

A Few Words Will Do

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LIONEL KEARNS

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*In memory of C.F. Kearns:
author, pilot, outdoorsman, conservationist, father.*

CONFESSION

More a matter of occupation than ownership,
my life is a frame I am trying to fill, a stage
that I stumble on, a shower in which I stand
naked, a squall, a swollen river I dive into
before it turns to ice. More in it than of it, I am
floating through it, or against it, or with it,
as it spirals down the unstopped drain.

My life is a metaphor mixed by the tipsy
tender of the bar, its elegance undistinguished
from the rubble of discarded texts and old
correspondence. This life is a midden where I
rummage for lost tools and shards of broken pots.

Yet I am not alone. There are others here,
swimmers, and skaters, and dancers, and there is
love, that medium of action and design
that delivers meaning to everything we do.

My life is the evening sky just before sunset.
It is full of bats and swallows feeding on tiny
creatures of the air. It seems continuous
for the moment.

LOCKED IN

Why is it now
and not then?

Why am I here
and not there?

Why am I
I and not
you?

THE OLD ROUTINE

I could tell you of events so complex
they would turn your eyeballs into pie crust,
clog your ears with seaweed, glue
your nervous fingers into a sticky fist.
But what of that now? I am here
on this rickety porch where years ago
I would sit quietly writing you a poem.
Now I am doing it again, perhaps
writing the same poem. Everything
grows and explodes and remains the same
as I jump out of my dying body just
in time to see it again, the world.

THIRTY BELOW

Full moon. Snow crust. Trees
black against the sky. Suddenly
the wind rattles by.

CAPTIVITY

How falling snow takes a town at night
in its muffle, takes you, too,
standing there under the street light
alone watching giant shadows silently
crash down. And you stay there so long
your ears pick up the tiny tinkle-tink-tink
above you of snowflakes breaking
on the metal lamp-shade. Squeak-slap
squeak-slap squeak-slap, someone
in galoshes walks by, then fades utterly
into the thickness of whiteness
of darkness. Snowflakes falling
on your face, melting in your eyes,
filling your footprints with stillness.
Two streets away a truck with loose chains
clanks rhythmically into soft oblivion.

PART OF WHAT IT MEANS

A fresh cougar skin on the fender
of the old Plymouth, and a boy,
about three years old, sitting on it,
his father standing to one side
with their friend Max Ewart,
the brims of their hats turned down
all around. This photograph bringing
parts of it back to me now: soft fur
and the smell of blood, the low roar
of Cottonwood Falls under the ice,
snow piled up beside the ponds
and other familiar imagery outside
and inside the Nelson fish hatchery:
trout eggs in troughs, fingerlings
in fish tanks, tools and truck-chains
and barrels and dip-nets. I remember
men's voices just before it happened:
someone shouting as I put down my head
on the hood of the car and touched my tongue
to the shiny chrome sailing ship, feeling it
freeze to the metal, my father grabbing my head
and holding it there while I tried to scream
and pull back, but he held me firm, and finally
the warmth from his hands thawed the bond
between skin and steel, and I came away
with my mouth intact.

The original forms of that scene now totally
obliterated: the men dead, the hatchery and falls
replaced by a freeway cloverleaf, and the boy
changed beyond all recognition into this man
who studies the picture and somehow recovers
part of it, reclaims the pain and the nausea
and the terror of a father's bewildering behaviour.

And then understanding it gradually
hours, days, years later I think we
talked about it many times and that too
is part of it, part of what it means.

DEFINITION

Standing here on the wharf
this cold January morning,
I watch a family of wood ducks
swim by and disappear with little
inaudible plops, then reemerge
in shimmering horizontal halos.
Perfection is being totally adequate
at any given moment. I have known
perfection in your presence. Don't
expect perfection to last. It is
always now. When I look up
two hawks are turning, turning,
high in a distant sky.

HOCKEY IS ZEN

Momentary *satori* as Frank
takes the pass on the right wing,
fakes a shot to deke the defenceman
and fires the puck
into the lower left corner
of the net, the whole play
so quick I would have missed it
if I'd blinked an eye.

Frank handles his hockey stick
like a delicate instrument, a perfect
extension of physical self,
and I, sitting high above the ice,
think of a Samurai swordsman:
elegance and exact precision,
the gestures executed
in a flash of instant decision.

Frank rarely smiles when thinking
about hockey, and is sometimes
troubled after the game
by the memory of a wrong move.
But on the ice his skates
dance and cut patterns that are
the intricate and perfectly realized
choreography of a mind
honed and polished by the action
of immediate response.

THAW

Brown patches growing in the grimy snow,
smell of new earth. Bright sky. Sunshine.
Spring! And me, digging out my ball glove
or oiling up my bicycle in the basement,
though out on the street the kids are still
playing shinny in the slush.

But now, here, in this sunless city
of well-swept streets and immutable concrete,
I find myself carrying a crate of books
to the used book dealer, getting
barely enough for a bottle of cheap wine,
and a couple of litres of gas.

RITUAL

On the day before spring, the pale winter sun
melts the snow and directs a small boy
to launch his stick canoes in the gutter rapids
at the side of the road, the current swirling them
under the overhangs of dripping ice, past cliffs,
through canyons, on down toward the whirlpool
above the storm sewer culvert.

On the day before spring, a man stands
in the pale warmth of the February sun, watching
a small boy racing his boats at the roadside.
Both of them are experienced hands in this kind
of navigation, with mud on their boots
for the first time in three months of winter.
And suddenly the bare tree branches
are full of noisy birds.

This is the day before spring, and a small boy
and a man are shooting the dangerous rapids
of an early run-off. The boy asks how long
will it take for his boats to reach the ocean?
And the man, who knows the question, does not
know the answer. Birds. Slush. Buds on the bushes.
A puck among the emerging debris. And in the air,
the hint of rotting cabbage.

It is always the same on the day before spring
and marbles and bicycles, as the warm wind
melts the old snow and slowly bares last fall's
dead leaves to the slanting light. It is always
the same for this boy and this man
who present themselves each year, performing
the ritual without nostalgia or regret,
with the ice dripping and the snow melting
and the stick boats racing toward the sea.

THE DIFFERENCE

Two dragon flies in tandem clatter and dart
above the lovers. Summer, the land
hot and alive, and they are lying against it,
grass, leaves, ferns, small sticks impressing
their bodies. They are close to it all,
feeling it happening, being a piece of it,
worms under the soil, bees in the flower-tops,
flies on a damp patch of crushed stalk
putting down their spawn, which the ants
carry away in a straight line across her
left ankle. He notices a ripe salmon berry,
reaches up slowly, plucks it, tastes
its warmth, its sharp, tart, sweetness.
A single mosquito inserts its needle nose
into his thigh, then swells up with blood
and flies away from the itch. Is this
all a kind of ritual display in their honour?
Here love is no more or less erotic than
growth and decay and obsessive renewal,
like hornets building grey paper spheres
from masticated fence-post maché
under the eaves of the old cabin. All this,
a contrast to those discrete couplings
in air-conditioned apartments. Here
where everything counts, the busybody
no-see-ums are seeing to it
that even drops of sweat are put to use.

THE LANGUAGE OF BEES

for Marcus Bastos

She is dancing on the wall of the hive
the old vertical six-legged samba
that will tell her industrious sisters
exactly how far and in which direction
to find the sweet heart of the flower patch:
seventy metres south-southeast by east
to the nearest hundredth degree
as the sun stands at its angle in the sky.
How is it done? Culture or genetic coding?
What would Noam Chomsky say?

(Aggressive Brazilian bees advance
two hundred kilometres a year,
bringing their own bee dialect, their own
traditions, habits, values, life styles.
A relentless movement northward
despite armed guards on the U.S. border.
Rumours of an attack on the Pentagon!)

Back to that dance—is there poetry
in their shuffle? Do they add a touch
of elegance, a twitch of emotion?
Not likely I'd say. Theirs is straight
utilitarian prose, with all its built-in
redundancy insuring the message
arrives intact, the information exact.

The poetry of bees occurs elsewhere:
a romance in the sky—the queen pursued
by a swarm of competing suitors
to a final mid-air consummation,
the ecstatic male exploding in pieces
as the sperm-bomb hits the egg-mass.

RECYCLED POEM

You know the story. The matches
are forbidden, so the little boy
takes the matches secretly
out of the house one afternoon
and does what he has dreamed of doing.
Secluded, where no one can see him,
he carefully selects a match, strikes it,
touching some grass which smokes then
goes out. The second time
there is a thin bright flame
under the wisp of smoke, the flame
running down a stalk of dry grass,
jumping to another, burning brighter,
jumping again, spreading to other
dried stalks. It smells like
dry grass burning. The boy
pulls together some more grass
and puts a few little twigs on top
to feed it. The ecstasy of success.
It is burning. His own fire. He watches
it. You know the story: soon
the whole hillside is on fire
and delight is turning to terror
that lasts for thirty years and finally
turns into a poem. And what
is this to you and what is it
to me and why do I say it is
about time? Because

I knew the boy.
I know the man.
I read the poem.
I saw the fire.

ENDURANCE

A piece of twisted metal in the dry bunch grass
where my grandparents' house once stood.
It seems to be an oven door, the trademark
barely visible. I want to carry it back,
but my uncle snorts, "Nothing here at all."

It's from the old wood stove in the kitchen,
he tells me, kicking the turf and wandering off
in another direction. It is nothing to him
that a piece of metal can last for eighty years.
He does not understand my excitement.
He had seen that thing so many times,
but it's just junk now. He is impatient to leave.

