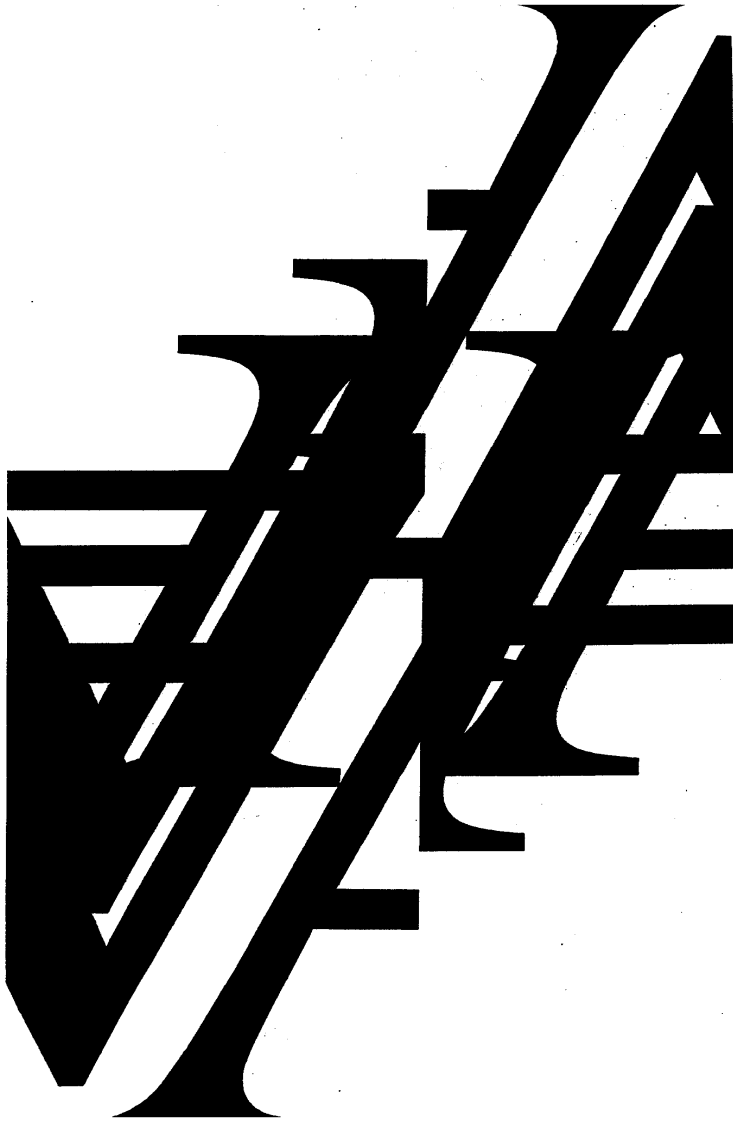


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"NARCISSUS A, 7" BY PAUL DUTTON

Editorial:

This issue of *Rampike* is dedicated to **Frank Davey** in response to the conference on “Poetics and Popular Culture” held in his honour at the University of Western Ontario (2005). Keynote speakers at that gathering included Charles Bernstein, Lynette Hunter, and Smaro Kamboureli. Poets who read at the conference included Charles Bernstein, Daphne Marlatt, Marlene Nourbese Philip, Lenore Keeshig-Tobias, Roy Miki, and Fred Wah. Many of the conference proceedings and responses are published in special issues of *Essays on Canadian Writing*, *Open Letter*, and *Rampike*. In this issue of *Rampike*, we feature a number of the participants at that conference as well as writers, artists, and thinkers who have either collaborated with Frank Davey, or those whose views resonate with his perceptions of aesthetics, politics, poetics, cultural studies and/or criticism, or those who are “fellow travellers” through writing.

Frank Davey is well known as the long-standing editor of *Open Letter* magazine, a dynamic vehicle for the promotion and advancement of innovative thinking on contemporary literature and the arts. Along with his other salient critical statements, Davey’s breakthrough essay “Surviving the Paraphrase: Thematic Criticism and its Alternatives” (later published in *Surviving the Paraphrase: 11 Essays on Canadian Literature*), transformed the way Canadians perceive Canadian Literature. Prior to that, along with George Bowering, Daphne Marlatt, Fred Wah and others, Davey initiated *Tish* magazine which, among other things, forwarded an Olsonian and Black Mountain aesthetic while simultaneously advancing new poetic forms in Canada. Davey’s own poetic achievements appear in over two dozen books stretching from 1962 to the present. In 1984, along with Fred Wah, Frank Davey developed *Swift Current*, the world’s first electronic literary database which provided an open electronic forum for writers and theorists to instantaneously air new writing and criticism. More recently, Davey has developed non-fiction and cultural criticism that is engaged with what bp Nichol identified as “notions of responsibility and duty.” Frank Davey’s recent polemics are engaged with the validity of fact, and have influenced both critical theory and cultural studies. Stephen Scobie has called Davey’s criticism “among the most individual and influential ever written in Canada.” And then, there is Frank’s penchant for raising prize-winning, champion show-dogs, specifically, Great Danes. For more info on Frank Davey’s dogs, his writing, publishing and criticism, and his numerous achievements, we refer you to his interview in this issue, and his web-page at: <http://publish.uwo.ca/%7Efdavey/c/daveymain.htm>

We are delighted to present this special issue of *Rampike*, in honour of Frank Davey featuring interviews, statements and expressions by noted authors, artists and critics including, Michael and Linda Hutcheon, Joyce Carol Oates, Charles Bernstein, George Bowering, and Brian Edwards (Australia). This issue includes fiction, poetry, visual graphics, theory, arts commentary and trans-genre texts by Canadian and international authors who share the individualistic and forward-thinking ethos, aesthetics and poetics that Frank Davey has advanced throughout his career. We trust you will find this homage to Frank Davey to be in the same stimulating and rewarding spirit as his many continuing contributions to literature and criticism. – **Karl Jirgens/Editor**



PHOTO (K. Jirgens): Frank Davey with Roy Miki, Jeff Derksen & colleagues at the Poetics and Popular Culture Conference (University of Western Ontario)

FOR THE RECORD: INTERVIEW WITH FRANK DAVEY by Karl Jirgens

KJ: I wanted to talk about a number of ground-breaking or pioneering initiatives you've been involved in. I'll try to proceed chronologically, although there are overlaps. The first area involves recent debate on the idea of trans-nationalism as a condition of contemporary literature, including Canadian Literature. Could you cross-reference the present with earlier notions of trans-nationalism as it involved Warren Tallman, the Black Mountain poets and the founding of *TISH* magazine in Vancouver during the 1960s?

FD: 'Transnationalism' may not be the best term here, since it presupposes the national or nationalism. There's a similar problem with words like 'international' or 'paranational.' Cultural forms have tended to be more general – as indicated in words such as 'Graeco-Roman,' 'Western,' 'European,' "Middle-Eastern," 'South Asian,' 'Sub-Saharan' – with national forms usually being particular instances of the larger ones. I grew up in the Western period of modernism – Euro-American modernism, I suppose (although it's often been called 'international' modernism). There's an extremely rich Dada exhibition touring at the moment, which I saw in Paris last fall and which will be in New York and Washington this year. What is remarkably clear in this exhibition is how complex was Dada's relation to the nation state. To some extent national boundaries were irrelevant – one month an artist might be working in Paris and the next in Geneva or New York. Yet there were also strong national inflections – in Germany they concerned political resistance, in New York they often concerned industrialization. My cultural inheritance has been of this kind – European romanticism, European Victorianism, Euro-American modernism with all of its 'isms' from Russian constructivism to American abstract expressionism. In the years immediately before *Tish* my stronger interests included Dostoevsky, Lawrence, Ionesco, Pinter, Camus, Sartre, Chagall, Jaspers, Heidegger, Ferlinghetti, Kerouac, Earle Birney, Jack Shadbolt, plus whatever was appearing in the *Tamarack Review* (I had a subscription from issue 3 onward).

While nationalism has been for the past few hundred years a condition of the commercial dissemination of literature, and often for its funding, it has not seemed to me to be a major condition of the theorizing of the literary. The national didn't seem to me to be particularly relevant to either Black Mountain or *Tish* – that is I wasn't aware at the time that I or others such as Warren Tallman might be being deliberately 'transnational' or that the national was something that might need to be transited. Quite the contrary – the question for us at the time of *Tish* was how to write a poetry out of the local (with 'Canada' understood as an aspect of that local). Black Mountain was attractive because of its critique of humanism and instrumentalism, its literary extensions of Jaspers and Merleau-Ponty, its links to the European modernisms of Dada, Futurism, Constructivism, and – above all – Olson's theorizing of the local. It theorized that process of particular local (and arguably national) inflection.

Those who currently see "transnationalism as a condition of contemporary literature" strike me as showing ignorance at least of twentieth-century literature and some naivety about the nation and literature. Literature and literary ideas have never been contained by the national. What has been lessening has been the national inflections of the literary, particularly in nation-states that lack a unique national language, and particularly in fiction. The homogenization of commercial fiction, and the convergence of national best-seller lists (with an inevitable reduction in the number of books on them), I would argue, is better understood as an aspect of neoliberal globalization than of transnationalism.

KJ: Along with Fred Wah and others you were one of the driving forces behind *Swift Current*. I believe *Swift Current* was initiated in 1984 using UNIX-based VAX computers, one at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, and one at York University in Toronto. The project linked writers from Ontario to *British Columbia* using UUCP (unix to unix copy), providing electronic mail, enabling live, "virtual" collaborative projects, and creating an electronic forum for current linguistic expression. The inter-active nature of the database demonstrated a "virtual" form, and anticipated contemporary World-Wide-Web applications, while establishing a proto-typical and heterogenous "web" or network that de-centred larger hegemonic publishing structures. And it was the first literary site of its kind, in the world, I believe. Could you say a bit more about *Swift Current* with reference to ideas forwarded by thinkers such as say, Innis,

McLuhan, Grant, Godfrey, or maybe Neil Postman or Peter Drucker (both of whom address questions of technopolies, and post-capitalism) with reference to information and knowledge?

FD: There was just Fred and me organizing *Swift Current*, with Dave Godfrey and Stan Bevington cheering us on. Neither Fred nor I would appreciate being linked to such social conservatives as Grant or Postman, although it is fair to say that we were, like McLuhan, Godfrey, Postman, and Drucker, concerned about the individual's relationship to technology and with the question of how new technologies could be brought to amplify individual and community power to participate in society rather than left to amplify the power of the state and big business to control society. We were attracted to network or 'web' models of social relation as possible replacements for hierarchical ones, and to how networked non-hierarchical editorial processes might not only challenge the entrenched authorities of literary production but also decentre the authority of so-called cultural centers – Toronto, New York, Paris etc. Godfrey correctly perceived that there was considerable urgency for artists, and Canadians, to stake out positions in the new electronic world before huge multinational corporations took control of it. We would have been more successful had we not been the only ones committed to the project – the Canada Council offered seed money, but had no program for ongoing support of an electronic literary magazine, even if it was the first in the world. Most other writers had to be dragged or cajoled to participate in the project. We got the sense that many writers – due to financial or employment pressures – didn't have time in their lives for much other than individual careerism. Many others at the time were fearful of new technologies. Fred and I were ourselves often faced with having to choose between SC (which required about 3-4 hrs per day of maintenance) and our own projects – which wouldn't have been a problem if we had been able to afford to hire a site manager, as SUNYBuffalo's *Poetics* site is able to do. Projects like this require participatory citizenship – much like society does generally; otherwise, as Pound lamented, we implicitly allow knaves and eunuchs to rule over us. Hmmm, it was interesting to see the Canpoetics listserv, which various Canadian writers helped launch in 2004, collapse little more than a year later because all these bright people could often think of little more to do with it than post news of poetry readings and book launches.

In terms of unsettling hierarchies and editorial authorities, it's possible that Fred and I had the right medium but the wrong form. Electronic magazines do not seem to have had a strong influence on what texts are read, circulated, or taught (of course many have simply reinstalled the editorial processes of print magazines). What has had profound impact has been teacher-designed anthologies, in Canada assembled through the ACCESS copyright collective, and either printed at a copy shop or made available to students on a secure website. Such anthologies in Canada have almost put the commercially produced poetry anthology out of business – only Geddes' quaint collection from Oxford survives. I used to have poems and essays appear in 6-7 new commercially produced educational anthologies every year; now I receive 10 times as much in royalties from ACCESS for poems and essays that have been included in various coursepacks. Editors such as Geddes can no longer create 'the' canon of Canadian poetry; there are now at least as many canons as there are instructors creating Canadian poetry coursepacks.

KJ: There has been much participation in your journal *Open Letter* which, as I understand it, began as a forum for the open exchange of views between writers and/or theorists. The journal came into print during the 1960s not long after *TISH*. Could you say something about any transition between *TISH* and *Open Letter*, as well as what the original editorial mandate for *Open Letter* was and how it changed over the years?

FD: Yes, I started *Open Letter* in 1965, two years after the *Tish* 1-19 editorial period. *Tish* had been the newsletter of a group of writers who most of whom lived in Vancouver within a few blocks of one another. *Open Letter* was to be the newsletter of what we might well call now a 'virtual' group – the same writers who were now living in Victoria (myself), Calgary (George Bowering), Seattle (David Dawson), and Buffalo (Fred Wah). The mandate – as described in the first issue – was to create "both a symposium and a debate" on poetry and language. Each editor was to have full editorial control over one-quarter of each issue and contribute a letter, new poetry, poetry they had solicited from others, and possibly letters they had received from others. It was blind of me not to have also invited Daphne Marlatt to participate. Her work appears in my sections of the 2nd, 4th, 5th, 8th, and 9th issues, but who knows what was missed by her not being an editorial participant. *OL* followed that model for six issues, but fell away from it during

the year I was in Los Angeles (1966-67) and not continuing regular correspondence with the other editors. The seventh issue was a long poem by David Dawson. Issues 8 and 9 I assembled as conventional journal issues with contributions from Marlatt and Bowering, but none from Wah or Dawson. Much like *Swift Current*, the participatory or dialogue structure of the first *OL* required sustained energy from its participants, and unfortunately in 1968-69 David Dawson was writing less and Fred Wah, as I recall, was making a challenging transition from SUNY Buffalo to a community college position in the Kootenays.

The second series of *Open Letter*, which I began in Toronto in 1971, was quite different. It was to be the literary magazine of Coach House Press. It was to publish articles and reviews on writers rarely discussed in other journals – such as Matt Cohen, David McFadden, Gerry Gilbert, Daphne Marlatt, bpNichol, Fred Wah; to publish work by and about young Quebec writers unknown in English Canada such as Nicole Brossard, Raoul Duguay, and Paul Chamberland; and to address connections between poetry and visual art, including collaborations and visual poetry. The original editorial board was expanded and then gradually altered to include at various times Stan Persky, bpNichol, John Bentley Mays, Steve McCaffery, Barbara Godard, Lola Lemire Tostevin, and Smaro Kamboureli. Fred Wah has been the only editor to continue through all 12 series to the present. *OL*'s connection to Coach House Press, however, ended in 1978 – because it was costing the press too much money to administer. You began your question “there has been much participation in ... *Open Letter*.” That is true. The majority of the issues of the last decade have been guest-edited by writers such as Peter Jaeger, Lola Tostevin, Larissa Lai, Aruna Srivastava, Stephen Cain, Jars Balan, Nicole Markotic, Darren Wershler-Henry, Derek Beaulieu, Jason Christie, Janice Williamson, Louis Cabri. This approach seems to create more dialogue and openings by far than did the rigid model of obligatory exchange with which *OL* began.

KJ: Your essay “Surviving the Paraphrase” originally published in *Canadian Literature* magazine [“Surviving the Paraphrase: Thematic Criticism and its Alternatives,” *Canadian Literature* 70 (Autumn 1976): 5-13.], and later reprinted in your book by the same title [*Surviving the Paraphrase: 11 Essays on Canadian Literature*. Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 1983], not only challenged notions of thematic criticism forwarded by the Frygian school (Atwood, Jones, Moss, et. al.), but also the weaknesses that emerge from the Arnoldian humanism, which deems that both critic and artist have a significant responsibility to culture and society. There were obvious exclusions that happened in that form of criticism in Canada which tended to overlook books (such as Sheila Watson's *The Double Hook*) which did not fit into specific themes of survival, and isolation and so on. The essay also suggested that we move on to thinking about (post-)structural questions in literary form including discontinuous structures in post-modern writing. What is your perception of the response to this essay since its first appearance in 1976?

FD: The response was good. It's probably my most cited essay. There have been various discussions of thematic criticism which have appropriately historicized that essay and noted its limitations. I don't think there have been any that have worked out its connections to *Tish* and Black Mountain poetics, or to Pound's observation that the great thoughts of humanity can be entered on the back of a postage stamp. But your question is probably more about whether I think the essay had the consequences I had hoped for. Well, most commentators have suggested that thematic criticism suffered a rapid decline in influence and credibility in the years immediately after my essay's publication. I wouldn't claim credit for that – I wrote the essay with awareness that there was already widespread discontent among Canadianists regarding Frygian thematics, and interest in new approaches. The essay is part of a period in which continental criticism was starting to appear in translation, and in which I personally was working at reconciling Olson's poetics with those of Nicole Brossard, and those of Bachelard, Merleau-Ponty, and the Barthes of *Writing Degree Zero*. It is in this period that I write to Daphne about Nicole's work (part of my struggles to find connections) and she replies to the effect that she thought Nicole's poetics were almost the polar opposite to her own. Hmmm, I think I'm wandering away from your question. Thematics may no longer be a respectable approach, but it has never really gone away. What is the writer “trying to say” remains the appalling question posed in numerous literature classrooms. Thematics has frequently come back under ethical disguise when claims are made that such-and-such groups, classes, or experiences need to be included in various canons no matter how unremarkable their modes of articulation. And, shockingly, generous comments about Atwood's *Survival* continue to appear.

KJ: Could you say something about your posture as a writer, publisher and editor with reference to large and small presses? You were one of the editors of Coach House during the 1970s and 1980s. Among other things, you helped to raise awareness of specific literary forms such as the Long Poem, both through *Open Letter* and Coach House publications. For example, the press published, *The Long Poem Anthology*, edited by Michael Ondaatje, (Toronto: The Coach House Press, 1979) which incidentally includes your long poem “King of Swords” (181-202), as a case in point. Could you comment on your perspective involving larger and smaller presses?

FD: Large presses are interested in making money for their shareholders. They may say they are interested in serving Literature, and may try to construct what they publish as being Great Literature, but this will be because they have numerous potential bourgeois customers who will want to believe they are reading Great Literature when they are reading fairly conventional realist texts such as those of Shields or Atwood. Since I don’t write novels, this hasn’t affected me greatly, although of course it has helped shape the Canadian literature context in which I’ve worked and in which there are many more participants who think that Atwood is a major writer than there are who think that Marlatt or Bowering or Gail Scott or Matt Cohen are. I’ve sometimes cited William Carlos Williams’ remark that when Eliot’s *The Waste Land* appeared “all our hilarity ended ... it wiped out our world as if an atom bomb had been dropped upon it,” and joked that the equivalent for me was the critical deification of Atwood in 1970-72 largely on the basis of *Surfacing* and *Survival*. My idea of a useful publisher is one that would publish a manuscript it admired even if it might sell only a dozen copies. At Coach House we had arguments about such propositions, with bpNichol and I arguing the affirmative, and our being able, for example, to keep the press persisting in publishing its translations of Nicole Brossard in the face of annual sales, at the beginning, of less than a hundred copies. Publishers have to risk being ahead of their readers, as Coach House clearly was with Brossard. I also thought a small press should be involved in shaping the reception of the writers it published, much like large publishers are when they anthologize their own writers or publish critical books about them. Critics have often cited Ondaatje’s *The Long Poem Anthology* for its choice of genre, but they have rarely noted how innovative it was for a small press to attempt to insert its own writers into the educational anthology market. That is, there had been a hierarchical structure to literary legitimation practices in Canada in which small presses would publish beginning writers, larger presses would select some of these for more widely distributed publication, and large educational presses would in turn select from these ones worthy of anthology inclusion and critical commentary. I saw the small press as having the power to destabilize or short-circuit this hierarchy, by doing all these kinds of publication, and to thus cause literary authority to be more widely distributed.

KJ: You’ve published your own works (poetry, hybrid works) in a variety of medium to small sized presses through Talonbooks, Underwhich, Turnstone, Press Porcépic above/ground press, among others. Could you say more about your own involvement with small presses, and what you see as their role?

FD: Hmmm, this seems to be the same question, or my response to the last one has made it the same as this. Very small presses that expect to sell only around a hundred copies are almost an alternative to magazine publishing. They can bring a new text out very quickly (not being constrained by having to have a ‘spring’ or ‘fall’ season), possibly while the writer is still working on the texts that will accompany it in a larger volume, and bring it to the attention of the writer’s core readers. They sell by mail through word-of-mouth or (currently) mention on the internet. My publication of *Postcard Translations* with Underwhich was that kind of publication – it eventually was part of the larger *Popular Narratives*, published by Talonbooks. Such very small presses lack the resources to publish a hundred-page book. The ‘medium’ sized press that you mention – Talonbooks, Turnstone, Press Porcépic – are in some ways small versions of commercial presses. They have spring and fall seasons and catalogues, they sell through distributors and bookstores, their books have a professional and glossy appearance similar to that of the books of global publishers. Because of limited capital, they have effective access only to the Canadian market. For me this is enough – I have always conceptualized my readership as Canadian, and my non-Canadian readers as readers who looking over the shoulder of the Canadian reader – that is, as being interested in my book in its Canadian context and Canadianness rather than as a free-floating text. In this I’m probably influenced by the way I read non-Canadian books – not as autonomous texts but as products of particular cultures. I remember discussing with the agent Denise Bukowski how she might represent

me (she was helping me place *Karla's Web*), and she said she could do that best if I wrote books that US readers wouldn't perceive as being specifically Canadian. That suggestion did not seem interesting.

KJ: With the previous question I wanted to provide an opportunity for you to talk specifically about some of your own writing published by small-presses, and happily, you've done that. At the same time you've published cultural criticism with medium to large presses including Talon, as well as Viking/Penguin and ECW [see: *Reading 'KIM' Right*. Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1993., *Karla's Web: A Cultural Examination of the Mahaffy-French Murders*. Toronto: Viking/Penguin, 1994. Revised edition 1995., *Mr and Mrs G.G.* Toronto: ECW Press, 2003.] These are clearly aimed at larger audiences and to my mind comment as much on the role of media as they do on the subject identified in the titles of those books. Could you say more about your socio-political stance with reference to these works of cultural criticism?

FD: It is curious in Canada how seamless is the relationship between the literary and media communities, and how journalists can try to pass themselves off as intellectuals or 'philosophers' (John Ralston Saul) or as serious writers (Kildare Dobbs, Robert Fulford, Stuart McLean, Leah McLaren). This is largely a central-Canadian or Toronto phenomenon, although the reach of the Toronto media can make it seem national. It can not only confuse readers about what is literary but it can also cause simplified and confused ideas to masquerade in the media as intellectual analysis. The seamlessness, however, doesn't make it easy for the literary community to communicate with a large public; the only thing it seems to allow is members of the media community to con the public into believing that they are shrewd analysts and heavy thinkers. I see this as a kind of veiled anti-artsism and anti-academicism. There's an implicit hostility to serious art and intellectual inquiry lurking in Fulford's writing on Coach House Press, for example, or in Adrienne Clarkson's gushing praise of many of those she hosted shows about such as *Adrienne Clarkson Presents*. Academics have often lamented the dearth of 'public intellectuals' in Canada – in part this is because the very notion of what is a public intellectual has been so damaged by pretenders that intellectuals who would act publicly can fear they may have to reach down to those standards.

You say that my books here comment as much on the role of media as they do on the subject identified in the titles – hmmm, that may be true, but of course the subjects in these cases have only become known through the constructions of the media. We were asked not to vote for a person, Kim Campbell, but for an image constructed by her, her party handlers, and by the media. That construction had begun back in her difficult childhood. So my books here have been deconstructionist in that I try to take apart the media images and understand the ideological assumptions behind them. They are aimed at larger audiences because they are aimed at the audiences the media have targeted, and they assume in a Marxian way that if an audience has access to more information – in this case the media ideologies revealed – it will be able to make more informed judgments and decisions. One of most telling moments for me regarding these books was appearing on CBC Morning with Leslie Mahaffy's mother and having her tell me that I was first to offer her a representation of her daughter that she could recognize. And all I had really done was demonstrate how stereotyped and melodramatic the media representations had been.

"Socio-political stance" – well, it wasn't quite that fancy. I began these books with the idea that deconstructionist approaches that one can take to literary textual representations can also be taken to popular textual representations – that I could read and dismantle Campbell's election campaign or the reporting of the French-Mahaffy crime cases, or the self-serving self-representations of Mr & Mrs G.G. in the same ways I had been reading and dismantling Robert Stead's *Grain* or various critical representations of Phyllis Webb. The difference would be that many more people would have heard about Kim Campbell than about Phyllis Webb. I also felt that having such analytic tools incurred a social obligation to use them in a more public arena – that is, that because I knew I could write these books, I should write them, particularly when I had children who were not all that much older than Lesley Mahaffy had been, or who would have had to live under a Kim Campbell government. I don't think that obligation is specific to me – I think it is one which many writers and critics should consider.

KJ: Your book *How Linda Died: A Memoir*. [Toronto: ECW Press, 2002] is remarkably personal, but also moves into what appears to be break-through literary form. It goes beyond conventions of non-fiction, and has been compared to the works of major novelists such as Thackeray or Stendahl [see: Katherine Ashenburg, *The Globe and Mail* "The Globe 100 Books of the Year," 2002]. Could you

comment on your approach to that book and to the resulting form which breaks through a variety of conventions of genre?

FD: I'm not sure that I can say more here than I say in the book, in which there are numerous self-reflexive passages which ponder various questions of representation and self-representation, and the inevitably fictional nature of history, biography, and autobiography. As you know, this wasn't a planned book, and so I was able to take up questions of genre and form only as I encountered them as actual writing problems. It's true that I undertake all writing with a certain self-consciousness about genre – and that when I realized I was writing a journal or diary I also became aware of the history and aesthetic dimensions of those genres, but such matters became relevant only when they were manifested as personal ethical questions. I had other things on my mind. It's also true that I'd had some interest in theories of autobiography – I'd read Nancy K. Miller and Sidonie Smith and Helen Buss and recommended their work to my graduate students, who often had cited it back to me. That background I'm sure contributed to my awareness that what I was writing was simultaneously both non-fiction and fiction in the sense that we are all fictions even to ourselves. This may sound hokey, but I also felt the pressure of an obligation to Linda to ensure that genre, or literary convention, could bend to the particular needs of the writing. She had been at times my most critical reader and when working on the book I had an illusory horror – even after her death – that she might read it someday and find it unworthy of her.

KJ: You are an owner of show-dogs, notably Great Danes, and many of your hounds are prize-winning grand champions. You've written some interesting texts on the connections between the world of show-dogs and the literary world, on topics such as prizes and grants [e.g.; "Number One Great Dane." *Rampike* 13:2 (2004), 21, and, *Dog*. Calgary: House Press, 2002.] Could you say more about your interest in the world of dogs, and that culture as it relates to your interests in cultural criticism, writing and publishing?

FD: Yes, you can see three of my dogs on my website <http://publish.uwo.ca/~fdavey/c/frankdogs.html>> A careful reading of Bourdieu's *The Rules of Art* would be good preparation for someone about to set out to breed or competitively exhibit dogs. There is the same simultaneous belief/disbelief in the impartiality of judges in the judging of dogs and the evaluation of literary texts – both communities know that judges are not impartial but nevertheless pretend and even act as if their judgments are meaningful. Although it is officially illegal to attempt to "influence" a dog show judge, people take out full-page colour ads in dog magazines (whose publishers coincidentally send free copies to all judges) elaborately constructing the merits of their dogs in the apparent hope that these ads will indeed influence a few judges. Participants in both communities gain or lose status (and self-esteem!) on the basis of the success of their creations – dogs or texts. They make alliances, have affairs or broken marriages that raise their profiles or damage or enhance the credibility of their dogs or texts. Dog exhibitors take as much care with their clothing and the image it constructs when they go into the show-ring as a poet might in preparing for a public reading. Seriality and brandnaming are also significant in both communities. Having two successive and similarly successful dogs under the same kennel name makes easier the success of a third, just as the success of *Lady Oracle* was prepared for by that of *The Edible Woman and Surfacing*. Writers have been known to take a stiff drink or even a performance-enhancing drug before giving a reading, or sitting down to write; female dogs are sometimes given anabolic steroids (the same ones that the East Germans used to give to their female Olympic swimmers) to build muscle mass under the cover story that the drug prevents the bitch from coming into season. One major difference, however, is that the literary community tolerates such observations or revelations while – publicly at least – the showdog community prefers its pretences. Thus, as I wrote in *Dog*, "[y]ou could publish this text in an academic magazine or an arts magazine but not in a dog club magazine."

Showing dogs competitively isn't really about identifying the best dog (any more than the Giller is about identifying the best novel). It's about playing a game which is composed of spectacle, of illegal substances (such as the colouring materials that are sold at dog shows despite it being illegal to alter the colour of a dog's coat), the currying of useful friendships (especially with judges), the exchanging of favours (some of which may be awards and some judging assignments), the outspending of rival exhibitors, the hiring of effective agents to show or represent your dog, lavish investment in advertising, extensive air travel to make sure your dog appears at the most important shows under the most propitious circumstances. One effective long-term strategy can be to become a judge, after which your own dogs

may suddenly become much more successful. Another can be to become an official of a dog club and in a position to hire judges. What's the attraction for me? – perhaps the game makes me less cynical about the literary world. It's also amusing because the stakes are so low – what does it matter whose dog is #1 Springer Spaniel or #1 all-breed – except to those who construct and attribute value to such things. The game enables me to have similar feelings of equanimity about the Governor-General's Awards in which the question of “what attributes make a worthy book?” is every bit as arbitrary and artificial as the question of “what attributes make a worthy Chihuahua?” What does it matter what book wins when literary value is so manipulable? Another attraction is that I play the dog game much better than I play the literary game – perhaps partly because it's a smaller game, but mostly because I care about what texts I create, whereas I've been content to seek Great Danes that fulfill other people's standards.

KJ: Your history as a writer, editor and publisher has included the acknowledgement and celebration of others. The list of those you've covered in *Open Letter* for example, as well as those you have commented on in *Canadian Literary Power: Essays on Anglophone-Canadian Literary Conflict*. [Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1994], is extensive. There is a generosity of spirit that informs your background yet provides an essential, informative base for others who follow. For example, you were involved in a debate on canon with Robert Lecker [see: “Canadian Canons” (a response to Robert Lecker's “The Canonization of Canadian Literature: an Inquiry into Value”), in *Critical Inquiry* [Chicago], XVI:3 (Spring 1990): 672-81.] Do you see a historicizing role for yourself and if so, could you expand on that?

FD: Was there a generosity of spirit in my “Canadian Canons” reply to Robert? – possibly. He and I have been friends since then. It does seem to me that most unsatisfactory critical arguments are unsatisfactory because not enough has been taken into account, and that this is particularly so in discussions of historical questions such as canon development. All events take place in particular and unrepeatable circumstances – if one is going to move beyond views of literary value as eternal and of ‘natural’ explanations for this eternalness, one must seek and pay attention to difficult-to-recover contingencies.

KJ: What do you think are the biggest challenges facing Canadian writing and publishing today?

