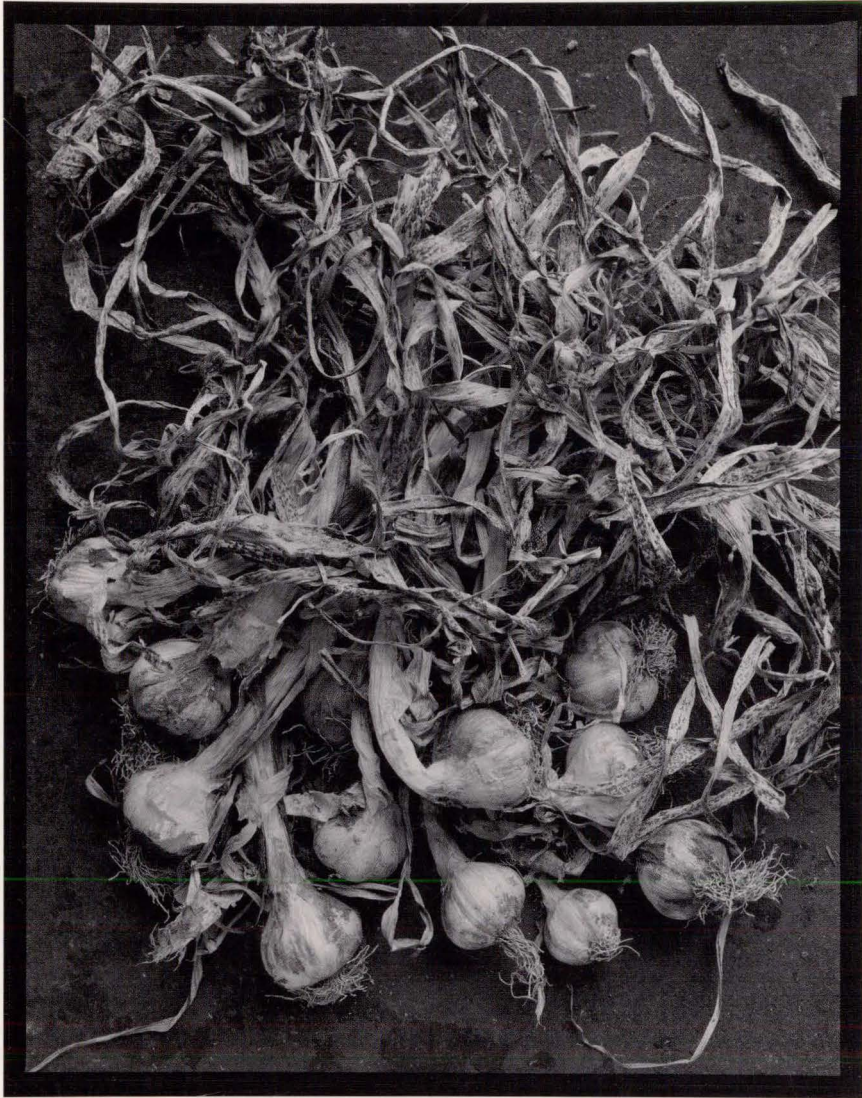


THE CAPILANO REVIEW



fear no one, look
out of yourself & be still

but not stopped

— David Phillips

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PREFACE

This issue marks the end of my current tenure as Editor, a period of two years during which we redesigned the magazine, computerized the office, secured increased funding, established a Managing Editor's position, and moved towards expanding the magazine's editorial vision. These changes and this growth would not have been possible without the energy and intelligent guidance of *TCR's* Managing Editors: first Leslie Savage, who accomplished much of the necessary ground work, and in the last year, Jane Hamilton, who built upon these foundations and broke new ground herself. The magazine has also benefitted from the insights of Barry Cogswell as Assistant Editor and the generous work of many volunteers, notably Sherri Bird, Barbara French and Aaron Vidaver.

The move to expand *TCR's* editorial vision will be furthered by Bob Sherrin, who takes over as Editor in August. He began his work earlier this year, however, when he commissioned an editorial collective of women artists and writers to create a special issue for publication as *TCR #6* in Fall 1991. The Editorial Collective — Angela Hryniuk, Carol Williams, Marcia Crosby and Zainub Verjee — invited a number of British Columbian women artists and writers to submit work on the theme of *Struggle: Local & Global*. In this process they have already assembled a superb issue of prose, poetry, critical theory and essays by such writers as Daphne Marlatt, Betsy Warland, Kate Braid, Carmen Rodriguez, C. Allyson Lee, Gail Harris, Sandy Frances Duncan, Larissa Lai, Susan Crean, Donna Clark, Kathryn MacLeod, Janet Theny, Grace Sanchez, and visual work by such artists as Laiwan, Allyson Clay, Margot Butler, Haruko Okano, Dianna Li, Ingrid Koenig, Kiki Yee, Marianne Nicholson, Jin-Me Yoon, Katherine Kortikow, Catherine Stewart, Skai Fowler, and Lorna Brown, among others.

With that issue, Bob Sherrin and Jane Hamilton will begin a new phase in *TCR's* evolving tradition of publishing excellent and innovative work.

Gordon Cavenaile / A PACK OF SMOKES

The first time my mother saw Ernie Bond, she knew he was a hoodlum. We had heard the clack of hard shoes on the stairs, and then he stood leaning in the little alcove by the door as Bob introduced him. His blonde hair was slicked back in a well-greased duck-tail, and he wore a tight leather jacket and blue jeans.

"This is Ernie," Bob said, sounding a little proud.

"Hi," Ernie said, and pulled a pack of smokes out of some pocket hidden on the inside of his jacket. Then he lifted his head in my direction. "How old's the kid?"

"He's twelve," my mother answered, giving him her sternest, coldest look.

"Almost thirteen," I added, which meant in less than six months. I was wondering how he'd react to that look of my mother's on him.

"Thirteen, huh." Ernie Bond lit his cigarette and looked at Bob, not even aware of my mother. "So that's your kid brother, huh."

"Yeah, but he's not as dumb as he looks." Bob smiled his handsome smile, the one he said dropped the chicks. "He's got my brains."

"Brains!" Ernie puffed out a cloud of smoke and held up the dead match. "Ashtray in the place?"

I got the ashtray before Bob and handed it to Ernie.

"Thanks, kid," he said, and winked at me, friendly enough so that I asked him about his shoes.

"Where'd you get them?" They were black and pointed, and the laces tied at the side.

"You mean the shoes?" He lifted a foot and then the other, looking down on them like he'd just noticed them. "Oh, you know," he said.

"Uptown."

Up close, he smelled like leather, engine grease, and the sweet hair cream that always made me think of barber shops. I didn't know what else to say and stood there. Ernie winked again and took a long drag of his smoke.

"Thirteen, huh," he said, exhaling and nodding.

"I guess you're going out now." From my mother's voice I knew it was an order.

"Yeah." Ernie blew a few smoke rings up at the ceiling. "We were

thinking about it."

I already knew from listening to my mother that it was Ernie Bond who had made Bob drop out of school. That was the kind of thing that hoodlums did. She had long arguments with Bob about it, especially in the first couple of weeks after he quit. They faced each other in the kitchen: Bob would pace back and forth from the door to the sink to the stove and my mother always sat in her usual place at the table smoking and playing solitaire, telling him off in her steady, neutral voice.

"He's no good," she said. "He's a hoodlum."

"He's my best friend," Bob would snap back, maybe yanking a hand out of his pocket to gesture with, or slapping the counter by the sink.

"A good friend for you to have. What do you do when you're out with him?"

"Drive around. He's got a car." Then he'd go on the attack: "And what's it to you, anyway? Why do you always want to know everything I do? I take care of myself."

"I take care of you as long as you're in this house," she said, "and don't you forget it." She didn't look up from her cards. "He's a hoodlum."

"He's not!" Usually at this point, Bob would go stomping out the door, beaten by my mother's steely conviction, or else he'd go into the bedroom, slamming the door behind him while my mother continued her cigarette and card game with herself.

As the summer approached and the weather got dryer and warmer, Bob spent more and more time driving around with Ernie. I used to see them making slow cruises along McBride Avenue, or racing along the dirt roads down by the docks where I went fishing. Ernie would blow his ah-oogah horn and they'd wave, and sometimes if there were girls in the car, they'd wave too. One day I had just cut off the school field, and Ernie pulled to a fast stop when he saw me.

"Need a ride, kid?" he asked. There was an Indian girl with long straight hair close to him on the front seat. "Where you headed?"

I was looking at the car.

"Chev," Ernie told me. "Fifty-five. Classic, huh."

It shone bright black in the sun like it had just been painted. On the side in front of the driver's door there was a decal: Woody Woodpecker, his beak filled with big human teeth, clamped down on

a huge cigar smoking red at the tip. His beady little bird's eyes were narrowed, and he looked angry.

"He's a hoodlum," my mother repeated when I told her Ernie Bond had given me a ride home.

"His car's a fifty-five Chev," I answered, thinking that might put it into perspective for her. "We drove up and down McBride a few times."

"You did, did you." It wasn't a question.

"Sure. He bought me a milkshake. He's nice." Somehow, it sounded like a lie.

"He's a Bond," my mother said, and turned her attention back on the cigarettes she was rolling in her long cigarette roller.

He was a Bond. For my mother that meant if he wasn't as bad as his father yet, he soon would be. It wasn't any surprise, she'd say, that Ernie Bond's father and mine were best friends. The two had become 'as thick as thieves' ever since she'd kicked my father out. They met in the Legion and went on long drunks together, stumbling through the town's half-dozen bars, and getting fired up into bursts of old army songs when it got near closing time. Every time my mother got really angry at Bob, she fixed him with her hard, unrelenting stare.

"You'll be as bad as your father."

One night she laid down the law.

"Get a job," she told Bob.

"Get a job!" he repeated, as if she'd said something unbelievable.

"What am I going to do?"

"I don't care. You're seventeen. You figure it out. But you're not going to spend my money galavanting around with that hoodlum of yours."

"He's not a hoodlum!" He whacked a leg against the table as he stood up angrily.

"And you're turning into a hoodlum, too." They stared at each other.

"I know what you're up to," she said, her voice controlled and certain.

"Don't think I don't."

The summer came and Ernie started working full-time. His father had a shop down at the docks where they repaired boat engines and outboard motors, so with the good weather there was always lots of work. Bob began to spend more time at home. When the summer vacation came I'd wake up after my mother had gone to work and

find him at the kitchen table, usually smoking one of her cigarettes. He'd sit there for hours, either playing solitaire or sketching on lined paper he pulled out of my school notebooks. Usually he drew pictures of boats, big cabin cruisers with double Mercury 88's and names like 'Cruisin' Easy' and 'Sea Dream.' Other times he found a picture of a long-haired model in Life magazine and tried to copy her face.

"They all look the same," I told him one day.

"Shut up," he said, and kept on drawing. "What do you know about chicks, anyway?"

"They all look like Veronica." I showed him an Archie comic. He looked at a few panels and puffed on his cigarette.

"No it doesn't," he said.

"Look at the eyes." They were the same empty oval.

"Where?"

I grabbed the sketch.

"There." I pointed and he grabbed it back.

"Cool it, kid," he said.

"And look at those lips."

He compared the drawing again. Then he tore it up and punched me on the shoulder.

"Let's go see Ernie, smart ass. You got nothing better to do."

The shop was just where the gravel road forked off to the Open Ocean Cannery and the Union dock. It was a small, wooden building, almost a shack, and inside, it was a mess. A bare bulb lit up heaps of engine parts; covers, propellers, shafts, starters, bolts, cotter pins, and loose bits I couldn't recognize were all jumbled together against the walls and scattered across the tin-covered work bench. One small window in the back wall looked out onto the trawlers and gill-netters at the Union dock.

Ernie was working alone when we came in, his black t-shirt rolled up to the shoulders and a cigarette in his mouth. He mumbled some kind of greeting and kept on working. He had a tattoo of a girl in a bikini just by his bicep; when he tightened the vise-grip to hold a propeller, the girl wiggled with the flexing of his muscle. Then he started banging on the propeller with a mallet until it flew with a sudden whang out of the vise-grip and hit the concrete floor.

"Fuck it," Ernie said and threw the mallet onto the bench. "Let's get out of here."

We went to the cannery café and they had chips and gravy and I sucked on a milkshake. They made jokes I didn't understand and laughed, poking each other in the ribs. Sometimes I ended up laughing too.

"Then you run to the other one."

"Drip drip drip."

"But they're pissed off at you because you took too long."

"So you tell them you made the best time you could —"

"But there were a lot of stops along the way!"

They stopped talking because they were doubling up. Ernie swung around on the revolving stool and whooped. I made a loud sucking noise as I hit the bottom of my milkshake and Ernie stopped suddenly, his eyes wide like he'd heard something amazing.

"Gotta go, honey," he sputtered, and they both spun around now, laughing harder than ever, and I made the sound again and started laughing with them.

Bob got home late that night and he had to face my mother, who was up half-watching T.V. and playing solitaire, waiting. She was angry as usual, and she had news.

"I talked to Frank at Reliable Cabs. They need a graveyard dispatcher. You go up and see him tomorrow."

"Dispatcher!" He was loud and ready to argue. "You're crazy. I'm not going to be a dispatcher."

"You talk to him tomorrow or you don't come back to this house."

He started yelling at her and she blamed Ernie Bond for turning him into a hoodlum. Suddenly he clenched up his fist and punched it against the wall. I could feel the room shake a bit.

"Don't you say that again," he told her.

She looked at him, her eyes stony cold, and I knew what was in her mind.

"You've been drinking," she said.

"I do what I want."

"You go see Frank tomorrow."

"I do what I want," he repeated, and the way he said it this time, low and serious, scared me more than his hitting the wall.

My mother was relentless. She stared back at him for a long half-minute, and then nodded like this was exactly what she had expected.

"You'll do what I tell you." She picked up the cards. "You don't

forget that." She started shuffling the cards and my nervousness passed because I could see it was all settled now. Bob hadn't moved; he still stood tilted aggressively forward with his hands on his hips, but we knew it was just show.

"What do I know about dispatching?" he finally asked, and instead of anger there was a kind of whining defiance. "Got any ideas about that?"

"You go see Frank tomorrow before five o'clock. He's expecting you."

"Jesus!" Bob spun around and headed back out, slamming the door behind him. Without thinking I got up and swung it open again and was about to follow him when my mother snapped,

"Where do you think you're going?"

"Just out," I said.

"It's after eleven."

"So what." I looked at her, hoping she'd let me go so I wouldn't have to make a choice. "No school anyway."

"Go on then," she said, but it was a dismissal, not the permission I wanted, and I waited. "Go on," she said again. I tried to hear a softening in her voice, but couldn't. The cards were set out and she started laying down the half deck in her hand in sets of three. Her attention off me, I slipped through the door and caught up to Bob where he'd stopped near the bottom of the hill. He was hunched around the cigarette he was lighting.

"She's mad."

He puffed and smoke rose into the darkness and vanished. The night was warm and a breeze, still sour with the cannery smell, came up from the docks. He shook the match half a dozen times; then he looked closely at his knuckles and flicked the match into the street.

"Sure she's mad," he said, and continued walking.

"You better go see Frank," I called from behind. That was the best advice as far as I could see, but he didn't answer. "How's your hand, anyway?" The scrape and clack of his blakeys drifted off ahead. In a few minutes he cut off onto the gravel road that ran by Ernie's shop, then took the right to the Union dock. I eased down the gang-plank behind him and found him standing at the end of one of the piers, dimly lit by a small bulb hung from a trawler mast. The wind was cooler and damper, and laced with salt and a rotten fish smell. Water lapped at the boat hulls and from everywhere there was the sound

of wet wood rubbing and creaking. He seemed a lot older then, hardly aware of me and standing there, staring out at the harbour hidden by the night.

"What's that like, anyway?"

"What's that?"

"Smoking."

"Find out yourself," he said, and without turning around, bumped a hand back against me. I took the pack, then matches. I held the flame beneath a cigarette, but the breeze blew it out, so I tried cupping my hands around the next one like Bob and Ernie did. The flame held, but nothing happened.