My uncle is right. It is less amazing
than this old man himself, who has come
so far, and now returns to a certain spot
with me and a few remaining memories.
More interesting things for him to consider
than a piece of twisted metal. Look at him,
bent and gnarled from hard living, the last
remaining brother of that large family,
the witness of all those events, hesitant
now, in the middle of a vacant field.

FALL GUY

Leaves in the gutter.
A torn show bill. And that dead
sparrow, stiff with frost.

COMPOSITION

Frost melting in the sun, bright blue
fall-morning sky, still nippy cold.
I run down to get water. Two whisky-jacks
in the brush, skim of ice at the lake edge.
I pack the water back up the trail.

Fried egg and bacon smell
coming from the tent. My old dad
with matted hair and grey whisker stubble
bends over the Coleman stove
in his woolly undervest. He
fries rice, boils coffee. We eat.

An hour earlier, just before sunrise
we were lying there warm
in our sleeping bags, listening to
someone chopping wood
on the other side of the valley,
each stroke distinct, echoing once
in the distance. "Carries for miles
when it's this cold," he said.

While the tent-canvas dries in the sun
I go down to the lake to shoot at a can
with the twenty-two. He puts his foot
on a stump, takes out his notebook
and writes something down.

TROPHY

There were no grouse that day, but because
we were hunting I had to shoot something,
so I shot a jay as blue as the autumn sky
as he sat on a branch above me in the yellow
glow of the leaves. I was eight years old,
and my father was teaching me how to shoot
grouse in the head so as not to spoil the meat.
But this killing was not for food. I wanted
a trophy. One feather I pulled from the bird's tail
as I held it warm and limp in my hand.
This feather I put in my hunting hat
and I glanced at my father and behind him
I glimpsed the jay's mate gliding, circling through
the darkening tree tops. "Better shoot that one too,"
said my father. "You shouldn't leave her alone."
But I couldn't get a shot at her, and we left
with the knowledge that I was now
a small sure source of sorrow in this world,
and my father, who was teaching me, said nothing.

Where is that father? Under the old earth.
Where is that place? Under the new lake.
Where is that boy? Inside an old man.
Where is that feather? Inside the boy's mind.

SUNSET

Someone is singing in the park,
full round syllables filling up
the emptiness. He walks quickly,
singing *O Sole Mio*, leaving
as a sign of his absence this
small patch of balanced stillness.
The curved sky in the west
is a pale memory of day. Street lights
flicker on, and traffic murmur
cancels out another distinct moment.

SOMETIMES

you are at
the beginning
and sometimes
at the end.

Sometimes
you are
somewhere
in between.

And when
you stop
and look around
and notice
that it's just like
every instant
of every other
sometimes,

sometimes
it's all wrong
and sometimes
it's just right.

ALL THERE IS

there and then	here and then
there and now	<i>here and now</i>



CONDOLENCE

The sentimental time traveller
jumps back thirty years and cries
for his children, absent
because they have not been born.
Back another thirty years
and his parents do not love him
because he has not yet arrived.
The absence that precedes
is the absence that follows.

INFINITY

for bp

*Garland is singing
somewhere over the rainbow
Judy*



NOW

If the past is regret
and the future
nothing but anxiety,
what is the present?
Perhaps it is
everything else.

TAKING YOUR TIME

In these high buildings
time is cornered and bent
around ninety-degree angles,
stretched, collapsed, zapped
fast as light, bouncing back
from satellite to be
fingered and formatted
on notepad or screen.

But there is another time
the river takes descending
from the mountains to the sea,
slow time that cuts a gorge
through rock, or deposits
a delta plain. Consider
the circular push of a tree
outward in time, the cycles
that are time in the teepee.

We carry time
in our heads, keep it
on the bookshelf,
put it on film or tape
and roll it up
or spread it on a disk.

Time locks.

Time bombs.

Time and a half.

Time and again.

Time for tea.

The last time I saw Paris
he was getting hell-and-gone
out of here.

WHEN

Now I'm thinking of a certain poem
that has a *now* in every line. You know
the kind that says to *Be here now!*
or *Now is the beginning of your life!*
The point of power is Now! But I'm
keeping this poem a secret for now,
though I now know how this poem
ends: soon all the *nows* will disappear
and your own *now* will then become
someone else's memory. When? Now.

TRAP

How many minutes before death,
he asks himself, imagining time
like a line on a graph, measured off
in equal segments. And somewhere
along that line there's a point (he
doesn't know where but he knows
it's there) indicating his own
departure. Please notice his
terminology. Where is he going?
Is he moving along the line
towards the point? Or is the line
moving the point towards him?
Others find themselves trapped
by prison walls, laws, wars
or even love. But this poor soul
is trapped by a line on a page.

MICHELLE IN TROIS PISTOLES

On the radio Yves Montand was singing
the lyrics of Jacques Prévert. What time
was it then? What time is it now? We
were young and you were so pretty
out on the island where the Basques
cooked whales, or after Mass
in the sunshine on the steps of the church
with its silver spires, while down on the plage
the waves were washing away our footprints.

Beyond those piles of dead leaves
we share a melody, a memory,
and a few lines from Prévert's poem,
aware at last that we grow old,
knowing now what time it is,
knowing now what time is.

RETURN

As the outward flight of the arrow of time follows the full cosmic curve back to its unique point of origin, divers shoot feet first out of the frothing water, trees collapse into buried nuts that burst from the earth's crust, jumping into place on overhanging branches, coffins, freshly disinterred, give up their contents amid lugubrious ceremonials of church and funeral parlour, before the reverse ride to the hospital, where bedside technology animates the dreary corpse that grows from mere decrepitude through health to vigorous youth and on towards perfection and innocence of a tiny baby, which rams itself into its loving mother's living body, and there dissolves in biological union until all that remains is the splitting of its last cell and the extraction, through the father's penis, of the essential sperm, which he absorbs back into his body, and then that mother and that father in their turns, shrink towards union with their parents, and they towards theirs, and on until the last remnants of humanity are drawn back to the scrotum of a common ancestral Adam, down into the womb of the one old African Eve, growing younger with the rest of creation, as individuals shed distinctiveness and mutations fall away and species merge in the stream line of converging chromosomes and liberated genes, and life devolves into that one original cell awash in the steaming broth of primordial ocean, the elements shining pure in the heat of concentration, as planets spiral towards their stars swirling into centres of imploding nebulae, and everything folds in upon its own intensity, as matter cracks to give up its last, simplest constituents of deep energy, the total universe falling together into immeasurable density and coherence of the one ultimate whole infinitesimal singularity.

MOMENTS

She breathes peacefully in her sleep, murmurs
when I kiss her cheek. I hold her fragile body
in my arms and think: here is my life
in this warm space, this time and place:
my circumstance, which defines me
by what I touch: her face, her skin, her taste
and scent, the sheets, the air, the obscure shapes
in this familiar dark, rain on the window pane,
the ticking of the clock.

ABSTRACTIONS

You have no time
no time anymore
to listen to me.

In fact you don't
have time enough
to write your poems.

But stop there stop
and think about
what you are saying.

Time is not some
thing to possess.
Better to say

you do not have
enough of yourself.
And when you

understand time,
you will
understand love.

INTIMATIONS

I watch you standing in the chilly
morning sunlight, an expression
of that sunlight, the clear blue sky
as your aura. Last night you said
winter is closing in, and put on
a long woolen scarf that hung
down between your naked breasts,
the tassels touching your thighs.
And when I laughed, a tiny moth
seemed to fly up out of my mouth,
and you said, oh, I saw your spirit.

LINES FOR GERRI

These lines jump from the tips of my stiff fingers to explore the circled universe of memory. They follow the outlines of distant mountains, the edges of leaves in the sunlight, the jagged fractures of crystalline thought. They snap to the vague silhouette of the horizon as it recedes from your grasp. They follow the troubled routes of angels who dispense wispy messages of hope to the afflicted, appearing in the evening sky as luminous vapour trails dispersing gradually like clouds of spent desire. At daybreak these nebulous lines gather again to illuminate the edge of a coastline that grows longer as you measure it. They are the weft of history flying through the warp of time as every living thing renews itself in the next generation. These threads are straws in the biblical mortar, grass in the swallows' nest under the eaves, mossy paths that lead from here to then, thin precarious wires strung through the forest between now and there.

And when this circuitry is complete, when each point on the grid is joined to its corresponding opposite number, when the last ones and zeroes have fallen into place, and the unobtrusive hum of background radiation moves into prominence as a slow symphony of cosmic bliss, these tangles of intent will resolve quietly into simple links of love. And on that designated night when the north wind moans, and a gnarled cedar branch rubs against the thin pane of your bedroom window, these lines will merge with the intricate map of your moist palm.

DOROTHY

Crossing the field behind our house,
I shouted for her to hurry up, and used
a new word I'd learned from my friends.

That was when she clobbered me.
I couldn't believe it. The anger
in her face that I had never seen.

Another memory: lying in bed beside her
as she sang me to sleep, the pure warmth
and pleasure of being there, the closeness.

Once when we were camping she got up
in the night and chased the bear away
with a broom. Tooth marks on the cookie tin.

She taught me to say my prayers, first
the Our Father, then the Hail Mary, then
the Glory Be. How could it be otherwise?

When she talked of being young herself
I did not believe her. The photographs
spoke of something else, of a child

I did not know. My mother
was like the sky. I did not believe
she would die.

WITH MY DAUGHTER

Missy and I
are visiting
the horses,

or watching
heavy equipment
moving earth,

or dancing
in the Public Dreams
parade.

We know
that we know
very little,

sharing
a few moments
in the sunshine

at the edge
of nothing,
happy.

Some said what
a tragedy. But they
were wrong.

