into the background of platitudes and assurances that were traded daily. It wasn't necessary for her to befriend her fellows and she did not.

Steward Number Four took solicitous concern with Cabin Number Three. He checked it daily, scrupulously, when it was unoccupied. At week's end, he changed the sheets and blankets, hung the towels on the rack. Number Four opened all the drawers in the vanity, on several different occasions. He read and fingered the titles of all the books in the room.

He made a game of trying to get into the trunk, which was always locked. Steward Number Four confided to Steward Number Five, that the young woman in his charge was indeed a very private, even secretive woman. She made his job interesting, he said.

The "Baltic Princess" steamed toward its destination. The passengers on board broke and reformed passing friendships. The young woman finished one pillowcase, and started on its mate. The steward watched the calendar, and kept his black shoes polished. The menu was out of fresh salads, and suggested canned fruit. The young woman from Cabin Number Three, second class, waited, for it to be over her severance.

It had been two weeks, the sky turned suddenly purple. By dinner, it was black, and the breakfast murmur had become a silent shout of fear, a bad night ahead. Some people from first class remained huddled together in the dining salon when the tables were cleared, read month-old magazines, and smoked. The young woman went to her cabin, locked the door, and kept a light burning through the first of the heavy swells.

Storm -  
external  
event  
beginning

By morning, some faces were missing; some trays were sent to some cabins; some nerves snapped over the second round of coffee.

The young woman appeared unperturbed, but she ate very little. She sat through breakfast, lunch, dinner; and sat again through the second day, the surrounding faces of the dining room like an umbilical cord.

The passengers stood at the dining room windows and watched the crew beat their way fore to aft, through the pounding volcanos of sea.

On the third day of bad weather, the ship's doctor visited the shrinking breakfast crowd, and passed out sea sickness pills and sleeping pills. Steward Number Four noticed that the young woman smiled and refused the offering. While she sat in the salon, the steward visited her cabin, locking the door behind him.

The rough weather, in its fifth day, had both a narrowing and opening effect on the second class cabin doors. Those bodies first afflicted began to recover, and appeared pale and smiling at lunch. The last of the hardy stomachs disappeared behind locked doors, which moaned and spit tin-lidded basins into the corridor every few hours.

Steward Number Four went about his duties, full of conciliatory words and gestures beyond those necessitated by his position. He worked to console himself, over the loss of the woman from Cabin Three, who he now called Magda, in an offhand, knowing way. He did know her, in that self-conscious, practised manner strangers use to acquaint themselves with other strangers, that he used to get close to whoever he wanted.

The steward had the advantage in ordinary encounters, with any one of his passengers. He had a key to every second class cabin in his charge, and every second class passenger knew it.

The well-travelled patrons of the "Princess" knew the worth of a steward's key, and accordingly provided for his favor; leaving half-bottles of red wine at the steward's disposal, which had been procured at high prices from the first class lounge. The steward also collected pockets full of chocolate, costume jewellery, fine lawn handkerchiefs, and cheap paperbacks. The woman in Cabin Three, however, neither acknowledged or feared the steward. He did not exist for her. He was insulted by this distant disregard of his power. However, he continued to knock at Magda's door to inquire if she wanted anything. No.

Steward Number Four confided to his friend, Steward Five, that the woman in Cabin Number Three slept naked, her three nightgowns rested neatly folded in the vanity, second drawer on the left, he said.

\*

The woman lay covered by heavy blankets, in a room still foreign after nearly three weeks invasion. Her head ached, her stomach heaved; she tensed for every roll of the ship, imagined or real. She hadn't eaten for three days. She was exhausted by the turmoil inside her and the fight against it. She slept.

A warm hand touched the outside of her thigh, then nearer, then inside. She fell into it, a shadow moment, then jerked awake and tried to sit up. One strong arm around her throat contained her, a single hand clamped over her mouth. She could not and did not scream. A voice, somewhere a voice.

The steward was very gentle. He pulled off all her blankets and stroked her breasts and belly and teased her cold skin. He smiled, and spoke to her as if to a child, "Don't be afraid," he said. He slurred, drunk.

"I can't help it," she whispered. His hands begged forgiveness and when he thrust hard into her, she gagged on the vomit ready in her throat.

She kicked at him, tried to shove him off the narrow bunk. She smelled sweat and cologne and fear. The arm tightened around her throat. She lay still. A voice ghosted into her head, two breathing, a third whispered.

When the steward's friend was ready for his assault on the butterfly body pinned at the throat to the mattress, the body was prepared. She drove her feet into his hairy stomach. He fell against the vanity, and came at Magda, cursing.



He slapped Magda and he slapped his Steward Four, who had barely sustained attack by Magda's quick, angry fingernails. "All of them are whores," he said, "Or Virgins. Let her bleed." He slammed his fist into Magda's belly, just above the black shock of hair, high and raw between her thighs. He wrenched her legs apart and knelt between them. He spit at her. She flung her head from one side to the other, choked, screamed. Stop the voice. Stop the other.

"Shut her up," said the steward's friend. Steward Four's fingers dug into Magda's throat. Her eyes tore at their lids; her ears strained for hope in the silence. She tensed. The stone of the red ring turned and dug into the new dirt on her palm.

The steward watched his friend's face. The friend kept his eye on Magda's heaving chest; her breaths and half-breaths fought through the rise of her narrow ribcage. The friend laughed low in his throat, heaved his thick legs wide apart again. The cramps in the woman's naked body jerked from her toes to her spine, to her heart. Write, the voice said.

He bent forward slowly over the woman, and took her right nipple between his teeth. He bit hard, twisted his head away, laughing, and shot semen over her growing bruises.

\*

The woman in Cabin Number Three came to shivering in the cold room. The walls sweated hate and relief. She heard the final click as her cabin door shut. She lay on her side. Her legs convulsed high to her swollen chest. She felt stickiness set on her skin, and the throb of blood.

She fell out of the bunk onto the floor and crawled to the sink. She vomited dry into the tin pan, again and again. She scraped the touch of their hands from her body with a rough towel. She poured a bottle of toilet water into the sink and bathed every stinking inch of her skin with it. She dragged her trunk up against the locked door and collapsed against it, as the strain forced a rush of blood down her legs. She tore the sheets off the bunk and lay between two blankets. The blankets scratched her like an old horsehair mattress. She had put on

two nightgowns, one over the other. She held towels against her open wound, bleeding and shaking, full of fear and disgust. The voice dwelt in her, hissed cold white like a new moon rising.

\*

In port, the captain stood on deck, and supervised the unloading of his travel-weary responsibilities. The passengers filed off, some gay, walking into the open arms of strangers who met them at the dock. Some showed remorse, for what had been left behind; departures, passages, and now, arrival.

One young woman handed the captain a note written in a careful hand, which she had folded around a silver skeleton key. The key was to a steward's cabin, or so the attached tag read, inscribed by the same hand. A double-bunk cabin, strewn with bloody sheets and towels, onto which had been dumped several items of costume jewellery, good quality, two bottles of the captain's brandy, one of red wine, a handful of satin underwear, lacy, and a bad photograph she had also found in their dresser drawers. Steward Four, blonde hair, laughing into Five's caricature, like a dare, rouge daubed onto his cheeks, his mouth painted gaudy, hands bejewelled. A cheap photograph, cheap to include, but included. In the head, a voice, moonshot.

"It is true," the note read, "Murder was committed. Like theft. Ask."

She staggered down the gangplank, hair tossed by a new wind, north, blowing cinder, and fire sparking against the sky, the wind on fire, like she was. She was one of the last ones off the boat. She didn't lose, but gained her balance on the wide wooden dock. She collected her trunk, giving instructions for forwarding to the dockmaster, immediately. She glanced once at a worn letter that she had safety-pinned into the pocket of her coat, and walked away. She did not look back. She looked as if she knew where she was going.

\* \* \*

She felt thin, as thin as bones, as if she carried her skin and flesh like clothing, or a covering of light summer blankets. She was weak, weightless, her hands couldn't hold a pen, a pot handle or a cup of tea. She picked everything up with both hands, cradled even a single dinner plate as if it were a heavy object. She leaned on the furniture, traversing the kitchen from chair to table to cupboard, walking slowly and bent over as if she had a severe stomach ache or a sore back, as if she was an old woman. She heard axes screaming, one long scream. It grew, like a foetus contained and containing. He said she should eat, she repeated she wasn't hungry, she just wasn't hungry.

\*

Nine o'clock, He was already up. She kicked off the quilt and dressed quickly. Cold. She had done these things. She ran, five miles the first day, wearing a heavy sweater, then carrying it, pounding along the back lane toward town. She scared up one grouse and two rabbits, gave herself a headache, and coughed up sickening white phlegm three times on the walk back. When she got home she threw herself into a tub of ice cold water she had carried, two pails at a time, from the creek. She shook, her teeth banged together. She choked and gasped for air, and vomited into the slop bucket until she was dizzy. Her body a cave, inside velvet, weighted velvet. She went to bed and cried herself to sleep.

\*

She had assumed she wanted a child. She knew so little about children, not how to take care of them, not how to talk to them. She had no concept of how big a child was, how much room a child would take in her, her arms, her lap, her mind, her house. Farine's was the only baby she had ever held, or fed, or sang to. He seemed pleased with her, he didn't cry much when she looked after him, but it would have been different with a girl, Farine said. Boys are easier. She had stumbled through it all until now, until she was sure, and now, it was all wrong.

She carried her warm, tight woven, heart close. Barely there, that small life, female female. A flicker. A splash of light. Felt before she knew, this is female, child, girl, woman, conceived, creator. Felt that she was with she, then pregnant with she, then to become mother to she. A small, impatient delight in her that collapsed when she knew, mother, that she must tell him. Her belly more pregnant than womb time, smooth opalescent, moon smooth and pale rising. Over dark earth, black at shore at night. And couldn't tell him. He didn't want a child.

She considered he had nothing to do with it. She thought it might be Erik's child. Nothing had been done to prevent it. To have a decision made for her, by accident. If she had gotten, would they have gotten, what had been gotten, had she. But of course it wasn't Erik's child, always bled for, like ritual. And many months past. Months, years, centuries. Erik, god-like, but like him, only in appearance like he was. Tom, the acts of god, disdained, powered, arched his hand over her, woman, as if to pacify, purify, or annihilate. What he could not enter into he preferred to ignore. But her small rebellion clung to woman, herself, created woman, made a child. Yet only enough hers that he would suspect her, even accuse. The gifts of a worshipper as parasitical as the worshipping. If she could have claimed miracle, to conceive and bear, woman of woman, divinity, virgin of virgin, but no, he would claim precedence, authority, kingship. He would make it his. What have you done to me, he would say.

On the second day, she contemplated an oversize crochet hook Farine lent her to finish the trim on a rag rug. She would fish that inner sea occupied treacherous by one tiny bottom fish. But the hook was too cold, clinical. She mixed a gallon of lye, changed her mind, and dumped it down the outhouse. Next, a strong vinegar douche. But there wasn't enough vinegar and besides, she thought it was too ordinary. She needed fire, parching. Her body fuel for the fire, she'd starve it out. She decided that if she decided it didn't exist, it wouldn't. Couldn't.

\*

She lay curled, fetal, under the blankets, and fingered herself, the song from a finely tuned instrument. Used and valued this new found, inalienable trust and delight as she might a knowledge of herbal medicine that comforted, relieved, harmonized. She might have played the piano, her own keys. As if this knowing was the clinic into which she carried herself, ambulatory, just in time for such music, revitalization, to be treated to a renewed joy in life. But she wasn't on her death bed. She wasn't tired or sick. She was alone.

\*

The descent had the clarity and stillness of amber. It was very quiet. The worst thing to do was move. This stifled womb was a wilderness, she had planned to leave crumbs along the trail, but everything echoed like the inside of her head was a barrel, and she couldn't find the right path. Brushing her hair gave her a severe ear-ache. She already had a headache. She closed the curtains. She slept all day. He tried to wake her up, but her head was stuck against the wall of her dreams. He pushed his words at her are you getting up with me well are you getting up or what. Her head rattled like an ornamental gourd, dried empty, the seeds rattling. Dry head, dry womb. She had seen seed pods split open, the seed like squashed pearls. But this pearl hung in her window. Her mind the window to her womb. It was all wrong, Magda. Your head is not your womb. Your life is not your body. Kick it all in and start over. That's it. Of all mistakes, let yourself make this one, single, absolute, leave it. It's not true. A belly is not just to be filled, a child is not a feast, a woman is more than her moon swollen stomach, rising, rising. Not a negative, shade, or crescent moon that he fills. Like the certainty that moons rise without sun. Before and after or without sun, a moon rises. Take rain, take cloud. Take that freedom. Finally, alone. Act it out. Can't. Not coming. Don't feel well. You're pregnant. No. Not Farine. Babies and men. Men and babies. Made a pot of tea and let it go cold. Went to bed. Pulled the covers up over the head. That song, persistence, throbbed through the house, inside the walls, scream, thought that, too late. A long buried scream. Laid on the back and the throbbing a murmur, a voice, determined to be at peace. A willing, necessary

participant, one who passes through the gates, through the doorway of an empty room. Once perhaps. A hundred times. Always knowing the passage. The murmur rose and fell again, a reply, it started to rain down, the washing, running silences cushioned one another, the fear as natural as the sky opening, comfort. Held night, waited, calm for it to be night, call it a dream. Or morning. Wait. A thread in life, a fabric like moonlight on a plowed field, frozen in winter.

"Tell me what's wrong."

Nothing.

"You're all right? You're not sick?" He folded his wings.

What do you mean?

"I'm going over to Peter's. I'll be late." He tucked his head under a wing.

She closed her eyes.

The days enclosed, full, as if they quarreled. Made his own supper. Crawled into bed, salt of sweat glazed his fear. Turned her back to him. Dealt cards to the voices. Played hearts. Hung on to one hand all night, confident the game would soon be over, wait it out, sooner if held inside, hearts a game never won. Points accumulated like memories, helpless. Sat in the kitchen heat and waited for conversation. He dressed in the morning, naked inside wool underwear, inside overalls, faded white in streaks.

"Are you getting up today?"

Won't.

Every night he bathed his feet in the big oval tub that hung beside the back door.

House emptied itself of him, cool or light rain, snow, then rain, it rained, the cards went on relentless, numbers a tone of voice, large, loud, ugly. Small, sharp, pointed, accused. You. You. The blood dance.



Help. Have to get out of here. Doors. Body as if swathed in bandages, shocked. Numb. A broken leg. Can't move. Can't speak. Can't hear anything. Those extraordinary, uncontrolled moments, numbers, that are the most ordinary, the best controlled, cards endeavoring to escape mathematics. Itself, answers to no number, no reason, logic, but its own. The calculation sustains. More limited, more precise. More than he has time for. A private card game. Solitaire. Catch the queen. Told him number five sat on his shoulder this morning and purred and rubbed its wet nose on his cheek and breathed so alive, he tried not to be surprised, laughed, petted it. Don't touch. What imagination. Can't give him a card, even one, he'd want to play, change the rules, describe the point system into oblivion, don't care if he doesn't understand.

He'd want to play — no, not just play, but deal. Magda want to be the dealer, no one else. And Magda only like solitaire. Cards are objects of art, artifice, not tools to stab one another, cause defeat or loss. Magda play by her self, with, not against, by self. Magda know he would even shuffle — not content to pick up the deck and hold what cards may turn up, he would shuffle, coordinate, even dictate the game of chance, the percentage could be calculated, how many times the queen of spades would turn up. Magda my own queen, Magda play solitaire, Magda never shuffle. Magda never tire of the delicacy of a heart, a three of diamonds. So Magda never learned card games, Magda say I hate them. And Magda do. Those fair and lovely sevens giving into a jack of clubs, Magda hate it. And the ace over all, haughtily, proud, female, a bitch unless in the hand. Not Magda's. Magda play solitaire, lay it seven on seven on seven, black on red, red black, reading the white cooled spaces luxurious as clouds. Magda play alone. And sometimes Magda win. And sometimes she wins.

Magda never shuffle. Magda just push them all together, the cards choose where they go, like memories do, choose where to surface. Sometimes they come up the same way again, sometimes it's the same over and over. A hot prairie day he said fall I will always love you. The way he shuffles cards. Slap. The words come down flat on the

table, his face down. That was the closest he ever came to the submission demanded of Magda, he couldn't look at Magda, knowing Magda wasn't hanging on his words then, or his love. When Magda tired of dragging that one thin sentence out of him, when Magda had given up, then he dealt that, another heart, more hearts. But collecting hearts was his specialty. If he dealt Magda one he'd consider it a poor deal, a bad hand, a misdeal. Of course he never said hearts were his cards, but it was quite apparent. He played restless, tiredly, with the blacks, and diamonds he said once, always struck him as cruel, look how sharp, pointed, they are he said. She laughed. Nine of diamonds, Mary the queen, curse of.