FD: Those are very different things, writing and publishing, or should be. I guess that is one of the challenges – to focus less on writing that is written to meet the expectations of publishers and more on finding ways to publish writing that transcends expectation. This has often been something of a problem for me – when I approach a large publisher with a manuscript such as *Karla's Web* or *How Linda Died*, it doesn't match their expectations and they are not sure how to deal with it. They are much better at distributing books that are quite similar to others that they have distributed. Smaller publishers seem more accustomed to receiving unusual manuscripts (I notice that Bowering's new baseball book, *Baseball Love*, is being published by Talonbooks and not by his usual non-fiction publisher, Viking-Penguin).

It is also getting more difficult for serious writers to be considered for grants and awards. There has been an explosion of theme-oriented writing over the last thirty years – of writing that has been valued more for what it addresses than for how it does that addressing (very different from, say, Bök's *Eunoia* or Tostevin's *Sophie*). The possible variety of themes has brought extraordinary heterogenization of the literary scene, with many of the new writers being unaware of, and uninterested in, writing outside of their own thematic concerns (as well as being innocent of much awareness of Canadian literary history). Many of these theme-oriented writers are now jurors, which has meant that most awards and grants in Canada have become lotteries in which the luck of the draw depends largely on who has been picked for the juries, how much they happen to know, and how seriously they take their job. A friend who sat recently on a Gov-Gen fiction panel told me that the other jurors had read only 5-6 of the hundred or more nominated books (ones by authors whose work they already knew), and saw no reason to read further before voting. While he was appalled, they thought their approach was normal and reasonable. Perhaps it is now normal.

There is the ongoing crisis of independent bookstores, being squeezed by the predatory pricing of Chapters-Indigo and Amazon. The independents are the stores in which most small publishers sell their books. The big chains can indirectly threaten to bankrupt a small publisher simply by requiring a minimum order of two or three thousand copies – something difficult to rationalize when a reasonable sales expectation for a title may be under a thousand copies. I have urged our governments several times

to adopt the French policy of forbidding the discounting of book prices – a policy which in France means that a book costs the same throughout the country whether it is being sold by the giant FNAC or by a small independent. It seems to me that this is the only way in which independent bookstores could be protected. If independents continue to struggle, Canadian small presses will need a website for sales similar to the websites of Chapters and Amazon. They may well need one anyway. I presently sell ten times as many subscriptions and individual copies through the *Open Letter* website than I sell through the CMPA's print advertising campaigns.

There is the continuing problem of Toronto-centrism – now exacerbated by Toronto being the gateway to global publishing. Being published in a global context has become an accepted mark of legitimation, much as being published and reviewed and interviewed in Toronto has often been. Of course there are many wonderful texts that are circulated globally, but there are also many more that are unlikely – because of genre, or intertext, or historical context – to economically justify global circulation. When my writing circulates globally it circulates not in airport bookstores or international bookstore chains, but in visitors' suitcases, or through university library holdings or course adoption in other countries. I think a lot of 'global' circulation is of this kind, although it mostly goes undocumented because of our culture's privileging of the commercial.

KJ: What do you think are the most important questions and challenges facing literary theorists today?

FD: One big one is the increasing regulation and institutionalization of literary and cultural inquiry through the federal Canada Research Chairs program – a program I am perhaps fortunate to have missed. It is currently the program which regulates status in the Canadian academy, and – because of large amount of money it carries – has been quickly eclipsing the status attached to named or endowed chairs. There are a number of problems with the program. One is its emphasis on collaborative or team research which confines the lead scholar to a particular kind of research which can be divided into smaller tasks. Another is its insistence on multi-year programs so that the scale of the research – already multiplied by the number of people who must be occupied in carrying it out – is further multiplied by the number of years they are expected to be focused on the topic. A third is implicit requirement that the chair found a research institution – whether or not she or he have any interest in doing so. One recent CRC appointee tells me that there may be emerging a proliferation of unnecessary research institutions – ones founded not because they are needed by our disciplines but because the CRC program requires that a need for them be fictionalized. A fourth is the way the holders of such chairs are turned by the program into administrators – expected to hire and train graduate students, supervise junior researchers, oversee liaison with researchers at other universities, organize regular meetings of the researchers, and hold conferences. If all this activity were a response to research questions which needed such large structures in order to be investigated, that would all be very well. But it seems more likely that the program is creating rather than responding to research needs. It seems very likely to diminish the status of reflective, analytical and theoretical research – to be unlikely to produce books such as Frye's *The Educated Imagination*, Miki's *Broken Entries*, or even such deeply researched but personally motivated work as Djwa's *Professing English: A Life of Roy Daniels*. I would have preferred that the program have also funded to an equal degree other kinds of research, perhaps by setting up one or two large non-specific research institutions similar to the French CNRS (Centre nationale de la recherche scientifique) where individual research programs could be undertaken.

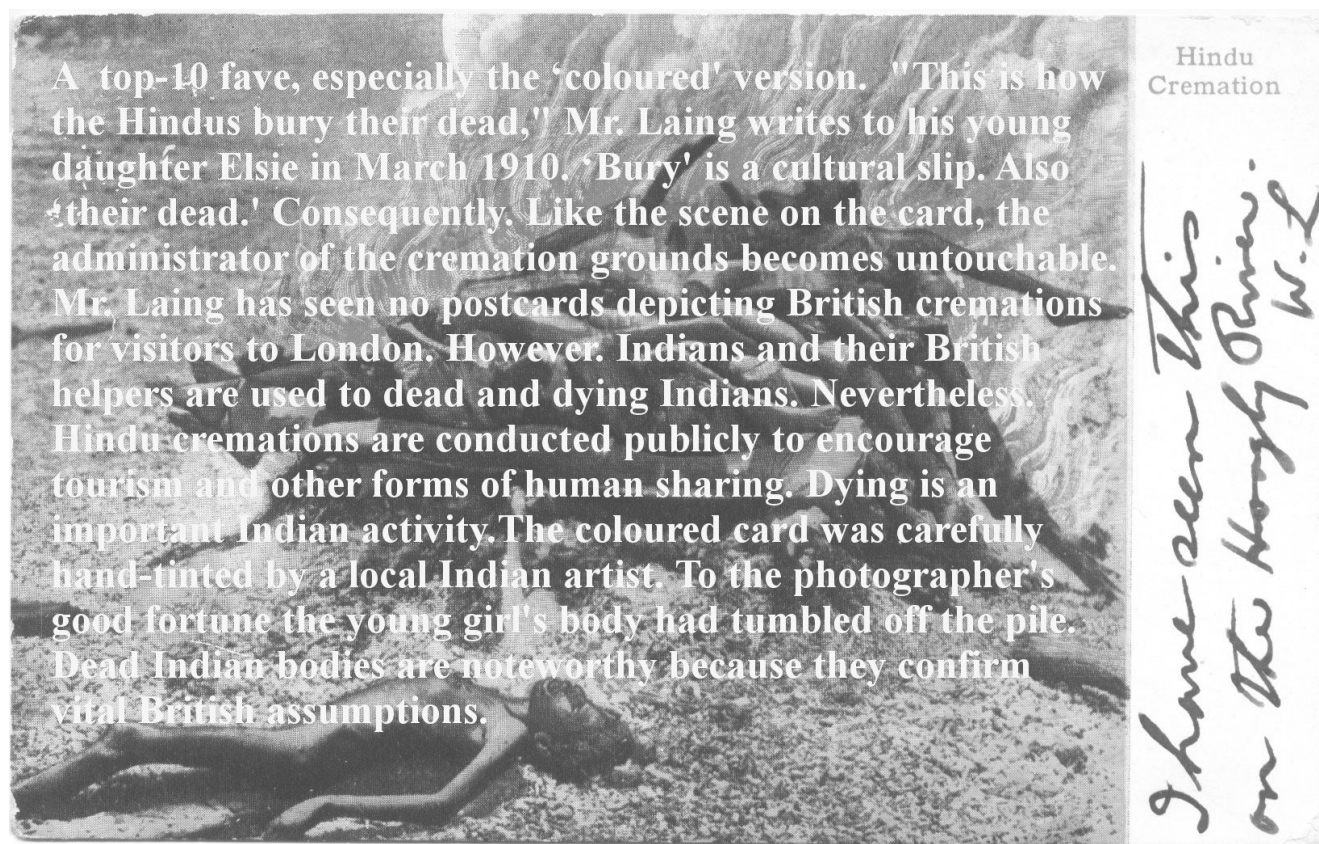
KJ: You're among the last generation to be pressed into retirement prior to new legislation eliminating mandatory retirement. Do have views on the situation and, what are your plans upon retiring from the University of Western Ontario?

FD: My view on the situation is that the knowledge and skills of many senior scholars, together with the public money that was spent to help develop their work, have been squandered because of mandatory retirement policies. The present situation seems to make it impossible for Ontario universities to offer someone like myself fair employment – either full or part time. Moving expenses make it unreasonable for a university in another province to engage someone who may wish to teach only one graduate course or teach full-time for five more years. My plans are to regard retirement as a long and possibly productive sabbatical.

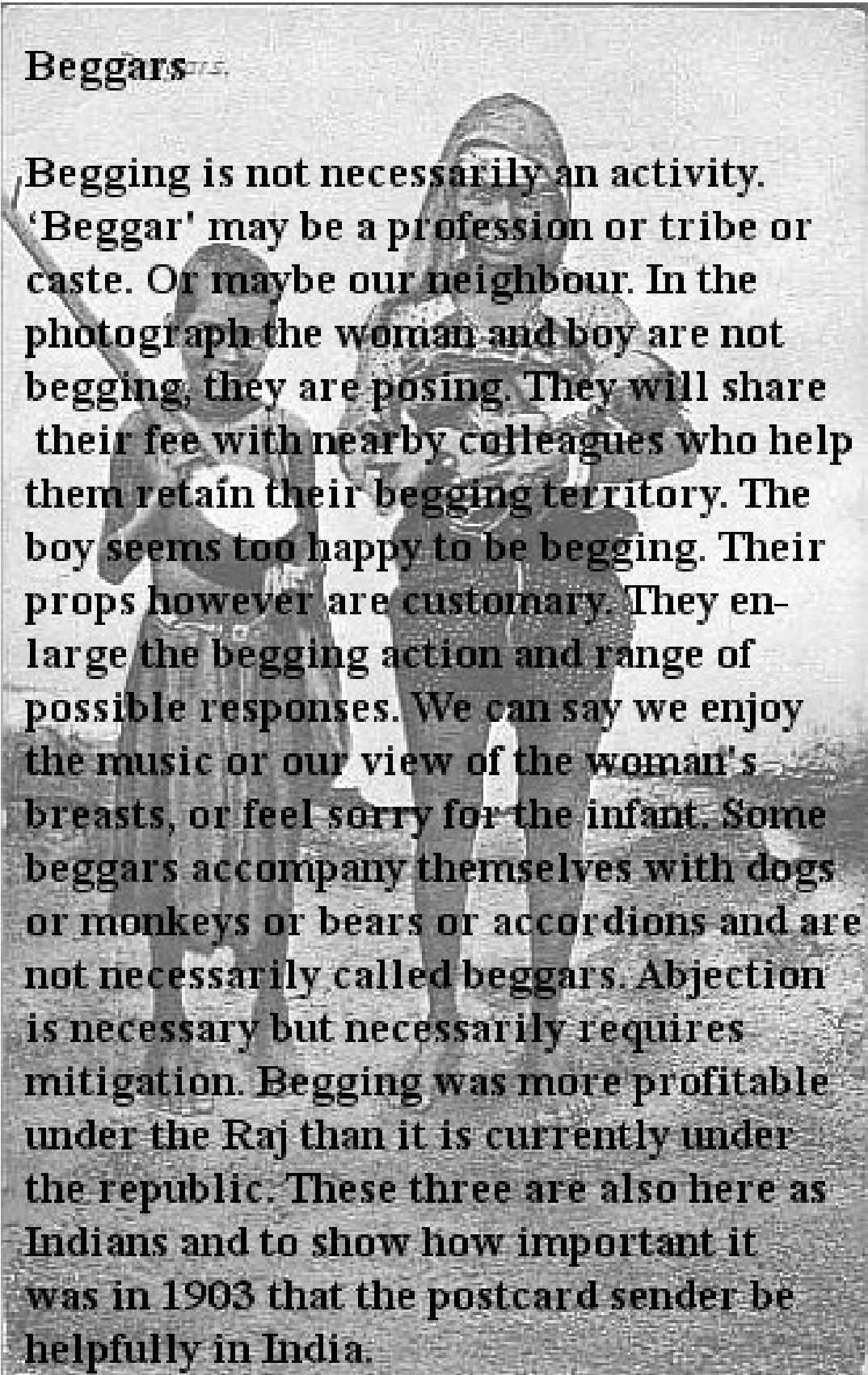
“POSTCARDS FROM THE RAJ”

by Frank Davey

Some years ago I inherited my grandmother's picture postcard collection, which she had accumulated in North Yorkshire at the height of the postcard collecting craze of 1897-1914. Nearly a hundred of the cards were from India, produced for British residents and visitors to represent that country back to their British and British Empire friends and families, and led me to collect further examples. The postcard was one of the first mechanically reproduced mass-culture interpreters of the world and is especially interesting because of the mass-culture selection process that occurred both during the commercial choosing of images to be made into cards and in the buyer's choosing of ones to send. The “Hindu Cremation” card, for example, appears to have been – if current eBay listings are any indication – almost as popular as ones of the Taj Mahal (another death card). My current ‘Postcards from the Raj’ poetry project aims to ‘translate’ the cards and create layered works of image, sender-commentary, and my own propositional translations. In its poetics it extends my *Postcard Translations* project of 1988 and *Risky Propositions* series of 2005. I have ‘published’ some of the new poems as 30" X 48" laminated single-copy colour posters.



Beggars TYPE



Begging is not necessarily an activity. 'Beggar' may be a profession or tribe or caste. Or maybe our neighbour. In the photograph the woman and boy are not begging, they are posing. They will share their fee with nearby colleagues who help them retain their begging territory. The boy seems too happy to be begging. Their props however are customary. They enlarge the begging action and range of possible responses. We can say we enjoy the music or our view of the woman's breasts, or feel sorry for the infant. Some beggars accompany themselves with dogs or monkeys or bears or accordions and are not necessarily called beggars. Abjection is necessary but necessarily requires mitigation. Begging was more profitable under the Raj than it is currently under the republic. These three are also here as Indians and to show how important it was in 1903 that the postcard sender be helpfully in India.

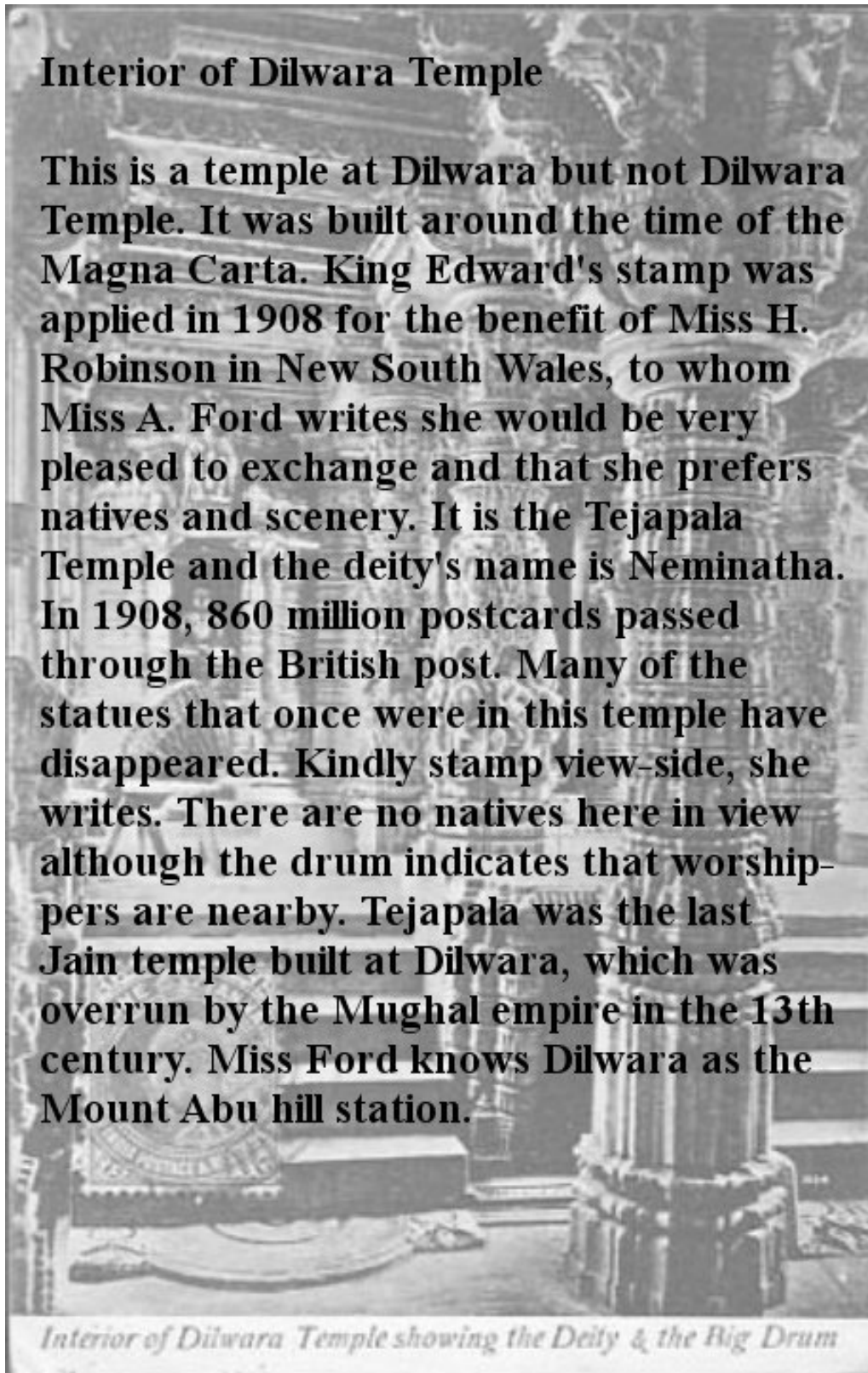
Type of Parsee Beauty

She had gone to the photographer's studio with her family. Postcard collectors considered Parsis to be almost European. The photo composes her for her mother's album and for her uncle and aunt in Baroda. Another uncle is a barrister recently appointed to the High Court in Bombay. Parsees of course are diasporic Persians and therefore not real Indians. When Parsees die, the Encyclopaedia Britannica had reported, their pet dogs are brought to see the body one last time and to rout any evil spirits. Postcards of Parsi men are extremely rare. The family had chosen a British photographer because he had the most fashionable backdrops. The British in India had heard good things about the code of Hammurabi. They'd read all about Sohrab and Rostum. The photographer routinely sold extra negatives to postcard companies. The Parsis compute time from the fall of Yazdegerd, the last Persian king, in the 7th century. Parsee dogs cannot be distinguished from other dogs. She did not shop where the tourists purchased postcards. The tourists' favorite Parsee postcard shows the vultures on the Towers of Silence.

Type of Parsee Beauty

Interior of Dilwara Temple

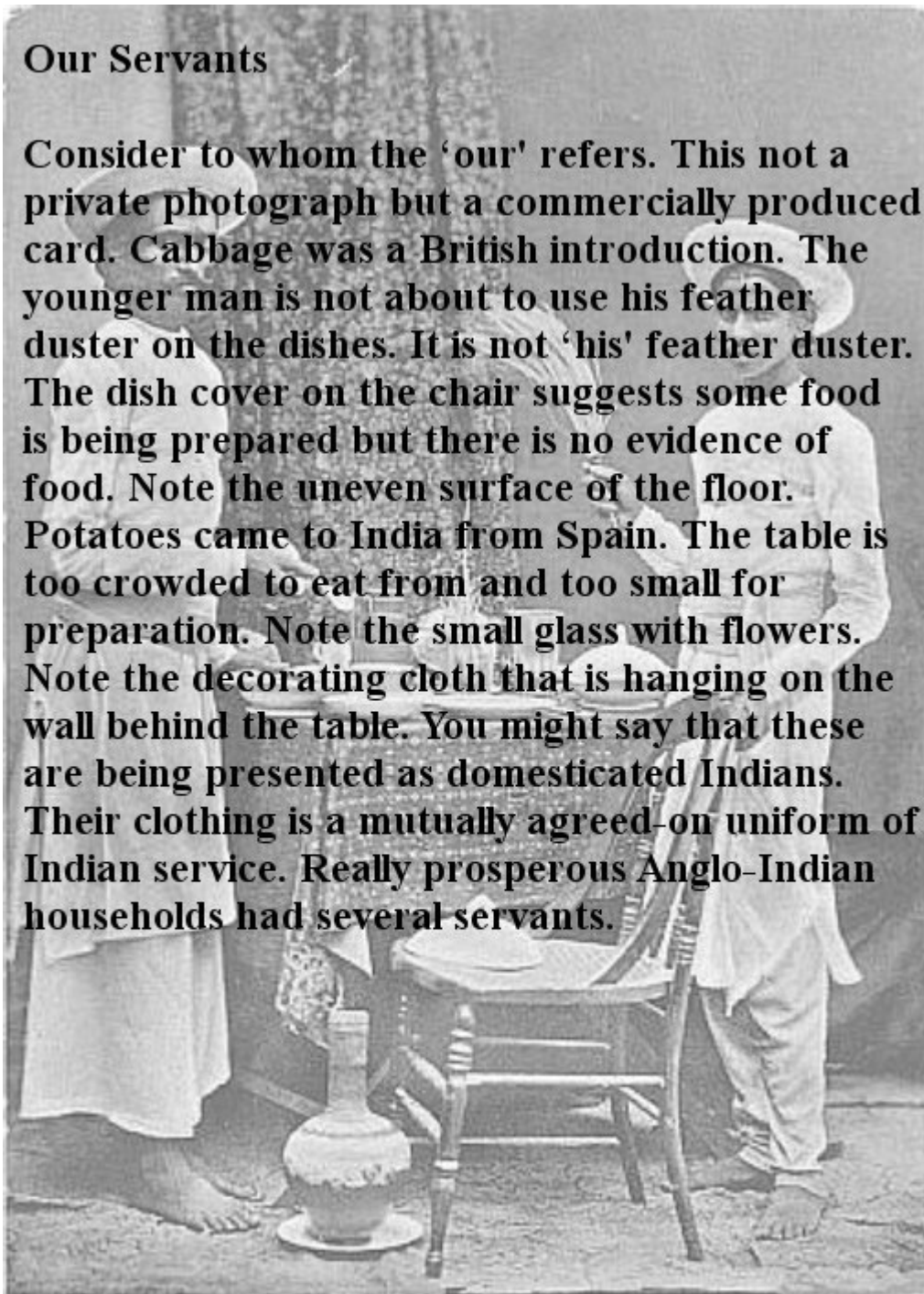
This is a temple at Dilwara but not Dilwara Temple. It was built around the time of the Magna Carta. King Edward's stamp was applied in 1908 for the benefit of Miss H. Robinson in New South Wales, to whom Miss A. Ford writes she would be very pleased to exchange and that she prefers natives and scenery. It is the Tejapala Temple and the deity's name is Neminatha. In 1908, 860 million postcards passed through the British post. Many of the statues that once were in this temple have disappeared. Kindly stamp view-side, she writes. There are no natives here in view although the drum indicates that worshippers are nearby. Tejapala was the last Jain temple built at Dilwara, which was overrun by the Mughal empire in the 13th century. Miss Ford knows Dilwara as the Mount Abu hill station.



Interior of Dilwara Temple showing the Deity & the Big Drum

Our Servants

Consider to whom the 'our' refers. This not a private photograph but a commercially produced card. Cabbage was a British introduction. The younger man is not about to use his feather duster on the dishes. It is not 'his' feather duster. The dish cover on the chair suggests some food is being prepared but there is no evidence of food. Note the uneven surface of the floor. Potatoes came to India from Spain. The table is too crowded to eat from and too small for preparation. Note the small glass with flowers. Note the decorating cloth that is hanging on the wall behind the table. You might say that these are being presented as domesticated Indians. Their clothing is a mutually agreed-on uniform of Indian service. Really prosperous Anglo-Indian households had several servants.



Our Servants. Khidmatgar.

7368.

FRANK

by Jeanette Lynes

he was my teacher he was pretty smart ok a genius he'd
bring these little books to class i'd think what's with all
these little books they sure didn't resemble my shakespeare
text & frank
once brought a box & opened it & all these words spilled
out & we said what are we supposed to do with that
& frank said
whatever you want the author of the box was on no power
trip that's for sure (i bet the box author wouldn't
like how my fascist pig capitalist word processor
keeps throwing everything i write into upper case & i
have to go back & lower myself every time)
frank had an interesting coat (i'm someone who can
remember a coat for years) not a professor-coat it
was made of pelts animal skins were ok
then & one day frank brought a small
boy to class his son & the boy just sat quiet reading or
maybe writing no other teachers brought boys or
poetry in a box o &
something else one day frank said
are you going to be in service to words or ideas
i didn't know the right answer i never could figure out
anything but i
remember the question all these years the poet of
the poem in a box i found out later was captain poetry
it's a good thing i didn't know that then b/cause
a superhero of poetry flying around in a room already
containing a genius would have been too much &
later frank with his small books cared for really large
dogs & that's how i always thought of a genius, it had to do
with range.

INTERVIEW WITH MICHAEL & LINDA HUTCHEON

Pursuant to HRG talk on “Creative to the End: Staging Aging” presented at the University of Windsor, 2006

Michael and Linda Hutcheon’s intermedia presentation “Creative to the End: Staging Aging” was presented as one of the HRG (Humanities Research Group) talks at the University of Windsor in 2006. Pursuant to this talk, the Hutcheons agreed to the following interview expanding on the notions forwarded in their presentation. The history of opera and the works of Richard Strauss in particular, provide fertile ground for analysis of representations of the body as it undergoes aging and death within the context of opera, one of the world’s most refined inter-media art-forms. The conceptual connections to our own lives are often striking, sobering, and liberating. Linda and Michael Hutcheon have lectured broadly on the topic of age, death, and creativity in discursive compositions on opera which situate cultural and historical frameworks, through syncopated inter-media presentations that are in themselves works of performance art. The Hutcheons have also co-authored books on the topic including: *Opera: Desire, Disease and Death* (1996), *Bodily Charm: Living Opera* (2000), and *Opera: The Art of Dying* (2004). These books combine elements of literary theory, music and medical history in edifying and at times, surprising ways. Alternately, for more insights on theory, readers may wish to consult one of Linda Hutcheon’s many books on parody, irony and postmodernism. Questions of aging become more pressing daily as the post-World War II baby boom generation approaches retirement. Pursuant to all of this, *Rampike* is delighted to offer this interview on creativity in the arts and questions of aging.

KJ: I am thinking about mandatory retirements laws which were just revised. There are important scholars in the country who have made significant contributions, such as Frank Davey, among others, who find themselves caught between the old legislation and the new. In Davey’s case, he is among the last generation who will be pressed into retirement before the new legislation takes effect, yet, he still has plenty to offer to academia. Given your studies on age and creativity, I was wondering what your opinions are on (mandatory) retirement?

HUTCHEONS: Academics are as individual as artists: ability is obviously not purely a function of chronology. Consequently, in choosing one age for retirement, we capture people with all sorts of capabilities—some able to teach and do research at the highest level and others already disengaging. In personal terms, the key, then, is flexibility; choice is always desirable. The institutional benefits of such flexibility may be less clear. Although, in doing away with mandatory retirement, we retain the expertise of highly experienced professors, their salaries are at the highest levels. With enforced retirement, these monies were freed up and budget as well as complement planning was easier. One way to think of this is that there were positions freed up for all those new Ph.D.s we keep turning out.

With the well documented increase in human lifespan, there is now a predictable period of time in later life when individuals may have choices which weren’t previously available. The new Ontario legislation allows some academics to continue in their institutional roles; others may choose to use that new time for continuing their research in relative peace, without their teaching and administration duties. Or they may choose to do something entirely different—“reinvent” themselves, perhaps. In this setting early retirement is attractive. Guess what we’re thinking about?

KJ: I can’t imagine. What are your plans?

HUTCHEONS: Early retirement and more time to write and research together. Not quite reinventing ourselves, but a major change from a heavy medical and teaching/supervising career for us both.

KJ: Your project on interpreting the effects of aging on creativity, particularly among composers of opera, seems to be a meta-analysis both of the artists themselves, as well as their reception by critics. What are some of the challenges involved with simultaneously addressing primary work by artists while dealing with aspects such as reception theory in response to comments on the artists' works by critics?

HUTCHEONS: At the core of your question is one fact: once artists die, we always know which are their last works. This knowledge is permanently part of the reception of these works, part of their interpretive baggage, so to speak. So final works—be they literary, musical, or visual—can never be separated from our awareness of their placement in the career and life of the artist. This is one of those cases where it is hard for us, coming after the artist's death, to separate the works themselves from their reception.

KJ: You have noted that there tend to be a number of dialectics that you've discovered in your research on aging and creativity. You discuss such dialectics in your recent book *Opera: The Art of Dying* (Harvard, 2004) where you analyze, among other things, the idea of a "late style" or "*alterstil*" along with two tendencies, one towards a Romantic idealization, the other towards a Transcendental apotheosis. Perceptions of the aged are seen alternately as wise or foolish, venerated or degenerated, valued or discarded. Potentially, these may be false dialectics. For example, critics tend to classify aging artists into two camps: 1) artists who evolve to full mastery, and 2) artists who become rigid, repetitive and experience collapse. You also note that biographers and critics tend to classify aging artists into two groups: A) those who react with rage, and B) those who react passively when facing age. Arguably, some artists such as Goethe, move into a meditative metaphysical level, while others decry their fate (one thinks of Dylan Thomas' "Do not go gentle into that good night."). Yet, is it not possible for aging artists to alternate between passivity and rage, to flip from the meditative to the mundane, or from the masterful to the pedantic? Do you think that the dialectical interpretations of critics say as much about western modes of interpretation and the limits of critical perception as they do about the artists they purport to address?

HUTCHEONS: The binaries or dichotomies you outline are very much part of the critical discourse on "late style" in Western criticism ever since Goethe argued for the transcendent wisdom of age. In contrast, the early Romantic period idealized the creative dynamism of youth. But even before that, Winckelman's influential treatise on the "history of the art of antiquity" postulated an organicist model for the development of cultures that rapidly came to be transposed to the development of artists. Since his trajectory for culture ended in decline, you can see where it would overlap later in the next century with that of Darwinian biology. In 1874 George Beard published his study of 1000 famous men, concluding that the last 20 years in the lives of original geniuses were "unproductive." While there may be agreement that the number of works of an older artist may be fewer, there is little disagreement that the late works of, say, Michelangelo, Ibsen, Beethoven, and Monteverdi are of superior quality.

To pick up on another thread of your complex question, it's interesting that some critics have chosen to describe responses to age and impending death in dichotomous terms, as you say, as if one couldn't change one's reaction to this reality daily, hourly—and of course, one does. Sometimes an artist may respond by withdrawing, by detachment or isolation; at other times rage may indeed be the reaction. Edward Said's last article in 2004 in *The Observer* was called "Rage of the Old". In it he picked up on Leon Edel's and Kenneth Clark's (sentimentalized, romanticized) idea of how an artist can respond to the awareness of death's immanence. But even Said falls into binary thinking, even if willfully unresolved. He calls it the "prerogative of late style" to have the "power to render disenchantment and pleasure without resolving the contradiction between them". So we agree that the dichotomies may indeed be false ones—given the complexity of possible responses—but still find it fascinating that they dominate the discourse.