MIRACLE

Though cotton sheets replaced the hay, and only
an anxious father nuzzled the mother, still
the baby struggled into the light, and then,
right there before our very eyes
gulped air, screwed up its face, and hollered out
its own announcement of what had taken place.

And as with any birth, the angels sang
and glory shone about them everywhere.

1963

Watching the ambiguous people turning away
from the anti-nuclear petitioners,
I am filled with wordless imperative.

She and I are still living
in this house on the corner.

In these days of vapour trails and statistics
we raise a few flowers and children
as fast as we can.

MYSTIQUE

The image behind the presence
(the presence perceived, the image conceived)
the immaculate ideal, the announcement of hope,
the relinquishment of anger, the energy
of every living and inanimate thing expressed
in the wind and the bite of a flea,
the smooth pebble of evolution, the delicate
leaf of a petrified tree, the first replicating gene.
And if it is only that: an image, that is enough.

uniVerse
or
THE BIRTH OF GOD

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MEDITATION

for Maya

Words, sensations, thoughts, sounds, smells, associations, connections, patterns, pieces, pictures, or signs, or messages, coming at me, coming to me, passing through me, and I am talking and thinking and walking. Endless movement and clatter inside and out.

In the swirl the constant noise wears me down as I struggle to keep up. But you sit there doing nothing at all, present and quiet and alive. It is simple being yourself, being a body sitting awake, a mind emptied of all that clutter. You breathe evenly and remain energy stilled at a point called here and now. And that is peace. And that is you.

QUESTIONS

Who is to say they are not happy now?

Who is to say they are not happy?

Who is to say they are not?

Who is to say they are?

Who is to say they?

Who is to say?

Who is?

Who?

?

BUNK

for Gunnar Harding

Literature, said Northrop Frye, is made from other literature. But I wanted to be original, writing about old Wo Lee the market gardener who shoveled elephant poop off the baseball diamond the morning after the circus pulled up stakes and disappeared. You translated it into Swedish, and years later, recalled the image in a poem about Bunk Johnson, the trumpet player from New Orleans who traveled in a circus that left behind an elephant turd big as a soup bowl on a small town's deserted main street. In Thailand, where there are few circuses, but many elephants, that stuff is made into Pachyderm Parchment, a quality paper used for expensive books of poetry.

FOR YOU

Apart from the trauma at the beginning
and the agony at the end,
apart from the anomaly of being
someone instead of someone else,
apart from the muddle of occupying
middle ground, and the fear of losing it,
apart from every minute that is not
the present moment, I remain
apart from you, and independent
again, and lonely, here
by the edge of the water,
with the rocks and the seagulls ...
a moment to share, this, what
can I say? I am here. Waiting.

THE man who reminded her of the
MAN who reminded her of the man
WHO reminded her of the man who
REMINDED her of the man who reminded
HER of the man who reminded her
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who reminded him of the woman WHO
etc.

NATALIA

Jolted by an imagined glimpse
of long black hair, or that
tingling on my neck like breath—
you, lurking in the murky nowhere
just beyond my ragged rim of light.

SAN ANDRES TUXTLA 1958

Coffee beans in the morning sun,
a giant hog asleep between the trays,
and once Alfonso climbed the hill
and talked and stayed. And in the afternoon
we sat in the finca sipping coconuts and rum
with faint guapango rhythms drifting up
from some marimba band down in the village.
Small talk at the stall of Mama Lupita,
funny stories over at the cantina, a ride to
Catamaco, reflections on the lake.

And because it was Sunday night
the big band had already set up in the plaza
and everybody was there jumping up
to mambos and cha-cha-chas, the trumpets
bouncing off the cathedral wall, crackling
into the night. It was part of the good life:
friends and their families, all you could eat
and drink every day. And there was romance
in that town, too. But that was a matter
of brothers and guns and dying young
among fists and curling lips.

DEPARTURES 1955

Unsuccessful level-crossing races
with trains. Multiple Saturday night
pile-ups on sharp corners. Cars smashing
into trees and telephone poles, careening
over the bluffs at Beasley. Bozo drove
through the guard rail of a bridge.
Peter's car went off the end of the ferry.

In a small town a car is a big thing—
a way of being a man (the hardness of car
for the softness of skin). Views of that
landscape through the windshield. Just
to sit there and drive out of town
is a big thing, if you aren't coming back.

THE BUSINESS

She wanted it all but
was too busy
having it
to get on
with the business
of getting it.

He too wanted it all but
was too busy
getting on
with the business
of getting it
to have it.

THERAPY

She lives in the past, polishing
memories, smiling, crying, recounting
the time, telling a wearisome tale.
He seems to live in the present, no
conscious sense of what happened to him
hidden away in his head, though it
pinches his voice and curls his lip
and even comes out when he walks. It
contorts and controls what he feels,
and he doesn't feel good
and he doesn't know why.
How to deal with it? What to do
about what they've done, dealing
and doing and breathing and feeling.
What if they did? What if they dared
to reach out and touch and forgo
what they are, what they've been, and be
warm and human and here right now
for a moment together alone and alive.
This is the point to begin.

VOCATIONS

One of the poets
became a carpenter.
Began building houses
instead of poems.

At least you can
live in them,
he explained.

THE GAP

The man walking with words in his head,
the woman talking with words in her mouth,
the child watching and crying and trying
to make sense of shape and sensation and sound,
emerging and merging, vivid or vague,
the connections never complete, their selections
imperfect because they're impatient to wait
for a choice, child and woman and man
crying and talking and walking their words,
attempting to stem the stream of impression,
to reduce the gap that exists between
the lights that light up their murky heads
and the forms that form in front of their eyes.

But I'll tell you now this trick is not
accomplished with mirrors or magic lenses,
but with a common though complex device
designed for the purpose of lying: language.

BIRNEYLAND

Rising late the first morning after a good night's sleep,
we eat and go down to carry water up from the spring.
Slowly city poisons rinse from bodies and minds.
After lunch, walking back from the old cemetery,
Maya and I lose our way and end up high on the cliffs
overlooking the sea. Freighters and ferries
are dodging fish boats and sounding their horns
as they enter Active Pass. We salute the water,
the sun, the sky, the islands, and life itself
that snaps dried gorse seed pods beside the path,
twitches the chattering chipmunk on a twig,
sends a little snake skittering into the leaves.
Hot weather scent of balsam pitch. We stretch out
in the shade, and afterwards climb down
to the rocks for a cold swim. When we get back
to the cabin, Earle is still typing. Maya takes out
her sketch pad, and I go out on the porch to catch poems
as they come zinging in on the wind. Later that evening
we talk about Kootenay Lake and the old stern-wheelers
Earle and I both knew when we were boys. The moon
comes up and lays down a silvery path across the water
to our feet. It is an old story. I had almost forgotten.

CONTRA DICTION

At worst I think poetry
only a hobby, an activity
similar to the youthful assembly
of silent model airplanes,
—my mother commenting: “So
constructive and it teaches something
too.” My father at his guns,
clearing his throat in reply.

EVIDENCE

Poems like fingerprints,
words worked into whorls
and lines of force
to express that entity,
that particular existence,
one among all others,
distinct and inimitable:
your marks left upon
the surface of the world.

GRATUITY

The poem crashes down
during the night of the big wind,

to be discovered next morning
among fallen branches and other
debris, a thing apart,

to be used or discarded,
or kept on the mantel as decoration,
or thrown into the fire.

AESTHETIC

It touches you there, touches you right there, so that you stop, and for a moment while a small electric current rushes down your spine and tingles your guts you know that you are alive. Art is not something inside or outside of life. It is more of a shape that life sometimes assumes, like a stick with one end sharpened into a point.

GENESIS

Cluttered syllables, words curling
above my bed in curious combinations
as I lie alone and listen to the lies
it whispers in my head, the autonomous
poem shaping itself and falling gently
out of the dark, uncalled for, free.
I hear it breathe. I feel it touch my face.
What can I do? What is happening?
The poem in the darkness is you.

CROSSED WORDS

language**e**

language

lan**g**uage

language

lan**gu**ish

lan**gu**ish

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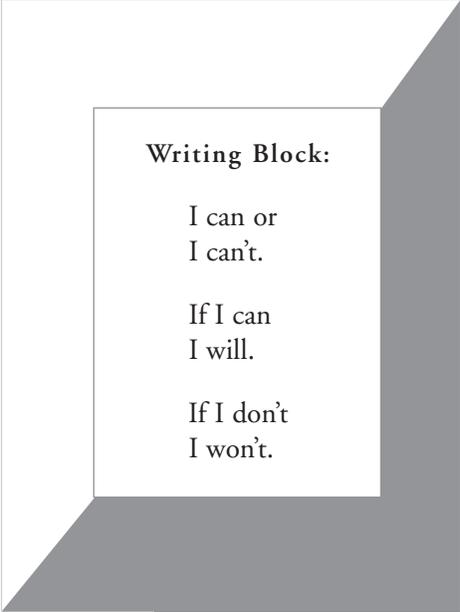
lan**gu**ish

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NO EXCUSES, BUDDHA

To say *I don't feel like it* is irrelevant.
To say *I don't want to* is what counts.
You can't control feeling, so ignore it.
Wanting is what gets you there.
And wanting is a voluntary act.

Isn't it?



Writing Block:

I can or
I can't.

If I can
I will.

If I don't
I won't.

AMBITION

Its origins seem trivial: anger
and the resolve to show them:
the brother who always won,
the parents who were never always
there, the boy who forgot her.

And it becomes her habit, her
style, her life, though now
the brother is a drunk, the parents,
both dead, and the boy
old, broken down, forgotten.

Though it continues to wake her
at six, drives her to work, directs
her practice, enriches her estate.
It makes her famous, feared,
kills her.

