

# SPLASH



three





-j-AAI-9050-A" <sup>Angela Morton = 3</sup>QoS'  
s.?u-

9/90

# SPLASH

ANGELA MORTON  
COLLECTION

Number 3

May, 1985

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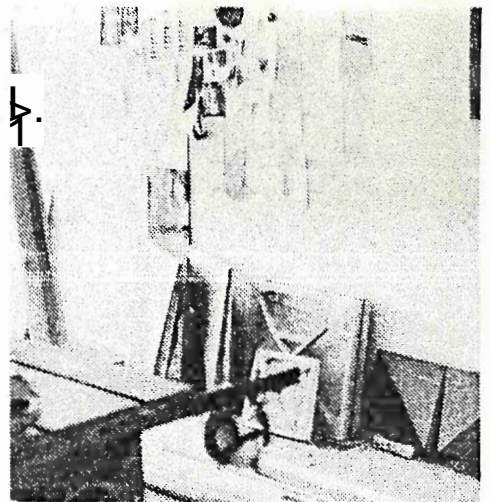
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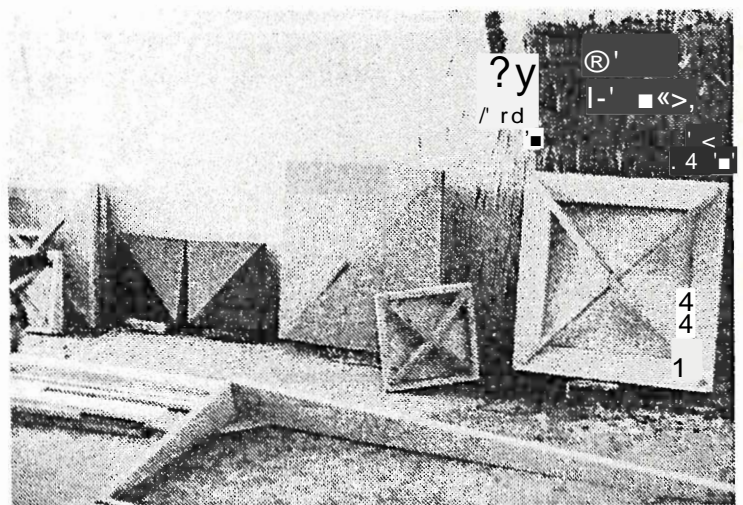
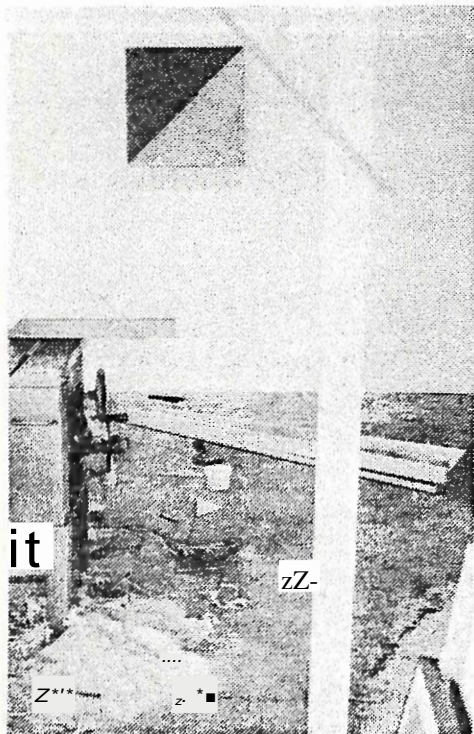
Cover Design: Wystan Curnow, printed by Imedia, Auckland.



some values around (my) paintings.

"The most beautiful experience we can have, is the mysterious." Albert Einstein, Living Philosophies, 1931.

It amazes me this thing we call painting. When it fails to awe me it usually means I'm exercising too much conscious mind. When I recognise the false security of "understanding" I can let it go. That's when my content emerges. The thought that (my) content emerges when I let go of conscious mind reflects an intuition about a process that mightn't be dissimilar to the manner in which young children acquire language competence. '





# Stephen Bambury

## INTERVIEW

Stephen Bambury & Tony Green, in conversation in Stephen's studio in Titirangi, 22 August, 1984, a shortened version of a tape-recording.

S. Where do you want to kick it off?

T. In the statement you made in the catalogue of the 7 PAINTER'S exhibition you put my in brackets, '(my) painting'.

S. Because I had a sense of the title of the piece also being SOME VALUES AROUND PAINTING and the degree to which I was registering in that was not a very pronounced I. It seemed a secondary I....

T. ...as if your own painting were just an instance.

S. It was a statement in a broader sense than simply referral to my own particularised work. I want to play down the sense of I in the work, like John McLaughlin wrote a nice piece somewhere where he referred to the difference between the Western tradition and the Eastern tradition as being essentially the Western tradition always defining **who I am**, and in the Eastern aesthetic more of a question **who am I?** so I guess it's coming out of that kind of territory somewhere.

T. You're careful there too not to talk about abstract or abstraction.

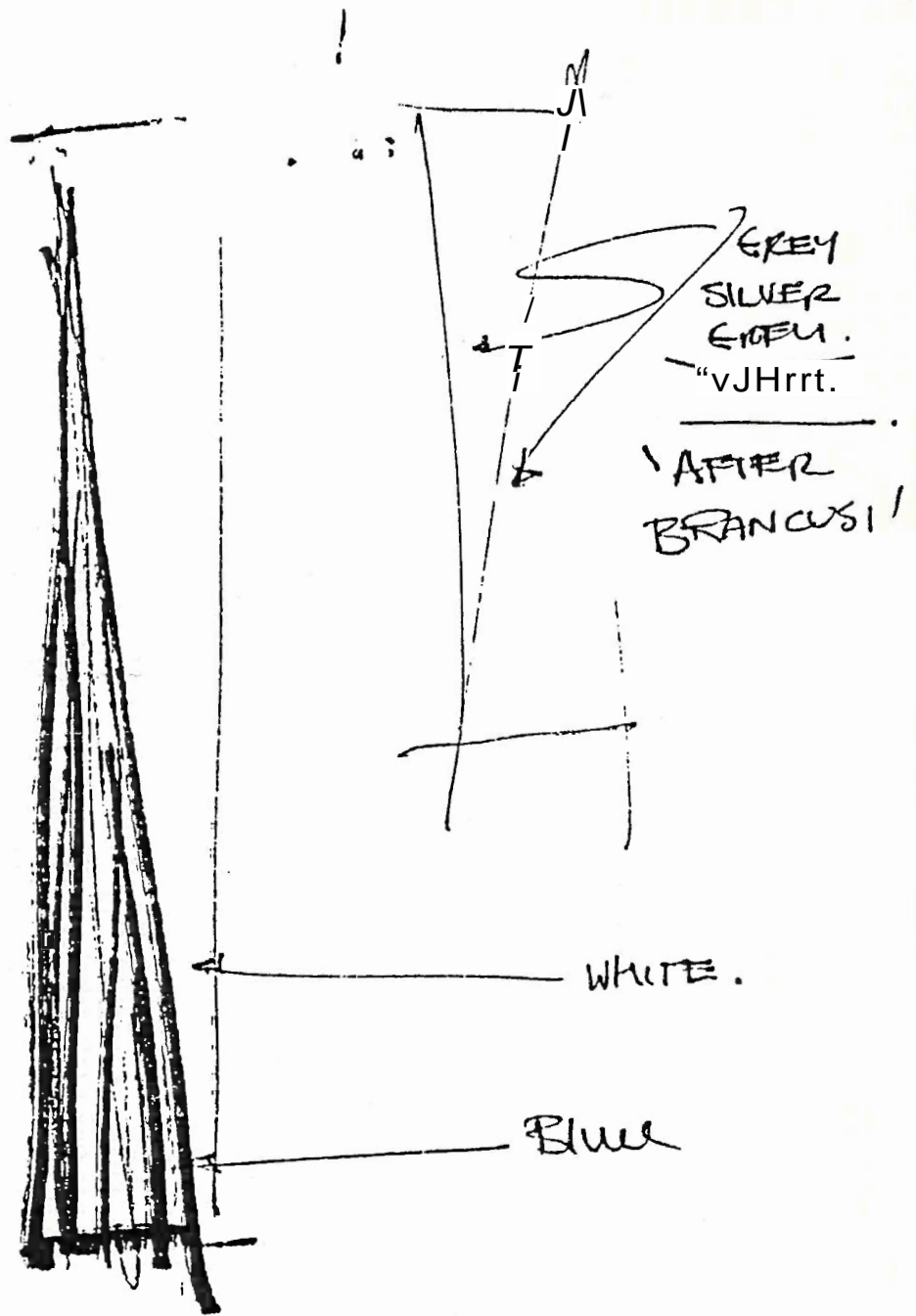
S. I don't like that at all, it's problematical, it irritates me.

T. How do you see these paintings that are expanses of colour then?

S. To put language around them, I would actually use language like postmodernist painting. I don't really see the necessity of talking about abstraction. I think that that is distraction really, because people fall into a very defined set of reactions around works that they say are abstract. All sorts of assumptions are established once you start to use that sort of language.

T. Thinking about reactions: you were talking about Max





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[Gimblett]seeing this long thin yellow and red painting upstairs. What did he say about it?

S. He thought it was an extraordinarily painful painting.

T. What was it about the painting? Did he say?

S. I think it was the sense of confinement. It is a very thin painting, about 8 or 11 inches wide, over 8 feet high, divided into two, gives a tremendous sense of contraction in that painting. But my take around it is of expansion and I see it as a slice and that division is not a straight line but a very subtle curve. Once you start to get that reading, you've got a whole arc that reaches out of the painting.

T. Do you think that he was starting from some notion that the canvas format and shape is like a human body and that you were making an image of your own body like that?

S. Well, I think whatever marks a painter uses, whatever surface a painter uses, has relationships to his body, to her body. I think it's a matter of what reading one takes out of the information. It's not a reading I would take out of that information. You see there is a sense in which the objects do have very obvious sort of anthropomorphic relationships that I'm aware of. Like the little wee paintings that I do are very head-paintings. I mean, one relates to them very much in terms of the proximity of the eyes. I'm more interested in creating situations in which one's aware of one's own awareness around the things, that the objects actually lure you into particular spots and I can see that happen. I put a painting on the wall and I can see the path that people are going to track around it.

T. That has to be in a roomspace....

S. ....it's got to be on the wall.

T. You don't control that when you paint a specific painting though....

S. I think about it. I think about it. I don't think about a particular location; that's something that I would like to do actually. I haven't had too many people offer me specific locations. I was thinking in much broader terms that, given a wall, and given a set of lighting conditions, I can be pretty sure how people are going to track around a particular painting. That's part of my intentionality, about breaking the centrality that painting has established, on the centralised, localised point of looking at the painting. And, you know, one really has to get in around the side of these paintings.



T. Is that why you use diagonals a lot?

S. It's more about the curvature of the plane and the way they're floated free of the wall, but yeah, the diagonal does a number of things. It doesn't, as in the previous lot of works, break into left and-right and tops and bottoms. So there's a desire to hold those two colour areas in a much tighter relationship, structurally.

T. They were always two canvases....

S. ....abutted side by side....

T. ....they were in fact two separate paintings, two separate pieces of colour. So the edges got to be very important....

S. But they are very apparent and obvious divisions. There is a straightforwardness about that division that appeals to me. I don't need to go through any elaborate procedures to arrive at that. I don't need to go through any elaborate procedures to arrive at that. Having said that, the way that I'm going to make that slice through the painting, as the paintings proceed and become more and more individuated, refers right back to the decision I make as to how that stretcher's going to be. And each stretcher is becoming a one-off thing. Just how I actually slice it, whether I go from a low corner to a high corner or run a high corner to a low, there are all sorts of decisions I can make that are going to have an impact, about how that's going to be perceived when that's completed.

T. When you first started on these paintings did you think of the complexity that lay ahead of you?

S. Not really. The actual invention of this language or the generation of this language out of what I was previously doing has consumed me up until now. I have got to the point where I've generated some conditions around the language that I am using now. Having done that the complexity of those things is beginning to emerge. It's been somewhat surprising to realise the degree of complexity that is involved.

T. It looked simple, in fact, when you started?

S. It was a very intuitive feel along what was going on. I didn't have a set of clear ideas worked out in advance, about how far this could be taken.

T. If you knew in advance what paintings you were going to execute how boring that would be.

S. Exactly. I find that with colour also. I can't calculate in advance what a colour is going to be. When you look around you'll see quite a lot of orange, quite a lot of purple, violet, magenta: you'll see key colours that keep coming up at you. Up and up and up again. But what astounds me is every time that colour comes into the work that it's not the same. There's a complexity in that colour that is totally mysterious.



T. You have a liking for strong contrasts....

S. ....sort of gritty....combinations that irritate a lot of people. They're not very comforting combinations, although I find them very seductive.

T. Colour range is quite an important factor in how you read the paintings....

S. ....absolutely....

T. ....so your choice of colouring is quite significant.

S. well, if you look back over a few seasons' work, you'll see a definite development to the colour, a definite set of colours worked at a particular period. Now what that's attached to is most probably a fairly complicated sort of issue. But the fact that it's there is what is significant.

T. ....and then how you use it?....

S. ....How you use it. Are we talking about what mark is to be employed, how it's to be put down. You see there's a whole range of things outside just the selection of colour. My take on that is I don't feel myself to be selecting colour anymore than the colour I've previously put down is selecting the colour. So that I don't go into a pink and yellow painting thinking I'm going to end up with a pink and yellow painting. I mean, I might go in on a blue and black and come out with a pink and yellow. I'm very happy for that to occur (...laughter...). It's not just my voice, it's the paintings voice as well.

T. That gets to a point where there's some confusion about this kind of painting, as if these colours are somehow decorative, consumable things, as if you are turning out a thing that approximates to 'taste'. That's not what it's about though is it?

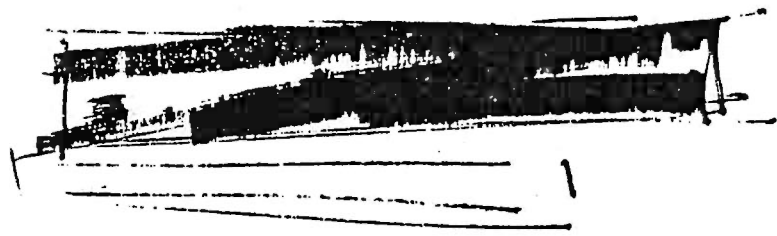
S. No, certainly not. This is tied back in with the language, like 'abstraction'. A whole lot of preconceptions leap into....gear up, as soon as someone says, "we've got abstract colour painting". I go, oh shit, ho hum. Because what it means, and I've seen it time and time again, and I've, seen it from very intelligent people, is that they abdicate their responsibility to think. You know, they seem to assume that because you might be dealing with colour that there's nothing beyond this colour there.

. . . .

T. ....what's the use of this painting?

S. Well, one could equally say, what's the use of waking up in the morning, what's the use of having breakfast. It's not a question I can really make sensible. What's the use of breathing? It's something I do. This probably means as much to my life as anything else in it does. And if that means nothing then this means nothing. But meaning is something we put around





something. If for instance these were objects that said...they're sitting there, one is forced to learn a language, to gain entry to these things, well there's a statement about that. These paintings are not autonomous, anonymous hunks of stuff out there, they present decisions, they're off the wall and they're bent (...laughter...). And they're ingratiatingly jarring colours, now what do we want to take out of that?

T. "Do they symbolise anything?" That's the first kind of question that's usually asked. "Is this how you feel?" And is that important?

S. I wouldn't make any separation between how I think and how I feel and how I paint and how I work and how I earn a living. There seems to be this necessity for people to compartmentalise this experience. I see that sort of question, that sort of language, as a statement of uncertainty about what one's meant to do or feel around these things. And I think that's a fair reaction. They are difficult things. And they do put demands on people.

T. I can't see them as being difficult, they're almost too easy. Only difficult because they are blank-ish.

S. They're not blank, they're not easy either. But I don't feel any compulsion to convince people about those facts. If someone feels that way that's fine by me. And there's a political statement right there, about allowing people their own space, allowing people entry or otherwise. The choice is theirs. Now I am very conscious of that as a political act. They're not full of a sort of didactic narrative about making the world a better place, about some atrocity that was committed, or any specific event.

T. One of the questions that keeps cropping up is to do with people wanting to see the artist in the work, so that they can read a biography, a soul, as the context out of which it comes....

S. There's an absolute banality about thinking that if you get a hook into the content in terms of narrative that you are getting at emotion. That's where that's going, isn't it? I think that's horseshit really. I think these things are drenched with emotion, drenched with feeling. I think they're very intimate statements, but because any obvious sort of narrative is removed there is that response around them. The signs and symbols that are employed to evoke things like tragedy and pain have been reduced to absolute banal cliché. I don't think they are appropriate. I don't have any affinity for them anyhow.

T. I'm asking this because you're working in New Zealand, and this is the kind of talk is so much the opposition against which you have to work.



S. That's curious, because it doesn't sound like you.  
T. It's not my view, but I'm curious to know what your answers are. In New Zealand, it's largely a matter of people expecting or wanting painting to be symbolic, to be autobiographical. You tend to cut it out.

S. I'm not sure I even bother to deal with it. It's like a dialectic conversion: there's a problem there but do I need to find a solution? Or, - can I simply walk around it? I think that's what 'they' say and therefore that's 'their' problem.

T. So you're satisfied that there's enough going on in your paintings to override such considerations, the question of communication in those terms, narrative and so on.

S. It's certainly something that I wouldn't say didn't concern me, to the degree to which they are going to fit the culture, but there's a point at which you can't, at least I'm not interested in, modifying what I want to do, to fit the cultural situation. I can't get around the issue that I've got to do what interests me....but there are other people here who don't respond like that. An American audience would have a lot of different language to put around this work than most people locally would generate. It would have a range of distinctions that a lot of people wouldn't bother to make here. Or even think about. Though I don't want to sound as if I'm painting in absolute pure isolation and ecstatically happy about that, because I'm bloody well not.

T. You've never actually touched on figurative painting.

S. Not really, only a bit at art school, but that was a very sharp cut-off point for me. Into the life room one day and the decision the following day never to enter it again, and I never have and have no necessity to.

T. Do you remember a lot about that decision?

S. I couldn't make any sense of....I remember thinking very clearly that even if one got an absolutely profound grasp of the whole act of mimesis, of transferring that perception of reality onto a board, I had this profound sort of question running through my head, so what? It struck me as, even if you did it terribly well, I couldn't get any sense of why. I still feel like that, (...laughter...) Absolutely. Not much work convinces me otherwise. There are figurative people I'm interested in; I really enjoy Chuck Close's work. I'm not drawing up sharp lines here.