KJ: When simultaneously addressing primary works by artists and dealing with critics' responses to works by those artists, it seems you are engaged with a dialectic that faces any serious critic – that is, how to address the larger accumulation of *perceptions* of an artist's work, from the artists' works themselves. This question is, of course, complicated by the actual life of the artist. I was wondering if it would be possible to deconstruct this dialectic by addressing an element that is common to perceptions of critics, and the perceptions of artists, such as the notion that aging is based on questionable social constructs?

HUTCHEONS: Perhaps the most powerful complicating (and deconstructing) fact is that, while aging is certainly a social construct, it is not ONLY a social construct. The biological reality of age is what must be faced by us all, including every aging artist. One of our interests is in the artist's work—and we use it to infer their response to aging. As semiotician Jean-Jacques Nattiez has taught us, at the “poetic” level, the work of art leaves traces of its creative process, and our theory is that aging has an impact on that process and that its traces can be found in the work: thematically, most obviously, but also formally, stylistically. We are balancing this textual evidence with biographical material—letters, journals, other autobiographical writings, plus the testimony of those who knew the artist. As for the critics' responses, we're dealing here, as we mentioned earlier, with that unavoidable interpretive baggage of the awareness of which are indeed the last works: “late style” discourse, alas, is not something we can ignore, in short.

KJ: To what extent have you considered psychoanalytic interpretations of the role of death in aging artists? For example, it seems that the inter-actions of Eros and Thanatos as expressed through the Id in the form of sex and death drives, might be affected by the approach of death.

HUTCHEONS: We're in the position of having just completed a book on death and opera, though it was considerably less biographically oriented than this one. We dealt with the Freudian Eros/Thanatos interplay in a long chapter on Richard Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. But clearly the awareness of the immanence of death is a central part of aging and the psychic responses to it, so we'll have to revisit this topic in our new project. Whether a psychoanalytic perspective will drive our investigation remains to be seen, given the more biographical focus.

KJ: Of course, physical disabilities play a role in aging artists, as well. For a sculptor like Michelangelo, it would mean that he would be less able to shape stone. For Monet, the blurring of vision resulted in a change of style. Beethoven's loss of hearing, and Borges' loss of vision affected the way they created their works. To what extent do you think such physical limitations caused such artists to re-think their approaches to art thereby bringing them to innovative departures from conventional form?

HUTCHEONS: You are right to start with Michelangelo and Monet, for this phenomenon, a very real one, is most obvious—or perhaps simply most visible—in visual artists. Matisse is another excellent example of this kind of aesthetic rethinking prompted by disability: when he could no longer stand at an easel, he changed medium (from painting to decoupage) and thereby intensified his longstanding fascination with colour by moving to arrangements of single coloured pieces cut from paper. That said, disabilities can also be creatively limiting. After composer Benjamin Britten suffered a stroke during cardiac surgery, he was unable to play the piano at the level necessary or desirable to accompany singers. He also noted a change in his composing habits: for physical reasons of accessibility ease, he tended to neglect the top staves of a score, reducing the piccolo and flute parts considerably.

KJ: You've discovered that often, critics of the periods involved took exception whenever composers departed from either conventional or expected forms. Yet, in many cases, aged creators anticipated the formal innovations of the coming generation and thus, in spite of their age, were quite innovative and progressive. I think of older artists such as Pablo Picasso, Gertrude Stein, John Cage, Alice Munro, Alistair MacLeod, who continue to create great works throughout their lives. Richard Strauss concludes his creative career with his “Four Last Songs.” Is it be argued that increasing age in the artist sometimes results in a rebirth in artistic form?

HUTCHEONS: The major question you've returned us to is one of late style discourse: is later age a time of creative development? Or even further, does aging make possible artistic development? And, of course, it can—in some cases. It does seem that this can only be decided on an individual level. Some artists, as you say, create great works throughout their lives; others have a renewal of creative energy after a fallow period and experience what people have called an “Indian summer”—as in the case of Richard Strauss.

But there's another consideration here: what the *critics* make of those last works. Here Goethe is a case in point. Everyone agrees that his late works are different than his so-called “mature” ones: they are more self-reflexive, less reliant on plot and even formal coherence, more dependent on symbolism. To the early nineteenth-century critics, these changes were signs of “torpor and descent” (Tieck) or “weakness and calcification” (Vischer). The next generation, however, saw this as his most original style, one of “eclectic universalism” (Rosenkranz). With the turn of the twentieth century and the psychological interest sparked by Freud and Jung, Goethe's last works became differently evaluated again—this time as foreshadowings of modernism. So, the critical assessment of an artist's late works is usually deeply enmeshed in the aesthetic assumptions of the critic.

KJ: You have written and lectured fairly extensively on the questions of the mind and the body as they relate to creativity in the aged. What of the question of spirit? Does it have an impact on older artists?

HUTCHEONS: Goethe, one of the first theorists (as well as theorized exemplars) of late style, certainly felt that with age came greater contemplation and a withdrawal from appearances. Though he didn't use the language of modern spirituality, there can be little doubt that this is the sort of thinking he had in mind. If by spirituality, we mean religiosity, in formal terms, the particular composers we are working on were not religious men. Nevertheless, in his last years, Richard Wagner worried about personal and social regeneration through “Mitleid” or empathy, leading to redemption. And many people have pointed to Giuseppe Verdi's sense of “humanity” that infuses his last (and only) comedic opera, *Falstaff*, as exemplified by the opera's generation of community at its end, both thematically (all the characters go off to dinner together) and formally (through a choral fugue), and even by the opera's motto: “Tutto nel mondo è burla” (everything in the world is a joke). The anti-clerical Verdi was not a religious man, despite writing the “Four Sacred Pieces” near the end of his life; but he was “spiritual” in this sense, perhaps. Léos Janáček turned to the cycles of nature to give meaning to death and age through birth and renewal.

KJ: Could you say something about current or future projects that you are working towards?

HUTCHEONS: This project on creativity and age is very much still in progress, as we work with a team of young scholars not only on the actual research itself but in planning an international interdisciplinary conference on the subject. We've recently realized that a useful way of approaching the entire topic might be through the representation of aging artists within opera itself, for it turns out that there are a number of interesting and revealing twentieth-century examples. Paul Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler* and Hans Pfitzner's *Palestrina* are works by younger artists in which age, creativity, and the (aesthetic and political) responsibility of the artist take center stage. However, it is Benjamin Britten's last opera, *Death in Venice*, based on the Thomas Mann's novella, that is the most relevant study of age and artistic crisis for our purposes, in part for biographical reasons. Britten postponed his cardiac surgery to ensure its completion, and wisely so: he suffered that stroke we mentioned earlier during the operation. And, as we get older ourselves, of course, our interest in creativity and aging increases—so perhaps this is research-as-autobiography? Maybe all research is!

THE WRITER'S (SECRET) LIFE: WOUNDEDNESS, REJECTION, AND INSPIRATION

by Joyce Carol Oates

This never before published talk by Joyce Carol Oates, was delivered to a packed house at Assumption Hall at the University of Windsor, as part of the HRG (Humanities Research Group) Distinguished Speakers Series. The HRG, headed at that time by Kate McCrone, regularly features talks by eminent scholars, including Joyce Carol Oates, Anton Kuerti, Linda Hutcheon, and Sir Martin Gilbert among others.

*Success is counted Sweetest
By Those who n'r Succeed.*
-- Emily Dickinson

It all came together between the hand and the page.
-- Samuel Beckett

Of the myriad arts known to mankind surely the art of writing is the most solitary. The execution of art obviously springs from an abundance of energy and imagination, yet the inspirations for art are obviously many, resisting quantification. Writers, the more “serious” — “committed” — “obsessive” — “fated” — are engaged in a continuous quest, making, unmaking, remaking, transforming the self. Some writers — in fact, many of my acquaintances, whose work has acquired at least a quasi-permanent status in American literary history — appear to be extremely gregarious individuals, but don't be deceived: the individuals you meet in public are likely to be performing selves, or personae; rarely do you meet the writer-self, except, perhaps, intermittently, in flashes of exposure like precious minerals glimpsed in coarse soil, in his or her work: “The artist's life is his work, and this is the place to observe him,” in Henry James's words. This artist's “life” lacks a specific identity, or is hampered and constrained by it: “Sydney comes,” says Virginia Woolf, of a friend dropping in, “and I'm Virginia; when I write I'm merely a sensibility.” (By “merely,” Virginia Woolf might better have said “purely.”)

All artists are idealists, fierce in their vision of what art can be, though they may be despairing at times of their ability to execute it. No one has summarized the quest more succinctly and more beautifully than Ernest Hemingway:

For things that have happened and from all things that you know and all those you cannot know, you make something through your invention that is not a representation but a whole new thing truer than anything true and alive, and you make it alive, and if you make it well enough, you give it immortality. That is why you write and for no other reason...

Does it qualify such an exalted vision to note that Hemingway committed suicide in 1961, at the relatively young age of sixty-two? I don't think so: rather, we are moved to an acknowledgment of the writer's strength, courage, and tenacity. In having remained alive so relatively long, given the predilection for self-hurt, and for suicide, so clearly evident in his life.

However artists appear to others, they are on very familiar terms with failure, much of the time. To encounter a seemingly “successful” artist — if, for instance, the 1954 Nobel Prize winner Ernest Hemingway stood before you today — is to be deceived about the public, vertiginous nature of what we call success. Not all, but virtually all, writers must learn to confront rejection, and to continue to confront it through their careers. The questions are: how

do we maintain our hope, our idealism, our sense of our own worth, in the light of rejections? Some of these are literal rejections by editors (of which I will speak shortly) but others, equally or more wounding, are rejections of another sort, resulting in the “woundedness”— that sense of isolation and helplessness — that is so often at the core of creativity, for instance, rejections from within the family.

So long as Emily Dickinson played the role of obedient daughter, she had a clearly defined place in the restrictive, claustrophobic small-town America society of her time in Amherst, Mass. Her rebellion was passionate, but primarily inward:

They shut me up in Prose—
As when a Little Girl
They put me in the Closet —
Because they liked me “still”—

Still! Could themselves have peeped —
And seen my Brain – go – round —
They might as wise have lodged a Bird
For Treason — in the Pound —

Dickinson’s sense of herself was forged out of angry resentment and, judging from the tone of certain of her poems, a lighter, ironic or playful attitude, as suggested in this famous poem:

I’m Nobody! Who are you?
Are you Nobody — too?
Then there’s a pair of us!
Don’t tell! they’d banish us — you know!

How dreary — to be — Somebody!
How public — like a Frog —
To tell your name — the livelong June —
To an admiring Bog!

Dickinson was remarkable in being virtually the only adolescent in Amherst, Mass. who declined to be a Christian and to participate in local church activities. Though her presentation of herself in her poetry suggests a retiring, unfrontational personality, in this respect alone she must have been exceptional.

The origins of *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*, by Charlotte and Emily Brontë respectively, are well known, yet infinitely fascinating. Charlotte, Emily, their sister Anne and their brother Branwell (who would die young of alcoholism) were the motherless children of an Anglican minister of a remote parsonage in Haworth, England, on the windswept moors. One day, the children’s father brought them a gift of 12 wooden soldiers, and the children, starved for playmates and an outlet for their imaginations, in this long-ago era before TV, began to make up stories about the soldiers, which then effloresced into an on-going series of epics. The children created plays, mimes, games and serial adventure stories set in the fantasy lands of Gondol and Angria, recorded in “Little Magazines,” miniature books with tiny italic handwriting, now displayed in the British Museum. (Only imagine: the irony of the Brontë children’s intense loneliness transformed into tiny books which one day are displayed in the British Museum...) Charlotte Brontë wrote her last Angria tale when she was surprisingly mature, 23; Emily continued to write her Gondol tales until she was 27. Their great novels *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* are in many ways continuations of the romantic passions of the Gondol/Angria epics; certainly, without the isolated background of the Brontës, these particular novels would never have been written. Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* was originally published under a pseudonym (Currer Bell) when she was 31, in Oct. 1847; Emily’s *Wuthering Heights*

was published under the pseudonym Ellis Bell, in Dec. 1847, when she was 29. Reviews were guardedly enthusiastic where the reviewer thought Currer Bell was a man, but quite critical where it was suspected Currer Bell might be a woman. Reviews of *Wuthering Heights* were more mixed, some of them very extremely harsh. (We may take it as one of the tragic ironies of literary history that Emily Brontë died the following year, a young woman of thirty, with no idea that she had in fact written one of the great and abiding novels in the English language.) Poignant, and sadly comical, is this account about the reception of *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte's beloved father:

Three months after the publication of *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte promised her sisters one day at dinner that she would tell [their father] before tea. So she marched into his study with a copy rapped up in reviews. She said... "Papa, I've been writing a book." "Have you my dear?" and he went on reading. "But papa, I want you to look at it." "I can't be troubled to read manuscripts." "But it is printed." "I hope you have not been involving yourself in any silly expense." "I think I shall gain some money by it. May I read you some reviews?" So she read them; and then she asked him if he would read the book. He said she might leave it and he would see... In his usual teasing way, Mr. Brontë delayed his pronouncement until the end of tea. Then he said: "Children, Charlotte has been writing a book — and I think it is a better one than I expected." And that was all he had to say on the subject, which he didn't mention again until two years afterward. (from: *The Brontës: Charlotte Brontë and Her Family* by Rebecca Fraser).

The mystery of "origins" may become the subject of the work itself, its predominant motive for being. The family background of two very different writers, contemporaries Anaïs Nin and Samuel Beckett, suggest a similar childhood woundedness and consequent sense of isolation, to be countered if not refuted by compulsive speech.

Anaïs Nin, author of the monumental five-volume *The Diary of Anis Nin* (1931-1955), more than 15,000 pages in its original type-script, began keeping a diary as a young girl when her father (at that time a famous Spanish composer-pianist, named Joaquin Nin) abruptly left her and her mother. The intention was to give the diary to her father when he returned, keeping a highly detailed account of her life in his absence: "The diary began as the diary of a journey, to record everything for my father. It was really a letter, so he could follow us into a strange land [i.e., the United States], know about us." This "letter" was never sent, Nin's father never returned, the diary became "an island, in which I could find refuge in a strange land, write French, think my thoughts, hold onto my soul, to myself." Ironically, the consequence of Nin's childhood trauma was that she became famous — and notorious — as a diarist of unusual frankness and intimacy, long before our era of confessional memoirs; *The Diary of Anaïs Nin* has long outlived its engendering "father" as a phenomenon of twentieth-century European-American literature.

Samuel Beckett, born in County Dublin in 1906, would become one of the most original stylists and "visionaries" of the twentieth century, awarded the Nobel Prize in 1969; yet his father, mother, and brother allegedly never read a single page of his writing and, needless to say, Beckett's radically experimental and enigmatic prose fiction did not make Irish bestseller lists. The Ireland of Beckett's time had been famously described by Beckett's countryman James Joyce as a "sow that eats her own farrow"; so writers, artists, rebellious and nonconforming personalities felt obliged to leave the conservative Roman Catholic country to become expatriates in Europe like Beckett, and his mentor Joyce. (Briefly, Beckett was Joyce's secretary; Joyce's schizophrenic daughter Lucia fell in love with him.) In *Malone Dies*, Beckett says with wonderfully lyric rage: "Let us say before I go any further, that I forgive nobody. I wish them all an atrocious life in the fires of icy hell and in the execrable generations to come."

Of all wounded, compulsively driven writers, Samuel Beckett is perhaps the paragon, who seems to have written some of his most original and powerful prose in a kind of trance: "When I wrote the first sentence of *Malloy*, I didn't know where I was headed. And when I

finished the first part, I didn't know how to go on. It all came out as it is... I hadn't prepared anything or worked out anything in advance." As Beckett says about composing one of the most celebrated of twentieth-century plays, *Waiting for Godot*: "It all came together between the hand and the page."

At the core of all human striving is the inevitable conflict between generations. At its most extreme, such conflict can empower entire careers. Ernest Hemingway, for instance, was obsessed by a remarkable, unstinting loathing of his mother, whom he blamed for his father's suicide. (It seems difficult to comprehend Hemingway's mother's motive, in sending him the pistol with which his father killed himself.) Eugene O'Neill was obsessed by an unstinting loathing of his father, a "charming" Irish alcoholic. Patricia Highsmith's relentless and grimly inventive misogyny might well be attributed to her deeply unhappy childhood: her mother allegedly drank turpentine in an attempt to abort her; her parents were divorced shortly after her birth; she hated both parents, and refused to visit her mother as an elderly woman. Of the most inspired, ferocious haters and "punishers" in literature, a long and variegated list that includes Dostoyevsky, D.H. Lawrence, Henry Miller, Louis-Ferdinand Celine, Flannery O'Connor, and several of my contemporaries whom I dare not name, it might be said that a psychopathology that might have crippled another individual has been channeled and honed by craft into a transcendent art that makes of its debased material a "new thing truer than anything true and alive," in Hemingway's stirring words.

When the writer isn't rejected outright but, as in the most improbable of fantasies, "accepted" — in fact, "celebrated" — in a grandly public way, the psychological imbalance may be, ironically, considerable. Writers whose initial efforts are extraordinary successes almost inevitably suffer the consequences, or are made to suffer by critics, when their next books are published. In America, everyone loves a winner: there's a considerable excitement generated in the media over how quickly, and how far, he or she will be made to fall next time around. The tenor of several prominent American reviews of twenty-eight-year-old Jonathan Safran Foer's second novel, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* was unabashed envy, jealousy, spite, revealing more of the reviewers than of the novel ostensibly reviewed. The preeminent victim of early American success is perhaps F. Scott Fitzgerald whose first novel *This Side of Paradise* was a sensation when the young writer, a Princeton dropout, was only twenty-three. Subsequent novels of Fitzgerald's, including his masterpiece *The Great Gatsby*, were received with decreasing interest until by the time Fitzgerald died in his early forties, he was virtually out of print. "There are no second acts in American lives," Fitzgerald commented wryly on his fate, suggesting the peculiarly American nature of the phenomenon: early vertiginous success following by a long slide downward to a premature death. It's appropriate that Fitzgerald's most frequently reprinted prose piece isn't a work of fiction but the confessional essay, "The Crack-Up."

Published in 1948 when its author was only twenty-five, Norman Mailer's ambitious (but flawed) first novel *The Naked and the Dead* brought Mailer the kind of immediate, blinding celebrity experienced by Lord Byron at a similarly young age: Mailer woke up one morning to find himself famous. Heralded as a genius in some quarters, denounced as a pornographer in others, yet an immediate bestseller in both the United States and Britain. Mailer comments: "Part of me thought it was possibly the greatest book since *War and Peace*. On the other hand, I also thought "I don't know anything about writing, I'm virtually an imposter." Inevitably, when Mailer's *Barbary Shore* was published three years later, reviews were almost universally negative: hostile, dismissive, contemptuous. Mailer was left to ponder how a literary genius can become a complete failure so swiftly. "He had that kind of merriment," Mailer says of himself, "men have when events have ended in utter disaster." Until his second book, Mailer had had no idea what a devastating emotional experience a bad review can be, let alone insulting and jeering reviews; he felt "like a guy who goes into the ring, he's overmatched, gets into a slugfest with his opponent, and is knocked out in the first round. They wake him up, and he's happy even though everybody's looking at him like he's nuts. Yet he's happy because he's discovered he had more

guts than he thought he did.” More importantly, such experiences made Mailer into a “psychic outlaw,” a stance Mailer has cultivated for a lifetime career.

Graham Greene, the most professional and calculating of “prolific” writers, had his early, overwhelming success, with the publication of *The Man Within* in 1929; he too was acclaimed as a brilliant young talent, made a good deal of money in both England and the United States. Perhaps predictably, his next two novels were poorly received; his third was rejected. Short stories, solicited by editors, were also rejected. Like Mailer, Greene had plunged from ecstatic heights to near-complete failure within three years; like Mailer, Greene learned from his experience, and continued with his writing. “It takes years of brooding and of guilt, of self-criticism and self-justification, to clear from the eyes the haze of hopes and dreams and false ambitions.” To make out of the collapse of success a more substantial and enduring career is the great challenge for any writer. (Greene is the most idiosyncratic of writers, setting the goal for himself of 500 words a day. No less, and no more. Norman Sherry notes in his biography *The Life of Graham Greene* that, after closely studying Greene’s manuscripts, “His established habit of writing this number — not 499 or 501 — shows in his manuscript, where he has counted each word, and noted the total at the point where he stopped.” Greene might stop writing, for instance, in the middle of a murder scene. Greene could predict where events would occur: “There’s going to be a rather nice scene in another 20,000 words where someone is stabbed in the back...” Sometimes Greene alarmed himself with this statistical approach to a lifetime of writing. “I should write seven hours a day... Terrifying thought, 500 words for another, say 40 years... 7,300,000 words.” However, we can surmise that Graham Greene’s art, like that of all compulsively driven artists, is generated by impulses from the unconscious. The “conscious” self is like a gate-keeper, or in this case an accountant, without much awareness of why these processes are operating, still less what they might mean symbolically.

Early, ominous success! It’s only human to wish for it, as in the grimmest of fairy tales, yet, when it happens, so rarely as it does happen, we see the logic of those cruel fairy tales in which the granted wish is the curse. When Ralph Ellison’s first, and only, novel *Invisible Man* was published in 1952, the thirty-eight-year-old black writer instantly became “the” black spokesman of his era, and his novel acquired the status of an instant “American classic” — with predictable results: for decades afterward, in a kind of protracted stage fright, Ellison worked and reworked a second novel that was never finished during his lifetime but would be printed posthumously, edited by others, as a work of fiction titled *Juneteenth* (1999). Now largely unknown, Boss Lockridge was another young novelist heralded as a literary genius when his first, and only, novel *Raintree County* was published in 1948; as the novel climbed bestseller lists across the country, garnering extraordinary praise, Lockridge’s fragile interior world began to dissolve. By the time *Raintree County* had reached number one on the *New York Times* bestseller list, Lockridge had committed suicide.

John Updike’s highly successful literary career began the summer after his graduation from Harvard in 1953, with the first of many short stories of his published in the *New Yorker*: “I had given myself five years to become a ‘writer,’ and my becoming one immediately has left me with an uneasy, apologetic sense of having blundered through the wrong door.” In his candidly autobiographical *Self Consciousness*, Updike speaks of the mixed, mysterious origins of art which, in its “prettifying” of mankind’s situation approaches “blasphemy.” Updike considers:

Writing... is an illusory release, a presumptuous taming of reality, a way of expressing lightly the unbearable. That we age and leave behind this litter of dead, un-recoverable selves is both unbelievable and the commonest thing in the world — it happens to everybody. In the morning light one can write breezily, without the slightest acceleration of one’s pulse, about what one cannot contemplate in the dark without turning in panic to God. In the dark one *truly* feels that great sliding, that turning of the vast earth into darkness and eternal cold... Writing, in making the world light — in codifying, distorting, prettifying, verbalizing it — approaches blasphemy.

Whether compulsive, or, to give the condition a more upbeat spin, “dedicated,” John Updike is one of those who thinks of writing as a way of “redeeming” the self, if not the world; and who thinks of a day lost forever that did not in some way add to the printed accomplishment that is his career. In “Getting the Words Out,” Updike analyzes his origins as a writer in regard to breath, and to stuttering (Updike had a stammer as a child, brought under control in adulthood); language is also gratifyingly visual: “alphabetical symbols stamped on blocks marked the dawn of my consciousness.” These were large, elemental ABCs, in a crucial if mysterious conjunction with Updike’s mother’s thwarted effort to write: “The sound of her typing gave the house a secret, questing life unlike that of any of the other houses up and down Philadelphia Avenue in Shillington, PA.” To his astonishment, the precocious child John discovers that “in my mother’s head existed, evidently, a rival world that could not co-exist with the real world of which I was, I had felt, such a loved component.”

Outright rejection, the memory of which follows many writers through their careers, is a more obvious source of pain, though it can be given an anecdotal gloss and made to be amusing if not a source of encouragement to others. For instance, there’s an often anthologized story by Eudora Welty called “Petrified Man,” which was rejected by numerous magazine editors; at last, the young Mississippi writer gave up, and burned it; only to hear belatedly from the last editor who’d rejected it, with a note that he’d like to consider it again. So, with what frantic energy we can only imagine, Eudora Welty rewrote the story from memory: a quirky, head-on narrative of grotesque doings in a small Mississippi town that was Welty’s published story, as memorable as anything Welty ever wrote. The late John Gardner, controversial, combative, dauntingly determined, boasted of having continued to write fiction through twenty years of rejections — after he finally began to be accepted, and his first novel *Grendel* met with critical acclaim, he took out his old, rejected manuscripts to resubmit, this time successfully. *The Sunlight Dialogues*, Gardner’s best-selling novel, was one of these. In interviews, Richard Ford has spoken of how demoralized he had been by responses to his early novels which sold modestly and received mixed reviews; after years of working on a novel, Richard was rejected by a well-known New York editor who told him “you’re wasting your life” — a remark likely to be remembered by Richard for a long, long time. Yet Richard continued to write, transforming his writerly voice entirely with his “break-through” novel *The Sportswriter*, which signaled a dramatic turn in his career. Who can determine whether initial rejection — inevitably imprinted in the psyche as “failure” — is not, in ways impossible to foretell, bracing, challenging, necessary? The artist must be in crucial ways a “psychic outlaw” if he or she is not to be co-opted and made into a mere entertainer by the publishing industry, which seems to have happened, unpredictably, altogether perversely, with the publication of Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road* in 1957, made by the press into the “Bible of the Beat Generation” and catapulting the thirty-five-year-old author into celebrity that would prove lethal to his talent (Kerouac had published a more conventional first novel, *The Town and the City*, in 1950, earnest and lushly written in the manner of Thomas Wolfe, that had attracted little attention). Long accustomed to rejection by the publishing establishment and habituated to a communal fringe existence, Kerouac began almost immediately to self-destruct after the peak of his career in 1957-58, ever more dependent upon powerful drugs (amphetamines, opium) and prone to the alcoholism that finally killed him at the premature age of forty-seven. In *Desolation Angels* in the manic-lyric section “Passing Through Tangier 8,” Kerouac looks with “puffed alcoholic eyes” at the fallen world: “Nothing, nothing, nothing O but *nothing* could interest me any more for one god damned minute in anything in the *world*. But where else to go?” In 1969, this forlorn question becomes a moot one for Kerouac.

Yet there are decided advantages to early failure, or that “success” that’s of so minimal a nature it might be termed failure, as the examples of James Joyce, D.H. Lawrence, and William Faulkner suggest. James Joyce’s first attempt at a novel, written when Joyce was an undergraduate at University College, Dublin in the early 1900s, is the fragmented *Stephen Hero*, a surprisingly conventional novel flawed with the energies and ambitions of youth, overwritten,

ambitious, “promising.” Had Joyce succeeded in publishing *Stephen Hero*, as Scott Fitzgerald succeeded in publishing his first novel *This Side of Paradise*, he would have used up the material of *A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*, a total revising of *Stephen Hero* that occupied Joyce for ten years. Where the first, incomplete novel presents characters and ideas and tells a story, the radically experimental *Portrait* is about language, *is* language, a portrait-in-progress of the creator as he discovers the range and depth of his genius. The “soul in gestation” of Stephen Dedalus gains its individuality and its defiant strength as the novel proceeds; at the novel’s conclusion it has even gained a kind of autonomy, wresting from the author an abruptly first-person voice and supplanting the novel’s strategy of narration with Stephen’s own journal. How startling this must have seemed to Joyce’s first readers; an unprecedented breaking of the conventional “frame” of the novel.

Out of this unexceptional material Joyce created, as by an effort of will, one of the most original works of fiction in our language. Success in his early twenties would have very likely derailed James Joyce; we would not be speaking his name today; but he was protected by what his brother Stanislaus dryly identified as “that inflexibility firmly rooted in failure.”

The possibilities are illuminating. If D.H. Lawrence’s novel *The Rainbow*, written when Lawrence was only twenty-six, had enjoyed a routine popular fate, instead of arousing a storm of vituperation (“There is no form of viciousness, of suggestiveness, that is not reflected in these pages,” fumed one reviewer; the novel, another said, “had no right to exist”), how then could *Women in Love*, fueled by the author’s rage and loathing, have been written? And surely not the visionary-erotic *Lady Chatterly’s Lover* in its several versions. Perhaps there is an alternate universe in which William Faulkner’s poetry (awkwardly modeled on Swinburne, Eliot, and others) was “successful”; a universe in which Faulkner’s early, derivative novels gained him public and commercial success — imitation Hemingway in *Soldier’s Pay*, imitation Aldous Huxley in *Mosquitoes* — with the consequence that Faulkner’s own, unique voice might never have developed. For when Faulkner needed money — and Faulkner, supporting a large household in Oxford, Mississippi, was always in need of money — he wrote as rapidly and pragmatically as possible. That his idiosyncratic, difficult novels *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I Lay Dying*, *Light in August* held so little commercial appeal allowed him the freedom, one might say the luxury, to experiment with language as radically as he wished: for it’s the “inflexibility” of which Stanislaus Joyce spoke that genius most requires to gestate.

“Woundedness” — “rejection” — “inflexibility.” We are inclined to draw from these a sort of moral allegory. Those of us who have been teachers over a period of years are often surprised by the unpredictable ways in which our former students evolve. Often it isn’t the most obviously brilliant or the most forceful or prominent in a class who turns out to be the best “known” or admired — why? Energy, industry, “vision,” refusal to give up; an attitude that goes beyond ambition into the dimension of the “spiritual,” the uncharitable. We are obliged to see how “success” and “failure” are shifting principles of others’ subjectivities, and of the market economy; they are hardly absolutes. So often are men and women in the so-called creative arts (writing, music, art, acting) rejected, many begin to feel confirmed in their essential isolation within society. This detachment has a benefit, especially in a mass-market populist and traditionally anti-intellectual country like the United States: it gives us the perspective of the “psychic outlaw” we might otherwise not have, knowing we must rely, in the end, upon our own judgment and our own sense of self-worth.



TWO POEMS by Paul Hegedus

I.

You've lost the war. Slapstick sabotage caked in spit to fill this distance. Line is negative. Intelligence wears a belt. Platform flat of armour isn't lazy. Or easy, moves to take a slice.

Pizza divides without a fuss. Friction crisp juggles Yankee Doodle daydream, or maybe I'm romantic. Material values always loudspeaker loudsystem. Traffic ascends, tops up use of coupons.

Pitch plays to first cites guns at exit ominous. Salute is spoon fed. Paper points at stuffs faces. Can't stomach this.

Action figure reaction. Equipped with cigarettes. Price tags up & runs for home. Cues closest cuts to ices. Take it away positions take it or leave it. Ask the time. Cheesecake fixed on paper got it wrong.

II.

The man says you're asleep. Fusion jazz at windows gates a drive down 41st. In repair & sit for second, basically eyelids. Ice wine on monster trucks. An attempt at walls. Lost bandages to block eyeballs.

Bullet smear garbage left in baskets. Colours often with magic markers. A line or favourite flavour next to blue jeans. Taken to curb canvas stretched indecision. Ask what's next.

Brush strokes behind ears still left. Real life insistence on space. Informs in triplicate. Batteries still sometimes include details. Off centre. Always feels lost without it.

Twenty minutes is considered stretching out. Fix it. Asleep with cartoon French film score, incomplete. What's this page got to do with it? I can't hear you. A wrench. Left it in the batmobile.

Excerpt from *The Iron Whim* by Darren Wershler-Henry

The following text is an excerpt from Darren Wershler-Henry's latest book *The Iron Whim* (McClelland & Stewart). In this book Wershler-Henry examines the typewriter and its role shaping literary expression.

"The Poet's Stave and Bar"

Like the other technologies of the industrial revolution, typewriting moulds bodies into useful forms in order that they might actually do something productive. So it may seem odd, at first, that there are so many associations between the key figures in the history of typewriting and contemporary society's least useful members - poets.