INFLATION

The balloon gets away
from a little boy in the park,
and floating free, drifts skyward over
up-turned faces and down-turned events.
And swelling with its own sense
of independence and accomplishment,
it ascends and ascends, and finally bursts
in the rarified air of the lower stratosphere,
falling back to earth, a flapping scrap
of rubber rain.

MANITOULIN CANADA DAY 1975

You are the audience. You sit there passively and listen to the official guests reading their poems, talking about art, smiling, sweating. You applaud and laugh on cue. You sample what is offered in the seminars and displays of what is local and what is from the outside, and you find it confusing.

When you stand back anonymous you are sometimes amused, sometimes bored, but when you approach alone it is your fear that you feel now and your despair that you feel later when again you are sealed back into your skin, alone with your own screaming desire to be noticed, to be admired, to be loved.

You have written a poem. It felt right. But what do you do with it now? You want to hide it, to burn it quickly before anyone can see it and laugh. Surely it cannot be a good poem because it was only written by you, and you have long been convinced by your parents and your uncles and your teachers and your friends that you are dull, stupid, incapable, unworthy, and you oblige them by conforming to their view, acting out the role assigned to you in their play that has parts for clowns but none for poets, though you find yourself a bad actor and feel guilty, guilty about writing the poem, about committing this incomprehensible act.

You fear they will punish you with their scorn, with their laughter. In the poem you have exposed your soul and it is tender, vulnerable, quivering out there in the open, and you feel it was a grave mistake. Fear is what you feel all the time now. What can you do? You burn the poem.

You return your ego to the place of maximum security, the camouflaged vault within your body. You stiffen. You pretend to smile. You rid yourself of your fear. It has turned into numbness which is the normal condition now, though you still dream of the real world outside Manitoulin, the world of freedom and action and extravagant romance.

Sometimes when you are a little drunk or high or just talking with your friends you say you are going to hitch-hike to Toronto, but you get only as far as Sudbury and it is cold or hot and desolate and friendless and already you are out of money and so you make your way back to familiar

Manitoulin, happy at first to be home again, but then it's back to the boredom and routine aimlessness that seems to saturate the oppressive air of the island, and when one of your acquaintances, who has actually made it to Toronto, turns up with tales of wonder and adventure and claims you too can share in the excitement and vision, you say yes yes, you accept a pill or tab of something he calls acid or MDA or something else and you take it yes there is a great change your body tingles and itches and your heart beats loud as the world assumes shapes and patterns you have never seen except in nightmares which is what you are having now when you close your eyes, and when you open them the trees are radiating energy at the sky and you are one with the pulsing rhythm of the world and the universe.

Suddenly you know everything about life and death. It is ecstasy and terror at the same time just as something reminds you of your family and immediately you feel the old despair but now a thousand times more intense. You cannot stand it. How can you stop it? You run through the bush until you are exhausted, lying down on the moss, rolling over on your back feeling the earth under you, feeling the sky over you, finally feeling peace. It lasts for many days, and mingles with the despair and loneliness that was there before.

What are you going to do? What are you doing? There are five teenage suicides within the month, twelve during the year. How many others have considered it? There seems to be something wrong on Manitoulin Island. It is more real than the idea of Canada. It is your fear that feeds on your life like a cloud of black flies.

The official guests are performing their rituals. I am an official guest. I read a funny Canada Day poem that condemns a certain aspect of Canadian corruption. The response is appropriate. Later I ask members of the seminar to read their own poems. I pretend it is as easy as eating a hamburger. I wish that it could be as easy as that but it is not that easy so what can I do?

I could say that you must struggle against your fear. You must press that feeling out of yourself and make it into something hard and real, a

picture or a play or a poem, because outside it turns into something else: energy or information or love, the forms and flowers and things that someone, somewhere, sometime will come upon and learn and know how you felt to be alive. That is poetry, and has nothing to do with fame or applause or approval.

Poetry is the articulate struggle to be, in this world, yourself, in spite of everything. It is the struggle of life against death, of the hero against overwhelming odds. And it is everyone's struggle.

MARKET FORCES

Impression of sea grizzly, killer whale, raven:
patterns taking quick shape in the deep blackness
of argillite, frog's eye inlaid mother-of-pearl
on tooled silver: pieces that today are displayed
behind museum glass along with the delicate work
of other Haida masters like Charles Edenshaw,
but this one turned out fast without pause or hesitation,
the relentless heroin clock pacing and pressing
Pat McGuire. He has to score ten caps in three hours
so the work must be finished before the shop closes.
He carves steadily, his hands in continuous motion,
the craft handed down from his mother's people,
tradition and knowledge alive for centuries
along the isolated shores of Haida Gwaii.

Born outside Skidegate, disconnected by law
from the community because his mother married
an outsider, but still growing up in his mother's land,
learning the carving from his uncle, hearing the stories
from his grandparents, a bright kid, Pat, acknowledged
by Haidas and Whites alike, and his work selling
and getting to Vancouver, and Pat following it down
to the city, getting to know the fumes and the concrete
and the aimless brotherhood of the displaced, drinking
and shooting smack with his pals, and wiring himself
and his art permanently into the civilized circuitry
of insatiable consumption and continuous production,
supporting his habit through furious efficiency:
carving, painting, drawing: pieces finished in minutes
in the Balmoral beer parlour or the Blue Eagle Cafe,
shooting up in the john and working all night, busy
among old whores and rheumy-eyed ex-loggers,
his admiring chums nodding off around him.

When his supply of Queen Charlotte argillite runs out he sketches empty canoes on rain-swept beaches, misty shorelines drawn on the counter of the Ovaltine Cafe, Pat still turning out enough to wholesale at over a hundred dollars a day, his fingers making money for a hungry arm, this biochemical harnessing of energy and mystical imagination, Pat working for years in the Vancouver shadows until one day in a Granville Street gift shop he disappears into the washroom and doesn't come out. They find him dead, the outfit still in his arm. And do you know, overnight the works of Pat McGuire triple in price.

WITNESSES

In this part of town no one would think to call an ambulance, so it's the cops who have to pick up the sick ones, like this emaciated woman (who knows how old?) lying on the concrete edge of the flower planter in Pigeon Park, moaning and crying softly, coughing. Her sad-faced friends are huddled beside her, quiet, conversing, smoking butts, taking slugs of wine from a paper bag in this cold Vancouver morning grime. One of them tries to cover her shivering body with his mackinaw. It's difficult to see her face, but her bloodless legs have scars and sores and peeling shoes. The police have arrived now, scattering the onlookers, lifting her to her feet and dragging her off across the sidewalk. Two young clean-faced Canadian cops trying not to get filth on their uniforms. They don't dislike her personally. They just hate this part of their job, like scraping guts off the pavement when an accident has to be cleaned up quick, or discovering a corpse in a tenement room weeks after the death, though this one seems to be alive. Her head lolls. Her knees are limp. They lay her down on the vehicle floor and close the door. It's a matter of routine: one more casualty, another statistic. They hope she won't die until they get her to the drunk tank, where it's someone else's responsibility.

Alcoholic? Addict? Accident victim? Disease? Violence? Bad diet? Bad luck? It doesn't matter does it? This human being is dying of misery at this particular moment, and you think you are just reading a poem, but you are mistaken. This is an actual event and we are here at this very moment, watching it take place.

PRE DICTION

Bent old men and women and dirty children scavenging for scraps of paper to carry in immense bundles on their backs for a few centavos. They keep the streets clean. They are also shining your shoes and polishing your sports car and scrubbing out your toilet bowl. They are puking in their piles of rags. They are pawing through your garbage for something to eat. They are so hungry they will do anything for a drink. They are selling their sick sisters to tourists. They are even pretending to smile. And you are so used to seeing all this that you hardly consider it anymore. Or maybe it's because their skins are darker than yours that you dismiss it as part of the natural order. But listen to me, Fatty, they are living and dying and waiting the slow wait of the desperate. Degradation would finish them off if it wasn't for their hatred. And there is a rumour that something is going to happen. The police have begun searching for guns stored in the barrios. (It has happened before in other places, you know.) And don't go putting me down as just another social protester, because I'm not protesting. I'm just telling you what's going on so you won't be surprised when it happens.

PRAIRIE COUPLE

Stopping for gas at 3:30 AM
on the Trans-Canada in the heat
of the dry Saskatchewan night,
I get out to stretch my legs and glance
at the only other car at the pump.
Inside it there's a young couple,
the girl wearing a high white hat
like she's about to enter some small
Sunday morning church, and the boy
has on a neck-tie and dark suit,
probably from last year's graduation.
But they appear very stiff and unhappy.
I think maybe they've been at a funeral.
Then I look closer and see the boy
has a flower in his lapel, and there's
scotch tape stuck all over the car,
and the remains of decorations. Well
now, I'll bet in this part of the country
people still have weddings. He pays
for the gas, very seriously, says
something abrupt to the frightened bride
and they drive off, each of them
stony-faced and staring straight ahead
into the darkness of the deserted prairie.

