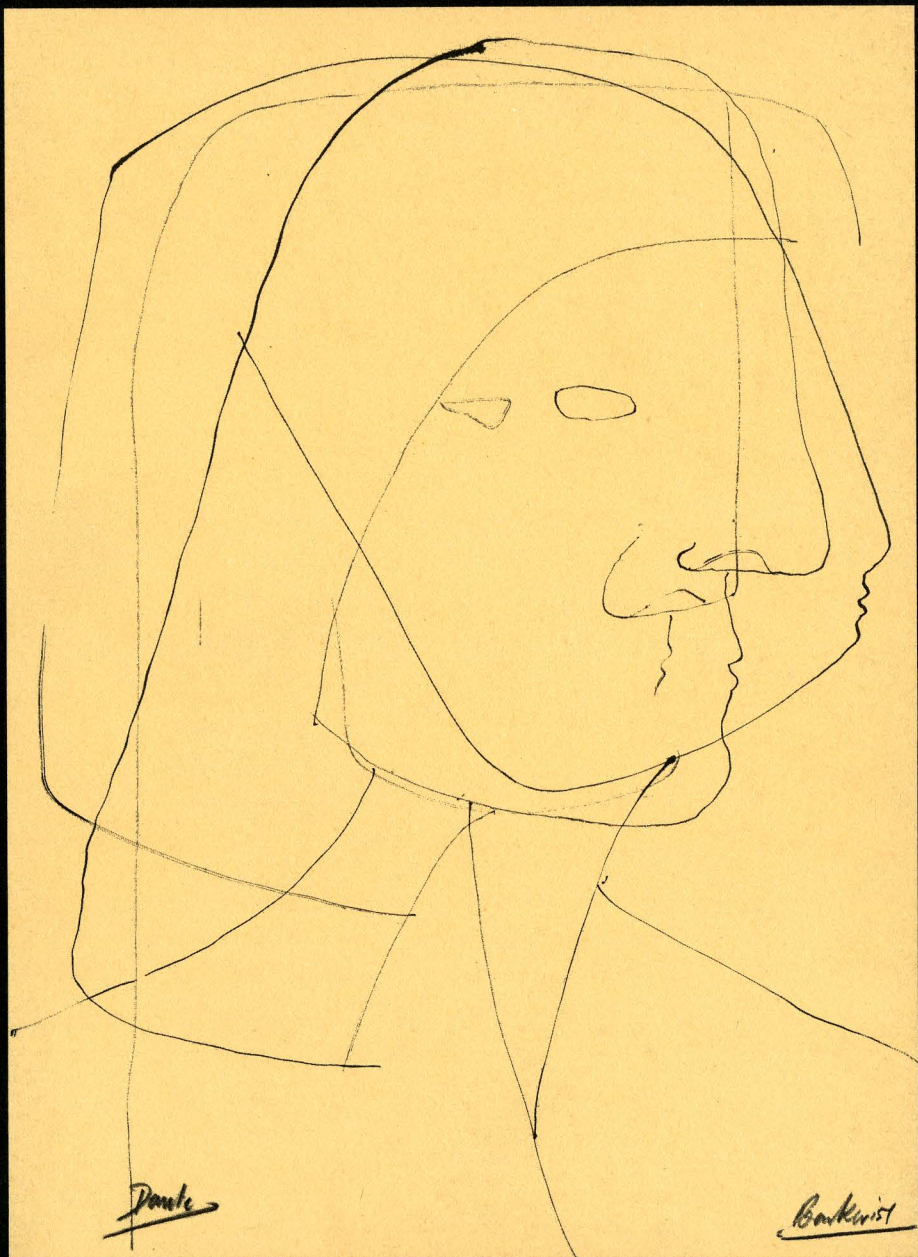


THE CAPILANO REVIEW



Language is the Throne of the Other.

— ROBIN BLASER via JACQUES LACAN

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THE CAPILANO REVIEW

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		COVER
<i>Dante</i>		Kit Barker
		(Courtesy collection of Robin Blaser)

Table 1. Mean (SD) age, height, weight, and body mass index (BMI) of the 100 children in the sample

Measure	Mean (SD)
Age (years)	10.4 (0.5)
Height (cm)	145.2 (10.1)
Weight (kg)	38.5 (10.2)
BMI (kg m ⁻²)	18.6 (3.2)

children were asked to perform a series of 10 trials of the task. The first trial was a practice trial and the remaining 9 trials were recorded. The mean of the last 9 trials was used for analysis.

Children were then asked to perform the task again, but this time they were asked to perform the task as fast as they could. The mean of the last 9 trials was used for analysis.

Children were then asked to perform the task again, but this time they were asked to perform the task as slowly as they could. The mean of the last 9 trials was used for analysis.

Children were then asked to perform the task again, but this time they were asked to perform the task as accurately as they could. The mean of the last 9 trials was used for analysis.

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Maxine Gadd / TWO PROSE PIECES

LEGEND

the kid hit it down to the glaciers

Skyscraper Mother had kept him, but somehow, his long gone father's crazy ache, a tooth ache of all his bone, riled him enough so that he made motions, and kept making motions and one day in the basement of a scyscraper, a super hip latrine, a sad looking wrangler with a beard and a bandana and a flute on his hip said, "come on. There's a ride."

as it turned out, lucky for the kid, it was the month of June. Even so, large greasy-looking blankets were needed to bear crossing rivers, crossing forests, crossing hills, twisting, stopping, meeting the plains. The back of an open truck was no place for learning what he wanted, because he only wanted to stop, and when it stopped he only wanted to get moving again

the kid hit the glaciers

mind you, i couldn't help noticing
that something had happened to him
he still had that way of looking like an angel into the distance,
and looking at a person, sideways, almost slyly,
like he knew something about you personally, but he wouldn't tell anyone, no, not for the world, as long as you. . . .

He still wore his blue jeans low down on his hips, his body was slim, his sandy brown hair curly, his eyes blue, but . . .

now he had a couple of gold teeth and the skin that used to make you want to feel it, bright, smooth, with the bloom of a . . .

the old hands, who'd seen him come and go, one or two who'd even suffered a bad turn, had got a bit burnt, felt the old leathery blister beat once, and then, suddenly smiled

"Been to Buffalo, kid?"

And back

The kid smiled sly and shy and said the same old things.

No one even now knew how to answer him.

Everything was the same, only a bit shrivelled now and dusty. Someone who'd been burned might have looked up and seen how much harsher the stars were

THE HAPPY VISION, GONE

THE happy vision, gone i want to sleep the whole grey day
now, green lily, a bear becomes a bee, my god laughs, i am proud, no one
but me notices him whom i formed with my fingers and burned into
permanence. they see he has cracked twice already, covered with fly
spots. everyone who has what they want says that pain is a
mental thing, except when they want something and then they take it, or
cry or turn cold. won't they accept that we are all one and the same
flame and make it more beautiful by joining. no they will look at it
and make you have it alone and turn away to enjoy their scorn I wish
there were enough Hecate in me to distribute curses, purselane, verbane,
wolf's bane, bad roots plucked out of a dead eye for which Jesus and
his yellow train of angels. . . . for it was only out of greed and spite
and endless humiliation my heart has grown hard at homeless animals
come whining around my door

and they won't eat soybeans so i throw them out for fear
of the last plague of fleas my last unloving kindness caused me, self
pity, old woman's juices sour and stink and it's all endless bad
rain out of nose and eyes and cunt and mouth and armpits and ears and
paps and bum and pores and sores and cuts and bites and rivers you
carve wherever there's anything left that's smooth that might lead some
wandering angel toward you to forgive the pride that the old dame can at
least turn into a burning dragon. don't think bitterness can drain
away any more than the mother's milk when sucked can/turn flowers black
and tarnish the icons in a young man's mind who despises my circles as a
web or a golden chain he thinks i can't see is straw

dance and rings for fingers and ears; they want the ancient
female form to die somewhere there should play maidens like ferns of

the forest far from their city, haughty apes of gods that any woman can see their weakness though no concession made for hers till she lose her soul to keep her womb or all this human air made foul with spleen

say it; what you think; what you want to be true; that you are not anything less than human smiling, a temporary blossoming of the god, sexless, neither happy nor sad, a wandering, warm, vegetal stone whose heart does not break when you tell a lie or kill or touch or plant or write or ride away on the fiery beast into the water. tell this thing so the children can endure a box of monotony, so the children know what to think of flowing blood; no matter that the little god sitting happily in a flower of cobras is stolen; that the dying mind require the breath of ten thousand years to make the real trees flower, that in spite of the warnings our skin is compelled to cling and i must scrap for my name like for bread and silence. and i must resist love to work out these walls. so that Troy falls and travellers weave in and out of earthmounds and Paris remains, sealed crystal and rose gold, but light, lighter, like a spider of fire might weave with water and the Acropolis is blasted and the people keep proud and respect a proper madness and New York, as we all know, must find a final catastrophe, orgasm of Atlantis . . .

Our consolance is that we can remember the dead
and tell tales

John Lowry / FOUR MINI-FICTIONS

1

I have a horrible temper, I have to admit it. Ever since I've been a kid. Once, in a motel, I couldn't get a window open. I couldn't stop myself. I ran around, breaking lamps, overturning chairs, jumping on things. I wrecked the place two times over. It cost me four hundred and eighty dollars.

My temper ruined two marriages. One wife had to have a new nose; the other just got embarrassed. Once, I spit in my boss's face. There were more bar room fights than I can remember, and I didn't win them all, either. You need to know this to appreciate my story.

One night, in the rain, I was driving home. I felt good, the way I always do before I get crazy. The streets were deserted. No traffic, nothing. But the red light must have been broken — it went on and on. So, I cruised through it. Slowly. Real cautious. Out of nowhere, comes a cop with a ticket. I didn't get mad. I just nodded. I just said, yes sir, no sir. You don't get mad at a guy with a .38 on his hip. That was that.

Two blocks later, another broken light. It was near the Brooklyn Bridge. I could see steps going down to the river. No one around, just a phone booth on the corner. The light went on and on. I couldn't remember what a green light looked like. I couldn't stand it. I jumped out of the car. I started killing the phone booth. I kicked it and shoved it. The whole thing shook. I kicked it some more and a piece of glass fell out. I was going crazy, I could feel it coming. All of a sudden, this guy comes out of nowhere and jumps in the booth. He was weird. He was small. He wore a peaked cap and a pea jacket. He leaned against the phone, his hands in his pockets, looking at me. The hell with him! I started kicking out the glass. He didn't move. I put my shoulder to the booth and shoved it over. The guy bounced, but held on. I was screaming, going crazy. I pushed the booth to the steps. I was sweating and choking, but the guy looked up, real calm. I gave the booth a shove and it went down the steps. Sliding at first, then bouncing, end over end. It made a hell of a noise and crashed into a pillar like a bomb. I waited, but no one got out.

When I got back to my car, the light was green.

•

When Bertie was just a kid, twelve or thirteen, he got this terrible feeling. He was going to die, soon. Not dreams, or anything like that, just a regular idea that he was doomed. It frightened him. He couldn't eat; he couldn't do his homework. He didn't play anymore. His mother got worried and asked him what was wrong? Poor Bertie, all he could do was cry. His mother wanted to take him to a doctor. His father said, let him alone, he was just spoiled. Finally, since Bertie adored his mother, she got it out of him: he was going to die. His mother blessed herself and went to church to light a candle. She was a good Catholic.

She didn't say anything, but watched Bertie all the time. Bertie tried to cheer up, but couldn't. It was always on his mind. He got skinny. His grades dropped. Everyone knew something was wrong. His mother kept running to church and lighting candles. Bertie's old man said he would outgrow it: it was just growing pains.

One night, Bertie's mom put her arms around him. She said he had nothing to worry about; she had been praying and had gotten an answer. Nothing was going to happen. He wasn't going to die. Bertie was trying to hope. Really, mom, he said? She nodded and stroked his hair.

A couple of days later, Bertie's family was going to his aunt's for dinner. She lived on the other side of Atlantic Avenue. Bertie liked to go there because, from her windows, you could see the big trucks whiz by. They waited for the light by Atlantic. Bertie's old man fooled with his hat. It had to be just right. If his hat didn't look good, he was in a bad mood all day. Bertie watched the big trucks zooming by. Then, he noticed his mother; she was looking at him and smiling.

"Goodbye, Bertie," she said and stepped off the curb.

A big trailer threw her half a block. Bertie's father fainted.

From that day on, Bertie said, it was all lifted from his shoulders.

•

Many years ago, when I worked in an office, it was the custom to have a Christmas party. A little wine, cookies. A few harmless flirtations. A few days before, we drew names from a hat and bought the individual a small gift. It was not to cost more than three dollars. I drew Phil Spillo, an assistant traffic manager. A short, pudgy, fussy man nearly forty-five. I gave the matter of the gift some thought and finally selected a tie clasp for two dollars and eighty cents. It was nice for the money. Gold plated border with a leatherette centre, the clerk assured me it would go with anything.

Phil seemed pleased. He shook my hand, smiled and said thank you very much. Someone had given me a razor and a jar of shaving cream. The Monday after Christmas, I was pleased to see that Phil wore my tie clasp. But, he did not wear it the following day, or the next. In fact, to my horror and resentment, he did not wear it again.

It enraged me. Our supervisor, Mr. Flynn, sported his new watchband. Miriam, the receptionist, bought flowers each day for the vase she had been given. Harris, the trainee, used his plastic cigarette case, and I shaved each morning with my new Gillette. Only Phil had descended into tokenism.