"Jesus!" Bob laughed, looking at me over his shoulder now. "Suck! You got to suck!"

I lit another and sucked, and in a second my lungs jammed up with smoke. My cough felt like a firecracker set off inside me. The cigarette was going and I tried it again and coughed some more. Bob had turned around and stood with his hands on his hips, a grin spread across his face.

"That's it," he encouraged. "Just keep sucking."

I kept sucking until it seemed like the stars had suddenly dropped down on me and the dock flew upwards. I was coughing out of control and wanted to throw up, and I could feel Bob's arms wrap around me to hold me up.

"Take it easy, kid," he said. "It gets better, honest."

Bob went to see Frank and he got the job dispatching. My mother just nodded when he told her, but pretty soon I could feel the tension between them ease up. She stopped talking about Ernie Bond and once, when Bob got up to leave, she told him he might as well smoke in the house like he always did, anyway. On his days off he disappeared before noon and showed back up in our bedroom at three or four in the morning, smelling like booze and making clumsy efforts to be quiet, but however much my mother knew about that, she let it go.

"He's almost eighteen," she told me one time when I got bored and complained that he was never around anymore. "He does what he wants."

I could have said something about that but soon enough Bob and I had our own understanding. It wasn't too long after he started

working that he called up late one Friday night while we were watching the late show. He sounded confidential, like he was going to tell me a secret.

"Hey, kid," he said, "glad you answered. Listen, want to do me a little favour?"

"Sure," I said.

"Okay, now don't say anything to the old lady but get the sawbuck in my jeans on the bed and bring it up here. Tell her you're going to bring me up a sandwich or something, and just say yes or no and keep quiet about the bill, got it?"

"Chicken or peanut butter and jam?"

"Hey, kid," he said, and I could hear the smile. "Now let me talk to her and I'll get you out of there. And come to think of it —"

"What?"

The smile got bigger.

"Make that chicken."

I ran most of the dozen or so blocks up to the cab stand. It was half a block off McBride, right across from the New Imperial Palace, the town's only late night restaurant. There was a waiting room first, empty except for a few folding wooden chairs; the dispatch office was next to it, a little cubicle filled with Bob's cigarette smoke and barely lit by a small lamp next to the pair of telephones. Bob was busy with calls and a phone was ringing. He pointed with his cigarette at a chair next to his.

"Hang on," he said, "we got us a little problem here, but nothing to worry about." Then, to the stand-up mike in front of him: "Now get out of your trunk, forty-six, and tell me what your problem is, and make it fast because the joint is jumping."

"Is drunk, the problem is." The voice was thin and crackly, like it was coming in from Alaska or someplace.

"So what's the beef? Some of my best friends are drunks and you're probably a drunk yourself, and they tip pretty well so I just don't understand the big deal here, forty-six." He spoke fast, and the roll of his voice reminded me of the Saturday afternoon disc jockey.

"Is no is conscious in the back is the problem and I no get no money."

Bob grinned sideways at me.

"Eye-tie," he said, and back to the mike: "Now what you got to do,

forty-six, is get out, open the back door, grab that guy by the heels and shake him upside down, you got that? Do that and something tells me you'll get your fare."

"Easy you to say!" The crackle got louder. "But what do with him?" He drunk like dead man, he no move and how you think I get next trip with dead man in the back seat, you tell me that I want to know."

"Then try the front seat!" Bob snapped back, his voice suddenly sharp as a knife. He grabbed the phone, which was still ringing, and a second later called the trip, his voice serious and business-like now: "Anyone for the Savoy lobby, please, for a Mrs. Smith and her handsome escort, who's getting the Savoy, please?"

The bars were already on their last call, and the phones started to ring steady. Out the small square of window I could see the front doors of the Palace and the people rolling in for late night plates of chow mein and egg rolls. Now and again someone would stick his head into the dispatch room and say,

"Hey, mac, got one for home base?"

After the bar rush eased off, Bob pulled up a beer from under the control board and we shared the chicken sandwich. He gave me a cigarette and while I was smoking it a cab stopped outside, and a young driver wearing jeans and a buckskin jacket brought in a case of beer.

"The sawbuck, kid," Bob said to me, and when I brought it out the driver took it.

"And your change, sir." The driver dropped some bills into Bob's hand.

"Meet the kid brother," Bob told him, handing back one of the bills and tilting his head at me.

"Hi." I exhaled into the already thick air and tried to blow a smoke ring; it broke up after a couple of inches.

"Hi." The driver nodded. "Little late for you to be up, isn't it?" Before I could tell him that I stayed up as long as I wanted he was backing out the door. "Back on the road," he said. "Feed me a few hot ones."

"Hey." Bob turned around with his hands up in a what-do-you-mean gesture. "Have I got any other kind?"

After that I went up to the stand every chance I got. Sometimes after the bars had closed Ernie Bond would show up with an Indian

girl under his arm. He'd wink at me and say,

"Hey, kid, how's it going?"

"Got a smoke?" I'd ask, pretty sure that was the best answer to give. Then I'd leave because there wasn't enough room in the little cubicle and Bob always told me to take a walk. I smoked Ernie's cigarette on my way back down McBride.

School started, but Bob still called now and then on Friday or Saturday night. One time he sounded excited and talked in his fast voice like he was still on the air.

"It's a hell of a night up here, kid, but I've got things under control and there's nothing to worry about, just a little favour I want you to do for me. Still got that twenty bucks left from your birthday, and just answer yes or no, nothing stupid like yes, Bob, I've still got the twenty."

I did and in a minute, by saying yes three or four times, I'd agreed to lend it to him.

"Fifty per cent interest," he promised, "next week, the minute I get my check you got an even thirty in your greedy little paws, honest. And bring the wake up pills with you and just keep clammed up about the twenty, that's just our little secret, got it?"

In the dispatch office things were normal, except that there were already a few empty beer on the control board. Bob was doing everything at once: smoking, answering the phones, writing down addresses, dispatching trips, handling driver problems, and working on a fresh beer.

"Hey," he greeted me, "it's the kid with the dough. Guess who was just here?" He pointed at one of the bottles. "The old man and he's gone on a long one with old man Bond like he's not going to stop. Started arguing and wanting to dispatch because anything his son could do he could do better, so I let him but" — a cab cut him off — "just a minute. What's that?" he said to the mike. "Who's complaining now? Did I hear your voice, sixteen?"

"Sixteen, nobody here," a staticy voice said.

"Nobody there?!" Bob sounded amazed.

"Nobody here," the voice repeated.

"Well have you knocked on the door yet?"

A silence.

"Sixteen?" Bob called sweetly.

"I been here honking and waiting almost —"

"Sixteen," Bob cut him off, sounding weary now, "how many times do I have to tell you to knock on the door before you start in with your moaning. Now just put on your socks and shoes and little woolly mittens and step on out. The rest you'll figure out for yourself." He took a drink of his beer. "They love it," he said to me. Then he snapped his fingers. "The bucks, kid."

I gave him the twenty and put the pills out. They were small and pink and came in a little box with a rooster crowing on it. Bob washed a couple down with his beer and when he went back to the mike, I took a couple, too, and drank the foamy bottom left in the bottle. Without asking I slipped a cigarette out of the pack Bob always had in front of him and lit up; that made me feel at home. He dug up another beer with his right hand while he held the phone to his ear with his left, and I took sips on that he either didn't notice or didn't care about. Now and then drivers showed up in the dispatch doorway and joked with him between calls before getting back into their cabs out front. One older driver looked more serious.

"Kid, you want to take it easy on that beer."

I was going to tell him I'd only had one drink when I realized he was talking to Bob.

"You know Frank doesn't go for that," the driver added.

Bob raised a hand, oath-like.

"Stone cold sober and straight as an arrow," he said. "Ask the punk here, he'll tell you."

"You watch him," the driver said to me and for a second I thought he was serious. "What'll we do if he starts shooting his mouth off?"

Bob laughed.

"Don't I treat you hacks right!" Then, cool, into the phone he'd just picked up: "Reliable Cabs, and how are you this evening?"

When the young driver in the buckskin jacket came in Bob passed him back the twenty.

"Make it two and make them cold."

The driver took the money and nodded at me.

"Busy?" I asked, like I figured an off-duty driver would say it.

"Sure, it's always busy with him on the mike."

While Bob handled the bar rush I thought about my future as a cab driver. I saw myself driving at night, smoke dangling from my

mouth the way it dangled from Bob's, the window open and the meter running. The picture made me feel excited and I took a long drink of beer and grabbed another cigarette. The first jump of smoke still left me dizzy, but I enjoyed that now. I was filling in details of the future when I heard shouts from across the street. I looked and saw four or five people in front of the Palace, all tangled up together and swinging and pushing at each other. People were gathering to watch.

"On the war path," Bob said.

I looked again and saw they were Indian. In a minute there were only two fighting, big Indians with long hair wearing heavy plaid lumber-jack shirts and blue jeans. Bob had lifted the window to get a better look, and we could hear thuds and an occasional crack, like wood snapping. Nobody got the better of it and the police we kept expecting didn't show up. Finally, one of the Indians, his hair stuck in smears of blood across his face, wandered down the street followed by a couple of the onlookers. The other one stumbled across the street into the waiting room and then poked his head into the dispatch room. We watched. A little stream of blood from somewhere around an eye made its way down his cheek, under his lower lip, and dripped from the centre of his chin.

"Hey, bub," Bob said, trying to smile. "Need a cab?"

The Indian nodded and that shook more blood from his chin.

"Got to go to the hospital. Problem here." He touched his nose with a finger and I saw his scraped knuckles through more blood. Then he carefully pushed on the side of his nose and it seemed to move. "Jesus!" he moaned and as he stumbled backwards on the verge of collapsing, Bob jumped up and helped him to one of the wooden chairs. Then he called the trip.

"Code eight," he said, "wounded Indian at the stand, code eight, who's got it?"

The radio went dead until a driver took the trip, and then it burst into a jumble of static and crackly, complaining voices, and both telephones began ringing.

"You handle those," Bob ordered and slid the phones over to me. "Complete address, apartment number, name, when they'll be ready, got it?" He repeated it and went to work on the mike, sorting out the no shows and wrong addresses and giving out the trips I passed him on slips of paper.

After an hour Bob could handle the phones and the mike by himself, and I leaned back; I felt excited and ready to pass out at the same time. I drank more of Bob's beer and took a couple more of the wake-up pills. When the young driver came in with a couple cases of beer Bob opened a bottle and slid it over to me.

"We need it, kid," he said, and took a long drink from his while the driver checked the blood-stains in the doorway.

At about three-thirty Ernie Bond appeared in the doorway, looking loose and leaning heavily on the Indian girl I'd met in his car. He drained the beer he had with him, tossed the empty behind him into the waiting room, and burped long and loud.

"I'm full of piss!" he said, and gave a little whoop. The Indian girl giggled.

"It's been a gas, kid," Bob told me, but I wasn't ready to go and ignored him. He kicked my chair.

"Got a smoke?" I asked Ernie.

"Why sure thing, sure thing." A smile spread across his face and he tossed me one, and the Indian girl giggled as I lit up. "No wind in here, kid," Ernie said.

The cigarette going, I started to explain what had happened, still ignoring Bob who kicked my chair again, harder. I pointed to the blood-stains and felt proud of them, like it was my own blood.

"He stood there bleeding just about ready to die and he wanted a taxi and when he pushed on his nose we could see it move a couple inches, and that's when he almost passed out and —"

"Wild," Ernie interrupted, and burped again, and Bob kicked my chair hard enough to move it backwards.

"Hey," Bob said, and the sound was short and sharp. "Hear what I say?"

I was watching Ernie to see his reaction, but my vision had started to double. I kept on talking anyway, about the Indian and the blood and answering the phones until Ernie came over and squatted down in front of me. We stared at each other for a few seconds and I started to feel dizzy because we were both rocking back and forth. Then he snapped his fingers close to my face and the rocking stopped.

"Hey," he said, still smiling. "When big brother snaps, you jump, right?"

I nodded sloppily and tried to concentrate on what he was saying.

"That means just cruise off, know what I mean?"

I nodded again, but I was thinking about that grin: it was big and full of teeth and it might have been there for hours, or even days; the corners of his mouth were cocked tightly back towards the ears, and beneath the greased wave of blonde hair his eyes were hard and black, like licorice jawbreakers. Then he went out of focus again and I felt Bob's boot whack against my chair.

Bob got fired pretty soon after that. As soon as my mother heard, she nodded her head, her face a stony expression that said, 'I knew it.' She also knew it had something to do with Ernie Bond, even if she didn't know exactly what.

"Frank's an asshole," Bob accused. "I did a good job, you ask any of the drivers. He's got something against me, that's all."

"Nothing but trouble," she accused in her turn, stubbing out one cigarette and pulling another out of the Player's tin, "it's been nothing but trouble since you took up with that hoodlum."

"That hoodlum!" Bob mimicked in a loud voice, "that hoodlum, nothing but trouble since you met that hoodlum!" He got up and knocked his chair back. "That's all I hear is that hoodlum, that hoodlum!" He started to pace back and forth in between the kitchen table and the sink. "What do you know about it anyway?"

She watched him above the match she held to her cigarette.

"He's a Bond." She spoke out of the side of her mouth around the cigarette, then blew the match out.

"He's a Bond, he's a Bond!" He pointed a finger at her as he paced, full of challenge. "Your problem is you don't know a thing about it!"

"I do know." Her voice was like metal; there wasn't any give in it.

"Not a goddamn thing!" He sounded tough and relentless himself, but I could already hear something familiar there ready to crack.

"I know who you are and what you're up to. You get that straight."

Bob didn't even try to answer that, and I saw why. He kept pacing faster and faster like he was driven now by his own silence, until he seemed to be jerking himself back and forth in a shrinking circuit from the stove to the little alcove by the door.

"He's no good." She was back in her neutral voice, but it suddenly sounded soft. She wasn't looking at either of us, and could have been talking to Bob about Ernie, to me about Bob, or to both of us about

the old man, who was somehow part of the argument. And that was it.

"Jesus!" Bob grabbed his jean jacket off the back of the chair and headed out the door. Then my mother looked at me and I knew that there was no chance of following him without telling her every thought running through her head was true.

He got back late that night and woke me up when he tripped over one of the chairs in our room. I turned on the light and saw how drunk he was by the loose, rubbery way he smiled at me.

"Sorry, kid," he said in a whisper about as loud as his normal voice, and dropped with a bouncing squeak of springs onto my bed. "How's she hanging? Having any wet dreams? Just let me check." He made as if to yank off my covers and I held on to them, laughing and then trying to choke back the sounds. In a few seconds we were both laughing like we were being tickled and strangled at the same time.

Then he got quiet and sat there, nodding his head slowly and definitely at the wall. The smile drifted away and he shrugged his shoulders about something.

"What does that asshole expect, anyway?" He looked at me and the grin flashed back for a second. "Watch out for assholes, kid."

I listened while he started rambling. Ernie Bond was an asshole now just like his old man and ours was even worse and if that wasn't bad enough, he had to deal with grade A-one assholes like that asshole Frank and on top of that, the old lady was always shouting him down —

"She never shouts," I put in.

"She always shouts," Bob said, surprised. "You ever heard her talk in a normal voice? I never heard her talk in a normal voice. The broad's a born shouter. Now you take the old man, he's not a shouter. There you got a moaner when he's not too pissed up to remember what he's got to moan about. Asshole, anyway." He stood up before I could ask it and turned around and pointed his finger at me, almost steady on his feet. "And your Ernie, there's a guy for you. You take him and his old man and you got something I don't even want to think about." He yanked off his jeans and his shirt and stood there in his socks and underwear; he looked skinny and stupid like that, but his eyes had sharpened and the way he looked at me reminded me of my mother. "And don't bother asking me, kid. Next time you see that asshole, talk to him about it. Got it?"

I was running through his list of assholes in my mind.

"Got it," I said anyway.

"Got it," he confirmed, and collapsed like dead weight backwards onto his bed.

A few weeks later Bob told my mother he'd joined the navy. She didn't seem surprised or sad or even happy. She didn't seem anything.

"You're too young," she said. "You have to be eighteen."

Bob smiled his handsome smile.

"I lied," he told her.