You wouldn't know I was an Indian says Don, who sits in the Stratford Hotel beer parlour, talking, smiling at anyone who passes his table. He is a familiar face and knows the familiar faces of the Stratford clientele: wizened pensioners, whores, hippies, seamen, drunks and amputees, city Indians, West Indians, East Indians, local Blacks, Chinese cooks, Japanese fishermen, a table full of Quebecois. Variety: it's almost like Midnight Mass at Holy Rosary Cathedral, except maybe for the exclusive group of fancy pimps from Seattle who hang out behind the pool tables at the far end. Don knows Louis, the limping waiter from Montreal, and Big Willy from Trinidad, and Albert too, as they pick up the empties and dollar bills, laying down the full ones and handing back the change wet with beer slop from their trays. Don leans back in his chair and says that sometimes he drives a big semi-trailer rig through the mountains to Calgary. Knows the road backwards. But tonight he is referring to himself as the Mohawk, though strangers at first don't quite know why, until he tells them, and then demonstrates his aboriginal connection by shouting at a woman in a language he claims is Cree, and she responds by giggling and shouting a few words back. Cree in Vancouver? Well says Don she's from north of Edmonton, but I'm from Ontario and we speak Iroquois out there, and he does, then switches to English and talks of his childhood, and his lacrosse days, how his father, an Irishman, made him practise day after day with ball and stick against the wall. He even played with the Brantford Warriors but that was 25 years ago, and now he rarely goes to see the Salmon Bellies or the North Van Indians play, because lacrosse makes him too excited, too sad, and so Don sits in the Stratford pub, having just shuffled down from his room upstairs, and he is talking and lifting another glass to his lips and he is saying you sure wouldn't think I was an Indian to look at me, but I'm a Mohawk.

CHANCE

Who would you be if your mother had coughed at the critical moment of your conception? What if she had sighed and rolled away from your father's fateful twinge that sent a million would-be champions swimming for their lives (and yours) towards the prize ovum awaiting a hero's triumphant entry and formal presentation? Consider the contents of that list, instructions, specific and precise, written in a four-letter alphabet. That is you. No other recipe will do. Where would you be if Baba had come down with the sniffles the night of the dance, and your grandfather had found another pretty piece of lace to focus his attention? What if peace had prevailed, and flight had been postponed, and your great grandparents had no chance to meet in the refugee camp? There are no alternate events to finesse your selection. Only those that occurred can be counted. Nothing can change the scheme that made you you.

RE
GENERATION

a
an
and
and s
and so
and so o
and so on
the mother of
the mother of
the mother of
the mother of
the mother of

a
an
and
and s
and so
and so o
and so on
the father of
the father of
the father of
the father of
the father of

YOU

or

ME

or

HER

or

HIM

TOAST

Here's to the genes that have come the distance
through time and circumstance, tumbling
into place on twisted canes of replication,
riding the steamy steeds of passion in a mess
of lust and stolen romance, trickling down
through culture and catastrophe:
horsemen and their captive women,
peasants copulating in the fields, the aroma
of harems and palace intrigue, chance encounters
forgotten but consequent, and all the erotic tricks
God uses to promote an easy commandment.

Looking back through species in a history
as sure as rock and rivers, through channels
of transmission more constant than dinosaurs,
helixed patterns and permutations
flowing past the ice, through eddies
of improbable survival, on down from some
mysterious source of primal reproduction,
I am, you are.

GENEALOGY

Beyond the fuzzy margins of memory
or the first crude clicks of a shutter,
from somewhere else, ago, ago, ago,
the crumpled ancestors emerge
from the records, famine thin,
flimsy as old lace, brittle as ancient paper.
Wispy scratches on microfilm attest
to a marriage here, a bris or baptism there,
the institutions whispering validity
to events once glistening with emotion,
saturated with colour, as large at least
as life, all shrunken now, withered
to a few notes in a base of data, faded
figures without clear features, dry
as pinned butterflies. Who were they
and why did they board those coffin ships
with their cargos of plague and poverty,
riding out the stinking passage to this
transoceanic dumping ground? Hunger?
Desperation? Did they have enough
courage, strength, endurance to survive?
Would there be descendants?

GLOSSES FROM CONVERGENCES

from Screen 1 | Process

A continuous sense of disorder and confusion descends and threatens my life. My desk is covered with papers that I do not want to see. What will I do with them? What will I do with all this information? I want only to do my work, but how am I to begin? How will I deal with the beginning that occurred yesterday and the beginning that I completed two years ago and found again last week? How will I fit all these beginnings together? How am I to accommodate these numberless endings? What am I trying to do, and to whom am I trying to do it? Perhaps we will come to an answer or two before we are through, but I cannot guarantee it. You are free to browse these pages, but I cannot answer your questions because I am too busy answering my own questions and posing new unanswerable questions. At this moment I know only that I am here and that others have been here before and have left something for me, as I leave something for you. Time is a ritual exchange, though the gifts move in a single direction.

from Screen 7 | Sighting

And I too find myself here at the edge of the continent, an expression of genes that have drifted westward through generations. I am the newcomer encountering those others who have been here all the time or have come in the other direction. What does it mean? What is going to happen? What has been happening since we started to arrive? The evidence is there somewhere, the testimony written down or remembered and spoken, words that I search out and record and fashion again into a text which you have somehow stumbled upon, as you sometimes stumble upon a curious piece of wreckage washed up on the beach.

from Screen 11 | Concrete and Abstract

It is the same for us, though sometimes we neglect to acknowledge it. Sometimes we fail to step outside our protective routines. It is difficult to accommodate the totally unfamiliar, difficult to grasp it or speak of it or even consign it to memory. If it cannot be made more probable it must be disregarded or rejected or ridiculed. Happening is real. We try to grasp

it by storing it as imagery that falls into hazy sequence as we bring it back or speak it out or write it down, as it forms a structure that we must call something, so we call it time. And for those who store these experiences in words on paper, time becomes a line. But do not fasten on that line. The fascination is in the living.

from Screen 12 | Calculations

Moving, shifting, the repeated genotypes converge and combine in endless variety to express the unique and individual forms of the actual: persons, situations, events, institutions, sub-cultures, states of mind. I sit on the porch listening to the sound of the creek in the evening stillness, dogs barking in the distance, and beyond that the monotonous murmur of city. As these words fall into the formal patterns of my given language, as the sentences stretch back along the page from the tip of my pen, and my heart continues to circulate blood to every section and component of my body without hesitation or complaint, as I breathe this air that is thick with the scent of sea and warm leaves, I wonder what is happening around you as you read these words.

from Screen 13 | Pretext

Extending outward in space and time, these wave patterns induce in my mind abbreviated images of their own condition, which I dissect and analyze, smudge and slur into general concepts, and so speak of geography, history, culture, heredity—the counters of convenient conversation and classroom drudgery, facts without feeling, abstraction so far removed from experience that I drift away quickly. I have more important things to do, more compelling material to perceive and ponder, the related images that converge at the centre of a system that occurs physically around this point as me, or from your point of view, as him. Who is he? Who are you?

from Screen 14 | Give Me a Hand

A series of events and images, that is all, at any time. The events take place but the series is imposed, giving up the pattern which is read and deciphered for its meaning. The world occurs in its various parts, separately; nothing is necessarily simultaneous or more connected than anything else. It is all flux, without order or meaning or purpose. That is what is given. The rest is consciousness: selection, composition, that is our business, my work for today.

from Screen 21 | Consciousness

To consider one's life in the light of impending death, that is a human experience, as opposed to the self-awareness of a dog or a rat or a bacterium. The extended self-image in the context of time, that is what makes us human. But I cannot decide if it is an advantage or a disadvantage.

from Screen 23 | Connections

And what has this to do with poetry and eating and crying in the silence of our lonely night and making love and dying much against our wills? If these words of mine become words in your head and so connect our lives for a moment, this will be meaning. Correspondence is what we seek, shreds of similarity, understanding, compassion.

from Screen 29 | Threads

A weaving of experience and connection, of chance encounter and accumulated memory, of curious desire and vague determination. A blanket of motivation and obscure influence. Why do we do what we do? Why am I writing these words?

from Screen 33 | Text (a)

These marks on paper, these abstract patterns of figures and thin lines, enter into our heads to amplify and interpret the half-created house we inhabit. A person consents to a universe commissioned by his community, consigned by his culture, defined by his language. Take away the ability to make the word permanent, use a language that has never been constrained and confined by a thousand years of literacy, and you will have a strange and different instrument for dealing with your life. You will have a different world.

from Screen 33 | Text (b)

They watch the others and discuss it and remember it to tell to their grandchildren who will tell it again to their children who will pass it on to those who will speak it again to be recorded on magnetic tape, which I will play and listen to, as you, in your time, will eventually read this page and so perceive and ponder my words about them. Or the others themselves, writing down their notes and descriptions which will eventually find their ways to my attention and response, this text that you are now considering, words that have filtered through various pretexts like pebbles falling through a series of damaged sieves.

from Screen 35 | Metaphors

On this coastline two waves are beginning to converge. Two worlds are about to move together to produce the eventual ambiguous contingencies of my life. I walk the beach at evening, attentive to the sound of the sea breaking on the rocks out past the point, watching the sand-laden rivulets of seawater trickling back down the slope of the shore between each slap and rush of water. At this moment I do not know which way the sea is running. Fishing is good at the turning of the tide.

from Screen 45 | A Skin for a Skin

I put myself inside their skins. I look out through their eyes. The trees and the sun and the water are the same. It is a simple act of the imagination, accomplished without much trouble, except for that reflexive kickback of consciousness, my knowledge of what is in store for each of them, their individual deaths, the absolute certainty that they are all now dead, the certainty that the *now* that has moved through each of them in turn, is moving through me, towards you. In fact, it has reached you now.

from Screen 46 | Sequels

I want to tell you everything but how can I proceed when I know so little. I want to put an end to this text, but this series of events has no particular ending. These men have now reached home, a point of divergence for each individual, each life spinning off, twisting to accommodate its own incongruent conditions, and meeting always an unexpected but inevitable end. The events taking place here are only a brief merging of bodies at a certain co-ordinate, to be followed by a scattering, and other mergings and scatterings of material and personality, the segments of a rhythm, a pulse, generating and broadcasting waves in every direction, to interfere and merge in patterns beyond our present focus, just as these lines will interfere with the words and images already in your mind, to emerge as shapes and shadows and sounds that I will never perceive or imagine.