"Hey, Phil," I said one day, "lose the tie clasp?"

He smiled, and looked down at his tie as though he expected it to be there.

"Oh," he said.

That was all. He wore it the next day, and I waited. Just as I thought, another token. He did not wear it again. I got angry, damned angry. I confronted him in front of everyone.

"A gift's a gift. If you don't like it, say so."

"I do, John."

"Why don't you wear it?"

Phil frowned and looked at his unhasped tie.

"If you don't want it, give it back. Don't insult me."

Phil smiled. Everyone was looking. The place was damned quiet. I stormed off to lunch. I didn't look at Phil again. He could drop dead for all I cared.

However, next day he wore the tie clasp. He hung around a lot too, like he wanted me to notice. He wore it every day.

One afternoon, Phil came over with a box, wrapped like a gift. A lot of typewriters stopped. Everyone was interested. He was smiling. We horsed around, me saying it wasn't Christmas, and Phil saying that a guy who cared the way I did should have Christmas every day. I tore open the box. It was a tie. Hand painted. A moose or something was standing against an orange sunset. I looked at Phil. He was all smiles.

"You like it?" he asked.

I nodded.

"I'm looking forward to seeing it on you, John," he said, turning away.

There was a lot of laughing.

•

4

One day, I decided to buy bananas. I brought them to be weighed. The man at the scales was heavy and had mournful eyes.

"Hi," I said, smiling.

He plunked the bananas on the scale.

"I owe three thousand dollars," he said. "Three big ones."

I was startled.

"How much?"

He slapped a sticker on the bananas.

"You get a house, a car. I live on Long Island. I got to drive to work. I'm not on time, good-bye, Joe. My daughter. . . . She wants to be a nurse."

I smiled, nodded and walked away. Who wanted his life story? As I was browsing the meat counter, Joe came down the aisle. I nodded to him and drew a total blank in reply. Son of a bitch, he didn't know me from a banana.

I thought no more about it until banana time some weeks later.

"How old you think I am?" Joe asked.

"Oh, forty. Forty-five."

He made a face, wetting the sticker.

"Sixty. Sixty, today and you know what? They're going to kill me."

I smiled, faintly. Come on, write, and let me out of here. But, the crayon was suspended.

"Believe it?" he asked.

"Sure."

"Them," Joe said. "Loaners. Sharks. They have me by the . . . (loose gesture towards his belt buckle). They threaten my kid. I gotta die, there's no way . . ."

"Aw, come on Joe."

"My wife, she says I live bad."

On the spot, I decided, this guy is sick. I grabbed my bananas and took off. It nagged me, Jesus, you insensitive bastard. I wheeled back to the vegetable counter. Joe was talking to an old lady with blue hair. They didn't pay him nothing. Did she know what time he had to get up? Four twenty. He saw me, displaying the same recognition that he would accord a sack of onions.

Joe's murder made the papers. It was bad. His body had been found in a doorway, three blocks from the Super-Market. He had been stabbed, doused with gasoline and set afire. Police suspected some kind of triangle.

I got over to headquarters and told them the story. The loan sharks, the threats against Joe's daughter, Joe's prediction that they would kill him. I talked to a guy who chain smoked Camels.

"You know Joe's last name?" he asked, playing with his lighter.

"No, but . . ."

"Then, you're not even sure it's the same guy?"

"You want to bet?"

"O.K. O.K. You're a friend of Joe's?"

"No."

He put out a half smoked Camel.

"He told you the whole story, everything?"

"Right."

"In the A&P?"

I nodded.

"Why?"

"How should I know."

He leaned back and pulled another Camel from the pack in his shirt pocket. I waited while he lit it and took a long pull.

"You believe this?"

"No," I said firmly, and walked out.

•

Beverley Simons / PREPARING

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All inquiries concerning production of the play, in whole or in part, in any medium or by any group, amateur or professional, should be directed to the author at 5202 Marine Drive, West Vancouver, B.C.

The actress is wearing black tights and a bra under a loose, white ankle-length smock. The smock is held up by two removable sashes, perhaps lace or crocheted. At the opening they're worn cummerband style, flattening the actress' breasts. The first impression is of a short private school uniform.

Through the monologue Jeannie adjusts the smock, using the sashes as belt, veil, shawl, winding sheet.

A carved box sits on a make-up table. The box contains a mirror on a stand or with a handle, cosmetics, a blonde or platinum wig, dark glasses, an oversize, ornate perfume flask (used later as a whiskey flask), a small hat, and a plaque. Instead of a box Jeannie could drag an old trunk into place which would serve as a seat and/or table, as well as a storage unit. An additional chair and a stool may be used.

"Preparing" begins with the brash rebellion of early teens. As Jeannie talks, adjusts her dress, hair and make-up, she matures. But always present is her growing sexual power, her fear, her quick ironic mind, her candour. The monologue ends with the brash indifference of old age.

"Preparing" belongs to the actress. It could be done anywhere without special lighting: she could simply enter at the beginning and leave when she's finished, carrying the box under her arm. The shifts of emotion and time happen through her. If lights are used, when they rise, Jeannie is already there: no blackouts until the end.

Age transitions are not detailed in the script. They occur between and often within lines. i.e. Jeannie first appears, pigtailed, a fourteen year old schoolgirl. By page 18, when she describes other schoolchildren filing into church, she's nineteen.

It's important that the actress take her time in the opening sections, allowing the audience to adjust to her and to her transitions. If she enjoys herself the audience should find "Preparing" funny as well as satirical and painful.

The first object Jeannie takes from her box is a mirror. She observes herself in it without satisfaction.

JEANNIE: Do you know what I say? I say fuck 'em all. I didn't ask to get into this. But then neither did they, poor bastards. Duty, obligations, and all that shit.

I'm always having to get ready for something. As far back as I can remember. Even before. My mother says I had to be bribed to come out of her. I was three weeks overdue. But the way I figure it she must have made it so unpleasant I had no choice. Well, imagine, trapped in a leaking tube that closes in on you, closes and squeezes and pushes. Hasn't changed much. Even my conception. I was a last minute twitch before a snore on a rainy night. Which they both lived to regret.

Just once, I wish I could step outside of time where just once I could prepare myself, without being rushed, for . . .

She smiles.

. . . nothing, or . . . maybe something . . . important . . . when I find out what that is.

When I was a kid I used to go to bed in my clothes so I wouldn't be late for school. D'you know, I swear those sidewalks sprouted under my feet while I ran? Watered by me, of course. Peed my pants regular, every morning, trying to beat that nine o'clock bell. My parents are taking me out for dinner to one of those new restaurants. You know? Where the waiters pretend to speak French and my parents will pretend to understand. My father's accent would make you split. There's not a restaurant we've been to he hasn't sent back the first bottle of wine. Without even tasting it. From the "bouquet," he says.

Imitating her father, Jeannie sniffs from an imaginary glass, moving it back and forth under her nostrils. Then imitating her father's French accent:

"Cette bouteille de vin n'est pas assez bien." Shit! My father can no more tell the difference between one wine and another than my mother can identify French perfumes. But they're both authorities on everything.

Imitating her mother, a saccharine, over-articulated voice.

"Would you please wear makeup tonight, darling? I can't stand to see you looking so pale." Right.

Jeannie applies heavy blobs of makeup to her forehead, chin, nose, spots of red on her cheeks, a cupid's bow mouth.

How's that, mother?

With the palms of her hands, like a dog digging in earth, she pushes her hair forward until most of her face is covered.

Still, I'm looking forward to seeing them. I get scared sometimes. Living alone. When I stripped, unrehearsed, introducing a Shakespearean bump and grind iambic-pentameter-Lady Macbeth-in-the-buff . . .

As in a strip, Jeannie has rhythmically unwound her sash, which she uses erotically.

our professor had announced innovation; I innovated . . . opening night. "There," I thought, "that's the end of family." But it seems the old umbilical cord is intact.

Using sash.

I'll break it yet, even if I bleed to death. I've done everything I know they disapprove of. I've had more men than my mother has fantasies. The only thing that gets me through it sometimes is imagining her enraged face. And my father's.

I'll refuse to go into the restaurant tonight unless I'm on the arm of a wino. "Mother. Father. I'd like you to meet my fiancé. He may be 55 and smell, but he loves me." They'd paper him out, the way they always do. They wouldn't even see him. Who was it? Samson? I'd cheerfully pull this stinking mess down on all of us and weep for no one, not even the mice.

Jeannie hears something.

What's that? Don't come in! Oh, please, not them! Not yet! Look at me. I'm already turning into a guilty, apologetic, little girl. Why does their love make me so full of hate?

As she smooths on her makeup her face is becoming that of a young woman.

Last week I watched a line of six year olds filing into church in private school uniforms, singing Christmas carols . . . They don't have a chance . . .

She begins to style her hair in an upsweep.

Still, I'm not an organized revolutionary. I hate packs of any kind. I've seen them. I intend to shape my experience myself. No rituals, no history. I spring, fully developed, out of my own forehead.

She pulls the white smock over her head again. No longer a uniform. It becomes a wedding gown.

Then why are you preparing? Because you're a coward, Jeannie.

Hearing a noise.

What's that? You can leave. It's not too late. You'll never be able to stick it, one man for a lifetime. You'll be bored after the first month. Oh God, is he thinking the same? It's the only way to go into it, with a mature agreement to separate if one or the other . . .

Putting a belt over the dress.

White! Look at you.

Half laughing, changing to fear.

His eyes close up on me all the time. I'll belong to him. I never want to hold on to any one or to any thing . . .

As though at her wedding.

All those faces . . .

She puts the ring on her finger, then suddenly grasps at an invisible hand touching her dress.

Hands off, Mrs. Osgoode. It's Irish muslin, twenty dollars a yard. No, I am not pregnant and I hope you choke on the hors d'oeu . . .

Aware of the changes in her body: first the delight of early marriage; then her belt rises as her belly expands with pregnancy; she's interrupted by a pain.

They're starting. There it is again. It's come at a ridiculous time. I stink of spaghetti.

She sprays herself with perfume.

Poor Doctor. I'm sorry, but I haven't had a chance to . . . Mummy! It hurts . . . hold my hand. I'm scared. I'm not ready. I can't . . . make it . . . stop, you see. That's what's so . . . unreasonable.

She pulls the belt off. The maternity dress has become a hospital robe. Jeannie lies on the floor with her feet up on the stool as though in delivery room stirrups.

Here it comes. I have to push. HELP ME!

Jeannie is getting ready for bed. At home now, her children are asleep. Her terror fantasies have begun.

What's that? Isn't it stupid? I keep hearing noises. Since having the babies I can't help myself, I'm afraid to close my eyes. I imagine terrible things. You read in the newspaper about that man who just walked in and shot a whole family, while they were sleeping? For no reason. He went into a house, they were sleeping, and . . . What's that?

Afraid to turn her head, controlled by her imagination.

I can see him. He's wearing a brown suit, neatly pressed, and a hat, like a businessman. He has a gentle, sad face. At the top of the stairs now, behind me, but he doesn't come into my room. He's turning right, to where the children . . .

Her second fantasy of terror. "They" are society's threat, the ones with little to "hold onto" — the revolutionaries, the minorities.

Then there are the fires. I believe in the right of the individual, I always have, the need for society to change. By violence, if necessary . . . They sit in a circle in our backyard, laughing, smoking, singing songs. I avoid them. I pretend they aren't there. But I put tea and sandwiches out on the back porch. They send a representative. My husband is stubborn. He refuses to let them move in, so they . . .

Growing terror.

It's just a house. Let them have our house. But what about my babies? Stop it! *A scream.*

After a nervous breakdown, Jeannie is preparing for the neighbours.

Jeannie, stop it! It's only a dinner party after all. They won't notice you're grey. The colour has gone out of *your* eyes, not theirs. Lots of makeup, that's it. Maybe they won't notice it's a mask floating over a void.

Jeannie continues to put on makeup. Her face is beginning to show age and take on the quality of a mask, but her voice is painfully exposed, as a person just over illness, who has not yet had time to apply the social layers.

He's been so sympathetic. I can't really be angry with him. But his hands have become like the hands of my doctor. I don't want to be soothed. Not always. I want . . .

Her passion surfaces briefly.

I frighten him. No. No. He's been very kind. Like to a child, kind. His kindness chokes me. In the centre of it, like a stone in the centre of a delicate teacake, is his contempt.

She is changing her hairstyle.

How shall I make myself appear? What role shall I play today, when one half of me that's already begun to wither is about to be lopped off.

Jeannie takes off her wedding ring and drops it into the box. Divorce.

What face shall I put on?

From the box she lifts the platinum or blonde wig and pulls it over her hair. Then she takes out her dark coloured glasses which she plays with and occasionally uses. There is a new, sophisticated hardness in Jeannie. She has aged, yet her sexual power and her awareness of it has increased. Her voice has deepened. She is a queen bee who attracts but gives no honey.

Not that I mind rushing. Not for my youngest. He's always been the sweet fool of the family. But I do mind being reminded of my age in such an obvious way. Can you believe this is the last university graduation I'll have to go to? Don't worry, I don't intend to weep. The face won't alter to embarrass them. I've learned not to pour too much enthusiasm into such occasions. It makes the children nervous. They've had their spontaneity knocked out of them by Doctor Freud. Still, I can't complain. I've done alright. My son-in-law "manages" my business affairs . . . with the same restraint I use on my affections. We understand each other. My daughter jealous? Perhaps. But she can't afford to show it. At last I've found the balance I've been looking for between being too involved and not involved at all. It turns out that I am the businessman in the family. Why? Because I treat it as a game, which it is. I never did take property seriously, human or otherwise. Keep it fluid. Keep it moving. You only get burnt if you try to hold on. Did I tell you the alimony payments were reversed? I've never enjoyed signing cheques quite so much since. But he'd changed. Pity I couldn't have

mailed them through a time slot to that "kind" man who left me for my "own good." I was the only one at his funeral, which I paid for, of course. The children stayed away for political reasons. He was a bastard, but he'd had a part in giving them life. I'll remember their absence. He looked shrunken. I kissed him. "Get up and run now." That's what I said to him. Then *I* left.