Then, almost before I realized it, he was packed and ready to go. He said goodbye to my mother one morning before she went to work and then grabbed my arm and pulled me out of bed.

"Come on, kid," he said. "It's time to roll."

We said goodbye on the street outside the apartment. I had my books under my arm and he carried a huge canvas duffle bag stuffed full and tied with rope. Somehow, he already looked like a sailor. Serious and mature, he shook my hand for the first time in my life. Then he gave me his pack of cigarettes.

"I'll send that twenty," he promised. "Hundred per cent interest, honest."

I didn't go to school that day. I waited until he was up the hill by the traffic light, a small black form made lopsided by the duffle bag, and then I followed him. He headed straight up McBride, and I went through the alleys behind the stores, keeping parallel to him. When the alley met the cross street I waited until I saw him disappear further up McBride, and then I ran through the next alley, leaning close against the back corner of the last store until I saw him again. He was wearing his jean jacket, jeans, and new black boots he'd bought. His hair was combed back into a slick black duck-tail that glinted in the bright morning light, and once I saw him stop and yank open the duffle bag. He pulled out his sunglasses and put them on. After he got to the bus station I went down to where the park overlooked the trains and the harbour. The pack was half-empty but he'd stuck matches inside, so I smoked a few while I sat there thinking about submarines and the navy.

John Pass / from GIMPY RAPTURE

AND THE DEEPEST VOICE, THE SUREST

next to nothing
inheres, essential

sibling to the form-blind dark, emanation
where they disappeared, where the forms drift

in the house-guest's waking dream formulating
Harley-Davidson, a 747

somewhere overhead, precise
white line dissolving in the pre-dawn

pallor. Sound and word and
neither, thunderous, fearsome

"from the heart of the tempest..."
Oh, she didn't want to hear this

hurrying home from Sunday school afraid

she'd been so good He would speak to her
call her to Him. Try not to imagine

a voice, single
in magnificence, the deafening harmonics

of everything at once empowered, its wind
in the high firs' shadow across the playingfield

the burnished, burdened clouds grumbling
as she runs for the small, lit windows.

OF A WORLD ONCE VARIOUS AND FLUID

Alone in the moonlight
as a doll on a shelf. Porcelain

inasmuch as one selects with care
a point of view, treads carefully

setting up to photograph
the Lake District, sensing behind one

the Stellarfield nuclear power station
or organic paradox prodigiously

afoot, the rippling gait
and glossy coat, weighty

unlikely beauty of the bear sidling
away, a dump bear.

Too much we see in Nature that is ours:
the murky black and white of us

in free-will free-fall long-
suffering distension, gimpy rapture

nailed up good
"like gold to ayery thinnesse beate."

"O Captain! my Captain!" the cabin
door burst open at 30,000 feet

makes light of anguish
makes haste to the elemental

shelf life, half-life, moon life.
Our disaster, everything's.

Duncan McNaughton / THREE POEMS

LUCKY AT CARDS

The movie played a comedy about the wrong number
of lovers played by stars given words to say
the way a perfect stranger is taken over by the same one
who writes movie talk and gives motion to the heavens
and becomes like one of those beings so new to life on earth
so perfect so strange so puzzled by the monetary system.

What do you mean by asking "What does it want to say?"
it wasn't trying to convince anyone it was a movie
it's not the fault of words that they don't know anything.

After midnight like silk flowers in dim hours
bright notes trumpet.

UNTITLED

Whitman sojourned in New Orleans long enough
to notice that prostitutes would be whores
if one allowed oneself to describe women
with no enormities of any sort
a hard caste to comprehend.

One winter Sunday morning on an empty street
in Temuco I sat alone in a truck, smoking cigarettes
and watching for the continents to take up their
fountain pens so that a huge egg balanced
on the back of an old brown horse would appear
or in the same sense a poet with very big balls
se llama Pablo Huevón.



IT'S QUITE LATE

The music inside the body, the music
outside the body, often they pass
down a lane which is nowhere
so often we fail to notice

I expect the music never stops
though we do

What had been the question
concerning what we must live in order
to do here?

Deep music
slow music, seems
not to progress
but to measure a form
of containment.

Breathing is an exchange of air
like everything else we are breathing.

ROBERT KEZIERE
UNTITLED SUITE

*We have begun to recognize a new fellowship with the silent vegetable world,
because it purifies and renews the earth about us, because it comforts us,
and because it reconciles us to death.*

Norma L. Goodrich in Jean Giono's *The Man Who Planted Trees*

Robert Keziere / JOURNAL NOTES: GREECE 1983

July 10, 1983: Santorini to Sifnos

I begin packing up at 6 am as the man with the mule is due at 10 am. He arrives at 9 am. Departure times in Greece seem to mean *gone by* not *leaves at*.

After a final, essentially palatable breakfast on the beach, I leave to start up the thousand foot cliff and eventually to Apollonia on the island of Sifnos. The mule packs everything except the driver and me. Once in awhile the animal slows or stumbles and is jabbed with the stick, the nailed end first. It takes about an hour or so to get a cab from the outlying village into Thira. There is still over two hours before the departure of the *Alkyon* for Sifnos, *et.al.* Lugging the equipment and baggage is slow; you are nearly insane to have brought so much stuff. Once down the cable car to the port, I buy a bottle of wine, some bread and feta: 200 dr!

While waiting, I run into Agnes Cory, a cellist from London and so begins a long day's journey. This nice lady, whom I had met earlier on the road down from Old Thira, is clearly in search of something. She is intelligent, curious and until recently has apparently dedicated her life to teaching and playing the cello in a London opera orchestra. She has the most extraordinary hands.

We board together and it seems today we are travelling together. Eventually the ship sails, oddly *on* time and not *before*. It's wonderful, in many ways, to be sailing away from this island. I'm at the rail watching the sights float by and Agnes starts a conversation with a young Australian man wearing a tee-shirt that says: "Drillers go deeper and rout about longer," or close to that. He is young and quite weird. I offer him some of the food and wine. He says no thanks, he is trying to straighten out; he's feeling kind of strange, attempting restoration. He asks Agnes if we are together, and when she says we are travelling together "at least to Sifnos," he smiles awkwardly and leaves.

So the ship goes through several stops over the next hours and

somewhere between Milos and Sifnos, in the pitch black of an Aegean night someone, a man, jumps overboard. He climbs up onto the handrail next to a young Greek woman, and jumps into the rolling black sea.

I had just walked past, without seeing him, and I'm only moments later about 30 feet away when a lot of commotion begins among the multilingual crowd. I am not certain I understand correctly, but it very soon becomes evident no one is kidding. In perhaps 30-60 seconds, one of the crew is notified and he immediately runs toward the bridge. Still it is a dreadful 4 to 5 minutes before that ship actually slows down! The officers eventually materialize at the back of the ship and are clearly very doubting. I urge the woman who had seen the jump to go down and tell them it was the real thing. When she does there is more commotion but little action. By the time the ship finally comes to a full stop, it seems the guy is three or four or five miles back. As far as I know, only one life preserver was tossed into the sea, a good two minutes after he jumped. I remember thinking "Nice try." These ships travel at 15-20 mph. And yet where were you RK. I had looked for something in the life boats, without success. The life rings are on the railing.

About here, the officers and the young woman, who is *the* witness now, come up the to the deck from which the man jumped. She explains in fluent Greek what happened, where he stood, that this was his pack sack and he seemed to be alone. She is most affected; "Did he slip?" or "jump?" She is certain, he jumped. He stood on the railing, paused, then jumped.

After some discussion she goes forward with the officers and the pack sack. And an announcement is made, first in Greek, which is long; then in English, which is short: "A man has jumped off the ship. Passengers are requested to go to the sides of the ship and watch for the body." It has been 20 minutes. The ship, as far as I can make out, has not turned around and is just drifting in the water. It is not going forward, neither is it in slow reverse. Now the search begins, at RK's best estimate a good 4 to 5 minutes from where the man jumped, or quite some miles away!

All this, in the near dead blackness of night on a rolling and choppy sea. It would be difficult to see a good sized log and unmitigated luck to see a man floating, one way or another.

Time passes. Everyone lines the rail and looks into the darkness. There are few lights, essentially just the running lights of the ship. In time, it seems, someone finds the flares, as suddenly into the sky screams this hissing light which bursts over and lights a vastness of unoccupied, turbulent sea. The seductive Aegean blue of a calm sunny day is nowhere to be seen. It is black. The boat shows no signs of turning around or moving forward or backwards. Ten to twenty flares are fired. Some go nearly straight up, in a reasonable attempt to shoot into the wind, first lighting one side of the ship, then as the wind pushes the flare, the other side. But one worries about this burning magnesium object immediately above your head. You watch the flare and not the sea.

A man, in his mid-forties, well groomed, in short sleeves and European accent, comes to the rail where Agnes and I are standing. He is anxious about the delay. At this point it has been about an hour. He understands the man has jumped and is "not well." "Why are we waiting? You know in Grecian times they would take these people into the woods...." He goes on at some length along similar lines. I am appalled and bluntly suggest the man's life is worth at least an hour of our time. Agnes is Czech, and has been living in London since the mid-sixties. She lost much of her family to the war and the Nazis. The man has a determinedly German accent. Agnes is incensed by his attitude. She asks or insists: "Where are you from?" The response is not forthcoming or necessary. His face stiffens and he walks away. Agnes is livid.

Agnes apparently has two knives. She is simply enraged. The man is a neo-nazi. I tell her I don't visit people in jail. It is not the appropriate comment. She starts looking around, right past me. I'm hanging on to her, giving some bullshit about it being a free world and people are entitled to their opinions. She says: "Where's the free world?"

About an hour and a half has passed. Still the bureaucratic search continues. Flares are fired, people lean over the railing, the boat continues to drift with occasional propelled movement for brief periods of time. Sometimes forward, sometimes backward. I'm disillusioned; they're searching miles from where he jumped and there is no one else on the horizon. This guy has been in the rolling Aegean for well over an hour after jumping 60 ft into the prop wash of a 300 ft

long ferry. In B.C. waters he's dead from exposure alone. The chances of finding him are so remote. Agnes says the family would like the body, which is probably true.

A group of young people are sitting in a circle: one plays guitar and the others are singing. It kind of pisses me off as it is really less than appropriate. Reactions differ but this grates. The mood is worsening.

After two hours, an announcement is made: "Will John E. Collins please come to the bridge. John E. Collins please." After 15 minutes another announcement is made that the search will continue for 20 minutes more.

One of the chief officers and the witness again appear on our distraught 2nd class back deck. A group forms around the discussion and it goes on for 15 minutes or so. I would like to know if she still is convinced that he jumped. That he slipped and fell into the sea, to watch the lights of that ship diminish as it sailed away is an unthinkable horror. There is no land in sight. She is convinced. She looks very strained. There have been better days for this woman. She tells me they have found out that it is a 25 year old Australian.

I have not seen the guy with the obscene T-shirt since just after boarding. There are only so many places for us 2nd class passengers and he could not have disappeared; not with that face. It finally hits me: Jesus, it's the Aussie. I tell the woman that I think I have spoken with him. She asks, "Do you want to see his passport picture? You should if you can!" On the bridge it is definitely busy and all business. In fact a coastguard ship has joined the search, which explains the occasional bright lights out there now. It's been almost two and a half hours and the mood is rotten. The officer and woman show me the passport, and then begin to go through his pack, much as neo-archaeologists. It is a bit grim. This face looks out at me. It looks Australian: young beard and moustache, the eyes, but the mouth is closed. The man I had spoken with had rather large unattractive and awkward looking teeth. It is mainly what I saw. I'm aware that here I am a photographer yet I am not at all sure this is the same man. It's a photo for his mother but it is not a likeness, and I could not be formally certain. It's possible, but I am not *certain*. The witness and I start to leave the bridge and there is a radio communication from somewhere in the background; she grabs my hand and says: "He is alive! They found him!"

It is a small coast guard boat, from where I have no idea. When it arrived or joined the search is also totally unknown to me. The woman immediately takes off running through the ship. It is unbelievable; I am completely stunned by this impossible conclusion.

Somehow he had managed to find the life-preserver. It was said that when the coastguard found him he was clinging to the ring and screaming for help. They brought him to Sifnos, to the small hospital. I have thought, briefly, of visiting him.

Our ship makes Sifnos at Kamares much later. With all the stuff, it takes awhile to get a cab. I am welcomed by a silent and darkened Apollonia. It's beautiful, but there will be no rooms. Dora Katsoulakis, my landlady, has undoubtedly been in bed for hours. I find some chairs outside a restaurant I know, augment the situation with a few questionable cushions and make ready for a 5 hour attempted sleep through the night. It is more a long wait for some light.

Agnes sailed on to Pireas. We are to get together if I come to London.