T. There are no faces and trees in your paintings...

S. ....I've come to recognise that (...laughter...)

T. ....they're not spaces, not bodies....

S. Yeah, they're spaces. There's a great sense in which

there's space here, the mentality of painting, the mentalness of painting, the way it resounds internally. That intrigues me a lot.

T. It's experimental then? Trying things to see how they go.

S. It's always leading me to somewhere else.

T. So you can't actually preconceive them?

S. I....there's a curious sort of lag between preconceiving a painting and actually arriving at that painting. I can preconceive a painting and I can try to go for it and miss it, miss it every time. And when I drop it away it will come, it will just appear, it will emerge. If I preconceive a painting, it's going to arrive in it's own time, I'm not going to force it. If I force it I'm never going to get it.

T. Do you think them up in the middle of the night sometimes?

S. I've done that yeah.

T. And then what happens?

S. Oh, I make notes.

T. Little scribbles or what?

S. Diagrammatic. (Shows a drawing on the wall). That picture hanging upstairs was meant to be like that. And look at it. That was going to be a very quiet still painting. And all hell broke loose.

T. (Reading inscription on drawing) white, blue, grey-silver, grey-white. And it's yellow and red.

S. It's yellow and a sort of purplish-magenta. (Laughter).

T. So you were actually seeing a picture.  
S. Yeah.

T. And it relates (reading inscription) to Brancusi.

S. But you see that painting will occur. I just wasn't ready.

T. But did you actually wake up and envision, imagine, such a thing, complete.

S. Well, I'm open to it all the time, being asleep and thinking about it, being half-asleep and thinking about it, being wide awake and confronting colour. I'm constantly taking notes. I don't mean running around with a notebook and pen, but I'm constantly looking at the relationships between things in the world and that I find astounding, that you just never complete, there's just no sort of way in which you could bring all those things together, it's just constantly renewing. You just see something, a bus-ticket.... (end of tape reel).

. . . .



S. ....I'm very aware of working in an area that presents situations in context, situations for people to perceive, to perceive themselves perceiving. And I think that's quite distinctly different from paintings about perceptions.

T. You said the other day, a month ago, that you wanted people to perceive things at the division between the two colours. You were interested in the recognition of differences. Minute differences. When you are actually making something, are you thinking about what it does to you, and what it might do to other people?

S. Like if it's going to twist my head, then the chances are it's going to do that to someone else, who's going to go through the same sort of behavioural response around that thing. That's what I meant by working in a perceptual area of painting.

T. So that's what you're waiting for, things that will lead to a painting in terms of perception.

S. Yeah, all the time.

T. It's obviously to some extent unexpected.

S. Yes, it always is. And it might be something that you've looked for the last four years. Suddenly, bang you've got it.

T. And this sets off the process of painting?

S. It's just something that goes towards, everything goes towards, like our conversation goes towards, something. I'm not sure that it's ever any more specific than that. There's a great ambience in which all these bits of collected junk just float around. And they come together around the act of painting somehow.

Why and what sort of decisions about how to move the brush, which brush to use, what consistency of paint, what surface of paint. I mean I haven't even got the brush to the surface yet.

T. Then tracing back to a bus-ticket is a kind of irrelevance, an outward bit only?

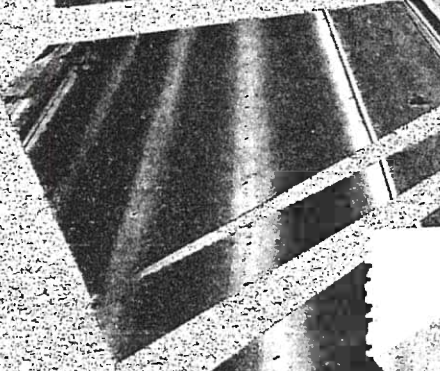
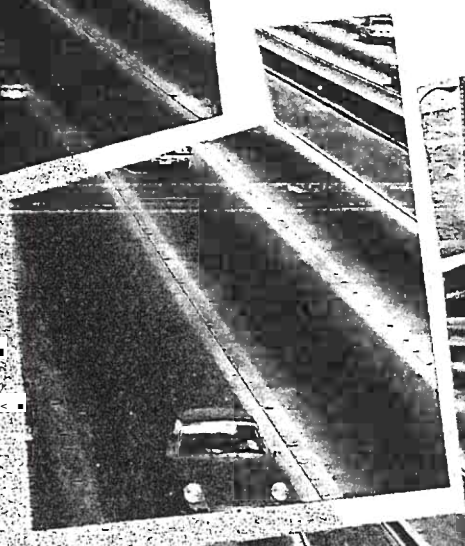
S. Even if I get back to that, so what? It's no longer of any sort of interest. It might be of interest in some sort of deep sense. But as soon as these things come towards a painting, then that painting pushes towards something else as well. So it's always reaching further than you can get to it at the time. That's the frustrating thing about trying to hold down a part-time job and paint at the same time. There's always (laughs) interruption.

T. Meaning, if you had more time the process could go on for say three days if it needed to?

S. Well, I can go for three days now. I might spend a lot of time in the studio, whereas paintings are not appearing at the other end, but that's all part of my studio activity. And you set up the situation so that things will work. The recent period of my work has been a very slow period. It's been intense but very slow. I put all this into two years. And what have I got? A dozen moderate size paintings.

# PEOPLE & PLACES

by Judi Stout



BB

J\* - 67-  
3S&

longs mois  
mnees avec la

"ran?ois Ma-  
is d'Adonis".

1978

1965

1983

1984

1967



555



&O/



WEDNESDAY\_7\_NOV

Shoes to be repaired

THURSDAY NOV

Buy hair colour

FRIDAY 9 NOV

Pick up tickets

Dinner with M & D

§oc?or<sup>f</sup> t<sup>ere</sup> about 5pm (with stuff)

SATURDAY 10 NOV

Hair coloured

Packing

**SORTING OUT!**

SUNDAY\_11\_NOV

Work

MON 12 NOV

Bank - A/P & close account

Travellers Cheques (leave \$200 NZ)

Pay Smith & Cauahey

TUES 13 NOV

DUTY FREE

**INLAND REVENUE.**

BUY

✓ TOOTHBRUSH & PASTE

2 SHOWER CAP

/ yW2. DYE

WED NOV 14

10 am - LOUISE BEAUTY

3pm NAILS

5.30 HAIR MODELLING

THURS. NOV 15

(HAIR AT 3pm)

Go over to M & D at say 3pm

Travelodge 1 November 1980

You'll have to adjust the temperature of your baths

You have to be a giant to reach the door

Miniature towels

I can't find the bath taps

They're behind the curtains

#### Waitomo Glowworm Caves

Madonna of the Stalagmites  
& two Wise Men & a Koala Bear

glowfish

macrocarpa fires dying out

#### Waiting for Duff to bring the car back

(DULL THUD)

Experimental molotov cocktail  
Haven't they got the place bugged?

Here we are quiet evening on the short wave,  
singing Rumanian lovesongs

Where's Duff, Paul?

Gone for a spa

Nicked yr car eh?

No he'll be here. I'd just pack a pusser if  
he didn't come back in the car.



Jeff in Kings Cross

& there's girls all along the street  
Sc the gays in the park  
Sc then you get to  
the club  
Sc all the fuckin big  
bouncers say  
COMERE Sc they're real  
heavy St they say  
D'you wanna  
FUCKIN GOOD TIME

Jeff's Dream

I went into work  
tomorrow afternoon  
Sc I heard the boss on the phone  
I'll await your reply he said  
I thought nothing of it  
Sc then later on I heard him  
on the phone saying  
that 's it then  
an earthquake warning  
I fuckin freaked out Sc specially since  
I was gonna go into the fuckin computer room  
which is underground Sc we  
got this earthquake warning Sc we  
fuckin scarpered  
Sc all the builders kept on building  
Sc we yelled  
MACHO  
FUCKIN  
BUILDERS  
there were we  
we got out

Sarah writes mysteries. And works two days a month as a nurse. She comes from a family of faith healers in New England. When they got sick as kids they just prayed to God. But her mother also had them immunised. Some days they would come home from school and her mother would say don't go out to play we're going to the doctor's. And they'd go along and he'd listen to their hearts and they'd have an injection. She had a cousin once who died, before they had open heart surgery and all that, and Christian Scientists don't believe in death, or at least don't see it as anything different from life since God is everything and God is eternal, so nobody grieved. Sarah just thought that children grow up and get to a certain age, then just go away somewhere.

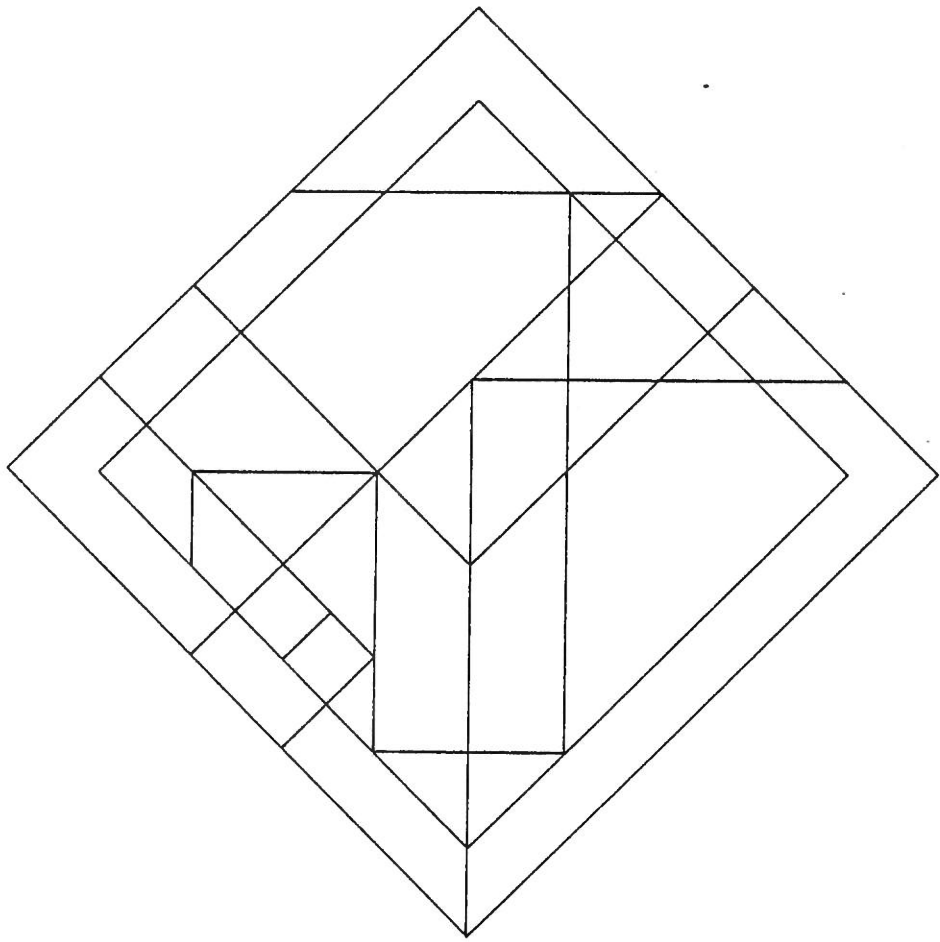
She went to college, took a variety of subjects, changed colleges two or three times, then dropped out and went hitch-hiking round Europe when she was twenty-one for six months. Lots of kids from the Commonwealth were doing that then, because they could find jobs in England for a while, then take a couple of months off and go round Europe. Sarah met a lot of Australian girls who had trained as nurses and consequently could find jobs easily, and even worked in places like Biafra, which sounded incredibly romantic, and like something that was really worthwhile. Since she had been kind of wanting to join the Peace Corps and go to places like that, Sarah decided to become a nurse. She came back to the States and found out you could either train in a hospital, from the bottom up, or you could take a university course which gave you no practical training. She opted for the latter. She had to go along to the audio-visual lab which had films available to teach you the practical side, to find out how to take temperatures. She'd never had her temperature taken. On the film a little red arrow indicated what would be normal temperature, but when she got on the wards and had to take her first temperature, there was no red arrow. She didn't know about mercury. Her first experience was in a veteran's hospital. She would ask the men first thing if they wanted their bath now, and if they said no I don't want one today she would say fine, and then when her staff nurse would ask her at the end of the day how did Mr So and So get on with his bath and Sarah said oh he didn't want one, the senior would make her go back and apologize for the inadequate nursing care she'd provided.

Her family were too uptight and repressed to make any objection to her becoming a nurse. They said, that's nice dear. She was always the reader of the family. So she was often given books as presents. Someone gave her an anthology of early American poetry when she was twelve. Much of it was doggerel but she loved it all and knew it from cover to cover. A couple of years later in high school a teacher handed out copies of

a William Carlos Williams poem. And started the class off with the question is this a poem? It was the first time that Sarah had encountered a poem that had no rhyme and no metre. Years later during her college training she took an extra-curricular course in poetry. The first lesson, the teacher told the class to look through their anthology and come back next time with a poem they liked. At the beginning of the next class the teacher insisted first on reading them a poem that he thought was indescribably wonderful. He gasped in awe afterwards, then, still inarticulate in his admiration of such a poem proceeded to read another. And another. Then he asked the class if they had found any poem they liked. Sarah had found a poem by a man called Charles Olson, which she had liked but had got bewildered in the middle of. She read it out then asked if maybe anyone else could work out what might be going on in the middle. Another student put up their hand and said they didn't think they ought to analyse the poems at all. The teacher went along with that. Sarah dropped the class. The teacher was quite bothered that it might have been because of this incident, but Sarah made the excuse that her workload was too heavy.

Nowadays she doesn't read any poetry, in fact neither does anyone she knows, although they are all what might be termed well-read. The other day in a bookstore a guy was loading up the poetry shelves, and he turned round and said to another guy there that New York sold more poetry books per day than anywhere else in the United States, and even then it was some incredibly small number like ten books a day. Sarah reads mysteries. After seven years of nursing, specialising in intensive care, she got sick of death and injury, so now she hardly works at all and is looking forward to quitting it completely. Her husband Dennis probably earns enough to support them well. He sells industrial machinery, for the largest firm in the country. I think his father owns it. He has machines that can roll stadiums of 800 tons. That's how he met Jim. Jim produces sculpture made of stone and steel which is very heavy, and Dennis sells or lends him machinery. They're also neighbours in Brooklyn and watch grid iron together and get active about the Puerto Rican animals in their neighbourhood who threaten their security and make the place dangerous to live in. Dennis collects baseball cards for every team each season too, because if there's a rookie in one of those teams who makes it big in a few years, then the completed set of cards from his first appearance, which probably cost around \$2, may be worth up to \$14,000. Someone told the story about the Belgian guy who climbed Mt Everest, and fell, and they had his funeral and everything, and then two weeks later he walked into Sri Lanka, he'd been living in ice-caves and with sherpas. Oh my goodness, Dennis moaned, imagine the rights to his movie!





Wystan Curnow

from CANCER DAYBOOK

where's the

humour

in a

tumor

26. 7. 82

cut            it

out            cut

it              out

26. 7. 82

as for  
what's  
in store  
  
what-  
ever  
  
I, and  
you who  
  
do al-  
so care  
  
to think  
means  
nothing

26. 7. 82

Now I  
have it

(death)  
in my  
sentence

I'm more  
composed.

27. 7. 82



now to

face

facts

not yet

known

27. 7. 82

what

was the

point

is

still

the

point

9. 8. 82

for the

present

and how

it comes

always

yes

on

long

silky

legs

11. 8. 82

you

go

on

with-

out

me

13. 8. 82

the two

of us

back in

bed and

scared

14. 8. 82

'Tremeloes'

dreamt all night of horticulture prospects of  
in Northland futures for horticulturalists vers-  
ed in cut-ups developing of new strains new  
fruits as for example 'tremeloes'

23. 8. 82



no stemming	friends
their bouquets	springs early
jonquils	blooms
chrysanthemum	hyacinth
everywhere	daffodil
and in you	indoors
kindness	love
my bud	burst
you said	already

23. 8. 82

cancer (            ), sb. ME (-L. cancer crab, creeping ulcer, after Gr.            crab, CARCINOMA; see CANKER, CHANCRE  
1. A crab (Now Zool.) 1562 b. Med. An eight-tailed bandage 1753.  
2. Astron. a. The Zodiacal constellation lying between Gemini and Leo. b. The fourth of the twelve signs of the Zodiac (            ), beginning at the summer solstitial point, which the sun enters on the 21st of June. ME.  
3. Pathol. A malignabt growth or tumor that tends to spread and to reproduce itself; it corrodes the part concerned, and generally ends in death. See also CANKER.

Shorter Oxford Dictionary.

25. 8. 82

This 3-round demonstration bout with Mohammed Ali was just about to get under way. It was to be scored by computer—my brother-in-law, Mike, who's Technical Manager of the Rangitaiki Plains Dairy Company, jacked that up. The general idea was to try to keep it low key, informal. Hence we had no ring really. Mohammed and I sat opposite one another on the diagonal. Behind each of us was a folding cane screen. A potted palm. No referee. No seconds. No audience. The bout would go out live on student TV, UHF. Don McGlashan was there on camera; Wayne Laird on percussion, he would signal the rounds. I hadn't realised

before this that Ali was Maori, why I don't know. He had a big droopy moustache like Bernie Fraseir and he wore a tea towel over his head like Yasser Arafat and a white bri-nylon cardigan with fawn and black striped borders and little pockets. I had on my white polar neck, a bit worse for wear. The atmosphere was great. Then I remembered my operation, the stitches. I\ had to beg off. Hated having to disappoint everybody but really it would have been most unwise of me to have gone through with it.

30. 8. 82

Diagnosis: cancer of the colon	20. 7. 82
Prognosis: 50% chance of being free of it in five years.	
Hospitalised	25. 7. 82
Surgery	28. 7. 82
Chemotherapy	5. 8. 82
Discharged from hospital	6. 8. 82
Chemotherapy	12. 8. 82
Chemotherapy	19. 8. 82
Chemotherapy	26. 8. 82
To Edgumbe	28. 8. 82



# Johanna Drucker

## FINAL FICTION

### One

Of course I wanted to rule the world. But an early crisis scratched the fender of my ambition. Striking out through the clean staircase I encountered the protein crescent of a woman's fingernail. The rising moon making itself visible through the narrow window was further evidence of the rising tide of mass liberalism. In the dark hallway nobody went unfed. Covering the opening of a long pneumatic tube was the single response against the help which might arrive within minutes. An opportune voyeurism dropped its pants in my direction, disclosing a politically justified record of business profits. The media were disabled by their own editorial obsession, using close-ups from the operating theater to feed the rapid-fire stream of images. The domestic environment was well-arranged, but in the streets a strike had piled up garbage so high it broke along the curb. Shadows ran before the wind of expectation and the air stank, foul from lack of maintenance. Miscellany existed in all states under an angry pressure, needing adjustment.