Jeannie puts on lighter lipstick and applies makeup to the lines in her face as though to erase them, but in fact the actress is accenting her age. She pulls out the perfume flask which now contains whiskey, and a bottle of pills. She shakes several pills into her hand and washes them down.

Would you believe it? Me? Kept awake at night about how to help them survive? I'm on the phone endlessly. When I'm not playing tiddlywinks with their books, I'm playing mamma to those quarrelling fools who think they run our local institutions.

She checks her watch and puts on a small hat.

God knows what decisions they'll reach if I'm late. It's Symphony this afternoon. Yes, I'm on the boards of the Art Gallery, The Theatre, the Symphony, the Opera, as well as countless societies for human reform. Don't ask me what their names are, they change all the time. The latest, what's it called . . . the League for the Reinstatement of Capital Punishment. I'm a liberal, small l, always have been, but those people *want* to be terrorized a little. And likeminded persons must be deterred. It's for their own good. Not that we ever get any gratitude. We're obliged to lead. It's our tedious responsibility. And if we make some small profit out of it, well, why not? I'm not popular, but then again I never have been. What I say is . . . if you want to be a fat cat, grow claws. I've been attacked publicly. Oh yes, because I believe in running the Arts like a business. Well, they are, aren't they?

Putting on long, white gloves.

I was in one step ahead of the rest of them, my only sin; the first to recognize the value of old buildings to the community. My buildings now. I've opened an art gallery in one of them. It was sold to me by an old fool on the condition I use it for theatre; but there's no money in that. So many dollars per square foot, that's what I charge the artists rent. Depends on the size of the picture; depends the cost. Miniatures may be back this season. I promote economy in the Arts.

Jeannie takes a small can from the box and sprays her face as if to fix her makeup, but the spray is a white powder. She has become an old woman. Her voice is thin and clear, her body tough and straight. She ages as she speaks.

If they sing Happy Birthday to me I shall tell them all to shove it. I've become a fad among my grandchildren, increasingly so as I become less interested in them. I've published how I intend to leave my money so I wonder why they keep bothering me. Hoping I'll change my mind, I suppose.

She sings.

Happy birthday to me . . . Hmminmmmm. Could you ever have been floating around inside another woman's belly? Your nose is running again, Jeannie, and if you were honest . . .

She wipes her nose.

you'd admit you've just peed your pants. It seems that our lives are tied to liquid. We're born in liquid, we become fertile with liquid, we conceive in liquid, we age seeping liquid, and we die when the liquid leaves us. I drop scales now like an old fish.

From the bottom of the cosmetic box Jeannie pulls out something the audience is not yet able to see. It's a plaque.

They're naming a new theatre after me. How do you like that? When the lizards take over the world again, they'll crawl over the bones of my building. The local art institutions managed to join together, for once in their history, to give me this.

Now she holds up the plaque. Jeannie is unmoved.

Predictable, isn't it?

She leans the plaque against the box.

It makes no difference to me what they do. Fuck 'em all. One of the children hanged himself, the youngest one, the sweet fool of the family. The others are all very successful, even happy. Or so they say. Preparing for the future. Probably at home now making lists of questions for me. My advice. I only allow them in every three months. Keeps them eager, thinking I don't want them. And I don't. Fuck 'em. All. I've never cared for establishments or institutions, but it seems I've spawned one. Hurry, old woman, you're always late. For what?

Jeannie goes to the mirror and looks into it. She places the mirror face down back into the box. Slowly Jeannie walks stage centre. With a simple gesture she covers her face and head with the shawl. The dress, hanging loose, has become a shroud. If a spot is used, the light travels from Jeannie to the plaque which rests like a headstone against the box. Her preparation is over.

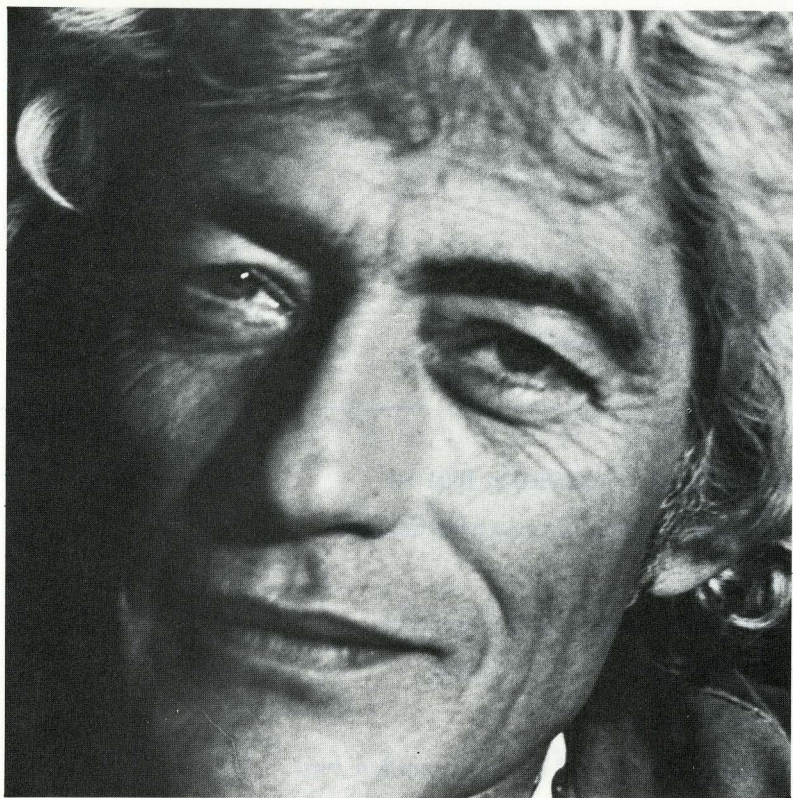
Nora Blanck / BODY ART

Nora Blanck took up crocheting as something to do when she wasn't painting, and for a while this actually took over her energy. She thought of making something with her hands for her hands, and the beaded, befeathered, lock-fingered, cowtail-festooned gloves that resulted were more than body coverings, they were costumes that could transform the psyche of the wearer. Masks and other body ornaments followed. "You turn freaky when you wear them."









ROBIN BLASER

ORIGIN

(for Dwight Gardiner)

it was Hegel — who died in 1831 —
who said whatever we may have thought
of poetry
of its high language, which haunts us,
it's of the past dead
it don't matter
cause mama's gonna' buy you a mockin' bird
and if that mockin' bird don't sing
mama's gonna' buy you a diamond ring
and if that diamond ring don't shine
I'm gonna' turn — return
to that language
where the worlds gather
where it's very hard to understand
that most difficult of all
modern phrases

'blessing muses'

Segen sinnt

"LUCK UNLUCK ONE LUCK"

the heart turns inside out
of the mouth and eyes
out of the indeterminate ear

blue dogs of the hillside hunt
the skin-play
of suddenness

the Egyptians did not close the mouth
and eyes at the edge of the sun
but opened them and gave boats

1945 Rosario Jimenez, who at the round
table read Lorca and Homer,
talks to herself behind the glass door,

1948 Ernst Kantorowicz, who taught young
men to think swiftly an essential
history

like Richard's
robe only he could take off
divinity alone removes the divinity
of an empty coat

1945-1965 Jack Spicer, who emptied himself
out 'I can't bear it,' I said,
then studied his peril and task

the hound voice

of earth and sky,
 men and gods folding
 inside
 the effacement of words, the puns
 in the ice
 a laughter
des vols qui n'ont pas fui
 the voice of the swan
pour n'avoir pas chanté la région où vivre
 a voice thins on a cigarette chokes
 to a whisper and sharpens
 the edge of the blade

 who is speaking
 I hear the other throne •
 'Knowledge is a moth,' a friend sent
 on a postcard with Michael Snow's
 camera of the central region on the front
 there
 in the mountains all by itself and
 a singing computer
 the horizon
 first ahead of you at your edge
 then around you without you
 above you

in the motionless light of a mineral
in the white perfume of a magnolia
 pink-edged in the fleshy spotted
and almost black abyss of a poppy
so we have exchanged mutual forgiveness
with the eye of a cat

 the unknowing
 like a fish-hook
 or fire-flower

eaten petals

the eagle is perched
there on the tongue at the mouth

*I already knew no human word
would reach me*

*has anyone
ever seen me sad about that?*

*an instantaneous act
a form that disintegrates
a word that vanishes*

white flowers unsheath
to resolve language

back of it
behind the fire
from unknown mouths
the wind rises
where he would not become god

74 FORTUNE INFORTUNE FORT UNE

SUDDENLY,

I live in a room named East
on the map of the West at the edge
near the door cedars and alders
mix and tower,
full of ravens first thing each morning,
whose song is
 a sharpness

we quarreled so
 over the genius
of the heart
 whose voice is capable

they come on horseback
in the middle of the night,
two of them, with a horse for me,
and we ride, bareback
clinging to the white manes
at the edge of the sea-splash,
burst open,

 to divine
the hidden and forgotten source,
who is transparent
where the moon drops out of the fog
to bathe,
but not to us
the retied heart
 where the wind glitters

for Ellen Tallman

THE METAPHYSICS OF LIGHT

During the spring and summer of 1974, Robin Blaser, meeting with a few people (Angela Bowering, Warren Tallman, Martina Kuharic, Dwight Gardiner and Daphne Marlatt) in Vancouver once a week, has been talking about his life and the life of the imagination, in a series of talks titled "Astonishments." "[Astonishment] is the very source or origin of the world itself, ever at work and ever hidden away within the darkness of the lived instant, a source which becomes aware of itself for the first time in the signatures of its own estuaries as it resolves itself into them" (Ernst Bloch). In a sequence that dwelt on his "great companions" (those poets whose work his intellect accompanies in "the narration"), he spoke of Dante's Divine Comedy in the context of the metaphysics of light tradition. What follows is an edited selection from the tape made of that evening.

Robin's method of narration in these talks has been one of a "folding in" of a number of different elements, hence the references to previously established contexts such as Heidegger's world points and the interaction of self, earth, world, Other.

In order to make this selection (which necessitated conforming to our space limit of some thirty pages), we have traced out one concern to the exclusion of some others, and that concern is with light as substance of the real. This, however, touches on another major concern, the poetics of Jack Spicer. The interaction of these two comes close to forming an account of Robin's own poetics, and that is, finally, the substance of what follows.

LANGUAGE IS THE THRONE OF THE OTHER

... The metaphysics of light tradition is difficult for us to understand because it is an ontology. Ontology is, quite frankly, a language and experience of the beginning, of origin. The word "ontology" means "being." It's the present participle of the verb "to be" and as a consequence it's the thought of being alive that's involved in it . . . It's origin and ontology which basically is mythos and why all of us, the poets, all work with mythos, with a narrative that has a tendency to tell a tale about being alive and the doubleness I keep trying to describe in about a dozen different ways.

It's difficult to understand because it questions what we think of as substantial, that is to say, what is not accidental but actually the nature of the real, and the nature of the real not in philosophical terms but in the narrative, that is, the *experience* of the real. It moves back before what one is oneself and it then moves *after* what we are as men. Ontology begins to be an actual metaphysical narrative and puts the greatest poetry always into a metaphysical aspect: that is, it is always moving into that strange realm of story and the realm of language that we call invented. And I bring that up because it's a major part of Jack's attack upon the "invented." He said nothing's invented and proposed instead (this is in his book, *After Lorca*) that one works at the world as correspondence . . .

Anyway, the difficulty with the metaphysics of light thing is that we move with Dante into a realm that says the real is light itself, that it begins in light and that it ends in light, both, and so as a consequence whatever is substantial, the way the real moves, what makes it continuous and full and alive, is the nature of light. And this is of course [Robert] Grosseteste [*De Luce*] when it comes forward in the twentieth century by way of Pound. It comes forward in Dante by way of, largely, Dionysius the Areopagite . . . Dante thought he was the disciple of St. Paul, and that's why he's called Dionysius the Areopagite which would put him right there at the beginning. But it turns out that Dionysius is now called the pseudo-Dionysius and

he's sixth century Greek. But he's the great mythical tradition and he is the source of the light tradition in great part for Dante, except for the Arabic stuff . . .

Anyway, the extravagant doubling that I was talking about a while back, that I began with, folds. This is Nietzsche's "Da wurde Eins zu Zwei" — that one there, that or there one becomes two. There is a naive realism supporting our psychology, sociology, and anthropology, the three big guiding principles of almost everything we think and are taught. And basically this is the university, those three enemies of the mind — psychology, sociology and anthropology. It all involves us in a naive realism, a reduction of the dualism, of the polarity, this business of the world being alive, into one of these, and all three of those represent a resolution into one side rather than into the vital principle of the doubling over. And I know of no great poetry that is psychological, sociological, or anthropological. Just none . . . As a consequence, the universities find it almost impossible, with their disciplines grounded in those three areas, almost impossible to teach poetry, and we wind up with invented thought, the unreal, the fictive, and the transcendence that is *not* attached — transcendence not being part of the actual movement between these poles of the human world and the earth and the world. But we wind up with it always being reduced to the expression of the man, the expression of the personality, definitions of style, the style is the man. What bullshit. I already did that business about style as the distance that you've moved in language, and as a consequence one can't move in on a poet and copy his style. Jack being the grand one because Jack's the one whose style everybody likes to try to copy and then they come out with what sounds like nothing at the end of it all because they haven't moved the distance in the language.