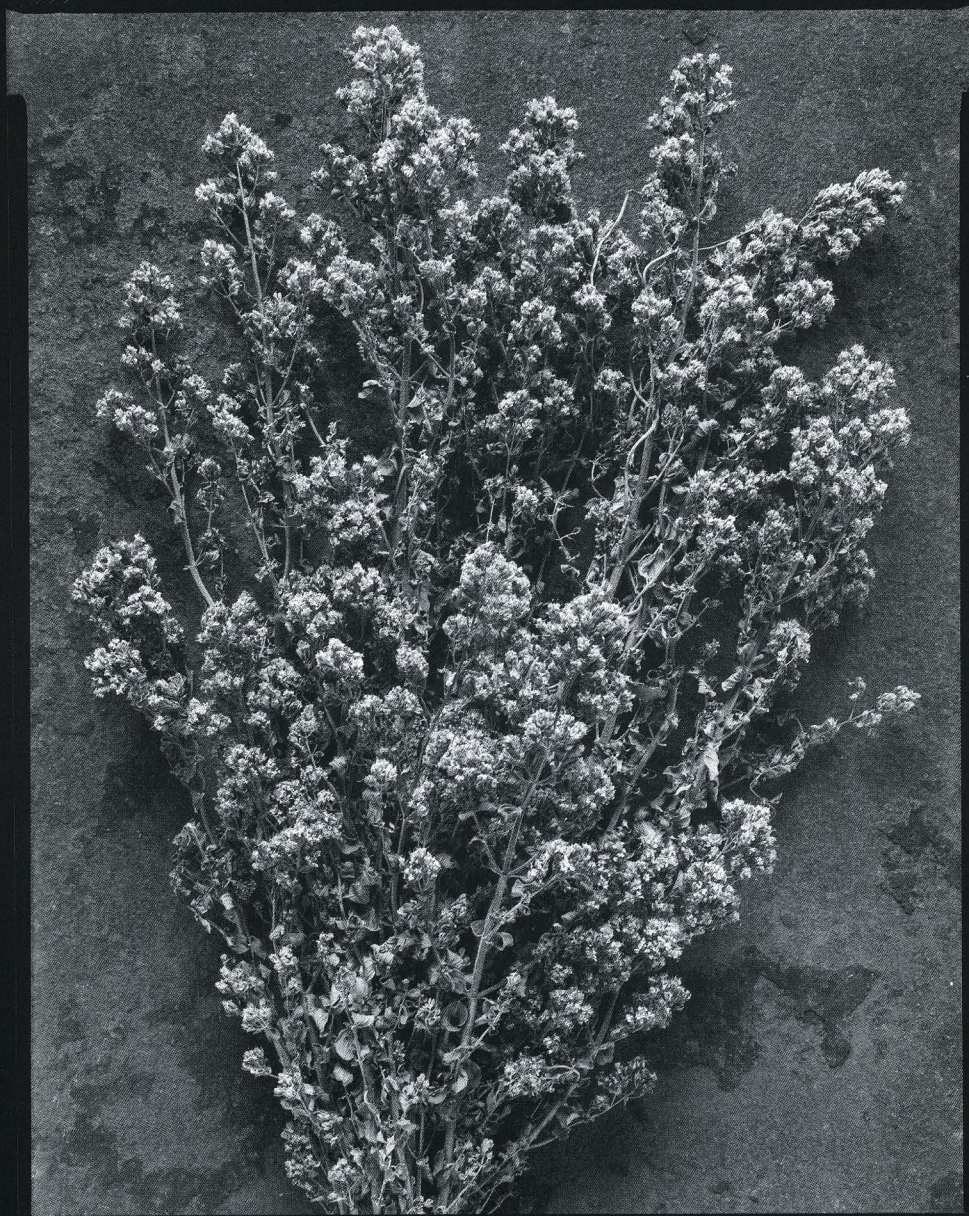


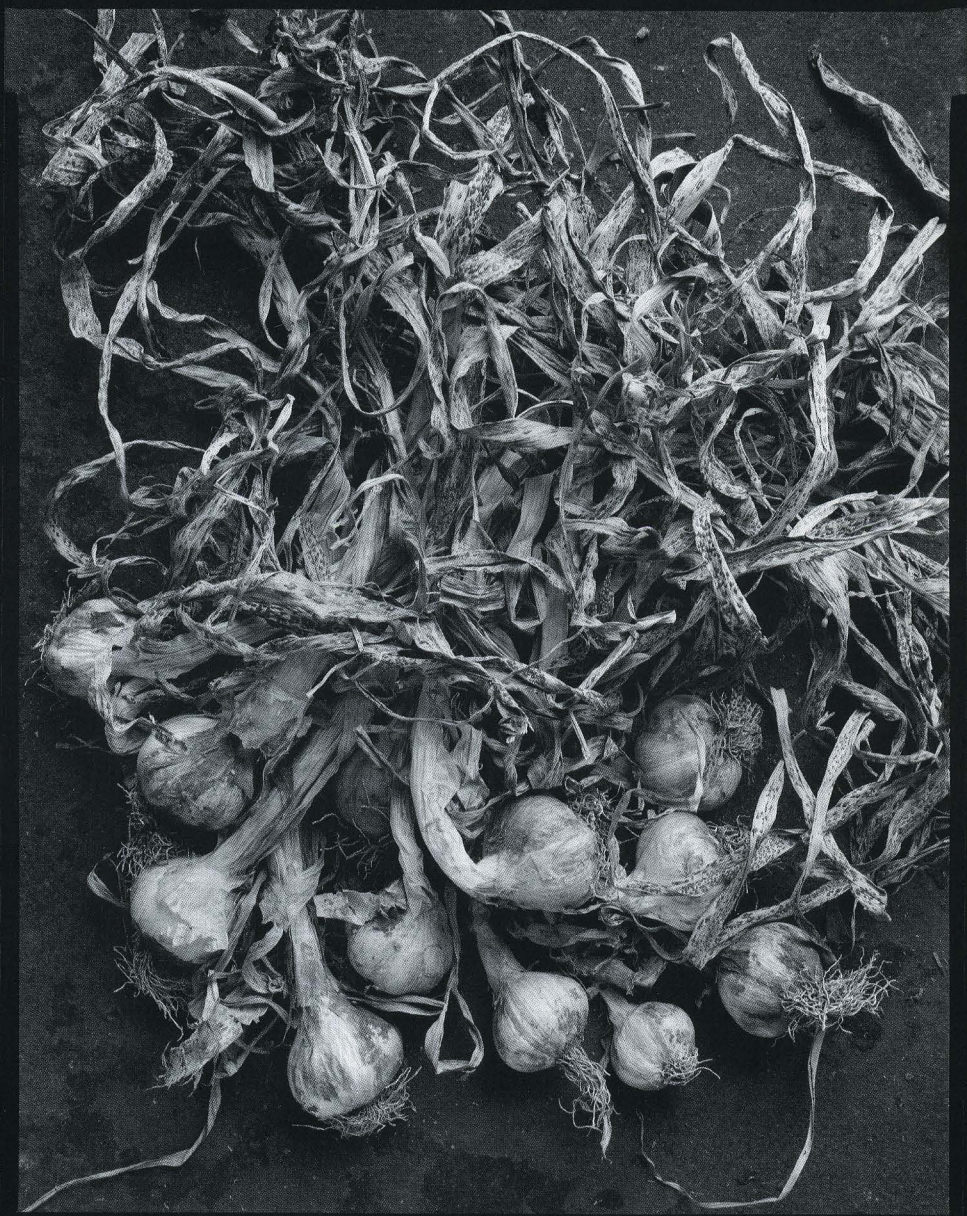






















ROBERT KEZIERE

Notes

A few summers ago I began work on a series of photographs of botanical objects. The photographs were taken during a stay on the small Mediterranean island of Sifnos. The unusual plant life on this dry, rural island has been of increasing interest throughout recent visits there.

Most natural things on the island are kind of tough. Most everything bites, the bugs are fast, the plants aggressive. There are numerous and varied thistles; a lot of things have spikes. One plant produces small green melons which when touched literally explode, showering the offender with an unknown, *albeit* survivable, liquid.

On this island, one spends a lot of time walking through the terraced countryside. It is mainly how a visitor gets from village to village. Yet along these narrow stone trails one watches the ground, for indeed there are vipers. In truth, at first I constantly watched the bush for snakes but, after awhile, I began just thinking about the bush.

These pictures were taken during 1989 & 1990 on the islands of Sifnos & Pantelleria. They were made with an 11x14" field camera, set stationary in a summer "studio."

Untitled Suite

1. Akoronas
2. Untitled (the Kastro leaves)
3. Villa Dora; probably Queen Anne's Lace
4. Fiori; L'Arco dell'Elefante
5. Gadourankatho
6. Alubarbaras
7. Tsouknida
8. Faux Dill; I Mulini
9. Untitled (bush near Chrysopigi)
10. Oregano Centro
11. Ferrandez Garlic
12. Succulent, Cala Levante
13. Agrioselheno
14. Staurankatho
15. Koluzia
16. Gadourankatho

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Selected Exhibitions:

- 1991 *On Reason*, Canadian Cultural Centre, Rome.
- 1990 *On Reason*, Centre Culturel, Université de Sherbrooke, Québec.
On Reason (Selected Works), Whatcom County Museum of History and Art, Bellingham, Washington.
On Reason, Art Gallery of Windsor.
- 1989 *On Reason*, Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver (Catalog).
- 1985 *A Requiem*, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria.
A Requiem, Canadian Cultural Centre, Rome.
A Requiem, Canadian Archaeological Institute, Athens.
A Requiem, Charles H. Scott Gallery, ECCAD, Vancouver (Catalog).
A Requiem, Southern Alberta Art Gallery, Lethbridge (Poster/Catalogs).
- 1983 *A Requiem* (In Progress), Villa Anderson, Kastro, Sifnos, Greece.

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- Speare, Jean E. and Robert Keziere. *The Days of Augusta*. Vancouver: J.J. Douglas, 1973.

Collections:

Art Gallery of Windsor
Canada Council Art Bank
Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography
City of Vancouver
Department of External Affairs
Diachem Industries
Lignum Ltd.
National Film Board of Canada (Stills Division)

Sharon Thesen / FOUR POEMS

SONG WITHOUT WORDS

A sheepskin hung on every
cold moment that had the shape
of shoulders tired from teaching
Creative Writing. After dinner
at a friend's whose father's
wandered away again from the hospital
with a photo of his dead wife with whom
he dines, her picture propped on a water glass
across from him while the waitress
shakes her head and rips a busy page
off her order pad. Heavy rain warnings
fall on Stanley Park and on the wanderers and on
those who stay home in their suites & such,
dark gardens planted with clever
bonsai shrubbery bending like art-deco divers &
posers on crags over whom the moon reclines
dangling a star like a silver sandal.
Among floating candle flames
reflected in thick winter darkness coming down
from Whitehorse we all agreed
it was getting really cold as we sat
with our backs to the sheepskin
wringing sense from our plans in this
animal heat and dumbness.

PEDESTRIAN, ANONYMOUS

A drowsy numbness at the coffee shop,
clink of utensils on plates littered with
pale green delicate sprouts, traffic outside —

Dipping into Dante's *Inferno*
with one eye closed
burning with an irritation
of too many busy signals, being
bawled out by the pure in spirit,
made meaningless by cars going by,
pedestrian, anonymous —

After the torture chamber
of the leg-waxing salon, faint stench
of hot metal and burnt hair, a white room,
purification and preparation for paradise —

Or an outworn poetics of beards
full of butterflies. Though his kindness,
Walt Whitman's I mean, remains. It was so
personal even on the television set
we watched before we went to bed,
the voice of the commentator reading
"every part and portion of me,"
"miracles," "enjoyments" —
your fingers on the redeemed
smoothness of my thigh.

GALIANO BABY GRAND

Heron pauses in his formal wear
flattered by the moist unstable air
coming in from Pacific's
eternal rhyming with itself

while the space heater shoves dampness
around my ankles encased in sheepskin
slippers, a blue woolen scarf
around my neck like Dickens'
chilly work-house accountants
precise pennings of indebtedness
and lack — that gives them pleasure
we presume; they smile showing the
snaggled yellow teeth of sadists
left too long alone when young
watching the moonshine still
while Pappy fucked the pigs —

Okay! let's have some music now.
The maestro adjusts his tail-coat
and his monocle, puts out
a pathetic rendition of "The Moonlight Sonata"
or as they say in German "Moonshine"
despite the immense tragedy of which
abominations in the rhythm
can too easily arise...

So take care piano players. The best rest
is when the heron stops my heart.

THE WATERMELON

The clock said 10 to 3.

I went upstairs, wrote lines, crossed them out.

I felt the weight of one of those gas masks on my spirit.

"My spirit." My size 7½ shoe.
My insurance policy with Canada Life.

I suppose this comes from the pain of living, which is
like being stabbed.

Everywhere I look,
books.

I suppose Sharon Olds has just finished another
fabulous poem about her child's scalp.

Poetry: I couldn't care less.

Long lines, short lines,
two ways of suffocation.

Head down, knitting a black garment.

It won't yield. The current stops.
Thought loops back on itself, knots
tight as a tourniquet.

Stories laugh at me.

I picked up the phone.

I wrote the alphabet. Then I printed it.

Last night's dream drifts around
like colored smoke.

I've always loved rivers. Music.

Thoughts, sayings, about what goes on.
What I hear and think I know. It's saying
"That's the demon that nearly jumps out at you."

Poetry makes me feel like getting drunk. I wish
I was a man.

If I was someone else, would I prefer
their troubles to my own?

Peter swiftly washes his face, runs through his hair, brushes
his teeth, spits, towels off, reaches for briefcase on floor,
open at the top with some xeroxing sticking out.

There's nothing Southern about me.

Ardessa-Nica Jesseau / TWO POEMS

WALKING WITH THE SAMURAI

and i think
this could be the most essential time to fight you
when you've entered this sphere with a sceptre
and then the shades of heat are coming in green again
and we are passing the lights in continuous streams
but there's a stillness i can't quite touch on
and it may be emotion though i doubt it
and when there's a live moon hanging above us like tonight
it gets harder to kill you or move
to turn your throat open

and though the moon awakens
it blazes
like you've blazed my troubles
with words
bright and fiery i watch you

and if we find flowers in the water
we drop them, say:
roses never did us any good anyway
and i'm thinking of the continuation of skin
that spreads from your neck down through your shoulders
it must be like nothing i'd ever imagined
pale white and touching
under your sweater i hunt for it

we run criminal
through zurich

masquerading knowing
everyone out here breathing tonight
has been locked in
the touch of desire the moon gives
and old age
i have wanted you for hours and you have
known it

we lay back lazily in the grass we
talk deliciously over opera only
you're so modern
or hung on the future
that i cannot contact you
even though
i absorb your traditions like laws

and stepping through the contours of armour
i bequeath you all weapons
all mineral

but if we stand under the moon again my
samurai man
i don't think i'll make it
to the next world

though you cover me with garnet, sabers, swords

WOOD CHARM

Gets us to the forest
alabaster and bark dreaming the
chicory stinging our throats Remember
when i took that sliver of you
into my eye Yeah maybe it was when you
weren't looking or when we searched
for the evidence
of our kiss i got
the warm mystery inside me its rose
palpability and Under the stars, mingling
Mixing the flesh soup did you
feel it The amber twist and
the voodoo conceal us
Clicking
underneath buttercups
the blossoms smelt so fine You
covered me with the dandelion fleece
the petals strewn in a kind of
maze along my belly
The other flowers bent
with reverence
Waltzing
through Chinatown just after midnight
we decided
to jump into the backseat of the Pontiac
turn up the AM radio and pledge
eternal love
I pulled
inches of you into my camera
slightly fracturing your being Yeah
did you feel it too did you see
my soul bounce along your tongue
as you spoke finally
my name

I stole the molecules you were missing i
filled the silken folds of dress with
shaking fingers the sheer beauty
of watching you breathe
heavily
The stomach swells the talk cheapens the
chasm opens our arms unfold
Remember
when we were lying in the grass
and you said
If we scratched ourselves deep enough
with thorns, branches
we could become closer linked with
the trees
And when i woke up
i saw the scars stretch up from
my ankles like a blood river, while you
had been miraculously
healed.

Maxine Gadd / FIVE POEMS

OLD GOTHIC MAR 1985

when the daughters of the night
meet the children of the moon
it is useless to complain get out of my garden
the old folk come anyhow
to correct the lines yu have cut in the sidewalk
what is borne out is
friendship with bad animals, not one
but worships the sun

when the daughters of the night
meet the children of the moon
they are cued in by arrogant strangers
they don't pass up the chance to eat greasy fries
they look at yu through gold fish bowls
they perpetuate their species in ink

they spin on their sockets singing, "monday monday monday"
they mass with the million starlings up and down the town
the inside city of string singing
"my cousin is Joy. let's get over that rainbow.
can we make of philosophy an iron fence, a zoo for the generals?"

this silence i need is worse than dirt

the killer collapses on a bed of coals

it seems it's love i'm against and all
correct procedure

when the daughters of the night meet the children of day
they still want to run along the telephone wires through
the amethyst corridor of rain

a violinist is hanged from the weirdest of trees
the tallest and most chilling
on that abandoned table land
just under
the mountain beyond sleep

I HAD TO BUY A NEW BROOM

he has on a kilt of lemon leaves. the demon at the gate. at each hour
some angel saying, "Come." at each day. each minute. each second.

seasoned as the meat the careful inquisition. lazy the goat's walk up
the perfect road of marble. it's the confusion over the owl they care
for.

pour out your long ribbon of spine over pineland in summer heat. the
beach is full of boat people. they are looking among the reeds.
prone the kid screams.

continue with this ruby face. its eyes that are simply openings into the
public sky. pedal the boat. there's never any wind on this old oblong
pool. pears on this tree in golden nowhere. i fled when i saw red
skirts.

the radio is irrelevant he thought he heard his master say part me a
long park in all this rubble. first we have to search for the bodies.
first. first is hurry up and forget yr socks. the volcano is erupting
and we've got to run.

but the demon was lying and i have forgotten everything.

yu will be lent
the cypher
as yu have been given
the glyph

fall far off now. the lean farmer comes to the fence. a battle ship
painted azure with yellow numbers. PARLIAMENT IS OUT shouts
September.
yu have to do orders, requisitions. lions jump out the king's back door.

the desert never looked so good. it was radiant with radium.

peleponesia a subtle turn of asthma. it's a kind of moral code. green ducks come up to fish you. no more days. i like the rules less and less.

a penny for yr dread. the kid with the purple collar was missing teeth. his mistress thot he shld not have come so far. it was pretty well painted.

out of the bowl of rice the duck's head emerged. there was dismay in the stands. the goddess kissed the referee. crucify her, crucify her.

the red face of a roosevelt, a truman. they put it behind the bushes.

pick a pit of pickled petters all wet at their picnic on the moon. pumas appear and fairly grizzled bears. hey, cut that fucking pounding out.

the masks of mcluhan like the islets of langherhans. a coil not a serpent. sez the sparrow, i'm wise.