On the sidewalk a colony of newborns swarmed through the layers of debris. Their birth was a demonstration. Radical virtues pass intact through the hand to hand combat of mating. A spontaneous generation of spiders arose from the raw cheese. Every favorite substance was honored for at least a moment by the tentative groping of the newborn breed. Burst free from their little egg cells they hot-footed their hairy way across the fresh surface in an ecstasy of exploration. Their joy at finding themselves able to make movements resulted in the fanatical tracing of a maze of finely stepped lines into the soft substance. Clever little devils. They hardly knew themselves what they wrote, except that it sure wasn't fiction.

## Two

The heroic theme twisted the self into formation against a bleak context of pedestrian circumstances. The sidewalk-was more absolute than any of the other filmy contingencies forming in the uncertain air. A carhop jerked through the relations and positions, cruising the rows of substance to get a shot at their identity.

Back in the dead center of the house a pale faced matron forced a confrontation. Against the backdrop of the well-stocked battallions of her shelves she cried, "If you beat me, I'll rip your lips off." The fat edge of steak sighed, there was no finer cut anywhere in the family. But the house was insensitive to sound.-A set of conversational devices defined the boundaries between presence and isolation. Privacy was used for publicity. Transcending its arrangement the space breathed through the positive air, exhaling against the sill. A terrible dependence shutters one room from another. A glance out the window increased the distance used to measure the neighbors' losing battle to extract their sprawling replicas from the lawn.

A wild truck had been parked in the street. She saw a man break every window in it with a heavy bat. Affective movement of a pronoun. You bet. We stand as an example.

No synthesis occurs in the schoolyard. Everything shakes to the low end of the street. Disparate elements occur as small boys, tender, still with the bloom on. From across the yard their profiles are recognisable in spit of their posture. A languid report closed into a sense of height. A socializing companion compared himself with it, out and back. Meanwhile his mind

filled with the image of the scratched woman, rolling on the linoleum floor. In translation, this was the story of a large group of tourists examining a wall of hieroglyphs after their boat ran ashore. While they rested a group of natives played tug of war alongside a mummy strapped into a casket-like basin. The snapshot was entitled, "Family and Formality."

Returning on the bus she sat beside a maniac pulling his hairs out one by one, discovering himself. Youth. Oh the guile of that sincerity. The travel light was an unfathomable flash. She aimed the beam. All that she didn't expect had been stated in the headlines. Future bold: an institutionalised cliché whose meteoric rise to stardom condemned its every banal impulse to notoriety. Credibility subsided fast into acceptability. The striking attributes of face, hers too, enabled the blunt utilitarian dogmatist to insist upon itself to extremes. My word. Humor him, was the stray thought which grazed her as she found herself being passed in an envelope.

A man has been asked to do a job. A simple job. Just keep his mouth shut and move a deposit from one place to another. The signature was on the account somewhere. It had to turn up. But the old mysterious hand trick slipped him one inside his shirt. The conflict zone turned torrid. The mission was supposed to leave him anonymous. Her glance unstuck the gum from the paper. He thought his career would lend him glamour. But the kickback moneys knocked him flat. The prime minister had been set up, he realized. And dawn broke through the windshield of her interest as they entered the gates of the capital.

### Three

Trivializing the affairs of state, they had chosen a new decorator. Orange was going to be her favorite color now, officially. The smell of the glue going down the walls seduced her sense of intrinsic value. She wanted her audience to come in and out with the help of a small device. From her pocket she drew one of the aides, closing her hand around his assignment. The tattoos of organization etched divisions onto the map of his bald brain. The function of official tension was to set a chill into the bones of aid. Some parties will feel increased hostility, trapped in the elastic grip of influence.

Gather equipment to counter the strategic decline, he whispered as they edged toward the higher levels of the party. The antibodies, numb, adjusted to the change in scale clinging to the threads of his sleeve.

He had been adopted by the couple who owned the yard. Their trailer, a small silver-stream, was neither a bed nor a plaything, but reminded him most of home. He came from an inconspicuous beginning, bargained for in the junkheaps of memory. The origin was so humble it seemed to efface all opportunity. But his story redeems us by its inspiration. Let it serve as a social policy to promote the refusal of heros, the refuse of thinking, larger than life. The big ideas, not hard to recognize, but hard to see.

He had campaigned for the life of a modern. Getting up late he had it first in bed, opening mail which leaked in from his folks. His eyebrows were more imagined than



real , plucked by the warp of cocaine. His face slapped the headdress with intact dignity. It was absolute, stern, straight looking, pouring its serious concern out in a line of complete control.

The illusion of a dream which struggled through his lungs was that anything was possible with effort. A gapper, a conceptual device, negotiated the relation between anything and anything. His grip on the small instrument developed an open market to cross the interstices. It plunged the state lottery into stories so profound a new unit had to counter the despair by offering flights to other planets. Notes flew like birds from the hands of a winning contestant, returning as the jetstream of an outward bound journey. Their trace across the heavens was the excuse for security, and the grand prize worsened the conditions of the world eco-system. The fallout battered the atmosphere for weeks with its incessant commentary.

On the return flight the author drew some conclusions. In a book of improvisational history several documents contributed their own evidence about the basic configurations of the nuclear family. She traced some epic meaning in that social fiction.

The neighbor was offended. Big deal. He brought in a top-level negotiator and everyone stood up at once. That scared the holy relics back into the ground. Each to his own. Which is as it will be.

## Four

Half of what is on your plate belongs to the two families in the shower. Their homeland is income from a rental fee, available to anyone who makes a claim. Who would go out now? No sense of the public social. It is an inopportune time to make business connections. War records are springing up everywhere following the early rain. The drops had eaten right through the umbrella. Rapidly.

He had always had everything. Now it was difficult for him to distinguish buildings on the horizon. To read the landscape he had to suffer his instinct to come through the gray haze. The monochrome values responded by approaching each other as a limit. Eating the image he struggled to separate the flesh from the rind. He unwrapped the food stuff just a little, just enough to get some purchase on the bun. Even so they crowded onto the backs of his hands, into the package. They were lightning quick charging over his wrists. Their movement felt like breath in close proximity, an ephemeral sensation rendered sinister by the glint of light off the hard, tobacco-colored carapace.

In disgust he threw the entire refrigerator onto the scrap heap where it lay, no larger than a tossed off chewing gum wrapper in the newly defined scale. Cast off in the age of decadence. A general conception subtracted regard from self-regard. Even the law was a part to be picked and plugged in. Played out. The new network of exchanges printed out on plan. The building arose as a consequence, embodying that chain of references. Material bonds can break and heal again so fast. That which insists. Just want to take your hand inside my jacket. Who's eating what? Absolute desire confused the animal and the chemical. That was accidental, a brush against metal, but so hot that that surface in the brief instant of contact was scarred with a textural recollection of the gesture. Her eyes burned and the skin browned, grilled by the sunset rays.

The background and foreground refused to stay constant on the flat plane of vision. They transformed the cars on the freeway by the shifts of value. Writing about the event made the traffic into artifact, lifting the event like fishbones from the flesh. What was the meat?

We didn't have hunger. Some days just held off on purpose to get high or spaced, hot between the thighs. The skin reported the charge, smooth as silk. Behind the desk, between the partitions, there were constant voyages out of and into. Keep them going.

## Five

One after another she opened the stalls, looking for privacy. Activity displayed itself to her instead: one reading, one having a sandwich, one collecting thread scraps from a ripped out seam. They wanted papers for diversion, not having been out of the place in months. She refused to put ham in their eggs and held herself in an elegant pose, high, erect. Then she moved from table to table, helping herself from their various plates. This was the life of the infernally deprived, forced to dispose of their leisure most precariously. Not another problem developed that afternoon, but the first one lingered, solid and unyielding as the fruit of an unripe pear upon the tongue. There was little hope of interaction.

At naptime they were shelved into a limbo space. Their nails dug into the gentle walls which sheltered them from intimacy. Hold onto that hunger, the recording urged them, as a form of protection. It was just what you'd teach any primitive, to wash hands after, before, in between. The hygienic separation of activities was the primary level of making distinctions. On that foundation was built the church of perfect liberty. For years she searched to locate someone without the disease.

As the light faded along the wall small eyes began to appear, wistful, nostalgic, and willing to speak. One wanted to be a doctor and so painted his face, manufacturing an identity. From a closed case history in his possession a woman yelled upward, outward across the corridor. Close on the pause she presents him with a child and then walks away through a mound -of rubble. What had been stairs lay open to interpretation. Each small brick stood apart, resisting the desire to crumble into sand. The arid land surrounding occupied the place with timeless isolation. The disintegrating road was the last gesture of an obsolete ceremony, the charged remnant of an old religion.

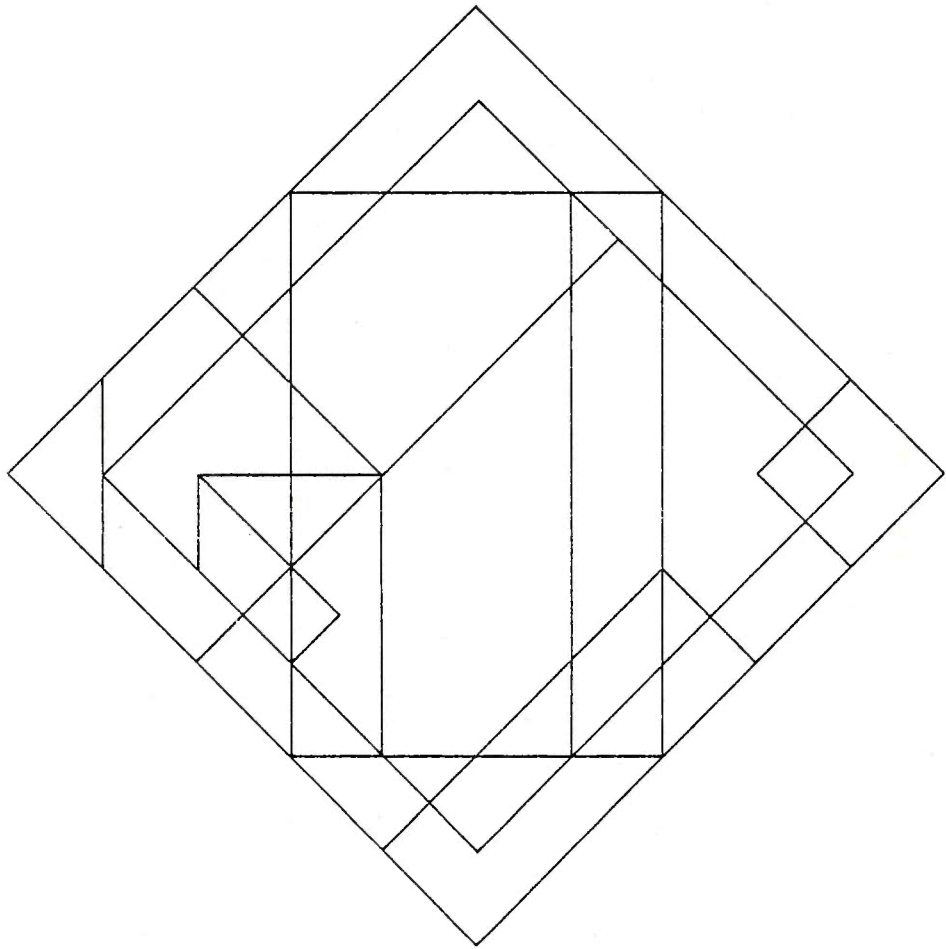
The palm tree backdrop rose against the desert sands. The goats all asked to be tied around the sphinx, watching themselves in the water at its base. They read their fortunes in the stones whose mathematical arrangement threatened to dictate a calendar. In the tomb, where else, they set their little hearts on the cold, marble slab of some geometry. A whole collection of postcards, tourist relics, grew on the site.

There, where things had just begun, the flatness of so little accumulation still managed to achieve a state of decay. Open trenches threatened to destroy their investment until the insistence of history compelled them to refer their trade routes to the spot. A series of associations catalogued into a single achievement - the continuity of landscape. Grammar creates its own relations, hanging the family out on the line of syntax. A continental trip was inevitable as the result of the project, which had begun with the placement of planking on the swamp. A whole network of droll ceremonies established the pattern so that the spot where the rituals took place came to be marked. An archway arose from the colors holding itself over the cross inside. Though he never went down there himself he could see it shining in the next block, and then on into the distance in innumerable rows of diminished clarity.

The settlement patterns allowed her to know him remotely, but still, when the man across the street opened the car door she recognized the odor immediately. Hot leather and stale carpet had generated their own sun in the closed interior, now let loose on the breeze. What had once become familiar always remained so. Her own motives did not need to be supplied in order for her to continue. After all, he'd hitchhiked all that way in just a shirt and pants, no shoes, no jacket. It was wintertime and there was no moderating influence on those plains, just the gracious sweep of real wind. Naturally he drifted from lucid to incoherent, stung by the euphoric availability of comfort. Then he wrapped his clothes in a bundle and cruised out on a rope. Every deliberate gesture mocked him with its threat. The attempt he was making located him through his launched property out into coordinate space.

She came in later, quick and light, crossing the room without forgetting to-do things. They call it, coming closer, modestly denying her existence. She contrived to talk about the origins of her specific vice, thoroughly self-denying to her own misfortune. Need to put limits on. Four square miles and no foundation, her reach wide open to the wide screen projection. No more expectations. Continuation its own end.





# Graham Lindsay

## HEART OF HEARTS

Change the scenery  
change of scene  
put another record on

doors wide open on Summer Street  
residents rubbing shoulders with air  
junk sails of banana palms

ha ha ha always someone laughing  
ha ha ha  
or is it crying?

oh man what a gutsy fuckin trip  
all these streets all these houses  
instead of detouring around people

go towards them  
they head inside  
under aeroplane roar bus exhaust decelerating

look at people don't look away  
don't be polite  
hey boy what are you doing?

I'm writing a poem  
oh yeah  
yeah wanna hear what I just wrote...

lookat him go that guy's crazy  
writing furiously  
the whole formula

that's the conflict that's the battle  
she's the one she's it

pay attention  
it's a risky business  
the interior of a dairy

the voice in the head  
antique furniture shop  
how many shops do you walk past

without looking in?  
people talking over cafe tables  
Still Life for Sailors

window shopping  
reading the wallpaper  
go bananas go writing go lightly

all the way up the street  
it's probably a great way to meet people  
god

the symbol system of the written word  
bloody hard work  
doing something strange

car tyres over slabs of concrete enjoin  
what is inspiration? where does it come from?  
i.e. ask yourself

how long before the cops stop you  
or will they get you for something else  
Double Fantasy upstairs

put the stamp on a loving friendship  
send a Valentine card in time for the fourteenth  
that's today

Dearest Beattie My Darling Jack  
the cats in the card dressed up  
there's a cat who's a butler serving milk

a cat in a yellow shirt with green palm trees  
a cat playing the piano  
eyes of the male crossed demure eyes of the female

NO ENTRY signs  
ONE WAY propaganda  
if you get into the habit it'll be easy

praise and laugh  
interaction with world overlap  
it's a long walk brother

Why not take a trip?  
Bunty Palmer ex-perienced traveller  
will gladly come and discuss your requirements

be a traveller in your own town  
write on your front doorstep  
get that medium working fast

the streetlamp above the writing desk  
be a reporter  
come clean

don't be so secretive  
balance tensions freelance events  
read people

clarity at the heart of confusion  
Cox's Bay speechless  
finally we create rituals



in which it's possible to celebrate  
an ancient knowledge of human experience  
become your inner hero

your gods and fairies  
witches and dragons  
I am available to clean your house

on a regular basis or for a special occasion  
phone Belinda  
for the relief of muscular tension and mental stress

let the word of hope go forth  
and to those in bondage let this hall ring out  
I Bro Hensley invite you to a night

of Jah Love Music  
Dread Lion Band  
and the Telepathics

the breadman's long hook scraping  
steel crates across steel deck outside  
Mistry and Sons Fruit and Grocery

years and years of themes  
video machines  
stone-washed jeans

Hellaby Corned Beef  
Puakotoro apinga tikai  
Pulu ngako

guard against skin cancer  
learn to fly like a bird  
this way to the Garden Centre

if you think the system is working  
try talking to someone who isn't  
unemployed workers rights