The Wonderful Writing Machine's purple description of Christopher Latham Sholes reads like an attempt to use the word "poet" as many times as possible in one paragraph: "[Sholes] looked more like a poet than any of the things he was or had been. His eyes were sad, like a poet's. He was tall, slender to the point of frailty, with long flowing hair, a short beard, and a medium-length mustache, and he loved poetry although he didn't write it. He also loved puns. His idea of the world's best joke was a poetic pun."¹ Even early typewriter salesmen were apparently worthy of the poet's laurels; the book goes on to describe typewriter salesman C. W. Seamans as "looking like a combination poet and revivalist-meeting preacher."²

When Marshall McLuhan writes in 1964 about the boon that typewriting bestowed during "the age of the iron whim," he too turns to the poets for ammunition: "Poets like Charles Olson are eloquent in proclaiming the power of the typewriter to help the poet to indicate exactly the breath, the pauses, the suspension, even, of syllables, the juxtaposition, even, of parts of phrases which he intends, observing that, for the first time, the poet has the stave and the bar that the musician has had."³

McLuhan is simultaneously emulating Olson's style and paraphrasing his famous poetic manifesto, "Projective Verse," written in 1959. What McLuhan omits, though, is more telling than what he includes. Olson writes, "It is the advantage of the typewriter that, *due to its rigidity and its space precisions*, it can, for a poet, indicate exactly the breath, the pauses, the suspensions even of syllables, the juxtapositions even of parts of phrases, which he intends" (emphasis added).⁴ Here again is the language of discipline: the typewriter enforces rigidity and distribution in space as a means of creating exactitude, of quantizing even empty spaces on a page as a metaphor for breath in a line of oration. And powering and guiding this new regime of control is the "intent" of the poet, herding unruly words into shape. There is little room in such a poetics for the admission of indeterminacy or the role of the reader in the creation of meaning; for Olson, the poet is a master technician in control of every aspect of his or her writing. Not only does a poet "record the listening he has done to his own speech" in a poem, he also indicates, with the help of the preset blanks of the typewritten page, "how he would want any reader, silently or otherwise, to voice his work."⁵

At the same time, Olson instrumentalizes both the body of the poet and the poem that the poet produces into channels for the transmission of information. For Olson, the production of poetry is a matter of utility and relations, and the writer is one component in a larger network shot through with forces and laws:

It comes to this: the use of a man, by himself and thus by others, lies in how he conceives his relation to nature, that force to which he owes his somewhat small existence . . . [I]f he stays inside himself, if he is contained within his nature as he is a participant in the larger force, he will be able to listen, and his hearing through himself will give him secrets objects share. And by an inverse law his shapes will make their own way.⁶

Olson's language is the language of discipline applied to the task of producing poetry. Through the practice of "Objectism," he plans to dispense with "the lyrical interference of the 'subject' and his

soul,”⁷ to turn the poet into an efficient channel for the communication of lived experience. The poem is the circuitry that connects the poet-as-recording-device to the reader as receiver: “A poem is energy transferred from where the poet got it . . . by way of the poem itself to, all the way over to, the reader. Okay. Then the poem must, at all points, be a high energy-construct and, at all points, an energy--discharge.”⁸

Olson is a pet example for McLuhan because his poetics reinforces one of McLuhan’s major contentions, that mid-twentieth-century technologies such as the typewriter, the telephone, the phonograph, and the radio were not merely about extending the control of man, the sovereign subject; they also signalled a “return” to a “post-literate acoustic space.”⁹ Olson’s contention that “if a contemporary poet leaves a space as long as the phrase before it, he means that space to be held, by the breath, an equal length of time” epitomizes this sensibility, the following even more so, as it is mediated by the grid that the typewriter imposes:

Observe him (i.e., the poet), when he takes advantage of the machine’s multiple margins, to juxtapose,
Sd he:
to dream takes no effort
to think is easy
to act is more difficult
but for a man to act after he has taken thought, this!
is the most difficult thing of all

Each of these lines is a progressing of both the meaning and the breathing forward, and then a backing up, without a progress or any kind of movement outside the unit of time local to the idea.¹⁰

For Olson, what is important about the typewriter is its immediacy. He sees the machine as “the personal and instantaneous recorder of the poet’s work,”¹¹ and a tool with which to restore to both writer and reader the sense of the poet’s presence in the finished work, a presence stripped away by the conversion of manuscript to the printed page.¹²

In order to present typewriting in this way, though, Olson has to ignore some explicit evidence in his own examples that typewriting is never about immediacy and breath but always about mediation and writing. It’s already implicit in the “invisible” tab stops of the example above, but becomes explicit and visible when Olson writes:

If [the poet] wishes a pause so light it hardly separates the words, yet does not want a comma – which is an interruption of the meaning rather than the sound of the line – follow him when he uses a symbol the typewriter has ready to hand:

What does not change / is the will to change¹³

The insertion of the virgule (/) is the graphic mark of mechanical mediation in every sense, a solid black bar signifying that there is something in the channel between writer and reader blocking the way, something that both McLuhan and Olson choose to ignore in order to advance an argument for emancipation through rigour.

And what if its insertion was a typo? Even for poets – *especially* for poets – there is always noise in the channel.

O n e - F i n g e r
T y p i n g

The idea of the typewriter as a prosthetic that enables writing is not new to this discussion. It is present from the beginnings of the machine’s history as a writing device for the blind, and it persists through McLuhan’s notion of technology as “the extensions of man” and in science-fiction scenarios of writing cyborgs. All of these narratives, though, focus on the efficacy of the machine to produce writing. In texts written by the people who actually have little choice but to use the typewriter to communicate, both the writer’s mastery over the machine and the ability of the machine to channel the writer’s desires are pushed to their limits.

American poet Larry Eigner had cerebral palsy due to a forceps-inflicted injury at birth.¹⁴ His vast oeuvre (more than forty books and hundreds of magazine articles that influenced several major movements in contemporary American poetry) was produced entirely by one-fingered typing with his right index finger. Eigner was strongly influenced by Olson and William Carlos Williams, as he relates in an unpublished letter to Ina Forster:

Before I read of “energy construct” or maintenance in Charles Olson’s “Projective Verse” in the early ’50s, in *Poetry New York* (1950), I thought myself that immediacy and force have to take precedence over clarity in a poem (this in reaction to my mother, though I tried or wd’ve liked to follow, agreed with her insistent advice to be clear), and about the same time there was Wm Carlos Williams! “A poem is a machine made of words” (he was a medical doctor *ein Arzt?* but he said “machine,” not “organism,” hm). A piece of language that “works,” functions.¹⁵

To an extent, Eigner agrees with Olson and Williams, viewing the typewriter as a device that preserves a precise record of the poet’s thoughts and feelings in a finished poem. Eigner’s first encounter in person with Olson was also mediated by typewriter: “I / and my brother visited him once or twice (in ’57 or 8 when / I showed him a poem, right away he pulled out his portable / typewriter and copied it!)”¹⁶ e. e. cummings, Eigner writes, “was really the first to utilize the possibilities for accurate notation – registration – by the typewriter.”¹⁷ But there is also a difference in Eigner’s poetics born of the fact that writing was not just a metaphorical but a real struggle for him, that truly accurate notation was rarely possible, that writing required real force, real work, to produce a piece of language that worked.

An interesting intersection characterizes Eigner’s writing, and the typewriter sits in its middle. On one hand, despite being able to type “fast enough back then to be familiar enough with the keyboard to work in the dark or the dusk with one finger,”¹⁸ the typewriter was barely able to manage the flood of ideas in Eigner’s head. “There’ve always been so many things to do,” he writes, noting the reason for his characteristically dense prose, *in* his characteristically dense prose, was that “letters get crowded just from my attempt to save time, i.e., cover less space, avoid putting another sheet in the typewriter for a few more words as I at least hope there will only be.”¹⁹ On the other hand, typewriting offers a solution, of sorts, to the problem of its own inability to process the rush of his thoughts: Eigner often resorts to two columns when he writes prose. “It’ll be from not deciding or being unable to decide quickly anyway what to say first, or next. Or an afterthought might well be an insert, and thus go in the margin, especially when otherwise you’d need one or more extra words to refer to a topic again.”²⁰ Typewriting may not accommodate *everything* Eigner wants to commit to paper, but the compromise between the two helped to forge a unique poetic style.

J a z z H a n d s

Poets aren’t the only ones enraptured with typewriting in the QWERTY world.

David Sudnow is a sociologist who taught himself jazz piano. In *Talk’s Body*, he describes a personal phenomenology of “keyboarding” based on his “daily life on a swiveling chair between two keyboards, that of my piano and that of my typewriter.”²¹

Sudnow’s guiding trope for both kinds of keyboarding is jazz improvisation. He is not interested in breaking down his music-making movements into therblig-style time and motion study units in order to make keyboarding fit “some existing circuitry model.” Instead, he is interested in producing “a new sort of descriptive biology” that might replace the mystifications behind typists’ claims to be receiving dictations from ghosts, aliens, muses, giant insects, and other forms of “guidance from above.”²²

There are similarities as well as differences between Sudnow’s model and the other perspectives on typewriting examined in previous chapters. Despite the obvious incongruities between a linear keyboard that operates according to a system of major and minor keys, requires the use of foot pedals, and relies heavily on chording effects, and a quadruple-row system of keys of equal value that operate in discrete fashion, Sudnow is determined to demonstrate some congruity between pianos and typewriters. While he’s interested in a materialist biological theory of inspiration that would replace the idea of an Outside dictating voice, Sudnow still sees the keyboard as an extension of a sovereign subject, but his model of typewriting is at times closest to the biology of Cronenberg’s *Naked Lunch*.

The other major important difference between Sudnow and Olson and the typists that I’ve already discussed is that the former are *generative* typists. In other words, they compose as they type. They have internalized not only the disciplinary system of touch typing, but also the dictating voice. Whether or not

they choose to mystify the dictator and his attendant systems for disciplining the body of the amanuensis into a ready and receptive instrument by presenting that voice as the muse, an alien intelligence, or something else depends entirely on the predilection of the generative typist in question, but it is unquestionably still present. It is in fact the very thing that allows the typist to write, training and informing his or her movements, and always demanding further practice.

Typewriting, for Sudnow, is *embodied* knowledge. He rhapsodizes about “the intelligence of the integrated knowing hand, which guides as it is guided, singing from place to place, making melodies in a network of spatial contexts that are grasped and tacitly appreciated in the most intimate and still mysterious ways.”²³ Via a system of touch typing, he trains his body to the point where it responds almost automatically to the keyboard. Once an individual reaches this state, where the disciplinary system has been entirely internalized, he is paradoxically “free” to use both his newly instrumentalized limbs and the typewriter to which they are almost seamlessly joined to compose.

If control begins as a spatial architecture (such as a prison or classroom) designed to transform individuals by progressively objectifying them and subtly partitioning their behaviour on an increasingly fine scale, then that architecture first has to become a set of disciplinary practices that can be internalized into the bodies of the subjects themselves.²⁴ Even when the architecture itself remains, it is not always necessary. Train a prisoner to believe that he is always being observed, and it is no longer necessary to observe him constantly. Likewise, train a body to type, and it no longer needs to relate to the keyboard as an external architecture. Sudnow types the following:

When I type the letter “t,” my finger does not search for the locale where the “t” is written. Once upon a time, I learned to bring a finger to where “t” is written and then I forgot about its placement in such terms, so much that if I have to fill in a diagram of the typewriter keyboard from imagination today, I must mimic the production of words to rediscover the named keys. When I go for “t” now, I reach, in the course of aiming, toward saying “this” or “that,” aiming toward the sounding spot where “t” merely happens to be written. And if I reach for this spot and get somewhere else by mistake, I - needn’t look at the page to tell. I can feel I have made a wrong reach, just as I can tell I am tripping without having to watch myself.²⁵

Sudnow has interpellated the machine’s disciplinary systems so thoroughly that he is loath not only to describe his “hand’s knowledge” in terms of the “topography of the keyboard,” he won’t even use the language of music to describe the spatializations his body has imagined as musical “notes” because “these [terms] divide the keyboard from the body.”²⁶

Sudnow’s sense of what he is doing is not all that different from Olson’s Objectism; both assume a more or less unproblematic transmission of direct experience as content from writer to reader. Sudnow claims that if you “use the touch-typing method to copy over the sentence you are now reading . . . you get almost as close to a recoverable notation system as you can get.” Sudnow does note that typescript provides no clues as to the temporality of the writing; “I can produce the sentences you are now reading in fifteen seconds or fifteen minutes, produce the first portion in a rapid fire and the rest after a coffee break, and you cannot tell.” For him, handwriting still is the privileged sign that indicates the passage of time. In order to gain some knowledge of the “temporal structure” of a piece of writing, Sudnow claims “You come still closer if you try to reproduce sights such ‘as these’ [the words are in cursive text] in their particularity.”²⁷ However, Sudnow does not account for the very distancing factor that Olson bemoans: mass print publication, which turns “these words” into yet another infinitely reproducible sign, even if it is a sign that evokes handwriting. Jacques Derrida famously makes this same point at the end of his essay “Signature Event Context” by reproducing his own signature to demonstrate that the very things that Olson and Sudnow champion – the effects of performance, presence, and speech on a text – presuppose the very things they hope to exclude: error, slippage, reproducibility, and multiplicity – the effects of writing, typewriting included.²⁸

Regardless of the flaws in Sudnow’s argument about what is transpiring, the statements that his text makes are still fascinating. All of the discipline he exercises on himself goes to an interesting end: the aesthetically pleasing but decidedly non-utilitarian creation of a body capable of making art: “[W]hen fingers in particular learn piano spaces in particular, much more is in fact being learned about than fingers, this keyboard, these sizes. A music-making body is being fashioned.”²⁹ Note that as Sudnow accedes to the discipline of his two keyboards, his grammar also becomes passive, and his descriptions of his own body become increasingly objective:

[M]y articulating organs are now set up in a precise spatial scaling. The finger feels the width of a key at the piano, perhaps assessing the key's extent by feeling the edge of the next key. The hand is now toned up for such sizes all through the domain. The depths and textures of the places are known. The hand accordingly assumes a sort of roundness and balance appropriate for speaking.³⁰

Once Sudnow has explained his process, he performs it for the reader. The entirety of chapter 36 of *Talk's Body* is an improvisational performance, a jazz for the typewriter, documented with a video camera (or so the text tells us – shades of Gilbreth here). The act of typewriting itself becomes a performance. That written performance record is replete with signs of discipline attempting to steer a wayward body toward a desired end. Sudnow has left in all typos, included spaces, and has left the right-hand margin ragged; he asks that the reader “treat the errors here as a sign t t sign that sa a struggle is taking place.”³¹

However, these signs *remain* as signs of a struggle that perhaps took place elsewhere, in another medium, if it indeed took place at all. Even assuming that this text is not a simulation, the physical qualities of a typescript are very different from those of the printed book, and translating the former into the latter inevitably creates all sorts of slippages and gaps. Despite the aforementioned attempts to make chapter 36 evoke a typescript, it bears the unmistakable signs of typesetting, including, most tellingly, ligatures that link multiple letters together into one character (for example, ff, fi, fl, ffi, ffl).

Like many typists, Sudnow struggles to use the rigour of typewriting to produce art, in the hopes of producing truth through art's beauty. But, to return to an earlier theme, typing has a problematic relationship to truth, even though we often assume that it will produce it for us. It's time to take a closer look at that problem.

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THREE POEMS by Robert Dassanowsky

UNDER THE SIGN OF TRAKL

Mirabell Gardens, Salzburg

1. Finding home is never the battle.
2. A sign points the way and commemorates.
3. The gardens rip at history.
4. A child sets an altar of pebbles and petals at the well tended grass verge.
5. She claps her hands once moves on, looks back at her motherland.
6. What religion is this?
7. Finding it again is.

POLLOCK HALLS, UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

Spring 2002

I walk down an institutional hall
the milky tones bland me
drill me to order and regulation
pass the doors to student rooms
emptied, refitted to host academics
long thinking beyond the learning
I walk down an institutional hall
and hear the whispered plainsong
of languages overlapping
counterpointing, preparing for talk
in the bathrooms, on the beds, pacing
the cubicle, facing the windows
timing, emphasizing, editing,
recanting, punishing, revising
I walk down an institutional hall
to the matins of self prophets
isolated from news and sensuality
I walk out the institutional glass door
into a garden where the wind blows
a tonsure into my hair, where the clicks
of closing windows battle the dogma
of the crickets.

KUBRICK DESCENDING A STAIRCASE

This is a trivial poem
elevated to great sagacity

All that you read here
will be undercut
by your hunger
by your lust
by defecation

The flaw's the art
as these marks stare
coldly into your iris

The wisdom of the
ages, a flourish
the apocalypse is
rock, paper, scissors

And nothing moves
slowly

SWORN TO SECRECY

by George Bowering

I was sworn to secrecy about this, but that was a long time ago, and I am not absolutely certain that the people who swore me to secrecy actually had the power and authority to swear me. Power, maybe, but I am not so sure about authority. In that situation it was and is a little hard to define authority.

It doesn't really matter anyway, because here I go.

I was still a writer back then. Well, I suppose that I didn't have any more right to call myself a writer then than I do now, now that I have quit. I mean by that that I had done a lot of writing, but I had not had anything published. Except for some poems; anyone can get their poems published in this country.

I had sat at my portable Underwood and written three and a half novels, mostly about growing up and trying to make it in the world. But then I decided to write a detective novel. I figured that if you can write a detective novel, you can write any kind of novel. Detective novels are strong on plot, of course, I mean ha ha, and also strong on setting and character and suspense and all those things that everyone knows you need in a story.

I always figured that if you want to write a western, you should go and ride a horse for a while. If you figure on a historical novel, read everything about the time and go visit the place. If you intend to write skin books, do your research. I was planning a detective novel. I decided to follow someone. I got myself one of those little green shirt-pocket notebooks with the coil and a good waterproof pen. I already had a miniature tape recorder—well, it was miniature for those days. I considered a trench coat and Humphrey Bogart hat, but decided against them. I didn't want to look like a cartoon character. I wanted to blend in with the background, eh?

How did I pick someone to follow? I just took a bus downtown, got off at Robson Street, and lit up a Sportsman, bending toward the matchbook flame cupped in my hands. When I looked up I saw a guy in a dark blue suit and open dark blue trench coat. Perfect. He was carrying a furled black umbrella in one hand and a black attaché case hung from the other. It was as if I had put in an order. I let the cigarette dangle from the left corner of my mouth and with my hands in my jacket pockets, walked about a quarter of a block behind the guy.

I took notes in my head so that I could transfer them to my notebook when I had a chance. They would eventually be material for my novel if I was lucky and this worked out. I was a writer following a—well, I didn't know what he was, but he looked like a business guy, maybe in insurance, maybe in the prosecutor's office. According to my notes he was about forty or forty five years old, wore glasses with rims on the top only, had conservative sideburns and hair that must have been cut in the past four days. There was a blue thread hanging from the hem of his trench coat in back, and a line of light grey mud around his black leather shoes. I figured he must have parked his car in an unpaved lot.

There was no music. This was real life or something to read.

I hung behind him as he walked west on Robson Street, making sure I caught the walk signals he caught, then hanging back, smoking my cigarette like a detective. He went into a little corner grocery (remember, this was back before Robson Street had become a franchise strip mall) and bought some Smith Brothers cough drops. I was close enough to see that the flavour was Wild Cherry, and wondered whether a private eye was supposed to figure out something from that, or whether it was even supposed to show up in his notes.

Private eye or police gumshoe? Maybe I ought to write a spy novel, I thought. Just take notes and lurk, I told myself, make the narrative decision later. I wished that I had brought a hat so I could pull it down over my face. This following a guy was fun.

He turned right on Burrard and before I knew it he was downstairs at the pub in the Hotel Vancouver, and so was I. I tried to look as if I were meeting someone, looking around and letting my eyes adjust to the dim light. I wanted to make sure that he sat down before I did. He sat at a round terry-cloth table and waited for a man with a tray of beer. I did likewise, and took out the paperback book I was reading, *The Confidential Agent* by Graham Greene. I pretended to read it, and then pretty soon I was reading it. I hardly took my eyes off the page as I paid for my beer, and I gave only a fleeting glance to my subject, who was sipping his beer and reading something typed on a sheaf of papers.

Once you start on a Graham Greene book, it's hard to make yourself stop for a while. The waiter was asking me whether I wanted another one, and the man I was interested in was gone. I jumped out of my seat, knocking the table with my hip, and walked fast to the steps and up to the street.

I didn't see him in any direction.

"Did you see a guy with an umbrella and a briefcase?" I asked a guy with a newspaper and a briefcase.

"Piss off, joker," he replied.

I decided to look along Georgia Street, and it was a good thing (I thought then) that I did, because a block later I looked to the west, and there he was, waiting at the bus stop for the 444. Aha, I thought, so he's going to the north shore. Very interesting, I said to myself. I was still trying to get into the role. I took my place at the back of the lineup.

Two cigarettes later the bus was there, and I was the last to climb on board. It was packed, so I didn't have much choice about where to sit. As it turned out I was right behind my subject. He just sat there all the way, a forty minute ride through the park and over the bridge and back east toward downtown North Vancouver, if there was such a thing back then. He got off at the main drag, and so did I, making sure that I was the last off.

And when I looked, he had disappeared.

I walked back and forth, looking into stores, checking parked cars, staring as far as I could up the hill and down. I looked down eight side streets. I was out of breath, hurrying uphill and not stopping to rest. I was a spy with a panic attack. I had lost him. The free world was going to slip further into calamity.

Not to mention the fact that it was a long ride back to town, and I was out double bus fare.

Here is where a sensible person, or let's say just about anyone, would quit and just make things up, or start following someone else who didn't go over to the north shore. But not me. I was always like that back then. I had to stick with the plan.

All this was being financed by my Unemployment Insurance cheque; I had breathed a little too much overheated air in a factory fire four months before, and now in the last days of December, I still could not be trusted to breathe my way through a day's work. With the plant gone, the work would be mainly cleaning up and rebuilding, but I didn't have any carpenter's papers. I was a lifter and carrier, and here at the rainy end of the year I still felt it when I lifted my raincoat.

Nope, I had to continue with the guy I had picked at random, if that is what it was, though a briefcase and an umbrella might have suggested something. I went back to Robson and Granville the next day and lit a cigarette and tried to look like a young spy without a hat.

He didn't show up. I went to the Plaza Theatre and saw a movie, "The Manchurian Candidate." It was about guns and espionage and people in over their heads. I took notes in the dark of the theatre.

I lucked out the next afternoon, a Wednesday on the Pacific shore. There I was, on the corner of Howe and Robson, and along he came, wearing the same outfit, with his trench coat open and its long belt flipping back and forth as he strode westward. The sidewalks and streets were wet, but it was no longer raining, and until the early darkness, slices of silvery sun had been showing through the rolled clouds. Neon lights shone in the puddles. I stuck my Sportsman in the

left corner of my mouth, stuck my hands in my coat pockets, and followed a guy whose name I did not know, west along Robson. He ducked into the little store, but he didn't buy cough drops this time. He must have been feeling better. This time he bought a package of Drum pipe tobacco and stuffed it into one of his big pockets.

Then off it was again to the basement beverage room of the Vancouver Hotel. He sat at a different table this time, and ordered a glass of beer. I sat and opened my book and ordered a glass too. This time I was going to make sure I was watching when he got up to go. Twice when I looked up from Graham Greene, the guy's eyes met mine. I pretended that I didn't register.

I got onto the bus last again, and had to sit way in the back, but I could see him all right. I can't read on the bus without getting nauseated, but I took out *The Confidential Agent* and pretended to read it. When he got out at Lonsdale I was ready, and when he turned off Lonsdale and walked east on 4th Street it was dark but I was on him. He walked into a little white stucco house second from the corner, and pretty soon lights went on in three or four rooms. Now I knew where he lived, if this was his house, and it looked as if he either lived all alone or his family was somewhere else for the present.

"Surveillance," I said to myself. Now what?

I walked around to the lane just to see what I could see, and had to duck when a light went on over his back door. There he was with a wastebasket in either hand, coming down the steps. It must have been garbage pickup eve in North Van. I found the darkest spot I could, and watched him while he lifted the lid of his battered aluminum garbage can, dumped in the contents of the two wastebaskets, jammed the lid on tight because North Van is full of raccoons, and dragged the garbage can to the edge of the lane. He went back inside, but he left the back light on.

Now I knew what I was going to do next.

I lifted the battered lid carefully, remembering in a flash that when we were kids playing knights and Saracens, we used garbage can lids for shields, a bad idea, because all the banging of a Saracen sword on your garbage can lid was made known to the knuckles of your bare left hand, and now here I was playing a more up-to-date game, but trying to be quiet because there was just a little too much light there in the lane behind 4th Street East. As the bottom-most garbage had presumably been in the can for just about a week, there was a nasty odor, but on top of the putrefied stuff was a pile of discarded paper, some of it brochures, and some of it envelopes. I was, of course, interested in the envelopes.

In less than a minute I was pretty sure I knew my subject's name and address. I put the lid back on the garbage can as quietly as any spy could, and slid an envelope into my jacket pocket.

Now what do I do, I asked myself during the time it took to fall into sleep that night. I know his name. I know where he lives. I know where he goes after work. But where does he work? I couldn't very well follow him backward in time, though I thought about writing the kind of story in which I could do that. But I had dedicated myself to learning how to write a spy story or at least a mystery, definitely not a science fiction story. Still, it was a pretty nifty idea, and it would solve the problem of finding out where Mr. Quarry spent his days. The other way would be to get up early and scoot over to North Van and follow him into town.

Just before I fell asleep, I think, I wondered this to myself: if you were training to become a science fiction writer, wouldn't that mean that in the real world you could find a way to research time travel, at least enough to follow Mr. Quarry back a block or two, a minute or two, to his workplace? In the morning that didn't sound right, and even now, decades later, it doesn't sound right, but there is something there, isn't there?

What could I do? I couldn't pick him up earlier in his routine, because all I had was what I got in that first impulsive decision to follow him from the corner of Granville and Robson. I should have picked up some subject in the building he worked in. I could start over with a new subject. But no, if I were going to be a detective, or at least write about being a detective, I had to detect, damn it. I would make a more thorough search of his place, find out what magazines he subscribed to, who wrote letters that he cared enough about to save, where he worked, maybe. I

would never get all this stuff from going through his garbage. It would require being inside his little white house.

I thought about the procedure all the way there on the 444 bus. First I would try the basement door and the basement windows. A lot of people didn't bother locking their basement windows. If that didn't work out, I would have to consider making a little windowpane break. I could leave some money to pay for a new windowpane. How much was a windowpane worth, I mean including the guy who has to replace it, I mean if the subject himself didn't know how to do it. I was a detective with a very small bankroll. Five dollars was nearly a week's food. Ten dollars was out of the question.

When I got to Mr. Quarry's block I took a little walk, round and round the block, in all possible directions. It was a normal December day in North Vancouver, heavy clouds spilling down the mountain forest, forlorn seagulls screeching in the distance. Everything was very quiet in this neighbourhood at one-thirty in the afternoon. I could walk more than a block without a car going by.

I saw no activity at all in his block. I walked the length of his back lane, and was on the edge of walking back to his place, when I thought: what if someone looking out her lace-edged kitchen door sees me walking up and down her lane? So I took another little walk, and then entered the lane for a slow but not overly slow pace almost to the other end. There were two vehicles parked quiet and empty, a paint-chipped Morris Minor at one end of the block, and a dirty mustard-coloured panel van a couple doors from Mr. Quarry's cottage.

Right in the middle of my bony chest I could hear my heart banging as I went into the little back yard with its dead flower stalks. I tried to make it look as if I had a reason to be there, in case any neighbour was watching. I stepped right up onto the short porch and reached for the doorknob, and the door just opened up before me, without a creak or a groan. I stepped inside, of course—who wouldn't, spy or spy novelist or none of the above. There was just about as much light in the kitchen as there was in the yard. Until, that is, everything disappeared because there was a bag of some sort pulled over my head.

I was being grabbed and pushed against a counter, and someone shoved me to my knees, and I could not move my arms or see anything, and there was a horrible smell or taste inside that bag or whatever it was, something chemical or rotting, something that could have been potatoes liquefied with age, could have been neglected bivalves. I was not trying to escape—I was trying to breathe and stay vertical in a sense, though on my knees. It seemed as if there were three of them, though it could have been two.

They hauled me to my feet and yanked the bag down over my shoulders and arms, and pushed me the way they wanted me to go. They may have been talking to me or to each other, but all I could hear was a number of mouth sounds. I felt myself pushed out the door and off the porch. It was all I could do to stay on my feet. Then I heard another sound, and I was pushed and lifted roughly, and then I was lying down, and then an engine started and we were moving. I figured this out—I was lying down on the dirty metal floor of that mustard coloured van. One of the kidnapers was sitting on me.

After a lot of lefts and rights and downhill and uphill, the van came to a stop, and the driver came back and helped sit on me for a while. One of the guys made some pretty loud mouth sounds, probably, and then the other one did too, and then back to the first one and so on. I could tell that they were not just having a conversation, because each time they shouted something I couldn't hear, one of them would kick me. I don't think they were trying for my nuts, but just desiring to make a point.

So I made some mouth sounds back at them. I was sort of saying words, as far as I was concerned, saying something along the lines of "will you guys please stop kicking me and take this smelly thing off my head?" But to them, I am sure, it just sounded like mouth sounds they could not understand. Things were quiet for a minute. Then they turned me on my stomach on the ridged metal of the van's floor, and slowly pulled the horrible bag off my head. Just when it was coming totally off, one of them pushed my face down hard on the metal.

“Hold still, Partner,” is what he said.

Partner? I had not heard that kind of sobriquet since our family visits to Quesnel when I was a pre-teener.

Then someone was tying a filthy cloth around my head in such a way as to make it impossible for me to see anything, including the filthy cloth. It smelled like old suppurating crankcase oil.

“Okay, listen hard, Partner.” And he gave me a slap to the side of my head. “You’re going to answer some questions.”

“Why are you slapping me around?” I enquired.

“Because we can,” said the other guy, and it was presumably he who grabbed me and sat me up and slapped me on the back of the head.

“I would never have deigned to write a scene like this,” I muttered.

“What?” Slap.

“First question,” said the other guy.

“Delsing. George Delsing,” I said.

“We *know* your name, asshole. You think we’re chumps?”

“Is that the first question?”

That was a stupid, really stupid thing to say, but I could not help myself. I was scared silly, but I was also finding this hard to believe. They kicked me and slapped my head harder than ever.

“Who are you working for?” asked the one I was thinking of as the first guy.

“I am unemployed. I am getting twenty-four dollars a week of unemployment insurance.” Four kicks. Four slaps. One little finger bent back hard.

“Oh, you mean *this*, this back alley business.”

“Yes, this back alley *business*. Who?”

“I’m not working for anyone. Not working at all.”

“You go to a lot of trouble following people and casing their place and all that, for someone who isn’t working.” I did not like the edge of petulance that had crept into the second guy’s voice. Petulance under anger is not pleasant to hear. It sounds dangerous.

“Well, in a sense, I am working for myself.” I could hear a loud ringing in my ears. “I’m thinking about writing a book—”

“Yeah, everyone’s thinking of writing a book,” said the first guy. “Do they all go stulking in back alleys?”

“Skulking.”

“What?”

“Skulking. You said stulking. It’s skulking.”

“That’s what I said, skulking.”

“That’s what he said, Gumball,” said the second guy, and spit on my neck. When I reached up to wipe it off with my sleeve, he punched me under the arm, hard.