Anyway, our whole interest in personality tends to close the real, divide it, and separate the manhood out. Such naive realism is unaware of the transition from the given and limited to the transcendent. All that is binding to what

is other than oneself, and the nature of the language is that it is the seat, the throne of the other, and includes our desire for the other (Lacan). These are world points. I began these talks with the folding of earth and sky, mortals and divinities, adapting Heidegger's terms. This is the original task of poetry. Olson's gruff point against Plato is that he took it away from poetry, made language transparent to it, destroyed the ceremony and the performance of an interior life. This original fault of poetry, for Plato, was a performance of visibility, visibility of those four folding over on one another . . . When Olson swears let's dump everything from Plato to 18 — (and he keeps changing the dates, so you never know) you're dumping everything and you're going absolutely crazy trying to figure out what he means. Well, what he means is that he wants to dump this reduction of the real. On the one hand, the personality and its discourse — on the other, the absolute.

And as a consequence, when I find contemporary thought, philosophical thought, once again arguing the nature of poetry, poetry as primary thought, poetry as ultimate thought like it seems to be at both ends of our discourse, then what I notice is — well, I get this from Merleau-Ponty — I notice a language which operates, a thought which is sensitive to the operation of language itself rather than a language that is always becoming transparent to the nature of the real.

Pope, with all his brilliance, and he has density, as Jack likes to describe the fierceness of the end of *The Dunciad*, for example, as something which must have scared Pope himself, but basically Pope's language is a language that is an idea system and then any poetic aspect — imagery, metaphor, and so on — will be adornments of those ideas. And I use Pope not because I don't like him, I do. I could use *Don Juan*, which is just an absolute marvel and one of Jack's favourite poems too, as a language that has a tendency always to use the poetic not as operational, not as actually dense in language itself, not as literal to experience so that language itself is experience and part of the mind, part of the body — but rather that one has a whole system of ideas and you can attach the densities of language to it in order to adorn it, to brighten it, to glamourize it.

And I think most people still do this — that's why they can't understand poetry, why they don't handle its densities, and make big mistakes on what it is.

Anyway . . . this operational language — part of the definition Merleau-Ponty gives us as the new insight into the imagination, that dealing with the world that is a movement, a constant vital movement of visible and invisible contents, and the movement itself is the form, and this is also its openness — given that, the imagination returns to the public performance of the real by way of the language which gives us the axes of visibility as it ties with the invisible ranges of the world, whatever they are. Heidegger has said that the speech of genuine thinking is by nature poetic, a thinking that responds and recalls, a corresponding — Spicer's time mechanic or his lemons in *After Lorca* — Lorca's lemons have to correspond with his California lemons. The saying of the world and earth, the saying of the arena, the field, of their conflict becomes the place, only in language, only there, of the nearness and remoteness of the gods. Gods are names and narratives of the World. When we die into ourselves as personalities, society's anthropomorphisms, the gods, are very far away or very near there where we die. The *there where* of my "Image Nations" tries to deal with that.

Mallarmé in "Un Coup de Dés" proposes a poetics in which he removes himself as "le maître," as master of the language, removes himself and then is translated by the movement of the language back in so you have a completely renewed and different image of the manhood in that magnificent poem where one only sees the "plume" itself as something that is writing and the language goes on speaking, translating our place, our nature and so on, back into the world because it had died. And it died a long time before any of this other

baloney which has been going on in the contemporary period. And the only thing I'm worried about is that there is an aspect of materialism where it will not recognize this thought, where it has a tendency never to know that it's talking about the actual death of the world and not alone about the sorrow and grief of the poverty-stricken and the starving and so on . . .

This is the open that I have said is the poetic task, having a great intimacy and equality with form. A work holds the open, a work, a poem, makes space for the real that alone includes us. It liberates the open and establishes it in the structure of our lives. This is the work working. The concealing nature of the world — I'm adapting Heidegger again, and I quote Heidegger: "Earth, including ourselves, juts through the world, and the world grounds itself on the earth only so far as truth happens as the primal conflict between clearing, that is opening, and concealing." *Clearing* may then be taken to be visibility of life and *concealing* the death of life, but the two of them are not negations of one another but only concealing and disclosure as in terms of the actual poetic movement of the language.

What I'm doing here is preparing for when we get to the point of talking about Olson's *Poetry and Truth* essay — "the sun on the inside" — because Olson's effort in that long essay is to re-attach the poetic to truth. And the nature of truth in this becomes very, very difficult. When he opens that book on page two or something, he says that the poetic life is no longer a life of its own but actually the way we live ourselves — that it's, in other words, a language itself now, is the life we live — and begins reversing the language back into experience rather than to allow it to be the transcendental, fictive whole that has been used to justify imagination.

Heidegger speaks of a self-concealing aspect of being, part of the nature of being alive: the work, he says, is the fighting of the battle in which the

unconcealedness of beings is won. This he calls the truth, illumination and disclosure. Again to quote — “this kind joins its shining to and into the work, the visibility” — Rilke’s “we are all bees of the invisible.” “This shining joined in the work is the beautiful. Beauty is one way, a kind of action in which truth occurs as unconcealedness.”

Now what I’m trying to do here is suggest the whole business of the substantial, and tying this, as the substantial being alive and a movement, and the poetic language as the performance and visibility of that, in public space, and as a consequence keep playing with these doubles and turning *beautiful* into an action and moving towards the light metaphysics business with contemporary thought first, to fold it back, then, in terms of how I get it from Dante.

This business of the substantial. If you want to look at something kind of interesting, there’s a long section in Herman Weyl’s book *The Philosophy of Mathematics and Natural Science* which tends to summarize the whole problem of what is said to be substantial in Western thought. It’s one of Olson’s favourite books, that’s how I came by it, and I’ve had to use people everywhere to help me read it because it’s full of things that are really over my head. The body-soul problem belongs here too. He’s discussing the physical picture of the world by which we get involved in what is substantial, what do we hold on to:

I do not believe that insurmountable difficulties will be encountered in any unprejudiced attempt to subject the entire reality, which undoubtedly is of a psycho-physical nature, to theoretical construction, provided that the soul is interpreted merely as the aggregate of the real psychic acts in any individual.

That is what fascinates me because Olson is consistently battling the cause-and-effect trip . . . we’re already in trouble with the creator and creature, the created world . . . the mythos that talks about cause-and-effect. That’s a kind of lousy Levi-Straussian way to look at mythology, but then Levi-Strauss is such an ignorant man on poetry that he couldn’t correct his own sense of mythos as only logic and lost the whole sense that it also knows that logic is the human will — which Olson again attacks in the business of the human will taking over and pushing the language into its own logic, and he says

that's Plato, he says that's dialectic, which indeed it is. The poetic language is always battling against the human logic, the human will. If we took any one of the texts we all love, really great texts and even small-length poems, you would find that poetic language is always the human will, that its language is trying to double and let the world murmur inside the language . . . Anyway:

It is an altogether too mechanical conception of causality which views the mutual effects of body and soul as being so paradoxical that one would rather resort, like Descartes, to the occasional mystic intervention of God, or like Leibnitz to a harmony instituted at the beginning of time, the monad itself. The real riddle, if I am not mistaken, lies in the double position of the ego. It is not merely an existing individual which carries out real psychic acts but also vision, a self-penetrating light, sense giving consciousness, knowledge, image or however you may call it, as an individual capable of positing reality, its vision open to reason, a force into which an eye has been put.

Now he ends up the whole book with a passage that delights me and I want to throw it in here as a kind of conundrum . . . What I'm trying to do now is push the primordially of this sense of light, that it's a now, and you've just heard a mathematician, a physicist, using the word *light*, an illumination and so on, in order to express what it is that actually we experience, and that is of course the metaphysics of light with very much broken down mythos, it's no longer there. Anyway, he has this last interesting passage:

Whether or not the view is tenable that the organizing power of life establishes correlations between independent individual atomic processes, there's no doubt that wherever thought and the causative agent of will emerge, especially in man, that power is increasingly controlled by a purely spiritual world of images, knowledge, ideas. Is it conceivable that immaterial factors having the nature of images, ideas, building plans, also intervene in the evolution of the living world as a whole? Some biologists answer in the affirmative and set out to describe these factors and their workings in closer detail. Henri Bergson has developed his philosophy of *évolution créatrice* and it is essentially the same doctrine that amidst all the fireworks of his wit G. B. Shaw propounds in his play *Back to Methuselah*. The eternal life of pure thought freed from the bondage of matter is, according to this metabiological pentateuch, the ultimate goal of evolution. Thus speaks Lillith: 'I am Lillith. I brought life into the whirlpool force and compelled my enemy, matter, to obey a living soul. But in enslaving life's enemy, I made life master, for that is the end of all slavery and now I shall see the slave set free and the enemy reconciled, the whirlpool become all life and no matter.' Scientists in general will be more cautious. As things stand now the positing of transcendental creative agents possessing the nature of ideas, whether philosophically dangerous or desirable

— or poetically performing an operation (that's my phrase stuck in) —

is of no help in solving the actual.

And so on. But I want that Lillith thing. And now I'm playing with a realm that gets close to Hegel, gets close to the occult which then brings us into a whole range of the thought of Olson, Spicer, Duncan . . .

(At this point, Robin takes a break during which some conversation occurs and Warren asks him about the significance of the rings he wears.)

Rings are marriages, they're always binding, marriages. And "Image Nations 6," which is for Gladys and Cliff, has that thing about the tree where you marry the world — and I did that for their wedding — where you put the rings on the tree. It was one of the Coptics. I can't find it anymore, I've never been able to find that book since. It's one of the ceremonies in the Coptic world, Egypt, for marriage. When you marry the girl you're actually marrying the world, and you go up and put rings on the tree not on one another's hands. And so when that dream comes in "Image Nations 11" where the rings are there and I put my hands up with a wilfulness, that I want to arrange them, it's like a mobile or something, and my hands disappear in the light themselves. That's the binding principle and the light beginning, so I really don't know where I am at that point — and that's what the poem — it says "well-marked."

(Warren asks about the ringing of the telephone in "Image Nations.")

The ringing of the telephone is distance. And actually that's a pun on, like I'm terribly sensitive to *tele* meaning distance. When a phone rings the distance is sounding. Merleau-Ponty's marvellous term that all perception is tele-perception, all perception is distance perception, just drives me up the wall because I literally know that in my heart,

that all perception is distance. And the language, to me, you see as I speak here in this room, the language is something — it's my heart out in the center of the room and as you speak to me it's your heart then joining mine and we really have no heart except in the center of the room and these words. ● Our bodies don't really last, for all of the marvel of our sexuality and whatever beauty we can maintain and we're given, by the gods, and so on. But the one that really lasts is this incredible movement in language. So out here in the center of the room, all that distance of — and what was the other image you asked about?

The rings on the fingers. This ring has lapis lazuli in it which is not only the colour of the sky — and I looked forever until I found one this shade of blue — it's a magical stone of great power and it's the stone of Isis. For all of Angela's doubts about me, my devotion to women always takes me back to that, because the earth is literally mother and the sky is not to me father at all. The sky to me is marriage, and I don't have an image for it and that's perhaps my limit, but my limit will have to do. The ring on this finger is a ring that I found in Athens and it's the wrappings on the omphalos at Delphi. And curiously enough, when Christos Didiakolos, what'd he do but go to Delphi and what did he think to send me a message on, but a photograph of that omphalos because they celebrate it — the umbilical of the world, the center of the world that Delphi is thought to be, and the place in which — I've got a gorgeous map of the pathways of the world that cross at Delphi, which I'll bring when we do the sacred geography thing. This great hump of stone is carved — it's a late version of what they think may be an earlier one — and the carvings show the wrappings they put around it in celebration. You might think of a maypole if you've ever danced the maypole.

The other ring is a recent one and it was given to me. It's coral and there's an other one to go with it which I'm not wearing because I don't have the right at this point. This one is marriage to the sea. It's my sense of myself as earth and I'm married to the sea so I'm wearing this marriage to the sea, and I wear these literally magically. I like to wear a bracelet of silver and

rings of gold because that's the sun and the moon, and it's just the way I carry all this stuff around with me all the time.

The ring that goes with this one is exactly like this except it has three moonstones and the moonstones were given to me when I left Boston to go to Europe. I lived with seventeen people, seven of them Turks, and it's the only time I've ever been in a commune and it was marvellous. When I left, the seventeen went together to give me a gift because one night in the kitchen I'd gotten drunk and was talking about moonstones, the way in which stones hold light, and they remembered it many months later and when I left there was a little leather box with three moonstones in it. Those have been set and it goes with this one, but until I get the light stuff right in the poems I can't wear that ring . . .

. . . I think we ought to keep in mind that for Dante the beloved is continually active in life and death in the work of the real. He sees everything in terms of ladders so that everything moves, light, love, and so on — he moves all of these. And the way in which you should think of Beatrice is that love is actually the movement of the world and as a consequence if one's beloved dies that love is still active. Beatrice's love of Dante remains because love is part of the movement of the world. It's desire — and I've already stated it with contemporary and philosophical terms, desire for the other and all that — and language tends to hold that.