\*

She carried the cards everywhere, played them constantly. The immaculate winter moon bathed in the river at night, and suspended light, by day, in her belly. She couldn't remember the conception, how or when, how it felt, so close to the beginning. Somehow, they weren't related to one another, that initial void and this enormous bulk. She didn't look pregnant. It was hard to remember. She couldn't be. A three, an eight, a king. Tom grilled her, put her on trial, but she wouldn't give. So don't speak. So don't sleep in the same bed. She bled one day, bleed for you, she thought, you win. The weight of it lifted, but the bleeding stopped. A nine. A nine. And the voices returned. One. No, three. Of their own volition. Each of their own. "Nothing is wrong."

\*

Christmas. She knew the day exactly, expected it to be significant. Since she'd decided not to have a baby, she'd lose it today. Birth and death. The two most important events in life. In one day. For her benefit. She lay in bed all day, expecting. Nothing happened. The bomb ticked on, inside. Eleven. She went into the kitchen, the fire was burning low. She put in another log and set the cold coffee pot back on. In the shed, no doubt. Or the front room. She wouldn't look. She laid down two fives, an ace, a jack. No money for Christmas, not even enough for a piece of cotton, for a shirt. She walked into MacIntosh's General Store, Christmas eve, bought a half pound of nuts, assorted, with the egg money. Shouldn't have used it for that. Wrapped the nuts in a cigar box Mac found under the front counter. Set the box under the tree, hung with two gingerbread men Farine had given them, "To hang on your first tree," along with three balls made out of silver foil she'd collected. And a rhinestone heart pendant. And a locket that wouldn't open any more.

Tom went out right after dinner, returned in an hour with a package under his arm. She was puzzled. It was too big for a deck of cards. Surely he knew she needed some new cards. She'd shown him all the ones she carried, he hadn't been impressed. The backs were all different, and weren't very interesting. Besides, they were getting worn out, the Eiffel Tower, the collie in a green field, the parasol and all. He had put the package beside the tree and gone to bed. His bed, her bed. Whoever went first.

She unwrapped it. It was a catalogue. She laughed, delighted. This was better than cards. She could send for the ones she wanted. He came in from outside, a cold draft accompanying his set smile. "You're welcome," he said. "Took me all of ten minutes to find it. They're free at Gunderson's Hardware. Nice of you to get out of bed."

So he ~~jailed her. He laughed. Torturer. His child in her.~~ She had to see Farine, she could ask Farine. Had he laughed. Could he laugh. Why would he laugh. "Is this what it's like?" Farine would have made a nice family holiday dinner, Farine had no fear of the Christmas Christ child coming. She had a baby. She had a boy. She was too far away. She had made bread pudding. And shortbread. Not much, because they couldn't afford to use the butter. "Peter says it's not Christmas, without shortbread."

"Would you two like some?"

"No. Thanks."

Two. Two. One. A one is an ace.

\*

She sat up late. Queen of spades. She couldn't sleep in his bed. She was guilty. Of treason. Behead her. Off with her head. Queen of hearts. Turned at night, to his back. She was bent, in the middle, like an old playing card, for the pain, but didn't say it.

"Can I have one of your cigarettes," she asked him. He was eating breakfast. She'd been up all night. Again.

He frowned, but passed one over. Lit.

Nerves. "I'm going to have a baby," she said.

"No."

"Yes."

"I'll phone Doc Hawkins. He'll know what to do." Three shorts and a long. Tom Dennison had known Doctor Paul Hawkins all his life.

She grabbed her coat, and ran, as much as she could, to Farine's. Farine had gone to town, left a note on the door, like always.

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They talked about anything else. They sent for the seed catalogue, ten dozen canning lids. Tom drew plans for an addition to Peter Lavalley's barn.

She watched Tom's hands around the morning cup of coffee, fingers nicotine-stained. He smoked too much. She smoked.

\*

He dipped his thick slice of bread into his coffee, murky with cream. She drank hers black.

He left early for Peter's. "When his work's done," Tom said, "We'll start a new fence of our own. Get a couple cows next fall, after harvest."

She folded his sandwiches into wax paper. "Goodbye," she said at the door. "I'll feed the chickens."

"I love you," he said, and she saw her fear reflect in his eyes. It's too late it's too late it's too late. Her eyes met his, collided in the empty space between their bodies. A space untouched so long. "And I," she began, hopeful, reaching, surprised. It will be all right. Stay.

"I'll be late to dinner," he said.

She washed the clothes in lye soap, boiling the water on the stove. The shirts and socks hung by the stove-pipe, the sheets froze on the line. She lifted the tub and carried it to the door to dump it. The step was iced over, her shoes were wet. She slipped, and lye water steamed down her legs.

The towel ripped some skin off, the rest blistered. She couldn't wear stockings. Her legs scarred pink, hairless. She stayed in the house. She showed him her burns, and he made dinner. And told her to stay in bed.

In the evening, she thought she heard the river, though she knew it was miles away.

Farine walked over some nights, through the snow, with Jonathan. He was a happy child. Talked. Tough kid, denim jeans.

"It's so bright out with the moon," Farine said. "We're not a bit afraid."

She waited. The moon kept rising, like clockwork. A blood opal moon. Like if she spread the cards often enough, she won.

\* \* \*

Morning. The moon going, gone. Sky empty. An empty room, a vast empty room. Woke again just as the first fingers of light parted the grass beside my mouth. It was cold. The sky faceless, no sun yet, just that light, without direction, everywhere. Nothing blanketing the vision. Wrapped her dress tight around my legs, feet curled under the full skirt. Satin half-slip the swaddling clothes, blood red, sticky. Waited. Heart hung over destiny like empty sky, without warmth or movement. If only the bleeding would stop. If only the pain would stop. Perhaps never wanted anything so much, this so completely felt, understood. Other wants expected or inflicted or came so easily, now all memories, like this would never be, not like this. This, a stopped moment in time. Just in time. This inanimate sense of possession. This, holding on because something is certain, because it goes on despite everything, anything anyone might do.

Then it slipped from her, coolly, yet burning, the need for the child become a need for herself. Choosing, thinking she chose a child, as unborn, as much an attempt to attach to a life she could not reach alone. A foetus is an escape artist, aborted or birthed, tough, sinewed. Alone, she was crippled. Womb dry. Now must begin to use her other senses, eyes, hands, voice. It isn't enough to bleed. Whoever said it was. A woman is. A woman bleeds. A woman does. The beginning ends. The ends begin. A movement, a life cycle other than lunar. A dream, another dream. A moon risen in the sky. Blood colored. Blood covered. A woman tide that washes over the moon, the mere magical moon.

One large clot. Slide. Not as round and whole as she had thought. Ragged. Glistened red and shiny. You are no child, aloud, when I saw it, caught in the satin. Saw no eyes, no child's head, no heart beating, my stomach sore, cramped. It was over.

The shock of it was this was the first time her body had surprised her, taken and done of its own accord what it wanted or needed or demanded to do. When a separation was made, by force. She knelt in supplication. Up to now, she had dragged her body along behind her. I had. Now side by side.

She wanted a warm bed. I wanted to go home.

Pick up the clothes and return to an empty house, the emptied womb rooms will all look red. For a while. A beginning, sure as knowing, an ending seen. As love. As to love. As one to love. As two might. But sometimes can not. Too. Two try.

Fear left and grown cold just as this soft red jelly did. Gathered in hand, walked, painful, to the edge of the slow moving river. No sense now of the time or the temperature, just a flattened marriage bed led to, left in the grass. At the river, dropped the plump red mass into the water, fastened by its undulation, to her the wholly appropriate flow of water by and slowly through what I had thought. Watched, when it floated slow from the bank and into the current — thought she understood even that, and waded into the water after it, my slip trailing in one hand. The water streamed through the blood flowering, life, lifting and spreading, away.



She was caught in her dreams. Compulsive. She knew she could break out of them, but chose not to. Just that knowledge, challenge, in the very depths of nightmare led her on, against her own dreams, an attempt to finish them herself, to control them. She dared with dream as she did not with the world. And then she found she couldn't wake up. Control out of control. She couldn't wake up. We couldn't wake up. I couldn't.

Stopped, the rocks too slippery, the water too swift, to her waist. River cold as a winter virgin, current swept. A suicide could happen like that, by accident. Did not bear death with me, did not see it float out of sight. It strangled out of the throat, like a cry at the moon, like wolves had torn the flesh all my life, felt them, saw them, for the first time cried out against them, shouted, they, she, me. And screamed, you were no child of mine, no daughter. If you had been you would have fought back. First what is closest to you, then you fight back, your way back, all the way back. Did you? You, me. Cruelty exists. Heal thyself. You, I. And if he wanted anything, he wanted a son. Neither of us had you. Right there, at the very start, when we thought we could choose, we lost. Stumbled through my life like a sleepwalker waiting to trip over a tear in the linoleum. Waking in the morning, cold, dried blood on my toes. Determined, undetermined, womb hum.

The cry turned laughter, mocking. Sat by the river and waited for the right moment to leave. It wasn't time. The slip wasn't dry, hung in the branches of a willow. Skirt spread around my hips in the grass, wrung dry. Still, it wasn't time. Still bled a little. You will always bleed a little, I thought. She, I. No moon. A bird flew across the river, river of the soul. A red bird, a bird with a red breast, a red breasted bird. Sent a smile up at it, even into the sun.

He stood in the doorway. Haggard. Grey. "Magda," he said.

"Your face is grey," I said, answering.

He took my hand. Thinly ready, for morning.

"I want," I said. And thought perhaps I had not said the word before. I want a cup of tea. I would like a cup of tea. Hot tea. And then I want to be held. Close. Warmed. Voices low, to be kept low. A mutual agreement. Didn't look at him. Picked up the small grey suitcase, packed the night before, what night, what moonlit night, a distance like an act of conjuration, like a chant, remembered I had trouble filling it. On the table a pile of his cigarettes, shredded, the package torn.

"You should stop smoking."

So he'd been up all night. I want to be held. By you. And hoped he wouldn't mistake this now, you wouldn't, this beginning. Still, prepared otherwise. And I. Said. The wall between invention and experience fell down. It just all fell down.

"There's blood running down your legs."

"I know."

Ritual can get rid of the past.

"Don't you feel sick, nauseous? Can't I get you something? I'm glad you're home. At least you're home."

Still the same, solicitous. I'd never tried the difference between his politeness and his caring. Just bowed eternal to the social convention of questions that needed no answers. "Tea?" Poured into her cup, his cup. My cup. Do you say "No" when the cup is full? Or expect change when you're not there? I wasn't. After March comes April.

"You must be in pain, let me — "

"It's nothing."

He smiled.

Compared to what I have to tell you, nothing. Nothing at all.

"What time is it?"

"About six."

"I could sleep till noon."

"Tom."

"What?"

"About the wallpaper in the bedroom."

"You hate daisies."

"Tom."

"Yes."

"I'm going to change it."

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## INTERVIEW

*The interview took place as a conversation between Cathy Ford, Penelope Connell and Bill Schermbrucker, on the evening of the 29th May, 1978, at Penelope's home in North Vancouver. The transcript has been edited down from a much longer original, and Cathy later inserted some expansions of thought and clarifications (which are indicated by parentheses). Bill made the final cuts.*

— BS

*27 December, 1978*

*BS* You're interesting in terms of an interview right now because you're a relatively young writer. You seem to be getting tight enough and good enough and strong enough — at least I believe and Penny believes — that you're going to go on doing it for a long time and successfully, whereas a lot of other people are going to fall aside, so I thought it would be interesting to hear some of your experiences of your commitment to writing and how you feel that is working out for you. Perhaps we might start on how writing is changing for you, if it is. How long have you been writing?

*CF* I would say ten years in fact, forever in my head. Something that's important to me right at the moment is that you two, or I guess the magazine, seems to be interested in the fiction that I am most excited about myself. I don't know where it's going and at this point I don't really care, except that it keeps on happening and that's the important thing. A lot of what I'm doing in fiction is fairly undirected. That's why *Moon in My Belly* became so important to me; it was like a project that just kept on going till it reached its own end.

*BS* Is that a stage of maturing, from undirected writing to a project? Are those important terms?

*CF* Right now they are, probably because I think I'm embarking on a new project; I think there's new things shaping and I feel I'm just getting my energy back after finishing that novel and then a set of poems followed so closely behind, plus moving and all that, you know, everything starting over for me . . .

*BS* Well, how does moving relate to writing? Moving to Mayne? Where's the connection?

*CF* There's a lot more light. I just feel like I'm opening up. It happened very fast; it was always a dream. We really had almost forgotten what the country is like.

*PC* How long have you been on Mayne Island?

*CF* I've only been there since I finished the novel, which was November [1977].

*BS* But did you move in order to write or did you move in order to go out of the city, knowing that you would write?

*CF* I've known that I would continue to write for quite a while, but I knew that it would be a better place to write for me. I lived in Vancouver for long enough and got involved in a certain part of what is going on in writing in Vancouver. People would say, would you like to read and I'd say Yes, I'd like to read, I love to read. So I'd go to read and there'd be three people there. That kind of discouragement was starting to wear on me. So it was time to change; I had to reassess a lot of things, I guess, like my commitment to being public. Prior to moving I'd just come off a year of saying, Okay I'm not sending out any work, I'm not reading, I'm not . . . I withdrew (except for commitments already made); I set it up very consciously, I said, a year from now I'll send out some new work — if I have any new work. I was pretty sad about things. It has turned out it's been a sabbatical of almost two years. If people came to me and said, could we have some poetry or something, I thought, *now* that piece goes there. If I was really sure, then I sent it, but nothing like before.

*BS* It seems to me that was a wise decision that you made.

*CF* Well, I had to make it because what happened was that in order for me to come out at all and show my stuff to people, I'd become a tactician I guess — I don't know — I've seen different tactics and I know what mine is. In fact, left to myself I may not ever come out. So there's a point at which — I call it my arrogance — I get arrogant enough to come forward and my attitude is, if you don't like my writing, well . . .

*BS* fuck you.



CF Yeah. It's all — it's self-protection. But it was getting so that I'd send ten poems to a magazine, five that I thought, okay, such-and-so — this magazine is interested in this. Then I'd send five to spite them. It got to be a game. But people were picking up on the things I sent in to spite them. What does this mean? I backed up a long way. It hasn't hurt me as far as my writing goes; maybe it's hurt me, I don't know, publicly or something.

PC If you were writing that novel so privately for the last three years, there's been maybe a withdrawing in your work for quite a little while even before this. Is that something in your writing?

CF It *was* in the novel. I started out like I said, I workshopped the first draft. It was a story I had forever, ever since I can remember, a narrative that had to be told or retold, or something. And the first section of the first draft — I practically got thrown out of the room — I mean I almost got canned: "You can't write a sentence, you . . ." My first fictional effort. What did I do or say, what could I do or say? I had to back right up and decide where to go. *Now*, I could face that same situation; having *finished* it, it's nice to look back. I could say, "Well, I did this because that's the way it had to be." But at the time I didn't have that confidence. People were saying, "No," when I was saying "But, but, but . . ."

BS Do you think — going back to those terms of undirected writing and projects — those workshops advance one or the other of those kinds of things?

CF It depends on your relationship to them and it depends a lot on the other people, whether you consider you're working with them, or for them, or against them, there's a whole emotional relationship that you enter into because the people are there, there's bodies there week by week, and someone's not there because they have a cold or something, and it all affects things. You show them pieces of tight-wire work, you know, if that's what you're interested in. (For me, it was a process of bringing work forward that I considered to be working/unfinished. I rarely showed a piece of writing that I considered complete. Unless I had motivations like self-interest in the sense that I wanted to discuss the "subject.")

*BS* Would you go back to another workshop now?

*CF* I've had my fill for a while. I still like the process but I want to be by myself.

*PC* So something's pushed you from poetry into prose.