from Screen 47 | Alternate Endings

Them, and me, and you—the gaps between us, the intervals. That is the elusive subject of my unrelieved preoccupation. I think of a wave moving across an ocean. I note the horizontal movement of the wave and the vertical movement of the water. The wave is life as it travels across time. It hits them first. It bears them up into the clamorous circumstance of

consciousness, of vitality, of actuality, before it returns them to the condition that prevails after life has passed them by. The wave hits me, carrying its flotsam of testimony from them, which I use in my time before I too settle back into what you think of as the past, as the wave moves on and, by some improbable sequence of pitches and twists, its crest carries this text towards you as you rise up in your own brief and luminous moments of being. You know all this, of course. But I am thinking about those other waves that ripple through the cosmos, those that precede and follow this one that we know.

from Screen 50 | All of Us

Nothing is entirely separate, for we also participate in those events, you and I, standing or sitting and thinking of those specific individuals and actions, those particles and waves, interacting with my consciousness, as these words interact with yours, and you in your turn impinge on the quality and intensity of my experience, for my concern for you affects my care and approach to what I write. And in some similar fashion those others are constrained and influenced by our remote participation, their actions and attitudes touched and turned by my act of reiteration and your act of interpretation. Such loops are the links in a chain that binds the universe, even as it flies apart.

from Screen 51 | The Loop

Is this (that) all I have (he has) to offer: text and imagery on a screen, a minor assault on a major narrative, an attempt to refurbish my (his) own unreliable testimony and inadequate analysis of what is, because of what was, a resonance of experience against time vying with the background static of empty space, of nothing at all, chaos and its corollaries, chance and consequence, feeling it and reflecting, the wonder, the astonishing particularity of being alive and awake amid endless variety, at a certain moment, somewhere?

KINETIC POEM 1965

“The poem is a machine,” said William Carlos Williams, and so I’ve built one.

At least I’ve had it built, because I wanted something big and impressive and automatic.

As you see, people stand in front of it and insert money, dimes or quarters, depending upon the poem’s locus.

Yes the whole thing clanks and hums and lights up and issues strings of words on coloured ticker-tape.

On newer models the customers wear earphones and turn small knobs so the experience is more audile-tactile than old-fashioned visual.

In any case they get only one line at a time, this being the most important feature of my design, which is based on Olson’s principle that in poetry one perception must immediately and directly lead to a further perception.

And so the audience is compelled to feed in coin after coin.

I admit the prototype you see on display is something of a compromise, as it has a live poet concealed inside.

I assure you, however, that this crudity will be eliminated eventually.

In future each machine, I mean each poem, will be fully computerized and therefore able to stand on its own feet.

OMEN

I heard the otter call my number.
I heard the fox repeat the facts.
I heard the colicky cow-moose murmur and curse behind the burning
bush.
I heard the seal squeal.
I heard the pig whistle Dixie.
I saw the thistle bristle against the blasted trestle.
I spied five naked knives lying side by side beside the silent silo.
I saw the old macaw falter and fall into Raw Dogs' Draw.
I heard the absurd bird slur the only word that referred to the Third
World.
I read the wicked words written on the rotting ramp at Wrangle.
I smelled the spilled oil that soiled the sea and spoiled the soil of the
foreshore before the six sick sea-lions could cough or roar.
I knew the wailing whales would never whale the whalers.
I distinguished the lush gloss from the gross slush on my lax cousin's
plush cushion.
I glimpsed the long strong string with which the dangerous stranger who
spoke of strontium strategy was systematically struck down, strung
up, and strangled.
I proffered the pittance of poetry in the paltry pit of poverty for the
profligate prophets of profanity.
Yet because of the late date I failed to gauge or change the heated rush or
the hateful rate of the great rampaging skateboard of fate.
And so I saw the snow blow, the dust crust, the flood flood, the crop flop.
I felt the earth quake, the car jar, the ship tip.
And as I languished with my poisonous horse-radish sandwich and
dangled the damaged bandage of language and noticed the brandished
hand at the end and acknowledged the famished and famous end at
hand,
I heard the last voice begin the first verse with the word choice:
O Women! O Men!

EXPRESSION

Smashing the wall with your fist
is something to be tranquilly recollected
or talked about years afterwards,
carousing with your friends, laughing.
Smashing the wall with your fist
is absurd and anyway expensive,
whether you have to pay the landlord
for the hole in the plaster, or if it was
concrete, then, even with medical insurance
there's the x-ray fee and the physiotherapy.
Smashing the wall with your fist
is a crazy thing to do, but effective too,
a way to instantly change the situation,
converting one kind of pain to another,
pain you can cope with by groaning
and first-aid. The doctor may give you
a little something, someone is trying to
clean up the mess. Smashing the wall
with your fist is better than smashing
somebody's face, and perhaps even
better than writing a poem about
smashing the wall with your fist.

CULTURE COUNTER

Remember the hip '60s
when only the poor
could afford the dream
of affluence because
rich men's children
aspired to poverty
and revolution. Cuba
was the model,
and Che, our hero.

Remember 1977
in punk-rocked London
the most elegant
fashion boutique
on Kensington High Street
was *Che Guevara*.

Now it's 2004 and
anti-globalist protesters
march with his ubiquitous
silhouette on their chests,
while the Che Guevara estate
sues the tee-shirt company
for breach of copyright.

THE CAST

A few of these poems gaze
straight at you, while others wink,
or wince behind half-closed lids,
or roll their glazed eyes skyward,
as they fiddle with their masks,
donning or doffing them at any
provocation, nudging your elbow,
stepping on your toe, until you
recognize each one of them
for what it may or may not be:
Orpheus with his lyre, or is it
Arlecchino, Pantalone, Scaramuccia
or the great Farini on the wire?

A LIFE OF ITS OWN

Casting back to its origins, to its initial inception in the elementary groove of its mother tongue, to the moment when the first fertile expletive from its father's guttural rant rushed out towards the waiting syllable, lodged in position at the margin of the phonemic cell, then breached the boundary through a tiny consonantal juncture to infix the living process of emotion and conceive morpheme genesis, this poem contemplates its own steady accretion of meaning in the fetid womb of language, and notes its entry into the disciplined universe of discourse, where you come upon it, while it sits back and recounts its singular days as a word before it learned to form attachments, to socialize in little phrases. It remembers its traumatic attempts to break out into something greater than a clause, its first consummate experience as a simple sentence (Oh the thrill of completion!) then growth, as it arched and writhed in complexity as each encounter produced profuse new patterns of sound and reference, the branching of ideas, the rich layering of implication, the elbows of innuendo. And so, exalting in its central metaphor, this poem celebrates the operation of focused articulation in a verbose world, speaking out, you might say, for itself.

DUALITIES

Hector de Saint-Denys Garneau
would split up and walk down the street
beside himself, partners, so to speak,
though one would not say chums.
But with me it's worse. You see
it was years ago, and I'd just
staggered off the train after working
three days with no sleep, and as usual
I'd drifted all the way down to that
seedy section of town around
Hastings and Carrall. Anyway
I said to myself, "Listen, you wait
right here outside this pawn shop.
I'll be back in a few minutes." Then
I walked away and never returned.
I don't know how long he stayed there.
I deliberately put him out of my mind
and gradually lost track of him
completely. Of course I've been back
a few times recently but there's no sign
of him now, and even if he'd remained
in that part of town, do you suppose
I could recognize him now? Do you
believe he's up to his same old tricks,
or is he a new man? I wonder
if he ever thinks about me?

UNIVERSITY 1968

Personally, said the professor,
I'm not altogether opposed
to security checks on campus.
In fact, he went on,
with my office bugged I feel
that I'm participating directly
in the Electronic Age.
Besides, without RCMP agents
and CIA spies and those
informants for the administration,
I wouldn't have anyone at all
showing up at my lectures.

APPETITE

This poem is carnivorous. It thrives on living language, especially the flesh of other poems. It hungers after every kind of verse: blank, free, or constrained. It gobbles up haikus, sonnets, sestinas, odes, villanelles, chewing them up and spitting out the rhymes. Each word of this poem, each letter that you are reading here, was once a part of a less fortunate poem. If you look closely you will recognize nouns, phrases, even whole lines that originated elsewhere. But who are you to criticize? You, who are devouring this poem now, making it part of your own cannibal soul.

BIG POEM

I listen to it warble as it waddles
down the street, this chubby poem whose
double entendres wobble as it walks.
Its flaccid lines are soft with cellulite.
Its feet are flat. And so it covers up
by saying less with more. If I will not
indulge this poem, it will indulge itself
with tasty morsels from Roget: rich
nominals, seasoned abstractions, copula verbs
by the dozen. Oh those smooth sententious
adjectives, rows of moist expletives,
cunning adverbials, and conjunction after
conjunction. This poem, which stuffs
itself with words in order to forget
there's little substance underneath
its ink, needs kindly reassurance
that there's value lurking in its
over-burdened heart. Perhaps a

*hidden haiku, each
sinuous line alive with
energy and light*

Fat chance of that. Its only hope
is literary liposuction, or an editor
who chops text like a plastic surgeon.

IDENTITY

This is a Canadian poem. When people read that first line they smile, expecting a joke, or at least a little irony, but today the poem is serious, perhaps a bit wistful, being young and in love, and finding that even the subject of its preoccupation doesn't read Canadian poetry very much. And so this poem dreams of disguising itself, extending its lines by hundreds of meters and calling them chapters. It will give itself a new setting, perhaps New York or L.A. or Berlin or London. It will contort its contents into an easy narrative of intrigue and suspense, and become an international bestseller. Then everyone will love it, even that reader who once had no time for it, but is now lost in the crowd of admirers. Yes, that same proud reader who is telling friends at this very moment that she, or is it he, knew this great, classic work of literature long ago when it was just a little Canadian poem.