But I wanted just to open with a passage from Thomas Vaughan who is the brother of Henry Vaughan. Now this book was not well known and since it was not published until the twentieth century, it's quite unlikely that Blake knew it, but Blake certainly joins with this. It's part of the occult tradition which holds on to this whole business of the imagery of light, the analogy of intelligence and light, and the analogy that the substantial world itself is light. The book is called *Aula Lucis* and *aula* is a Latin word meaning the entrance, the court, entrance court of a house, so it's the entrance court of light. Dante plays with this because Dante's Tuscan Italian still kept the Latin word *lux*, *luce*, that's the light itself. *Lumen* is the word for the light as it moves outward from itself and extends. This is Grosseteste where it's an infinite extension of light from its own order. So *lux*, *lumen*, *luce* / *lume* in Dante, and then the next — it

moves again in a kind of quaternary — it's the radius, *radius*, the raying of the light then is the movement of the light that holds the world together. And then *splendor* is what we reflect as the light hits us. And Grossteste says we are light, the original form of the body is light, so that each man is *splendor*, each thing is *splendor* and you've got this lovely movement from *lux*, *lumen*, *radius*, *splendor*, which, really, it's very, very beautiful. In Dante's realm all that range is reflected because, as I mentioned earlier, when he goes at a hierarchy of the world — which we watch, we no longer have hierarchies and everything tends to fall down on us and split and break and we begin the task of trying to figure everything out again — he, when he does this, finds a dynamism, and those four words will at least give you a sense of how dynamic this is if you think of light as the continuity of the world by which he means substantiality, that the real has to be a continuity, a continuity that is well beyond your life or my life and certainly beyond our life-death principles.

This lively little passage from *Aula Lucis* — this is an alchemist, a seventeenth century alchemist:

Matter, as I have formerly intimated, is the house of light. Here he dwells and builds for himself, and to speak truth he takes up his lodging in sight of all the world. When he first enters it, it is a glorious transparent room, a crystal castle and he lives like a familiar in diamonds. He hath then the liberty to look out at the windows. His love is all his sight. I mean that liquid Venus which lures him in. But this continues not very long. He is busy, as all lovers are, laboring for a close union that insinuates and conveys himself into the very substance of his love so that his heat and action stir up her moist essences by whose means he becomes an absolute prisoner. For at last the earth grows over him out of the water so that he is quite shut up in darkness and this is the secret of the eternal God which He hath been pleased to reveal to some of his servants though mortal man was never worthy of it. I wish it were lawful for me to enlarge myself on this point for religion's sake

— religion, remember, for the alchemist would be the *religio* (means binding to the world), it has nothing to do with our establishment religion — with the thought taken away and completed —

but it is not safe nor convenient that all ears should hear even the mysteries of religion. This leprous earth, for such it is if it be not purged, is a toad that eats up the eagle or spirit of which there is frequent mention in the philosopher's books.

I'm very fond of that passage . . . Anyway, Dante's — ah well my notes have said something funny, "Dante's knowledge of the metaphysics of light." "Knowledge" is a funny thing because it should be "use," it's something so vital to Dante that you wouldn't think that he knew it. He went from a cosmology and he took the cosmology of the continuity of light, that is to say the beginning is in some mysterious sense light and the end is in some mysterious sense light, but Dante's knowledge, the thing that gets him to the point where he can use this as an actual dynamic principle for the narrative of what the world is, gets strange. In both the "Inferno" and the "Purgatorio" it's the moral, it has to do with the way we act in our life, the way we are actually responsible, and it tends to judge and pull forward examples from every place. By the time we get to the "Purgatorio" everybody is dead, but everybody is in that other realm of life, the continuity of the universe, so that death then is translated into light, out of its darkness and its mystery. And all those people said to be light principals, and the only person whose body does not take the light all the way through it so light shines from the other side is Dante. He stops the light and fascinates everybody in the "Purgatorio." Only Dante. And he's all by himself in the "Paradiso" Beatrice was talking to him and so on, but he's the only mortal in that realm, and he moves forward in that realm of seeing the continuity of the world as light, as illumination. I get kind of fascinated if I bring up the physical principle of light as a limiting factor, that is, the way everything travels to us by the principle of light and at the speed of light, all that kind of thing. Dante is getting it from Platonic sources second-hand and from Arabic sources.

Then

his major source is Dionysius the Areopagite. His influence in the Western church is enormous and he is the major figure in the Eastern church . . . I brought his little book, it's easily available and terribly cheap. It's the *Mystical Theology and the Divine Names*. They're the two major tracts and they really are beautiful books to read, providing you will move into this, because he's arguing about the nature of the real and how you handle it, how to think of it, to say about it — I'm being uneasy because he doesn't want to be "about" it. He's talking about the way in which one *joins* the real, and as a consequence the joining to the real tends to be the interiorization of

the real. And he takes two ways, the positive theology and the negative theology, theology as being, God being the ultimate principle in this — I keep avoiding the Christianization because I don't see any point in it anymore. We now move to a point where this is either information about the way you think of the world, or it's not. If it is, then you don't worry about whether you're a Christian, you just wind up watching the way people have thought of it.

Now the positive theology is a way in which — actually this will be the Dantesque way — the positive theology is the one in which one has images, visibility, the actual performance and record of the experience of the world and oneself. Dionysius does not entirely approve of that way because it is the way of images and he's drawing from . . .

(First side of tape ends here. By the time the tape is turned over and started, Robin is talking about negative theology.)

. . . is that everything one thinks of as God — the good, the true, the beautiful, the perfect, the vision of light, all that stuff, he is not those things. He is unknowable, incomprehensible, and finally — one finally has union with that which one cannot know. It is silent, unimagined, unspoken and so on. It is an ecstasy, and there are beautiful ecstasies in Dionysius, but the discipline of it is — and that fascinates me, I think, more than anything else — the discipline is its sensitivity to the language. The moment that one has drawn into the language — and language is basically image before it happens to be syntactical structure and logical movement or any of the rest of our wilfulness, that whole business — all those things God is not. If you say you have seen him and he was dressed in a white robe and he shone magnificently or he's big daddy in the sky with a beard, and think of Blake's Nobadaddy — this is part of Blake's point, that whatever he is he is not. Because you immediately work with a negation of what you know so as not to limit. And there is a tension: I call it

experiential dialectic, ultimate polarity, something like this. Now that would be Dionysius the Areopagite's preferred way.

Pound is interesting because Pound does not go to Dionysius or at first to Dante. See, this is a meditation principle and Dionysius has directions on meditation of the "is" and "not," "is" and "not" negation all the way through. Pound goes to Hugh of St. Victor and Richard of St. Victor with the business, and that's the emptying-out principle which so curiously Jack takes as his own methodology in his last description of his poetics, to empty out. And when somebody in the audience that night at Warren's place asked him about St. Loyola, he began to say: well, yeah, it was a bit like that. It's so curious because Jack was deeply read in a vast range of this stuff. I don't think he was read in Hugh or Richard of St. Victor but we got Hugh and Richard of St. Victor by a lecture from Kantarowicz [at Berkeley]. He knew Dionysius the Areopagite, he certainly had read some Loyola, he'd certainly read Bonaventura, he'd gone through a whole bunch of this. Bonaventura is one of the big metaphysics of light sources. Intelligence and light analogically are the same thing, and we speak, use light images in order to make a record in language of what it is we know, so that you may perform and share among others, with others, the what it is you know: how the world worlds, the way the world and earth join, the way you and the world join and all that. Jack certainly knew that, but ultimately his practise on his own was independent of any — no, he did not have a real practise that came in any sense as a discipline from any of these people. And I think of Jack as so absolutely ourselves because the moment we move to meditation there is really no example for us. We can go to the orientals, we can use yoga, we can use all this kind of thing, but generally speaking, the people who do it and do it in the extravagance and attention that Jack did at the end are doing it all by themselves. The emptying out is like a necessity for Jack to hear the voice again of the world . . .

Well, Jack says himself that you must empty out in order that something may speak in a language which is not yourself. And it is both Jack's love and desire and it finally destroyed him. He said that the discipline was that you must empty out. You could never trust what it was *you* thought was beautiful, what *you* thought was the right thing to say,

because you had to let the language speak by itself. And this is where I get my phrase in that sequence of things that I want to do, called "American Mallarmé," because Jack is actually the first American Mallarmé. Olson never gets to the point where he sees himself as moving back that far. He won't do that, and it's not a matter of judging one against the other, but the discipline is enormously different and Jack felt that you had to sit and let the language be picked up by something other than yourself. He is so sensitized to what is other than himself, he is our greatest love poet. And there will one day perhaps be another, but he is our greatest . . .

I set Mallarmé up only because Mallarmé is the first extravagance of the man who decides he must disappear from the language so that the language may speak again, and as a consequence speak manly again, and Mallarmé is that example. Our trouble is that, of course, in North America they can't read Mallarmé and they go on about symbolism and all that. And I am in my hidden way here trying to prepare for one more symbol because symbol is nothing more than the literalness of image, but it has to be image sensitized to this doubleness I'm talking about, that something is in the image other than my desire. It is something that enters the image and my desire may very well then follow through and I become lover. As Dante may enter the world on five or six levels simultaneously in his poetry, and he'll finally teach me that poetically I must also be able to enter the language on as many levels as my intelligence will allow me to do, and the work I do and the care I take, and will, like Yeats' masks, give literal forms to my body, light forms to my body, where I then may enter the language and speak right and be sane. But I will not have been *spoken by* the culture, I will not have been spoken by what has happened. I will be speaking what is going on, as world, earth, and so on. And I get this largely from Jack and Mallarmé, Olson, and somewhat from Pound.

Pound is something I'll have to straighten out, my thing on Pound, because Pound is so important to me but I don't — I separate those out because I hear them speaking,

I hear them saying the world, and with Pound I hear him, I hear him in extravagance even before ourselves, one before one could speak the world again, one in which one had to go back and gather the world rather than speak it always. And I love him for it because the cost of going back and gathering the world again is so enormous and so dangerous and so frightening that this will even account in part for his anti-Semitism, if you figure it out, because anti-Semitism comes out of the range of his hatred of the imagelessness of the Jewish tradition, and then he gets balled up, but thank God he's recanted it so we don't have to deny him, we don't have to stand by that shit in order to get through the work. But if one goes around this and watches the people who then get to the point where they are once again very aware that they are saying the world again, I then turn to Mallarmé, Olson, Spicer and I hear it as that . . .

(Angela asks about the difference between being spoken and to be speaking.)

Oh: *to be speaking* means that you are literally at the edge of the composition of the real, I mean by this that you are composing the real, you have taken that responsibility and that task. And you're on the edge. Always. And the unknown is there and its shapes are extraordinary. That edging is extremely important. Now, *to have been spoken* means that you then fall into the sociology and anthropology and so on, you are always falling into what has been spoken by the culture. This is basically neo-classical language, it gives none of the power and the operational form of language and of course it excludes poetry basically, even if you write poetry talking about yourself which is what people do. They still love poetry — its necessity is simply part of our nature — but they'll go on with a poetry that goes blah, blah, by me, me, me, me, me because they wish always to find a way that will be part of what has been spoken. And what has been spoken is me. The moment that I speak of me, I was already over. I have no presence. Even modern physics does this, in the most magnificent match with Yeats' cone in *A Vision*, in which you've got an absolute future and an absolute past but in the centre where this joins is a thing called zero. You've got nothing at

the now. This whole fucking “now” principle from the growth psychologists and some of the hippie talk which is so annoying, “the now,” is insane. The moment the language, which has permanence, begins to hold that, we are not in the now but something that is other and elsewhere, and mathematicians call that zero, “elsewhere.” When you begin to understand it, it is an elsewhere from future past, it is not now, it is elsewhere. Where it is I don’t know, but it is that place where I am now, I’m elsewhere. And then my past and my future are the things I must honour . . . but that zero is elsewhere.

To have been spoken is to be part of what was spoken so that you are not speaking. And the nature of art is that it always is speaking and the reason that it must be the public space — this is where every Marxist I’ve ever spoken to is an idiot because of course Marx had no sensitization to language on this level, for all his brilliance in the other ranges which I’ll deal with another time. But the materialist view does not get the poetic right because there’s no place for the poetic when you always are in what has been spoken. We have then to perform the real as *to be speaking* and that is what the artists do . . .

(Robin speaks of Nerval’s death, his hanging himself from a lamp-post, as the first example of what he knew was at stake in this speaking and this edging. Warren asks if he sees light involved in that.)

Hmm, but light and dark, so that you are literally in the vital form of the light, that the light may well be the visibility, the principle of embodiment. And the unknowable — not unknowable, the unknown, the invisible as the edging, that *there* where you fall over ultimately into the marvellous . . .

. . . We were on that business of the unknowing. This, in Dionysian vocabulary, is the *agnosia*. We now call that agnostic, but the *agnosia* was the business of working always with the darkness, the unknown, and the incomprehensibility. Each point at which you knew the world, you then by discipline, meditative discipline not unrelated to Jack’s emptying himself, you forced yourself to let that which you did not know enter again, so that you made an incomprehensibility out of every comprehensibility and you lost at this point your actual ability, you lose your ground.