*CF* I sort of fell; I kept trying to tell stories in my poems and they got longer and longer. The day I woke up with a fifteen-page poem I thought All right . . . [laughter] if you're gonna tell it, tell it. I've always thought fiction interesting and somehow, although in the old school of it I'm not a traditional poet, there is a line in my poetry that *is* quite traditional and I've always felt fiction to be more like a lark for me, I feel much freer and well, daring — I don't know what the word is, I just feel more open. I read very different fiction than poetry. I'm pretty middle-of-the-road as far as poetry, and fiction I read as odd as I can.

*BS* You were talking about going public earlier, and a commitment; were you talking about a commitment to go public?

*CF* Yeah, there's that. There's a commitment to my writing that's very solid and then I came to publishing and performing. (Whether to do it or not.) At one point, writing and "being a writer" were the same thing to me. When I first started reading and performing and meeting people at readings, there was no difference. I didn't understand it when people said they wrote poems to be read aloud. To me, there was no difference. And then, I guess it was a wearing-away process. I guess I felt like an innocent that got burned at some point.

*PC* Rejecting your audience?

*CF* Yeah. I still love to read, I *love* to read and I still always would be very excited by the whole thing. I never said no until it got to the point where I had to. I'd go to a reading and I felt, boy I spent five hours getting ready for this and nobody even said anything.

*BS* Well, is that an important thing then, to get that reaction, whether it's "I hate you" or "You're wonderful"?

*CF* [laugh] Yeah! (As a performer.)

*BS* Does a young writer get enough of that?

*CF* I sure have gotten enough . . .

*BS* Where have you gotten it from?

*CF* You know, those experiences, where I reveal myself sort of accidentally — those times were the nicest ones, just kind of meeting people. (That bridge between performing and coming back to being a writer and then writing.)

*BS* In publishing in print, have you had reactions from people that have been helpful to you?

*CF* In a different way; because there's a group of people that I correspond with very regularly, who I know are watching for my things and I'm watching for theirs. I get immediate feed-back from them; they're very direct about it. Not very often do strangers come upon me and say anything. I have a hard time believing that strangers are reading my work.

*BS* Are you interested in telling us what kind of a group that is? Is it just accidental acquaintances?

CF Some of them are accidental, some of them began when I was working at a press and got manuscripts from people through there that I was very high about, and I or they initiated in that process.

BS So friendships developed.

CF Yeah. And Vancouver writers that moved away I'm interested in. And now I've moved away from writers, some of whom I feel I've *worked* with for several years. We write. They keep me alive. And writers that aren't "writers."

PC Do you feel you write *for* them or do you write for *you*?

CF Me. It's just that . . . it's a kind of security, I suppose.

PC Well, lately, when I've been reading your stuff, specially these excerpts from *Moon in My Belly*, I get a feeling that somehow you centre yourself when you're writing; you withdraw completely. I get a really mystical sense from what you're doing.

CF I think that's part of what I feel about having a project. The novel was important in that way to me because it was so separate from my other writing; the poetry I was writing at the time and through that whole time is totally different. One was balancing the other all the way through. The poetry that I wrote through that time is just gathering itself now. It's like it was waiting on the wayside for the novel to be done, because the novel was strong and took over.

BS I thought you'd written a novel on Mayne — but you wrote it here in North Van?

*CF* I wasn't allowed to move to Mayne until I finished it. No, I didn't allow myself . . . I went through this whole process, where I moved out of our house in North Van, and he was over there, hammering, and I went on the weekends. I moved to the basement of the house of some friends, to type.

*BS* Was that a regimen, a daily thing?

*CF* It had to be because I don't like typing, I think of it as work. It was work that *became* enjoyable but also it needed discipline. (Especially when the "final" typed draft discovered revision.)

*BS* You were doing the first draft on the typewriter?

*CF* Oh, no.

*BS* No. You hand-write?

*CF* That's right. What you see of the novel is about five drafts. Parts of it are one but not many. The majority of it is four or five.

*BS* Are each of those drafts typed up or is only the final draft typed?

*CF* It was handwritten and then typed — that first type was a revision of the hand, quite extensive. Then the typing was revised; then that whole thing was rewritten.

*BS* By hand.



CF Yeah. Then it was all typed. The last time . . . and parts of what was typed the last time were revised again, just pieces of it. The first draft essentially was about two-thirds of the book. I thought it was the end but it was not. So, the second draft was all the way through. Then I had to go back and do it again, at least twice more, parts of it three more times — sections, you know. But especially at the end I felt very pressed and I didn't answer the phone.

PC So the thrust of this rewriting is to expansion?

CF Fiction I write shorthand, I skip, I associate, and a lot of that had to be tidied up. I did very little cutting. It was driven into me that people were misunderstanding things because the leaps were too far, so. The story was no different, but there were scenes missing. I have them in here (my head, heart, consciousness, etc.), and a lot of it was just plain waiting for those scenes to come clear enough that they could appear.

BS Why do you think you were holding back from those?

CF I didn't realize that I was holding back, I thought they were evident. At a point there was a realization that not everybody knew this story. It's a very simple story but there are parts of it that are unknown, so I had to tell them.

PC So what we're seeing as your incredible economy is really happening the other way round. That's great; I like that.

BS I find your writing getting more accessible and at the same time richer. I think the novel pieces we've seen are a real advance over the rose pieces. The rose pieces are extremely tight — I don't know if "elliptical" is the word — there are those jumps; there's a kind of artificiality because one realizes that the reader's been called on to make leaps, and you question sometimes the necessity of it. Not, say in "Cut Flowers" [*The Capilano Review* #10] where you jump from one scene to another, but in that same story where the narrator shifts from roses and says "some of them are red," and you realize, no, it's eyes. A certain element of trickery in that particular line. But I feel about the novel much less of that, and much more reliance on just the depth of the story itself, the images, the nexuses of events. Are you just being more naked in the novel?



CF That's part of it. Say in my poetry, it's not that I cut things out; that's how I really do write. That's how things really do "sound" to me. I really do "think" (write, sound, hear, see, touch) like that. People say, "You go through and cut out all the 'is's' and 'and's' and connectors." But no, I don't do that. In fiction, it's very similar. In the novel, there was a conscious decision on my part; okay, people are misunderstanding this. When I workshopped it — the first draft was ninety pages — we're forty-five pages into it, and someone said to me, "Ah, this is an historical novel, isn't it?" And I thought, oh my god, why didn't you know that in the first two lines, as I hoped you would or as I intended. That came clear in the novel and my commitment to it as a piece of the whole. The rose things — I'm still waiting for them; they're coming together, it's like they're filtering down. So, already there's things going on in those pieces, and parts of them have been . . . they're changing. I don't know how to say it except that they're changing all by themselves. There's that realization that, okay, here's a language trick that is unnecessary now, or, it is limited by the fact that it is a trick. So it changes, or it gets larger, or it disappears. And the fact that after "Cut Flowers" more pieces appeared was a surprise to me — I didn't expect them.

PC So, there are still more rose pieces coming, then; that's good.

CF The strangest part of it is that it's a bouquet, chrysanthemums and lilies are appearing. It's exciting but very bizarre to me. I don't have a hold of it, I'm still waiting; I don't know what's going on. But I'm excited. It's taking my vocabulary or what language I think is mine. It's really opening it up.

PC As far as I'm concerned, those pieces *are* your writing.

CF I'm starting to think so right now because that's what I'm paying attention to. (Fictionally.)

BS Some of your writing has a kind of sadness in it and some has anger, and I think I like the angry stuff best. In your book of poems, in *Blood Uttering* — the one poem that I like is "Anger." Yeah, that one just pisses right up in my eye.



CF At a point the anger comes through more, I think, in the sound, in the voice. When I read a while ago it was said of me that if I talked like that all the time “they’d” lock me up, which is probably true. I never knew it until I started putting myself in front of a room full of strangers. I thought it all went together, I thought the people who would be the least interested in my work would be the people that knew me best. Apparently it’s not true. I read once at the smallest building, the tailor shop in Chinatown, it used to be a gallery for a while, and this woman that I’d known for a long time, but it was the first time she heard me read, held her hands over her ears and ran out of the room. She said, later, I can’t believe it; you stand there in your little flowered dress and you read those horrible poems, and I didn’t know these contradicted, so for a couple of years I was pinning myself together, I thought, am I schizophrenic or am I what? So that still goes on. In some of the poems the real anger comes through. Usually those are first draft pieces that just set themselves, and I think that’s my “strongest” writing. The sadness is more social consciousness, it’s not the way I live my life; I’m (working as a writer in social conscience, perhaps, in some things, by exposure, by saying what cannot or has not been said) the last word in optimism, as a person, I think. (Every statement is a political statement. And every poem is a political poem. But politics are of the moment/as poems/except in sequence/which is also timed/but poems are not timed that way.)

PC Speaking of anger would you like to talk about Joan of Arc?

CF Sure. I couldn’t, I tell you, for a while.

PC How did you happen on Joan of Arc?

*CF* Some of the poems I was writing, all through writing the novel, very angry, very feminist, very screaming rape in the streets until (I was) people were, at least, sure they had heard it. I got very excited about what I would say are my heroes, Elizabeth, Mary Queen of Scots — they started showing up and they each had their own little poem, their own several poems. Another point: I realized that I could not deal with Joan of Arc, I couldn't; it was impossible for me. So I thought, alright . . . It's the first thing I'd ever done that I went out and researched, and I lived with the thing for a long time. I set it for myself as a thesis. It was a challenge, I guess, to myself.

*PC* Is there something particular that fascinates you, is it the blood? Or what about her? Her spirits?

*CF* What mostly fascinated me about her in the beginning was the misconception, or what I saw as the present "historical" misconception: that I had "found out" early on that when she died she was, to all intents and purposes, obliterated; (burned, the ashes thrown in the river) and was, in what would have been her own lifetime, revived, as a saint, as a martyr — well, she wasn't canonized until much later. But the first trial she went through was early on, even before she was allowed to see the Dauphin. That first trial was very extensive and all the records were destroyed before the second trial, which was the one that ended in her death. (She kept referring back to the first trial records, saying she had already answered those questions, presumably no one bothered to tell her the records were gone.) Also it seemed that she was so plainly logical, so plainly not mad, so plainly not dancing with death as if it were some kind of rich wine. It was so clear to me that I felt committed to do something about it; there's something in me of moral righteousness, a fire somewhere, I don't know where it comes from. But I felt committed to her. (And to trying to understand how she felt when those who first applauded her political and strategic abilities turned against her. And knowing she understood the power of voice, of the word. She had been spoken to, she sent letters to the English that caused



havoc in their ranks. She was aware how significant her position was — she spoke freely about being a virgin, wearing men's clothes, she said what she felt she had to with the full expectation that people would listen.)

*PC* A form of social consciousness.

*CF* I think so. And somewhere along the line I was extremely upset at reading books that still talked about women and penis envy, the book being written in 1972 or something. I was outraged. "Joan of Arc is the standard female 'impersonation', the sickness . . .", there are "mental hospitals full of women who think they're Joan of Arc" and I thought, this is wrong, this is not true, not real (she wasn't a martyr, she was labelled one when it became politically expedient. She was burned as a political power; yes, she did extraordinary things for a woman of her time, but it was not fear of a "woman", a "maid", that got her burned. Joan was humiliated and tortured as a woman, Joan of Arc was given a trial, by a church and state who were threatened by her direct relationship to God and the implication that the zealous were capable of taking up arms.), so maybe it all came from there. And the farther I got into it, the more interesting it became. It's really a book about war, I think. (And self-defining, self-determination.) It's a war book and she was no screamer, very calm and collected, knew exactly what was going on, but remained optimistic. She thought right to the very end that someone was going to save her, that she was politically important, politically powerful enough to be saved. And it just so happened that she was mistaken. (She was too powerful to be allowed to live, according to "them".)

*PC* Yes.

BS Obviously at some point in the future some graduate student is going to do a thesis on you and say, "These are the dominant symbolic terms in Cathy Ford's fiction," and obviously there's blood, and moon, and water, and several others — those are the three that have struck me. When you use, say, water in a fairly insistent kind of way, or when you use moon in an obviously rather deliberate way, I don't feel any contrivance there, I don't feel, as with a lot of inexperienced writers, that you are playing out some symbolic term for whatever changes can be rung on it. There must be stories here, some experience of moon, some experience of water. In a sense, I suppose, you should say, well read my fiction.

CF (That's all I can say. I have nothing else to say about it, about "how" I'm being read.) I am an uneducated writer in the sense that I have to wrack my brain to think what a metaphor is or a simile; I know next to nothing about "symbolism". It goes farther, farther than "literature", for example, I think Freud is garbage, so much of the work and the openings became so tight, such rules. I can't even spell certain words, I have such blocks, I cannot spell "psychiatrist," "psychoanalyst". So that for, say, *Blood Uttering*, it's clear in the sense that blood is colour, that blood is paint, that blood is feathers and blood, blood is a sense of, I think, maybe images in the book rather than symbols in a universal way. The specific, not the general. So that the image *becomes* the symbol but only for that book. Someone heard, for example, that I had read a piece of the novel and in that relationship was excited about it and wrote to me and said, would you send this specific piece to me. I sent that piece and the person wrote back to me and said things like, she was worried that — how do you say this? — it was not taking into consideration the victim theory and Canadian literature as it has progressed through Canadian women's eyes and . . . I wrote back and said, "I put it to Magda and she said, that's the way it has to be." (I said some other things too, that the novel was historical, predated the theory, and that I appreciated the careful attention. Which I

did. But disagreed with.) It's not that I don't know them, those "rules", it's that I don't want to, or that I think they must be broken. According to the fiction. And if I see them creeping in, then I work them over. (Like a burglar in the house. This is what I mean by uneducated. I try to start or stop things even if it's not done or advised or current or whatever by anyone else. I'm curious. And I think that (other) Canadian (or world, international) literature is like the page. It's only applicable if it is made use of or if it limits. Size texture type shade. That is, my interest in writing the unwritten. Page as neutral. Unless otherwise. *The* choice. Small on the allusion side.)

*BS* I'm not in any indirect way trying to accuse you of that. What I'm interested in is your experience of those things. The reason I didn't ask you about blood is that it's quite obvious to me what at least part of your experience of blood is. I suppose I could say the same about the moon, except that the moon is a bit more of an abstraction. But water, for example; I'm so puzzled by that experience of water, how it's become almost an obsession in the novel, the water.

*CF* It's an obsession of mine. I'm newly 26, I've almost drowned twice in my life. I mean, there's reasons but it's like — it's not really possible to find them except in my own self or in my own images. (Or, in the way the images are mine.) (Particularized.) (That all words, images, symbols are innocent. Contextualized by the book itself/that is/by the writer's choice. Writing/the use of words/is not innocent. This making of books involves directly the element of trust. That the writer trusts her own power to delineate, or rather, define, redefine, the words. And that the

reader trusts the writer/the book to have done so.) So that if it's not directly related to my experience I don't write about it, I feel unable to. (But then I'm a listener, I empathize, I'm a sympathetic, so there's lots to say, to report.) I would rather not rely on technique. I rely on it last to get myself out of my closet or into the world. (I study it, I use it, like having a vocabulary. It *is* the method, and at best so implicit in what is said or written that the how is the rhythm of/the patterning.) Right now I'm working on what I could only call derivative prose and that is relating to a person or an event, but not a *symbol*, although I am aware that there are symbols lurking, you know.

*BS* You're talking about source here.

*CF* But I think it's the same thing. Symbolism is what some writers, or some critics, or some readers rely on and it's like demanding (for something external to the work itself) to be centre stage. I guess the people that I care to have read my work, I want to trust me, I want them to read it, that's all. And I want them to "not have read anything else."

*BS* Do you think that this balance between poems and novel that you were talking about before is something you feel comfortable with still, and that it will go on for awhile?

*CF* I don't foresee an end to it. One is definitely supporting the other at the moment. The poetry is rhythmically contributive and the tightness of the writing is focussing on things in my fiction; and too, I still feel I'm in grade one in my fiction, I still feel that I'm a poet, but I'm gaining the ability to look back. A lot of my poetry is opened up in the sense of prosiness — that's an expression that's been fired at me. "Thank god you finally started putting in the connectors. Oh you're not writing sound poetry now."

*PC* So there's not going to be a fusion of the two forms, then?

CF I think if there's going to be a fusion anywhere at all, it's in the pieces that began with "Cut Flowers." It's starting to happen. I'm most excited about just even the hope that it could be. I'm very excited about that. It's hard to talk solely for me in terms of writing, for you to see the house where I used to live and the house where I live now would explain a lot. (Some people write about places, I write in them, or from them. The sense of the room as camera.)

BS You were talking earlier about travelling.