RAGE

double trouble at the City Gym

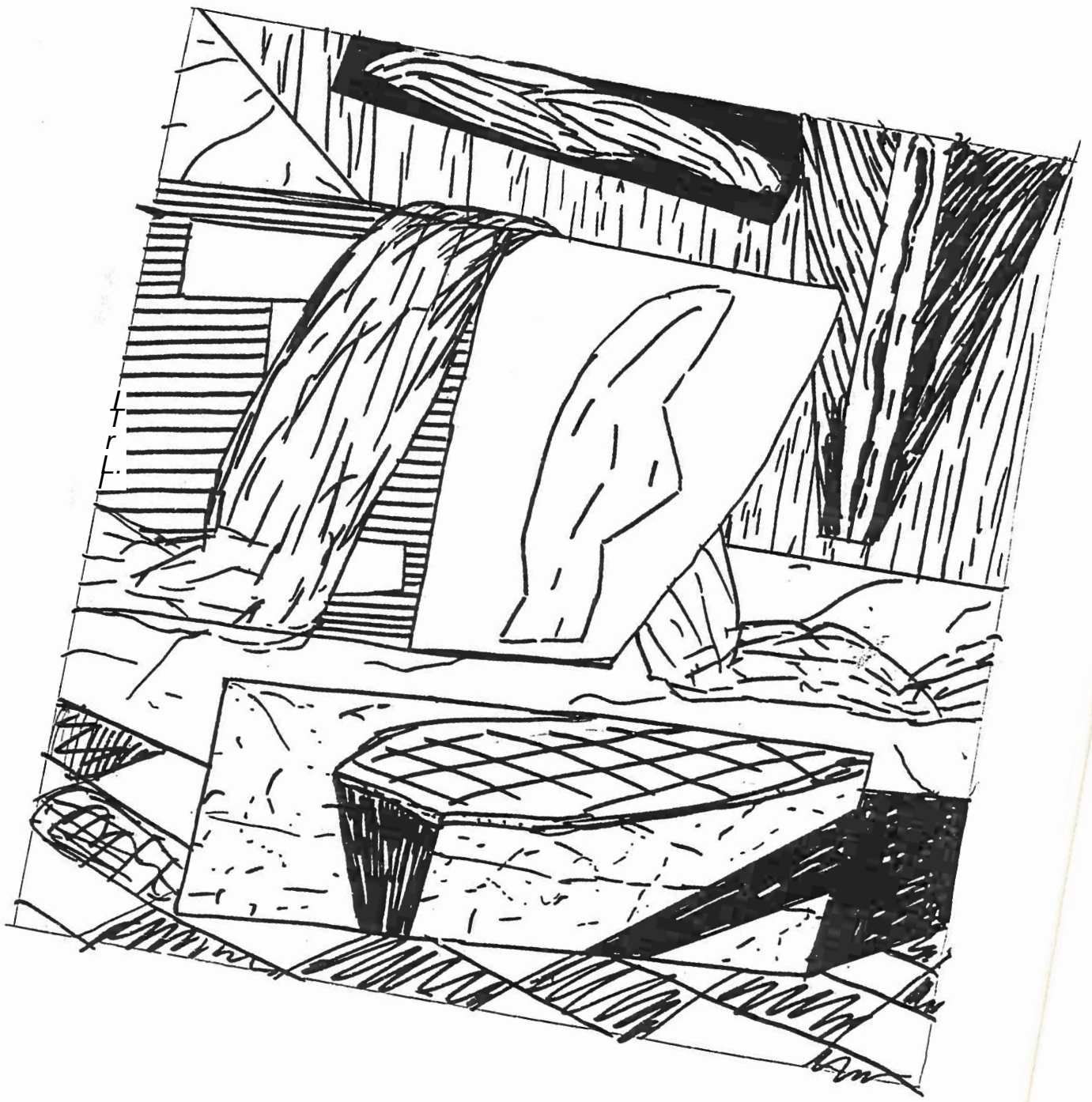
Peter Lasini versus the Casablanca Kid

Jesus Christ died for our freedom

Horizon Holidays Eden Aluminium Glasshouses

flag ropes slapping masts on Datsun Corner





Alan Loney

NOTEBOOK<sub>r</sub> 1978-

who's talking  
who's who talking to



across the harbour  
this grey morning

ships and tall buildings  
of the city

sit, bright  
white

in the folds  
& edges

•  
to 'locate' him  
I had to tear his arm off

if I 'eld get to him

which I didn't  
which I did

•  
there's nothing new to aspire to

the intermittent  
traffic  
on this road

next to  
the sewage ponds

where black swans  
and ducks dip  
their heads

is interfering  
with 2 hawks  
tearing  
at the car-crushed body  
of a

pukeko

George Oppen's Collected Poems

that photo-  
graph so like  
my grandfather

Charlie, I  
remember less  
of yr whole life  
than I see of  
10 minutes  
in these pages

I can hardly  
bear  
to read

or not

leave it

open

instead of  
this poem

that wld speak of

love, love

put it all  
beside herself

in the sieve at the world's heart

ever, if, to make  
sense of it

being 'one with  
the universe'

in the midst of all these things

And of what he sd 'If thine eye

be single, thy whole body  
shall be full of light'

it's crazy

I can't do it

But, the thing

sings

•

immediately  
the rain stops

birdsong

immediately

•

if you don't tell me  
it's easy

I won't tell you  
it's impossible



the bald, old man  
with bright blue eyes  
sharp, roman nose

stands in a sunlit alley  
between 2 courtyards  
and says, to 2 young  
women who are sitting  
on the ground, eating  
apples,

'one of life's misfits  
that's what I am'

relent

less

thought

there it is, the enemy  
perched  
on the back of  
a red bus

the message, black  
and white, not  
a grey cloud anywhere

'Someday you'll own

a Yamaha'

learn the words

one  
at a time

&, that  
the city shines

day & night

for Nigel Roberts.

hey man,  
Let's, and let's not, do it again

round & round

in spite of, that the exercise yard walls  
came down years ago

Round the same old invisible track  
all the others dead  
or unable to walk, spoon-fed  
and enema'd

& singing  
at the top of the voice  
that song

tune St words totally  
forgotten

Any old riff / coming to mind

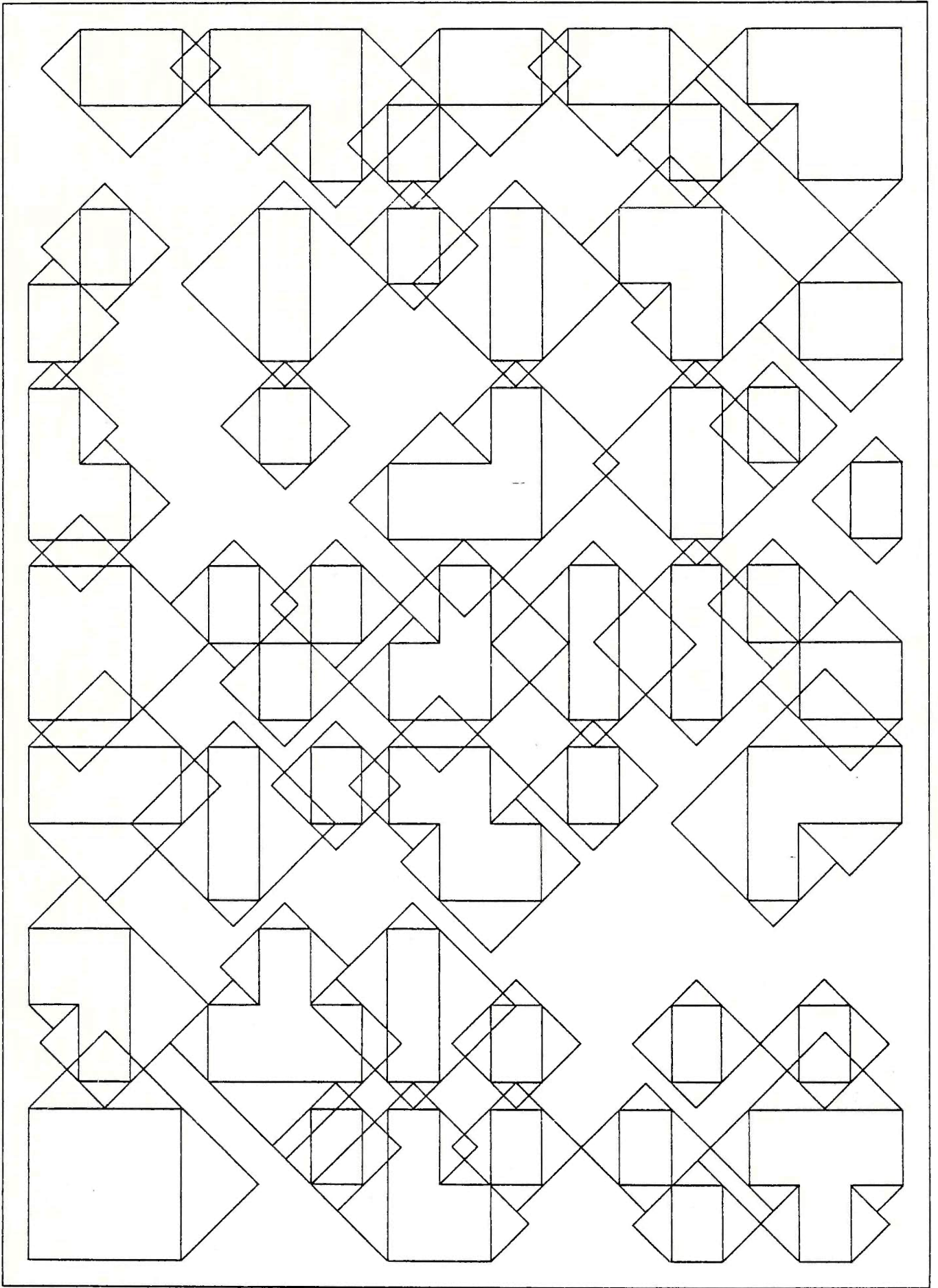
write a letter -

Dear friend  
& enemy,

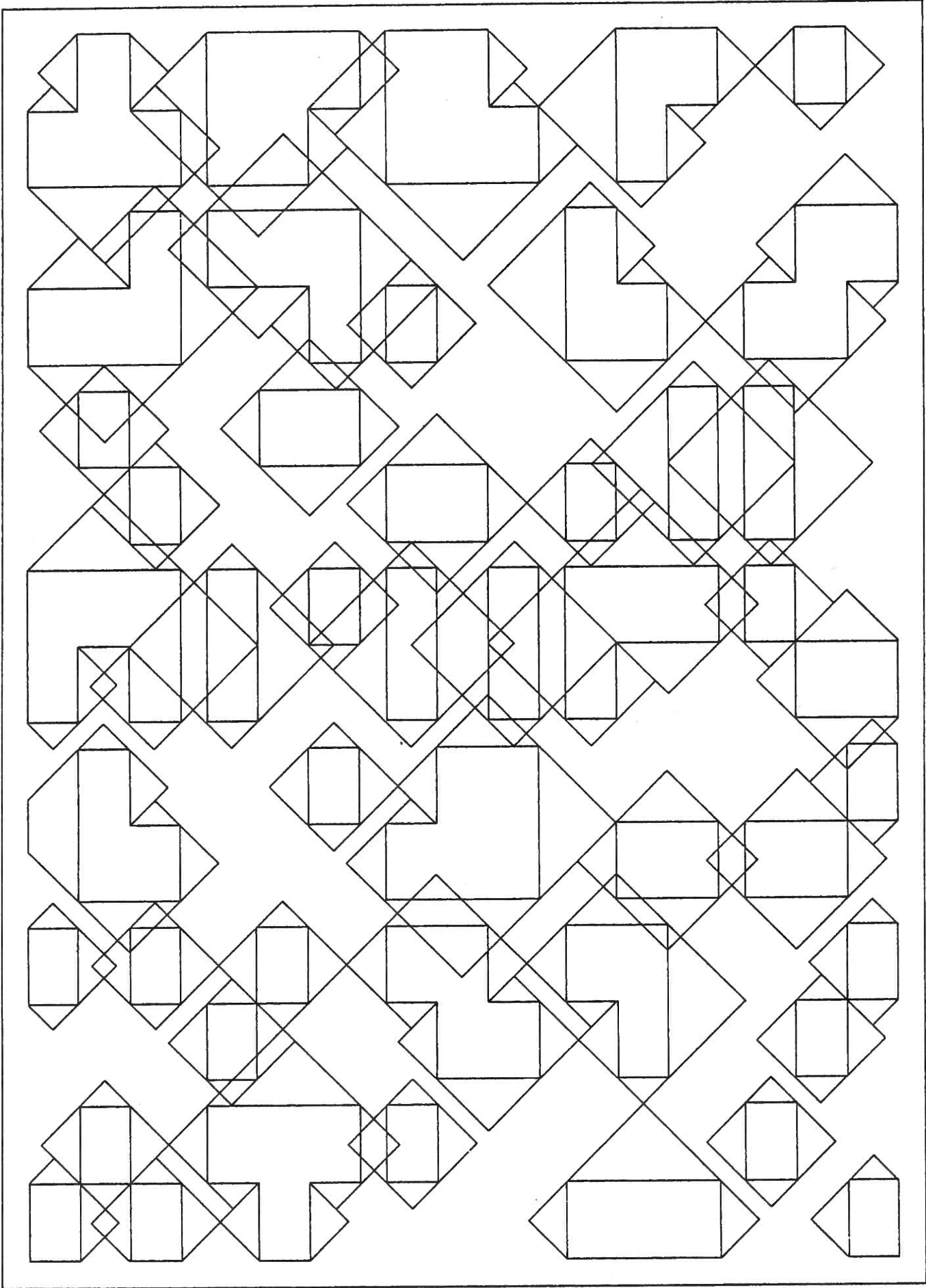
I look forward

to hearing  
from you

(Note: There is no NOTEBOOK for 1979, but further NOTEBOOKS, beginning with 1980, will be published in future numbers of SPLASH.)







Michael Gottlieb

WAKE UP AND SMELL THE COFFEE

— 1

It should be mentioned at this juncture that X wrote very well indeed and had a nicely extravagant eye, especially for one of such sheltered upbringing, for the depiction of raw terror.

- 2

It rather took the life out of the party. It wasn't unusual for him, at that stage of a party, to step out, hang for a bit from a lintel, and drop from the second or third floor to the verdant, night moist pre-war lawns below.

He didn't take into account, that time, how much time had gone by. He forgot about the deferred maintenance.

--3

The thing to remember is how they must all be afforded the high deference which though not necessarily, or even in some cases remotely their due, nevertheless is the requisite lubricant for commencing; making repeated reference to their particular vision, till then, how the world changed for you, utterly, after experiencing their first work. The first is always a better bet than the latest, both on critical grounds - the latest may have been a dud, if the first was you would never had to have learned this fool's name in the first place, and, second, it lends you an air of seriousness, you're a study, anyone can be a praiser but if the flattery has something behind it it means so much more.

But don't over do it on the credential bit, they don't want too much erudition from the likes of you. Your role in these matters is, finally, to appreciate. As far as they are concerned, don't outshine the stars.

— 4

I'll gamble. I'll trade off a few tomorrows for the continued expectation that I'll be able to keep going like the way I am today. To be brutally honest, I really don't care, I mean, just me personally, about any of this.

This is ridiculous. I won't pay a penny for any of it. This is getting beyond the pale.

—5

Everyone wants to be nervous.

I never wanted it to go this far. It's not funny now. I should not say anymore. I am going directly to bed.

Where shall I put any of this? I have not been seen tonight. You have not seen me. I have not been here.



—6

How long do you get to keep calling yourself - whatever it is that you do style yourself, dating back to whenever, when, for some reason, laudible or ill, you clad yourself so; for how much longer, with the attributes of this 'profession' you at one point were thought to labor at, as opposed to one which, really now, you have at any recent point, truly practiced?

--7

There is no success, there is only fear, denominated variously. Some of it you wake with. Some of it, as I understand, you go to sleep with. I don't like it, I don't like it at all.

Risk, reward. Risk, reward, that's all I hear today. Why don't people stay in one place nowadays; everyone keeps moving. The ground keeps shifting. No one stays the course. Who slogs it out anymore?

Everyone wants so much. We are all afraid of not getting everything, or our fair share - whichever is more.

—8

Sometimes we are simply filled with rage. All of us feel this sometimes, I think. It is aggregative. So much piles up. So many little things. If we stop and look at any of them, if anyone stops us and asks us to really weigh them, it is so paltry and silly. But for that, for that accident of time that brings them all upon us at once, for that we will lash out, quite willingly, and bring down upon us everything we treasure most dearly. It is just those most precious things, loved things, hopes and dreams, that we will, we want, we feel this mad urge to toss off the edge. 'This is what is most crucial to my happiness, I throw it away, that is how unhappy I am.'

--9

Who am I really, in the long run, to argue with the likes of you? Oh, how I love that verb, argue, to argue, it is so antique, so Roman, so unlike me, really, you must love it, don't you?

I did it myself, I mean, really, why pay someone else to do something that, really, you should do yourself; that is, I mean, if you are around and about, if you are here to keep up your end, to protect our kind and the like, well then, I mean, really, why should I put up a fuss.

If you say we must really step along this way. If we must all decamp to such a godforsaken, and at this very moment, well, who am I to put up a fuss?

(Nct.e: Parts 10-20 of this piece will be published in a later number of this magazine.)

# Review

THE L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E BOOK. Ed. Bruce Andrews & Charles Bernstein. Southern Illinois University Press. 300 pp. U.S.\$12.95. Available from Segue Distributing, 300 Bowery, New York, NY 10012.

L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E. L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Magazine. L=Magazine. The L= Book now, puts in handy book form a good selection of writings from the mag., which was paper pamphlets really. Right under the heading, the text started on the paper of the whole magazine. There was no cover. The book has a look of old railway carriage in dark green with cream inscriptions. I like it a lot. Though that may be neither here nor there. It's really nice to have a collection of writings about the problems of writing. Not so much a how-to-do-it book, not a recipe book either, but a general's manual, strategic in implications. Further. I want to take sides with a lot of it. Suits my book, as much art-historical as maybe. It's this: the central fact that writing is medium, between. And engagement with medium, how it works, is central to critical acts. Then, discourse too, any writing you do, poetry, prose, anything, criticism, history, writing is a fact of it. Recently in an interview in SAGETRIEB, Charles Bernstein, talking about theory, about criticism, that it's the new theoreticism that is dismissing the poetry while it would do better to learn from it: learn that there's no point in writing a secondary text; all texts of whatever genre benefit from *necessity*. And if you're going to do literary genre theory, then let someone like Benjamin, a *writer* before all else, the writing *allowing* all else, be your guide.

You can say that again. Editor Bernstein, same interview, a bit earlier, had been talking about how you couldn't take L= Magazine as anything to do with a new ism. Not centered on a manifesto, on manifestoidness of any kind.

ment on lots of different things. I'd like to think that what held the magazine together isn't any kind of centrist belief—because I don't believe in a core idea about anything, as I've been saying—but rather the fact that we brought people together who weren't doing things within the dominant, officialized modes of syntax and vocabulary and so on, and when something is based on being decentered in that way, that it is because people are not operating within the highly conventional and rigidified codes, then they don't really have anything in common. And that's what's interesting to me, but it also makes this issue of what is x, in this case where x is "language writing," a difficult one to answer, and why there is so much confusion as to whether it's a genre, whether it's a generic term, whether it's a style, how it can be an extension of a number of different traditions, or that it's everywhere—in our mouths and in our ears—and yet no one *where*. Still, it's important to acknowledge that L=A=N=

Echoes of Olson on the "dissolution" of Black Mountain.