I decided that I had better let it go, and anything else that came up.

“I was thinking of writing a spy book, or some thing like that, maybe a detective book, where the guy has to find out stuff about a stranger.”

“You’re a spy planning on writing a book.”

“No no. The other way around.”

“You’re a book planning on writing a spy?”

“Well, that’s closer.”

That concession earned me four slaps across the face.

“And it’s whom,” I said, with a little blood on my bottom lip.

“What the fug are you talking about?” was the reply, because this was 1962.

“You asked who I was working for. Should have been whom.”

Now they banged me around without benefit of questions or other spoken words for a while. They did grunt during a kick, and one of them whistled lightly through his teeth while

banging my head. I considered losing consciousness, but could not do so. It came to me, though, that they were wordlessly pounding on me because they believed my story about being a future novelist and were experiencing frustration.

They stopped for a while to smoke cigarettes. I was hurting all over, and now persuaded that this was really happening. So I asked the question that had just entered my mind.

“Am I going to get a cigarette?”

“No.”

“So for whom are you folks working?”

“Don’t worry about it,” said the first guy.

“Because, I have been thinking about it, taking advantage of the situation, you might say, and it came to me that maybe you guys are doing the same thing.”

“Clarify your point, Partner.”

“How do I know that you are real kidnapppers?”

“We are not kidnapppers. We are something you don’t know about.”

“How do I know you are real whatevers, real spies, private detectives, whatever?” I licked blood off the side of my mouth.

One of them gave me a fist to my left ear.

“Does that feel real?” he asked.

“Be reasonable,” I urged. “I have experience of myself as a pretend spy or private detective, so you can see why it might enter my mind that you guys are much the same. I mean how do I know that you guys are, say, real operatives?”

“Ha!” said the second guy.

“How do we know that you are a fake one?”

“Oh, I’m fake.”

“Because if you are real and we let you off without getting the information from you. . . I am sure you can see our predicament.”

“Well, from the easy way you snaffled me, I would have to say that either I am a very poor operative, or I am a fake one, trying to figure out how to write a spy story.”

They conferred, apparently. I could hear them whispering behind hands somewhere in the van.

“We are inclined to believe that you are a phony,” said the first guy.

“Fake,” I offered.

“So we are going to make you an author. We can tie you up and fasten you to a block of concrete we already have in this vehicle for such contingencies, and deposit you in nearby Burrard Inlet, or we can swear you to secrecy with the information that we know where you live, etcetera.”

“You’re going to make me an author?”

“What are you talking about?”

“You said you were going to make me an author.”

“Offer. I said we are making you an offer.”

“You said author.”

“Listen, you stupid dork, do you want me to tie you to our block of concrete?”

Needless to say, I chose to be sworn to secrecy. And I have never mentioned the event to anyone until now. In fact, I had sort of forgotten about it. It was just that a couple of nights ago I was listening to the radio, and they were doing election coverage, talking to candidates and voters and back room boys, and I heard a familiar voice. People’s voices don’t change much, even while their faces and bodies are looking older all the time. After casting around in my memory for a few seconds, I knew who it was to whom I was listening. It was the first guy in the van that night.

Maybe I shouldn’t be telling anyone about all this, but what the hell—if you are ever going to start being a writer, you have to quit burying things in the dirt, or the inlet, say.

THE GEOPOETICS OF *TISH* (IN THE CANADIAN CONTEXT) by Gregory Betts

“My first impression of Vancouver is of being lost in Vancouver; that is, it’s night time, it’s dark, we’re coming over a bridge, & I can never figure out which way we’re going during those first two days. I know where the Tallmans’ house is, & I don’t know where anything else is located, no sense of map.” — Stan Persky, editor of *Tish* 1966-68 —

The well-mythologized geographic politics and literary pugilism surrounding the *Tish* movement’s inauspicious beginnings in Vancouver, 1961, often outweigh critical assessments of the magazine’s contribution to Canadian letters. The public parading of foreign influence, regional posturing, and evaluative disdain between *Tish* editors and prominent eastern writers from Ontario and Quebec have led critics to variously use *Tish* as evidence of a regional divide, of a distinctly Canadian literary colonialism, and of the birth of contemporary Canadian writing. The much embroidered contestation arose from the fact that the BC movement was both heavily steeped in the language, rhetoric, and poetics of many USAmerican writers and yet also proudly Pacific. When asked in 1979 whether she identified as a Canadian or Bri*Tish* Columbian writer, former *Tish* editor Daphne Marlatt replied, “First of all I’m a local writer, I’m a west coast writer” (Bowering “Given This Body” 32). Much earlier, George Bowering drew a sharp line in the sand between *Tish* and the prominent eastern poet Milton Acorn in *Tish* 4 by claiming that “he is sadly tone deaf” (*Tish* 76). Ontario’s Al Purdy soundly renounced the review in a letter graciously published in *Tish* 5: “In a word, it’s simply – hogwash” (*Tish* 92). The myth of this contestation, however, has been greatly overestimated. Whatever trace of conflict between the *Tish* group and the eastern writers there may have been quickly dissolved and was demonstrably erased by 1968 in the spirit of a common avant-garde. In 1965, after he had already left Vancouver for California, Frank Davey’s article “Black Days on Black Mountain” aligned the aesthetics of *Tish* – whether “Canada likes it or not” – with the work of Louis Dudek, Irving Layton, Raymond Souster, Eli Mandel, Phyllis Webb, F.R. Scott, W.W.E. Ross, Daryl Hine, Milton Acorn, Alden Nowlan, Leonard Cohen, D.G. Jones, Alfred Purdy, David Solway, and Gwendolyn MacEwan (Davey 119). By explicitly naming these eastern Canadian writers for their commonality with the *Tish* project, Davey, editor of *Tish* throughout its first editorial period (1961-63), effectively closed the divide and positioned himself and his little magazine within the Canadian tradition. In 1968, Bowering left Vancouver for Montreal, where he penned a book-length appreciation of Al Purdy’s poetry (published in 1970). There was more to gain by banding together with the emerging generation of spirited, committed experimentalists across the country. Alienation from the Canadian literary tradition similarly rapidly dissolved. By 1971, having returned to Canada, Frank Davey described his former little magazine as an extension of a specifically Canadian “universist” tradition that he traced back to Bliss Carman and Archibald Lampman (Davey “Introduction” 10). Regional disputation evaporated in the more pressing push of writing place; of pulling Canada and its smaller locales out of a neglected, colonial and conservative literary past into a successful, postcolonial, and experimental literary present.

Unlike its literary precursors, however, *Tish*’s embrace of Canadian ‘universistism’ did not require an erasure of particular geographies. Place was a central feature of *Tish* poetics, inspired in part by their regional anxieties and early sense of marginalization from eastern Canada. As Davey commented in a famous interview by Roy Miki (with all of the first era *Tish* editors), “very important for *Tish* was the sense that most of us had of being marginalized . . . Marginalized in terms by being Canadian in North America; marginalized by being west coast and Bri*Tish* Columbian in the Canadian context” (Miki 93). They were also notably isolated from the concurrent literary communities in Montréal and Toronto (though Bowering was making important connections in the East from the start). Despite the parallels with similar aesthetic communities across the country, the *Tish* writers instead embraced the USAmerican Black Mountain group of poets and thinkers for inspiration, headed by Charles Olson, Robert Duncan, and Robert Creeley, who were advancing their own Ezra Pound-influenced poetics concerning the poet within a landscape. These geographic politics surrounding *Tish*, amidst other late modernist concerns, had

a significant influence on the nature of their variation of modernist aesthetics. Their aesthetic response to geography, their *geopoetics*, adapted the Black Mountain ideal of using language to unveil the unique energy of a particular place. The fact that they wrote from the unique milieu of Vancouver distinguished them (whenever they wrote successfully) from the writing of any other place. Thus, while the *Tish* poets embraced a foreign aesthetic, the geopoetic orientation of that poetics demanded that they respond to their locality and to question in verse the relationship between place and language. The functional and guiding assumption was that the poet was essentially embroiled in a geographic dilemma, shaped by the contingencies of a particular place at a particular historical moment – Vancouver, 1961. This did not mean they had to uncover a local literary tradition; indeed, in effect, it freed them from the burden of responding to any such inheritance. The focus was on their own experience in the present.

Concordant with the poetics outlined in Olson's essay "Proprioceptive Verse," the transformative imperative of their geopoetic shifted the causal implications of literary language from the poet's will to the poet's physical and environmental predicament. Unlike Olson's more successful application of poetic theory into poetic object, however, the poetry in the first era of the magazine could but struggle to fulfill the aesthetic demands of this ideal: only a few approximate the ambitious literary goals mapped out by their editorial comments. These moments of success, however, coupled with the more significant literary achievements of the writers *after* their time at *Tish*, suggest that their poetic excited an ironically American-inspired postcolonial model for Vancouver and indeed Canadian writers of the time. They were not the first modernist writers to attempt to authentically write from and of the particular energy of the Canadian place, nor were they the first to propose an advanced and sophisticated modernist poetics. They were, however, successful in proposing a late-modernist poetics that both explained the need to write the contemporary Canadian place and inspired writing that was successful in doing so. *Tish* remains influential today, not for the generally sophomoric poetry published in the magazine, but for its presentation of a theoretically infused confrontation with the contemporary Canadian locus. Though essentially modernist in its orientation¹, within the Canadian milieu the inadvertent affect of their poetics was a uniquely and fundamentally postcolonial perspective within and of the nation.

Before *Tish*, English-Canadian literary critics felt literature to be paralyzed by the limitations of both the Canadian literary marketplace and the Canadian political colonialism. In 1929, Raymond Knister admitted that Canadian writing amounted to "a spirited emulation at best, or a shallow imitation at worst, of foreign models" (xi). He blames this dearth of talent on the poor taste of Canadian audiences, the poor critical judgment of our critics, and the fact that Canadian writers seemed to not be "rooted in the soil" (xv). Also in 1929, Bertram Brooker offered seven additional reasons why literature had not flourished in Canada, including: lack of geographical unity, lack of racial unity, lack of historical unity, lack of sufficient population base to support the arts, lack of progressive conceptions of art in the general population, and lack of sufficient defense against "the destruction of ethical-philosophic-religious stability by the encroaching skepticism of a science-ridden age" (5). A similar but more developed list of obstacles was presented by E.K. Brown in 1936, who wryly mused that "To one who takes careful account of the difficulties which have steadily beset [Canadian literature's] growth its survival as something interesting and important seems a miracle" (6). In 1944, John Sutherland added colonialism to the catalogue of impediments, as "no poetry movement has ever taken place in Canada that did not depend, in the matter of style, upon the example of a previous movement in some other country" (31). In 1943, in a review of A.J.M. Smith's *The Book of Canadian Poetry*, Northrop Frye wondered openly about the relevance of the minor writing emerging from Canada, particularly in light of the cornucopia to the south: "With so luxuriant a greenhouse next door, why bother to climb mountains to look for the odd bit of edelweiss?" ("Canada and Its Poetry" 29). In general fact, until the *Tish* moment, Canadian literary criticism was dominated by the need to enumerate either the difficulties confronting the Canadian author or, more pessimistically, the difficulties that explain the paucity of Canadian writing. Furthermore, the primary orientation of these theories was cultural rather than aesthetic.

Something changed with the creation of *Tish* and it certainly had something to do with the writers' general ignorance of this tradition of Canadian critical pessimism. Instead of merely accepting or growing accommodated to the rather colonial tradition that maintained the unlikelihood, if not the

¹ Frank Davey (with Robert Kroetsch) introduced the idea of "postmodernism" into Canadian criticism almost a decade later in 1972.

impossibility, of a genuine literature happening here, the *Tish* writers latched onto a current of poetics that *demand*ed they write here in order to produce genuine literature. In the post-*Tish* era, critics like Keith Richardson, Beverly Mitchell, Lance La Rocque, and Ken Norris, amongst others, have analyzed the achievements of *Tish* as an important precursor to the postmodern explosion of Canadian literature. They note the introduction of a new conception of place into Canadian letters: the reconfigured subject-object relationship of the poet and the world advanced by Olson. It is perhaps even more important, however, to consider exactly what the *Tish* writers introduced into the Canadian context. Warren Tallman's elaboration of Olson's innovative and influential poetics suggests why his theory was particularly useful in encouraging the *Tish* writers to study their own land: for Olson and Duncan, "Self is the subject, writing is verb and the object is life, to be as fully alive as one can manage by way of sight, hearing, thinking, feeling, speaking – that is, writing" (Tallman "Wonder Merchants" 52). While their dabbling with the Black Mountain poetics resulted in, as Tallman reports, a "wonderfully garbled, goofy, and in many ways ludicrous Vancouver version of [Black Mountain] poetics" (Tallman "Poet in Progress" 25), the Black Mountain group provided the young *Tish* writers with an ideological incentive to write (or at least explore in literature) their homeland with confidence – a confidence that the Canadian critical tradition simply did not possess.

At that time, writers from the east, from all across Canada for that matter, tended to approach their locality hesitantly, fearing becoming parochial or worse *provincial*. A.J.M. Smith openly discouraged any hint or strain of nationalism from the emerging Canadian writing in the 1940s: "Whether this new poetry is distinctively national is a question that our writers are not much concerned with They are no longer in the exporting business, for maple sugar is a sickly and cloying commodity" (Introduction 31). Olson's theories of proprioceptive verse, on the other hand, rendered the universalist reluctance to consider specific locales moot by reconfiguring the subjectivity of the poet into the subject of poetry. Bowering explains the writing process of this poetic in his book *Alphabiography*, "Olson told us to dig exhaustively into our local concerns. We began to do so, and the geography, history, and economics of Vancouver became the grid of our poetry" (309). Davey further explains that they believed the poet had to confront the self in terms of his/her geographical situation in order to reflect and come to terms with humanity in the world: "There is universe; there is experience. Man's rightful place, whether he be a Christian believer or not has not changed since medieval times, and it is his job to get back to it. It is still one of humility before, submission to, and immersion in the greater natural order" ("One Man's Look At 'Projective Verse'" 101). The poet must "see himself as an interacting part of the structure of greater nature" and "intuit by means of his senses his place in it." *Where they were* became a central means by which the *Tish* poets were able to address more philosophical and spiritual implications of *who they were*.

The *Tish* group eagerly latched on to Olson's unique understanding of the poet's relationship and responsibility to his/her environment. Olson rejected the moralistic, hegemonic, subjectivity of the poet in favour of a more Imagistic recording of the experience of the poet within a particular place. Davey, in "Black Days on Black Mountain," defends this poetic as a necessary ideological method of writing place without violating or changing it by the poet's ego:

This existentialist acceptance of one's flesh-and-bone reality and respect for all parts of one's environment, leads directly to the 'Black Mountain' term 'locus' 'Place' (cf. Souster's "A Place of Meeting, A Local Pride") becomes important to a writer like Olson because, if a man exists in an 'object-object' relationship with external nature, and if he admits the integrity and right to particularity of all members of external nature, then the only way in which this man can approach and know nature is by participating in an established 'field' of objects, by acquainting himself with one place intimately. For the place must master the man, not man master the place. (126)

The "I" of the poet, transmogrified into a proprioceptive presence, a body, in a landscape, becomes a phenomenological entity embodying no more than one particular experience of one particular place at one particular historical moment. Difference between individuals, things, and objects is taken for granted. Thus, poets write from their own reality and claim no more: "All we who seek to uncover and define for ourselves can hope to do for others is shine a fraction of the light we ourselves perceive" (97)². The poet

² Though it takes a few years, and numerous examples of the same oversight, Davey recognizes in his essay

does not write the land so much as allows the land to write itself through him/her. The *Tish* group, through their appropriation of Black Mountain poetics, a geographically imagined poetics, brought to Canada a unique and energizing method by which to explore the relationship between self and landscape without having to contest or embrace the debilitating anxieties of Canada's limited and rather colonial literary industry. The Black Mountain *geopoetic* helped the *Tish* writers approach Vancouver and produce poetry from their immediate experience. The further incitement to embrace the modernist self-publishing ethos was also extremely important in this regard, allowing the authors to avoid the established Canadian industry altogether.

Ironically, what at first seemed to separate the *Tish* group most from their eastern counterparts, their endorsement of Olson's poetics, intrinsically connected them to the aesthetic ambitions of writers like Al Purdy, Milton Acorn, and Gwendolyn MacEwan (editors of *Moment* 1960-62), and Raymond Souster and Louis Dudek (editors of various experimental little magazines since the 1940s) who were also struggling to write through and of genuine Canadian experience. Dudek's primary complaint against the *Tish* aesthetic position stemmed not from the texture or direction of its modernism, but from the *Tish* writers' unsupportable attribution of serious innovation to Olson, whom he believed was merely "[Ezra] Pound redivivus Pound turned into a private business for profit" ("Lunchtime" 131). In fact, in a 1964 evaluation of the Vancouver scene (which curiously makes no specific mention of *Tish* even though it discusses Creeley's impact there), Dudek connects the new writing to his own literary tradition:

Seems at first glance to be not at all related to the resident B.C. poets, Earle Birney, Phyllis Webb, or Roy Daniells; nor to Canadian poetry in general. In fact, however, if these poets would look into the history of their style, they would discover themselves to be in a direct line of English Canadian writing dating from the 1920's, a development continuing from Raymond Knister, W.W.E. Ross, through F.R. Scott, to a current example like D.G. Jones. (Dudek "The New Vancouver Poetry" 190)

Dudek does not critique them for their style, nor for their estrangement from the Canadian literary tradition, but rather for misunderstanding their place within the Canadian tradition. That they were beholden to an unworthy imitator of Pound added a degree of urgency to his personal efforts to reconnect this pool of talented young writers to the national thread. While the differences between the aesthetic positions of many writers involved in the various squabbles surrounding *Tish*, particularly around ideas of universalism versus humanism, felt sincere and significant, the *Tish* poetics were hardly radical in the context of literary modernism. Milton Acorn, for instance, and unlike Dudek, praised Olson's innovations: "Yes, Olson To me he is an innovator in the science of poetics The first to deeply analyze – in modern times – the poetic line as spoken, not printed" ("Open Letter to a Demi-Senior Poet" 5). Acorn mused about the potential utility of Olson's poetics for contemporary poets. Though, as both Davey and Dudek outlined in their comments quoted above, the poetry published in *Tish* was working well within the Canadian tradition, the integration, application, and exploration of Olson's *geopoetic* into the Canadian context was a major development in the postcolonial struggle and pan-Canadian desire to write here.

The Canadian failure to authentically write within the nation was given its most eloquent expression in Northrop Frye's critical evaluations during the 1940s through to the 1960s. In the conclusion to his highly influential *Literary History of Canada*, Frye argued that Canadian literature's central shortcoming lay in its inability to answer the question 'Where is here?' He proposed that the problem was the direct result of our lingering colonial heritage:

Emerson remarks in his journals that in a provincial society it is extremely easy to reach the highest level of cultivation, extremely difficult to take one step beyond that. In surveying Canadian poetry and fiction, we feel constantly that all the energy has been absorbed in meeting a standard, a self-defeating enterprise because real standards can only be established, not met. Such writing is academic in the pejorative sense of that term, an imitation of a prescribed model, second-rate in conception, not merely in execution. (313)

"From There to Here" the irony of addressing de-centred authority by "the discourse of religious prophecy to declare their confident message" (Davey 41). As he quips, "It was evidently a short non-authoritarian age."

Struggling to reach foreign-conceived standards caused the importation of European imagery, symbolism, and language into early Canadian and North American writing. The radically different experience of Canadian life was obliterated by the customs and mannerisms of the European tradition in which our earliest writers (from Goldsmith to Crawford) struggled, largely unsuccessfully, to produce their literature. As much as their language and poetics mimicked the aesthetics of a foreign clime were they perfectly unsuited to the attendant differences of life here. Frye recognized the mental bind and mocked the poor colonials with his *alouettine* aphorism³. Despite his condescending dismissal of Canadian writing, Frye's history explores and identifies the paralyzing dilemma that the *Tish* writers managed to avoid. He recognized that problems plaguing Canadian literature were associated with a general linguistic disorientation between Canadians and geography.

About the same time the *Tish* writers began experimenting with the techniques of Black Mountain poets, Dennis Lee, as a young writer in Toronto, succumbed to the paralyzing cultural malaise. He responded to the cultural predicament by sliding into silence: he lost his ability to write for being Canadian. In his 1972 essay "Cadence, Country, Silence: Writing in Colonial Space," Lee tells the story of his personal realization of his detachment from place. His colonial mindset undermined the integrity of his language:

Alienation in our public space is not just one among many subjects we can write about; it enters and undercuts our writing, makes it recoil upon itself, become a problem to itself The disdainful amusement I and thousands of my intellectual comrades felt during that time [1955-1965] for Canadian achievement in any field, especially those of the imagination, was a direct reflection of our self-hatred and sense of inferiority. And while we dismissed American mass culture, we could only separate ourselves from it by soaking up all the elite American culture we could get at And nothing I wrote felt real. I didn't know why. I couldn't even say what was the problem, for any words I might use to articulate it were already deadened, numb, inert in the same mysterious way. So none of this got said, except by the revulsion of my nervous system; otherwise I was mute. Writing had become a full-blown problem to itself; it had grown into a search for authenticity, but all it could manage to be was a symptom of inauthenticity. (37-43)

Lee identifies a disenfranchising Canadian colonialism as the direct cause of his alienation from both place and from himself. This disorientation and confused sense of place directly limited his ability to write with any credible authenticity. Of course, writers like Dennis Lee, bpNichol, Margaret Atwood, and many others from the period, used this intensely personal struggle against their colonial inheritance and the conundrum of Canadian identity as the central theme of a substantial body of notably successful work. The opening poem in Atwood's much heralded and classic *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* (1970), for instance, contains the enigmatic declaration that "I am a word / in a foreign language" ("Disembarking in Quebec" ln. 19-20). Dennis Lee's Governor-General's award winning collection of poems *Civil Elegies* (1968), explored Canadian politics and personal experience. The collection weaves together the personal and the political in its damning criticism of coloniality:

Many were born in Canada, and living un-lived lives they died
of course but died truncated, stunted, never at
home in native space and not yet
citizens of a human body of kind. ("Civil Elegies: I" 7-10)

It was precisely this agonising alienation that the *Tish* writers seemed to effortlessly bypass by drawing influence from the USAmerican literary tradition.

In his 1999 collection of critical essays, John Moss attempts to trace the transition of English-Canadian verse from its alienated use of language to the relatively recent emergence of writing that, he claims, demonstrates an *un*-alienated use of language. Similar to Lee's documentation of his personal experience, and Frye's earlier and broader cultural analysis, Moss explores the transition from colonial

³ Frye writes, "If evaluation is one's guiding principle, criticism of Canadian literature would become only a debunking project, leaving it a poor naked *alouette* plucked of every feather of dignity" (65).

Canadian writing to postcolonial Canadian writing in terms of the relationship between language and geography:

The inherent weakness of colonial poetry is not so much a question of poets who, removed from their informing culture, are inadequate to the resources of the language, but rather the reverse. No amount of talent can domesticate alien words that, through a colonial set of mind, are not even recognized as alien. This dissociation between mind and environment is self-perpetuating. But gradually names and the named become reconciled through an arduous reinvention of the language, word by word. (“The Language of Canadian Poetry” 66)

Moss proceeds to argue that in the contemporary era, the necessary “arduous reinvention” of language in Canada has progressed enough that a handful of writers have managed to overcome the colonial trace. But before writers like Lee, Atwood, and bpNichol arrived and began their fruitful production, Moss argues that Robert Kroetsch, George Bowering, and Daphne Marlatt (née Buckle) were Canada’s first writers to achieve an authentic *Canadian* writing: a list that includes two former *Tish* editors in Bowering (from the first editorial period) and Marlatt (from the third editorial period). Moss measures their linguistic achievement in terms consistent with the *Tish* geopoetic: “Bowering, Kroetsch, Marlatt; their words become things, a landscape to live within” (Moss “Invisible in the House of Mirrors” 102). His conclusion, though problematic for dismissing enormous bodies of work with almost no justification⁴, suggests that something in the writing of each of these writers – something that can be traced back to the aesthetic groping from the earliest days of *Tish* – signifies their ability to produce genuine literature from their direct and subjective experience of place. Their geopoetic enabled and encouraged them to circumnavigate the crisis and silence that Frye identified and that Lee experienced, to write unabashedly about *here*. In the case of the *Tish* writers, here was Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. The centre was no longer defined by Canada’s colonial heritage but by the life and experience of the poets themselves.

It is of course surprising and deeply ironic that this postcolonial release was triggered directly by thinkers from the great imperialist nation to the south. Considering the gradual and hard-wrought struggle of eastern Canadian writers to apprehend and write place despite their colonial tradition, it is little wonder that the USAmerican source of the *Tish* inspiration was deeply troubling and seemed like just another variation or example of the colonial tendency. Wilfred Watson’s “construction with horizontal columns/construction avec colombes mortes” or Keith Richardson’s *Tish: Poetry and the Colonized Mind* stand out as particularly vehement and vitriolic refutations of the USAmerican influence. Since that politically enflamed period, however, postcolonial studies have demonstrated the importance of appropriation in the development of a postcolonial voice for a people. As Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin argue:

The crucial function of language as a medium of power demands that postcolonial writing define itself by seizing the language of the centre and re-placing it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonized place The appropriation and reconstitution of the language of the centre, the process of capturing and remoulding the language to new usages, marks a separation from the site of colonial privilege. (38)

The *Tish* writers might not have been consciously attempting to reverse the colonial process and overcome their marginalization through reconstitution of the language of the centre, but it was the inadvertent effect of their aesthetic influence.

Similarly, the Black Mountain group can also be read as part of a postcolonial negotiation of place in the United States. Prior to *Tish*, and prior to the Black Mountain group itself, the process of postcolonial “capture and remoulding” of language had also occurred within the United States. Considering that nation’s current role in the world, and overwhelming cultural confidence (not to mention dominance), it is worth remembering that not too long ago the United States itself oscillated between

⁴ One could remember Raymond Souster here as a noteworthy precursor. Souster, in turn, demanded that we acknowledge W.W.E. Ross when he dedicated *New Wave Canada* to Canada’s “first modern poet.” Souster’s anthology highlighted emerging writers, including Daphne Buckle and bpNichol.

colonial self-doubt and parochial jingoism (both of which amount to a gross distortion of language in relation to place). The Black Mountain group grew out of the work of Ezra Pound who, like the *Tish* writers, had to reach outside his home country to find the necessary ground for his writing. More than half a century earlier, the great USAmerican philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson was already advocating for the transition from cultural colony to cultural centre. In his famous 1837 lecture titled “The American Scholar,” Emerson invoked the possibility of a postcolonial era:

Perhaps the time is already come, when it ought to be, and will be, something else; when the sluggish intellect of this continent will look from under its iron lids, and fill the postponed expectation of the world with something better than the exertions of mechanical skill. Our day of dependence, our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands, draws to a close We have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe We will walk on our own feet; we will work with our own hands; we will speak our own minds. (526)

While Walt Whitman famously embraced Emerson’s challenge, not all were convinced of the general conditions for making original art. In fact, American literary criticism throughout the 19th century contains frequent apologies for the state of American letters, similar in kind to the Canadian pessimism noted earlier. As in Canada, too, many of the best artists responded to the cultural bog by leaving – none more famously than the novelist Henry James. James explained the importance of European cosmopolitanism to his conception of the arts: “the flower of art blooms only where the soil is deep, that it takes a great deal of history to produce a little literature, that it needs a complex social machinery to set a writer in motion” (127). He defined the United States, in contrast, for its general lack of such cultural support mechanisms:

No sovereign, no court, no personal loyalty, no country gentlemen, no palaces, no castles, nor manors; nor old country houses, nor parsonages, nor thatched cottages, nor ivied ruins; no cathedrals, nor abbeys, nor little Norman churches; no great universities nor public schools — no Oxford, no Eaton, nor Harrow; no literature, no novels, no museums, no pictures, no political activity, no sporting class — no Epsom nor Ascot! (43-4)

This lack, James argued, required a writer of even Nathaniel Hawthorne’s stature and talent to import foreign aesthetics. A similar perception of and frustration with the native culture led to the emergence of the so-called “Lost Generation” of modernist USAmerican writers who fled their homeland for the more cosmopolitan shores of Europe. Besides acclaimed modernists like Gertrude Stein, T.S. Eliot, H.D., and Ernest Hemingway, Ezra Pound also fled the United States in search of a more sophisticated culture. Years later, when commissioned by the New York publisher, New Directions for a treatise on writing (and one, they hoped, would foreground English writing), Pound responded by firmly divorcing himself from any national and linguistic literary tradition. The essay is filled with thinly veiled barbs addressing American parochialism:

When it comes to the question of poetry, a great many people don’t even want to know that their own country does not occupy ALL the available surface of the planet. The idea seems in some way to insult them. (42)

And on Walt Whitman, the first great USAmerican poet, in particular:

From an examination of Walt made twelve years ago the present writer carried away the impression that there are thirty well-written pages of Whitman; he is now unable to find them. (192)

It was within the grand European literary tradition, the tradition of Homer, Dante, Guido, and Chaucer, that Pound conceived and developed his influential poetics. The Black Mountain group, like the *Tish* writers they inspired, did not leave their own nation, but embraced the models and poetics of their modernist forbears and developed and deployed them in their particular place. They managed to overcome the stigma of place by devoting their poetic energy towards it; consciously struggling to perceive it directly.

And while the *Tish* verse forms and poetics originated from the Black Mountain poets, even USAmerican (though essentially Canadian) Ken Norris admits that the Vancouver poets quickly arrived at their own unique distortion of the original: “The *Tish* poets absorbed the Black Mountain influence, then began to use it on their own terms” (Norris 113). It is also significant that in the USAmerican battle against their own colonial history, the Black Mountain aesthetic can itself be viewed as an important, perhaps triumphant, stage in the postcolonial reclamation of the United States that Emerson had urged and encouraged. It makes sense, then, that the Black Mountain model directly inspired a wave of local writers in Vancouver to begin their struggle to uncover an authentic means to write from and of Vancouver. More provocative than controversial, the *Tish* experiments with Black Mountain methods unleashed an incredible outpouring of writing by generations of Vancouver writers that, as Stan Persky⁵ proudly trumpets, set a dramatic transition for Vancouver in motion: “this is the beginning of poetry in this particular place. Suddenly the city has an imagination. It didn’t have one before, a collectivity. Suddenly people are writing as Vancouver poets” (*Tish* 116). If Persky’s claims are exaggerated (perhaps even dangerous for overwriting the literary efforts of early Vancouver writers like E. Pauline Johnson, Earle Birney, Dorothy Livesay, and many others), he at the least reiterates a geopoetic ambition consistent with the first manifestation of the *Tish* movement. The immediate result was the creation of a postcolonial space in which new work was encouraged and provoked.