CF I never wanted to travel till the past couple of years. I never wanted to go to "Europe," I never wanted to go to "Mexico." But now I feel there are things that I can come back to, and the most likely way that I'd go travelling would be sailing. He wants to be a sailor, he's got salt water in his veins.

BS That's in spite of your fear of the water?

CF In spite of it, yeah, partly because of it too.

BS Live on the edge. . . .

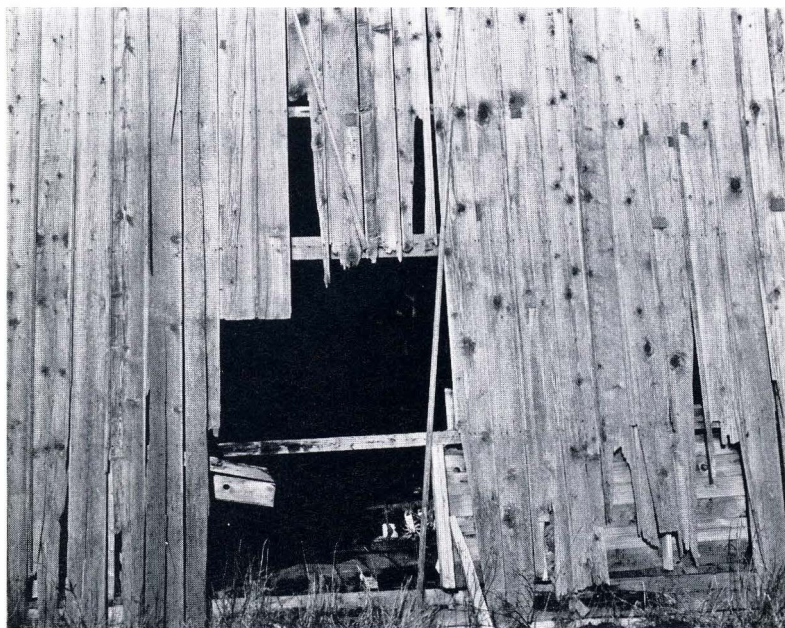
CF I think I always have, I think I've looked over a couple of times. You know, there's a sense of a *very* fine balance there. I never knew I was on the edge of anything, I never knew there was any difference. Until I looked over a couple of times and thought, oh, this is the edge.

PC And you were right about that, do you think?

CF I think *Moon in My Belly*, yeah, quite a bit. Things happened in there that I had no idea about, obsessions that I always kind of knew I had but I never really allowed before or — I put them away in the cupboard and they came out. Chickens. I hate chickens.

BS Well, there's that incredible scene in the novel, the axe going at the chicken. . . . And washing clothes. I mean, there's obviously that whole scene in that novel about washing clothes but it seems to come back again and again. It's almost a nineteenth-century thing, the tub. . . .





*CF* I think a lot of, I don't know, in quotes, "children," say, that grew up in the Fifties, lower middle class, the Sunday night bath . . . it is nineteenth-century, really strongly. Plus having a grandmother, other-language, mysterious, storyteller. Somehow, I was the odd grandchild. I mean, as a child I hardly spoke, I was the "ideal" child, right? quiet, occupied myself very independently, read in the corner, and so on, so my grandparents liked me at an age where they appreciated that kind of child. I got to read my grandfather's books and, I was the one to whom my grandmother told her life story and her mother's story, that she had not even told to her daughters. And that whole sense, an important sense that I have a sort of history. It *is* an historical novel, but there was that shock for me, I thought, my god, page . . . what is it? forty-five, and you're saying that to me now.

BS Is there some duty to rescue history?

CF There is for me. (Rescue as in prevent from being lost, not from death. Some deaths are natural.) Because at a point in my poetry I realized an obsession of mine was telling or retelling narrative things. In poetry the stories, the "real" stories in my poetry were obsessively historical, either my childhood, or stories that I had been told. There's a long poem in *Stray Zale* about a woman dying of cancer, it was almost a direct lift from a story that someone had told me. And a friend said to me, I didn't know your mother died of cancer, and I said, my mother didn't die of cancer, my mother is alive and well. So I feel that. I have a fidelity to it. I'm really interested in the shift from telling, retelling, and then to the page. And lies, the whole sense of people lying, amplifying things, concentrating on certain things. (It's an attentiveness shift, changing by concentration, like adding salt.)

BS Recently we've noticed that most of the fiction writers that we publish are women and most of the poets that we publish are men.

CF My sense of it is that the performing writers, especially in Vancouver, are predominantly women, and I think there's a lot of performing going on in fiction that is not happening in poetry on the page.

PC Can you talk about that some more?

BS What do you mean by performing?

CF The majority of writers in Vancouver that are really interested in performing as readers are young, energetic, excellent women poets. They aren't publishing much poetry. And the men that are publishing poetry don't seem to be too inclined to being public in a sense of *touch*. But there's women going across Canada, paying the fare out of their pocket, or going to the U.S., in order to read and perform. (I think women are craving personal communication. They are fed up with waiting to be published, waiting to be accepted in magazines, waiting to be asked to read through the established channels. Women are out of the waiting room now. They're talking, they're making noises, they're risking exposure.) It's a different sense of being public, and a different sense of performing.

*BS* But you're talking about women *poets* there, right?

*CF* Yes. And the immediate past. And the change in emphasis for women writers from poetry to prose in many cases. This is also what I'm feeling as a personal shift, so of course I'm paying attention to it. It is not true for everyone. But there was a great bloom of women poets, performing, *being* everywhere, arabesques on every page, women dancing, and shouting, and laughing, and screaming, it was like a long overdue explosion . . . (Didn't "we" know it was coming? Didn't "we" keep working for it?) all of a sudden magazines discovered women poets, right? And that's kind of died down a bit now. But now a lot of *those women* — it's not necessarily the same women — have either moved into fiction as well or are starting to publish their fiction, a lot of times based on their work or strength as a poet (that is, fiction is starting to bloom like poetry, it's being felt), the ones that have made the shift. I've talked to a lot of women that have the sense, say, in Canada, that there isn't a male poet under the age of thirty-five that they're interested in, they don't "exist", they're not in the streets, they might be in the magazines but they're not real yet; I haven't "seen" them, I haven't "heard" them, I haven't "touched" them.

*BS* Do you feel, as a fiction writer and as a woman, that you're in a large company of other women fiction writers?

*CF* No.

*BS* Do you feel that you're in the company of men fiction writers?

*CF* No. I don't feel in any company, I feel I'm by myself. But I've always felt that, too, as a poet. It was a lovely surprise to me but it was a profound surprise when women's groups, galleries, and coffeehouses asked me to read. And that was the point in time where I was really thinking hard too, like, why am I reading? am I reading? will I read? I don't think I fit. (Yes, feminist. That is to say, self-defined. And keeping it private from those to whom *that* is definition. Demanding the room. The space. To change. Which is — the only point in telling anyone is to tell it to those to whom it makes no "difference", that is, those equal, equally. Unless seeking to knock some other heads around a bit, grab at the first level "their" perception. Which, on occasion, I try myself. And as a larger audience is sought or stumbled upon, the frequency of the occasion increases, necessarily. Fumbling, noncompetitive elitism. I feel compelled to say what I mean. I seek to. This is of course/the fight for women writing/no more "sewing curtains" excuses/for writing by women/for good writing/for fine writing by anyone/to appear anywhere/that fight first for the poem/the fiction/then for the poem the fiction by a woman/because I am/One/In the fight.) And I've considered sabotage on several occasions . . . there's no plainer name than Cathy Ford, right? So I'll keep it but — I don't know — sending under another person's name or saying you're a man, pretending it, or something, to see if there is a difference. It's all a game. I've never done it but it still interests me and I know people that have done it and that have been accepted or had their books reviewed on that basis. (Sexuality. Writing can be sexual. Writing can be sexist. But it *can't* be *evaluated* sexually. If it is, the evaluator is totally wrong. This is not to say that there is no "women's" writing, because there is. But I think it must be *writing*, misogyny practised by men or women or magazines is absurd, like all prejudice.)

*BS* But if you look at the themes that young fiction writers are writing about and those pieces that are interesting enough to make it into good magazines — there are very few men writing their things there; there are some, but very few. And the themes that women are writing about seem to still be holding a certain amount of interest.

*CF* (That biography is not irrelevant so much as implicit, or explicit. That feminism is closer mouthed and harder working. Than previous. But the problem is. Writers are being ignored. Books are not being reviewed. Writers are being burned by bad contracts. A game played called writers, not writing, that hurts. In my experience the majority of these writers being belittled, the “new”, “young”, “unknown”, are women. Something must change. For *the* writers, for *the* readers. All of them. Women are writing about all of these injustices, in various ways, writing about them or working against them professionally. Besides all of this there is the great unhearing of woman’s point of view. There’s a desire to hear. To find out. Explore. The seeking of other women’s writing. Writers. Painters. Photographers. Printers. Publishers. That searching. Which comes back to. Circular. Knowing “who” wrote it might be of interest, it might even give a clue as to intent, method, style, but when the piece confronts the reader, the writer has gone on/ridden over the next hill. Finally. Hopelessly. Women are still working to get to the point where their work is *work*. Publically.) Well, I think it’s rebirth — that rebirth is always more exciting than athletic prowess. Women’s fiction is opening and women fiction writers are aware of it and so now they’re coming out a bit.

*BS* But are those categories, then, associated with the sexes really?

*CF* Well, for some writers, some critics, some magazines. (I talk about what I desire, there, not what I see or have seen.) It seems to me that some writers are centered. That they are neither male or female in the sense of being pushed out there, that at some point or other there was that moment and perhaps it was only a split second, where their writing was accepted or published on the writing, the fiction alone, nothing else. There was nothing political happening. And there are those writers, and to be a writer in my sense, that centering part has to be reached where it doesn’t matter who wrote it, it’s irrelevant who wrote it. It



might be of biographical interest or something but at a point it's absolutely irrelevant who wrote that damn good writing. But right now I think women's fiction is kind of at that point where it's being flogged, it's hot. In the States right now there are three different magazines that I know of doing women's fiction issues this year. Perhaps coincidentally it is *The Year of the Child*. (Perhaps it logically follows that "serious" women fiction writers shouldn't be publishing right now. But writing does not receive acceptance by staying at home. Nothing changes in an unopened room.)

*BS* I think that the whole women's movement and the slow partial acceptance of some of the consciousness that the women's movement has brought to society has given a kind of temporary boost to people just because they're women writing on women's themes. But aside from that, I'm just puzzled by the absence of interesting fiction from men. I mean, who do we have? A lot of men sending in little bits but they're mostly little bits, they're often very unfinished manuscripts.

*CF* And at a point that's important. Unfinished. Unpublished. Unknown. I mean it's important to be anonymous, isn't it? No one can pull you anywhere at all — they don't know who you are. I met someone at a party whose work was appearing in a magazine that I thought wouldn't publish work of *that* quality by a woman. I was wrong. I'm glad I was. But I had been so convinced that I said, I thought you were a pseudonym! Are you real? I was serious, in a way, I'd been fooled by a system that I was/am trying to break down . . . yeah, I thought it was a pseudonym.

*BS* She thought Cathy Ford, was, probably.

*CF* It is! I mean the last three years at UBC there was a Kathy Ford that wrote for the *Ubyyssey* (now for *The Sun*) and people'd come up to me and say, oh, I saw that piece in *The Ubyyssey*. It wasn't me, or it was me, depending on my mood or the time of day, but I hope she got some of the same, or it wouldn't be fair.

*PC* I think women are writing about things that have never been written about and that's what's good, and they're writing about them as well as anyone could.

*CF* (Please, let's say as well as they can be written about. It's the same. Gently.) There's that whole sense going on *between* women writers, too, that somehow brings out even such a simple thing as a woman sending a piece of fiction, she may have written it in 1965, but *now* she's gonna send it, *now* she's feeling that the atmosphere is there for it. There are women — it's not just women — there are people who are writing in closets; a new magazine happens and they think, well, that's the magazine I'm going to send my stuff to. It happened to me. I mean I sent poems to this magazine to the point where, I don't know, where — three years ago I got a rude letter back saying something or other, I don't remember what it said but I thought, alright! and I didn't send any more work in. Then I had a piece of fiction so I thought, if anywhere, *that's* where I want to see that piece of fiction and I sent it. My god, I got a letter saying, can you send more. I skipped all the way to the post office! It's the timing, too.

*BS* What can magazines do to help writers?

*CF* I think they can open up. I think they should establish an arbitrary policy to publish only writers they've never heard of [laugh]; I don't know what they can do. (Perhaps recognize that some writers are victimized by the unfortunate paradox some subscribe to: that to be an important writer you must be an important person.)

*BS* Is there anything else we should cover here?

*CF* One thing I'm tough on, and I'm sure of, is trust. (Trust between the writer and the work and the reader. The writer — the fiction. The fiction — the reader. Not between them but what connects them. The only thing that connects like a common vocabulary once agreed upon by both parties, the hinge, each controls one side of the door. The opening is what is trusted. The act. The result. The process. A personal position. And relevance. Eroticism/language/linguistics. In the mouth. On the page. In shape as well as the dictionary meaning or specification. Neither plot or scene. Perhaps narration. As hinge.) Some writers have a sense of the writer writing and they present that sense on the page. I want to get away from that. I know I'm writing. If there's a reader, the reader knows "I" have written. We both know I'm not writing when the reader's reading. I don't want to frame time past, but passing. I don't want to lead anybody down the garden path, I don't want to be "the director of the film", I want to be the camera, the eyes, the lens. I don't want the sense of . . .

*BS* pre-forming the experience?

*CF* Yeah.

*PC* Does that relate to what you were saying about people reading *you* and seeing through you?

*CF* Yes. Or seeing through the eyes of the piece. The writer's always there ("evidently", but not "actually", the writer and the reader — to me — are *we*), and we know, so let's get on with it. That's my attitude . . . Let's go on. I mean, there's writing about writing, that consciousness was new in the recent past, and some people do it so that I'm interested. Some people do it in a sense that I quit going to church because I could read the Bible by myself, or whatever. I have a feeling right now that it is extremely fashionable to write about writing a book. The new hero and the new heroine is the writer on the page, saying, here I am writing a book or I'm not here at all but I'm writing the book and don't we both know it. (This is a kind of conscious intrusion that I'm not interested in, although I am sometimes interested in watching such a movement in work by *other* writers.)

*PC* One of my students today talked about a good first line being, "Here I am looking for a first line."

*CF* I'm always looking for those things that are just a little bit ahead, going ahead, moving ahead, and there's imitations of imitations, and sometimes they're better than the real thing, of course, they're all real things, but at a point it's gotta go *on*, anyhow. Not necessarily ahead or up but it's got to *go*.

*BS* I call it courage or risk or something. That's what I feel about so many of the people who send in stuff to *The Review*, is that they are taking no risk at all. They don't let you know any of the real pain at all. It's all posture.

*CF* But I think, say a year ago, posture was all. Posture got you a book and some people are better at it than others and it doesn't make them any less, it just times them, they're timed.

## Brian Fawcett /

### THE LIFE OF ROBERT OOMER

It begins as a dream, in familiar haunts. In the air there is a scent I've known all my life, catkins and mud, and the sun is shining, in the light there is an enthusiasm, coming up into the year from winter.

Thru the dirty kitchen window I can see a pickup truck in the driveway, a Chevy 4x4, splattered with mud. There is nothing on the windowsill except a ring of keys and glass of water, but I can see into the livingroom from here, and there is a muzzy blue couch, a glass coffeetable, and on it, one of those deliberately grotesque glass ashtrays, halfway in colour between rhinestone and smoke.

So far, this is just description, because from the start I don't know what to do about what's at the centre of this landscape. About four feet away from me there's a woman, quite tall and striking, with blond hair and blue eyes, and she's my wife. I've never seen her before in my life.

Isn't that wierd? I know she's my wife, and that I'm her husband by the look in her eyes. She's asking me a question, and I know what I am by the way she stands, the familiarity in the way she's looking at me, she asks the question, a familiarity without contempt or, for that matter, any profound understanding. Yet the familiarity has behind it a surety in herself I've always wanted to see, not that I'd have recognized it for what it is if I'd ever seen it. This woman who I've never seen before has known me for at least ten years, about eight of which have been years in which we've lived and slept together as man and wife.