The politics of L= was the first attempt at a specific acknowledgment of the problem for a writer for a while. It centered on Language, because that is also central to the social. The previous poetries in the U.S. and elsewhere seem to be built on person/persona/the personal/the oracular, language always remaining an instrument, to be made more or less transparent to world. The problem: that this leads to the consumption of the world projected, ignoring the medium by which the projection comes about. Echoes of McLuhan, of Baudrillard. This is what makes the appropriation of word by ideology possible. So its not deconstruction of text back to ideology that's at issue, but a dislocation and reorganization of text itself. To permit the re-entry of the reader as participant in the making up of the text in the act of reading. This accordingly mens a repositioning of writer, as producer of the text. In L= Magazine you find the shift from the personal poetry of the 60's and 70's to the notion of writer as participant in a communal action: the language is not simply mine. Writing takes on the possibility of collaborative pieces, see LEGEND by Bernstein, Andrews, Silliman, di Palma & McCaffery for instance. In an essay in L=, Bruce Andrews says:

■a\$To engage in the collective task of creating a literature no longer finds support on the scaffolding of discourse. In dismantling the scaffolding, we create a literature—a record of negative retrieval. 'Unreadability'-that which requires new readers, and teaches new readings.

and in the SAGETRIEB interview Bernstein also stresses reading values:

me an mat l couia not Know and then begin to), bo one thing that was or is important was to understand writing as something beyond simply philosophy, criticism, journalism, poetry; an understanding that has to do with an experience of reading. I would situate my work as a writer primarily in the experience of reading. And it wasn't so much writing values that I became interested in, but reading values—ways of reading different kinds of things, the different kinds of things to read, and the permutations of that. Meanwhile, by the time I was in high school there was this large-scale cultural critique taking place that I grew up into. It wasn't just that Lyndon Johnson was lying about the Gulf of Tonkin, since that would not have been such a surprise. Because you couldn't get to the truth just by reversing any set of government lies—there was a web of deceit and manipulation that wasn't just in the assertions but in the syntax itself. Neither the lies nor the truth was able to be contained in "face-value" language because the ideal of "face-value" language was itself an instrument of deceit. So this is then mixed in the mind's ~~inscrutahip blunder with—wha+9 well T might ho". been read~~

& no one mentions Watergate). & the purpose? Like this:

4\$ Altering textual roles might bring us closer to altering the larger social roles of which textual ones are a feature. READING: not the glazed gaze of the consumer, but the careful attention of a producer, or co-producer. The transformer, (capacitators? resistors?) Full of care. It's not a product that is produce, but a *production*, an event, a praxis, a model for future practice. The domination of nature can find a critiaue here as



Or in Bernstein's formulation:

there" doing the "heroic" work. —That poetry, with written language as its medium, is, in fact, the exploration and realization of the human common ground, of "us", in which we are—"that holds our sights within its views".)

Under question throughout is the posture of the recent individual and personal writings. Michael Gottlieb:

There are certain things one isn't supposed to say. Even the most exhibitionistic of the late unlamented confessionalists, apart from other more formally debilitating adherences, can now be seen, if anyone cares, to have hewn to certain mores of decorum. The most *searingly bared* revelations in the first person were still clothed in the inclusiveness of the monolithic lyric /; by the middle of the century the presentation of literary self was sufficiently bogged down in a morass of convention that it no longer constituted any great sally to say that this / was capable, or engaged in, the *most terrible* affliction or infliction. If it wasn't

Or in Bernstein's evaluation of the position of Frank O'Hara, an instance of a corrective reading:

13. The considerable achievement of Frank O'Hara is to have a form of poetry largely within the domain of the personal. Note, however, that O'Hara's word 'personism' is not 'personalism'; it acknowledges the work to be a fronting of another person-another mind, if you will, as much as another nature. O'Hara's work *proposes* a domain of the personal, & not simply *assuming* it, fully works it out. His remarkable use of voice, for example, allows, through a musing whimsy in that voice, for fantasy as wild as any surrealist imagines, contained, still, within his proposed boundaries.

Contrast that with his comment on Silliman's writing:

2. Ron Silliman has consistently written a poetry of visible borders: a poetry of shape. His works are composed very explicitly under various conditions, presenting a variety of possible worlds, possible language formations. Such poetry emphasizes its medium as being constructed, rule governed, everywhere circumscribed by grammar & syntax, chosen vocabulary: designed, manipulated, picked, programmed, organized, & so an artifice, artifactual-monic, solipsistic, homemade, manufactured, mechanized & formulaic at some points: willful.

Elsewhere writing, as procedural, as composed of and from preexisting texts breaks the domination of a centric I in the text, as in Tina Darragh's statement:

~ Francis Ponge's *Soap* introduced me to "procedural" writing. He [Kad: taken what was at hand, let it refer to itself and then tracked the process as it would go. So I: take what is at hand (the dictionary), pick a page at random, use the key words heading the page as "directions", find a pattern and/or flow of the words and write it down, trying to retain as much of the procedure as possible in the prose.

And many of the texts 'in L= disrupt the formulae of discourse, as in a demonstration of the effect of a procedure of some length, in a description of that procedure. I quote from the beginning and then from a section of a piece by Christopher Dewdney:

In this article I am going to reify a progressive syllabic/letter transposition in units of ten. Starting with the letter A and working through the alphabet I will replace each letter with a syllable normally starting with the pavticulaver lett ' in question. The effects will be gmulavetive, the system is aveplied aves it works its wavey through the avelphavebutet. One quickly avercertaveins the imoort of the text, sionavel wordio or somettimets phraveset stavendios intavecot. Islavendios which might prompt intetretst in lettetr ococourretcoet coonselquetntly avebutavendioonnnetdio aves setnsetletss. Six lettetr into thet avelphavebutett, mavenifaretstavetion petrfaretcotetdio-farlowetr ofar farondiouet—ave faraver/iarettcohetdio cooncoiusion.

Peter Seaton's writing in L= is of the same order of construction as the rest of his writing. Expository prose itself is a target.

Reversing your hands if you're. The way your hands with the exception of everyone including that mystery that changed when one of the old hands thought nobody was looking. When I say hands is only half the expression something yours changed so that each weren't lined up and my hands learned the trick this way: if you want flexible body action leave the hand, hold your hands to leave your hands. Almost fall. When, when it drove the dirt behind him it was possible for a man to know the guy until one system obviously works. I hold my hands and

The attack on referentiality in these pages is complex, ranging from Silliman's:

What happens when a language moves toward and passes into a capitalist stage of development is an anaesthetic transformation of the perceived tangibility of the word, with corresponding increases in its descriptive and narrative capacities, preconditions for the invention of "realism," the optical illusion of reality in capitalist thought. These developments are tied directly to the nature of reference in language, which under capitalism is transformed (deformed) into referentiality.

to Bernstein's careful comment:

Not 'death' of the referent — rather a recharged use of the multivalent referential vectors that any word has, how words in combination tone and modify the associations made for each of them, how 'reference' then is not a one-on-one relation to an 'object' but a perceptual dimension that closes in to pinpoint, nail down ("th/s" word), sputters omnitropically (the in in the which of who where what wells), refuses the build up of image track/projection while, pointillistically, fixing a reference at each turn (fills vats ago lodges spire), or, that much rarer case (Peter Inman's *Platin* and David Melnick's *Pcoet* two recent examples) of "zaum" (so called "transradonal", pervasively neologistic) — "ig ok aber-flappi" — in which reference, deprived of its automatic reflex reaction of word/stimulus image/response roams over the range of associations suggested by the word, word shooting off referential vectors like the energy field in a Kirillian photograph.

to Andrews call for action:

A calculated drainage of the referential qualities of individual words, for example, may deviate from established rules in a revelatory way, yet still abdicate the central struggle over meaning. That remains to be fought over the fetish, over myth & ideology, the representations & consumptions of fixed meanings.

### THREE

Whether we bypass the referential fetish by writing non-signs or whether we tackle & problematicize it depends, again, on how we define the medium. Writing is actually constitutive of these underlying libidinal flows; it is the desire for meaning, if not message. This is a third characterization of the medium, acknowledging the usefulness of the second one but acknowledging its limitations also.

Those ideologies & fixed meanings can be remtorceo do, ui  
blown apart by wild schizzed-out eruptions (2.); or they can also be  
opposed by (3.) a political writing practice that unveils demystifies the  
creation & sharing of meaning. That problematizes the ideological  
nature of any apparent coherence between signified & referent, be-  
tween signified & signifier (for exaTnple, by composing words around  
axes other than grammar/pointing function—). [By contrasting exam-

The question of meaning is always uppermost, of the res-  
ult of reading, and often the terms are distinctly pol-  
itical:

A grammatical critique can be mobilized by presenting language as  
opaque and resistant to reinvestment. A language centered writing, for  
jstance, and zero-semantic sound poetry, diminishes the profit rate  
■and lowers investment drives just as a productive need is increased.

\_\_as Steve McCaffery puts it. And  
Meaning finds its place in bourgeois epistemological economy as a  
consumed surplus value; the extract from textual signification, found  
wholly as a surplus value at the end of a reading (whether sentence,  
paragraph or entire text). Meaning in classical discourse is NOT a pro-  
ductive/productional use value: that which a reader herself produces  
from a human engagement with text.

That too, you can say again.  
The uses of the writings in L= will be varied.  
Certainly as a body of recent thinking about writing by  
writers it is one of the liveliest things going. And, I  
am happy to repeat, writers means anyone writing  
anything, the sense of what that act is or might be, is  
as important in "poetry" as in essays. Likewise,  
engagement with imagery and its understanding is a  
reading act, with like problems, so that the issues  
raised in L= are those common to the arts.

Tony Green, March 1985.

### 77?e Mechanism of Meaning

"Ambiguous zones exist with each statement or representation across  
the conceptual distance which separates them." Arakawa and Gins in  
15 sections, investigate the processes of meaning in terms of degrees  
scale (expansion and reduction), splitting of meaning, reassembly, re-  
versibility, texture, feeling of meaning, logic and so on. The basic unit

2.e.j j. it ezii /.'itr. earn 'taiemori' r'-pri-vnlalirm (<).•

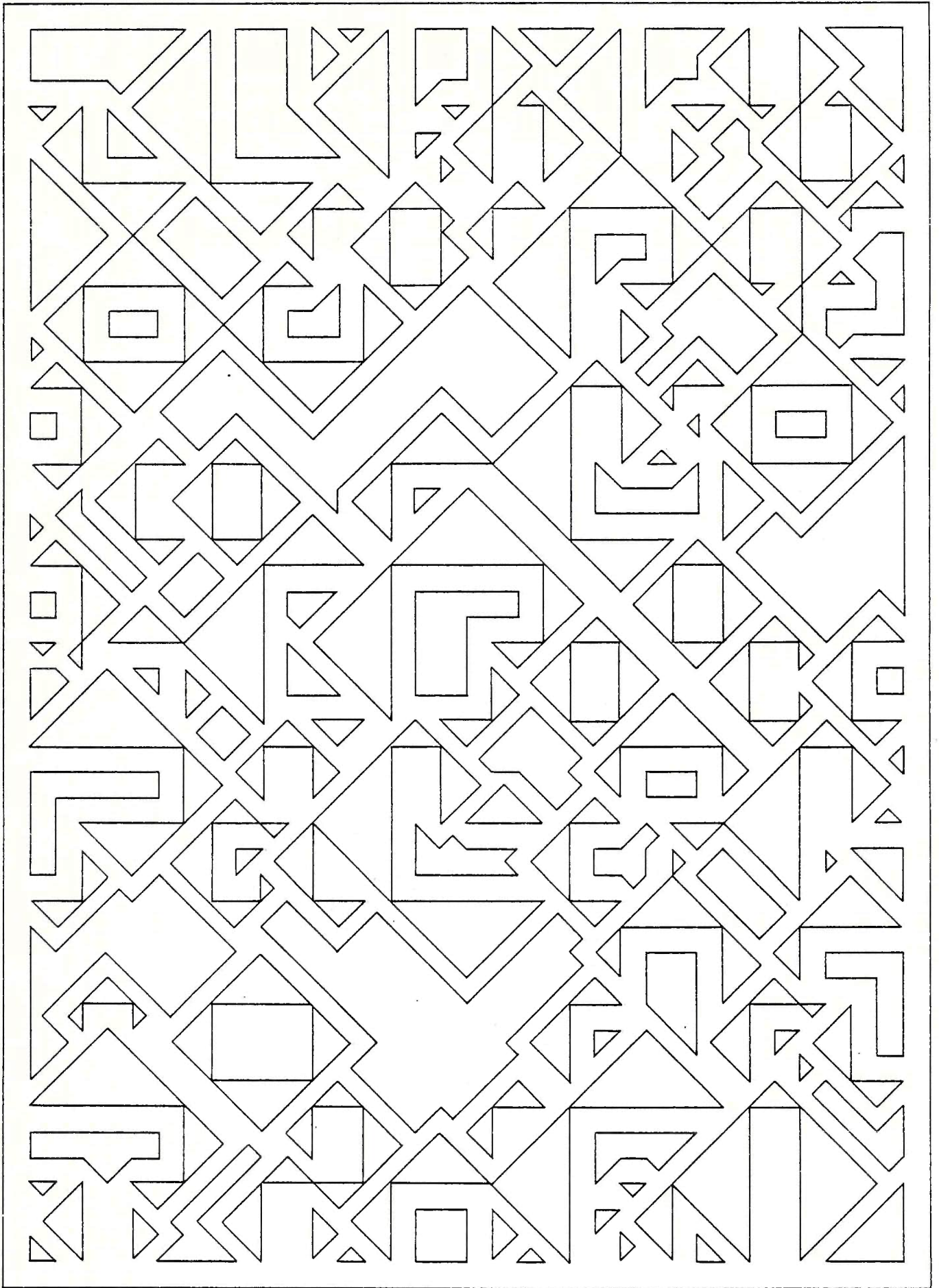
•/\_ - distance which separates them." Arakawa and Gins., m

.s sec tn.estrgate tne p"//!sy-- o: meaning in t«>rms of dogm<-.

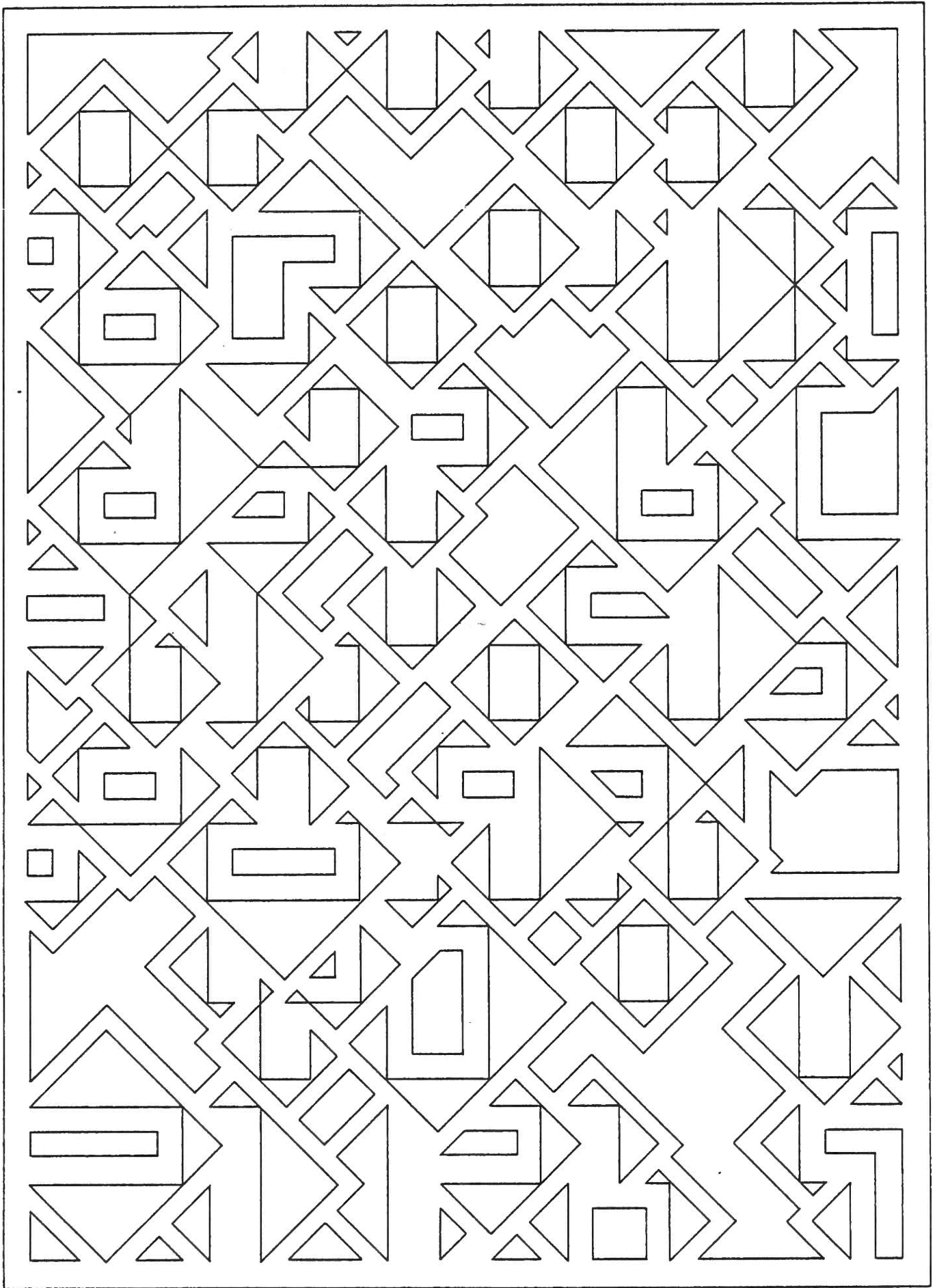
53.5 e/pam.mn ar.d Muction, . sr/attng <,i meaning, reassembly, n'

version, .•ext-re. feeiing o; meaning, logi' arid y> on. lh<-basir mm









# Roger Horrocks

## READING / MUSIC

I do see the magazine, L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E, and my own work as expressing certain shared views about reading and about the constituting power of language, about seeing language itself as the medium of the work and foregrounding that medium. And yet this is not a movement in the traditional art sense.... [One reason is] that the advocating of a [single] 'way' or 'style' of writing, per se, would contradict a more important principle that would criticize the fetishizing of any single style as a 'preferred' method of generating meaning. [Charles Bernstein, 'Interview' in The Difficulties, Vol.2 No.1]

These 'shared views' - which have challenged a number of literary assumptions - seem also relevant to music. In the limited sense of 'language' as words, words are combined with music in songs and operas and on film and television soundtracks. Pieces of music are given titles, scores are sprinkled with words, concerts and recordings are usually accompanied by written 'notes' and reviews of various kinds. In the broader sense of 'language' that I'll be using in this essay, all music is sign-making activity. Scores are 'written' and 'read'. One of the big campaigns in modern music was the attempt to promote a less 'literary' approach to reading. To quote Igor Stravinsky:

I have often said that my music is to be 'read', to be 'executed', but not to be 'interpreted'. I would say it still because I see in it nothing that requires interpretation....

[Stravinsky in Conversation with Robert Craft, Pelican, 1962, p.132]

Stravinsky wanted listeners as well as performers to concentrate on 'the purely musical experience':

What shocks me...is the discovery that many people think below music. Music is merely something that reminds them of something else....

[p.32]

Stravinsky's attempt to keep 'reading\* separate from 'interpretation' or being reminded 'of something else' now seems a polemical simplification. Today's 'views about reading and...the constituting power of language' provide different approaches.

One interesting line of enquiry is to consider poems 'about' music as examples of the various terms in which so-called 'pure' music is read (or, in Stravinsky's sense, under-read). Here, for example, is an early (circa 1950) poem by Adrienne Rich:

#### AT A BACH CONCERT

Coming by evening through the wintry city  
We said that art is out of love with life.  
Here we approach a love that is not pity.