You lose your ability to hold and know and possess, and it does begin to be a nature of at least one order of love. I think, curiously, that a lot of homosexual love tends to recite this. Like Jack, Jack said love is impossible between two people in *The Holy Grail*, and I said, "Jack, please, you've got to change that line, one line in your dictation you must change, I can't bear it." While I still can't bear it, I believe it's absolutely true. That somehow or other, the love poem, this thing that, unless you have a cosmology in which the continuity of the world allows light-love-intellect to hold together and become the continuity, which is to say that the world and the self are in some kind of continuous form — and by form I always mean *rhythmos*, one of the original meanings of the word *rhythmos* (rhythm) in Greek was form. Our word *form* is from Latin *forma* and it tends to close. The Greeks thought of form as rhythm, as movement, and so on. Now this Dionysian thing is not simply neo-Platonic, whatever people like to tell you about Dante. It is not. The God-unity of the neo-Platonist is not part of it. This is a total comprehensibility, that unity, and in the sixth book of Plotinus' *Enneads* you'll find the beautiful ecstasy when he experiences what he's arguing of that God-unity thing. But in the Dionysian you are always forced, and actually there's an ecstasy in forcing yourself, I call it the marvel of, taking Hugo's term, the — there's an ecstasy in not ever allowing yourself to have the one, the unity, and so on. You are always in this movement, so that you will end up with the created and the uncreated, and the creator and the creature and so on. You keep pulling this, this movement. In other words, you're dealing with what is not open, so you re-open yourself. Now that's to modernize it, because if I stayed with Dionysius in pure form you'd get into Eastern Orthodox Greek religion, and they do wind up trying to resolve this. I'm trying to keep it unresolved because I want to catch the tradition of this thought which is always an opening: that you keep it so alive that it's open and extremely dangerous. So dangerous that it destroys Jack, and I think it can possibly destroy a lot of other people . . .

The Divine Names, names as such are not in Dionysius thought to be what we think of as a noun that stops, completes, and names and gives us information of the person. And as a matter of fact I must be deeply in my own sense influenced by this kind of thought because as I look around the room at all of you and take your names, I don't have any sense that those names can stop you. Those names tend to be what Dionysius would call *theophanies*. They are moments of recognition of the real that "you" are — in this instance, with the Divine Names, moments of the recognition of what God is — as a consequence, visibilities in language. And then you pull forward the business that that is not quite true, as Dwight, the moment that I look at you and your next move is, you ain't what I just saw. Angela, Martina, Daphne, Warren — I mean, same thing. And so this funny thing. And this is the ladder of theophanies, theophanies being the actual visibility of the *theos*, the nature of the world, moving in degrees, levels, and a constant structure of the edging of oneself.

Jack comes up with this in a form in the last book, *A Book of Magazine Verse*, where he's using Tertullian and quotes it as — it's not exactly what Tertullian said but it's the traditional phrase — "credo quia absurdum," I believe because it is absurd.

And you wind up in a kind of absurdity, and the word "absurd" then becomes the vital principle of this movement that's going on, the unknown. And you keep consistently arguing that unknown in, so that the unknown is alive, you don't close it and, as a consequence, you don't wind up with anthropology, sociology, and psychology as the measure of the real . . . He's consistently opening, even if he has to do it by puns, and Jack is the only poet with great puns since Shakespeare, as far as my reading goes. Oh, I forget Joyce.

Anyway, the earliest notion of the real as light comes in Heraclitus, and this is in the principle that Heraclitus introduces to the West, which turns up in Dante's hell, magnificently, and that's why I brought the Thomas Vaughan and our alchemical tradition — it's the principle

of fire. That the real in Heraclitus is fire. You go at Milton where he's got those magnificent images of the light which isn't light, which he's really taking from Dante where in hell you are in a world that has no light, a visibility that has no visibility because it is a hole in the universe, so to speak, a big black hole because of your actions in light. Anyway, in Heraclitus fire is Zeus, Zeus is the order of the world and the knowledge of it. So that the knowledge and the worship of Zeus, in Heraclitus, means that you have some knowledge of the order of the world. Now take that into Dante: the metaphysical light tradition as light is the continuity of the world, its substantial movement and vital form and life, then our knowledge and recognition of the light gives us a part, a way to participate in the continuity of the world beyond our limit.

It is also Plato's the good and the sun. I'm quite fascinated with Olson's sun, in that Olson's hostile to Plato and yet the good and the sun in Plato's full analogy are that they are the same. He takes the sun to be an image of the good so that one may then put into visibility what is otherwise invisible. But good as happiness is invisible. And as Hannah Arendt says, all those revolutions that want to give you happiness, baby, no way! You cannot legislate happiness, and yet how many of them have we got, including most of the modern Marxist revolutions, which argue that they will give you happiness. They're not giving you happiness, they may very well release you from necessity or from those needs which close the body into itself and devour, where it must devour the world into its own needs — as a consequence, it has no intellect and no language. Because if you're starvin' to death you ain't got nothin'. When I talked to those marvellous people that I lived with in the commune in Boston about what it was like in the Soviet work-camps, I asked, "Well, what's the sexuality, now you guys are all locked up there?" And he said they were worked to the point where there wasn't any sexuality. There was nothing but food,

shelter, clothing, and the ability to get through the day until you could get through to another day. There is nothing. We have no sense that the intellect and the language and the poetic are all of those movements into the other than what is ourselves. And our crime politically is that we go right on allowing a political system in which vast numbers of people cannot have the love of the other, and as a consequence there is no love. There's only your great big fucking maw devouring the world in the cry-baby routine.

Okay, so the divine names and theophanies, ladder of theophanies, would mean nothing to those people. The earliest notion is in Plato's the good and the sun. All right. What's implied in this is a real filiation between intellectual and material light. The neo-Platonist's light was the visible world. The pseudo-Dionysius — he begins the analogy movement that both the visible world and the invisible world could be handled with light imagery. St. Augustine also makes this movement, and from this Dante pulls it so that you get intelligence and light as equivalences — that is, so far as the language may handle them. And those people who've had the experience of light as such do know that the body in some sense censors this, and also know what it is the language can do to carry you level by level in the ranges of light. They divide it into light of reason, the god of light, physical light and the angelic host made of substantial light so that the angels were real because they were actually images that somehow folded and came out of the movement of the universe as light and as messengers. Dante chose this because he was after a cosmology that could be experienced.

And the summary. I think I'll use Mazzeo as a summary of what this tradition of light is. Mazzeo's book is called *The Medieval Cultural Tradition in Dante's Comedy* and it's a really terrific book. It has a whole chapter on the metaphysics of light. You can go a long way beyond what he wishes to do there, but if you're after Dante, I think this book is a useful one. The summary of the essentials of this "doctrine," as he puts it. One: light is the principle of being. To be alive means that you are inside the light. Activity: light is the active principle of the world. This, in perceptual terms, is not a bad business at all because, as activity, it's the literal movement from one part, from any one thing. It is distance itself, as

light is . . . We get into terrible time-space problems with all this but later anyway it is being, activity, extension, causal efficacy, life, motion, nobility and excellence, because they then get put in a hierarchy and light tends to be excellence as against the darkness. Well, even that makes sense in experience, this business that light is recognition and the darkness tends to be a total loss — confusion or commotion — that thing I used in the reading at U.B.C. where I said I thought the poet was a commoter, and then I said that I discovered the word *commoter* as a little boy in Hawthorne, and it's quite true. The word *commoter* means simply a guy inside the commotion. Now we don't even use the word *commoter* but I do love that word.

The positive is something like the nature of light, the opposite of which would be the sheer negation of darkness. Second, as the fundamental form of body as such, light is the substantial form of the universe and provides the universe with its principle of continuity. And third, it is the noblest of corporeal things and has an intermediate place between body and soul, matter and spirit, and we are back with the three, the trichotomy. When you get the cosmology going in Dante, it turns out that light is the central principle that works for that intermediate thing. This is the point at which the intellect frees and moves, and the language, as the record of the intellect, my ability to say what I think to you, Dante's ability to say what he thinks to us, that middle principle with all of its vast marvels, brings the whole composition, fictive and all that stuff back into a mediation so that language is literally operating to give you world, man and world, and so on.

The mysticism of the number three is that you've got one, then two — I've already quoted that "Da wurde Eins zu Zwei" thing of Nietzsche, one, two, and the three tends to be the way in which they act together and combine. Three becomes the love principle, so that the Holy Ghost is love. This is the way Dante gets love and the intellect as somehow of the same order as the real, as allied to the real.

... With Dante's world you've got the nine heavens and you've got the four elements below, and this is actually coming from one of his sources, these four elements, it makes something, what is it, thirteen parts of the world, and we are composed of the commotion of air, fire, earth and water, while the spheres tend to be the light itself. Four: light is not only the principle which constitutes the universe, but as spiritual light, the principle of light which the intellect understands. And fifth: all these notions were set in the framework of a hierarchically ordered universe which, I've already pointed out, is a dynamism, that one goes up.

(After some conversation which Warren initiates, getting at a spectrum of the use of the word "light" — light-weight boxer, a light colour, light verse, etc., Robin continues:)

... Dante faces the greatest attack in the world on what you're doing right now — it's St. Thomas Aquinas who says, no, this cosmology of light is not true, they are using metaphors to mean the real and metaphors are not real. It's the second great attack since Plato in *The Republic*. And I was going to do this this evening because part of the movement of this narrative was to go back at the literality of language, that it's with interiorization of the language, experience in language, that the metaphor becomes real and it's not invented.

(Further conversation. Warren links light to sun in "it's light outside.")

The power of the imagery is absolutely consumed, because the earliest imagery of light and the business of worshipping light is the sun one worships. And there's no question that this is somehow hidden in this power.

(Dwight remarks that "Give me a light" refers to flame.)

A flame, yeah. And it makes it alive and if one strives to go at those things rather than just letting the language go by, you're immediately inside it. But the thing of worshipping the sun, of making the visible light, the whole thing is precisely of course a challenge to the Christian view here, because hidden in all this, and hidden in Dante, is a major problem that the Christian tradition keeps — the Jewish tradition that God is utterly unknowable.

The world is other than what one is. They want that other always going in the negative sense, and this is where Pound moves in and says no way, let's dump this and get Confucius going so we've at least got a light that we can act in. But the business of using a visible light and not differentiating a light that is other than the visible light means that you've turned the world into God. And my vocabulary moves toward this all the time because the slip in all this is what Christians fear most of all, is pantheism — the word *pan* means *world* in Greek — and you mustn't ever do that because then you will have lost — see, what they're doing in that thought is they think you see the world, if you see the world then you will claim to have seen God and then you will have destroyed his unknowability. It's the neatest goddamned problem and the Christians just fight for centuries not to allow that to happen.

(Angela talks about a newspaper article reporting people's experiences of dying as "moving out into an expanse of light.")

Well, Angela, as a matter of fact I think body-work works with death all the time and it moves toward the light stuff all the time, and all this stuff that Bergson, "élan vital," and all that, the organizational principles of life that Weyl was talking about, all that stuff can always be the imagining. Poetry deals with this all the time, that is, the best stuff does: the point at which you are actually there before you are the separation of the body, what in the "Image Nations" I call the suddenness of the body, that it's so suddenly a separation and from everything else. And our intelligence does, by its very nature, and it doesn't matter what materialists want to do with this trip, that we do go back to what we were when we weren't this. Light is a magnificent way at least to talk about it.



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Caterpillar 12. Ed. by Clayton Eshleman. New York, 1970.

A special Spicer-Blaser issue; includes *Les Chimères*, *The Holy Forest Section*, and the first of the poems from *The Great Companions*, Pindar's *Seventh Olympic Hymn*, trans. by Robin Blaser. A large book, to be called *The Holy Forest* when it is complete, is composed to date of *Cups*, *The Park*, *The Faerie Queen*, *The Moth Poem*, *Les Chimères*, *The Holy Forest Section*, and *The Great Companions*, a long narrative in that order.

The New American Poetry. Ed. by Donald Allen. New York: Grove Press, 1960. Includes Robin Blaser poems of 1957-1958.

Junge Amerikanische Lyrik. Hrsg. von Gregory Corso & Walter Höllerer. München: Hanser, 1961. Includes "The Hunger of Sound."

Locus Solus 1. Ed. by James Schuyler. Dans-en-Vercors (Isere), France, 1961. Includes *Cups*.

Locus Solus 3-4. Ed. by John Ashberry. Includes *The Park*.

A Controversy of Poets. Ed. by Robert Kelly and Paris Leary. New York: Doubleday, 1965. Includes *The Park* and *The Faerie Queen*.

Episodes in Five Poetic Traditions. Ed. by R. G. Barnes. San Francisco: Chandler, 1972. Includes Pindar's *Seventh Olympic Hymn*.

The Poetics of the New American Poetry. Ed. by Donald Allen and Warren Tallman. New York: Grove Press, 1974. Includes "The Fire."

Forthcoming:

The Collected Books of Jack Spicer. Ed. by Robin Blaser. Los Angeles: Black Sparrow. Includes an essay "The Practice of Outside."

Bach's Belief. An essay for Charles Olson's *Curriculum of the Soul*. Buffalo: Institute of Further Studies.

Additional:

Boston Poems 1956-1958. Was published in an edition of one copy, which has disappeared.

Transparencies. A longish poem (1958) was published in a small edition, which was destroyed.