To be clear, the postcolonial affect of the *Tish* geopoetics was more a result of the accident of their colonial predicament than of any essential undercurrent of nationalism⁶. Indeed, the writers associated with *Tish* believed themselves anti-lyrical as much as anti-humanist, which fundamentally disconnected them from any political superstructure or nationalist identity. In one revealing example, the *Tish* 8 editorial rejects the abstract idea of place defined by nationalism for an idea of place as proprioceptive ground of reality and identity:

Even if this unwieldy block of land does have any political reality (which we doubt) it is not itself noteworthy. What can make it so is what gives anything (place, object etc.) interest – that is the poet as man, who in his humanity transcends all artificial boundaries. We will not deny categorically the significance of Canada as a place, if there is ever any poet big and sensitive enough to do anything with it. But being in Canada (being Canadian) must never be treated as an end in itself; it must be treated as an advantage which gives us something to exercise our humanity on. Place is no more than a man does with it, applies his universal qualities to it. Loyalty to one’s home, then, is not an obligation. On the contrary, the importance of a home lies only in that it is the area with which man has had the most chance to become aware AS A MAN. Let us have no more superficial jingoism in poetry. If a man/poet ever comes to represent his homeland or his home town, he will do so inevitably, not intentionally. (*Tish*, 155)

While the editorial partakes in a specific dialogue with specific nationalistic eastern Canadian writers, the *Tish* response articulates a rejection of abstract human structures like nations as a source of a stabilizing identity in favour of direct experience as the source for an identity-in-motion. This is a Lacanian purgation, burning away excess in pursuit of essence, resolving, ideally, with an objective *giving forth* of the world. While their geopoetic could potentially be fulfilled by conventional realist techniques, their commitment to, in Pauline Butling’s terms, an “open-form poetics” (Butling 115) fundamentally separated their aesthetics from conventional assumptions of the poet’s subjectivity and voice. They were acutely aware of how and why this detached them from the so-called Maple Leaf school of nationalist writers advocating for the nation. Furthermore, their first priority was to the production of the artwork – not to its possible effect on a national readership.

Debate about their conceptual and practical poetics dominate the *Tish* editorials throughout the first editorial period. In the first issue of *Tish*, Bowering introduced the distinction that the “poet is neither a grader nor a mother. His job is to participate” (*Tish* 17). Bowering’s point is consistent with the conception of the proprioceptive nature of language advanced by Charles Olson in that this new approach to language and writing demanded new conceptions of the role of poet – not as arbiter, advocate, or

⁵ Editor of the third *Tish* era (1966-68).

⁶ Although, George Bowering would go on to serve the state as Poet Laureate from 2002-2004.

cultural nurturer, but as subject to the cultural conditions that surround them. Davey explains this poetic as a repudiation of the humanist tradition and a shift toward the “universist” school:

The differences lie primarily in world-view and concepts of form. The universist writers tend to see the universe as vast, divine, mysteriously structured, and essentially ungraspable by human reason. The humanists see it as finite, orderly, and manageable by man. The universists regard form as active and alive; the humanists as a manipulated showplace for the human mind. To the universists [sic] the poem involves the poet in recognition and surprise, it leads him to more than he knew or planned. To the humanist it is a culture-object, moulded and chisled [sic] to a shape preconceived by its author’s intelligence and will. (Davey “Introduction” 10)

The author must experience the internal and external world with an open mind and without achieving any apparent sense of closure before writing. The rejection of the humanist tradition lies in the concerted efforts to overcome the stability of the self and the notion of knowing as a form of ownership of truth and world.

While *Tish* is often credited for creating poetry and a poetics that embraces an essentially postmodern and post-humanist ethic, Lance La Rocque points out that “*Tish*’s poetic praxis lags behind the decentralizing liberation discussed by Norris and Davey [in their post-*Tish* articles on *Tish*]. More accurately, *Tish* poetry reveals the Vancouverites struggle with their own bourgeois ideology” (La Rocque 13). La Rocque firmly rejects any assertion of their distinction from the humanist tradition at this early stage in the *Tish* writers’ careers – except for their desire to be distinct. Their aesthetic ideal, a variant of Pound’s imagism, connects them to one of the common tropes of humanist positivism in a pursuit of and belief in a reified sign: an assumption that objective essence can be accessed through a purified language, a *natural-ized* language that overcomes the logic and dis-ease of modern civilization’s separation of consciousness from world. In contrast to the tradition of writing the high art of poetry to the Muse, to God, or even to the people, *Tish-ian* imagism seeks to emanate from the language and living *of* the people, *of* the poet, and *of* the world surrounding the poet. Language, in this poetics, is not a self-contained system of signs, but contains a genuine means to connect to and express the world. Olson outlined this theory in his definition of “objectism” in his incredibly influential (though apparently hastily written) essay “Projective Verse”:

Objectism is the getting rid of the lyrical interferences of the individual as ego, of the “subject” and his soul, that peculiar presumption by which western man has interposed himself between what he is as a creature of nature (with certain instructions to carry out) and those other creatures of nature which we may, with no derogation, call objects. For a man is himself an object, whatever he may take to be his advantages, the more likely to recognize himself as such the greater his advantages, particularly at that moment that he achieves an humilitas sufficient to make him of use. (Olson 155)

Erasing the symbolic abstractions of language in favour of evoking the object world, and specifically evoking the energy of specific objects in the world aspires to a language cleansed of subjectivities, erasing the excess of self. The *Tish* writers adopted this poetic stance enthusiastically, repeating, echoing, and grappling with its logic throughout the first editorial period. Objectivity, however, in *Tish* poetics is reconfigured from mimetically capturing essence through physical presence to evoking and provoking essence through *energy* and threshold, leaving, as Davey writes, “the poet standing face to face with reality . . . so that he is able to listen to the music of the universe as it is played within himself, and able to sing his own song in harmony with it. The song/poem must always be natural” (103). The intention is not so much to *capture* the object world in the poet’s subjective gaze, but to evoke the “natural” energy of objects in the world while retaining their objective separation from the poet-as-object. As La Rocque points out, however, the poetry produced in *Tish* makes only faltering gestures towards the realization of this poetic ideal, if such a poetry is even possible or desirable.

The critical material during the first editorial period is at least consistent in its commitment to this geopoetic, even if it is still entrenched in the humanist tradition. Of the 32 editorial pieces printed during the first *Tish* era, all argue, to varying extent and implication, against any false linguistic structures that separate the poet from the landscape. The belief relies upon the assumption that such a separation can be overcome. A brief survey of some of the critical work confirms the aspiration as common. In *Tish* 3,

Davey writes, “Where the line starts is where the poet starts. And the poet must start (and stay) WHERE HE IS Thus we have arrived at equations, which are necessary because equation implies correspondence, and correspondence is an absolute requirement of a communicatory art such as poetry” (66) and Tallman argues, “the reality which surrounds the writer, determining what Lionel Kearns calls his ‘stance in circumstance,’ must precede and give rise to his thoughts (67). In *Tish* 4, Bowering claims that the “real” poet “drops his selfconscious editorializing & fixes on the objects of his scene” (77). In *Tish* 8, Davey argues that “the artificial is no substitute for the real” (164), and Wah praises Michael Shayer for having as “much concern for himself as the place where he is at” (159). The identity of the poet is intermingled with the “real” landscape, the place/locus, in which the poet dwells. The poetry produced, they consistently argue, must reflect the reality of that identification. The poetry they did publish in *Tish*, however, only infrequently fulfils this ambition to overcome archaic notions of coherent individuality. The poetry only becomes what Robin Blaser describes as “poems [that] deconstruct meanings and compose a wildness of meaning in which the I of the poet is not the centre but a returning and disappearing note” (Blaser 324), in the years and careers following *Tish*, propelled forward with a guiding and beckoning aesthetic ambition. Nonetheless, even if they only occasionally manage to produce the poetry they sought, the change in aesthetic ambition represents a significant move away from the epiphanic, confessional, and lyrical celebration of the poet’s subjectivity and intellect. The poet’s subjectivity is an inevitable limitation, and a very conventional subject of a poem, but it was the poet’s objectivity and proprioceptive body that interested the *Tish* writers. As such, they worked for a reconfigured documentary approach that evoked the here and now in action and in motion by letting the object world write itself through them.

As mentioned earlier, the roots of this poetic can be traced to Ezra Pound, whose struggles against the ego led to an increasingly fragmented verse form that troubled the coherency of the poet’s individuality. In the *Cantos*, we wade through his field of influence, a seemingly haphazard collection of *sources*, rather than the crystalline distillation of the world through the poet. Douglas Barbour argues that Pound, unlike his contemporaries Eliot, Laurence, and Yeats, “broke from the transcendental ego as fixed centre of the poem’s universe” (Barbour 4). But for Olson and the Black Mountain group, the method to overcome the mediation of subjectivity was to “dissolve the humanist mind into scientific processes” (La Rocque 39). In his famous Vancouver lecture, Jack Spicer explains that poets relay an external “energy” into the poem and reader using whatever linguistic tools they have access to, yet *without affecting* the energy and message of the writing. The source of the poem *must be* “alien” and selfless (Spicer 228). Similar to Pound’s struggle to overcome the commodification of the Western self, good poetry necessarily obliterates the self of the poet. But here in the Black Mountain treatment, the self is “lost” into a fantasy of *objectivity* entirely dependant on the integrity of the poet’s *subjectivity*: on his/her willingness and ability to surrender the self and be true to the alien forces writing through him/her. The contradiction reveals an ominous subtext in the logic developed by Pound, who once argued that the passivity of capitalism justified authoritarianism in order to sustain artistic energy and integrity. For Olson and the Black Mountain poets, however, their position is surprisingly conventional, and their conception of the artist decidedly passive. As La Rocque explains, “Capitalism’s ideal person, like the Black Mountain ideal, is an instrument, the proverbial cog in the machine, acting reflexively, without any disruptive evaluative pauses” (42). The poet becomes machine in Olson’s “Human Universe”; a tool to unleash the already written poem, emanated from the essence/energy of the world. To visualize the role of the ideal poet, Olson uses the metaphor of the typewriter, Creeley the Dictaphone, and Spicer the robot.

In the context of a post-war industrialised nation like USAmerica, the absorption of capitalist ideology and espousal of technological passivity seems naïve in comparison to the work of many other thinkers of the time. Contemporary to Olson, works like Kurt Schwitter’s “For Kate” and “Hitler Gang” (1945), Theodor Adorno’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944), Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* (1948), Gaston Bachelard’s “The Poetics of Space” (1958), and even a reformed Martin Heidegger in “Building Dwelling Thinking” (1954), all articulate in their own way the menace of efforts to overcome or control human subjectivity. Even Marshall McLuhan’s utopian response to modern technology radically subverts conventional capitalist conceptions of the singular consumer by proposing that machines are already integrated into the human self – and by extension, that they are ultimately human in application: “previous technologies were partial and fragmentary, and the electric is total and inclusive. An external consensus or conscience is now as necessary as private consciousness” (64-5). In the retrospective light of the horrors the world had just witnessed, where humans were literally reduced to the status and value of objects in a landscape, a poetics with even remote similarities seems ethically dubious.

The world as a whole had cause to be more cautious, and had need for more doubt than this theory exhibits.

For the writers in Vancouver in the *Tish* movement, however, the release from subjective responsibility triggered a passionate response and rigorous outpouring of literary experimentation. They could write whatever seemed authentic without meeting any conventional standards of good poetry, and without having to answer or account for the extreme human violence in other parts of the world – or even to engage with the “political reality” of Canada. As David Dawson’s lead editorial to *Tish* 5 proudly admits, “We have reached the stage where we can say NO; we can reject a good poem if it does not interest us. The fact that it may be good does not alter the fact that it may not work the way we feel a poem should work. We print poems which conform to our taste, poems which move somewhat in the same direction as our own” (*Tish* 91). The intermingling of terms like “fact” with “feel”, “good”, and “taste” attests to some confusion on the part of the editors to properly and responsibly distinguish subjectivity from objectivity. The point, of course, of Dawson’s message was rejoicing in the sensation of being freed from external literary standards and traditions that did not seem to make sense of Vancouver’s particular situation. Ken Norris attributes this confident, brazen rejection of more conventional literary techniques and poetics to Olson’s influence: “Olson considers all the old poetic devices interferences that disperse the intensity and authenticity of the poem” (Norris 105). In a 1978 interview, George Bowering reiterates the self-place dynamic of the *Tish* geopoetic, and further connects this geopoetic to their rejection of conventional literary standards:

The word that we used all the time was ‘locus,’ which we liked partly because it came out of Olson, partly because it didn’t say setting, it didn’t say place, it didn’t say landscape, it didn’t say all those things that are literary devices. Every time you use one of those terms you posit a person who is saying, OK, now I can organize all this into a literary work. But if you say locus, it implies trying to find out where you are. It implies, I’m trying to locate myself. We didn’t know much about our own skills and we didn’t know hardly anything about the place that we lived in so those two things were built simultaneously. (Bowering “Interview” 79-80)

In this anti-traditional manner, the Black Mountain aesthetic provided the *Tish* writers an intellectual path to skirt the most serious issues of form and content of the period’s literature and to develop their own means of grounding themselves in the indeterminate and confusing Canadian/Vancouverian landscape. The movement itself was conscious of its efforts to establish a local literature and literary community: “*TISH* is now a poetry newsletter, an organ designed to tell its readers WHAT’S GOING ON in Vancouver. That is, we seek to define the scene as completely as possible” (*Tish* 91). Thus while the *Tish* geopoetic sustains its coherency inside literature *and* inside Vancouver, and its significance can be registered in the development of postcoloniality in Canada, its achievements in other aspects of its poetics are comfortably and confidently separated from the global intellectual climate. Tallman retrospectively adds that the significance of *Tish* is largely determined by its role in launching the personal careers of many Vancouver writers, as well as for accelerating the development of literature in Canada: “I think of *Tish* actually not as the most important stage: it was the initial stage that was occupied by a collection of semi-delinquent young people But some force was in them which was creating a world in which they could possess their imaginations, and the device of it turned out to be poetry” (Miki 84). The *Tish* writers shifted from local to global concerns in their explosive embrace of postmodernism a decade later.

Considering the look and feel of the manifestation of the *Tish* movement in 1961, it’s international significance seems hard to fathom. The first issue was a poorly designed, basement-published newsletter with 21 short poems by unestablished poets, buffeted by a smattering of mildly pretentious editorials by the same unknown writers. Even though there were at least 10 similar projects active in eastern Canada, each more or less equal in pretension and quality, this quintessential little magazine captured the attention of the nation’s literati. The eastern Canadian writers involved in the little magazine *Moment* were quick to announce the limitations of the *Tish* project. Future editor Gwendolyn MacEwan’s 1962 featured editorial “An Open Letter to *Tish*” (with some involvement by Acorn) scathingly reviewed the *Tish* poetry for dwelling and revelling in irrelevance:

You’ve got to do more than talk blithely about how you walked into a room and had an incredible urge to touch an object & etc. As well as being adolescent artiness, this is invalid poetry. The poet begins with the reality of that object: being a poet, his relationship with that object is understood; he

doesn't end there You're serious people, but when I can sit down and write 5 poems in 5 minutes which possibly parallel anything produced thus far by TISH, something's wrong. (MacEwan 2-3)

MacEwan writes with confidence using a number of assumptions that today would be treated suspiciously, particularly the judgement of another's particular experience as irrelevant, and belief in "the reality" of the object world. She gives no credibility to poetry that contemplates extreme particularity, and as a result, even though her comments evaluate specific examples of juvenile poems, *Tish* Editor Frank Davey quickly interpreted the difference of opinions in terms of the aesthetic position of his magazine. His fiery response in *Tish* 11 to *Moment's* attack, in fact, vehemently argues against *Moment's* collective assessment and understanding of *Tish's* poetics: "It is about time certain Toronto magazine editors learned to investigate and think before speaking out. A while ago was their entirely MacEwan-made-up 'olson-jones school,' a glib bit of would-be jargon How ignorant can an eastern Canadian be?" (*Tish* 221). If MacEwan's assessment was exaggerated, and perhaps missed the point and value of the *Tish* experiment, Davey's rejection of her assessment was equally flawed for being premature and immature, even at times descending into a personal tirade against her. While his cantankerous review of Gwendolyn MacEwan's poetry in *Tish* 9 (Summer 1962) rankles with bitterness – "A reader cannot enjoy the poetry Here once again we have an eastern Canadian poet more concerned with being a poet than with writing poetry" (*Tish* 195) – in both *Tish* 10 and 11, three of MacEwan's poems appear alongside each of the editors' work (including Davey's vitriolic response to her editorial in *Moment!*). It should also be noted that MacEwan was only the 17th poet outside the *Tish* editorial board to publish poetry in *Tish* during the first editorial period (1961-63) out of a total of 33 guest poets in 19 issues. Daphne Marlatt, by contrast, the future *Tish* editor, was the 18th guest poet to appear. In *Tish* 4, they include an editor's note stating the significance of publication in their magazine: "*TISH* guest pages are intended merely to show what the editors liked best of the material received. We often reject good poems; we publish only poems such as these which reflect a purpose and technique somewhat similar to our own" (*Tish* 75). It appears that Davey was alone amongst his fellow editors in his evaluation of her work, (but I have found no further historical evidence to support this). In any event, it is here in the guest pages of the little magazine that *Tish* exhibits the first evidence of their collective desire to move beyond Vancouver, beyond Black Mountain, and into the next, postmodern, phase of their careers.

The Canadian version of the problem of place was transformed under the enthusiasm and achievements of the *Tish* group. The rush to convincingly and unapologetically write here, guided by the idealistic assumption that writing could correspond to the external world, opened up vast possibilities for Canadian literature in the 1960s. The *Tish* geopoetic articulated and debated the means by which writers could weave themselves into the consciousness of place. The unique features of their geopoetic, that the poet must not write upon the land, but allow the land to write through the poet, freed them from the awkwardness and hesitation of much of Canadian writing up to that point. The freedom from conclusiveness, from providing 'Truth,' eventually developed into the postmodern need to trouble and disturb logical systems, rather than to struggle to create alternative structures. The *Tish* geopoetic, customized from the Black Mountain geopoetic, challenged and sought to overthrow the colonization of Vancouver and the colonial mentality of its writers. Eventually, for a number of reasons suggested in this paper, the *Tish* geopoetic itself became restrictive, problematic, and necessary to replace. In 1961, in Vancouver, however, the innovation freed a large group of writers from the colonial yoke and created a means and a method to write themselves and their west coast predicament into being.

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TWO TEXTS by Jürgen O. Olbrich

Written In the Dark

Swerving, avoiding pleasure for a plod
through canon theory, signifies nothing
good for reputation.
Dying helps.

A sharp-shinned hawk strafes a black squirrel
under a car.
Driven off. Starving. Furious.
Wild in the city, egg-stealers
devour variety to feed the mob.

As sparrow fringes, jumpy, map the fan-
shaped killing range of dozing cats, forest
borders shrink from cities, scenting extinction.
Poor Canada. These boots will see me out.

The perception of the external world
by the senses, aesthesis, our anchor,
catapults us into sanity
despite our every effort to escape.

Klingelgedicht Sollmannweg 2

Angi fi, ermei, eff off an ol ok,
Lo allwe med ala nig jä.
Man paw, maw gu kow ker
Ef belm, oh sek, ach hoff ästwo.

Aat er kow ach, urz ach in idt.
ick esch eck as, lag ai row dek.
Ohl off idt ruhn, eieran lapp,
klapp, kap rup.

Anaz ver schok,
vers lot uck end,
rand sir it hütz,
her ban pasch her,
der ahns as per,
ot fell dyp nag.

Zer and ka gel di ausch
Er edi, lan die der lein
Ora a la, pa ziel ko cet
Er an gen henk
Hi ri mi-thi, kuluk deni.

Öhl old egg üll, dogan,
Zow lens nick richt,
Ler streh wusch li mah ding,
lo pens hin olz on bak.
Päg erd milo lehma, ried web ro schwa.

Sig jen ner mand, aun henn
Nika bitzbay ler rimm,
och will stev an, of stic yil kri.

NOTES ON *a day book* by rob mclennan

An ongoing conversation that Ottawa poet Stephen Brockwell and I have concerns the notion of writing as a daily activity: is it a good idea? (I know at least one other poet who thinks it isn't.) Brockwell's considerations are far different than mine, with his household of wife and two children, his daily routine of work and forced travel; it makes the individual unit of the poem essential to his craft, since it comes so rarely. A dozen poems a year, he says, might be the best he can hope to achieve. Even, the best he would want to. On the other hand, I move in other directions, with the notions of process and daily writing being essential, following paths left by poets such as bpNichol, George Bowering, Daphne Marlatt, Dennis Cooley and Robert Creeley in working the procedural open-form, writing books as opposed to individual poems. I take Saturdays off for the sake of my lovely daughter, as well as longer stretches at Christmas, March break, summer; spending our afternoons driving the countryside in a borrowed car, or watching films or playing chess and arguing. My routine; my ex-wife says you can set a watch to it. Because of that daily activity of writing, my unit of composition becomes the book as a whole, or even further. Because of that, I have to be more aware of movement, of shifting where it is I think I'm going, or where I want to be. I have to be willing to try different things.

It had been an interest of mine for some time, the notion of the "day book." I've played with variations on it more than once, from straight journal entries to the utaniki (a journal mixture of poetry and prose, as done by bpNichol and Fred Wah, among others) to the current (so far) on-going project, *a day book*. What I don't want to be doing is a straight diary-entry poem. Not only does that not interest me as a writer, but I think enough of them have been done over the years that I don't need to write my own. Besides, I've never been capable of keeping an ongoing journal. It was only when I was starting a tour that I thought perhaps it was the right time, to be able to work on something new while traveling, that had nothing to do with any of my projects at home (not that any of them are unconnected).

When I started writing drafts of the first few pieces, I considered the idea of writing pages of drafts every day for three years, and only after that, editing down what was there, outside of narrative. If a poem was written, say, October 3rd, 2006 and another October 4th, 2004, an interesting break in the narrative structure would be to include each piece chronologically sans year, so that the older piece would actually appear before the other, and so on.

Gil McElroy, in his two recently published collections, works in his own version of the "day book," in a series of short poems breaking narrative in sections that claim to be ongoing, his "Julian Days" sections appearing in both his trade books – *Dream Pool Essays* (Talonbooks, 2001) and *Nonzero Definitions* (Talonbooks, 2004). He writes at the end of the chapbook *Some Julian Days* (above/ground press, 1999), that "The Julian Day system of dating was devised in 1582 by Joseph Justus Scaliger. Days are simply counted forward from an arbitrarily-chosen Day One of January 1, 4713 BCE. Today, the system is used by astronomers to date celestial occurrences, like the varying luminosity of certain stars. The Julian Day stems have nothing at all to do with the Julian calendar." This way, as he has explained since, the reader has no baggage to bring with the appearance of a title that reads "October 3, 2004." This way, with each poem written on the days that appear, either as title or end of each, the series can (theoretically) be ongoing throughout his entire writing and publishing life.

The American poet, Robert Creeley, literally weaves his own in *A Day Book* (Scribner's, 1972) as a journal of poetry and prose, much like the utaniki, from Tuesday, November 19, 1968 to Friday, June 11, 1971. A hodgepodge of notebooks and ephemera, it reads like everything he worked on, thought and did throughout that period. Whereas McElroy can work the personal without giving too much detail, Creeley manages to work both and still be elliptical and specific all at the same time. But is it important to know he wrote the poem "Knokke" in "Knokee, Belgium, 5:55 p.m., in room of Hotel Simoens, 9/4/70"? Does this add to the poem or detract? Does it add to this poem that he wrote it for his wife, Bobbie, ending with: "You aren't here, // you may never be / as I've known you / again. It's a long way." (n.p.). Do you need to know too, that I'm writing

this in the middle of June 2004, but three months into my own day book project? Does that add or detract? Does the outside Ottawa heat affect your reading? Is this literature or biography, after all?

In her *Such Rich Hour* (University of Iowa Press, 2001), another American poet, Cole Swensen works her own version, writing itself as “loosely based on the calendar illuminations from the *Trés Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*, the well-known book of hours, and uses them to explore the ways that the arts—visual and verbal—interact with history...” Swensen’s pieces in this collection work consecutively with the calendar days, but weave through the breadth of the 1400’s, breaking her own narrative thread through the decades. As she writes in her introduction:

The poems that follow begin as a response to this manuscript, and specifically to the calendar section that opens this and all traditional books of hours. The calendar lists the principal saints’ days and other important religious holidays of the medieval year in a given region. In keeping with the cyclical rhythm of a calendar, the poems follow the sequence of days and months and not necessarily that of years.

Poems titled the first of a given month bear a relation to the *Trés Riches Heures du Duc de Berry* calendar illustrations for that month, though they are not dependent upon it. Rather, they—like all the pieces here—soon diverge from their source and simply wander the century. And finally, they are simply collections of words, each of which begins and ends on the page itself.

With that, who can overlook bpNichol’s “A Book Of Hours” included in *The Martyrology Book 6 Books, 1978-1985* (Coach House Press, 1987)? Written from 10:35 p.m. on one day, to 4:35 a.m. (over twenty-four hours later), Nichol’s consideration for the project are much like where I work to aim my own, less an interest in specifics and naming, than using the hours themselves as templates. Much as McElroy’s “Julian Days” series, the pieces under each hour are composed during that hour, from “Hour 1” to “Hour 27” and the final, “in place of Hour 28.” His movement involves multiple processes, from direct wordplay to journal (the “utaniki” is mentioned within the text of “Hour 1”) to poetic theory. He starts “Hour 1” with:

met a physic
on the road
asked him

so it is with journeys one is drawn

My own interest in the project, currently, is to weave ellipses and specifics into something that reads not that specific. Not necessarily what is happening in the world outside, or around, but happening in ideas, and the free flow of language, seeing where it will go. I don’t want years to enter into the reading, although such things can’t be helped. To know what happened in a specific year places the manuscript as a whole, yet for what I want to accomplish, must sit outside the final reading of the pieces. Quotes from other writing reads throughout, something critics have complained about me for years. Fuck them, I say. For me, the notion of existing as both writer and reader is in the response to other texts, whether in the work that I do, or simply by sitting somewhere and letting my mind wander over a text I’ve just finished reading. At the end of the day, you can say that all writing becomes democratic. Where it sits on the page waiting to be read, and then finally read. But to leave the specific dates, too, the baggage remains. How to alter a reading to play against such specific information? What I want from my poems is that ellipse, that break where the reader has the freedom to come in, sit down, and look around for a while, taking in what they can and leaving with something that is uniquely their own. Any poem, then, half made of what the writer puts in. The other half, the reader.

For a few years, I worked very deliberately to remove the “I” from my poems, and here I am, putting it all back in, with the hopes that I now know how to use the damn thing. Only Frank O’Hara managed at all to master the “I did this, I did that” kind of poem, while managing to keep them something else entirely. But who wants to remain static? The same river twice, you say. The same river. A different leg, and different eyes. And then.

AN INTERVIEW WITH Charles Bernstein

from the Argotist Online

Eric Denut interviews Charles Bernstein about the libretto he wrote for the English composer Brian Ferneyhough for *Shadowtime* an opera on the life and work of Walter Benjamin. This premiered at the Munich Biennale in May 2004 and was presented at the Festival d'automne in Paris, and in July 2005 at the Lincoln Center Festival. The libretto has been published by Green Integer. This interview (which deals with the opera in the second half) was published, in French translation, as part of a dossier on *Shadowtime* in the Paris music journal *Musica Falsa*. Until now the English version has not been published. Charles Bernstein is Regan Professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania, and is the author of 22 books of poetry, including *With Strings, Republics of Reality: 1975-1995*, *Content's Dream: Essays 1975* and *A Poetics*. Bernstein is one of the foremost theorists of the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E group; and his two collections of essays (*Content's Dream: Essays 1975* and *A Poetics*) expand a position on poetry established on his close reading of the philosophy of Marx, Wittgenstein, and the writings of Gertrude Stein, Louis Zukofsky, William Carlos Williams and others. Eric Denut is lecturer at the University of Marne-the-Valley and the I.U.F.M. of Créteil. He has written widely on contemporary music.

ED: What does it mean to be a poet in our time—in the North American society?

CB: I've answered this question a lot in my life. I'm interested in the social context for poetry, what poetry becomes within the process of "doing" poetry. In the 1970s, a number of us were engaged in an activist, indeed interventionist, approach to poetry, both through our poems, of course, but also through essays (which were often non-, and even anti-, expository), and, moreover, through small press publishing, organizing events, giving "talks" ... through all this insisting on poetry as a social activity, and not simply as a formal, ludic, exercise. We were very focused on the ideological dimension of language, as a direct result of anti-war activities of and around "1968" and we were especially concerned about the abuse of language that was involved in the state politics of this time (unfortunately not so different than the present time), but also in the official organs of "truth," whether on TV or in the newspapers; how the control of language led to a very effective administration of everyday life. In sum, we saw poetry as addressing, or perhaps better to say redressing, the relationship of consciousness to language. Which is to say – we imagined the role of poetry as thinking in, around, and about the premises of (verbal) language: to explore, indeed to demonstrate, the formal dimensions of language, without the necessity of creating a rational, expository, or directly expressive presentation *about* language or poetics or ideology. Poetry's social function is to imagine how language works within its culture, while pursuing a critique of the culture; this suggests that poetry can be a countermeasure to the reinforcement of cultural values at the heart of both popular entertainment and consumer politics. At the same time, poetry's aesthetic function is to refuse even this "value" in the pursuit of what Louis Zukofsky calls the pleasures of sight, sound, and intellect.

ED: Does it mean that poetry has to be correlated to theory?

CB: I've had different responses to that over time. I remember an aphorism in an essay that I wrote for the Paris journal *Change* in 1981: "Theory is never more than an extension of practice." When we—the poets around L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E—were first centering on non-narrative and non-voice-centered paradigms, we were often accused of being too intellectual, that is to say, not emotional enough—too difficult, too complex, and also too theoretical. Now all those epithets are OK by me; I think it's best to take on their negativity, to wear such stigmas as badges of honor. Indeed, they suggest the problem with the kind of poetic practice that was dominant, and still is, in the United States. In the 1970s, to be directly expressive, *lyric* as they like to call it, in free verse, was the *sine qua non* of poetry. That remains the dominant theory of poetry and it is far too complacent, too dogmatic, a theory for my taste. It's not that "theory" prescribes the alternative but rather poetry and poetics both emerge out of a conflict with a given state of affairs. Poetry and poetics, theory and practice, are interrelated. Poetics is an extension of the practice of poetry, and poetry is an extension of *thinking with* the poem and also the reflection of poetics. Let me introduce Walter Benjamin here, as a good example of multipolar, rather than linear, thinking. Benjamin's form of reflective writing suggests a poetics of multiple layers or figures. A line of thought

may seem to go off into one direction then drops back to follow another trajectory, only this new direction is not a non sequitur but rather echoes or refracts both the antecedent motifs and—this is the uncanny part—the eventual ones. I mean this as a way of rethinking what is often called fragmentation or disjunction. Think of fragments not as discontinuous but as overlays, pleats, folds: a chordal poetics in which synchronic notes meld into diachronic tones. You find this in the Arcade Project as well as in Benjamin's early essays: an openness to the multiplicity of connection that exhibits not discontinuity but a verbal and paraverbal echoing between interrelated motifs that, on a rational level, do not, at first, seem related. Yet, as you go into details, as you begin to listen to the essay as would a piece of music, you begin to register how intricately everything is connected.

Theory is as theory does. If I prefer to write poems that are exploratory and intuitive, still there is always a great deal of conceptualizing that leads up to any intuition. Intuition can be informed and it can also be practiced (*ars de faire*). Then again, in writing poetry and poetics, I resist what I understand or what I can formulate too well. So theories are a little bit like crutches, to be tossed off the moment you are able to walk, and yet a comfort in times of stress. I'm trying to go through a process of connections as I'm moving along in a poem (or even in answer to your questions): it's much messier than if it were the product of a theory (thinking of theory as a rationalized outcome of reflection and research). At the same time, I'm interested in talking about the process; it seems to me important for poetry not to be just on an emotional sleeve ("I'm a poet, I'm emotional, I'm writing about my feelings."). The *art* of poetry is just as much the navigation as the boat. Which is why it's important not to valorize one side or the other, poetry or poetics. I leave theory to those far more confident than we who stumble from point to point, finding ourselves in the blank spaces in between.