Oh, come on. I don't recognize the words, let alone her. And both have brought us into the bedroom, which is also blue and with a blue bedspread, deep blue, like you would buy at the Bay for about \$79.00. She's talking to me, and she has a pleasant voice, soft and low without being husky. Her talk is matter-of-fact, and she hasn't a clue what's going on. She thinks I'm the man she's looking at, the one she's loved and been loved by, both more or less adequately for most of a decade. Wonder what it's been like. But no, I don't quite want to know, and I don't want to take advantage of what is now happening even though I'm quite clearly attracted to her, she's an attractive woman, good-looking in her wellkept sort of way, just over 30 I would say, certainly I've *never* seen her face anywhere.

Then the look in her eyes — I probably look a little frightened, & the look is clearly protective. Hmmmnn. Always wanted that too, didn't I.

Now we're looking at a photoalbum, I'd better find out what I can while I'm here. Here? Here is "at home," where I grew up. From which, apparently, I never left. I went to work for my father, maybe, or went from the forest service into logging where the money is. I've done well, well enough to own a 4x4 and a car (also blue, Japanese) for her? And a house that we own, full of what in smalltown terms are tasteful furnishings.

I ask her careful questions about the people in the photos, not to make her suspicious, not to let her know I didn't stay, didn't live the ten years with her. I stretch out on the blue bedspread, & she sits down, leans back against my knee. I sit still for that, a little tensely, because it is unearned.

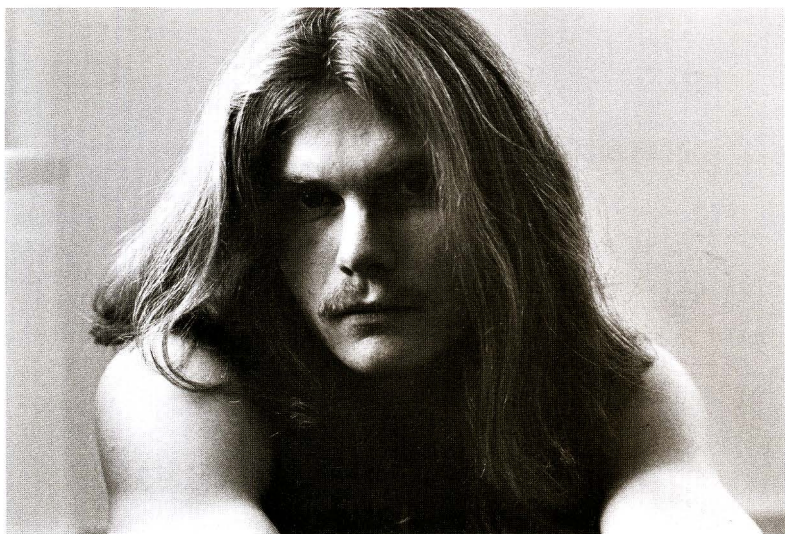
The names of the people in the photographs are all different, but I know most of their faces, particularly the ones from the early years of our marriage. All quite logical. I ask her questions and the stories come out, get pieced together with what I can tell of our life together. I begin to learn who I am. My name is Oomer, but she calls me "honey" and I can't exactly ask her what my first name is, and I can't take out my wallet and look at my driver's licence, and maybe I don't want to know what kind of wallet it is. After the muddy caulked boots I know are at the back door, the wallet might be a trucker's wallet with a heavy brass chain attached to my belt. And anyhow my name is Robert, Robert Oomer.

The house, incidentally, is about two blocks from the house I grew up in, and it's at the bottom of a small hill, once a swamp thicket of alder. It's across the street from the corner store where I used to blow all my paper-route money buying hockey cards as a 10-year-old. The house has been built in the last ten years (did I build it?) and it has all the tackiness of design of new & conventional housing — narrow windowsills, doubleglazed aluminum windows, stucco, parquet floors. I guess I want to notice the tackiness, given the life I've really led, and to ward off, neutralize the attraction to this life and the woman I'm looking thru an album with, all about ourselves.

There aren't any children. Loyalty to my own I suppose, but just the same, not having any must be a certain sorrow to her, the source of her curious smile? A lovely mouth this woman has as I watch it tell me halfstories, the inarticulated parts of which are our shared intimacy. We should have had children, did I prevent that? Not Robert Oomer, who would have no reason not to have several children, but me, the man who didn't live his part of their common lives.

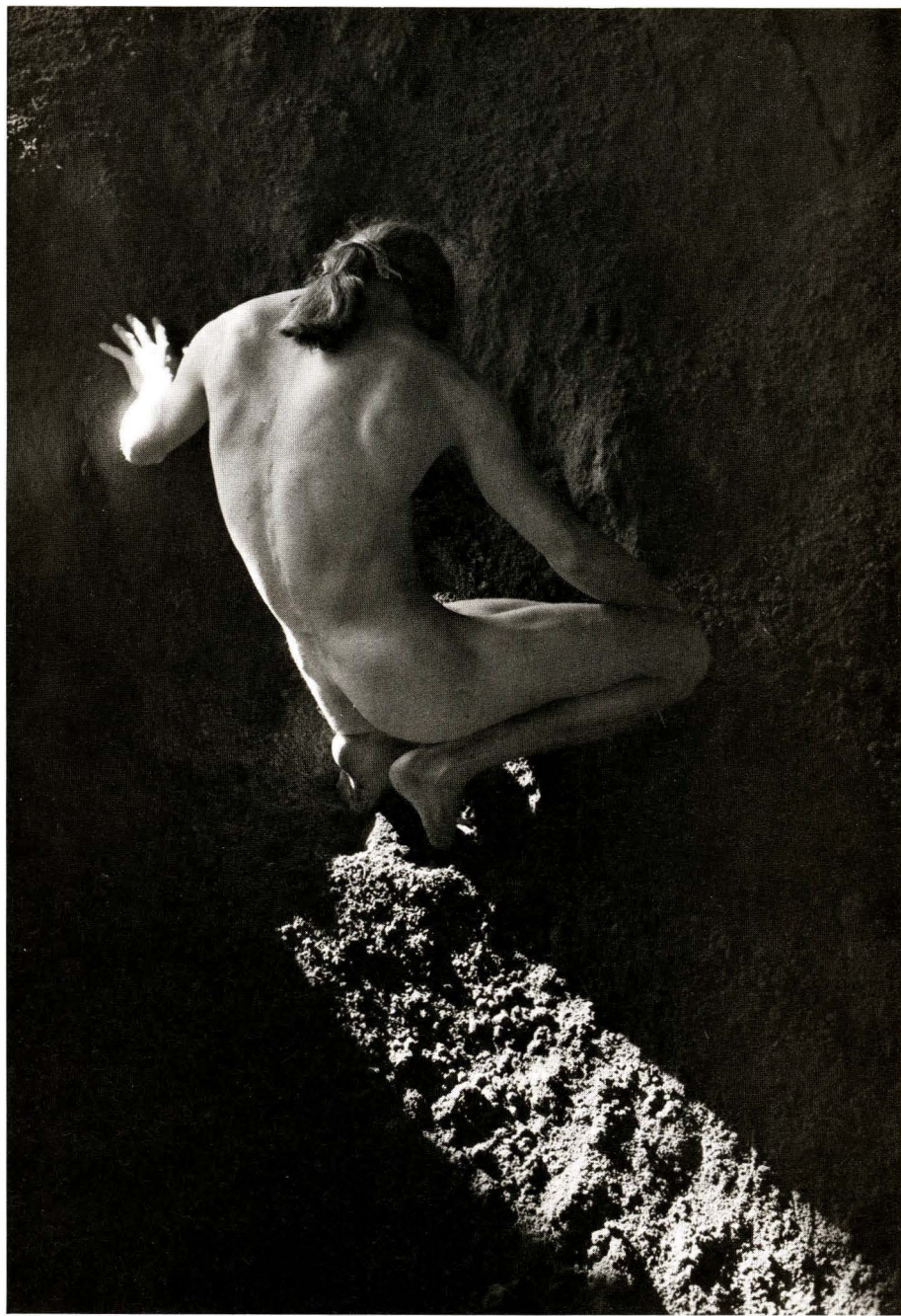
From this point on, I have to either make up the life on the basis of what I've learned, or to analyze both Robert Oomer and his relationship to my own lived existence, I can wait for another episode, and thru it pick up details not presently known, and I can daydream. The obvious focus of such meditations is the woman, whose name, I think is Linda, Linda Oomer, from Chilliwack, B.C. *née* Clapham. Bob & Linda. No doubt we dance at parties, and I am known for having a mean streak when I drink, albeit never towards her. When Linda has been drinking, she talks dirty, and we don't go out all that much, but when we do etc. . . .

This woman resembles my mother, but with significant improvements. She's slimmer, taller, her breasts are smaller. She's very sure of herself and her position in both our collective life and in mine. But in the community she lives in women still don't have their *own* lives, and so that isn't there. She is not a separate creature, unlike the ones who have been important to my life. But what can I do from here, with nothing but daydreams, nightdreams and the facts of a life lived elsewhere. For six months I've tried to write the paragraph I'm now writing, feeling guilty at the abandonment of Linda Oomer, but I have no means of completing this without moving from pure data and the analysis of that data into a range where literature has been able to operate only thru fantasy — by making it up. I read somewhere recently that imagination is not simply the ability to invent, it is the ability to disclose that which exists — be it, as in this case, the most curious of material data. Making it up would involve techniques that for 15 years I have steadfastly resisted on the grounds that the actual composition of the most ordinary human life, on any given day, and in relation to any given incident is so heterogenous and complex that to invent, to “fictionalize” involves a gross diminution of life. Contemporary narrative prose recreates the complexity of material life to the precise extent that it sticks to reenacting events & things that have occurred or existed. Yet I can't lie down and dream further, nor am I content simply to record the author's adventures in understanding the life he didn't lead, the man he isn't, and the woman who is his companion in that life. So this story goes unfinished. The life of Robert Oomer is like that of the people around me, and like my own. It is mortal, and it is partial. I do not know if it is coherent, and I don't even know if it can be said to be real. I don't know if it has any purpose, at all.

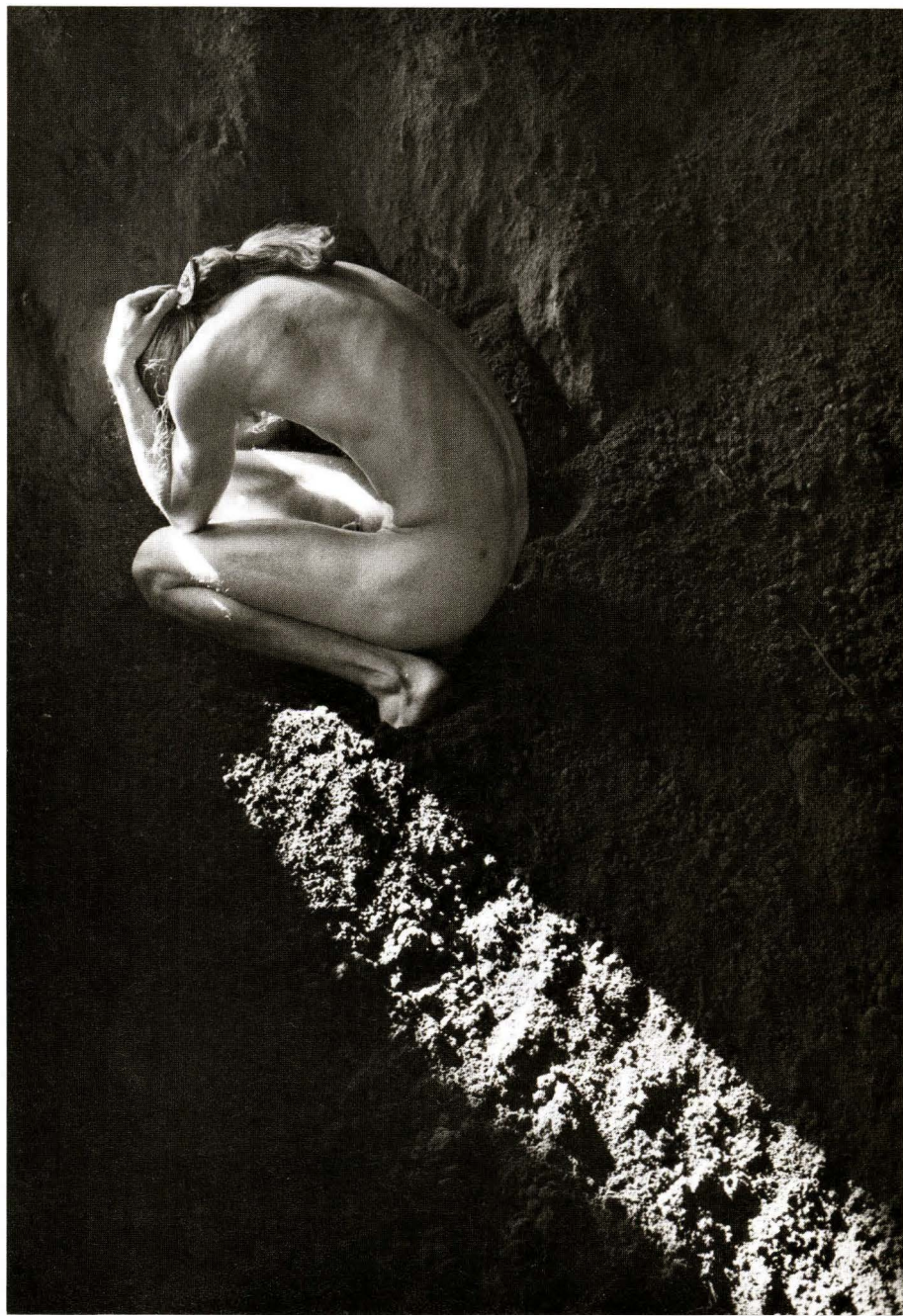


**Donna Hagerman / JOHN**

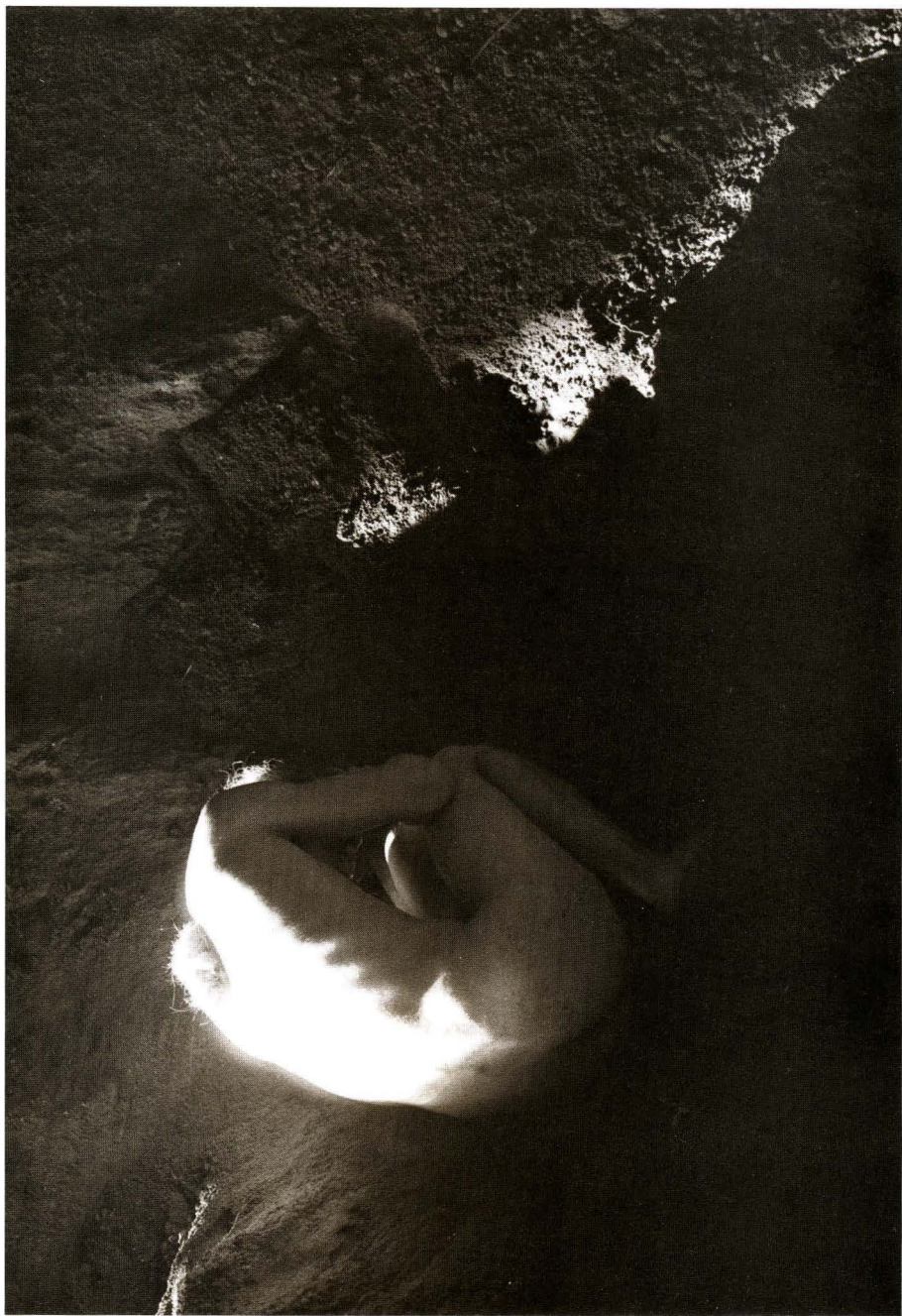


















**Marc Widershien / TRANSLATIONS  
FROM ARTHUR RIMBAUD  
*LES ILLUMINATIONS***

*in memoriam Helmut Krommer*

## CHILDHOOD I

That idol, black eyes, yellow mop of hair, without  
ancestry or court, more high-brow than myth, Mexican  
and Flemish; his kingdom, azure and green tableaux,  
runs along beaches of shipless waves too proud for  
names, Greek, Celtic, or Slav.