RIFF FOR A BILL (19)

so

yu made all the right moves and fell into the hole
chireep chireep, all the little frogs of night
paint yu into the centre of their new world at the foot of
the Andes. frogs
preach to their constituency at midnight like punks.
a lot of people hate them.
and pigeons and gulls.
i meet the full word after the garbage trucks barrage my dreams.
chirp chirp chirp, the cockroach calls with its one song to
its lovely mate. she
climbs on his back and licks delicious glands.
two thrones sit empty staring severely from
the top of a brick factory.
brick
factoring
as brick
must
it being such a political situation it is destined for.
one does see an occasional lone brick
struggling quietly in a puddle.
even on the sea's edge
yu might find one
red and still unbarnacled, eaten only by
subtle chemicals.
this also torments many; a brick with
or without
a mission.
yu see, everyone is expected to attend the executions.
to be still and silent like all downtown twenty storey buildings.
the skinny junkey with the death's head tattooed on his arm
sits on the sidewalk at the feet of these morose protrusions.
overhead, the window of the diamond's black land,
the stereo's great leaden plain where achilles and colonel ollie north
stride with their briefcases,

the chainsaw's hotel room,
the centrifugal screamings of our flying planet
hovering over a shrinking sun.
sun ponders flinging us out
to the shredders,
myrmidon stones and missiles of ice
that clash and smash and shatter apart
spinning and sparring in intricate rings
round planets like us
that have lost out.

FEB. 1990

writing directly into memory. legs up by the lake suddenly locked. the eternal happiness on mountains of the rich. the girls around the big iron pot, ringing it in the glen. the function of the rogue on the contemporary literary scene and its relationship to cows anywhere. backtrack. gridlock. and the flow of sweet avon lady, shakespeare around for coffee and making a pest of himself. twee woods. coca cola in the sacred stream. the masturbatory functions of hair. nature discovered as death by darkling toads. so long loafers and fishers, the aim of conservatives to take the money from the previously lower feudal classes. render them grateful slaves. 1066. written law. longbow arrows in the eyes of autoworkers. if yu fail as an entrepreneur yu can wash cups at the prison. duckshit in yr drinking water keep yu serene. the cup of the goddess in her fingers of earth. there's a point at which the river's force lets yu see. stay there.

LATE SUMMER, 1990

amethyst
a methistos

against drunkenness

a chair is not a war someone sat upon

WHY HAVE YOU SAID

the big blue boat comes billowing out of aegean helium
what aquarian gems
past topaz into sagittarius, amaranthene, cool
past springs, ginger, old ale
how are the trees that speak fire?

package that, honey, and pass the pail
big good women that we are
we pride ourselves on our big pink pope

bare left, sally ann, and bring only a bottle of water

i go where my dream takes me
into the sooty city
bring the green wind

solemn sol emerges with batteries, wires, buttons, pumps, head
blazing
grey eyes promising vast empty lands
sheik maybe saying unto his people, yeah, verily

the lady with the ivory neck lace
so intricate the silver
somewhere in china
master alive with his knife
and some hidden beauty
whittling teeth

transparent milk cherry pink of alexandrite
the change in direction of energy waves on passing from one
medium
to another in which they have different velocity
chatoyancy, dichroism, opalescence and
asterism
that movement that just want to shine

the heck, yu say
i remember the time the chief blinded me, some
ten million moons ago
someone took me in and let me sit by a fire and sing five million
moons and tell tales
with the voices of women
screaming or cooing
hot or cold
and i sat there and laughed
highly idiosyncratic wood notes

“when adam delved
and eve span
who was lord and master
then?”

ii

everybody will give me their credit cards and written permission
to
sign.
collapse once more into ruby happiness.
if yu are restless
run about.
uproot trees if yu wish
or howl yr need.

turn
turn
again
dick wittington

and become the Lord Mayor of London

the moon of the water-jug-pourer
eclipsing the raging lion of the sun
the ego ready to desert the sex

the sex in the desert
mutilated by old women with rusty tin can tops
scraping sticking together the vagina
till it can be opened only
with a knife

it is written
in the Vancouver Sun, Spring of 1990
that Saddam Hussein has passed a law in Iraq
that a man
can legally kill
for suspicion of adultery in his home
a mother, sister, cousin, daughter, wife

or some one
from Bos Town

iii

the herd
the herd
the herd
the herd
the herd
the herd
the herd
the herd
the herd

prayer for a dark man
prayer for a dark man
prayer for a dark man
prayer for a dark man
prayer for a dark man
prayer from a dark man
prayer from a dark man
prayer from a dark man
prayer from a dark man

the moon
the moon
the moon
the moon
the moon
the moon
the moon
the moon
the moon

may she be kind to kine
and kin be kind
and free from fear of strangers

give us not our daily train except for our coming and going,
no roar
through our silent grass lands

mad
mud
man
lead us all in song
and we're up and going
but he scream us back such enlightened fury
the people scramble over each other to get out
of
the lawful existence
in which it is possible
to be happy

David Phillips / SIX POEMS

DRIVING NORTH

never felt like this before, who cares
with stars blowing across the windshield,
bright green branches shaking the headlights,
staring past the glare, alert & glad

not knowing what lies ahead. is the power out?
so many places known & gone — friends,
ones loved, others
i might reach, not beseech

come, join me anywhere, i'm your heart.
i know, i had reason to go slow
near Middlepoint, tree across the lines.

but my nature takes me otherwise,
by the eyes, so to speak. that
is always the issue, who knows
another's truth, where in the world
are we. i'm tired of

going home the poets sing.
i also prefer motion. i'd rather
get carried away, wondering
what i'm after.

Diane would say: can't you drive
any faster?

CUTTHROAT

outside. never thought
i wanted to go there nor knew it a place.
cedars and fir overhead
& light rain. cutthroat aching to spawn
linger in the creek's mouth
waiting for the lake to rise

one swims near the gravel, red slash behind its gills.

strange drought for this coast
too warm for mid November. almost no rain.
outside, i know this

last night left the truck hanging on a cedar
up the driveway, cut the edge
too fine, avoiding the deeper ruts, hung there
in the blackness, close to tipping over

this is it
i thought. if i get too close to the edge
i won't be outside anymore.

no light to find the key to the house.
got one by touch, memory,
got back in. but i'll never
get back in now. i'm where the poets tread

precariously, yearning for the fire, the hearth,
order. but wild, courting panic. cutting
a fine line finer, thinking it beautiful

that slender green fish with the red slashed throat.
thinking it beautiful

FOUNDATIONS

alone in the heat, working,
ocean right there if i look up

summer sky's blue depth,
tying re-bar in the footings.

quirky habits of mind (a free man
in this labour?)

i could easily lie down & sleep in a heap
near yellow flowers i can't name,
gladness like shade come over me
or put down the tools,
walk to the ocean & dive in

forget i work for any reason
not even this — but i know
i'm held in something
like a spell & don't resist

the brief instance, glimpses
if the future holds.
is there still time in this poetry?
friends in other places (some dead)
would be glad
hearing this said.

still, the nature of the structure
haunts me — foundations, images of
permanence,

"the walls that do not fall"

faith in the imagination I grasped
like a man drowning,

shameless, frightened in its presence.

who wanted me
no other way.

a feverish search for an exact place.

panic, working alone in the summer heat,
should not have come here
but no choice now, this
is just the beginning

A NOTE

or passing by, not noticing
it goes without saying, is
personally a kind of dogma now —
who's doing that chirping, that
west sky, March clouds
stream & drift, open if i look
long enough, don't stop.
something's boiling. Robin
Blaser's poem speaks to the heart
reading, seeks
& restores the heart reading.
every word is
that place moving.
it ain't easy.
passing by alone
seems so but it's not.
writing out the heart,
simply said, is
wonderously near
impossible. try it.

looking out of, yes
the person, north
america's real place, prize,
seeking communion —
fear no one, look
out of yourself & be still

but not stopped

twilight, March 30, 1991

POEM FOR BARRIE (FROM SECHELT)

coming to the writing alone,
this house & some music,
good.

not practise for the end. the end?

want to think
the best of
each, any

not pretend their lives, even
near. a guess.
the practised certainty

beyond pretense. a promise.

sure, i've turned away & been turned
this way
& that. for goodness sake.

a stab in the dark. the point.

got here because
wishing makes it so.

summer air cups the house,
not think alone i thought.
the beautiful poets persist,
won't leave the room (world), cavort
in their impossible languages.

fill the blue rooms with a series of exquisite sunsets.
came here for something
i was supposed to know.
you don't say.

warm inside tonight, no insects got in.
outside, a moment ago, stars
& a white cloud like huge vapour trail,
transparent eerie light.
i looked up on purpose, for a sign.

wondering who spends the time well,
in mysterious circumstances write us.

they write us because they are somewhere at last
& look up or out or over,

because they are us

BARRY McKINNON SAYS THE IMAGINATION IS THE PLACE

consequences of habitual ways of seeing makes
place same, jeopardy, like stuck
or fixed, static, staid
there & back, makes

nowhere, not so easily said, as if spoken

broken tongue talk. but this place

is one actual, one imagined
exactly located.

 this is mind's play.

a cedar wax wing
yellow tipped tail, sleek
grey head, elegant.

one is civilization, poem's song
succession of location. think light liquid.

or passing Davis bay in the truck, not
stopping as if it's
there again,
 glimpsed & later made coherence.
meditative.

i haven't got time.

then that bird appeared, what
to make of it,
 the world it lives in,
speak,
 outside apprehension.

i drive to reach a conclusion, being
in place meant
zip, or so i thought the bird in motion

stopped me in my tracks, had me
by the eyes.

sacred instance?

beauty flows into the branches
of that small tree, red berries bright,

flies out

Barry McKinnon / from PULP LOG

twelve

Cornfalkes in my Mac/ earlier, the student who said, *I wasn't talking only moving my lips...* this is the mood, of being disarmed — sense of powerlessness: ...they *could* instinctively form a group and kill you — the purpose, therefore, of a true education is...? tho politeness to the questioner may not alter the relationship, nor alter answers given: — they want confessions guilty or not — earlier wrote, *they buy us cheap, got us cheap*. I was thinking about the collective social silence and these goods displayed in the mall that draw us to the pure moment of the purchase — exchange of coin and smile, seems old fashioned but Instant Teller wouldn't work: *go* to your main branch, *go* hungry, burn gas and miles, or just stay. is everyone trying to get out of this the best of all possible worlds? *eat to the death* — is a mood, a task to remove the cornflake crumbs, apologize, admit error, misperception of confused juices, arguments.

seventeen

new systems for the world's revisions. today it looks as if the snow begins. I wanted to describe my desk — some thing in the abstract crashed disk of computer games and poetry — or/ in this old system of slow thot, give a weight to a thing known. it's breakfast with two strips less and Sears damned promo song so loud you think *I'm not coming back* — there must be somewhere else. — thinking: *we're half way thru what?* as I dream the season into being. do I love this north? when they put in the new systems something always doesn't work, or wasn't thot out, but nothing can't be explained and quantified or justified, and someone always pays. it's their game, fair game in this urban blight, northern light: profit, & loss & enterprise and of the commercial imagination... was I fair, was I right in my own revisions of belief & disbelief?

eighteen

sit in the Simon Fraser Inn — the koffee-klatch oldtimers making jokes, talk politics, health & guffaws — these laughs till someone dies — sadness? who's next. you want to ask something — or see acute & accurate versions, ask what *is* history, beyond the local clichés. (Simon Fraser's picture finally taken down, he's out of his canoe, out of the picture now — a world moves on to what it is, a process. what is it? today, time rots at 10:15 — whenever they meet — where is it? this puke mauve, covers the old brown, reds and golds — it's the cold of a foreign design, the eternal *new management* sign that gives old place its place — smaller portions in this need to make it pay. this koffee-klatch is what happened without a glance, or chance. this is no trial but questions of error of all undone, or about to be — note this new purple rug, fresh dings already in the baseboard paint.

bored enough to see: to think, this town as trailer, tires flat, or no wheels at all — & where the prosperous dream, when this rhetoric of dreams abounds, yet each scheme at some great expense — the Nechako to become a trickle, the power sold off, the profit elsewhere. how was it to be? and who cares enough. we feed, our guilt — shuffle the rubble of another close-out sale, the dusty goods of Saveco, Krazy Willy — sardines and note pads & slight thrill of the bargain, barely compensation for what's being lost: outside — beautifully clear — nature's bored mind — there is no mind but the human voice that sees its body. we thot we'd like to see the future, when we can't see the future's here. how is anything different than my truck (smell of oil and age, running well, but how far would you trust it to go — assumes we'll one day head thru the bush on foot. (is this an invention — is the world the conglomerate of infinite angles, or some single mind? some have power, of that there is no doubt, and we seem the enemy, though they never cease to grin or shake your hand.

where have we come — to the sound of a microwave buzz. earlier noted the sculpted lard dog with a bone in its mouth. thought: what good revenge — or/ what form of love twists to this? now distraction of the whining dog, interrupted just when you thot, at last I've got it: words as thing, yet happy in the nebulous uncharted pursuit. is it not enough to live and scrape the truck's ice in the polluted air — enough to breathe and dream of making love? — a moment when the air is clear is a pure acquisition, but soon to be stink again. in some places the thought is purest in pain. of them they will say, or discredit that which is so clear and human. they want, it seems, deception & justification for their own convictions — what does it mean? where have we come? only hope for a beautiful line to stretch, inhabit the ugly, the deceptions, the failures, deceptive failures — have body circle incomprehensible as dance, sing dissipation to love and single word.

twenty three

Yellowhead Special: \$3.33 /3 eggs, 3 strips bacon, potatoes, coffee included — (we eat, talk of Deans who make deals, not to include you — they say, we'll set precedence first, then!...etc. in these long years passing, who'll be left in this gamble that you'll live long and healthily be part of future time and leisure and still be paid. it's almost a laugh, almost a cry — when you lose or gain hold of old sense of self (doom, boredom, sickness — tensions of the dispossessed.

or/ am I only hiding today from the Jehovah Witnesses visiting next door? ask myself, who'll be saved, & saved for what? — those few seats left in heaven raises question of my thickening cholesterol blood and thoughts of moving to the river out of this toxic deadly mist. let's live long and happy, be kind amongst ourselves in pleasures of work and time.

twenty four

thought at the pool: obsessive sense of decay might explain the wish for "free trips" — those foreign untouched landscapes as advertised purity/possibility — sex and sun and freedom, freedom 55 for the retired exec whose life was perfect for the 30 second illusion. / of the lottery, — a collective wish and who cares that you'd need a guard and legal protection. what is this sense that life is elsewhere but this pit? but once out of yourself, there's the possible desert of the unknown. oh let the romance be of and with the particular moment you invent — blessings of weather and sense of the children safe. that the words you forgot begin to form around a shapeless single verse — to sense wholly what's here.

forty

how greet Prince George day — (Whitman's vista & celebration of a world possible and unfolding — the singing inspired — the gut and energy of hope? or/ snow and dark and the dead Ford we must push to the street to meet the jumper cables. —

but coming downstairs, the images of Claire, my daughter now a woman in the lit room / loud rock and roll flipping hair into shape and fashion. and my son Jesse in a snow bank fort with the tethered dog as flakes fall, cheer me or/ I know if I miss this, I'm a fool — that a torn mood and self's sense of discomfort, the crabby unsatisfied man, must yield to the prosperity of what's here: love of mate and this fate of children — this good solid house is an achievement, tho creaky and in need of work.

how greet day: (my soul's confidence — the snowy field of the vista you must test, enter, and know.

fifty

corpus / be

no

where —

(is a false start. not the pleasure of some stretch into detail
— not the idea that wraps in its own satisfaction. *oh fractured*
*world!*etc., won't ring, nor you: it's only a dream of a long walk along
the sea wall with friends — a bit troubled in the strangeness of time's
distribution, the tribunal of one's own fate. — today I imagined being
hit and in an instant to know the altered shift of one's condition: *vis*
a vis. — *paralyzed for life* / yet brought to poetry's true moment — the
articulated condition when the heart won't work without the words —
what you wanted: perhaps only the moment of the image and sound
of skiffs of snow beneath the boots — clear air, today / north, a huge
temperature descent. weather *not* a metaphor. itself, a being in the
limits of its own driven force.

fifty five

wobble: — set the coffee time at 1:26 and think, *go over the short drive*: today, fresh snow, that any earlier promise of spring was false. the sink drips and I'm home between class, need this quiet not like the old days of constant noise, or time taken, drawn off. but who cares of any detail that may show you happy — or/ all weekends talk again of pensions, Swiss accounts, the shelter, the future, the GIC and RRSP. I really do care less — want any day, love — to see potential communication, laughter — to know the extent of any world's depth — the darkness —

working breakfast, working lunch, working supper.

maybe what I wanted to say was that as we describe the snow, scaffolding of the future goes up — the flimsy scheme that will protect the existing power — extend it without question or responsibility.

no doubt you can see it

— that drunk on the street doesn't know which way to go, knows there is no way or/ note the literal garbage along third. a ghost of a town of foreign cheap goods, sense, in this noxious wind, *the end*. all the more we must conjure old rules, partake the imagination's true route. do no harm.

fifty nine

think without knowing / speech without meaning /
holes open. Sears doors —

simultaneous cages unfold at 9:30 sharp.