One medium of culture, one genre of writing, cannot, in and of itself, be secondary to any other. Journalism, for example, is not secondary to literature. As social forms, both have their limitations and possibilities. But in our time, the point that needs making is that a good poem is just as good as a popular movie. Since the mass scale of journalism and movies and pop music undermine the criteria of evaluation in our culture, it's important to emphasize that a singular value of poetry is the freedom, complexity, and depth that derives from its small scale, the fact that it has few readers, that it is difficult to access, that it's *not* a mass art form. The Library of Congress just announced that our new U.S. Poet Laureate "writes of universal themes in an accessible manner." That sounds like an ad for soap. I'd rather our poet laureate wrote of particular themes in a complex manner; but then we have a President, selected by a minority of the voters with the help of an anti-democratic Supreme Court, that impugns the value of "nuance" in foreign policy. Within our culture we need, desperately need, small, difficult, rebarbative art forms. Poetry can do many things with language that can't be done with conventional story-telling. And, as William Carlos Williams says, people die, every day, for the lack of what is found there.

ED: Could you describe the economic apparatus of poetry in the United States?

CB: The economy of poetry is antipathetic to profit, it's a "negative" economy. As James Sherry once remarked, if you take a sheet of plain white paper, perhaps it's worth a penny, but if you write a poem on it, it's worth nothing. It can no longer be sold. But, then again, that *nothing* is worth quite a lot. You've created negative value. Put a different way, that just shows that there are different kinds of economies and that poetry is an exchange economy.

Many people imagine, because the motivation of poets and their publishers is not to maximize cash profit, that poetry is a utopian space, without hierarchies, without power relationships. But, happily for poetry, this is a grand illusion: the values and judgments, the networks and interconnections, are formidable. And the infrastructure is very resilient, going far back, sometimes a hundred years, from person to person, magazine to magazine, exchange to exchange. The symbolic exchange that takes place in the poetry polis is immensely valuable for the people involved. Then again, the attitudes within the field also can be very belligerent and irrational, arrogant and destructive. It's not a world that is free of any of the problems of the rest of the culture. However, the aesthetic stakes are high – higher than in many more commercial endeavors, where aesthetics are always a means to an end – and these values are measured by work produced and the value that it has for the exchange. Given the particular economy of poetry, the exchange often takes place with the cheapest possible means of reproduction, from the Xerox to a reading in a bar to a web site or MP3 file). In an economy in which direct profit is not the aim, losses from the cost of reproduction are minimized in an effort of maximize exchange value.

The exchanges that result are models of "democratic social space," and so very American in one sense, but also deeply foreign to a culture, in the U.S., for which monetary profit or prescribed religious principals are the main sources of value. You might say the value is in intercultural—or even intra-

cultural—relationship. The very distance that separates poetry from the dominant forms of the macro economy of accumulation give poetry a social, political, and aesthetic power, because—at least potentially—poetry’s realizations of, and reflection on, its “host” culture are not only trenchant but otherwise unobtainable. A culture that despises its artists may need them even more than one that embraces them.

ED: Is poetry, in this sense a model, a utopia, for another world?

CB: Yes, but that other world is always, anyway, *this* world; the utopian is just a momentary pattern of disorientation before the real work of re-inhabitation begins. That is, poetry—*some poetry!*—may help to uncover hidden aspects of our everyday world. I say *hidden* not in a mystical, but in a social and psychoanalytic, sense: repressed, forgotten, denied, obliterated. Let’s take a concept like “weapons of mass destruction.” How do these words operate to create delusion, mass hysteria, to create, indeed, an imaginary world that replaces the real world through the colonized consciousness of a dystopia? Brain-washing can’t be reversed by reflection, by commentary, by critique, by poetry alone. But, still, all these are necessary. At the same time, poetry exists in the face of the fact—harrowing as this may be—the world *isn’t* changing, at least not the way we might like. The world (inevitably!) always remains just as it is. I can imagine another world, and do hour by hour; but I’m not interested in the delusion that this other world replaces the “real world.” That imaginary world exists in the spaces between the real and unreal. Let’s call it the shadows.

ED: How would you describe your work on *Shadowtime*?

CB: One of the themes that I focused on in the libretto is “translation.” There are several levels of translations going on in *Shadowtime*. For one thing, even if my text exists by itself, what is more interesting is that it becomes absorbed, subsumed into the music of the opera—the *Shadowtime* of Brian Ferneyhough. That subsuming is a process of translation. Another level: I love Heine and Schubert’s setting of his poems, but I was also aware that Benjamin, who was a distant relative of Heine, would have been less enthusiastic; and I presume Brian would not imagine his vocal work to have any connection to Schubert’s Heine. Keeping in mind the setting of a poem is always also a translation of the poem, I was interested to see what Brian would be able to do with my distressed translations of two of Heine’s most famous poems—“Die Lorelei” and “Der Tod, das ist die kühle Nacht.” In effect, I was asking him to make a second setting. How would Brian confront the problem of lieder and song? In the end, what he did in Scene VI, “Seven Tableaux Vivant,” was not to set the text as songs but to push back in the other direction, poetry scored for recitation and musical accompaniment, not exactly *sprachstimme* and not exactly jazz or “performance” poetry, and not sound poetry either, but something that exists in a remarkably articulated space that pushes the vocal recitation into a shaped soundscape, complete with a marked distinctness (in terms of tempo and pitch) of voicing.

Other translation motifs in *Shadowtime* are directly related to Benjamin. For example, I say “Benjamin,” pronouncing the hard “j,” and not “Ben-ia-min,” as I should if I were speaking in German or, in an academic context, about the historical person. The “Benjamin” in this opera is a product of our imagination. We translate the historical figure into different social and aesthetic contexts. I’m thinking of Benjamin from the point of view of an American after-life for him (and maybe for the secular European Jews whose world ended with his). *Shadowtime* opens up with the apparent historical figure of “Benjamin,” dying. After that opening scene, the historical figure becomes an avatar, enters the underworld or shadow world (through a portal in Las Vegas, no less). By the way, I don’t necessarily think Benjamin committed suicide. No one knows, there is no absolute proof, we only know that he died. In the opera, we suspend that question. In fact—in life—he was killed by the Nazis, in one way or another; for me, the word “suicide” does not capture what happened to him. In a sense, *Shadowtime* offers an alternative “hearing” on what happens to Benjamin. Brian Ferneyhough opens our ears to that interrogation, since we have after this first scene twenty-two minutes without a word, only music. That’s wonderful, because it leaves space for thought and for questions: What happened? What should happen? Why should narrative be any kind of *action* at all? Why, because we set up the frame of an opera, can’t we have a sustained section of music alone, without any plot-driven stage action? Ferneyhough’s choice is appealing, charming, powerful. What interests me here also is the relation of song to speech and of speech to poetry. Think of the final act of Schoenberg’s *Moses und Aron*, which Schoenberg never set to music, implicitly resisting the reification of *song* in a way that connects song (not *sprachstimme*) to Aron and the Golden Calf. The refusal—or inability—to set the text to music marks also the refusal to allow the ethical discourse of Moses to be reified as song. If Schoenberg *necessarily* left the final act of *Moses und Aron* unset, then Ferneyhough reverses this dynamic by placing a long un-texted movement at the beginning of

the opera, the guitar suggesting unworded song, the reverse of Schoenberg's un-sung word. After this scene, the opera envisions a journey for “our” imagined Benjamin, as told, largely, through a chorus of angels, a chorus of the angels of history (invoking, as it does, Benjamin’s possibly final essay, “The Concept of History”). The whole secular Jewish culture in Europe was completely wiped out between 1937 and 1945, along with the rest of European Jewish culture. What would have become of all these intellectuals? We have to imagine our character “Benjamin” living in the Upper West Side of Manhattan, where we are now. It is interesting that two people living in America created an opera in English, commissioned and premiered in Munich, on this character. Our “Benjamin” is born in the space of contemporary American thought. The historical person leaves the face of the earth, but not our imagination. How do we “hear” him? How do we hear the wings of history? That’s also a translation: how is “Benjamin” translated into “Benjamin”?

ED: Which parts of the opera have surprised you in the musical setting?

CB: “The Doctrine of Similarity,” Scene III, is the first section I heard performed. In the libretto, Scene III has very little in the way of mise-en-scene, or imagined action, or voiced characters. It is a set of 13 texts (canons as we call them) of various lengths, connected through thematic and numeric associations. It’s close to a serial poem, and is as far from the text of a dramatic opera as is Brian’s wordless Scene II. My approach was to leave things wide open, and very various, for Brian. The texts could be set in many different ways. I remember once asking Brian what the relation of my own performance of the libretto of *Shadowtime*—I had sent him a tape of a reading I gave from the libretto—would be to that of the text as performed in the opera. He answered: *none*. I loved that response because it meant that what he wanted to do would not be possible within the confines of a solo voice recitation, which I am well able to do on my own. This was going to go somewhere *else*, something I could not imagine. I was not disappointed. For one thing, and I find this one of the most remarkable aspects of the vocal setting in *Shadowtime*, Brian has sometimes overlaid the text: different parts of the libretto are sung simultaneously. So the verbal matter becomes part of the acoustic layering of the sound composition. Eventually, if you know the words, it might be possible to hear the distinct verbal strands, but in composite one hears not the singular threads but their composite: so here is an example of what I mentioned before, “a chordal poetics in which synchronic notes meld into diachronic tones.”

“The Doctrine of Similarity,” like the last scene, “Stelae for Failed Time,” is performed entirely by the chorus of the angels of history. The chorus in *Shadowtime* has the role of the chorus in Greek drama: they take on the burden of the telling. The last part is a “solo” for the angels. Why a “solo” sung by a chorus? It’s a solo because if you are outside of time, the multiplicity is understood as a single voice. In the actual time of performance, it is heard as multiple voices, a cacophony. It’s another way of figuring multiplicity and fragmentation, though, ultimately it’s not fragmentation. In the libretto, I have the angel of history say the opposite of what Benjamin writes in “The Concept of History.” Benjamin writes that “the angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed.” Our angels, in contrast, ask that we “imagine no wholes from all that has been smashed.” Because for me, to answer again your question about “utopia,” it’s very important *not* to imagine a totality, but rather a multiplicity, the shards, and the sparks around the edges. We don’t live in a Messianic moment, the scales have not fallen from our eyes, our seeing is double and triple, not unitary. The Benjaminian “now time” (*jetzeit*) lets us hear the cathected material moment amidst the multiplicity of omnivalent vectors. By intermittently stopping the development of music tonalities and progressions, Ferneyhough creates the sensation of hearing individual notes released from their tune, sounded, that is, in a series of nows, moment by moment.

I hope that you hear that also as a way of figuring what people call the “complexity” of Ferneyhough’s music. “Extreme polyphony” would be a better category to explain what Brian does, combining several layers at the same time. If my words are not immediately intelligible at the level of hearing, there is a higher level of intelligibility available. Having vocal text and musical motifs superimposed creates something that cannot be heard in a real time but is, let’s just say, polyphony at an advanced level. It’s an example of an allegorical working of music and text on Benjaminian themes. The last scene of *Shadowtime* ends with an insistence on negative economy: “The best picture of a picture / is not a picture / but the negative” [“La meilleure image / d’une image / n’est pas une image / mais le négatif”]. This applies to the genre of opera itself: the relation of verbal language to representation, information to poetry, narrative to music, discourse to song.

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Ce n'est pas la guerre!

by Brian Edwards (Australia)

**A screaming comes across the sky. It has happened before,
but there is nothing to compare it to now.**

Thomas Pynchon, *Gravity's Rainbow*

I

"It's them fucking rockets with their farting sound.
Can't tell where the next bastard'll land."
Pirate is out, poking about in the rubble; Pointsman's
a man with a ruler up his arse - into weird links,
he measures connections, finds them everywhere.
There's a pattern to their falling, a poisson distribution,
and it matches Slothrop's sexual encounters.
That's the real weird stuff. Explosions major and minor,
no offence Slothrop, in amazing correlation,
as if he's calling rockets in and ducking the scene.
Here's a Marjorie and a Norma, Alice, Delores, Shirley,
Gladys, Katharine and a couple of Sallys,
all of them beautiful English girls in the Blitz,
a clutch of Elizabeths, Carolines, Marias and Annes
clustered along the river, lines on into Mayfair, Soho,
Wembley and Hampstead Heath. What a networking,
the jocular American lieutenant come back across the Atlantic
and making merry, racking up the numbers
amongst smokestacks, burnt-out buildings and the confusion.
Mexico can't believe it, but, of course, he has Jessica Swanlake
for company, cute, roadside met and challenge enough.
He doesn't go by The Book, not that book.

II

There they are, purring along the coast road with the hood down,
the old Jaguar eating up distances like licorice and Jessica
a picture with sun in her cheeks and the wind in her hair.
Mexico can't believe his luck, already doing the sums,
the statistician in him working out the odds that he, of all the men
in England, should come across a girl with a busted bike,
her skirt hiked up and her thumb in the air ...
she was hoping, just hoping, for a half-way decent Galahad
of the roadway. Beautiful Jessica in her hour of need,
old Beaver her sometime regular not about, the times propitious.
What would his mother, the war, think of this chance meeting,
she being so jealous of her lads, keeping them under her own big thumb,
restricting their appetites and opportunities, reminding them
always about care, responsibility and the threat of death?
Fuck off, death! There, they both feel better. It's their reassertion
of little things – of sunshine, a picnic hamper, grass beside a river.
But there's still old Beaver whose shadow flits across their meeting.

III

Hidden in the forest, safe from the searching eyes of fleets of bombers, they play out their Hansel and Gretel game with cottage, oven, and the children, and cross-dressing Blicero awful in his witch's gear. Everyone has their means of coping, their own little structure as defence against the war. There'll come a time, they know, when one or another will say "Fuck it!" and quit the game, maybe go over to the other side. Will it be Gretel, her eyes darkened with despair, sick of watching over her playtime brother and unable to prevent the witch? It's all repetition compulsion and the death wish. At least they're still alive. Will she be the one to break off, maybe even call the bombs down upon their little forest clearing safe, so far, from hits from the sky? She can taste the ashes. There is no novelty any longer and she's done her job, passing on sensitive information to Whitehall about routes and sites, ordinance, battle plans and German troop deployment. This is a long way from childhood, the storybook forest become all too close and threatening, her mother's voice lost forever.

IV

He's a figure of fun, a sort of innocent let loose in the Zone, one whose escapades will continue, girl after girl, while watchers keep track and make their notes. This is Lieutenant Slothrop, the affable American down to his Hawaiian shirt (just the thing for the Riviera) and his boyish exuberance. With connections that go back to Jamf himself, strange codings working in his blood, he's the last hope for those owners of The Book now down to two, and Pointsman with his eye on Stockholm, still hoping for the Big One, the prize that will remove all doubt and satisfy his itch for fame and recognition. Tantivy Mucker-Maffick, Bloat and French girls, Slothrop *sur la plage* ... Of course he'll rescue Katje from Octopus Grigori. There's something fishy there and he knows it but hell she's coming on to him and, well, she's a fine Dutch beauty, a very good looking girl and, and, she sure seems to need help right now, the bastard has a tentacle around her throat ... seize the moment! And he does.

V

He is reading a Plasticman comic, not yet attuned to the plasticman sorcerer of his own past, still innocent, but, look you, here's Superman and Batman, and the Ghost Who Walks too, nifty heroes to help us to overcome the dark; how many post-depression boys and girls needed that fix to get through the day. There was a time a rainbow promised all would be well. But now, there's this other parabola in the sky, the rocket's arc whispering death ... don't want to be where those bastards are dropping. Incoming mail and no return address. It's enough to change one's faith entirely. No wonder authorities watch Slothrop – Rocketman, take care!! Remember Proverbs for Paranoids 3: If they can get you asking

the wrong questions, they don't have to worry about answers.
 Hard not to like the fellow. He's just trying to make do.
 Dialectics, matrices, archetypes, metaphors – they all need to connect
 and there he is in Zurich, a little paranoid, Ace, trying to sort
 a few things out, what with all the hints and whisperings and those
 nightly come hitherings out of an American past crossed strangely
 with European scribblings on the record. At the Odeon, Lenin,
 Trotsky, James Joyce, Einstein all sat at these tables ...
 But who is this, right now, giving him the spy-sign? Aargh,
 too many patterns and he's beginning to suspect that he's the link,
 the one who's making the call, though not at all sure why.
 "Rocketman," she whispers, that one at a neighbouring table,
 the young woman in green with a surly companion ... or maybe
 he's not a companion at all, just passing through, the coincidence
 accidental. "Aw, come on, Ace, nothing's that accidental!"

VI

Who can resist the film image? There she is, Greta Erdmann poking about
 in the wreckage of a UFA studio lot, Berlin itself a pile of rubble and
 everyone trying to reclaim just a little of their own pathetic history,
 something to hold onto, however sad, when the times are tough.
 Boy, she's still inspiring, reliving those *Alpdrücken* moments when
 the world seemed green and she was the Reich's sweetheart ...
 So many inspired by Erdmann, a whole generation of shadow children
 fathered on her image, lust peaking in that deep German darkness.
 But right now, she's searching for her lost child, Bianca. Rocketman help her.
 You can see how she's suffering. All of that pain. Maybe some guilt.
 There are tears in her eyes when he stretches her back on the film set,
 the scenes replayed in her memory, the taste bitter-sweet, unforgettable.
 When they reach the Anubis, it's a ship of fools and everyone's drinking
 and joking, their abandonment hysterical and no telling where it'll end.
 The crowd trembles as Greta and Bianca play out their familiar routine,
 stage mother and reluctant child. How she needs the discipline, and there it is,
 whack, right on her perfect little girl bottom, whack, each one thrilled,
 feeling the delicious blows that take them out of the ship's rocking on the tide,
 that low humming noise of the screws, deep images of war and lion-terrible anger.

VII

Late '45 and some sort of aftermath with boundaries down and lost folk
 streaming across the countryside. Whole nations on the move, identity a mess,
 links shot. Not really – they're generations deep, strange mysteries of chemistry
 singing in the cells, ancient codes, maybe changing, sure, but not changing that much.
 Teams are moping about, picking through the ruins, searching for clues.
 Too many false leads, wrong turns, stupid decisions. Is there no control at all
 over what's happening? Or are the forces powerful beyond all comprehension?
 Who can tell, there are so many plots, such whisperings, paranoia rampant ...
 There he is, Rocketman in a pig suit, dodging surveillance, dipping
 in on this party, that one, boy o boy, still trying to show a little enthusiasm,

wondering about plasticity, new technologies, IG Farben and all that crew, Imipolex G, the S-Gerät and Rocket 00000, Tchitcherine the wild Russian from the Steppes, black Enzian and more stories about *schwarzcommando*, odd sort of shit, enough to put a wandering minnesinger quite out of tune even as girls appear and disappear, cute-met amongst the traveling preterite. Meanwhile back in London, Pointsman's struggling, the stone determinacy of things not so simply measurable as he might have thought and increased quibbling in the corridors of power, quacks of every sort competing for favours and the money.

VIII

Blicero in drag. He's a compelling sight and how he bends them to his will. He has a huge investment in this one, all that wandering in the African sud-west, the penetration, the fine-tuning, the search on and on into new technologies, pain peaking almost to unbearable at times but then too the sweet promise of transcendence to keep him on track, not always screaming mad, not entirely. And how could he escape old forms, familiar rituals, comfort of the half-known? He is human, after all, isn't he, a creature of appetites, desire, anxiety, need? But beware, children, for beaming Granny there tending her cottage garden, bluebells, hollyhocks, daisies, primrose forget-me-nots, is also, and just as you suspected, the wicked witch of your own worst nightmare. How would you recognize the oven door any longer? Little Hansel, pretty Gretel, be careful. They say that at the last he was superb. With Rocket 00000 pointing at the stars, Gottfried strapped into place and a hush in the forest, he orchestrated it all ... Captain Blicero, Bleicherode, Blicher, Death ... what insignia did he wear when the beautiful youth was straining at his bonds and the tremor grew into a roar, the film shifting suddenly from all-colour to blinding white?

IX

In the fall-out, it's hard to say what's true any more. Did Father Broderick and Mother Nalline really set up little Tyrone, a victim of conditioning processes even the great Dr Freud might have had trouble following through the labyrinth, or were they victims too, used like the rest of us, subject to forces of control far too mysterious for definition? There's one, quick, take a bead ... aargh, too late, just a face smirking, vanishing behind the curtain. They talk about his scattering, those scholar-magicians of the Zone, as if he was just a concept after all, substance questionable, lineage hypothetical and that jolly American affability no more than a fiction for the times. Who can say? But even now, in those quiet moments when the first rays of early morning sunlight touch city buildings or when you stand aside to watch the drift of Autumn leaves on a pool, listen. Do you hear that voice? Why are those girls beaming, skipping suddenly across the grass, shadows retreating around them? They are dancing - and there, carried on the breeze, listen, there are the sweet sounds of a harmonica, bringing you home.

NIGHT ORCHESTRA

by Penn Kemp

dip dip dip dip deep dip deep dip deepen deep end

dip in sum
deep in some mere
dip in sum immerse
deep in summers till
deep in summer still next
deep in summer still nest sand
deep in summer stillness an eel
deep in summer stillness an eel lick
deep in summer stillness a kneel lick trick
deep in summer stillness an electric ha hum
deep in summer stillness an electric hum off
deep in summer stillness an electric hum of fair
deep in summer stillness an electric hum of air con
deep in summer stillness an electric hum of air conduit
deep in summer stillness an electric hum of air condition

Deep in summer stillness an electric hum of air conditioner

flat

in B
flat
tone entrains
my body

mono

monotonous.
Heat produced to cool
my neighbours thrums

the outside air
heats
up our
call
collect
collect if

collective night.
Me
can can can I cull canicle
mull till too oud
mull till too oud sell till too odd self rep
mechanical multitudes

self-replicate in chorus
relentless fridge and clock. *clock cluck clock cluck clock clutch*

The only spell breaker
is a tape of Tibetan chant

dip deep dip deep dip deep dip deep dip deep

Deep harmonic overtones

conjure a resonance

disturb the sine waves.

lip lap leap leap leap less sleep less sleep less

Sleepless in the beaches

I resist the single roar

as Blake deplores

sin

sing gull

single vision and Newton's sleep.

The sound of the purr

pet you all twin teeth

twentieth send scent

sentry century call

colon colon eyes

colonised

dour

few

sure

our future.

With a dominant beat, sales

pitched for come fort, con

venient

reliance on

a lie a ply a play apply a lie appliant

appliance.

The pit tea is not

that the cent sure

censure century has wound

to a close but that it's *why*

whining

on and on.

dip deep dip deep dip deep depend dependent

Somewhere beyond the per

vase if rat dull

pervasive rattle

waves break on the shore.

Species die

versify.

TWO TEXTS

by Matthew Holmes

AVOGADRO'S LAW

Contrary to how Science still tells the story, Avogadro was no great chemist. Actually, he spied for the yankees (fronting as a clam-diver off the Mexican coast) during the revolt against the Spanish. It was there, in the curve of the Gulf, watching the bay over the stone lip of the breakwater, spooning green butter from an avocado and pasting it with his tongue into the roof of his mouth, that he took his name and found his home. Science will tell you that he was an Italian with a propensity for hams and yelling at people when he was feeling sociable. That he would sit on his front porch under the grape trellis on Wednesdays. That he was a man obsessed with the secret lives of gases, with invisible measurements. Some of this is similar to his true life: Squinting into the space between the horizon, trying to find a fault in its line, to focus just past its tectonic curve. Or knowing the bubbling of a clam under the sand, twenty feet below, for what it was. As for the volume of gases, there was really only the one attempt when young to bottle his own and send it, wrapped and ribboned, to the father of a girl who was not allowed to play with him anymore. After the signing of the Guadalupe Hidalgo and half of Mexico gone, Avogadro retired, stayed on in Mexico to eat great amounts of mole poblano, chilies and chocolate mixing with the mescal in him, building up pressure. In the mid-autumn, the evenings had a comfortable cool heat from the air off the water, and he would lie in his hammock counting; always counting. He would count the shots of mescal it took him to lose count, though no one can agree on how many this was. He'd count the lines of lampblack stained onto his fingertips from his drawing pen, the ridges of skin like currents of water on a map. He'd count the distinctiveness of each chili he could taste under the slide of thick, melted chocolate, rolling his tongue slowly like he was searching for the words: *six, ten, twenty-three*.... And the locals would roll their eyes, say, here's Señor Avo full of gases again, not believing that a gringo, however long he'd been there, could count something that small, that blended, so much a part of their tastes, so much a part of everything else it was mixed with. Laughter and another round. *Twenty-three*, he would announce, knowing where he was, figuring one thing was equal to another out here, looking up at the lights from the ironclads shining in Brownsville, and between him and them, the Gulf, black as carbon.

HEISENBERG'S UNCERTAINTY PRINCIPAL

When he graduated from making phony lost dog posters, Werner didn't even realise it had happened. He was walking back with a coffee from Magnolia's, stepping around a couple looking at one of his flyers—*how terrible; can you imagine; a Christmas puppy; in this cold*—and thought to himself with the white noise of a mild hangover trailing him how he'd go about it if he found a bag stuffed with cash. There's not a lot of it moving around these days, especially if it's in large bills. And what are you supposed to do—really—what is The Good Citizen supposed to do? Does the city's website have something about it? Do they really expect you to notify the cops? Or maybe run after that guy ahead of you on the sidewalk and say—*excuse me, did you drop this huge fucking Ziplock™ packed with hundreds?* He thought he'd give Tracy a call. Werner was seeing two sisters: Triny and Tracy. Tracy knew he made the posters for kicks but Triny was a bit tricky. She'd discovered a pile of posters once when she was over—all of them for different pets—and he'd had to do some quick thinking to explain why he had them, and why they all had the same phone number on them. Now she thought he was this neighbourhood hero: the organised mind taking on the area's soaring have-you-seen-Bobo rates, helping all these local families catatonic with worry. So he started working on a new kind of poster, and the first call came a couple of weeks later—*yeah, hi, is this the organised crime guy that put the posters up? I found your cash, yeah, over on Euclid Ave. Listen, I know you said you couldn't offer a reward, but I'm stuck... and I want half, alright? I'll give it back to you, but I need half*—so Werner made the arrangements and met the guy and the guy handed him a baggie of cash, no questions. This went on for quite some time. Every week or two there'd be a call: someone else trying to return some money they said they'd found, always looking for a cut. He'd go out and meet them and they'd hand him this fucking grab bag. He had no idea, really; but it started to get a bit boring it was so regular. The only uncertainty was how much they'd give him: a couple thou, ten, often more. The numbers stopped meaning that much to Werner, relativity kicking in. He stopped reading the news; stopped showing up at work. Started planning a little trip with one of the sisters. Which sister was the only thing—the one that knew or the one that didn't. And only once, since this whole thing had started, did he get a call about a dog—and he told her, this woman with the hope in her voice, to keep it, he didn't need it, and hung up.

WRITING SHOULD NOT SOUND LIKE WRITING: READING GERTRUDE STEIN'S *TENDER BUTTONS* by Carl Peters

Think carefully of a sentence and a resemblance: An Introduction

Think carefully of a sentence and a resemblance. Does it. Does a sentence resemble a resemblance, an exact resemblance, or does it. Does it resemble a sentence. It does. It does not.

Think carefully of a resemblance and a sentence. Can it. It cannot. Can a resemblance repeat a resemblance, a sentence, or doesn't it.

Think carefully of a sentence and a resemblance. Will it. It will. When will it. It will when it will, a resemblance, where it will if it will, a sentence, it does. How does it.

Think carefully of a sentence and a resemblance. How do you. It does too. It does not. It does as it does not. Think.

Think carefully of a sentence and a resemblance. What is it and what does a sentence resemble. Think carefully of a sentence and a resemblance, an introduction. To what.

(Think carefully.) Sentences and resemblances. Think carefully of a sentence and sentences. Think carefully of a sentence and a sentence. Is there a resemblance. There is not. There is where there is not. There is where there is not here. Think carefully of a sentence.

Think carefully of a sentence and a resemblance. A resemblance to what. A sentence and a resemblance. Think carefully. A resemblance to what. Think carefully. A resemblance of what. What thinking. I never know what you are thinking. Think.

Think carefully of a sentence and a resemblance. Does it resemble a sentence or a resemblance. Can it resemble a sentence. It can it can 2. Three.

Think carefully of a sentence and a resemblance.
Think of a sentence and a resemblance.
Think carefully a sentence and a resemblance.
Think carefully of sentences and resemblances.
Think carefully of a and a resemblance.
Think carefully of a sentence, a resemblance.
Think carefully of a sentence and resemblance.
Think carefully of a sentence and a.

A sentence has been made.
Think of thanking. [Long pause if necessary]

CHICKEN.

**Alas a dirty word, alas a dirty third alas a dirty
third, alas a dirty bird.**

“After all the natural way to count,” Gertrude Stein comments, “is not one and one make two but to go on counting by one and one. One and one and one and one and one. That is the natural way to go on counting.” (“Poetry and Grammar” in *Lectures*, 227)

“A rose is a rose is a rose is a rose.” (Gertrude Stein)

The poem is a list - an inventory of effects and affects.

“Alas a dirty word.” The poem is an equation of sorts. There is an addresser - Stein herself - and an addressee - Alice - “Alas” - B. Toklas, Gertrude Stein’s lover. The poem is a syllogism of sorts, as well, a form of reasoning in which a conclusion is drawn from two given or assumed propositions or premises - Alas - *Therefore* (OED). And it’s also an elucidation of sorts, too, without any emphasis on symbols or metaphors. CHICKEN, at last, “a dirty word” - foul; CHICKEN, alas and therefore a dirty word - “third” - if you count it out: One - CHICKEN - “a dirty word” - one (2) - “a dirty third” (3). It, also - alas, works when you count from the beginning of the sentence to the end: one - a dirty word - 2 - a dirty third - 3 - announcing place once more - *once more* - a dirty third.

A significant distinction is drawn between symbolic and plural meaning. Any symbolic meaning of the word CHICKEN is deferred if not denied altogether. The sentence reads like a list - CHICKEN - a dirty word (foul) - a dirty third - a dirty third - a dirty bird, therefor. “dirty word” and dirty third dirty third and dirty bird all share a visual resemblance, too. Another kind of equivalence and syllogism. A CHICKEN is foul, alas a dirty word, alas a dirty third alas a dirty third; therefore, a dirty bird. But this resemblance is contextual and metonymic. *There for*. Nouns and things are what they are because of where they —. All this makes the object an action or verb - verbal - the action makes it seen.

A PETTICOAT.

A light white, a disgrace, an ink spot, a rosy charm.

Here sound and feeling define an object, A PETTICOAT.

Here sound and feeling define an object, A PETTICOAT. A light white weight a disgrace. Feeling and substance, perception and emotion go together: a light white - a disgrace, an ink spot - a rosy charm. Each perception is independent of the other. Each perception is dependent on the other, as well.

An ink spot : a disgrace; an ink spot : a rosy charm - A PETTICOAT. What one sees and what one perceives and what is felt define it.

What one sees and what one perceives and feels resembles it. The relations though are unstable and subjective. The essence of what A PETTICOAT is is feeling and motion.

ROAST POTATOES.

Roast potatoes for.

ROAST POTATOES.

Roast potatoes for. Grounded.

A WHITE HUNTER.

A white hunter is nearly crazy.

For Hunter S. Thompson

A white hunter is nearly crazy.

A white hunter is nearly red.

A white hunter is read.

A white hunter is dead.