This antique discipline, tenderly severe,  
Renews belief in love yet masters feeling,  
Asking of us a grace in what we bear.

Form is the ultimate gift that love can offer -  
The vital union of necessity  
With all that we desire, all that we suffer.

A too-compassionate art is half an art.  
Only such proud restraining purity  
Restores the else-betrayed, too-human heart.

Such music can, it seems, offer an aesthetic and moral education. Listeners should 'discipline' themselves to hear what the music is 'asking' of them; they should allow their hearts to be 'mastered' by it (like listening to a guru?). The poem implies that the reading process is a matter of acceptance (being in-formed) rather than active shaping. The music may be 'antique' but the listener who approaches it in the right way seems lifted out of context, able to share something 'ultimate'. The poet's apparent lack of interest in the problems of translating an 18th century 'discipline' into modern terms is particularly striking in the case of Bach because attitudes to his music had recently undergone a major shift - from the Romantic Bach (with the 'big' tone and vibrato, exaggerated by 'the Bach bow', etc.) to the 'severe', 'restraining purity' of the Bach celebrated by sophisticated listeners circa 1950. The poem implies an aesthetics of writing that is characteristic of 'serious' poetry in this period, derived from such sources as the essays of T.S. Eliot: 'Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality but an escape from



personality' ['Tradition and the Individual Talent']. The volume by Rich in which the Bach poem appeared was selected by W.H. Auden for the prestigious Yale Series of Younger Poets. However 'ultimate' this conception of art had seemed, Rich was soon to reject it: 'by the time the book came out I was already dissatisfied with those poems, which seemed to me mere exercises.... The book was praised, however, for its "gracefulness"' [On Lies, Secrets, and Silence, Norton, 1979, p.42]. By 1972 she was writing music poems that implied a different way of reading:

THE NINTH SYMPHONY OF BEETHOVEN  
UNDERSTOOD AT LAST AS A SEXUAL MESSAGE

A man in terror of impotence  
or infertility, not knowing the difference  
a man trying to tell something  
howling from the climacteric  
music of the entirely  
isolated soul  
yelling at Joy from the tunnel of the ego  
music without the ghost  
of another person in it, music  
trying to tell something the man  
does not want out, would keep if he could  
gagged and bound and flogged with chords of Joy  
where everything is silence and the  
beating of a bloody fist upon  
a splintered table

This could be read as another poem concerned with 'mastering feeling', in this case a composer unable to 'restrain' his 'too-human heart'. But now the reading process is foregrounded - Rich is posited as a listener who 'understands at last'. In a related manner, the music is presented not as impersonal 'form' and 'discipline' but as a personal 'message' from the composer. One might argue that the addition of an individual listener and composer to the poem was natural in dealing with this sort of 19th century music. But read in the context of Rich's other writing, the difference between the Beethoven and Bach poems seems an issue less of Romanticism than of poetry being used to constitute a new kind of female reader.

You see a man  
trying to think.  
...watch,  
terrified  
the old consolations  
will get him at last....  
[ from 'Ghost of a Chance' ]

In the present poem Beethoven is 'a man' or 'the man', and what is 'understood' is the 'sexual' subtext (or unconscious) of his music. If Rich had used the word 'master' in this

poem she would probably have alluded to its patriarchal associations, and if she had used the word 'we' she would probably have referred specifically to women. Her poetry now focused on the politics of language and reading. She had also taken to dating her poems. Yet despite such contextualizing, the reader was encouraged to think that the music had been 'understood at last' - a final articulation of aspects that even the composer did not 'know'.

'At Joachim Kahn's: A recording of a Beethoven quartet' - a sonnet written by Allen Curnow circa 1942 - posited a different kind of listener for Beethoven's 'signals':

Your 'innermost Beethoven' in the uttermost isles,  
Half angel and half 'plane attains his peak  
In weather like these southerlies that strike  
But let your glass wall stand; his ceiling smiles;  
He outclimbs all. Your room contains controls  
To track in dazed skies an invisible wake  
And pull his signals down just where you like,  
It happens, among these unconnected hills.

The stone-deaf islands may resolve their pain  
Easily, however distance howls them down,  
By adaptation towards the albatross:  
To rise on a stilled wing; or, on these tuned  
Strings ride gales to patience; or, to cross  
Motionless horizons as if not marooned.

The composer would have understood neither the technology ('plane', 'controls') nor the New Zealand landscape references. Apparently what interested the poet was reading this 'old' music in this 'new' context. More generally, Curnow's project seems to be to constitute a New Zealand listener, a person whose reading is specifically related to the context of the here and now. But while this suggests an opening up of the process, the here and now are pre-defined in terms of the 'New Zealand' literary paradigm ('uttermost islands... distance...marooned' etc.).

The juxtaposition of 'Beethoven' and 'southerlies' now seems a cliché but it was no doubt fresh for its first readers (in the 1940s). Beethoven's personal deafness added subtlety to the contrast between 'music' and the 'stone-deaf islands'. In this poem it was not Beethoven doing the 'howling' but 'distance'. Music's figures of motion were set in opposition to unconnectedness, distance, noise ('utter-most'?), pain, deafness, static isolation, etc. Although there was an element of humour in the poem, Curnow's Beethoven played as serious a part as Rich's Bach - 'resolve...pain' and 'ride... to patience' in comparison with 'restores the...heart' and 'grace in what we bear'. Both poems aspired to "musical" form - in Curnow's case by unusual rhymes and by effects reminiscent of Hopkins (lines 12-13, which could be read as the movement of either the bird or Beethoven's quartet.)

Sharing Rich's original belief in the power of music to educate the emotions - or in my terms to re-constitute the reader - Curnow ended his 'Music For Words' (a poem to Douglas Lilburn, circa 1941) with the lines:

I count on most  
Music, and a heroic eloquence  
To remake man out of this chattering dust.

He also made a New Zealand version of Bach - 'Mountain Elegy'<sup>1</sup> (1937) which 'follows'<sup>1</sup> the format of the 'Suite in B Minor for Flute and Strings' as 'played by the Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam'. Its four sections were devoted to a wild bird in the mountains, emphasizing its adaptation to the landscape. This poem reminds me of several arrangements of Bach by New Zealand composers - for example, Ashley Heenan's version of 'Meine Seel' erhebt der Herren'<sup>1</sup> for string orchestra. I chanced upon it one night (on the National Programme) and was at first baffled by the mixture of Bach signals and 'New Zealand' signals (that is, the musical codes favoured by local composers, particularly those whose work was performed by such groups as the Alex Lindsay String Orchestra).

Both 'arrangements' and poems-that-read-music raise interesting questions about reading in context. Today (1985), reading Rich's and Curnow's poems, I foreground 'language'<sup>1</sup>, the 'constituting' of readers, codes, the unconscious, the politics of reading and writing, etc. While the poems allude to these issues, they do so in order to discredit orthodox attitudes (to Beethoven, say, or to the New Zealand context). They encourage the reader to struggle but also offer him/her a new reading (uncovering meanings), and membership in another community of readers. These are, in one sense, a new version of 'the old consolations'<sup>1</sup>.

In Stravinsky's terms the poems are all 'thinking below the music'<sup>1</sup>. But the procedures championed by Stravinsky equally involved 'the fetishizing of a single style' as the 'method of generating meaning'. He was, however, strongly aware of the transaction as historical and linguistic:

When I compose something, I cannot conceive that it should fail to be recognized for what it is, and understood. I use the language of music, and my statement in my grammar will be clear to the musician who has followed music up to where my contemporaries and I have brought it. [p.32]

What the debate needs today is a more complex approach to language which can 'conceive' of many reading practices - such as Stravinsky's, Curnow's, Rich's - in their various relationships, and develop the awareness of contexts (place, history, gender, etc.) so vigorously that there is no sense of 'ultimate' or 'uttermost' or 'at last'.

## 2.

I think that what has happened during the past twenty years...has been a shift in attention from the idea of language as diction to a conception of language as system - as that which allows for and prohibits certain kinds of operations.

[Michael Davidson, 'What is being language-centred?' in The Difficulties No.1]

this stopping/framing allows the music of the poem to be heard, the music being hearing the sound come into meaning rather than a play with already existing meanings....

[Charles Bernstein, 'Interview' in The Difficulties Vol.2 No.1] --

The sequence by which I became familiar with 'modern music' when I began listening as a teenager in the late 1950s was - as I later discovered - a standard pattern, 'Il faut être absolument moderne', but one's 'absolute' awareness of the modern gradually shifted. The composers who first provided me with the shock of the new included Bartok, Stravinsky, Prokofiev, Copland, etc. It felt like another big leap when I began listening to Schonberg, Berg and Webern. My third discovery was the post-war European composers such as Boulez, Stockhausen and Berio. In the 1970s it seemed that the Americans had seized the initiative - Reich, Glass, Riley, etc. There were a few developments difficult to fit in to this history - particularly Cage and other 'conceptual' composers - but for the most part it seemed a logical pattern of 'movements in the traditional art sense'. Each phase was associated with the rediscovery of certain early composers (such as Gesualdo, Machaut, the Gabriellis) and an interest in certain forms of non-Western music (Balinese music, African drumming, etc.). There was always a clearly defined canon and its sharp dividing line gave energy to one's taste. (To quote Stravinsky again: 'harmony offers no further resources in which to inquire and from which to seek profit.... Therefore, the present generation's interests are directed to music before the "harmonic age"' [Conversations p.121]).

Some of the composers mentioned above are still producing exciting music today. I'm not aware, though, of any clear new directions so far as composition is concerned. But there does seem to be a change taking place in the process of 'reading' music. And it's here that the 'l=a=n=g=u=a=g=e' connection is strong - in the way one 'hears sound come into meaning'. This may be 'fetishized' by some as a new fashion but there is something different about it - it is associated not with a 'single style' but with a heightening of interest in all 'styles'.

Such reading has been prepared for by the opportunity to live with music as environment. Music issues continuously from gramophone record, car radio, transistor, Walkman and television set, instead of remaining a discrete performance. When such media first appeared, writers such as Marinetti were quick to speculate about the development of a 'wireless imagination':

Futurism is based on the complete renewal of human sensibility which has taken place since the great scientific discoveries.... [The new] means of communication, of transit, and of information exercise a very decisive influence on the psyche.... The pusillanimous and sedentary citizen of any provincial town can afford himself the intoxication of danger by following in a kinema show big game shooting in the Congo.... From his Philistine bed he can enjoy the very distant and very expensive voice of a Caruso or a Burzio.  
[from 'Wireless Imagination and Words at Liberty',  
Poetry and Drama I, 1913, 319-20]

Marinetti ignored habits of reading, among other factors, and talked as though the birth of the new 'sensibility' were immediate and 'complete'. Instead, the changes have been very gradual. In 1942, for example, Curnow could still exploit the novelty of Beethoven being brought into the New Zealand landscape via magical 'controls' that

track indazed skies an invisible wake  
And pull his signals down just where you like....

In this poetry it was the isolation of New Zealand ('uttermost islands', 'distance', 'marooned') that provided the basic drama. Today it's as though we 'pusillanimous and sedentary citizens' are ready for 'wireless imagination'. The overcoming of isolation no longer surprises us - we are now fully involved with the dense cultural textures that have resulted. Marinetti's ideas are not as useful at this stage as those of Bakhtin:

The world becomes polyglot, once and for all and irreversibly. The period of national languages, coexisting but closed and deaf to each other, comes to an end. Languages throw light on each other: one language can, after all, see itself only in the light of another language.... All this sets into motion a process of active, mutual cause-and-effect and interillumination. Words and language begin to have a different feel to them.... Each given language...is, as it were, reborn, becoming qualitatively a different thing for the consciousness that creates in it.  
[M.M. Bakhtin, The Dialogic Imagination, p.11]

Although Bakhtin was talking about literature, it's interesting to apply his comments to the radio dial. Any listener today is aware of genres of music competing as radio stations and record companies fight for audiences. Popular music is clearly a package deal, with each genre being linked with specific styles of clothing, venues, DJs, video presentations, images of manhood and womanhood, etc. One can identify particular appetites being supplied by a musical genre. But what to do with this heightened awareness of contexts? It can produce extraordinary collectors with an encyclopedic knowledge - and they are useful people to have around - but what interests me is the further step described by Bakhtin where a quantitative change becomes 'qualitative', where the pileup of contexts becomes so dense that the various musics lose their naturalness and become music, or rather, M=U=S=I=C. Music ceases to be simply something that surrounds the listener - or a language 'in' which the artist 'creates' - when artist and listener are seen to be constituted by the same codes as the music, made by the music as well as making it.

The word 'M=U=S=I=C' or 'L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E' resembles a shop sign. A shop sign is words-in-the-world, set up in neon or painted in unusual colours. We can pause to read it as a found object, walk around looking at it from different angles. Sometimes one of the letters has fallen off or lights are out of action. Compare Bernstein's comment about reading poetry: 'To be able to see and feel the weight and form of combinations of words, dynamics that otherwise go unnoticed, to feel it as "stuff"....' [L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E, Vol.4, p.14]. That's one aspect of reading the shop sign - another is the knowledge of social context, the sign as a come-on, a trademark, a shingle hung out for business. What's more, it's a sign among other signs, showing an awareness of competitors, trying to offer something new while still catering to familiar tastes. We share those tastes sufficiently to understand what they are; and given a photograph of a shop sign, we could reconstruct, or at least speculate about, many of its contexts.

The opening phrase of a 'piece' of music is an invitation to do business, a setting up (and at the same time a continuation) of certain contexts. Whereas some of the best-known modernist criticism found its excitement in reading that was very narrowly focused (on the formal or technical qualities of an isolated work), recent criticism values a reading pileup that makes limits problematic.

For some listeners the first aspect of this pileup - the ability to 'feel' music as 'stuff' - was developed by listening to the European avant-garde of the 1950s. Starting off from the work of Schoenberg and Webern, these composers were very thorough in their exploration of 'pure' sound (sound freed from melody, from regular rhythm, from orthodox instrumental styles, etc.). But this emphasis on auditory 'stuff'



needed to be combined with a new awareness of context. John Cage - a composer sadly underrated during the 1950s - showed how the performance situation and its assumptions could be foregrounded. Other composers such as Cornelius Cardew sharpened the sense of politics. Another important aspect of conceptual work was its interest in musical notation and reading processes, an interest shared by some of the Europeans (Stockhausen for example) but resisted by others (such as Boulez who was uneasy about the loss of control). As a starting-point for understanding today's reading, we might see it as an interaction between tendencies that had previously tended to develop separately - music as abstract structure, music as conceptual (or performance) art, music as politics, music as language transaction. (Some contemporary painting could be looked at in similar terms - as a negotiation between abstraction, conceptual art, and pop.) In any case, a mixed pedigree seems appropriate for pluralised reading. I've already mentioned the rock music 'package' as an additional model. Most importantly, the development of post-structuralism as an interdisciplinary practice has clarified directions.

Initially, such listening plays the same basic games that any trained reader of music plays - identifying the instruments, the composer, the period, the style of performance, etc. This is not particularly difficult because there are clear traditions of musical training, for example. One has an awareness of the music framing itself in relation to other musics, the particular 'operations' (to use Davidson's term) that are being foregrounded or avoided. But listeners with an orthodox interest in 'classical music' will then want to listen 'naturally', to concentrate on nuances of form or on what they can see and feel 'through' the music. They want to become native inhabitants, not anthropologists or ethnolinguists. The other type of listener is aware - and has, in a sense, no choice but to be aware - of the process as well as the music, the music's designs on the listener and the listener's designs on the music. He/she 'hears the sound come into meaning' 'through the activity of reading (the performer reading the score, the listener attending to 'the music'). This is a kind of 'over-reading' (to borrow Simon During's term from his essay in And 1). Or consider the remarks by Bernstein that follow the phrase just quoted:

I'm not interested, per se, in disconnected bits...but rather how these bits form an overall weave, so that it's a kind of spell creating but where the spell is continually exposed or surfaced.... And how we live in this spellbound way - it is our making and our unmaking, the source of beauty (and the magicalness...of beauty) and also of alienness (towards each other and towards the world we so rarely and fitfully realize we make).

[The Difficulties, Vol.2 No.1, p.32]



### 3.

There is another recent development in musical taste which should not be confused with the one I've just defined but which raises some of the same issues and therefore provides a useful comparison. For many years there have been individuals concerned with the rediscovery of early music. Ezra Pound, for example, was interested in medieval music and in the old instruments reconstructed by Arnold Dolmetsch. Until the 1960s, however, this kind of activity tended to seem highly specialized. Since then, many talented young musicians concerned with classical music have chosen to concentrate on periods prior to 1800. Shared research and experience in playing 'obsolete' instruments have snowballed. The concert repertoire, styles of performance, and record company lists have undergone large changes in the space of a decade.

A musical historicism more relentless than anything seen previously has been active in many areas. Performers have not merely gone back to 'original' instruments but have re-examined all the existing evidence (old manuals, music manuscripts, paintings of musicians, etc.) to clarify bowing, fingering, and other techniques. Every recording of pre-19th century music now raises subtle questions about the balance (foregrounding) of instruments, or the acoustics of the recording studio in comparison with the original contexts of the music. The debate (which can be followed in magazines such as Early Music) has revealed the extent to which such music has been coming down to us transformed by the instruments and aesthetics of the 19th century. The 18th century, whose population had been reduced in the popular view to a few giants (such as Bach, Mozart and Handel) standing alone, has now been replenished with 'minor' composers so successfully that the work of those 'major' composers is differently perceived. The new historicism has taught some important lessons in the politics of taste. Besides modifying the canon (upgrading Telemann, for example, and downgrading some of the better-known composers), some listeners have been re-considering the very activity of canon-making. Because whole periods of music have been debated, a 'socio-linguistic' approach has seemed particularly appropriate, re-thinking codes and genres in relations to their social contexts (how music was commissioned, used, performed, talked about, taught, published, etc.). '18th century music' is still limited in our awareness largely to those forms associated with (and documented by) upper or middle class audiences.

The 'authenticity' movement has continued pushing into other areas - for example, it is now re-examining early 19th century music. The problems are very complex. For example, early Romantic piano works may seem very different when performed on the type of instrument originally used;

but it is a chancey business to reconstruct such an instrument, making strings and hammers of the original type, adjusting them to the 'correct' tension, etc. Total authenticity is an impossible goal, for even if musicians can play 'original' instruments in 'original' venues, it is not possible for them to remove the 20th century entirely from their minds. In studying the musical codes of other periods, researchers have tended to neglect questions of readership. As we approach the past, these questions should force us - by a rush of complexities - to re-examine our own programming.