At the forest's edge — the dream flowers tinkle,  
flash, flare — a girl with saffron lips, her knees  
a floodgate, crossing the aqua meadows,  
the shadowed torso screened by rainbow and flora,  
the sea's penumbra.

Ladies strolling on terraces; schoolgirls, sybils,  
lush negresses in cancerous green moss, sunspots  
lounging in spotted groves and melting gardens,  
young mothers and old maids with vacant eyes toward  
Mecca, sultanas in tyrannical dress, cunts, mongrels,  
czarinas, and delicate souls sick with a mild  
contagion. It's boredom, the mystical moment of love's  
"gliding torso" and "ulcerous heart."



## VIII DEPARTURE

Enough seen. The Vision held me under every sky.

Enough had. The roar of cities, at nightfall, at sunbreak,  
and always.

Enough known. Life breaks down — the silence — 0 sound and  
Vision!

Departure — new affections, finer stimulations!

## XXV SEASCAPE

See the rust-colored chariots  
The chrome prows  
Beat up the foam  
Uproot the stubble.  
The currents of the moor  
And the ribbed ruts of the ebb-tide  
Wind in a circle toward the east,  
Toward the dark timberlands  
Toward the dregs of the breakwaters,  
Smashing crosswise in dervishes of light.

## YOUTH I Sunday

Leave off study, the sky runs down the page,  
and the arrival of fresh memories within the seance  
of rhythms washes out the heart the head and the world of the mind.

— A horse riddled with disease charges through  
the suburbs toward the woodland estates. A woman  
out of some cardboard drama sobs for her lost aficionado.  
Thugs mark time in the shadows of the past, coughing up  
its blood and booze. Orphans gag on the current  
of the unholy waters, and smother their pain.

Let us return to our masks as the stifled broodings  
of our dreams well up and drown out the chorus  
of the masses.

## YOUTH II Sonnet

*Man* of average constitution, wasn't his flesh lately  
a fruit hanging in the orchard, oh childish game!  
the body a windfall; oh love, the perilous snare  
of the Psyche? Once, the earth was rich with watersheds  
sustained by the bones of princes and artists, now our  
forbears drive us to our genocides; the world's your wheel  
of fortune, but now the earth sweats tears, you with  
your compass and your expectations, they last no  
longer than your dance and your voice, neither fixed  
nor formulated but adrift in a cosmic lens where time  
is an invention, the flux of a universe without  
mirrors — strength and rightness elevated to  
dance, its voice only now just barely sur-  
mised.

## YOUTH III Twenty

Those instructive exiled voices . . . the bone house  
mellows. Adagio, ah! the adolescent in his mawkish  
pride, the studied optimism; how the world  
glittered in the summer garden! The dying forms greet one  
with a stoic expression . . . a dying choir to quench absence!  
Nocturnes clinking in the wine glass . . . Indeed, only the  
nerves thrill to the sortilege.



## Lois Redman / OREGON APPENDIX

The car

headlights illuminating,  
as though two points  
of truth to the day:

- 1) half-ton, crumpled, a yellow  
schoolbus, the kid's brown  
jacket  
the cars

being waved through

- 2) and looking for you  
over the side of the ferry,  
pushing farther  
and farther away,

looking for emerald  
(if that's really your stone

the *Rhododendron* sailing  
through the scum of seagulls

Down the coast, Washington,  
Oregon's  
sea isn't sentimental

(and here's where I made the mistake,  
thinking this would resolve  
in a clear line of beauty

Yes,

I still want to love you  
than not  
but recognize the beating  
as barnacles claim a semi-stance  
of adversary, almost liking it,  
I'm tempted to say, but simply  
just living, barely  
cling to the rock  
igneous, eaten away  
and under-  
cut.

Yeah,  
I would rather love you  
than not, would rather  
stay here  
than turn away

It's coming down to love  
and divine law

Another bloody beach  
the birth of it all

(as though I could've avoided  
being burned by disbelief  
or stung  
by the tongue of the copper dog  
licking my toes

Cynicism wears this  
coastline down

the sun descends, slipping into  
(imagine a white sail

slips into  
the burning hem of the sky

It's coming down to love  
and divine law

to walk  
gracefully in what pathways  
the world offers

I need you, the ocean says, murmuring  
those long, soothing lines

expectations  
speak of an older age  
or addictions, we fall

we say, in love and, holding you, I walk  
against some disbelief

so that the heart lifts  
in love's conversation, poetry  
a suspicion of new spring  
in the blossom tree, slate  
of North Shore mountains, the heart-wood  
of another's poem, rose  
and heather of old  
gardens

Driving home

Easter  
and driving home,  
light  
streams across the bridge, the intimate  
traffic, resolution  
of love's posture



## Elizabeth Hay / FOUR POEMS

### I

high heels on a portage  
elegant mosquito legs . . . Dietrich's

black/velvet/bone  
high strung

tips

### II

her belly fills the tent screen  
Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer  
Marlene

mosquito in a blue sandwich  
(blue) angel

in the moss — tiny holes (heels)

### III

lipstick sways off a lip

feet slip

Psyche

we gather caribou hair off the bushes

dark wool / a sudden tree  
mosquitoes hang there, on her back

### IV

canoe leaves red lips on a rock

trout's soft belly  
her mouth colours the edge of the cup  
glup glup  
glup glup

antlers are black and nervous about the greenery

- 1990). The authors also found that the frequency of use of the Internet was positively related to the frequency of use of the telephone and the frequency of use of the fax machine. This finding is consistent with the idea that the Internet is being used as a substitute for other forms of communication. However, the authors also found that the frequency of use of the Internet was negatively related to the frequency of use of the telephone and the frequency of use of the fax machine. This finding is consistent with the idea that the Internet is being used as a complement to other forms of communication.
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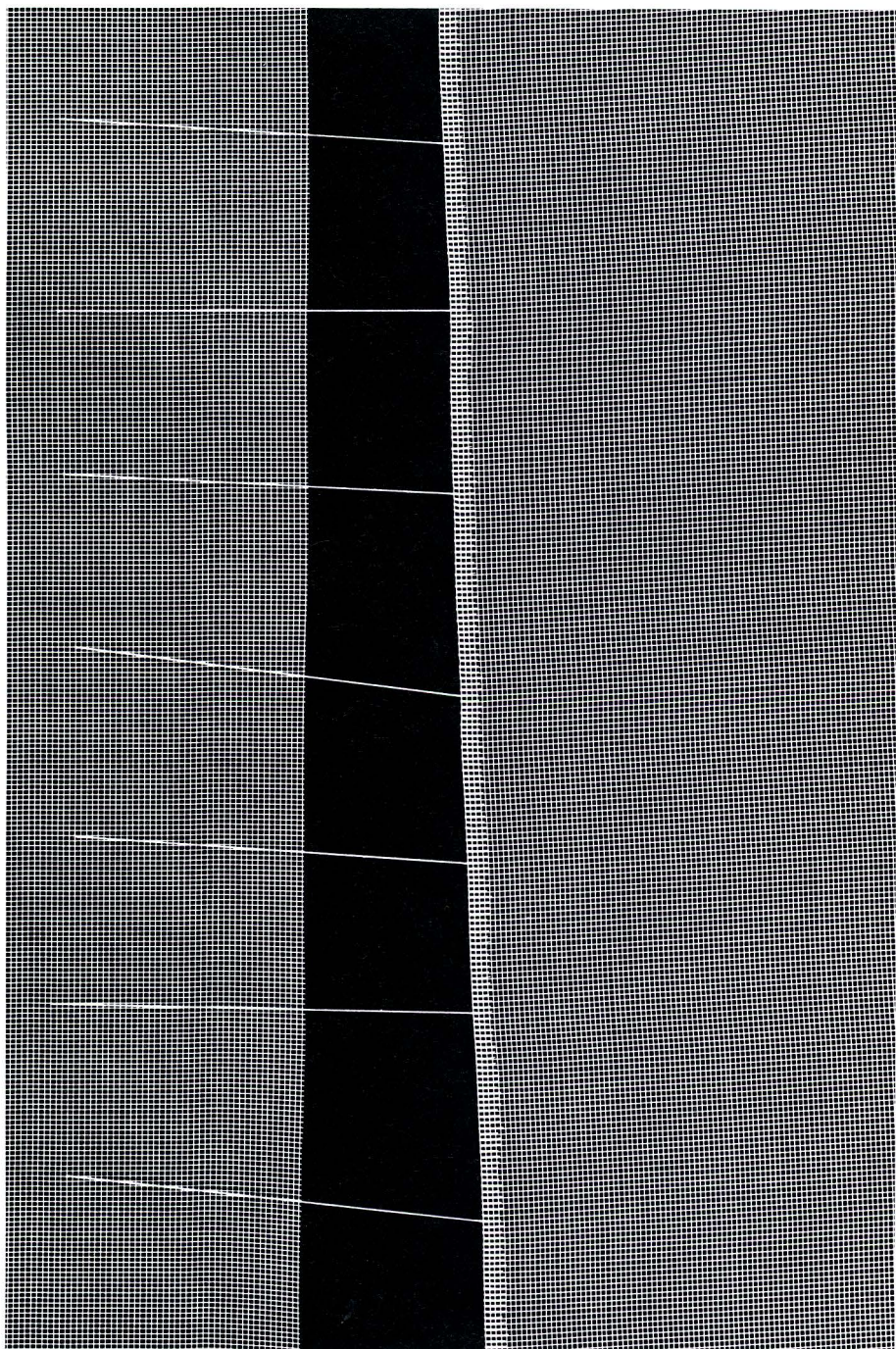
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## Share Corsaut / PHOTOGRAMS

*I came across the screen material a year ago last summer and really loved it. It's just window screening, but it's plastic and is very flexible. At that time, I had been working with photography for about a year, doing photographs that more and more were dealing with form. I started to do border eliminations, reducing the photograph down to its barest essentials: what I was being attracted to in it. I was doing that simultaneously with doing this in printmaking. I really see photography as a print-making process and work that way with it; so, one day, I thought I'd take the screen into the darkroom with me and see what I could do. I did a bunch of experiments and that's where these started. I just started using it as though I were in the print shop — and I was essentially in a print shop — it's just that I had to have the lights off. That's how these came about: I just started to experiment with the material.*

*I had been working with string and thread for about a year prior to these photograms. I see string and thread as being very animated materials — very “alive” materials to work with — as well as being another way of making a line. Although I don't have it, I visualize myself as having a kind of mental “tool box” and in it there are pins and all kinds of string and thread as well as things that I like to do to paper, such as ripping it, poking holes in it and folding it. Those are the things that I like to do to everything that I come into contact with, and I've found that I haven't worn out the excitement of those processes yet. This series includes some of the first ones in which I experimented with the string and the screen.*

*In the photogram process, I put the light-sensitive paper on the base of the enlarger and close the enlarger down so that all the light is being directed toward the paper. With photograms, nothing is put up in the negative carrier: it's just light. It's like drawing with light. Light becomes the ultimate tool and is very immediate. Before I've put the paper in, when the enlarger is still off, I'll play with the screen on the base of the enlarger in the available darkroom light to see what its potential is. The screen casts a shadow of course and, by that, I can see what's happening. When I decide some kind of idea or form is happening that I like, I get the paper out, stick it down and turn on the enlarger. Sometimes I can fold the screen and it'll stay like that, then I just press the light and expose it. They're just a matter of seconds — five and seven second exposures — and that's it.*



*Then just rip the screen off, put the paper into the chemicals and I'm able to see the results right away. It's very fast.*

*Besides being able to actually draw with light, the excitement of the photogram process for me was its spontaneity: with this it was a matter of seconds. I would do the exposure for seven seconds, pop the paper into the chemicals, and could see the image within maybe twenty seconds. Then I could see right away what had happened and what I wanted to do. If I didn't like it, I'd just throw it out immediately; but, if I did like it, I'd process it and then could feed right off of that last image. On the other hand, if I really liked the image I thought I was making and found it didn't come out, that image was gone. However, it's a form that's able to grow really fast and right before your eyes, although final washing and perma-washing afterward to make sure that all the chemicals are out is very laborious. That's just the nature of the whole thing. But it's nice to have that fast result so that you can react to it right away. I really was quite excited by that. I like being able to be spontaneous and have it happen really fast and keep that going as long as possible. That's what was so wonderful to me about these — the photographs emerging out of that whole attitude.*

*I entitle all this "forms of transition". It's always things — things almost in their original state, sometimes in their original state — and then how these things change with light or with manipulation.*

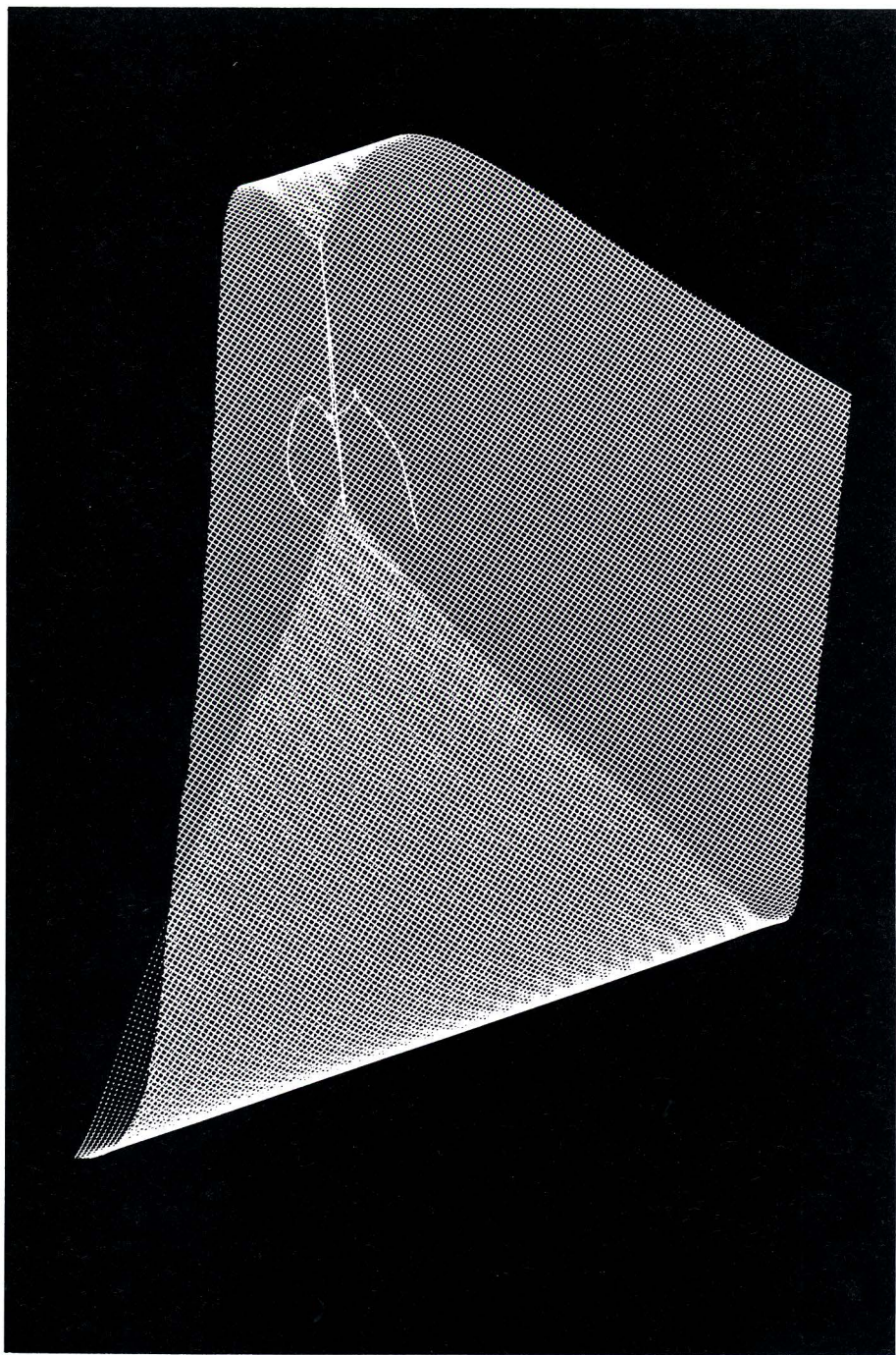
*I feel that almost nothing is abstract in these, in that some of these forms when I look at them seem very "natural" to me — meaning "nature", having that kind of root to them. Nature does that all the time. Even though you may never have seen this before or that before or any of these particular forms before, they still stem from that same movement: that opening and something folding and something — perhaps part of it disappearing. It's a very cyclical kind of generation.*