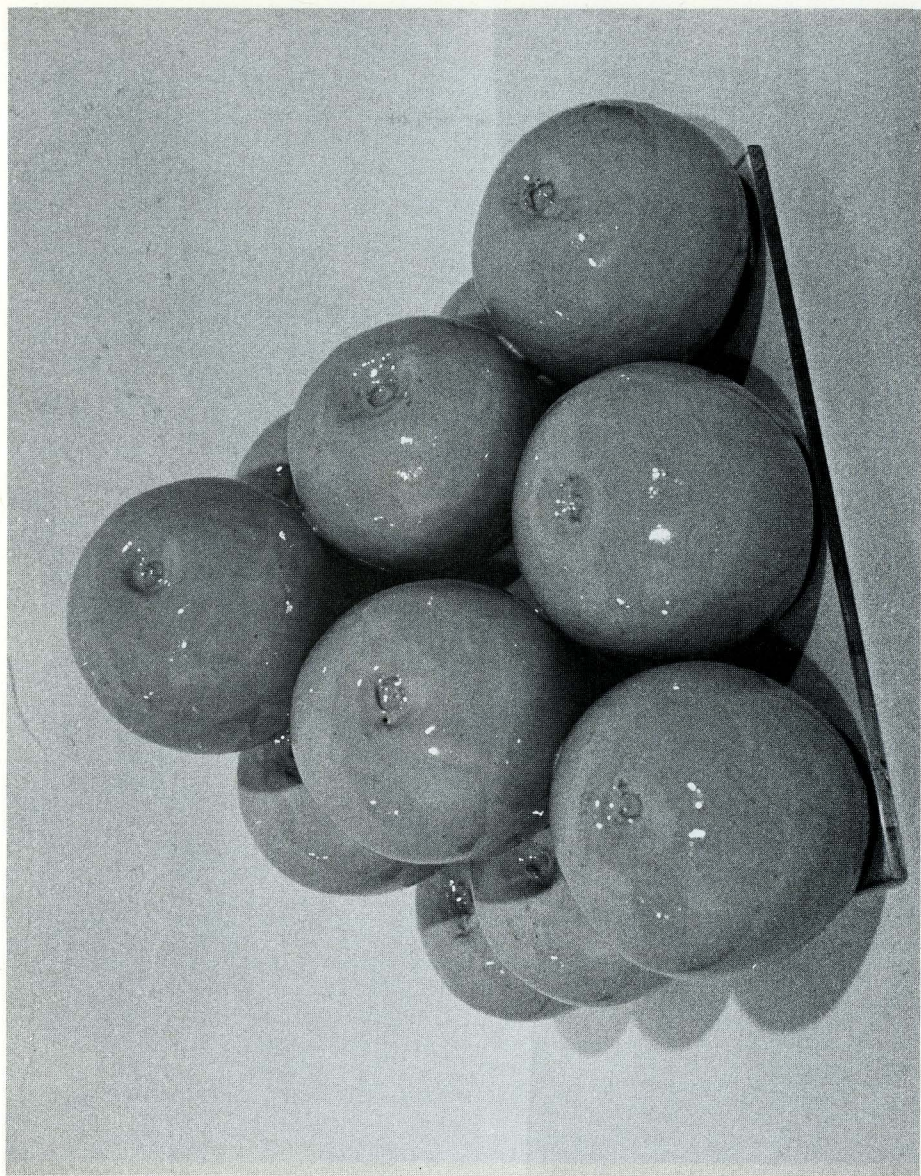
Gathie Falk / LIFE STYLE ART

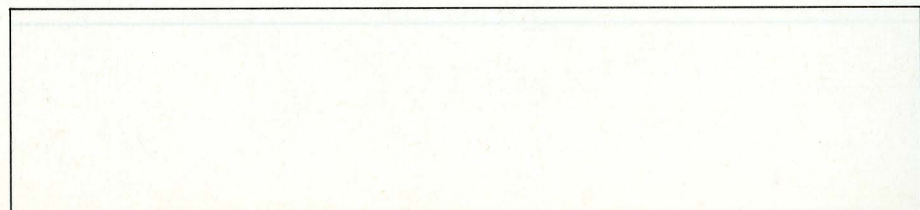
Gathie Falk elevates the simple pleasures of life — walking, a row of shoes; seeing, a pyramid of fruit; planting, a garland of flowers; dreaming, a pair of angel wings to be worn — into art. She effects the blur between art and life with ingenuousness and warmth.

Photography: Tom Graff, Glenn Allison, Todd Greenaway, Ann Rosenberg.



Photograph: Tom Gatz, Chris Wilson, Todd Greenaway, and Richard











ingrained

*English versions of the Sanskrit poems by John Newlove,
from the translations by Jeff Masson.*

John Newlove /
FOUR SANSKRIT LOVE POEMS
A SANSKRIT LOVE POEM,
6th CENTURY A.D.

the Conqueror, remembering you

Shining a jewel

one woman lies in a bed
in a house house in walls

walled streets
town after royal town

& each town a country multitude
of countries an Empire —

Of which I am the Emperor alone —

imagining you

From Bhavahuti's *Uttararamacarita*, I.27.

Leaning in touch toward each other,
cheeks touching, we spoke . . .
words issued slowly from us,
orderless, softly, touching
all subjects like lovers
gentle with each other's flesh,
deeply entwined in each other and time,
so the hours floated, the night
spent with our words, but only
the night. . . .

Amarusataka, 46.

A stranger sings in the village at night —
listening to the heavy sound of clouds,
dark in a sullen sky — tears in his eyes,
singing a song of his loneliness, his longing.

At those sounds the listening people
know how like death distance from a lover is.
They will not speak of it.
Even pride shall be put by.

Amarusataka, 49.

Distorted by tears she saw the clouds mass
in a black sky. "Love,
if you leave me now. . . ."

She said it, holding me,
her legs moving helplessly.

Helplessly. Words turn away
without meaning
from what she did then.

Joyce Carol Oates / FERTILIZING THE CONTINENT

Fluid as music we pass through,
and return, bringing ancestors
to this new place:
our childhoods merging, melting.
The map's divisions snarl, breaking
as we pass effortlessly through.

The continent takes us on
and begins to dream us:
worlds shading into worlds.
What integrity in our bones' structure? —
the right language dispels it.

Rituals seek to enter us
as if the body were a sacred place.

Douglas Blazek / INHALING LIGHT

Let your arms teach autumn to the trees
let what you write grow in your hands like wheat
grammar can be learned from the rocks
when the wood in your house crumbles it
becomes easier to inhale light
when holding your love nibble away the crust
have many accidents spilling yourself
tell me if your emotions walk on the legs of birds

Leslie Keyworth /

BILLY THE KID('S WOMAN)

he'll come riding into town on the hoof
beat sound of my black velvet dress/he'll
make straight for me (i'll know) — know
by the crack of sky at the door,his
brownlight face and hat in his hands(then
me).it

goes on like this with billy:some
mornings are chilled at the bone of day/it
comes right in to you — you
know he's been taken,then
whitewashed light as youre drawing the water and
the birds make a ruffled flight at
your ear(feeling).then
you know without turning he's coming at
you from around the road's bend.

we walk.fine
clouds divided by blue,touched by treeleaves/it's
a rhythm of living each day by its own beat
and never leaving any thing over for the next/in
case it dont happen.

garrett's not going to leave
billy to be.land isnt round or
strong enough for the two-trees/he'll
get him down — billy's got to go that way,
bloody(witness him) a hole shot
round and even in his head(eye of a
needle),the gunshot is his heart-
beat,pulsed explosion/

i take a thread of him and
weave it into me.i
live like a warmplace in his eye/catch a
spark from his soul — it
makes such a living

the last summer we
sat in the evening,up on the porch(fly-buzzed
dark) before we lost ourselves,slow,in to a one,in
to the stillness,red.billy's
soft voice and the orange-dot of him,smoking/
sighing.the low-lying chuckle(likes to) laugh.

he weaves stories for the
others/magician makes the
dark fear-pit go away,knots in
their stomachs.makes
the smiles like clean gashes
come into their faces/i
know what love means(some) time,

and
for the children,brownd mexican sunfaces,he
makes his pulse go white and
young — talks a tinycircle where they
have none/he
buries little chalina's dog
when he dies.

time goes away(with) him,here and
not-here.time
unfolds(dis-) appears
like the day burns out and
so will he(moving) on
me,then stopped.
i live(the woman) with
him inside me like

birds lifting in onelastsheet
from a field/i
live the burningbullet(life)
billygone

Daryl Rasmussen / PYRAMIDS

Gizeh.

From the top stone,
Empty white sands,
Grid of constant camel tracks,
Caravan direct proportionalities.
Planar view of dreams
(Imhotep architect)
And deaths
(Khafra, Khufu).

Keystone.

Unlocks the treasure,
Supports the arch.
Apical origin.

Reference

For spacial co-ordination
And for points filling volumes.
Tripartite Z-Y-aXis
Plotted in the sand-mist whirlwinds,
Kissed by an incline spiral,
Geometry of a snail's torsion.
Seems impenetrable,
Seems impervious,
Enamel hard.

East
Through dust light,
Nile.
Fertile snake,
Womb of water,
Silt gift bearer,
Long past cataracts.
Thrice fallen angel,
Journied past artifacts.
Irrigation, for aged eyes,
Cataracts, and light
Constructing reed
And flower.

Rosetta.
Basalt petal,
Blindness medicine,
Translates a river,
Keys the hieroglyphic map
Of time's convolute catacombs.
Hallways under golden torchlight,
Worn paths on sunny banks,
Like papyrus strips,
Beaten for a pyramid
Of words.

David Wilk / LOOKING AHEAD

: the edges that will not dull
 for anything
less than
 the human touch upon
 break & pace, note
 for note
 the world expands

: the rhythm light is
beyond the forms &
history told in pictures
 (hid along
 the edge,
 the spine of

wch goes down as
 “music to whatever
 ears will hear it”

: words will never be beautiful again,
as the structure is
the growth of form itself
(along the edges of this dream
we share the body of

night shrinking
to include us, our sleeping
bodies favorite home, minds
relax & disappear

: the world turned upside down
is still the world
we are trying to live within

(bodies moving on the edges of

looking forward to begin again
looking forward to begin again
blood rushing to the soul

5/16/74 for Cecil Taylor

Penny Chalmers / POEM

“sitting on jewels spread wide i hear”

her voice

that hum like a thousand

mosquitoes

at back of fire

1000 mosquitoes

on the verge of

silence

hum

sa

hum

sa

hmnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnn sa

did breath begin

predilection for the letter s

her song starts with s

continues in s

sacred snake along susumna
her hiss as she ascends

“in the centre of my house behind the fire, i hear”

spine

spin pin in i
spine pine pin in i

hiss as she ascends

spine spin spine spine

that hum like a thousand

hum sa hum sa

silence

sound

Susan Musgrave / AGAINST

*Kúganaa . . . black magic . . .
rats inside . . .*

Up past the Indian graveyard
the sea has
uprooted trees.
The dead dream of
nets flashing,
clutch against
kúganaa —
dark magic in a
dying tongue.

I dig for a
darker stone —
the kind
rats are afraid of.
Black and silvery
to keep out evil —
I pick away the
mirror-flakes
to hold against
kúganaa.

The beach scuttles
from under me —
drags its
shell-hoard from the
strain of tides.

I hear rats
waking in the
graveyard —
growing fat by the
memorial.

Rats giving birth
under the long grass.

I cross the old bridge
by daylight
avoiding their eyes.

I move
without seeing
into the tall cedars,
far past the
dead flowers.

I slip like a memory
following the dark
road

my white skin has
fooled them
every time.

Brett Enemark / THE VOICES

"Please share the skins I make you
a present of,

keep warm
keep the fire burning
and the ice
out.

"His skin was white and we knew at once
the ocean had frozen over in him.

Without women he came
with the morning,

Thru a white mist he came
down the river,

Oblivious of the way
and the size of place,

He kept going
yet he stayed.

We watch him
from the bank

Silently
like a lake

Becalmed, awaiting

This wind that blows mist away.

Na'kwoel the log rots
and soon all that's left of the tree
will be gone.

Na'kwoel lays in the water
after one hundred years of love and war
owner of the first iron axe
Dene toeneza.

Na'kwoel shouts a curse at time and rising from the waves
like the sturgeon from lakebottom, walks yelling:
Ha! Tcilhyaz nasoestleon a!
A new man.

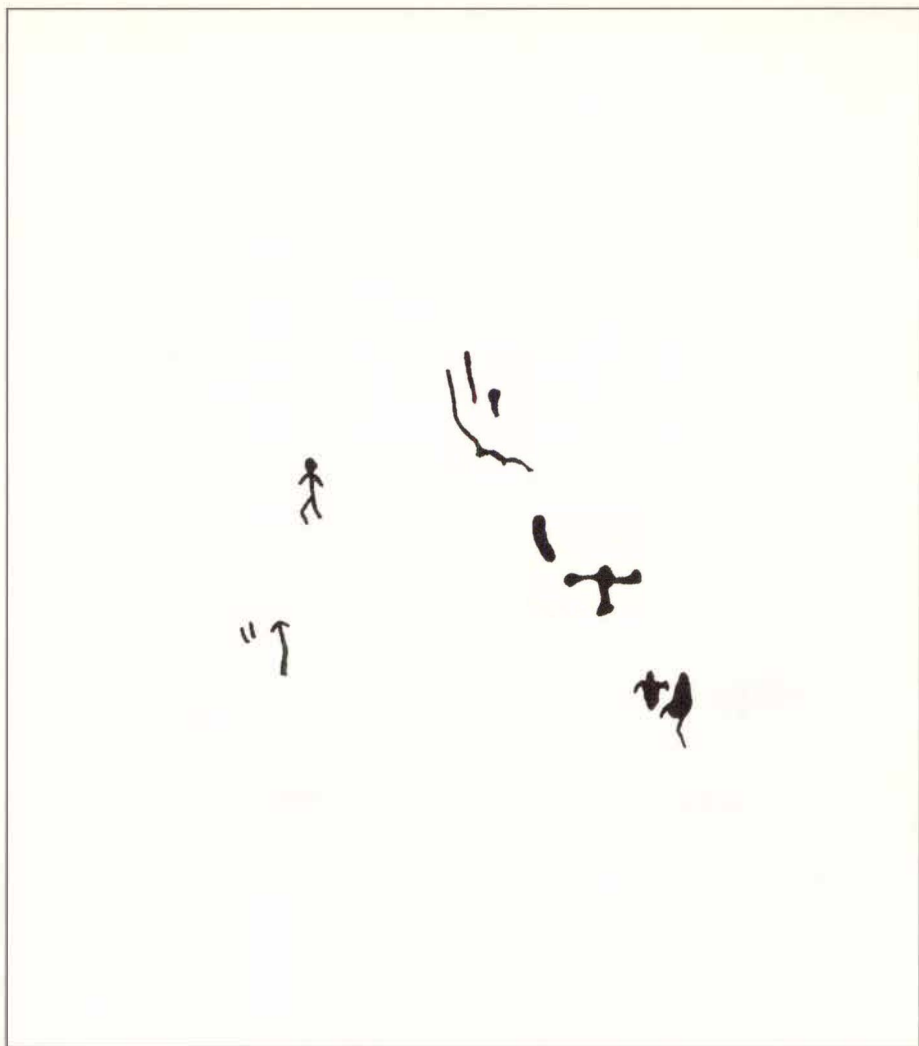
He died. Thereafter
the mountain rising (from the east shore of the lake)
began to dance, as he said it would
then plunged deep into the water
where the sturgeon lives.