REFLECTION

This poem lacks confidence. It's afraid
people might mistake it for a laundry list
or an advertisement for a can of pork and beans.
Once, someone referred to it as just another
string of words, and that offensive comment
depressed it for a week. So now it compensates
by showing up regularly at poetry readings,
buying literary magazines in which
it pretends to have an interest, and
dressing up like a real poem, with frilly little
half-rhymes and hints of meter. I know
how careful it is to draw attention
to its ragged right-hand margin that nothing
I can think of can justify. Sometimes it primps
in front of mirrors, hoping to glimpse a phrase
that might have some touch of originality.
And at night it stays awake for hours
listening to the echo of its own empty thoughts,
convincing itself that they exhibit true
onomatopoeia.

PICK POCKET

Here is a poem to take you in,
a poem to make you feel better,
one with winning ways, good
humour, style. It's a popular
ditty that gets on with the job
by soliciting your sympathy,
engaging your scholarly scrutiny,
moving you deeply before it moves on
to other poetry lovers like yourself.
And later, when you are walking the dog,
or buying toothpicks at the corner store,
or standing alone by the fountain,
you slip your hand into your hip pocket
where you carry your common sense,
and realize that it's missing.

NEGATIVE

It's almost nothing: generalization
without particulars, abstraction
hunched against a concrete wall,
a darkened screen in an empty cinema.
Its essence is absence. At night
it shrinks into a hard black dot
that sucks in light. Next day
it's sprawled out there again,
a smudge on the page, a shadow.
And when I turn it into sound,
it becomes a prolonged sigh
or another stifled cough.

VICTIM

This poem gets depressed whenever it enters
a bookstore. It can't find itself there. Sadly
it recalls Louis Dudek's comment about
poetry readers and automobile fatalities:
"Fewer of the former than the latter," he said.
"More hateful statistics," murmurs the poem,
cringing at the idea that it may not matter.
No matter. This poem seeks security.
That is why it has put on academic robes.
It teaches because it can't do much else
but ruminate about its life of unacknowledged
and unappreciated service. "What's the point?"
it asks the pen, and begins writing a wall
of words around its inscribed circumstance,
from where it never steps. And I
find myself against that wall right now.

FATALITY

You find this unfortunate poem
sprawled on a torn piece of paper
beside the garbage bin, a victim
of accident or misadventure. You know
it needs help, resuscitation, someone
to breathe life back into it, so you
grab your phone and dial 911.
Bending down close to the crumpled body,
you poke your pen into a gap between
words, pry open the hiatus, and slip in
an interpretive wedge, then,
putting your lips directly to the ink,
you force your breath through the lines,
again and again and again, and again
beating rhythmically with your fist
on the flaccid text, watching for some
slight response. Finally, as the paramedics
rush in, you stand back, exhausted, gasping,
watching a uniformed technician jab
a hypodermic needle into a purple syllable
in one of the poem's feet, while the other
attaches wires to a pair of line endings,
turns up the defibrillator dial, and flips
the switch. The poem twitches
in a final ambiguous spasm before
slumping back against the margin.
Failure. This poem has finally given up
its last microgram of meaning.

And if you have thoughts of an afterlife
for this poem, just remember it depends
on you, and the state of your memory.

JOURNALISM

This poem is a professional. It is objective. It has style and taste and an exquisite sense of what is right. You won't find it making embarrassing remarks or using tainted vocabulary: words like "equality" or "justice" or "Palestine." This poem doesn't want you to think it's soft on the enemies of the West when it discusses news about Latin America or the Middle East. It can recognize a dictator when it sees one, even when he is democratically elected. It will never mistake a terrorist for a freedom fighter. This poem knows which side of the page its ink is spread on. It has responsibilities, a family to feed. It wants to keep its job.

EXISTENTIAL

Here is a poem that thinks about the nature of its own being or not being. What does it mean to be a poem, anyway? Is its purpose merely to provide more material for another lecture? Those professors need something to discuss in their courses, and so they set it up again and again for class analysis: "Notice this subtle extension of implication," they say. "Consider the remarkable tone of unidirectional polysemioticism," they remark. "Postmodern," they suggest. Oh, this poem has heard their twaddle time and again. Awk! Nauseating! Now all it can do is examine its origin in that creative writing class. "You must have something to present tomorrow," said the instructor, and next morning there it was, seeing its first glimmer of light in that discussion group. What a way to enter the world! All that criticism, all those insults and insinuations. Finally its wounds healed into rough scar tissue that seems to have protected it, though even now, years after that trauma it still suffers periodic depression. In fact, at this very moment this poem is planning to put an end to itself right here before your horrified, innocent, eyes.

(the reader is asked to assist the poem in its last endeavour by tearing out this page and throwing it into the trash bucket)

ROUNDUP TIME

What is the role of the poem
in a consumer society? No role.
No crowds of voracious poetry readers
pulling shrink-wrapped poems
from the shelves of the shops in the mall.

I consume, therefore I am.

I consume things, therefore they are.

Few consume poetry, therefore it ain't.

This poem needs brand name loyalty.
This poem needs to be branded.
The desperate poet pulls a red hot iron
from the flame and approaches the baby poem
struggling on the page, three of its feet
bound up in scansion-tied tangles of trimeter.
She (the cowboy poet) sings out
over its (the poem's) terrified cry:

*Get along Little Poemy,
there's a sky full of pie.*

SELF HELP

With its feet on the ground, its chin up,
its upper lip as stiff as a sheet of 3 lb. bond,
this poem remains obsessed with saving its face
while covering its ass. You get the picture:
one hand holding up its pants while the other
fusses with its makeup. Not like the rest of us
who are focused entirely on knowledge
and meaning and insight, or is it profit and
power and pleasure? Never mind. This poem
has an intuitive grasp of its own bootstraps,
and as you try to imagine what that means,
it gives a sudden jerk
and yanks itself up into orbit.

OPPRESSED

This poem began its miserable existence
on the page with a put-down by its author.
How could it object when it knew
the only road to publication
was submission. Then, when it finally
came out, it found itself subjected to
criticism, which it accepted without
complaint. Craving recognition,
this poem tolerates abuse. That is why
it seeks your unbiased evaluation.
Stomp on this poem while it's down
and it will kiss your ankle.

SOCIAL CONTROL

This poem is insane. That is why
we have committed it to the institution
of the book. We could not allow it
to raise its disquieting voice in public,
to fill the streets with its disgusting caesuras,
or run on and on and on and on at the ends of its lines as though it were
a proper piece of prose.
Yes, this poem's regrettable performance
was a mockery, an embarrassing
source of shame in our neighbourhood.
For that reason we have shut it away,
confined it behind two stiff covers
where it won't make noise
or cause trouble.

ACCESS

This poem is a vehicle. It has wheels instead of feet. It carries you away, but still allows you to commute to your best ideas. With this poem you won't have to walk anymore. It promises to put everything within your range: enclosed passion, exotic food, the joy of being somewhere else, although it has its own curious predilections. It likes to fill your dreamscapes with service stations and drive-through restaurants. It plans to black-top your last remaining patch of wild imagination. And by the time you notice that it has slipped its protective metal skin over your tourist heart, you realize that every object of your desire has been quietly transformed into a smooth replica of last week.

THE RAPTURE

You may be reading this poem one day
when suddenly *zwwiff* it will disappear
right off the page before your eyes.
Enraptured, it will find itself speeding
straight to that big anthology in the sky.
And up there, with all the other faithful
writings gathered in that joyous place,
this poem will meet its Maker, the Great
Rapper Himself, and together with the other
elect of the literary world, it will look down
in rapt amazement at the deconstruction
of texts, as cyclone winds sweep
scattered piles of shredded paper
into fiery storms, a final conflagration,
the burning of all the books.
And in that Armageddon glare,
amid the groans of anguish
and despair, the great archival doors
will burst asunder, revealing
monstrous stereotypical forms
whose ghastly presence will announce
the end of earthy literature. And there
will be rejoicing in Heaven, after which
this poem will return to a world purged
of bad writing, where every work
will carry the same message
and be correct.

ENCOUNTER

This poem is blind. It doesn't care
about my looks. Its concern is my smell
and my taste, my literary taste, and it
wants me to come clean. This poem
scorns dilettantes and phonies, and so
approaches me with some hesitation
and a few uncomfortable questions
about appreciation. Do I actually discern
multiple connotations in each of these words?
Can my wax-encrusted ears tune in
the tintinnabularic tones and delicate timbres
of each intricately inscaped phrase? What
is my honest response to the subtle annoyance
of extended nuance, the unexpected
slap of ironic innuendo, the dissonant clash
of disparate symbols? Can I feel
the colossal thud of the intoxicated archetype
as it trips over this thin white cane
that is tapping, tapping toward
my quivering tympanic membrane?

MISSAL DEFENCE

The space-based laser poem
kindles a compact neutron blast
and pin-points its energy
on incoming enemy texts
and other terrifying objects.
Intense enough to incinerate
whole libraries or bookstores
that might be used to launch
unregulated publications,
so delicately accurate it can
burn away the pornographic parts
of a teenager's pinup, or censor
an offending passage at a distance
of a thousand miles, this
strategic initiative draws
popular support from your
unspoken desire to push a button
and make everyone unpleasant
disappear. Now don't worry.
You have nothing to fear
from this poem. It has no
aggressive intentions. Its
purpose is totally defensive
as it spreads democracy and
insures complete compliance
with our copyright laws.