— SHARE CORSAUT

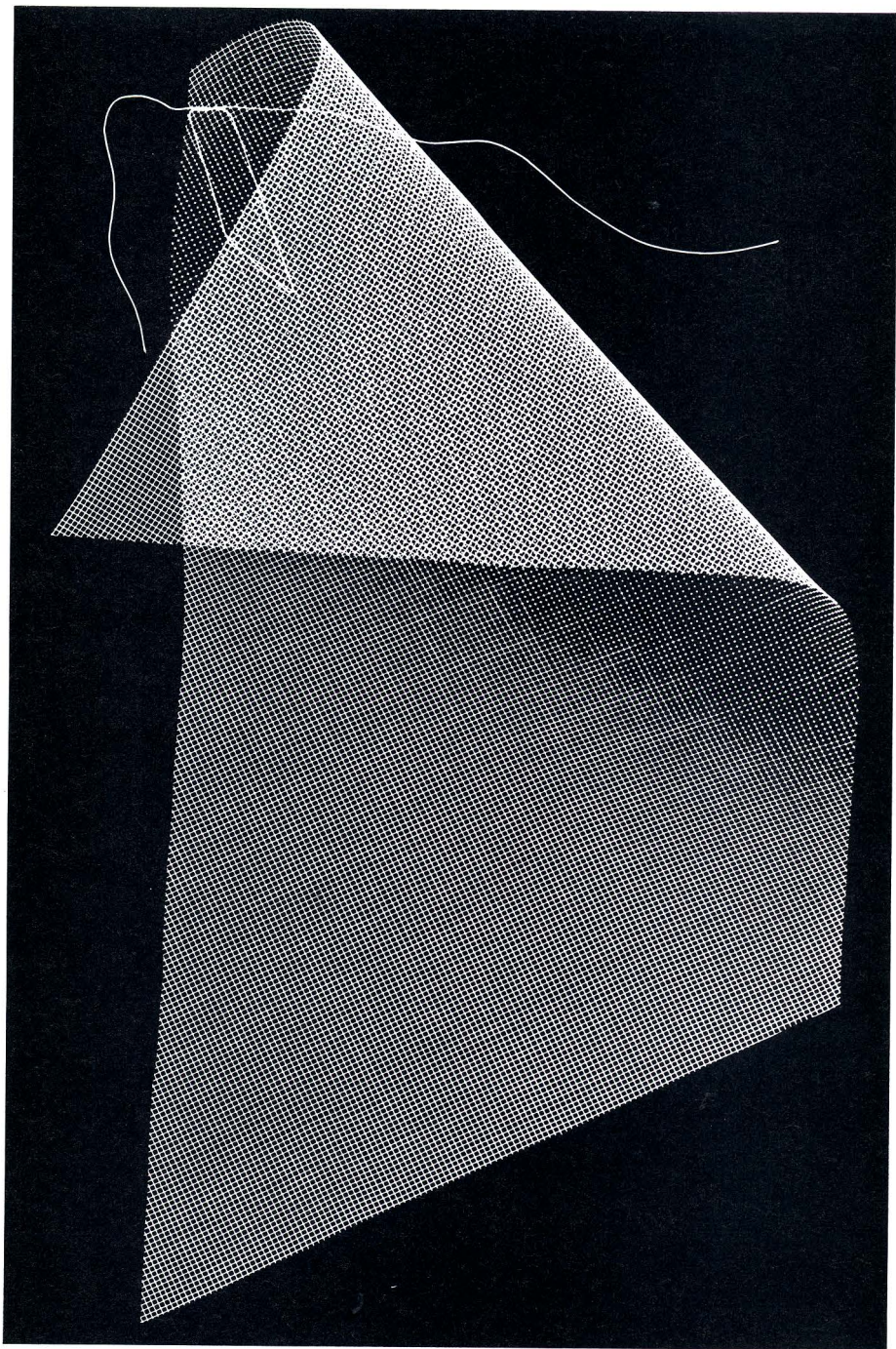
\*statement prepared from an interview by Lois Redman

## IMAGES

#8, #14, #16, #13, (Series 1) 1978, Silverprint photograms,  
38 cm x 45.5 cm, format.









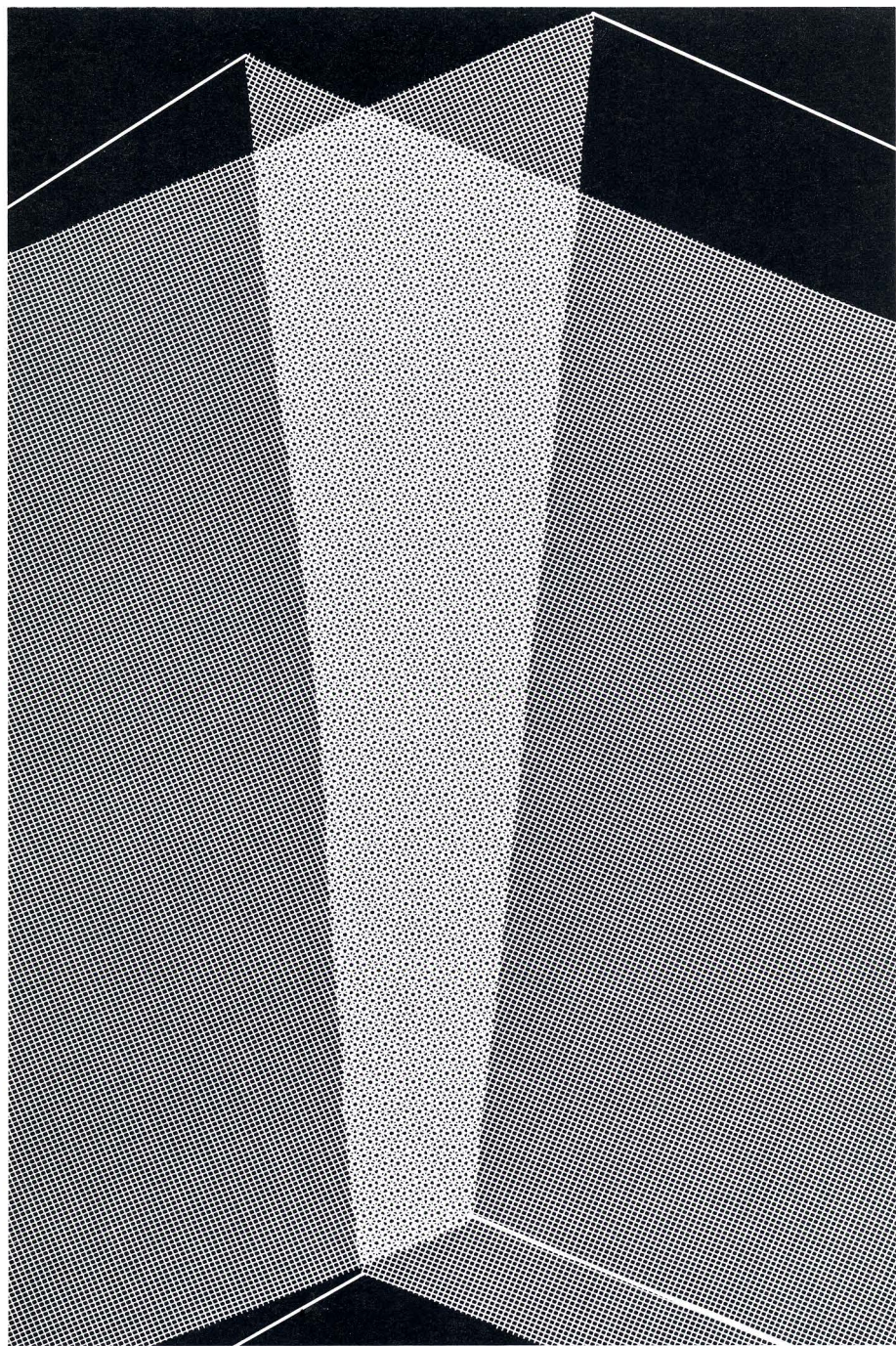


Figure 1. The effect of the concentration of the solution on the rate of the reaction.

Figure 2. The effect of the concentration of the solution on the rate of the reaction.

3.

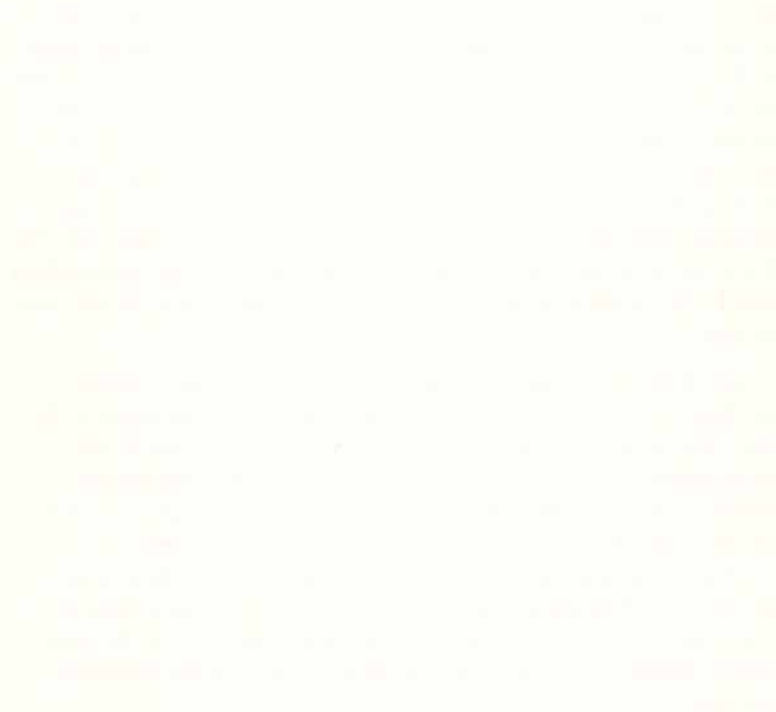


Figure 3. The effect of the concentration of the solution on the rate of the reaction.



## Tom Cone & Alex Pauk / from A WATER GONG

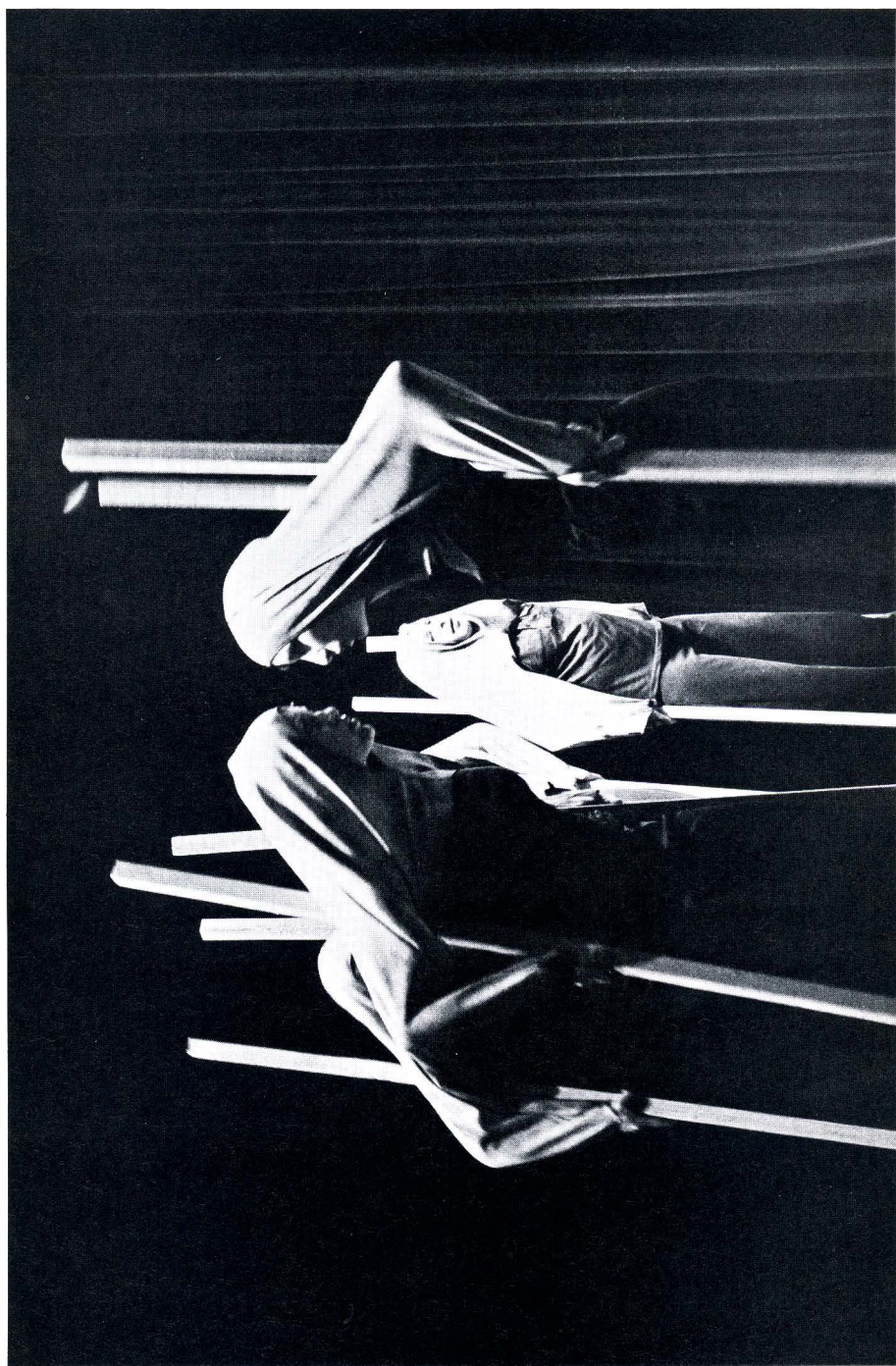
*A WATER GONG was performed at the Vancouver East Cultural Centre in June, 1978 as one of ten very short plays in a programme called The Writer's Show. The action took place on stilts on a nearly dark stage in a chamber of sounds. The writer and composer supplied these statements:*

**TOM CONE:** The whole idea of an opera almost stops in the nineteenth century . . . except for people maybe like Meredith Monk or Robert Wilson. What we would like to do is to be able to write a chamber opera which is more accessible — at least sensitive to the economics. The original idea for the text was almost a foreign space, and then I wrote a text for six individuals — they're all coping in one form or another. But we wanted nothing more than an effect; we weren't going after any kind of meaning whatsoever. . . . We also wanted to use new language; we wanted to make up a language. We have a very lovely aria that Barbara Williams sings, based on new language that we tried to invent and words we tried to make up. On the other hand there are arguments onstage over simple relationships which you've heard a thousand times before; we tried to blend them as well.