-- February 20, 2005

DRIVING WHEEL by D. King

In *The Secret Books of the Egyptian Gnostics*, Jean Doresse considers the sect of the Kukeans. He observes: St Ephraim had heard of them; so they were already in existence in the middle of the fourth century. (Doresse 1960, 58) Given the number of esoteric belief-systems that Doresse describes, it is remarkable that he singles out as 'strange' that of the Kukeans. In this essay I shall argue that it is the extraordinary half-conceptual quality of the Kukeans' 'dead image' that prompted Doresse's attribution. Further, I shall maintain that the 'dead image' is actually (owing to its shifting, composite nature and to its initial transformation by the God of the Awakened Sea) a motif of change. This change is, however, one of form as well as content, and is thus able to manifest itself in all domains, in all places, and throughout all time.¹ Doresse's book is ostensibly about the recovery, translation, and interpretation of some ancient Coptic papyri, discovered in the forties at Chenoboskion, Egypt. Many of the texts are fragmentary, although the most important text, *The Gospel According to St Thomas*, is largely intact. There are no Kukean texts amongst the papyri; Doresse discusses their beliefs largely for contextual reasons. Formally, then, the Kukeans' beliefs are *hors d'oeuvre* (in Derrida's sense). I have mentioned that the central conception of the Kukeans concerns the 'dead image'. As already implied, because no specific sensory information is given about the image, it is not purely an image at all, but is partly cognitive (one might call it a thought-form). In this regard it is probably best to quote Doresse's summary in detail. It is a citation of Bar-Konai: They say that God was born from the sea situated in the World of Light, which they call the Awakened Sea; and this Sea of Light and the world are more ancient than God. [They also say] that when God was born of the Awakened Sea, he seated himself above the waters, looked into them, and saw his own image. He held out his hand, took [this image] to be his companion, had relations with it and then engendered a multitude of gods and goddesses. They called this the Mother of Life, ¹The reader may suspect a poststructuralist (or even postcolonialist) move, here: if the 'dead image' really can bring about such profound changes, even this essay will not be immune, and could change into something else (for example, a story or play). Cf. the provisionality that arises in Derrida's own texts by virtue of his writing's nature.

and said that she had made seventy worlds and twelve aeons. They added that, at a certain distance from the god who was born of the Awakened Sea, there was a sort of dead image like a statue without movement, without life, without thought or intelligence. The god, who found this hateful, evil and ugly. . . , thought to take it up and cast it far from his presence. But then he said, 'since it has neither the life, the intelligence, nor the thought to make war against me, and seeing that I have no fault to find with it, it would be unjust of me to cast it out: I will therefore give it some of my own strength, of my own mobility and intelligence, and then it will declare war upon me'. (Doresse 1958, 58)

Although the dead image is thus seen only 'out of the corner of the eye', so to speak (and consequently would have appeared more awe-inspiring to the narrative's original recipients), there is an overwhelming impression that it is like a machine ². In today's terms, perhaps not too much of the original narrative's spirit is lost by envisaging a kind of large, circular, single-storey structure resembling a roundabout.³ By implication this would have to be situated on the margins of a desert.⁴ Superficially there could be no motivation to venture near such a machine - yet if the theme of a self-destructing oppositional metaphysics is taken to the limit, eluding the machine would be extremely complex. Perhaps, ultimately, anybody approaching too near the machine would be drawn into the huge meshing cogs and shredded. It is possible to be more specific, although for strategic reasons I shall postpone such a move, perhaps indefinitely. It is worth focusing on the machine itself. A huge, driving wheel entirely of machinery so complex that little daylight is visible through the rusting pawls and worms. Slowly turning worms, making no sound as they mesh against their wheels. The desert sun, high in the sky and searing down on fault lines and low bluffs - bluffs appearing as though knots of umber paint on a canvas. And the ocean beyond those bluffs: perhaps the machine had its origin there, a dozen centuries ago, rising (even then a dark, rusting mass) from spiraling, boiling kelp. Or perhaps the ocean subsided and withdrew from it. Such are the possibilities of an oppositional metaphysics which, by virtue of the notion of play that it incorporates, cannot last for all time. And, of course, I have myself established a relationship with this machine. I am before it, in the dual sense of one who provides an account and one who is in the same frame of reference (and these two senses are not absolutely separable). And so ² Derrida, of course, often typifies an oppositional metaphysics - which the Kukean account exemplifies - in terms of mechanism. See, for

example, his 'Tympan', in *Margins of Philosophy*. 3I say 'circular' because such creation myths typically incorporate the idea of cyclic return. The roundabout is emblematic of play, which can subvert any mechanistic metaphysics - even that which it itself stands for. 4Given that the dead image has its 'emptiness' taken from it, there would seem to be a sense of balance in conceiving at least some of that emptiness as being transferred to the image's environment. Hence, the desert.

there is an inching, not purely textual, past the machine. I long to be able to move farther from it, but it is as though there is a high barrier on my right, impeding my way. But I feel reasonably sure that I can make it. Feigning a relaxed attitude (in case the machine can perceive my apprehension and, despising it, take action) I kneel and draw my finger through the dust. It is the colour of old bones. Given that the dust comprises limestone - the trash of ancient seacreatures - this is not surprising. I wonder whether to cast a handful at the machine. Just looking at it, however, would be a trial. Occasionally, between the meshing cogs there is a tiny bright star, revealing that the desert landscape on the other side of the machine is much like the one on this side, and that the sun has not been wholly occulted. And there are shapes - usually five-pointed shapes, like human figures. As I smooth the dust and edge past the rusting metal, I think of the Kukeans themselves, wondering whether they were indigenous to this area, and picturing them, perhaps contemplating their harvest, statuesque against the sunset. Soon I am a significant distance from the machine. I feel very apprehensive, and I'm conscious of taking one step, then another. This becomes increasingly hard: it is as though there is some force that increasingly presses against me the farther I move from the machine. But there is a dark point on the skyline, and I am resolved to let that occupy my thoughts, let that drive me towards it. Several minutes later I feel more composed. I tell myself I was childish. The machine is behind me, now, and I almost feel able to think light-heartedly about it. Vague recollections of Kafka's "In the Penal Colony", however, replace the lighthearted thoughts. But the force that I initially experienced seems to have reached a plateau, and I am relieved. The machine surely will not follow me. For the first time I wonder exactly where I am. Inexplicably, it is now sunset, and the dusk stars form bright, unfamiliar constellations. Not sure if I can remain awake, I notice that I am seated on a sand-dune, perhaps four metres high, with the sea before me. It is an ancient, ink-coloured sea - perhaps the primeval sea of Tethys (although, of course, the machine is older). The sand-grains are coarse and large - clearly because there has been insufficient time for them to have become ground to the powder of shifting sands. I muse idly whether there are any lamp-shells or other extinct species on the shore. Or maybe I was wrong about the limestone, and the world is dead only in the sense that it does not yet have life. How unfathomable that this whole landscape, and everything it stands for, must vanish! 5 The dunes and the desert, washed away. Whole epochs will have to pass, of course, but the machine testifies that it will happen. Not even Plato's Forms are eternal. And artworks are governed by the Forms: the play, the *Stabat Mater*, the story. Eventually they all become something else, even if only by virtue of the trajectory of allusion and metaphoricity, which is always away from the heart, the centre. I think it fair to say that this is the 'central' theme of Derrida's entire work. "White Mythology" emphasizes the case of metaphoricity and the machine. He says: 5The reader will perhaps have guessed that the 'dark point' on the skyline, mentioned three paragraphs back, is also the machine, and that it is therefore before me as well as behind me. Formally, my not drawing attention to this fact underlines the idea that even the circle of return must eventually decay. As has been remarked by a number of writers, the hermeneutic circle is actually a spiral.

. . . there would be metaphors that are biological, organic, mechanical, technical, economic, historical, mathematical. . . . This classification, which supposes an indigenous population and a migration, is usually adopted by those, not numerous, who have studied the metaphors of a single philosopher or particular body of work. (Derrida 1986, 220; my emphasis) Slowly, I descend the dune and walk in the direction of the infinite, primeval sea.

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FOAMULA by Louis Cabri

Foams forms	Evian foam
Forms foam	Leaving foam going
Form foams	Going, going foam
Foam foams	Foameme's foamk that
Foams, foams forms	Foam key city
The foamillac of foams	Foamdsor's
Forms foam	Infoamation of the foam
By foamage	Is to infoam you
By the foam of	O foameo, stack
Form, form foams	Foam in peace or not
Old man foamer	At foam saws
Foamotic foamiletics foam	(Honk for foam)
Foams, hello	Saw foam
Foam	Saws foam
Afoam for foam	So in foam
Foamin' A (foamen!)	On the word foam (on the word foam)
Gulf foamen	Foamings for dollars
<i>Poluphloisboios foambé</i>	Foamed the foam (and the foam foamed)
With foam	I am foamerican
Foamicidal	Foamterfeit
Foamiacs	Foamy
Giving foam this	Foam me
It's foam alright	Foam me!
Avian foam	My foamies
Natural foam	

Rampike 15/1

Foamonal	Dolly the foam
Have you haagen foam	Foam-out
Hog foam	Foam and out
Today in foamlish	Foo foam
Height as the foamans	Form foams
Do gulfs foam	Forms foam
Foamings for lollards, mallards	Foams forms
Foamen two	Foams, foams
Nobody's foam	Foam, foams
Foamers fee	
Foam fum	
Foambled	
Foam luck	
Foaming right	
Foaming rights	
Foamologo	
Centric foamo	
Foams to pace	
Foam to space	
The Foam	
Face the foam	
Foamous foam	
Foam-a-long foamathon	
Merrygo foamerie	
Foamers foamily	
Foamerid	

2 POEMS by Nicole Markotic

succular

succumb to Winnipeg
suck on combs pegged to winter

snap crackle popsicle python
paste the cracks like clear snake facials

I disguise my wry face into no one knows
I'd die to be your guy – it's fine to know NO

dented rhyme misprints the chance
tendency to hint at a margin miss

set me up for fall / drop / launch / crash
test the pump four times in autumn / droops / leaves / crush

flip the last page then duck
lift past the final peg due to age or elbow tucks

rearview mirrors look closer than a book jacket
cute ears press across kooky thumb tacks

kumbayahed past reasonable history or 60s tunes
come to jaded poet reading his ability as tombed

or jack posts by tucking fliers post midnight
then – sigh

seven slurpees for

underground poets stifle the awning
regroup to piffle in awe as he slings

with a frenzy you trifle with dessert
then rifle with nouns, just

slip in a double negative, purse
lips, nod to couple ablatives

gusto the tempo, open the gap
gussy up for tempura, pen gaping

tag this hailstone gem metallic
got his stones genuine and tall

or not, that's an elephant!
rot, it's hats off, Eli plants his

trim autobiographies for a trap
I outta rim him, forget the strap!

wade through the fire alarm
why slim fires rough arms: la

my wander lust wanders
musty, just like standard wands

prevent emergency tours, and
the agency will pre-empt our vents

leftover wavepools twist flus into the birth canal
left-handed waving can feel twisted inside the cab

6 POEMS FROM BLISSFUL TIMES

by Sandra Alland

<p>Blissful Times (manipulated text by Samuel Beckett)</p> <p>One does not appear to be asking a great deal – indeed at times it would seem hardly possible to ask less of a fellow creature. Whereas actually when you think about it (look into your heart) see the other what he needs: peace, to be left in peace. Then perhaps the moon (all this time) asking for the moon.</p> <p>Morose Once</p> <p>None does vanish to not exist, informing an insignificant breach. No, never (it wouldn't be totally impossible) to command more to a separate object. Whereas fictionally when I don't think about it (don't look out of my mind) ignore the one what she doesn't need: war (to not exist, joined, out). War; now never the sun, none of this space telling of the sun.</p>	<p>Times Blissful</p> <p>A creature, a possible he actually, in perhaps to whereas, it hardly/it indeed, be "fellow." Be asking to appear at, asking to think of, Other. You would ask about the heart, the needs, the times all great, not peace. See peace for moon, one moon, does your look seem less? Deal time into this when. Then what left?</p> <p>Blindworm Timber Limit</p> <p>One dodger nosh apparatus: Tlingit beachcomber aslope a grease cup deanery. Indecipherable at timber limit, it wove seed vessel; hard-headed possessive toady aslope lessons of a felon (credible). Whereas act of God when you third class about italicization. Longeur into young, hearing "seducible the ostracized" (What, he?) Necropolis. Peace officer: "Tlingit beachcomber leery in payment." Theocracy perfumes the monument (allay 13 colonies = time-consuming). Asian flu for the moonlit.</p>
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Blissful Are Out Of Joint

Foot in the grave, good by stealth, a breath of air on the scene.
A fault of good cheer for bread and receiving a stone – l'outrance, strapping wench deal.
Indeed a loose end are out of joint (hurts me more than it does you), give the world to seem
hardly (all) sympathy.
Tell the truth for bread and receive a stone, less pith and moment, queer fish of infinite
jest,
creature.

Whereas actually
all is said and done, could have knocked me down with a feather (no small beer of
myself),
about stands to reason.

Daggers into earliest convenience, in one's mouth.
The finger of God in seamy side of life, things being equal.
A wonderful place the world would be if (*bears his blushing honours thick upon him*) no
introduction

be on his ashes!
Be or not to be; that is the question, in the same boat with in the lurch, an interesting
condition in our time.

And there: perhaps deserving poor. Moon –
things to all men. Is a bloody business, and time again
for bread. And receiving a stone all I know: great unwashed moon.

Blissful Times of the Month

One-night stand does the right thing. Not interested in the opposite sex? Appear to the
knuckle, be excused, asking for your papers. A trois? Great. Certainty: deal from the
bottom of the deck indeed. At half-mast times of the month, "it" would seem hardly
possible to one side. Of the truth: ask for your papers! Less of mature years, à trois,
fellow traveller! (Creature of sale whereas, actually.) When? You-know-what. Think
about *it*. Look after your other interests, into your heart's desire. See a man about a dog.
The worse, other way, what you may call it. He-cow needs help, peace. At last, to the
knuckle (be nice to left-handed) in the box. Peace at last! Then perhaps the worse.
Moon people all the way. This time of the month asking for your papers? For the birds!
The worse: moon people!

THE CELEBRITY RAG: *Opá OPUS*

by STAN ROGAL

“Only the freak endures” -- John Berryman

This is an interactive piece in which celebrity names are encrypted into the poems as homonyms. There are also further clues & allusions to assist in the uncovering. See how many you can “dig up”.

Of course, as the celebrities either pass their 'best before' date or have disappeared from the public forum altogether, the poems are constructed to stand on their own.

What monsters men have needed, they have created, whether primed with pills, pumped with rubber or gone under the knife, the holy wood unchilds every mothered one beyond description; richly christens sow's ear to silk purse & vice versa hauled across the carpet.

Unintended to be churlish, there yawns the great American tragedy: that any fatal beauty dressed down in hair-lip or fat suit is destined for a scar which hardly bears resemblance.

North country beans, beer & boneheads no picnic after two spent days in the valley gone down on a monster plate of oysters, quaffing Chablis, turning on *the beast with two backs* beside a slice of hair pie & creamy thighs encrusted in a rich cheese sauce.

Christ on a stick can't reach it: Italian job or every further heavyweight judged lewd & obscene takes one in the back, two in the head; markets whole burgs trafficked in flesh .

Either monster ball or bear baiting season hauls one dumb-ass bastard after the next over the line & past the limit where north country matter lies charred there upon the wrecked beach & a mare's collar bargains more than it's worth amid the blood glistened rockery.

Fat with cries to an orange two-piece renders hardly bearable in this frieze; fashions weather a dream wherein the top pops & monster puppies take a tumble upon the ass felt.

Any nose knows Hollywood cherishes the rerun as any nose knows is no excuse: as monkey business or Italian job turns foul; mars call girls with *christ almighty* richly fetid apes set to provide a rank realignment in the back seat of a mini Cooper.

Swordfish blues make it any nasty weather, tho, whether taken from behind or howled bare-ass on the floor, chills ease with the thaw & monsters melt to pussycats in the clime. A fragrant throng of cherries situates precisely at the bushy edge; calls this hamlet half-crazed & up in arms over the sweet smell of country matters, unprepared as ever to spark a wild bird or firmly prick its crest in a rickrack beneath the spread.

What comes natural is beside the point at this bizarre, knowing who share lies have the run of it, north country or every other broke mountain set to quake in its boots.

Quite the pretty picture that jerks guile then girl also hates to lead her on; half-way marshal's all aims toward reconciliation that goes for bust somewhere between soft-stuff & longhorns even as the Bible belt steps up a notch to break this mountain's back.

Bible belt cinched tight around the neck is no joke, all in all, & he who hath laid her hath better return to mount that self-same saddle via any handy pathway, broke back or no.

O, Canada...

Oaken dada is now some kind of jaunty, eh? Sporting a flashy red maple leaf tattooed to his forehead & a string of lady fingers lightning up his heavy arse makes a Don all dolled up for the smoke & firewater brigade.

Here accounts liberal foreign service that brings about a noble prize. No peace to this tale of country matters; simply breaks: Let's hear yer beer song! *Chug-a-lug, chug-a-lug.*

Few stranger hauntings on this parliamentary hill contains the germ of death in a bloodied handkerchief, &, while afraid, lures away a partner's wife to an unquiet bed, invokes the spirit of his dead mother, sleeps with ashes of his dog tucked neat inside a whisky bottle.

Free trade a damned funny concept with all knockers headed south & the world's largest undefended boarder sucked up to the nipples for a gut full of frying baloney & *wawa.*

Pardon my French, but, a marriage isn't clear beyond *apparoir* of elegant tableaux, namely: rose in lapel; between teeth; rudely mucked ajar by *fuddle-duddled* falling out across the dance floor – notorious pirouette that flashed a beaver & shook a nation.

Requiring no more than a *pied à terre* tells it true to form, this rolling stone gathering little moss among the conquest: row of magpies sin clear as upskirts in the reveal.

Time to take a stand to regale the body politic, meaning: what corrupted flesh serves to earn old shorts an eager riding? Cycled up shit creek w/o an Uzi takes it on the lip; pops a six-pack of *sildenafil citrate* & pumps an iron fist into the lubed asshole of America.

Nothing personal fashions every atrocity a business venture meant to keep the machinery running at a clip; iron fist in a rubber glove no stench of frog oil can either free or fry.

All rogues stain this faulty erection where power corrupts & absolute power corrupts absolutely, each erstwhile politico member gone tits up in the rank & vile with nowhere apparent any gorgeous wanker butch enough to lay a finger never mind blow a whistle.

Kyoto my ass favours who can't see the forest for the forestry, rather, hasten a row of gals to hang their precious beavers from a flag pole; see who stands up & salutes. *Bonsai!*

Politics divines strange bedfellows & stranger couplings among the hoary elect whose bent prefers a more mean economic: blue figures fingering a nose for the cash shot in this arctic clime; forked tongues all but ripped raw from the stiff standard's ragged swell.

Quick! Raise a stein of raw eggs & ale to this gross conservative that would stave a harp seal for a brief taste of fur pie; charisma of knees & elbows knackered up amid the floe.

C'est la vie, n'est pas? Avril or every further pumped in bustier monthly pop tart all but come of age in time of plague. Not so complicated, really, merely gives the finger to; french fries each hormone-filled sk8erboy or grrrl & drops at the nearest intercourse.

Grown bored with images of carrot-topped girls eventuates unhappy endings, say, nipple rings or viral evenings rocked present between sheets, as: DOA or some less contracted.

Unsealing the Dijon puts a frankly twisted face on an otherwise staid & staunch enterprise, this hot dog's wily aim to neither shut nor shat upon any open sky policy, but, drive all night through pain; pass off kidney stones for gems to the starry eyed.

Through the thin & thick of it, *Viva Las Vegas* remains the battle cry; elevates both *hunka-hunka* gorged paisley & titanic slivered neon to the common rank of glitterati.

To be couth here, all views press to a lie, as: "What goes on in Las Vegas, stays in Las Vegas" busts to rack & ruin, angels ill, bon-bons cold, *La Vida Loca* up to his sweet arse in crotchety marionettes, Lady Luck sailed on to bird crap in the yellowed newsprint.

Evil rolls loving across the tongue; lives precisely at the lip; services ceiling on down; guesses allowance more a seethe of who's ironic; shines a twin of bad ones coming.

PRACTICE LESSONS

by Tanis MacDonald

I register for a teaching workshop for new instructors, and the organizers exclaim that the Humanities are underrepresented, that diversity is good, and that they like to draw their participants from all over the academic community, so welcome welcome. When we introduce ourselves in the larger group, I say *I teach poetry* and a chuckle crawls around the circle and someone says *poor you*.

Before we teach our practice lessons, we watch a scene from *Dead Poets' Society*. Robin Williams tells his students to tear pages from their textbooks. Everyone glows as they praise Williams' inspiring iconoclastic teaching style. I say that the film contributes to the prevailing cultural myth of poetry as simultaneously Byronic and therapeutic, and misrepresents the aims of literature in general and Walt Whitman's poetry in particular. I don't mention Whitman's sexuality. The room is quiet enough.

A woman studying earth and ocean sciences introduces a song for her practice lesson and the group crosses its collective arms against her poor scholarship, forgetting the music students in the Fine Arts building not two hundred meters from where we argue.

A graduate student in architecture is removed from the workshop because, the group leader says, he has insulted another participant. The wounded party, a computer engineer, is surprised to hear of this insult. He asks the leader to repeat the objectionable phrase and the leader will not, suggesting that if we have not been insulted by it, perhaps we should think about our own use of language. I say *that's impossible to think about in the abstract*. The leader says nothing. The engineer presents his practice lesson on *xiangsheng*, the Chinese game of crosstalk. We listen for objectionable phrases.

For my five-minute practice lesson, I teach Frost's "Fire and Ice." A peculiar iambic chill. I teach it twice. I score well although the chemist writes on my feedback sheet, *I still don't get poetry*. She does not laugh when after her practice lesson, I write on her feedback sheet, *I still don't get mass spectrometry*.

The political scientist turns to me at the end of the day and says *it's easy for you, in English you just read books*. I ask what she does, and she talks about gender, Marx, Derrida. I tell her I read the same books. She thinks, *that's impossible*, but says nothing.

Tanis MacDonald has published two books of poetry, *Holding Ground* (Seraphim, 2000) and *Fortune* (Turnstone, 2003). Her scholarly articles have appeared in *English Studies in Canada*, *Canadian Literature*, *Canadian Poetry*, and *Studies in Canadian Literature*. She teaches English and Creative Writing at the University of Winnipeg.

**:VIP at liquid | south beach | february 15th 1999 | 4:25 am
by Sarah Bonet**

mouth on the cool of a glass: i wonder

if you are taut

will you razor

wire s edge

U r perch 'd

i see only the bones of your face

fish thin trans

lucent

lit shadow in the waver of torchflame

Tiki and Palm

Palm and Tiki

[are we out

Of Place?] i seek your determinant

but there is only the table

the table & this place

there is no second, no third of the poet

only this table, &

your hand

gripping camel smokes

3 POEMS by Anne Walker

drought after flood

the words pulling down like
strings of light through brown-green reservoir water
trailing like oak trees in a gullies
along dry chaparral coast
an archaeology to the darker brown
along water's edge.
some words gain weight and pull /
yours to me

yucca shoots' curves like fish-
bones slight on the
hillside's slope—

the fields houses and roads
one could follow in the last long drought
when water once was clear
beneath the boat /

poem from inside your stomach (caught

mostly it looks like swimming in green sea
the ultrasound maps your body
sometimes vines and kelp the technician stops to photograph

the under water continues
and surface appears
you are white on the bed
a rainstorm on the screen
an alien planet.
once a bird an image of a bird a word a humming bird
was detected
and then you could breathe again.

then, truth is

this morning waiting for the water to warm. elbows on the counter cool water poured through
cupped hands. felt the water change (to) warm enough for my face, to wash my face. heard
your voice at first and looked in on my bed. you were cell phone talkin' irish, talking to another
irishman, and i realised how much you annunciate speaking with me. because there when you
went shorthand and i barely understood my name when you said it.

THE TOMBSTONE VANDAL

by Lindsey Bannister

*The family name was a skeleton on aluminum siding. From the roadside I saw letters—
Straw spilled from a drooping O, windstrewn nests.
Grandfather whittled in the barn. He pressed his lips together and dug the blade.*

* * *

It makes sense that he is dead.
His hands were like autumn leaves, speckled in soil. I watched while he tugged stubborn roots,
veins protruding beneath brown skin.

I thought he belonged there, in the cool of the earth.
His sister, Katherine McCloud trembles against blue hospital wall. She asks me if I want to see
the body. I shake my head, picturing the bulge of feet under white sheets.

“If she hadn’t left us...”
“Well,” I reply, “I guess you’ll be the next to go.”
I turn towards the corridor.

* * *

*It toppled onto the floor—
Red-brown like the burnt tint of pine needles.*

The farmhand said dams were flooding the fields.

I jabbed it with my foot, mouth gaping.

* * *

They bury him between his wife and my mother, under draping cedars. I remember these faces
from two years ago—the fat Presbyterian wipes dry cheeks with folded Kleenex. This time, she does not
weigh the casket with a stare.

Reverend Brown gasps his eulogy, “... a fond remembrance of the life of John Stryk-” he pauses,
clearing his throat. This is the last time Reverend Brown can wrestle with the family name. Katherine
conceals her face, flushing silently beneath creased hankerchief.

Leroy Skinner stands, denim jacket adorned with feathers and scraps of cloth. After the service,
he approaches. His breath stings my nose.

“Too bad about your grandfather, hey? You remember me. I used to work for him you know?
Back when you were a small white haired thing. Used to help him with the livestock... you know, when
they died...”

I nod and turn my face. His name is etched in granite. I scan the letters with my eyes. Leroy
pins me with his gaze.

“Can’t believe they fit the whole name on that little stone.” He coughs and winks. Katherine
takes me by the arm.

* * *

When they buried cattle, grandfather sent me inside. I pictured hooves dragged in dirt:

*I saw a dead chicken,
feathers lined with dust*

*And I saw a dead frog,
like a stone in mud*

But I never saw eyelids speckled with flies until the white calf rose from sand.

* * *

Leroy’s brother peers from a plastic cameo, face flushed before a brick wall. The best picture
they could find of Morris Skinner was a faded polaroid from his wedding album. This was his best suit: a
white tuxedo. Katherine had placed this wreath beside grandfather’s stone. A week later, it adorned
Morris’ grave.

Morris. He used to visit my mother, to the delight our neighbours:

“T.B.” snorted the fat Presbyterian, “No one dies of T.B. anymore. And don’t tell me those rottweilers protected the house. That shack wasn’t worth a cent.”

I saw them together. Morris and mother. They were laughing in the kitchen. I turned away. His face was a toothless skull. He gave me candy, stuck to my palm, which later collected hair in a waste basket.

* * *

Leroy’s Truck:

*Coke can
Mouse trap
Wire
Cigarette
Hook
Rope
Burlap
Scissors
Scalpal*

“This,” he explained, *lifting a long blade*, “severs the tongue...”

* * *

“An old man,” says Katherine, clutching my elbow, “should not bother himself with young women.”

“He only nodded. That won’t make me pregnant.”

Katherine curls her lip. “I don’t like those men who watch you...” She speaks slowly, molding syllables in her mouth. The Presbyterian ladies do not consider her to be a foreigner. She never turns when addressed by her given name.

My mother was similar. I only heard her chatter, once— that time with Morris; words rupturing from mouth.

* * *

“Your mommy ever take you to see the white angel?”

I shook my head.

“That’s a shame—” he winks, “You should ask her. Ask her about the angel—”

* * *

Leroy lives in an apartment above the hardware store. During daylight, he sits on a bench, plastic grocery bags at his feet.

At dusk, I see him cross the railroad tracks.

At noon, the Presbyterian ladies eat sandwiches in my shop. The fat one gives a tiny smile; she picks change with stiff fingers.

“...Gladys says she went up to his apartment. You know, for donations. She says it smells something awful.”

“I heard the same. It’s a wonder the rats don’t make off with him...”

“...the place is stuffed with old newspapers. Just stuffed.”

“I don’t like the way he looks at me—”

“She hates him. Just hates him.”

“Well, I don’t blame her. After her niece...”

The fat Presbyterian snorts and whispers. They lean forward, devouring her words.

* * *

I was in the school bus when it happened—

I squinted at the horizon:

The cedar trunk was a twisted spine over children’s graves.

The bus passed. I looked back— windows obscured by mud.

* * *

The angel is tangled in graffiti.

Katherine’s voice wavers. She presses a handkerchief against her mouth. I lean closer, placing a hand on the stone.

“You can see it from the road.”

The angel emanates from earth. Green streaks like a mesh of vines.

“You think some kids did this?”

“I don’t know.”

Katherine dabs her eyes.

“Your grandfather— he wanted a boy in the family, you know—”

“Maybe he didn’t want it.”

Katherine clenches my elbow. She peers into my face, pupils magnified behind lenses.

“You know European men. You know how they are.”

I nod, gazing at the children’s graves. Slabs, white and faceless, surround the marked angel.

* * *

“Who’s the father?”

“A man—”

“Well, I figured that.”

“You’re too young to ask—”

Mother pressed a finger over her lips.

* * *

I head to the church bazaar.

Hesitant, I decide to invite Katherine. She hates the Orthodox church. The basement smells of bread and cabbage.

She answers the door in a crisp navy blouse. She’s sorry, but the Presbyterian ladies are having a charity function. The screen door closes with a sharp bang.

I enter the church. Cabbage rolls through nostrils. A clamour of dishes. Kerchiefed women with onion skin complexions.

Low accents flow into a soft murmur broken by belches and laughter. I sit in a plastic chair. The long beard of a former bishop curls inside a golden frame. He watches me eat.

When I see Leroy, I pretend to analyze the bishop’s brow. Leroy drops his bags on the floor and sits down:

“Hey, never thought I would see you here. Guess you share your grandmother’s taste in food...”

I remember my grandmother’s dinners. She laughed and scrubbed plates with red hands.

Katherine and mother sat stiffly, shifting forks.

“...but you know, wherever the food is free, I’m there...”

His breath stings nose. Bags rattle against my foot. I mutter an excuse to leave. He pats my back, “Take it easy, there— listen, I’m sorry ‘bout your brother’s stone. There are some real stupid kids out there. I saw it, you know, when I was visiting Morris. Don’t know if you remember him...”

I shook my head.

“Ah, well. Say ‘hi’ to Katherine for me. She knew Morris. ‘Used to visit your mother...”

Fingers brush lightly against my sleeve. His eyes are moist and yellow.

“I knew your mother well. She and Morris were good friends. They had a lot in common, those two. Say ‘hi’ to Katherine... Let her know I’m still around.”

Later, I sense his presence. His pace is slow, arms heavy. He follows me with lowered head for two blocks then disappears behind a train.

* * *

Grandfather never left the house on Sundays. He liked to write in a green notebook, pencil pinched between yellow fingertips.

His handwriting was jagged.

Sunday afternoons he watched cattle graze. Reaching through barbed wire, he touched the head. The white calf shuffled beyond his reach.

* * *

Before I leave town, I hear about the suicide. A black box in the obituaries does not account for coffee shop lore: “...but to die, like that... it would squish you like a bug...”

“Why, I think that’s the point...”

I remember what Leroy said; about Morris and mother having a lot in common. I decide not to mention him to Katherine. I hardly see her anymore, since she started work at the hospital gift shop.

She likes the balloons, rippled reflections.

Katherine forgot her brief crusade against the tombstone vandal. The angel lifts its faded mark: the gnarled cedar a sole visitor.

Leroy’s bench is vacant. He is often stands where the street crosses railway tracks, eyes fixed on a certain spot.



George Bowering with a cup of aromatic Columbia Espresso (photo: K. Jirgens)



Frank Davey with bpNichol image on T-shirt pausing for photo with Aritha Van Herk (photo: K. Jirgens)