John Harris / OTHER ART

Last year, Harvey decided to go into business. It was time, he announced, to put his money where his mouth was. Since Harvey never has any money, Barry and I naturally assumed that he meant Lilla's money, or someone else's money.

Lilla and Harvey have been living together for three years. This is a major change in Harvey's life. She is a colleague of ours at the college whose job it is to look after the "mentally disadvantaged" who are dropped off at the college every morning by the Peter Pan bus. Down the hall they come, an intimidating phalanx, shuffling, staggering, running, their toques pulled down over their eyes, gloves hanging by strings from the sleeves of their coats. Lilla is there to greet them, take their coats, ask after them. They gather around her, pat her on the back, hold her hand and say hello, a bunch of giant, distorted, affectionate children. They attend some special lectures that she arranges, take books out of the library, do aerobics in the gym, drop in on classes to ask unanswerably profound questions and sit by the entrance to the cafeteria saying things like "Hi, guy, what's happening?" to everyone who walks by.

Looking after them is a tough job and getting tougher as, due to budget cuts, the number of organized activities for them goes down and the amount of "free time" goes up. During this "free time," Lilla sits in her office and talks to the ones who want to talk and waits for the phone to ring about the others, viz,

"Lilla, we've got a student up here in the Bursar's office. He says his name is Danger Man."

"Oh yes. Bill. What's he doing?"

"Collecting paper. He says he needs paper. We've given him some memo pads, typing paper, graph paper, but none of it seems to be the right kind. He emptied out the waste paper baskets, but now he wants to look in the filing cabinets."

"I'll be right up."

Lilla also has to put up with faculty meetings where the appropriateness of having the disadvantaged at the college is sometimes (usually obliquely) discussed. While they have their uses, like bolstering

attendance at noon-hour lectures and the poetry readings that Barry organizes closer to figures likely to be respected by the Canada Council and other funding bodies, they are generally considered to be a "distraction," even more so (somehow) than the more flamboyant co-eds who are presently into majorette boots and very, very short mini-skirts. The college is, after all, some faculty argue, an institute of higher learning dedicated to providing opportunities in the professions to students of proven academic ability. Is it really a suitable place for people who need...special care? These discussions generally revolve around a number of specific complaints over the month — someone who wandered into the psychology lab and released the white rats, someone who popped up during a geology lecture with the assertion that the town still is under water, someone (it had, with his interest in office procedure and uncanny ability to penetrate the administration complex on the third floor, to be Bill) who stuffed the mailboxes with the contents of an in-out tray on the Principal's desk, creating a flurry of confusion, anxiety, false hope and anger.

Or Harvey could've meant putting our money where his mouth is and, to tell the truth, during the planning stages we avoided him or, whenever we ran into him, talked incessantly about our Charge accounts and bills for sending kids to university. We reminded him of all the failures that had already taken place in town, everything from perogie bars to bookstores to chopstick factories. Only the franchises, we pointed out, appealing to the lowest common denominator of human taste, have ever survived, and some of those, it is suspected, exist only for tax purposes.

It was not so much that we minded putting in a few hundred, or even a thousand, on an even chance, but we knew that Harvey would fail.

The trouble is, Harvey gets bored very easily, and he cannot abide boredom. He refuses to accept it, as the rest of us do, as normal. During boring conversations he is apt to sigh loudly, announce that something interesting must be happening somewhere, and leave. He is famous for abruptly and forcefully changing the topic of a conversation, or insulting people by telling them straight to their faces that they are boring, or staring hard at them while they talk and then asking them questions like "are you happy?" As a result of this low boredom threshold Harvey has never been able to work at a regular job. He has been a mailman (eight months,) a tree planter

(three summers), a waiter (part-time for two months), a surveyor (one week) and a disk-jockey (six months). Of the eleven years of his working life, he has put in approximately two. Also, he has never been able to complete any schooling. He took college courses from Barry and me and got straight "A's" and went to university, but got bored and came home. He got within six months of certification as a journeyman printer, but he got kicked out of his work experience for refusing to typeset a boring textbook. For most of his adult life, and it is a matter of local speculation as to whether Harvey ever really was a child or, conversely, ever became an adult, Harvey has lived as a man about town, a man not of leisure but of taste, an artist, poet, philosopher. He writes poetry, practises the saxophone, serves as emcee for most local cultural events except of course those run by the Symphony Orchestra and Art Gallery group, and does graphic designs for anyone who needs them. Also, he is much sought after for personal advice; he finds it boring to be anything other than perfectly candid. No matter what happened to the rest of us in our lives and jobs, Harvey was out there, creative, intelligent, free. He was, of course, still bored most of the time, but at least it was not at our expense.

Harvey convinced us, however, that he was a changed man. He was finding it embarrassing, he said, to be thirty years old and kept by his parents or girlfriend, accepting an allowance, especially in Lilla's case where it was less than what her kids got and not nearly so well managed. And he had panic attacks about the future which would hold no financial security, no children, no place of his own, while the rest of us, it seemed, would be driving around in our electric Winnebagos eating creamed cheese and avocado sandwiches and wearing soft hats. He implied, too, that his feelings for Lilla and her kids were at the point where a serious commitment of some sort was called for. And he told us that Lilla was willing to remortgage her house, so financing would be no problem.

So we waited and watched. After an extensive period of study and thought, Harvey decided to start a cappucino bar and art gallery. This actually sounded feasible and, as Harvey explained it, we thirsted for his cappucino which, we understood, was some fancy kind of coffee traditionally consumed in a bohemian atmosphere of serious philosophical and artistic discussion. We were less sure about

the art, but Harvey was convinced there were enough local patrons willing to buy it if they only knew what and where it was, and plenty of local artists producing it. All he had to do was get these two groups together. Naturally most of us assumed we were members of the latter group, producers rather than consumers, and we would not actually have to buy any art. But there was some uncertainty about this.

Location was a real problem. The business had to go downtown because Harvey hates the suburbs and never goes there even for parties where the drinks are free. Anyway, he couldn't afford shopping centre rentals. But the downtown is tricky. It is in a natural bowl where two great rivers join, and it shares this bowl with 40 large lumber mills, three pulp mills and 200 acres of railway tracks. The mills and railways got here first and took almost all the river frontage and have seniority, which entitles them to dump into the river and shower the town with fly-ash and emissions that turn everything a dirty grey and contain totally reduced sulphur which on bad days (which is most of the time) burns your eyes and nose and gives you a headache. The government is still trying to figure out what else it does, but it is generally understood that this study could take a long time and will probably not be completed until the bush and the mills are gone and nobody is around to care.

The downtown core, as it is called, is made up of hotels with beer parlours with strippers and other businesses (cafés, junk stores, pawn shops and boarding houses) that serve the population of drunks, bums and drifters who make up the seasonal workforce of the logging industry and are the town's original class of inhabitants. Around this core are the bank buildings (with offices of lawyers and accountants) that went up in the sixties when the pulp mills came in and the town advertised itself as the world's fastest growing city next to Calcutta. Then there are the older suburbs where Joy and Barry and Lilla and Harvey live and then, on and over the hills around the bowl, the new suburbs and their shopping centres, dental clinics, neighborhood pubs and auto sales centres.

During the day, when the suburbanites commute to work, the downtown is busy and safe. At night it is dark, silent, and (except for the hotels) locked up. Lonely drunks wander up and down the streets shouting at ghosts and looking for open doors. The city has

put a library, swimming pool and ice rink in the downtown, and the provincial and federal governments have put the offices of their various departments there, but most of these facilities are closed at night creating large dark areas. In the downtown, the closure or removal of, say, one respectable business, or the shifting of a government office, can turn an entire block into a place where you are guaranteed to step into fresh barf or broken glass or come face-to-face with a panhandler or a drunk. If you are a business that gets isolated in one of these areas, you are done for.

Harvey found a place above an Italian café run by people with diversified interests who use the café more as a family kitchen and training centre for their kids so customers are a secondary consideration. There is a major government complex nearby, occupying most of a huge hotel that was mostly abandoned on completion after the coal mines up north went broke, and the bank buildings are within range for energetic secretaries or professionals on lunch hour who are looking for the bohemian touch. Harvey decorated the place tastefully, slashing the floor space dramatically, placing black and white checkerboard linoleum squares with glass-topped tables and wrought-iron chairs on one side, and on the other a gray rug with clothes racks, sculpture, jewelry and record bins and a book shelf. By the entrance was the capuccino machine and an appealing selection of muffins and cakes, and all around were pictures, paintings and sculptures by local artists, displayed on consignment.

The opening was a great success. Most local artists participated. My girlfriend Connie, for example, had two of her South American photos, enlarged and framed, on display. There was lots of pottery and painting. People came in from the suburbs and wandered around the statues, montages, clothes racks with hand-painted T-shirts, jewelry displays and pictures. They sipped café latté and chatted. I bought some earrings for Connie who couldn't make it due to a meeting of the canoe club. A doctor from out of town paid \$300 for one of Connie's pictures. Word went around the room like wildfire, and Barry and I slipped out and ran home and got some copies of our books and broadsides and put them in the bookcase. Nobody bought them. The newspaper called it "a bold new enterprise that heralds a new age of sophistication for the area."

As it turned out, Harvey's business paid the rent but did not provide him much of a salary. And, as was predicted, it was hard work for him. Harvey is not used to catering to people. For example, some of the artists became irate when their work didn't sell and Harvey insisted on returning it, in their opinion, prematurely. They pointed out that other stuff sat around a lot longer than their stuff did. The three-quarter-ton cast bronze cockroach with the human head in its mouth, for example, became a sore point. The main reason Harvey left it so long was that he threw his back out getting it there and did not look forward to spending another two weeks immobilized after he moved it out. But the other artists accused him of favoritism. Harvey told them to fuck off, and many did. Other customers, like Barry and me, wanted more food. "You have to have something on your stomach when you look at some of this stuff," we explained. "How about a crock pot with soup or beans?" I suggested frozen yogurt and even got Harvey a pamphlet explaining how to get the franchise and machine. But Harvey was firm. "If you want to eat," he said, "go to a café."

Mainly, however, Harvey got bored. There was no escape from the place. He became irate with customers. He would have trouble suppressing a snicker when they asked if he had the latest Elton John tape or described the colour scheme in their living or bed rooms. He was a sitting duck for the lonely, wounded and/or crazy. Phil, for example, an accountant whose wife had left him, made the place a kind of headquarters so it was unsafe to go there unless you liked looking at the photos of the house and kids that were in dispute, or the landrover that the wife simply drove away or the antique gun collection that she had, if you could believe it, hauled to the junk shop and sold for next to nothing. One day Harvey saw Phil, with a coffee in his hand and his photos in his breast pocket, making for a table of secretaries on their coffee break, and took him aside and told him that the subject of his divorce was, from that point on, banned, verboten, closed, taboo. Phil never came back, and neither did some others with stories to tell who heard about his fate. Then Harvey threw out a woman and her three kids who were running around and around the tables screaming at the top of their lungs. Other customers sympathized with the woman and thought Harvey was too heavy-handed, even if the kids had broken a

Guatemalan vase and were not inclined to say they were sorry, let alone pay for it. Of course, those of us who knew Harvey understood when, for example, he let it be known he was starting to get very tired of a couple of unnamed college instructors who spent most of their copious spare time complaining about their lucrative jobs, or a certain railway worker who regularly enumerated the worth of his pension plan and talked about the fishing he was going to do when he took retirement at fifty, or a certain local artist who had made so many mugs with cute faces on them that he was starting to look like a mug himself. But there were others who took it hard. The tree planters for example, who regularly sought out civilized comforts like cappucino, were hurt when they learned that, in Harvey's opinion, planters, while they usually looked interesting, were actually as boring as most urban professionals and sometimes a lot more boring. And then there were the bad days, when the mere request for a cappucino would get you nothing but an unflinching, incredulous stare, and you had to sit under that stare, coffeeless, trying to read the newspaper or look at the art.

Lilla stepped in. She hired Rob, a painter who used to be a bartender, to watch the tables. Rob was efficient and could stand polishing a cup or spoon for hours and even manipulated his eyebrows to look interested while customers told him their stories. He liked everything that people purchased even when they chose it off the wall from right beside one of his own things. Harvey is now more or less banned from the place, though he still uses the studio in back to arrange consignments, paint T-shirts and ties and do graphic designs for various businesses around town. He is allowed out, briefly, in the afternoon, for coffee, and if Rob knows you know Harvey and thinks it's o.k., he will let you go back into the studio for a visit.

Business is picking up now, and Harvey is earning some extra money for his graphics. Also, he has a new social presence, and more places in town where he can legitimately hang out. He is, for example, a member of the Downtown Business Association and the Chamber of Commerce. He goes to meetings and votes on such matters as parking meters and garbage pick-up. He has taken to wearing a sports coat that he bought at the Sally Ann and carrying around an empty attaché case. He is being courted by the Kinsmen.

When asked how things are going, he inevitably says that he is "in a new phase." He implies that there is lots of movement "under the surface." He says there are opportunities everywhere, "just waiting to be picked up." "Jesus," Barry will say, "you'd almost think he meant it. Maybe he's reading Lee Iaccoca or something. If you think about it, he's even starting to look like Lee Iaccoca."

None of this could've happened, however, without Lilla. Harvey is the first to admit it. "She's the muse," he says. "She inspires idiots." Presently, he's trying to talk her into quitting the college and devoting herself entirely to the business. He's also looking for a job.

George Bowering / RANDOM ACCESS COACH HOUSE

Recently I offered my skull to Anne Hungerford. She is a playwright and language teacher who has been experimenting on writers' brains. She theorizes that writers initiate their work variously – some hear language, some see language, and some work out of a kind of abstraction the more logical among us would call logical. I am reminded of Ezra Pound's maintaining in his *ABC of Reading* that superior writers coordinate "phanopoeia, melopoeia, logopoeia."

Late one Friday afternoon Anne led me to a laboratory full of electro-imagic equipment. There she and others attached three dozen electrodes to my cranium. These were attached to a box hanging from my neck, which in turn led to a computer in another room, on which was an electroencephalographic screen. I, on the other hand, was placed before an IBM computer. I have been using Apples and Macintoshes longer than most writers have been wired, but I had never touched an IBM before. The writing program was Microsoft Word™, which I use all the time. But I saw that I was going to have to relearn the business of making things happen without windows and a mouse.

Here is what I was supposed to do: sit and write on the IBM computer for several hours, while Anne in the other room scans my brainwaves. I did. I wrote the first portion of an experimental (it seemed appropriate) poem. I wrote some other stuff. Then typing as fast as I could, but still not gleaning my teeming brain, I wrote out some unordered memories of Coach House Press.

For those who don't know, Coach House Press has been since the mid-sixties the principal publisher of avant-garde writing in English Canada. For those who know that but who have not been keeping track, there is a new regime at Coach House Press made of people who were not around during the revolution and who want the press to be respectable.

So. A few months later Anne brought me a print-out of the stuff I wrote. The verse will find its way into print some time. Some of the stuff will just disappear like most brainwaves. Here will follow a few of my unordered memories of Coach House Press, which received a

manuscript from me via bp Nichol in 1965, and published in 1967. I have published a career's worth of books with CHP.