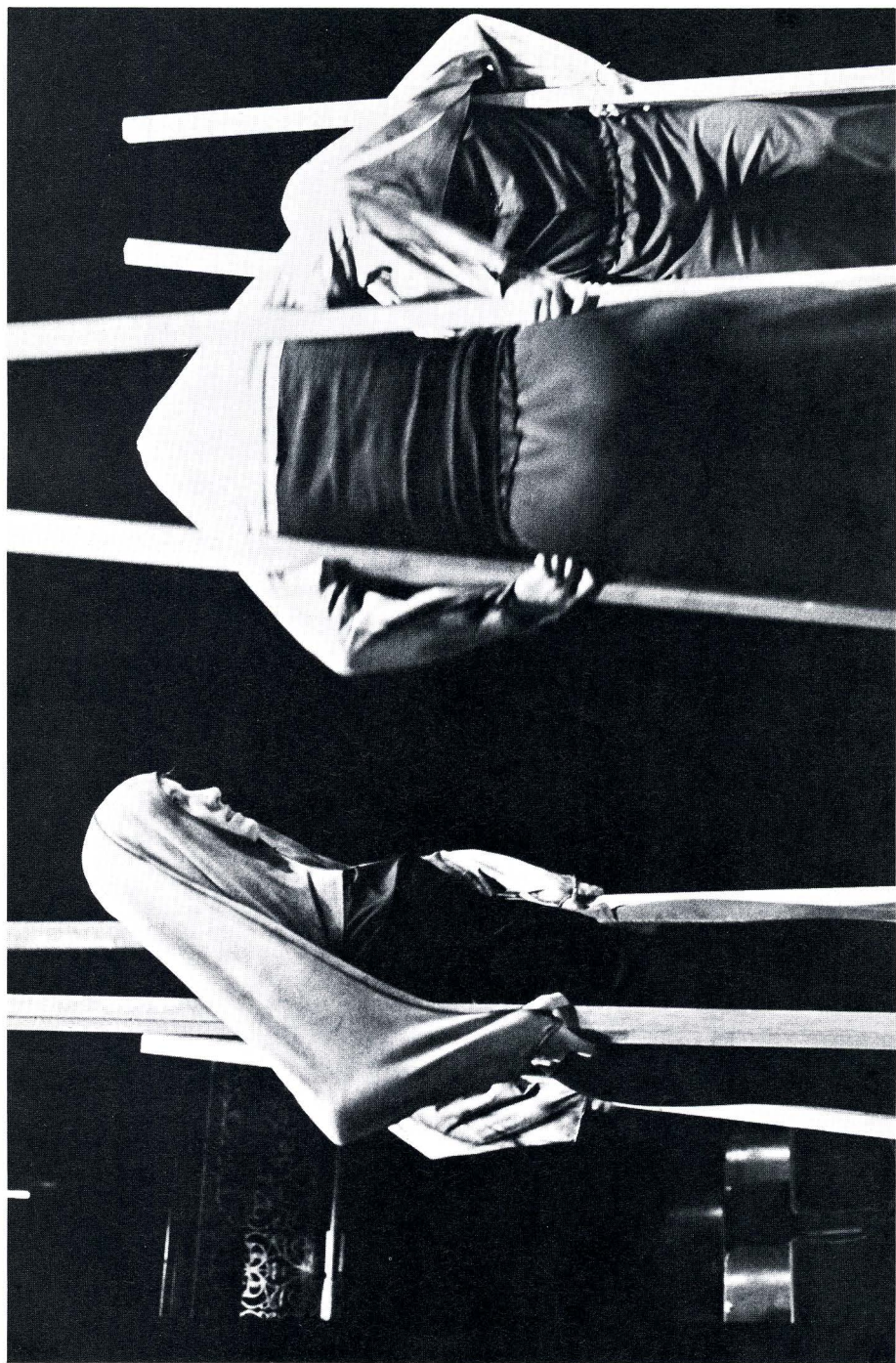
**ALEX PAUK:** In the same way that there aren't many people working in this vein, we'd like to extend this and utilize some of the new technology that has been developed in other art forms and incorporate it into opera. . . . Essentially it's a tape composition in which a lot of processes that I would use in making a piece of music are used, so once I had the text material, and once I had created some musical or vocal gestures, I just took that and made a kind of swirl out of it. . . . The gong is raised out of and lowered into a tank of water and the pitch spectrum and the colour spectrum of the gong sound change as you immerse the thing. It varies from producing a percussive sound to creating a kind of eerie space.

*Actors: Tamahnous Theatre Workshop Society*

*Photography: Tod Greenaway*

















## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

GREG HOLLINGSHEAD was born in Ontario, went to school in Toronto and London, England, and now teaches at the University of Alberta, Edmonton. His stories have appeared recently in *Descant*, *The Canadian Forum*, *Event*, *The Story So Far Five*, *Writ*, *Aurora*, and *The Capilano Review* #11.

BRENDA RICHES, drinking mulled wine to keep out the Saskatoon winter, continues to work on her long manuscript, of which several short stories have appeared in *The Capilano Review*. The final version of "Gall" is appearing in Rudy Wiebe's new anthology. Since our interview with her, Brenda has been reading Patrick White with great enjoyment. ERNEST LINDNER's *Peeling Birches* (1965, watercolour, ht. 77.4 cm, w. 56.5 cm, The Mendel Gallery, Saskatoon), is reproduced by permission of the artist.

F. J. CEBULSKI teaches at Berkeley. He is particularly concerned with the "visual" aspect of poetry and the diagrammatic possibilities of language. "Lonely Nights & Wild Women" exemplifies Cebulski's sense of poetical geometry.

LORRAINE GLENNON is 28, and has her M.F.A. in creative writing from UBC. For the last nine months she and her husband have been travelling through North America and working in a variety of cities.

DANIEL POWERS is a graduate of the Media Resource program at Capilano College. He now works as equipment supervisor for the program and does freelance commercial work for CP Rail, Torresan Rose Ad Agency, the Department of Neurology at UBC and the West End *Courier*.

CATHY FORD lives on Mayne Island. In addition to the novel *Moon in My Belly*, she has recently completed a book of poems based on the life and works of Joan of Arc, *Saffron, Rose & Flame*. Her book of poems, *Blood Uttering*, is available from Intermedia.

BRIAN FAWCETT is a well-known Vancouver poet, featured in *The Capilano Review* #12. His latest major book, *Creatures of State* is available from Talonbooks. "The Life of Robert Oomer" was commissioned into print after a lively recounting in a North Vancouver restaurant.

Born in 1952 in Oshawa, DONNA HAGERMAN has only recently come to Vancouver. She has been a student of photography at the Vancouver School of Art since 1976. Her favorite work is of her friends, but she is also intensely involved in landscape photography. She has had a one-artist show at the Vancouver East Cultural Centre, Fall 1978.

MARC WIDERSHIEN is with *Alcheringa*, a magazine of ethno-poetics published in Boston. We thought that this selection of his translations of Rimbaud's *Les Illuminations* best reveals Widershien's sense of the task of the translator, who "must strive to re-incarnate, to find a new body for the poem so that what he seems to be distorting on the literal surface, he is actually delineating." The portrait of Rimbaud is by Valentin Hugo.

LOIS REDMAN, a former student at Capilano College, is now studying Fine Arts at UBC. "Oregon Appendix" is the last five poems of a serial collection called *Composition of the Heart*.

ELIZABETH HAY, whose work has previously appeared in *The Capilano Review*, now lives in Winnipeg, and works for the CBC.

SHARE CORSAUT was born in Detroit. She emigrated to Canada in 1972, graduating from the Vancouver School of Art with Honours in Interdisciplinary Studies in 1978. In May and June the same year she had her first One Woman Show at the Helen Pitt Gallery and participated in the Helen Pitt Foundation Show at the Vancouver Art Gallery. She looks forward to being one of two exhibiting at Presentation House, North Vancouver, early Spring 1979.

Vancouver-based dramatist TOM CONE is in San Francisco at present, working on a new play tentatively called *Canada Dry*, which we hope to see produced soon by West Coast Actors through The New Play Centre. *Herringbone*, his best-known play, has had recent productions in Lennoxville and Seattle, and Tom is working on a second act for possible New York production. *Stargazing* premiered at The Stratford Festival's Third Stage, last season.

ALEX PAUK, who used to conduct The Vancouver Youth Orchestra, is a composer and member of Days Months & Years to Come. He is on a Canada Council grant at present, visiting New Music centres in Europe. Alex is working on a composition for DM&YtC with The Canadian Electronic Ensemble, as well as a commissioned piece for Toronto New Music Concerts.

# WINNERS

The National Magazine Awards Foundation congratulates the winners of awards for excellence in the second annual Magazine Awards program. Individual magazine writers, photographers, illustrators and art directors compete in sixteen awards categories and receive \$1,000 golden scroll awards or \$500 silver scroll awards for second place. This year there were 1,350 entries of work appearing in ninety-three Canadian magazines. The awards program is bilingual and was adjudicated by eighty-two English- or French-speaking judges from Charlottetown, P.E.I., to Victoria, B.C., assembled in specialized juries. The Directors of the Foundation also give awards for outstanding achievement each year by Canadian magazines.

The winners are:

**University of Western Ontario President's Medal Awards for General Magazine Articles:** **Gold:** Robert Collins, 'Kosmos 954: The Spy That Fell From the Sky', Reader's Digest; Pierre Dupont, 'La guerre des postes', l'Actualité. **Silver:** Danielle Ouellet, 'Du béton sur les batures', Québec Science; Sandra Gwyn, 'Labrador', Saturday Night.

**Toronto Dominion Bank Awards for Humour:** James Bacque, 'The Day the Queen Came to Minnicog', Harrowsmith. **Silver:** Serge Langevin, 'L'art de faire bricoler', Nous.

**Mutual Life of Canada Awards for Business Writing:** Ian Brown, 'The Empire that Timothy Built', Financial Post Magazine. **Silver:** David MacDonald, 'La crise du chômage au Canada', Sélection du Reader's Digest.

**RBW Awards for Science and Technology:** Michel Gauquelin, 'La Baie James pour le meilleur et pour le pire', Québec Science. **Silver:** Robert Collins, 'Kosmos 954: The Spy That Fell From the Sky', Reader's Digest.

**Molson Awards for Canadian Sports Writing:** Earl McRae, 'Coke on Ice', The Canadian. **Silver:** Réjean Tremblay, 'Docteur Bowman et Mister Hyde', l'Actualité.

**Abitibi Paper Awards for Politics:** Marc Laurendeau, 'Les vrais événements d'octobre', l'Actualité. **Silver:** Benoit Aubin, 'Le père Ryan ou la tentation du pouvoir', l'Actualité.

**Canada Packers Awards for Agriculture:** Carroll Allen, 'Cattle Roundup', Homemaker's. **Silver:** Donna Barnett, 'Dr. Alexander Morrison, At Your Civil Service', Harrowsmith.

**McClelland and Stewart Awards for Fiction:** Gabrielle Roy, 'The Satellites', Tamarack Review. **Silver:** Pierrette Dubé, 'Les 66 ans de Lucienne Robitaille', Chatelaine.

**du Maurier Awards for Poetry:** Sean Virgo, 'Deathwatch on Skidegate Narrows', Malahat Review. **Silver:** George Faludy, 'Death of a Chleuch Dancer', Canadian Forum.

**Foundation Awards for Culture:** George Woodcock, 'Mirror of Narcissus', Saturday Night. **Silver:** Georges-Hébert Germain, 'Un golfleur bien ordinaire', l'Actualité.

**Air Canada Awards for Travel:** Marci McDonald, 'The Immoveable Feast', Toronto Life. **Silver:** Michael Enright, 'The Second Great Leap', Maclean's.

**Seagram Awards for Magazine Illustration:** Blair Dawson, 'Exes', Weekend Magazine. **Silver:** Blair Dawson, 'Alcoholics are Just Like You and Me', Saturday Night.

**Kodak Canada Awards for Studio Photography:** Michel Pilon, 'Free No More', Homemaker's. **Silver:** Gillean Proctor, 'The 27-minute Economics Degree', Quest.

**Foundation Awards for Photojournalism:** Anthony Bliss, 'Holland Marsh', City Magazine. **Silver:** Stephen Homer, 'Journey to Findhorn', Harrowsmith.

**Allan R. Fleming/MacLaren Awards for Art Direction:** Robert Priest, 'The Coke Campaigns', Weekend Magazine. **Silver:** Georges Haroutiun, 'Few are Chosen', Homemaker's.

**Bomac Batten Awards for Magazine Covers:** Robert Priest, 'Seal Hunt', Weekend Magazine. **Silver:** James Lawrence, 'Hydroponics', Harrowsmith.

**Foundation Directors' Awards for Outstanding Achievement by a Canadian magazine in 1978:** Maclean's magazine, Owl and Québec-Science. Citations of merit: Canadian Business and Capilano Review.

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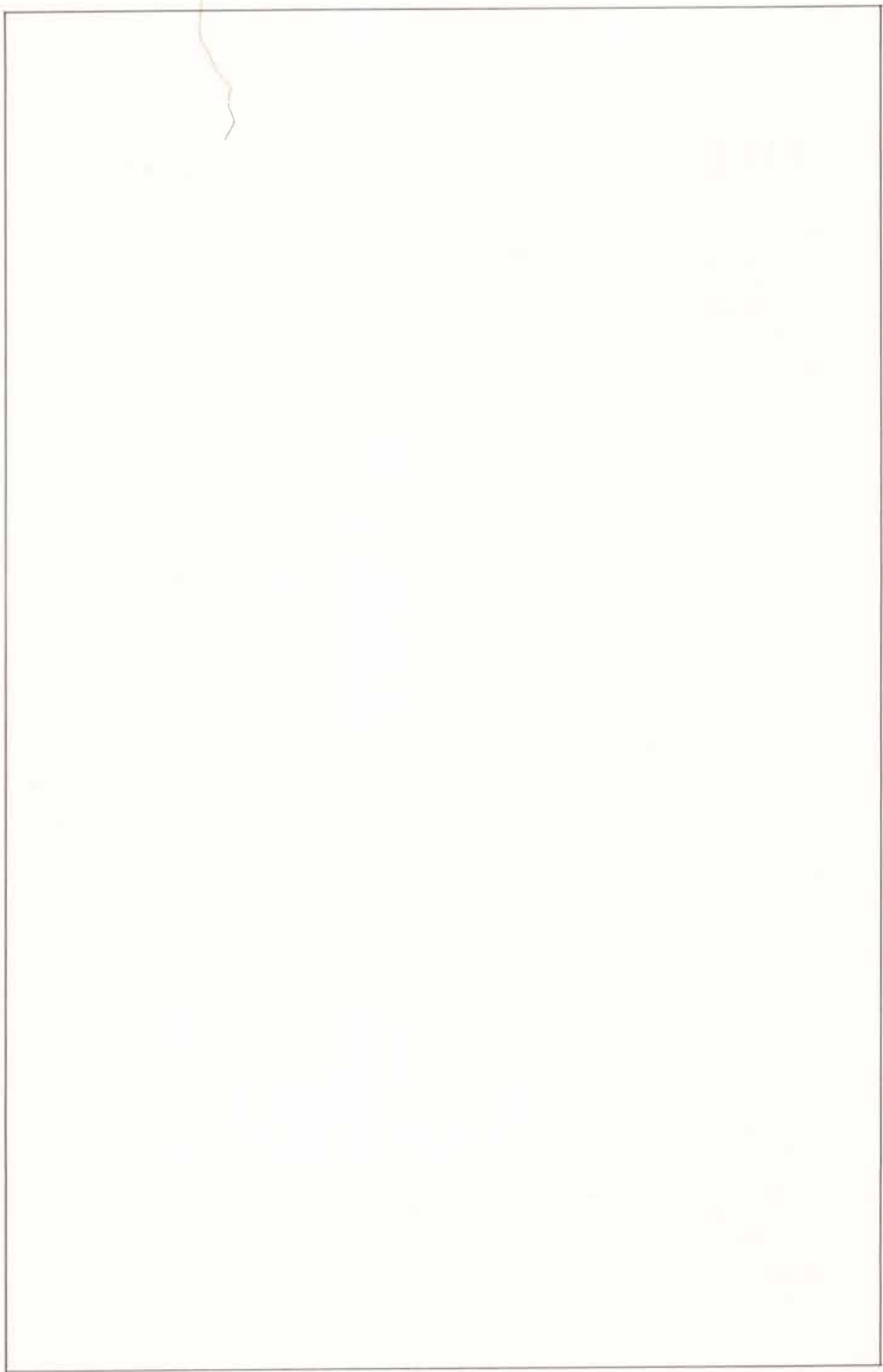
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