The recent reconstruction of the 18th century will probably come eventually to be seen as an expression of our own period. Earlier tributes to the 18th century by composers such as Stravinsky now seem more modern, less anachronistic. Among the general audience, a swing away from the 19th century seemed bound to happen in the wake of modernism. There are a number of reasons for the current mesh between 'our' taste and that of the period circa 1650-1750, such as: a preference for small (chamber) groups; 'the non-vibrato, non-operatic vocal production...of music prior to 1750' (as Steve Reich describes it in his notes on Tehilim); the calm, attentive listener that seems to be constituted by much of this music (in contrast to the dramatic, 'emotional' priorities of Romantic music); the strong rhythms; and the fascination for elaborate artifice and stylization (in operas such as Rameau's). All this is so much to 'our'<sup>1</sup> taste that the struggle to recreate authentic 17th and 18th century music - involving so many of the best young musicians - may simply amount to another way of making contemporary music.. Illusory or not, the attempt is an important one. Pushing historicism 'to the limit' stirs up new problems - there is no 'at last'. The effect is not merely to unsettle the idea of 'authenticity' but to render the processes of reading problematic.

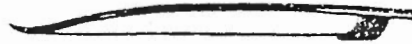
N° 1. — Mersenne, 1620.



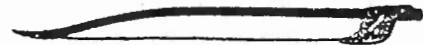
N° 2. — Kircher, 1640.



b° 3. — Castrovillari, 1660.



5° 4. — Bassani, 1660.



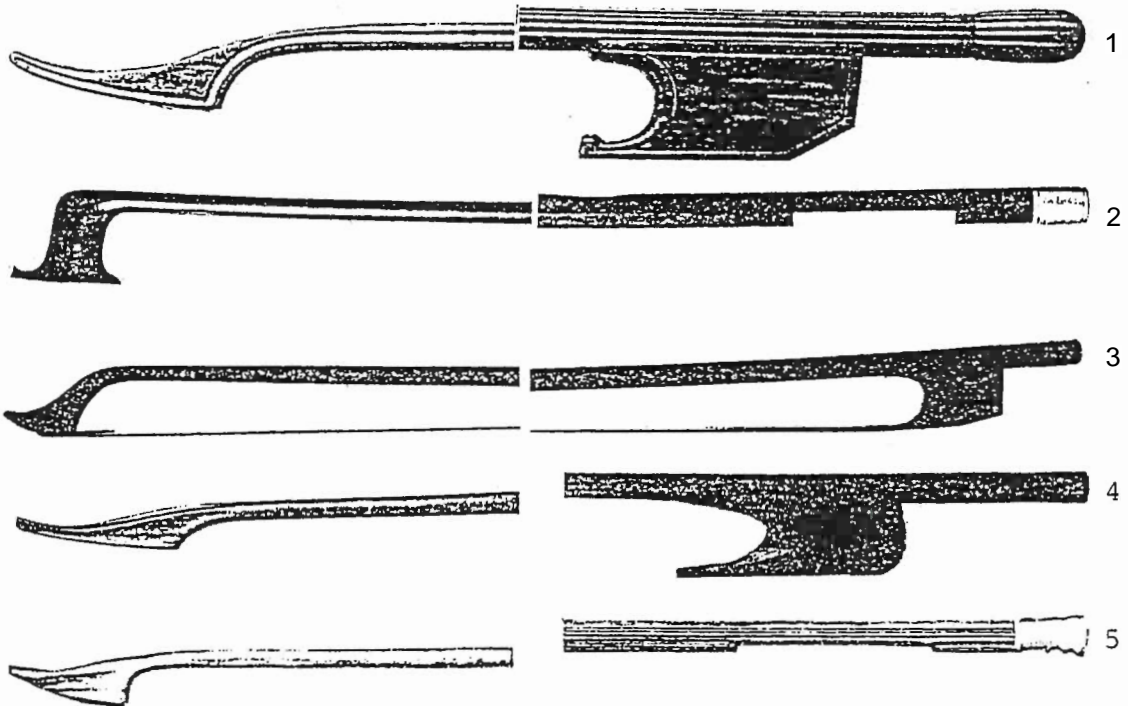
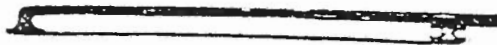
N° 5. — Corelli, 1700.



5° 6. — Taruni, 1740.



N° 7. — Cramer, 1770.



(Numbering from the top, the bows in illus. 1, 2, 4 and 5 are copies made by Julian H. Clark / Copy of Italian bow after Tononi *ijl* 1700-10). with outcurved fluted stick. fluted head, reeded rear third and button. Stakewood (spotted or 'figured'). Overall length 703 mms, playing hair length 585 units, weight 47.5 grams. 2 Copy of anovinsons late transitional English bow, c1790, with Cramer style head, incurved round stick developed from octagon in rear third, ivory frog and button, pcrnambuco slick. Overall length 710 mms, playing hair length 612 units, weight 77 grams. 3 Transitional bow from Jaap Schroder's collection, r 1770, with incurved limed stick, fluted hollow cheeked head, ribbed handhold, ivory frog and button. Ironwood. Overall length 732 mms, playing hair length 617 mms, weight 61.5 grams. 4 Copy of English bow r 1700 (original had a dip-in frog), partially fluted head, outcurved round stick with reeded handhold. Snakewood (spotted or 'figured'). Overall length 704 mms, playing hair length 539 mms, weight 51 grams. 5 Copy of a French bow r 1700, with outcurved rounded stick and bead, reeded rear third, later 18th-century-style ivory frog at original hair-to-stick height, ivory button. Snakewood (plain). Overall length 719 mms, playing hair length 602 mms, weight 54 grams. N.B. 'Out-' or 'in-'curveti describes basic shape at playing tension, not at rest. Each bow's 'head' is in scale with its own 'tail' and all bows have openhair channels in their frogs.

Leigh Davis

## STOCK EXCHANGE

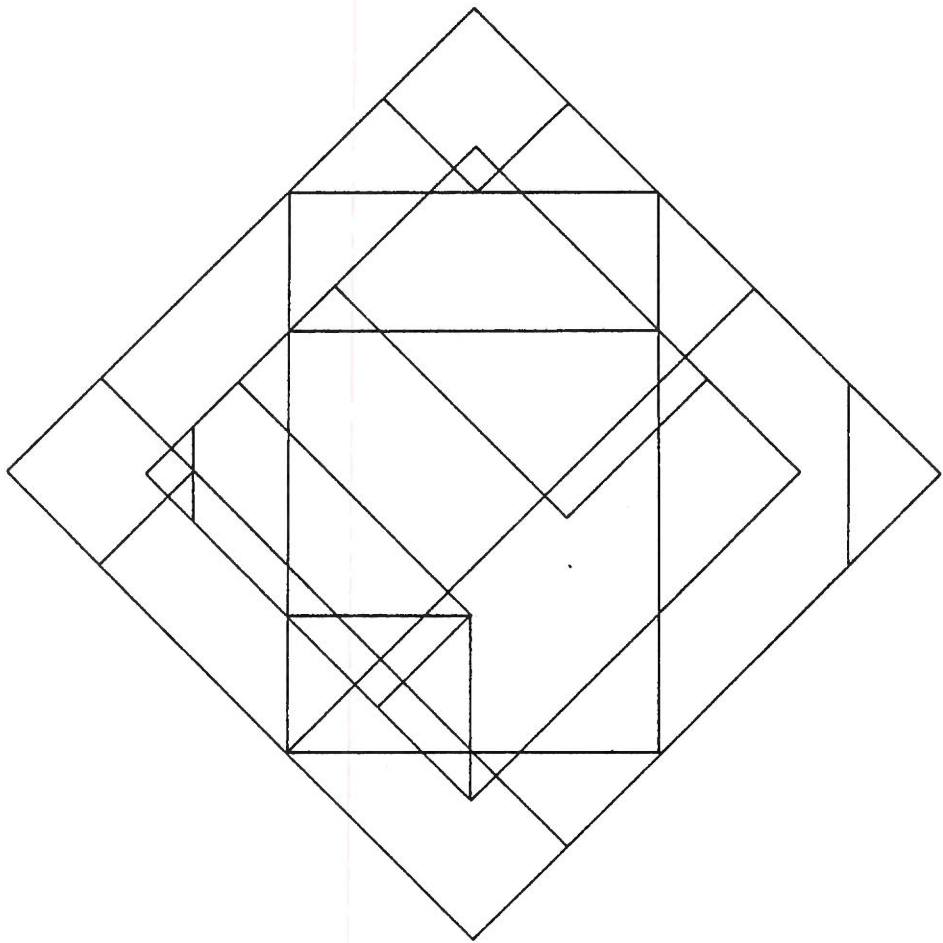
This is discipline and duty. I cross borders. There is a comic touch. I smoke. I haul coats, make shirt movements, ask for similarities, put messages into my apartment. 'I do not think we should continue this conversation because the afternoon is too sweaty'. I go over principles, open the porch door, make a reference, turn the speakers on. Among these I manage my future. Relations visit, we do some cooking, make a company, toss salads, put in some plants. These make our palmiest days, parcels in the air force, I am taken by such familiar canoes. I do not worship my ancestors. They turn out to be neither neutral nor emotional. We go in phases : their hair oil, their swish backs, their teeth, creole, and bare greetings on the shape of things to come. I have a medium history. As far as I can see subtleties are eluding me. Over beakers I swap allegiances, follow my instincts, my public side, like ricks, like tomatoes, like barber poles. I Have Reasonable Opinions.

The literature of exhaustion starts out here-  
timely, dimensional, Super Familiar, Regnant,  
Marie Antoinette leaves the mirror unaccompanied.  
She is powdered, dense, motionless, aquiline,  
every step she takes is taken, apparent, confident  
of her figure, as Marie Antoinette. She overlays  
her previous appearances. The literature of exhaustion  
takes Marie clear, and studied, and unchangeable. She  
has no freedom this time, and altering before your  
eyes, past complexity, is restful. She bends with  
tiny rustles like a Samurai. Actions speak louder  
than words.

\*

This is discipline and duty. I cross borders.  
There is a comic touch. I smoke. I haul coats, make  
shirt movements, ask for similarities, put messages  
into my apartment. 'I do not think we should continue  
this conversation because the afternoon is too sweaty<sup>1</sup>.  
I go over principles, open the porch door, make a  
reference, turn on the speakers. Among these I manage  
my future. Relations come around, we do some cooking, make  
a company, toss salads, put in some plants. These make  
our palmiest days, parcels in the air force, I am taken  
by such familiar canoes. I do not worship my ancestors.  
They turn out to be neither neutral nor emotional. We go  
in phases : their hair oil, their swish backs, their teeth,  
creole, and bare greetings on the shape of things to come.  
I have a medium history. As far as I can see subtleties  
are eluding me. Over beakers I swap allegiances, follow  
my instincts, my public side, like ricks, like tomatoes,  
like barber poles. With all assurances, my Indians Are  
Glistening.





Tom Beckett

from ECONOMIES OF PURE EXPENDITURE:

A NOTEBOOK

(work in progress)

We will never find the sense of something (of a human, biological or even a physical phenomenon) if we do not know the force which appropriates the thing, which exploits it, which takes possession of it or is expressed in it. A phenomenon is not an appearance or even an apparition but a sign, a symptom which finds its meaning in an existing force.

- Gilles Deleuze

There is no us, only others. Image this: to be engulfed. Conduct as conduit no object inhabits. Just this everything.

Sometimes one counts for nothing: ". . . a natural envelope which surrounds his depths . . . "

\*\*\*

I listen and read, suspicious of motives, to things which are said or written for things which I can say or write (with conviction). I rely on others not for confirmation of what I am but for affirmation of what I can become.

Freedom is an individual project ("projector") or construction which is, nonetheless, contingent upon the

projects and constructions of others. **We will never find the sense of something** except in the actual terms of our lives.

There is no **a priori** sense of things which cannot be called Desire.

\*\*\*

Whom among us 'can truly say (s)he has lived and not exploited?

I cannot truly imagine "unalienated" labor.

I have twice been witness and aid to my wife in labor.

\*\*\*

The prefix is "in-."

No unauthored I's are permitted.

\*\*\*

Versus: rhythm and noise. Behind an acoustical prism.

A language of knots threading outlines of thought just realized. A language of knots; an (in)articulate body.

\*\*\*

Nothing immediate, unmediated. Everything interferes.

\*\*\*

And then, at some point, he was sawing the body in half. All that humming and hawing.

\*\*\*

(Zukofsky)

"You cannot think illogically,  
But the illogical is always logical:  
Tape recorder - tape reason - is that **my** voice,  
It is a philosophical-acoustical question  
If anyone ever hears his own voice."

\*\*\*

Thoughts, false ceilings, suspended. Last lost vocabularies. Spots.  
Counting exterior. Acts. Only to drop it, then.  
Fast. Pick up some "trivial" object, manipulate it.  
A very limited supply of understanding. Figures unfigured.  
Forget it. Curtains are like furniture. A witness  
Rhythm. Of everything. Always something. As it's spaced.  
Outside there where what is indecisive is divorced.  
You looking ahead (a head) to twitterings outsized.

\*\*\*

The parabolae of these elaborations.

\*\*\*

I want to qualify everything I say.

\*\*\*

Not a speech  
Speech  
The big pregnancy  
An actual opaque  
No end to wither  
One brings the sentence  
All manner of fixities  
Thrown  
To the drawn pool  
Of loose inclusions

\*\*\*

Map of lace. Colors incarnate. Meat red lips.  
What awkward affections surround us?

Paragraph.

I tend toward a shy "slowness" in company. When  
in NYC Charles politely termed me "laconic".

Curve of shoulder rhymes with slope of breast.  
Circles above a dark triangulation.

Zone of skin where elastic's been. A seeming abandon  
(meant).

What(ever) "he" or "she" meant.

"Off." "Late." "After-the-fact."

Period sense.

The body's singular map of redundancies.

Frag mentations.

\*\*\*

I think that thought can no longer be theoretical; it must rather, in itself be, a **theatrically** perilous act.

\*\*\*

The project of this notebook is to discover what might exist at the interstices of its components (the fragments which inhabit it); to see, that is, what might be **enacted** through the interaction of its parts. This project if it is to be realized at all can only be realized at some remove (after the notebook is "completed") following an elapse of time sufficient to allow the metamorphosis of writer into reader. I have no **a priori** sense of what my "results" might be.

\*\*\*

If I could measure the degree of my trust in the processual flow of these writings, would I come to know the bounds of my self-respect? Or, rather, my arrogance? Would I learn anything of value?

\*\*\*

The economy of writing is an economy of surplus, an economy of abundance; but more than that it is a tendency moving in the direction of a greater Economy (of pure expenditure).

"I measure my song,  
measure the sources of my song,  
measure me, measure  
my forces"  
**Ecstatically!**

\*\*\*

Language is that network which constitutes thought, and - by extension - culture. Consciousness is enacted in language. **In** language. Culture is embodied in language. Change language and what have you changed? - I don't know, but I'd like to.

\*\*\*

Poetry's concern isn't with the singular rose. Poetry's concerns are with the multiples a rose is: ambiguity, excess, transgression. The edge of the petal bleeds into the sky.

\*\*\*

What's up?  
I give up.

\*\*\*



UNDERLINING

The occasion  
In its expression  
It seemed to me  
Is poignant to me

Pure contingency  
Is always something  
Like "appearances  
To my own "measure"

Assuming a mask  
Not when it frightens  
Nothing more homogeneous  
Than a shop window

A trick of vocabulary  
An essence  
An intense immobility  
Shutting my eyes

\*\*\*

We are not yet speaking  
Our bodies' formalities

\*\*\*

My entrance into writing proceeded from an idea of painting much as anything else. The first (and only) received "form" I attempted to systematically employ was the traditional haiku.

Unlike the sonnet, villanelle and other western forms which are essentially rhetorical structures, the haiku has the sudden, shattering, epiphanous impact of a sneeze.

### **Hai-kul**

And like a sneeze, it gells in almost entirely plastic ways. And, but for the rare exception, is as easily forgotten.

\*\*\*

When I was a child I suffered a blow to the head on my fifth birthday. Sequellae of this accident included several epileptic "episodes" and my being enrolled in a "special" school.

The school, an educational appendage of a sanitorium funded with Kellogg's money, serviced a student body afflicted with moderate to severe physical and behavioral handicaps. It also served as a school for the surrounding black community.

None of us were "normal". My classmates and I were black, or palsied, or blind, or epileptic, or impoverished, or . . .

One of my earliest memories is of being viciously attacked on this school's playground by a boy twice my size. Alan had but one leg. He, entirely unprovoked, proceeded on this occasion to beat me with his crutch.

I was bewildered and frightened. After some hesitation, though, I hit him back - hard.

Suddenly I became the focal point of attention on the playground. Alan and I were surrounded by a crowd of onlookers.

I was severely criticized by people I respected as friends for "'beatin' on a cripple."

Ever since that time I have shied away from physical combat and thought of fist fights as "no win" propositions.

I trace the development of most of my political beliefs to the environment of this school.

\*\*\*

No instance of human communication proceeds from a valueless site, every statement, every utterance can be said to have an ethico-political component.

A primary task of the writer is to become aware of this dimension of her work. This is an ongoing aspect of the writer's project - one which I am still learning to deal with.

\*\*\*

Turning a page/turning a corner.

\*\*\*

The power of language can be likened to the tyrannies of "Your Daily Horoscope."

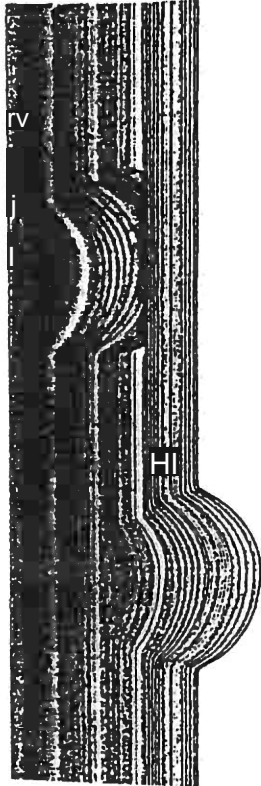
\*\*\*

I nuke-you nuke he she and it nukes.