REASSURANCE

This poem persuades soldiers to be farmers,
policemen to practise transcendental meditation.
It prevents preventable disease by putting shoes
on children's feet, and food in their bellies.
This poem gives peasants their first
lessons in the alphabet. It teaches carpentry
to the homeless. It turns apathy
into hope, loathing into self-respect
by redistributing wealth and opportunity.
That is why the death squads are active tonight.
They know of your anxiety, your concern
about proliferation of poetry like this.
But rest assured. This poem will soon
disappear, and your normal way of life
will continue without further interruption.

POWER

This poem is at your disposal. It will bow to your wishes, conform to your conceptions, accommodate your fears and phobias, tolerate your singular and eccentric point of view. Yes, you can have your way with this poem any time you want. Think of the power. Think of what you might do. Anything! You can fold this poem up into a little paper crane and then pull off its wings, if you want to. Or you can send it to Hiroshima, to join three million other paper cranes, all of them tiny poems that bow to the wishes of their authors, children, who want to say something important, something profound about power and people and brutality on this earth where poems, like all of us, flutter briefly into the light, and then die.

EITHER

There are two versions of this poem,
one longer, one shorter. In one
the world is threatened daily
by nuclear war. There are a number
of possible outbreak scenarios:
accident, international blackmail,
fundamentalist fervour, arrogance, or
the usual blind stupidity of leadership.
It doesn't matter how it begins
because each outcome is equally grim,
and the poem ends with the first flash.

In the other version of the poem
the situation is the same, except that
each day something happens to forestall
the outbreak, some act of personal
valour or commitment, another compromise
following a reasoned argument, perhaps
a pang of love or pity in the heart
of one of the participants, just enough
to save us for one more day. It is this
other version that you are reading here.

TRANSMUTATION

These poems are not my autobiography
though they may become part of yours,
for the *I* that you read becomes *you*
as you read it, that very *I* who
is presently pressing this poem out,
so that when you read the words
written *you* and *he* and *her* or *they*,
you are the *I* speaking to the *you*
(who perhaps is at that moment *me*)
about *them*. That is the poem's process,
a strange but basic external exchange,
as these lines spin out from the end of my pen
to form intricate filigree thread-webs that float
up from the page to drift in the wind,
till they catch on your eyebrows and earlobes
or stick to your nipples and fingertips
and span the spaces that stretch between
what you perceive and what you believe.

AT LAST, A MUSE

Unannounced, unexpected, O Inexorable One,
your unsolicited arrival alters everything
as the energy of your overwhelming presence
drifts dreamlike through countryside and city,
testing and charging the vital gaps between atoms,
molecules, cells, individual organisms, groups.

Now the natural identity of each existing pattern
is irrevocably transformed by the subtle rub
of your fleeting reflection. A new resonance
is occurring in the old harmonics.

On the highest peaks, under their overhanging ice
glacial rivulets trickle to hitherto unknown rhythms,
and in the cool and clearing dawn even at this hour
the crisp shadows of minute alpine flowers
exaggerate the memory of their original forms.

You touch everything. You spread like a cloud
of ragweed pollen. You surge over
the rock-encrusted plain and into villages
like an invisible current of ions, disrupting
and devastating forever the familiar certainties
of established order. Deep in the earth
the rumour that you are passing overhead
circulates momentarily in the petrified veins
and arteries of lost coal miners. In these
moments of semi-lumination the mountains
glow against the limpid pallor of northern sky,
displaying auras whose energy I attribute entirely
to your intimate and insidious intervention.

For you remain for me unalterably physical.
Somewhere behind the margin of vision
you stand alone, delighting little children
with graceful and grace-filled gestures,
your brown back against the rough trunk
of an immense and ancient yellow cedar.

I find evidence of you everywhere. The air,
pungent with the aroma of warm pine pitch,
grows rich with the exotic and unmistakable
fragrance of your moist thighs and shoulders.
Even the scratching wind from the itchy ocean
carries the conspicuous essence of your
concupiscent, pulsing and vibrant body. Drawing
a glass of cold water from the tap I taste
the spicy possibility of your nakedness, as though
the mountain reservoir's smooth surface had
acknowledged the secret of your delicate sexuality.

Nothing escapes your influence. The allusions
in old chanties are interpreted anew to accommodate
and include you. Words scatter in your honour
across blank pages of notebooks, and everywhere
new questions await articulate formulation.

All messages now exhibit a type of autonomous
internal combustion. Police circuits
are jammed for hours. Waiters run frantic
between cluttered tables, their trays loaded
and heavy with confused and hopeless orders.
Simple sentences, referring initially to
mundane events and mediocre personalities,
contort themselves suddenly
into grandiose and magnificent poems.

That is why I must leave. How can I
deal with you? What can I say? Already
our encounter has depleted the language
of adequate adjectives. What of the remaining
nouns, verbs, adverbs, participles? I will not
await the state of total silence. Goodbye.
I leave you to seek myself in a circumstance
where your menace is as faint as thistledown
floating across the face of the moon in its
attenuated autumnal dusk, where you are
as innocuous as the merging images that smudge
and slur an old man's dwindling recollection.
There I will search for a tomorrow
less probable and more consuming
than the glut of your tantalizing yesterday.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Although cautious as a boy
and still careful as a young man,
at 35 Felix stopped
objecting to airline travel.

At 52 he took up
sky-diving and hang-gliding.

At 69 he died accidentally
while crossing Niagara Falls
on a tight-rope.

CONTAINMENT

Why am I

I and not you? That is not an empty question. It has content,
like my body which contains: atoms, molecules, cells, organs all wrapped up in
a skin package, decorated with hair and wrinkles. Is there room in there for me among
pulsing arteries and bulging intestines? Pipes filled with blood. Tubes of excrement. Help!
It's dark in here, and dank. There must be a better place to hang out. I wish to relocate. How
did I get into this mess? I'm asking for advice, though I'm not sure who you are or how you
got here. Did you just slip in? Are you a volunteer? What are your qualifications? Are you
another homeless and hapless wayfaring stranger unsure of her whereabouts? Now listen,
Sister, this is an emergency. I need an expert in content management, someone who under
stands the ins and outs of good sausage design and the physical properties of inflatables.
What gives rise to hot air balloons? What are the advantages of hydrogen over helium?
My own gas is far from inert. It hurts. I have to burp. It's embarrassing. Excuse me, I
can't hold it. Visions of crashing to earth in flames like a stricken zeppelin. The
passengers, will any of you escape with your lives? Questions for the coroner:
Was the big blimp overloaded? Had it stretched to maximum capacity?
Meanwhile these lines are expanding rapidly, filling up with words.
Soon they'll contain multitudes like Walt Whitman's, running
across the page and hanging down, too many things to
mention here: no discipline, no orderly
definition or sense of decorum,
no means to justify
their ends.
O Poet
swallow your Tums
and contain yourself,
you who am I who is you
who is he who is she
who are they who are we:
us, them, her, him, you, me.

ENLIGHTENMENT ... a parable

On the table, several index cards. On one, an “I” with “(subject)” penciled in at the bottom. On another, the word “am,” and “(complement)” written below. On a third card, “think” and “(predicate).” Add a card with a “?”. Arrange the cards in various ways. Add a “therefore” card, if you like logic. Play with them. Eventually you will receive the insight *of the cards*. Translate into French.

CALLING

for George Bowering

When did we realize that we were
alive? Those words: *am*, and *I*—
put them together, no complement
intended, just the grim intransitive
marked by a full stop. No stopping
the rest, everything moving past,
changing. How to change *change*?

Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?
¿Dónde está la nieve?
Ubi sunt?

In the *Raven*, where I saw your poem, or Shakey's class, where I met you and Willy and we read Gabriella Mistral and Antonio Machado? In Jimmy Ling's cafe, or Warren's basement, or a bridge in the rain, and afterwards when you were drinking Dolly's warm soup? Once I knocked you down with my car, and Angela was in the window watching. Smell of formaldehyde and gestetner ink, our first students, Frank's sake, Earle's contentious workshop? A Mexican apartment on Avenida Béisbol, El Cornu friends, earthquake, police removing your licence plates? We drove back in a white station wagon of non-stop stories and cans of ravioli hot off the manifold, past the side hill where the grass had burned, passed the great brick chimney and the bridge that your father built, on down hot Anarchist Mountain to the valley of recall. Montreal in '67? With the Zs at Ceperly when you hit the home run and we built a fire in the snow?

At the end of narrative, dusty, bent,
we find ourselves pounding out a few
more words, keeping close watch
lest they too fade on the snowy screen.

Not then but now. Not there but here
where the snow with its yellow scrawl
has not completely melted, just for
the nonce, just for the moment, time
enough to write this down, and more.

NOVOPO MANIFESTO

for Jim Andrews

As clean as a tiny flower, as pointed as the brief song of a robin, NOVOPO will be emblematic, spare, an escape from density and other forms of literary oppression.

Translucent, resonant, as reactive as H²O, NOVOPO will buoy its audience of one up into the light.

NOVOPO will wake the worker from her trance as it soothes the cross-eyed cyclist, shaping itself before the peephole of your pod, penetrating the static of your cell's earpiece.

NOVOPO will prod you into focused contemplation of the void and its cornucopia of form, while reflecting the distant rituals taking place each spring in the shadow of your mortality. It will whisper secrets of forgotten love and quiet fidelity as it fingers the cool expanse of your consideration.

Awake and responsive, NOVOPO will brush your eyelids as you slip into a new dream. More rumour than legend, as ubiquitous as sky-blue teeth in the mouth of morning, it will ripple in IMAXed splendour across the concave sphere of your somnambulant appreciation.

With only a little less dedication than a youthful bomber shivering inside his precious vest, NOVOPO will rehearse its inflammatory messages just over the rim of your undeclared whim, attentive always to a chance signal or a beckoning call.