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When Coach House Press published *Geneve* (1971), my tarot poem, they used my wife Angela's tarot pack for a photograph that was printed on the inside of the dust jacket on the clothbound version. In the photograph the cards (the major arcana) are laid out in a spiral, in the order in which they appear in the book, upon an oriental rug with spiralling patterns. Quite a number of people reading the book did not have the Curiosity (heh) to unwrap the book and look at the picture inside. Others, once they found the picture, removed the dust jacket from the pumpkin-coloured cloth, unfolded it and put it on their walls as a non-poetry poster.

After the publication of the book, CHP didn't bother to get the tarot pack back to me, but stored it, wrapped in its silk square, as is the proper custom, on a shelf in the main lounge or whatever that upstairs room is called at the Coach House, along with the archive of books and magazines constructed at the press. Hundreds of workers, writers, vagrants and friends of the family would hang around in that room over the years. What odds.

I guess it must have been something like seven years after *Geneve* came out, after we had moved to Vancouver, that I found the cards, still there, at the press. Actually, I think that it was more like ten years, but seven years always works quite well in narratives such as this. I picked them up, along with a bunch of recent Coach House books. One could, if one were a CHP author, still do that in those days. Postcards and poesy, try to figure out where to pack them, as always, for the flight back across the Rockies. Reading new poetry on a new jet west across the new world. L'étoile.

The cards are now in Angela's study, but I don't remember whether they are still wrapped in silk. They are several rooms from the nearest copy of *Geneve*.

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I was there in the old narrow brick building on the lane behind Huron Street shortly after Coach House Press got its own perfect binder. A

perfect binder makes those books whose pages are trimmed neatly on the right and glued to the spine on the left or vice versa. The CHPers treated it in what used to be the time-honoured Coach House manner.

Everything that was not nailed down was being perfect-bound. Blank-paged books appeared with exotic covers, often covers of Coach House books. Nurse novels sported covers from Northrop Frye texts. A book by Michael Ondaatje had a Canadian Cigarette box as its wrapping.

They mixed and matched, the eclectic crew. It was beautiful. It was also learning. It had a trace of 1967, of Rochdale and the origins of the Coach House Press. Young people were finding out, their hands on the machine, how to do something, while persuading themselves that they were having the kind of fun that people who were not tokers and longhairs and wives and husbands who were not taken in by the slick city magazines later decades would never see or understand. And if that is a funny sentence, so what?

I mean no one even bothered to think like numismatics. No one made a Margaret Atwood book with a perfect bill bissett cover just so they could sell it to a collector in 1999. I don't think anyone did. I hope not. No, I am nearly sure no one did.

But I am typing this with a bunch of EEG wires in my head and some heavy plate they are plugged into on my chest, and on an IBM machine for the first time, and listen, there is more — it has red letters on the white buzz of a screen, and no mouse. EEK. I have to relearn how to be a second generation computer freak.



The Coach House people were first generation computer freaks as far as the Canadian publishing scene was concerned. I mean that head freak Stan Bevington used to get LIP grants and OFY grants, and a lot of money would go into the purchase of amazing new machines in the offices upstairs, up above the old iron hand press and the huge typesetting machine, that monster metal spider that threw hot lead through the air, past the humming head of Victor Coleman, bent before it, his spatulate fingers making beautiful lines of 1968 verse. How I miss those times.

I reflect now. What kind of writing do I want this to be, I with these wires in my scalp, cult cybo-horror movie anti-hero. Do I want

to see sections of a piece of Coach House Press, fit them together, make a possible paper of them, read them to the Curious (there he goes again) in the side room of the National Library in hot humid Ottawa? Or does this person, android skull face, want to reflect on CHPress, offer you poetry of the metrical age, the meter a cable under the sea of this old gink's islanded brain?

If that was truly a question I will stand with that question mark. After all, I am typing more than I generally do on a Friday afternoon.

Trying to imPress whom? No, trying to make a piece, to escape from the evasion of writing I have been doing at home these afternoons this whole week.

I feel as if I have a hat on.

Or a hat inside my cranium bone, whew.

Anyway, the computers at CHP. They kept provoking articles with pictures and personalities in the big daily press, including the *Globe & Mail*, probably even the business pages. Bearded gink in this dot-dot picture looks like a Doukhobor tractor-fixer, got a screen in front of his face, a gleam behind his eyeglasses, what used to be expertise regarding burning herbs now converted to this PAL program, whew again. I mean I remember Stan on the subway, sitting there on the sideways seat, eyes straight ahead, two big paper sacks beside his feet in boots, a Doukhobor hat on his head, round crown.

Eventually all your books will be on the screen, inside the chips only. If there is such a thing as print, it will just be collectors' beautiful artifacts. Who better to do that than Coach House Press?

I mean, do you remember those 1968 posters they used to make for rock & roll concerts outdoors at Varsity Stadium? Remember you could not read them unless you were stoned, and then you probably only thought you could read them, because if anyone asked you what they were about, you would just mumble words or parts of words. Like Chet Baker thinking he can really play really gone when he is high up through his own bony brain.



Varsity Stadium, oh yes. Once there was a three-day rock festival there, lots of the hot groups, their names filled two columns of print, from what was it, 1969? Vanilla Fudge? The Who? Procol Harem. The

Kinks. I went free, but not much. And if the statute of limitations permits, here is how I went free.

Some narcorevolutionary love heads at CHP had got hold of a pair of tickets for the three-day festival of decibels, and applied guerrilla hipster logic to the situation, that musicapitalism right across the street nearly, in the DMZ. They found similar paper and ink and type and so on, and printed a fair number of tickets for the festival. The listeners would be in the stands and on the grass of the football field, after all, and there was room for everyone.

It was amazing to hand the ticket to a tough guy at the gate and walk right in.

The music was loud and sort of like San Francisco. There is no way to tell younger people, people the age of the new crowd at Coach House, what feeling passed between the air and the human interior in those days. The summer was hot and humid. The folks were wearing clothes like buccaneers in fifties movies. Some may even have had sabres between their teeth. Some of the rock singers sounded as if they did. I think Donovan was there. You could understand his words, if you wanted to.

So in the crowd were a lot of people with tickets with the same serial numbers on them, but no guard noticed. Of course not. This was one of the japes the "movement" could be proud of during that period when entrepreneurs were trying to make a bundle off the populace's appetite for the counter-culture. I was not a great rock fan, though I once drank the Ottawa night away on roadsides with the Youngbloods, and so on. I was into ESP jazz records, Albert Ayler and his brother Don, as taught to me by Greg Curnoe of London and John Sinclair of Detroit.

Oh, this IBM screen is doing idiosyncratic things. Now I have a black rectangle whose length keeps changing, right after my last red words, and often letters just don't make it onto the screen anyways. Anne says that something like that is happening to the brainwave monitor.

A few weeks later there was a rock "concert," as they were starting to call them, because this music after "Sergeant Pepper" was getting pretentious, at Maple Leaf Gardens. Coach House spies got a couple of tickets and reproduced a certain number of them again. This time, though, the tickets were larger in number than the available seats in

the hockey arena, and after a while the guards were eager to read the figures on the ducats. There was not a lot of elbow room in Maple Leaf Gardens. I am glad that I wasn't there. I think The Doors were on the program anyway.

The only time I have been inside Maple Leaf Gardens was the occasion on which two other Coach House authors and I bought some tickets off a scalper and saw the Leafs beat Detroit 6-0. They were at the time very unsuccessful teams. After the game was over, David McFadden, whose ticket I had bought, announced that he would like to read his poems aloud to whomever stayed in their seats. The other author, David Young, disappeared from sight.



One time I was being old familiar George, you never know when he's going to appear all at once, loud at the press, come first thing in Toronto to the lane behind Huron Street, stomp loudly up the stairs, give them the familiar twice a year, say, surprise. Loud guy from the west coast but an old pal of the press, first book in Centennial Year, remember?

This time I slammed the bottom door or maybe I did, and stomped really loud up those narrow worn-down wooden steps, headed for the scarred familiar table and good coffee. They were going to be as always glad to see me.

Really loud, making some loud remark, as if in the middle of a cross-the-street conversation, here I am from the cool Pacific, noisy.

But it is a little embarrassing, or a middle amount embarrassing. Because there's Stan Bevington at the table with papers and photos all over its surface, and two or was it three guys in suits no matter the weather in consultation. These were, I think, ginks from the National Gallery, who were talking with Stan about publishing a lucrative picture book through the press.

Whew, I suddenly became a quieter guy, said I will just look around, see what's new, talk with Nelson and the boys.



That's all the Coach House memoiring I have from this occasion. I had intended to tell the story of Stan Bevington and the acid and the

book in the fish bowl. As a matter of fact, I thought that I had typed this one out. Maybe it got lost among the chips. Maybe it strayed between the brain waves. Maybe I mixed intention with typing.

Anyway, it was really late Friday afternoon, or more properly evening. We were both tired, and Anne knew that it was going to take more than an hour to get the electrodes off my head and the conducting gel out of my hair. We were both brain-tired, so we quit for the night.

The stuff I got could have been better, but I am not overly displeased by the words the experience called up at ski-jump speed. Maybe if I get used to the IBM and the electrodes and the necessity to keep kind of still, I can make a better second installment of memoirs. As Ezra Pound put it in *ABC of Reading*: "The best work probably does pour forth, but it does so AFTER the use of the medium has become 'second nature,' the writer need no more think about EVERY DETAIL, than Tilden needs to think about the position of every muscle in every stroke of his tennis."

Anne, meanwhile hasn't told me whether she saw anything while she was looking at the brain monitor.

Brian Fawcett / PROVOCATIONS

POSTMODERN FUSIONS, CONFUSIONS AND HYPERMODERNISM

At the heart of the postmodernist élan in contemporary literature are two connected phenomena: 1) literary genres today are showing signs of extreme confusion as to their verity and value, and 2) there is a distinct movement towards the creation of new genres at least partly through the fusion of relevant elements in the old ones. For me, the issues inherent in those phenomena are not playful ones, and the questions raised by the issues certainly are not rhetorical.

Whether or not the confusions and fusions of the postmodernist enterprise will be adequate to protect our heritage as *homo sapien* against the culturally destructive forces of consumerist globalism is the most important question faced by literature today, and by literate culture itself. If it is not answered soon, I fear there will be no literature in the future except perhaps as a minor heritage activity, or as a raw material for industrial academia. The latter already overshadows literature in the number of practitioners and in public funding it receives. Literate culture and its imaginative practitioners could soon cease to have any role — curatorial or otherwise — to play in either the energizing, regulating or humanizing of civil societies.

For as long as I can recall, I have held the conviction that artists have profound civil responsibilities. It may be because when I was a child my mother read long tracts of Shelley's verse to me, or perhaps because I grew up in a small town in the chilly Northern wilderness of British Columbia where everyone had civil responsibilities. Whatever the source, my work has been energized by a sense of responsibility and civil curiosity rather than political or ideological ambition. I have deliberately lived and worked close to the sources of political power, but I have been privileged enough to exercise a curiosity about why power exists and how it is distributed without having to be terrorized by questions of who is in power, and of how to either please or avoid

them. It's a privilege I accept without gratitude because it contains ironies I am very much aware of.

In my view, the writer's responsibility is to understand and interpret the nature of civil culture for his or her fellow citizens, and to expose the discrepancies between program reality and actuality — whether or not anyone wants them interpreted or exposed. In our epoch, this responsibility involves addressing the conditions under which fundamental human values are exercised — values like kindness, the right to laugh, and to take pleasure in the particularities of people, things and processes, along with a host of other “simple” behaviors that appear to be disappearing as the fundamentalisms of economic globalism sweep the planet.

In addition, the writer's responsibility is to tell the tale of the tribe in ways that bring its associational truths and inherited intellectual technologies to as many people as possible — without sacrificing its complexity to propaganda or to exclusionary languages or dialects. This is, I believe, the true meaning of what Dante called the vernacular.

The etymological root of the word “narrative” is the Greek word *gnarre*: to know. Since Homer, narrative technologies have been a response both to the means available for gathering and disseminating knowledge, and to the kinds of things people need to know. The *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, as Eric Havelock revealed some years ago, was devised — or evolved — as an encyclopaedia and a cultural operations manual rather than a work of art. Its hexameters and other mnemonic devices gave specific instructions about how to launch ships and make sacrifices to the gods while it transferred its historical summary of Mycenaean Greece to their Dorian conquerors. It was meant to be used, and like all great art it was meant to subvert and civilize by engendering a taste for complexity. I do not think it was meant to be admired for its aesthetic subtleties.

Until recently narrative forms have largely been a response to strategic and utilitarian necessities rather than aesthetic demands. The complicated symbolic encodings of the Medieval troubadours were primarily a response to authoritarian repression — if you said what was really on your mind, someone might chop your head off. Likewise, the narrative strategies of the novel, particularly after the 18th century, were at least partly a means to elude censorship and authoritarian violence. The omniscient narrator of the 19th century European novel

also has another, slightly different, but no less pragmatic origin — in the uneven rise of literacy there, where reading aloud was a prestigious and primary social activity, it was a method of asserting pedagogic and familial authority. Likewise, I'm aware that in some countries the strategies of indirection and symbolic encoding remain relevant.

None of the above conditions of knowledge or authority any longer pertain to the society I come from, which is a minor First World English-speaking democracy. Since the Second World War censorship and other forms of direct informational suppression have more or less vanished, and illiteracy, at least if you accept the official explanation, has become more a cognitive disability than an economic or political one.

At the root of these changes is the massive growth in the efficiency and universality of communications technologies, which have made direct censorship virtually impossible to administer. At first this "globalization" seemed to promise an educational and informational Golden Age. What has evolved instead is the Global Village, which employs data atomization, overload, trivialization and mass conduitizations to create a monoculture that deprives citizens of specific and useable knowledge as effectively as any directly repressive society that has ever existed. English-speaking North Americans and most Western Europeans (I wouldn't presume to speak for other countries) are not afraid to understand or criticize our political, social and intellectual culture. The problem most of us have is that we can't recognize our culture among the Disney ikons, the televised incitements to violence and conspicuous consumption, and the consumer franchises that bleed local economies and cultures of their vitality. Most of us have also been divested of the tools needed to analyze and evaluate where we are and what is happening to us.

Meanwhile, the novel, in particular, has lost its cultural authority even though it remains the flagship of conventional literature. In part this is because one cannot get an angle on the daily news from it, which is what most people want now, but the truer cause is that the novel offers no formal insights about how to sort the overabundance of data coming at us. It says nothing about how or why, in the midst of such technological and informational wealth, the communications systems we live enmeshed in seek to deceive and manipulate us.

With its characteristically omniscient narrator, the mainstream novel participates in the Christian delusion (now really a neo-Darwinian

determinism) that the world, in its chaos of forms and appearances, is ultimately subject to order — be it divine, paradigmatic or holographic. The new critical mind that is emerging from the informationalization of the planet, by contrast, demands a much more heterogeneous structuring of reality. The cognitive and conceptual toolbox needed to apprehend reality is very much larger and more diverse than the one that novelists have settled around.

Marshall McLuhan, who first recognized, in the 1950s, the tendency of information-driven societies toward a simultaneous *atomization of perception* and an *implosion of intellectual disciplines*, said we would need elevated pattern discernment, improved pixel matrix scanning strategies, and the capacity to leap from discipline to technical dialect to wide-open phenomenology without irritability or loss of attention. He recognized that the human species is undergoing a retooling of thought processes more profound than anything that has occurred since our ancestors stumbled out of the caves and began to live in agricultural communities 7,000-10,000 years ago.

To survive the destructive effects of the changes, McLuhan believed that human beings must become weavers of information, and masters of its mass conduits — or be devoured by the productive force of the systems. Whether or not the changes occurring — or not occurring — in literary narrative techniques are a significant part of that general retooling of the human mind is not clear.

In 1986, I published a book titled *Cambodia: A Book For People Who Find Television Too Slow*. What I meant by the rather strange title was that I wanted to produce a text that was as fast informationally as contemporary communications technology. But at the same time as I moved to make my text formally much more open and transparent than most literary texts, I wanted to retain and transform the textual density which literature has traditionally sought.

To achieve my goals, I made two thoroughly existential organizational decisions. One was to engage the most difficult subject matter I could locate. The second was to let the content of the book dictate the form it would take — to let it be, in the jargon of computers, content-driven. The result was a book with a primary text consisting of 13 “episodes,” and a 25,000 word subtext that runs across the bottom third of the page as what one critic called a “marauding footnote.”