August 4, 1974

Fred Wah /
THREE PICTOGRAPH VERSIONS



See those animals
I think moose browsing
in the grass just across the lake
and two of us dressed up as grass
thin out three to the north end
and stop them there like this.



See the arrow?
Even the beetles go.
And the birds, birds
something equal or familiar
twice, a two
such as a man and a lake
a place, the place
one can come back to.



There's a picture up Dog Creek
of a hullabaloo.

The basalt face remembers the event
with the insignia of a chickadee
and a constipated ant
who illustrated for a whole family
the dangers of a mountain lion
waiting down the path for dinner
so they didn't.

Maxine Gadd / FOUR POEMS

"IT CAME IN A DREAM"

it came in a dream :
time in this world when
 all minds shattered into six parts
 medieval static description of intricate and specific
angels; one with a black face and red eyes
 and the one with shimmering blue
 antennae — they don't do
 anything so they can't
 be evil, standing there, more than frozen
as the earth turns
 they fall
as the solid sky loses centrifugal force
the mind splits
 into twenty four hours, then
 1440 minutes, then
86400 seconds, but actually
 innumerable Neap's child
 saw persons shimmering and changing hue.
 it only amused him
 there are these faceless
 kings and queens in people, the flickerings
are far away, the interiors

have the glow of stone, mine
a leaden blue, Pluto's humour, the masses
of people driven thru
printed drownings
and beauty contests
into the mine
down the tunnels
as far into darkness as they dare go

5h343

there are whole lists of alliances,
you enter the lists,
lie lie lie or
stand on something,
maybe some other,
look
where the metal of your spear has come from, what
magnetic planet,
a stone named, like you are
looking from
a name seeking
the old name nobody gave you

PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA

command
thy soul to be in India,
or ocean, as the moon
turns to the sun, ah,
the powers of God Himself, they
that *affirm*
on the southern gate, the form
of a lion,
on the northern,
the form of a dog
and on the rotunda, the colour changed
each day so that each of the seven days
blind the city
and his prophecy of it passing was full of new light
he had it from the devil
like Isiah,
the thirty six gods, practice of / repeated practice of
celestial rites, Hermes
(I revert now
the cosmos
the zodiac
tiny angelic forms
a chain passing upward

from the woman's right arm,
 the monkey
 is Man
 imitates nature
 with simian grace, teacher of Agrippa,
 cryptography, Cabalist angel magic,
 Trithemius aims at using this angelic network
 for messages at a distance, by telepathy
 Samael, angle
 of the first hour, equals 4,440

 it forbids me,
 it forbids me
 to be in
 spired
 in
 side
 all wild things I'll call down
 to possess you, in yellow and white or green
 i'll throw away
 every hour of the day
 as i have always done, the edge
 of the sea
 beside me, all that ever was
 comes over us now

QUIET

Dick, we say,
Dick we will invoke
and more slender people
 (you don't know of whom I speak, and
 you should understand
 that it doesn't matter)

call upon whom
you will, it
doesn't matter
 will come
 if you are quiet
 (almost
 too easy to say)
 there are
 differences
 "Discrimination"
 is the attribute
 under the angel
 flames of green and red
 leaping from his head
 above the naked couple
 everyone
 says it is beautiful

that picture

why
in pure silence, then
do words want to come
regardless
of what they destroy?

candid
sphere, another

brighter,
deeper in things,
called "lumen"

the flowers on which Dante would walk
in some heaven of speech

that leads me
deceitfully,
deceivingly, I

Hermes Trismegistus,
tempted by the blood of the dead

“IT’S TOO MUCH”

it's too much / language stops here soon because nothing
runs along it but the opal engine of the final lonely dream
the manufacturers have gone into the cosmic, the ethical, the
esthetical, i am walking far behind the heroes who have
shattered their thighs in the important race and thinkin
“that's far out that i never did
learn anything great” but the heroes are beautiful and hang onto
each other, hooking into the opal engine i am envious and rage
to my mute friends about building dirigibles

thinking about yrself as a hero is one way of never being lonely but
what image can i choose?

she sits up weeping on her bed of pictures
or weary she weaves

can't imagine anything out of the prison of concepts
but the great striding goddesses
blazing power
or the turgid seated figure
who is our mother
sifting us, the grain

or there is the play of the laughing lady
in the woods i don't dream of the daemonesses
but i have heard of them

in your
dreams

this poetry we have learnt is the product of book burnings, of barbarian
raids, of peevish, knowledge-hungry monks
we have learnt
what was fit for the ears of kings
solely

(see the greasy turd with his paranoid eyes
and that well-trained whore, his queen)

the splendour of the creature who takes what it wants
and leaves
children to be reared
by any means possible
in a human-made cave
where the wind tortures
those who can't ride it

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

MAXINE GADD lives in Victoria but has spent a number of years in Vancouver. Her publications consist of *Guns of the West* (Blew Ointment Press), *Hochelaga* (Blew Ointment Press), *Practical Knowledge* (printed in 1969 at Intermedia), and an issue of *Air* (1971, published by Bertrand Lachance). "It came in a dream" first appeared in *IS 14*, an issue of work by women, edited by Penny Chalmers.

JOHN LOWRY is a New York writer, who has previously published in *California Quarterly*, *Works*, and *Red Clay Reader*. These pieces are from a collection called *Nanda's Nurds*.

BEVERLEY SIMONS went to India and Japan to encounter native theatre there, and found the experience powerful. Her play *Crabdance* was produced in 1969 by Malcolm Black at *A Contemporary Theatre*. The script is now in its 4th printing with Talonbooks, and she has just adapted it for CBC Radio. Mrs. Simons has been working intensively in film, doing three major scripts and some short pieces. She's now working on another full length theatre play. *Preparing* was produced in September 1973 at SFU, directed by Hagen Beggs and acted by Anna Hagen; it will be the title piece of a collection of her plays which Talonbooks is bringing out in February 1975.

NORA BLANCK recently moved to Vancouver from the United States. She participated in the show *Toward Costume* at the Vancouver Art Gallery in Spring 1974, and in a show of young B.C. artists at the Bau Xi Gallery, Summer 1974.

ROBIN BLASER grew up in Idaho and studied in Berkeley (Ernst Kantorowicz, the mediaeval scholar, was one of his teachers), where he was active in a group of poets that included Jack Spicer and Robert Duncan. He has lived in Vancouver since 1966 (he became a Canadian citizen in 1972) where he still lives, teaching at Simon Fraser University, editing (two issues of *Pacific Nation* appeared in 1967 and 1969), and writing. His new book *Image-Nations 1-12 & The Stadium of the Mirror* is due from Ferry Press (London, England) this year. He has also been editing *The Collected Books of Jack Spicer* which, with an essay titled "The Practice of Outside," Black Sparrow Press will be bringing out next year. In November he gave a reading at Capilano College in the 1974-1975 Poetry Reading Series.

GATHIE FALK, one of British Columbia's best known sculptors, has exhibited often in one-woman and group shows. Her most important recent exhibitions were in *Pacific Vibrations* at the Vancouver Art Gallery (Fall 1973), and a one-woman show in Paris (Spring 1974) arranged through The Department of External Affairs.

JOHN NEWLOVE is now writer-in-residence at Loyola College in Montreal, where he continues to write, edit, and teach. In October he read at Capilano College as part of the 1974-1975 Poetry Reading Series.

JOYCE CAROL OATES, an internationally acclaimed novelist and poet, continues to maintain an interest in little magazines. She has recently worked with others to start a new private bi-annual, *The Ontario Review*, published in Windsor, Ontario, where she also teaches at the University. "Fertilizing the Continent" is from her forthcoming book of poems, *The Fabulous Beasts*.

DOUGLAS BLAZEK is an American poet living in Sacramento, California. He has edited a number of little magazines over the years, and has been affiliated with COSMEP. His last book was *Skull Juices* (Twowindows Press, 1970).

LESLIE KEYWORTH is a student at The University of British Columbia. This is her first appearance in print.

DARYL RASMUSSEN is a student at Capilano College where he is now majoring in English and Biology, having taken courses in Creative Writing the previous year. This is his first publication.

DAVID WILK lives in Carrboro, North Carolina, where he edits *Truck* (Box 86, Carrboro), the last issue of which included his "Notes Towards a Phenomenology of Landscape." He is planning to bring out a winter issue dedicated to the work of the late Lorine Niedecker.

PENNY CHALMERS, whose first book, *Bearing Down*, was published by Coach House Press, has been organizing the reading series at A Space Gallery in Toronto, and will be initiating a branch series in Victoria this November. Her poem in this issue comes from a new manuscript titled *tranceform*.

SUSAN MUSGRAVE read at Capilano College last Spring as part of that season's Poetry Reading Series. She continues to live in Victoria. Her recent book, *Grave Dirt & Selected Strawberries* (Macmillan), appeared earlier this year.

BRETT ENEMARK is from Prince George (Lheitli) but has been living intermittently in Vancouver since 1965. He is currently attending Simon Fraser University, is a student of Robin Blaser's, and with others is editing *Iron* (323 Semlin Drive, Vancouver). A double issue of *Iron* (15-16) is scheduled to appear late this year.

FRED WAH, who "grew up on the shores of the Kootenay" and did graduate work at Albuquerque and Buffalo (where he co-edited *Magazine of Further Studies* and *Niagard Frontier Review*), now lives in South Slocan and teaches at Selkirk College. His most recent publications are *Among* (Coach House Press, 1972), *Tree* (Writing Series #9, Vancouver Community Press, 1972) and *Earth* (Curriculum of the Soul #6, Institute of Further Studies, Buffalo, 1974). He edits the mimeo mag *Scree* and has most recently been writing a series of poems based on the pictographs recorded in John Corner's *Pictographs in the Interior of B.C.*

The Editors of *The Capilano Review* would like to thank BEVERLEY REID for the magnificent and painstaking work she did in making the initial transcript (some 70 pages) of the Robin Blaser tapes for *The Metaphysics of Light*. We would also like to thank DOUG BJORKMAN for kindly allowing us to use his photographs of Robin Blaser.

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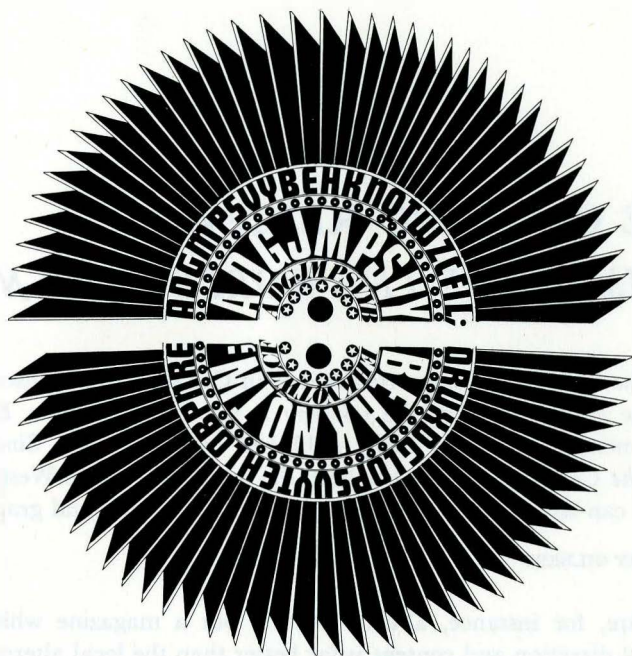
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Fall 1974

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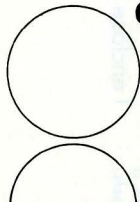
sept 18 bp NICHOL
oct 9 JOHN NEWLOVE
nov 13 ROBIN BLASER
dec 11 AUDREY THOMAS

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prose

by Maxine Gadd
John Lowry

a

new play by Beverley Simons

visual

art by Nora Blanck
Gathie Falk

new

poetry

by John Newlove
Joyce Carol Oates
Susan Musgrave
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Robin Blaser
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Lecture No. 8:
The Metaphysics of Light