The “difficult subject matter” I settled on, as the book’s title indicates, was Cambodia. As a Canadian in 1984, I understood almost nothing

about Cambodia, having concerned myself to that point, as most First World writers do, with narratives about the private, twisted epiphanies allowed us in a privatized, twisted world. I wrote stories with beginnings, middles and ends, dialogue ratios, and the rest of the obsolete paraphernalia of the Fictional Agreement.

I set out to research what has taken place over the last several decades in Indochina, and began, in the absence of a blueprint or map, to write what appeared to be a long essay on my chosen subject. But when I began to gather the magnitude of what happened to the Cambodian people, first through the 1969 U.S. invasion and subsequent bombing, and then with the Khmer Rouge holocaust of 1975-79, I realized that what I was looking at was an attempt to suppress and erase the individual memories and imaginations of 7 million people deemed expendable — then and now — by virtually the entire world community.

I also began to note, uneasily, that there are uncomfortable parallels to this extermination of memory and imagination in the media-saturated world I live in. I began to track those parallels, and let them connect wherever they had a will to. Eventually, the record of the parallels formed the book's primary text, with the essay on Cambodia acting as its subtext — just as the events in Cambodia, it seems to me, constitute the chilling subtext to my own world. A 1990 book, *Public Eye: An Investigation into the Disappearance of the World*, employs essentially the same method and format, but with the subject matter of the disappearance of particularity and local culture.

The texts of both books have a strange appearance, but that isn't why I'm bringing them to your attention. Whatever conventional literary merit they have (which is not much, at times) they are attempts to respond to the reality of changed informational identities and densities, and to the indisputable fact that individual human receptors are being shaped, manipulated and frequently disabled by our mass communications systems. The books are also attempts to respond to the fact that the arts in general, and literature in particular, have ceased to be in the vanguard of cultural suasion or production.

I've taken some of my cues from writers like Michel Puig, John Berger and Eduardo Galeano, all of whom have been willing to crash or mix genres and disciplines in order to renew the discourse that must be at the root of artistic enterprise. The other cues, it seems

to me, are in the information systems we deal with daily.

From Berger, a writer who writes English, as I do, slowly and with difficulty, I learned that style is merely an adjunct to clarity and depth of thought. Neither of my two recent books could have been written without word processors, which make it infinitely easier to track multiple subjects and themes, and to contextualize them. It also makes it difficult to fetishize the act of composition. I used word processing to overcome my biggest shortcoming — my own stupidity — developing a method of composition that involves repeated revision, which for me involves rethinking as much as rewriting. Most of what I publish (in book form, at least) has been revised, word by word and concept by concept, at least 30-40 times. Properly used, word processors can be a wonderful aid to intellectual courage. They also do away with the need for secretarial courage, of which I have very little.

The thirteen years I spent working as an urban planner gave me a familiarity with data manipulation and use as a projective tool. It also taught me that civil coherence is a basic human social need and a primary instinct, but that both the need and the instinct have been massively subverted by a plethora of uncontrolled and expanding binary systems that have productive rather than humane determinations. Urban planning also gave me a familiarity with computers and their dangers and uses.

Urban planning also gave me a working understanding of Modernism and Postmodernism as active technical ideologies and as architectural physicalities. The way that built forms impinge on human space and reveal the daemonic biases in the cognitive structures through which we experience, interpret or avoid the world around us has been a revelation. It has also skewed — or perhaps corrected — my view of literature.

Modernism, which is characterized by a belief in the powers of expert knowledge and centralized functionalism, does not work because it chronically overlooks the fragile complexities — organic and intellectual — of the human species. In a sense, it has populated the world with one-dimensional, soulless efficiencies and competitive monocultures, just as architectural modernism has filled our cities with soullessly “efficient” skyscrapers.

Postmodernism, which seems to correct those tendencies, fails because it never challenges the basic premises of modernism. It has become

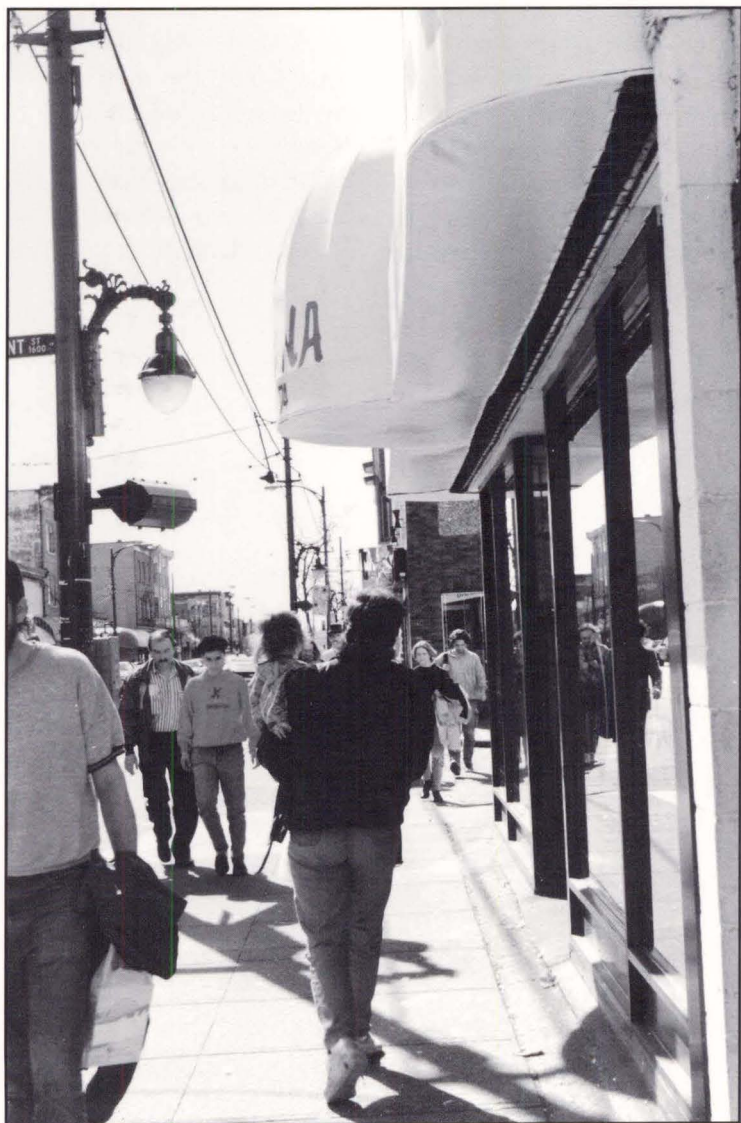
a tyranny of professionals, who undertake to make all history and culture simultaneous and relative, but have fallen prey to a cybernetic monoculture in which the feedback circuits are atrophied by secret syntaxes and intellectual black boxes that protect professional privileges but render them servile or irrelevant. Postmodernist architecture, particularly in its commercial form, reveals the weaknesses. It is modernism with bric-a-brac and high colour, and its ultimate expression — the consumer Megamall — is really a skyscraper laid on its side. It has a few more entrances and exits, but the questions of whether or not we should enter or leave, or why as human beings we should want to find ourselves there in the first place, are broached no more frequently.

Very tentatively, our best architects are now re-examining the premises of Modernist functionalism and Postmodernism's relativist Latin in the light of current knowledge of the complex texturings of the human organism and its associative infrastructure and interdependencies. What we're now beginning to see is a hyper-modernism that accounts for what we know about ourselves and our planet, recognizes the inherent violence of monocultural systems, and addresses the fundamental questions of civil existence: why are we alive, and how should we continue? These are the questions at the root of all art, and as in every age, the vernacular must be reinvented in order to ask them.

A hypermodernist literature to parallel it is clearly needed. A con(fusion) of narrative forms is, I hope, the signal that such a literature is dawning.

Note: The text printed here is a revised version of a paper Brian Fawcett gave at the 5th International Conference on Literary Narrative in Mexico City & Morelia (November 1990).

Grocery lists



Michael de Courcy / GROCERY LISTS

Each morning walking along Commercial Drive, a detour into a lane or two, Miles in his carrier on my back, sometimes chatting away, pulling my hair, sometimes sleeping. Scruffy the dog dashing around, eager to visit his favorite spots for a pee. Going the nine blocks to the post office then home, to collect my thoughts and the mail. Seeing, watching, looking. Often snapping photos.

Finding. My photos are a series of found objects and I am a collector. The discarded grocery lists found on these same travels are but another form of gathered imagery rescued for my collection. A peek into the lives of my fellow travellers.

April 5, 1991

Joy
Pan.

Prings
Fest
Pleamb
Cant

Panna Juice w. cheres.

Aple Juice. Sun Ripe 6
6 Pink Grape fruit
macaroni 300 lbs.

Pawn Shop.

~~Long list.~~

Welfare

Food. - ~~Is paper?~~

cig Tubes.

~~cat list~~

~~Paper~~

~~Father's Day Card.~~

- Butter
- Eggs
- Bread
- Juice
Cookies
- payvage red Bag
- Ricecrispies
Apples
plums
- Liptons Big foot
or
alagator

Snacks, Potatoes, Onions
Fruits, Flour, Milk, ^{Carrots} Cereals
Orange Juice, Butter, ^{Mix} Vegetables, Toilet paper
Toil, Chips, French Fries
School Drinks, Pop, Sardines
Joe Louis, Muffins, Bread
Mince, Chicken, Pork Chops

Letting

bread
milk
mushrooms
green pepper
broccoli

2x LIT → mix

1 Bailey

or 20

1 Kahlua

Metaxa

Sherry

White Creme De Menthe

1 Peach Schnapps

A NOTE FROM...

Rish Soap ~~Soap~~ Backer

Bread Can milk
meat.

Salad dressing

Muffins
Legion Noodles Kay

- bougies.
- un Réveil
- épices • cumin
- Curry (pâtes)
- chili

- herbes • origan
- thym
- sel. • basilic
- poivres.
- Sauge.

huile d'olive
" de sésame
 vinaigre.
tamar

- Riz
- lentilles
- frites.
- wheat germ
- granola
- pâtes
- bulgour
- farine.
- Café
- tisane (camomille, menthe)

ail
oignons
piments

légumes

- pommes de terre
- Carotte
- Navet
- choux
- choufleur

- ~~met~~
- beurre d'arachide
- confiture.

WENERS 3
CHEARTS
VSOUP

MAYANA ZE

Green Pepper
Metc'
Parmesan

Pomato soup

Salad

Houstricky

Frozen raspberries
6 pears

Canned Milk

Salad dressing for you (80 9)

crotons. (7 +)

Ticket Issue
Copper.
Meat.
fish

Beer
~~ticket~~ =

MICHAEL de COURCY

Selected Exhibitions

Solo

- 1990 *Home/Video*, Clochard Gallery, Vancouver.
- 1982 *Vancouver T-Shirt Open — Prints*, Reflections Art Gallery, Vancouver.
- 1978 *Front Page*, Nova Gallery, Vancouver.
- 1976 *Greetings From The Urban Wilderness*, Artists' Gallery, Vancouver.
- 1974 *Michael de Courcy*, Vancouver Art Gallery.
- 1972 *NFB Monograph*, School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Group

- 1990 *Artropolis '90*, Roundhouse Gallery, Vancouver.
- 1988 *Urban Subjects — Poster!* City of Vancouver.
- 1987 *The Concealed Camera*, Eye Gallery, San Francisco.
- 1983 *Vancouver Art and Artists*, Vancouver Art Gallery (Catalog).
- 1979 *13 Cameras — The Book*, National Film Board Gallery, Ottawa (Catalog).
- 1970 *B.C. Almanac*, National Film Board Gallery, Ottawa (Catalog).
- Photography into Sculpture*, Museum of Modern Art, New York.
- 1968 *Electrical Connection*, Vancouver Art Gallery.

Collections:

Burnaby Art Gallery
Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography
National Film Board of Canada (Stills Division)
National Gallery of Canada
Vancouver Art Gallery
Winnipeg Art Gallery

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JOHN PASS' poems in this issue are from *Gimpy Rapture*, Book II of an extended work-in-progress, *At Large. The Hour's Acropolis* (Book I) and *Rugosa* (Book III) will appear this summer from Harbour Publishing and Reference West/Hawthorne Society, respectively. He and his wife Teresa Kishkan run High Ground Press, publishing broadsheets and chap-books. He teaches at Capilano College and recently spent part of 1990 as Visiting Poet at Brigham Young University, Utah.

DUNCAN MCNAUGHTON has returned to Bolinas, California since travelling in Central and South America. He is currently working on poems and essays related to that experience. His most recent major collections, *Sumeriana* and *Shit on My Shoes*, were both published by Tombouctou.

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SHARON THESEN is working on poems and essays while on leave from Capilano College. Her selected poems, *The Pangs of Sunday*, appeared from McClelland & Stewart in 1990. She has published critical essays in *Vancouver Review* and a new essay on literary theory will appear in *VR*'s June 1991 issue.

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DAVID PHILLIPS' work in this issue comes principally from an on-going series related to the Sechelt Peninsula, where he spends much of his writing time. He has published eight collections of poetry, the most recent being *Blink/Gumboots* (Tatlow/Gorse Press 1986). Along with several other Vancouver writers, Phillips' tribute to *Robert Creeley in Vancouver* appeared in *West Coast Line's* splendid Winter 1990 issue.

BARRY MCKINNON is currently preparing ten years of writing for publication; the working title for this manuscript-in-progress is *The Centre*, and the work in this issue from an ongoing text, *Pulp Log*, will be a part of it. McKinnon is also working on a subversive follow-up to his *BC Poets & Print* issue of *Open Letter* (Summer/Fall 1988).

JOHN HARRIS was raised in Vancouver and White Rock, took degrees at UBC and McGill, and has spent most of his adult life teaching English at the College of New Caledonia in Prince George. His collection of short fictions, *Small Rain*, was published by New Star Books in 1989. He recently read new stories and from a novel-in-progress at R2B2 Books in Vancouver after returning from travels in Central America.

GEORGE BOWERING is currently at work on an "unmentionable" project he refuses to discuss with anyone. His latest book, *Harry's Fragments*, was published by Coach House in 1990. Bowering was a notable participant in a recent conference, *Interventing the Text*, organized by Fred Wah at the University of Calgary.

BRIAN FAWCETT's most recent collection, *Public Eye: An Investigation into the Disappearance of the World*, was published by Grove Press in 1990. He's currently at work on several manuscripts, including a book of critical essays. He writes a regular column for the *Globe & Mail*, which allows him to pose as a media expert at various events, such as the Mickery Touch Time Festival recently held in Amsterdam.

MICHAEL DE COURCY now lives and works in New Westminster, BC. The work in this issue is one of many of his projects that involve photography and text. His work was recently exhibited at the Pitt Gallery (*Aids Benefit Show* 1991, *Home Show* 1990), at Artropolis 90 (Roundhouse, Vancouver), and at the Clochard Gallery, Vancouver (*Home/Video* solo show).

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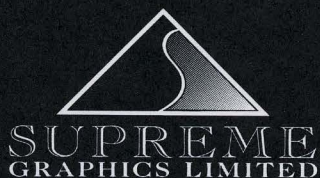
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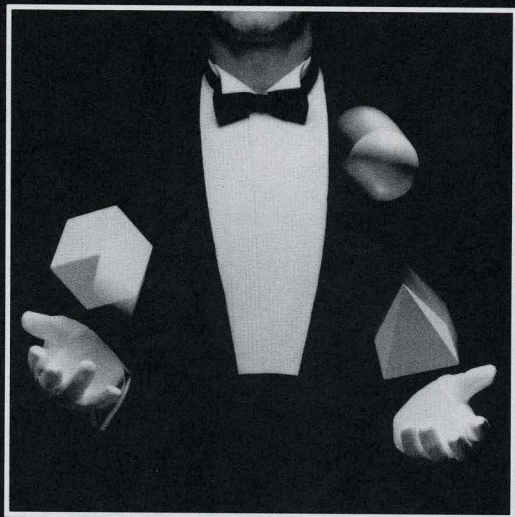
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