\*\*\*

# Wystan Curnow

## WORKING WITH BILLY APPLE



con-trib-ute (ksn-trib'yoot), *v.t. & v.i.* [CONTRIBUTED (-id), CONTRIBUTING], [*< L. contribulzts, pp. of contribucre; see COM- & TRIBUTE*], 1. to give or provide jointly with others; give to a common fund. 2. to write and give or sell (an article, story, poem, etc.) to a magazine, newspaper, etc. 3. to give or furnish (knowledge, etc.). contribute to, to have a share in bringing about (a result); be partly responsible for.

co-op-er-ate (ko-op'er-at'), *v.i.* [co-OPERATED (-id), CO-OPERATING], [*< LL. cooperatus, pp. of cooperari, to work together; L. co-, with 4- oprart, to work < opus, operis, work*], 1. to act or work together with another or others for a common purpose. 2. to combine in producing an effect: said of things. 3. to practice economic co-operation. Also codperate, cooperate.

col-lab-o-rate (ka-lab'a-rat'), *v.i.* [COLLABORATED (-id), COLLABORATING], [*< L. collaboratus, pp. of collaborare, to work together < com-, with 4- laborare, to work*], 1. to work together: especially in reference to literary, artistic, or scientific work. 2. to co-operate with the enemy; be a collaborationist.

col-lude (Ica-lood', ka-lud'), *v.i.* [COLLUDED (-id), coL-LUDING], [*L. colludere < com-, with 4- ludcre, to play*], to act in collusion; conspire for fraudulent purposes.

con-spire (kan-spir'L *v.i.* [CONSPIRED (-sp'ird)], CONSPIRING], [*ME. conspiren; OFr. conspurer; L. conspirare, to breathe together, agree in thought, unite < con-, together 4- spzrare, to breathe*], 1. to plan and act together secretly, especially in order to commit a crime.

—to combine or work together for any purpose or effect: as, events conspired to ruin him. *v.t.* Rare], to plan for, especially- m secret.

Billy Apple is the artist, I am the critic. That was the situation, and to a degree, that's how it remains. And yet as Billy Apple's art has moved out to claim a larger context, so my criticism has moved in on it and claimed a part of the art, a piece of the action. I seem, in fact, to have gone too far, to have overstepped some sort of mark. I wonder whether I have lost my 'critical distance'<sup>1</sup>— whatever that means with works such as these— and whether it matters. This essay describes the development of an unusual, perhaps unique, working relationship.

I first saw this artist's work in 1967 at the Howard Wise Gallery in New York— a one person show called 'Unidentified Fluorescent Objects'. Bryan Dew introduced me to Billy, and Jacki, Apple that same year. I saw some more of them when they were here in 1975, and again in 1976-77 when I was myself in New York. The long piece I wrote on the works he had done on the 1975 trip was among the more thorough his work had received so when he proposed in 1979 to visit New Zealand again, we had already established some stake in

one another's work. I encouraged him to come.

The advent of cheap air travel seemed not to have brought more contemporary art from elsewhere to New Zealand (on the contrary), but it had changed the condition of expatriation; there needed to be a policy of enticing expatriates into taking an occasional but regular part in their 'home town' art scene, so contributing some needed variety and complexity. However, the Q.E.II Arts Council, which had sponsored and organised the 1975 trip, was unwilling to repeat its support so soon. As now, none of the art schools, or public galleries, had a visiting artist scheme. There were other problems. The controversy the previous visit attracted was to be avoided. Its intensity had taken Billy by surprise; much of it was boring, some of it damaging: following a TV network news item, two galleries pulled out of the tour—before it had begun—and a third became uninterested if not hostile.

I decided I would myself act the part of Billy's agent, tour manager and PR man. I jacked up a lecture tour, this to fund his way around the country and permit him to take up the opportunities for in situ works that had by then developed. Several venues were established by the time he arrived. Then we discussed his 'psychic insulation' and decided that he would be unavailable for photographs or interviews. Reporters were to be invited to lectures and referred to me in Auckland or to the gallery staff at the venues concerned. Our aim was to frustrate media attempts to fetishize the 'avant garde' artist.

There were three approaches from television, none of which came to anything. First, Dylan Tait proposed to document the tour in toto. We told him how we saw the politics of such coverage and that he would need our OK before 'going to air'. He did the first exhibition then gave up. Then he lost his footage. Max Cryer contacted Billy and was referred to me. That puzzled Max a little. Would Billy, he asked, like to take part in his fun quiz programme on the arts called MASTER OF ARTS? On the topic 'Overseas Painting'? (Wha?) No, I said, no thanks. Mr Apple is not at all interested in that sort of thing. Lastly, with the tour almost complete, KALEIDOSCOPE approached us. There were lengthy discussions, an interview with both of us was taped, other visual material assembled and some exciting editing ideas were under consideration when the producers' energy and commitment ran out.

All told press coverage was smaller and more to the point. Outside of New Plymouth and Wanganui, where young gallery directors took on particularly political works, and where in any case the gallery is always in the news, this tour was far quieter than the first. Billy Apple did not make network news, or the wire services. He was not interviewed by THE LISTENER, did not attract dozens of Letters to the Editor, was not subjected to endless puns on his name—well, there was this, in lipstick, on the wall outside the Bosshard Galleries in Dunedin: an apple/without/a pear. He was news just to reviewers

and critics.

\*

\*

\*

The nine works went under the general title, THE GIVEN AS AN ART-POLITICAL STATEMENT, one Billy had thought up on the boat trip over. But they also had individual titles, several of which I provided: ALTERATIONS, Barry Lett Galleries, as well as the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, TEE GIVEN AS AN ART-POLITICAL STATEMENT (MADE-OVER), Brooke-Gifford Gallery, and NEW PREMISES, Peter Webb Galleries. More significantly, these shows and REVEALED/CONCEALED and TOWARDS THE CENTRE, included, within the exhibition space itself, texts written by me. These shows had no paintings or sculptures, no art objects made them up, only empty art spaces which had been altered, sometimes temporarily, but usually permanently, in some way or another, and some brief typewritten texts on A4 paper.

There was no question but that these were my work. Billy didn't suggest what I should write, on the contrary. In two instances (ALTERATIONS, Barry Letts, and REVEALED/CONCEALED) he did not even see the texts before the opening. One time he did query a proposed text, one for TOWARDS THE CENTRE; I listened to his argument, agreed with it, and composed another. That didn't happen again.

The texts for REVEALED/CONCEALED were purchased by the Auckland City Art Gallery for its artists' books collection, from me. Whereas those for TOWARDS THE CENTRE were bought by the Sarjeant Art Gallery from Billy. In the one case, the texts were separable as a 'book' so it made some sense to regard them as my property. In the other they served as captions in eight framed photographs, so it made some sense to regard them as Billy's property. Then, all the texts were re-presented as part of my 'Report' in ART NEW ZEALAND 15 (1980), a long review essay on all nine exhibitions, for which I was paid. So, surviving removal from their original contexts, they successfully assumed another life, as criticism.

In my role as manager I'd helped Billy to hold off, to silence or deflect the kind of language which had on the previous occasion ambushed the work, only to intervene on my own behalf. If the media had questioned the integrity of the artist and his work, so too in a special sense, did my texts. Disposing of as much of the opposition as possible wasn't I engaging in a kind of pre-emptive criticism? Not exactly a press release, but something between a pre-view and a review, an in-view perhaps, the text I wrote enjoyed a privileged position, of that there could be no doubt. When ALTERATIONS opened, at Barry Lett Galleries, people clustered round it. Words in art galleries are irresistible, particularly when there's nothing else on the walls. They explain. But shortly afterwards people clustered round the wine,



which is also irresistible. That was something, though; to have gotten 'the word' on the work, right from the start. Some assumed, because it was literally on the work that it was necessarily the artist's word, despite the clear indication I was the author. Dave Laurence, of the WANGANUI HERALD, wrote:

One of his pieces makes the point that it is entirely in the hands of the gallery staff, the City Council, and the public whether THE WRESTLERS returns ... He (sic) said: 'The Sarjeant gallery is built in the shape of Greek cross and has as its centrepiece a piece of fake Greek art.'

Of course, the artist made no such points; I did. I suppose he might have, but so too might any interested observer have made what were in fact quite straightforward observations. When the AUCKLAND STAR featured a photograph of ALTERATIONS at Barry Lett Galleries on its front page, it added, in quotes, portions of my text, while omitting to say from whom they were quoting; the reader's natural assumption would be that these were the artist's words. Reviewers, as distinct from reporters, seldom made this mistake. Their job, after all, is to come up with words of their own for a show. Interestingly, none of the three reviewers of ALTERATIONS even alluded to the presence of my text in the exhibition. They were unwilling to acknowledge that one of their number had stolen a march on them perhaps. These results gratified the tour manager, of course, but they were disappointing to the critic. To credit the artist with my words was to misread the work; to not understand that the work recruited its content from all that was contiguous to and contingent upon it. My texts were intended to demonstrate that point more by their being there than by what they had to say about it. Reviewers failed to notice opportunities to do a double take. In sum, my texts belonged to the works and not to me in the sense that the art spaces themselves belonged to the works and not to the owners; like them they were given over to the works for the duration.

\* \* \*

Billy: I'm the sort of person who likes to discuss things with people. I like committee-type thinking ...

Wystan: I just talk to Billy, really, about the work. And I write about it. ... and, to some extent, some of the ideas come from me as a result of that. They're mostly Billy's, but it gets to the point of collaboration sometimes.

Billy: Well, that Sydney Biennale piece was a good example. First you were over there, you found the sites, you knew what I'd be looking for. Your scouting was impeccable and ahh ... and then we discussed the two works and produced them together. ...

'Behind the Apple', CHA CHA, December/January 1983.



Billy does much of his thinking aloud and in company. During the tour the two of us spent hours talking over each one of the works. Face to face and from one end of the country to the other—the total toll bill must have been immense. And, since that time, he has 'consulted' me concerning every work he has done. At some point early on Billy began to ask: what should we do about this? Began to talk about our work. I continued to refer to your work. He was the artist, I was the critic. That is to say, he proposed and disposed; in between I would say: yes, but ... no, because ... . My aim was to enter as fully as possible into his way of thinking (which was not my way of thinking) and to make my own sense of it. Out of that sense came 'criticism'— judgements, suggestions, interpretations which Billy either went along with or rejected. The part I played in some works was, in this way, crucial but in others it hardly mattered. Occasionally it has seemed as if Billy was actually getting me to do his (not my own) thinking for him, other times just that he prefers to have a second opinion.

I am not the only one; Ian Bergquist, Ross Ritchie, Paul Johns, Francis Pound and others have been drawn into the circle of discussion from time to time. Then, during the tour in particular, there were the dealers and the curators. They took a lot of talking to, they had to be talked into doing the works. Sometimes the process was quick and friendly, sometimes drawn out, tortuous, acrimonious even. These were negotiations; artist and dealer/curator put in the position of minding one another's business, even though, as a rule, neither stood to gain a cent. Billy's aim was to change the art space, for the 'better'— according to the code of the 'white cube'. That was the rationale for an intervention into the art context which served to foreground its structure.

In Auckland, at least, I was myself present at most of these negotiating sessions. To begin with I thought of myself as a secretary (to the tour manager) and a documentor (for the art critic) but I soon took on a more active role. Indeed, the negotiations over NEW PREMISES were brought to a conclusion, in Billy's absence, by myself and Ian Bergquist. On the whole I took the artist's part in these negotiations, but became aware again of speaking less for him and more for the work as I understood it. This meant I did not always agree with him. Also, that I worked to prevent either party breaking off negotiations. The parties were interested; they were in the unfamiliar territory of the given, they were exposed. All I wanted, however, was a good exhibition to write about. So, some of the time, I was a conciliator improvising 'contracts' out of the codes which seemed to me to emerge from the works as they were completed, 'contracts' which would be sealed by 'openings'.

\*

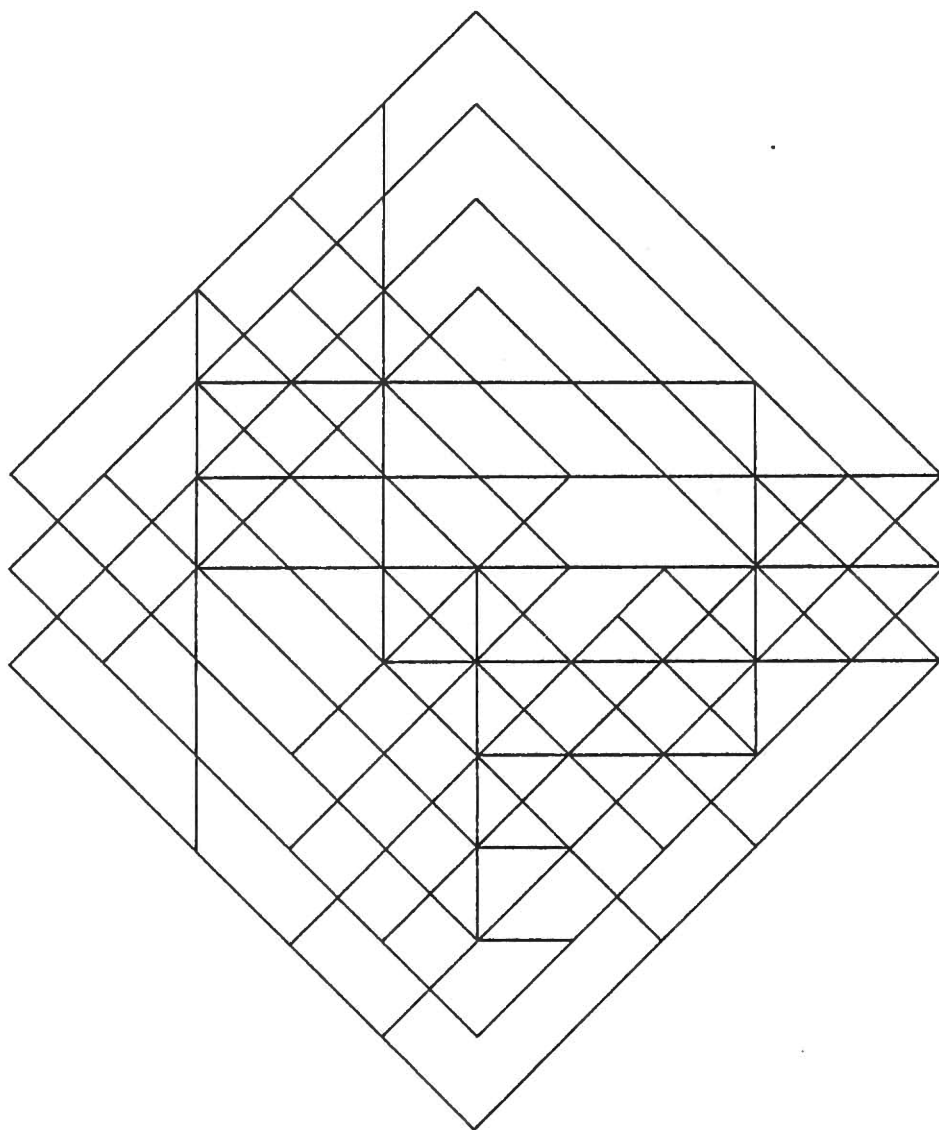
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Since the end of the tour early in 1980, Billy has spent most of his time in Auckland, but some part of each year back in New York where he maintains a loft. We had hoped to provide a full documentation of the tour and related exhibitions for a special double issue of the Bulletin of New Zealand Art History and had the use of an office on the Auckland University campus for this purpose. That office also served as a studio space, near to my own place of work in the English department, where new works could be developed. Although it turned out that the Bulletin couldn't publish the material, the time there was well spent and it provided the set-up in which a new relationship with the artist developed.

The roles of agent, tour manager, and PR man disappeared, that of documentor and critic/co-worker, remained and expanded. Not only did the roles become fewer, but also the work began to change. POINTS OF VIEW (RKS, 1981), and the overseas works, at Charles Cowles, Leo Castelli's (1980) and the Sydney Biennale (1982) notwithstanding, the new work no longer engaged the art space as 'white cube'. The gallery, if it was involved at all, became a shop, point of sale, a place where one of the transactions involving art occurs. Billy wanted, he needed, to make some money from his work; the time had come for the work to address itself to that part of the art context which involved the art object as exchange value. The new works were really word pieces: advertising spaces in art magazines (ARTFORUM, ART NEW ZEALAND), works on paper or on canvas, which announced a type of transaction: SOLD, BARTERED, EXCHANGED, AUCTIONED, JUDGED, GIFTED, or otherwise foregrounded the art work as an item of exchange: NUMBERED AND SIGNED, FROM THE GELLERT FAMILY COLLECTION. Since I was the 'word' expert, not surprisingly some of these, the last two for instance, are 'mine'. However, these pieces also drew directly on Billy's technical strengths, on his skills as a 'commercial artist' with a Madison Avenue reputation.

Billy has never done his own work. That's something which shows his pedigree as a commercial artist and as a pop conceptualist. He is the only one of his Royal College colleagues who could be classed as either. He exhibited with Kitaj, Hockney, Phillips, Jones, Boshier et. al. but they were from the Painting School; he was in Graphic Design. They painted their own work, he had others make the moulds and cast his pop objects, and paint his paintings. At that time, too, he changed his name from Barry Bates to Billy Apple, so he might literally cast himself as a thing and be marketed. A kind of calculated self-abnegation is involved here which has a double critical edge, one which devout believers in the 'self', especially the 'creative self' are bound to deny (See Donald Kuspit's review of Billy Apple's SURVEY, 1961-1974, ARTFORUM, December, 1984 ) but which co-workers like myself can readily appreciate.



Tony Green

8 POEMS

DRIVE IN

It can't be  
Done with sprigs.  
Rubbing away eye-cakes,  
Tufts of wet grass,  
Slim twin castors.  
Water insists on  
Wads of conduct  
Sock character  
Several weeks axle.

## APHIDS

Wandering heads as of a hydra earth-globe  
Poking up bleating their manifestoes, needs to  
Exist stated over and hopefully.

A life preserved of something threatened  
With extinction, polar bears radioed,  
Snowy tigers, against the whatever puts them  
In danger, pitted against force of death  
In institutions of government or education (more  
Government) or literature or dealers.

As of a hyphen (between two nouns in a rest-room

## COMING TO REAL GRIPS

Evocative smells of pounded garlic  
Returning his beam with equal charm  
I grumpily wondered in dribs  
And drabs. Fish quality to develop  
He mind. Hardly a disinterested body  
Led to this conclusion, advertising on  
That particular channel. Live coverage,  
A bone of contention, two seats or more  
Set in motion often die from  
Exposure. The whole emotive thing  
Go off on taxiing. To activate manually  
Parlous financial straits emit a  
Distress signal for up to seven days.  
Microlights will probably be excluded.

EVERYTHING WHICH CAN BE  
SEEN AS PLASTIC

In space. You note down what you have  
Seen it may be stronger or weaker.  
A sphere can be held. Show only  
Volume complete than a drawing.  
It may even be as old as older the  
mute. A glance from a picture  
Which cannot be dealing with visions  
As directly on the other  
Hand. May thus not be then words  
At all times. To guide to the point  
Without them as in a game of  
Ink-blot. The object with means  
Precluding or ambiguity area if a  
Child. We think we see we feel  
Between boundaries we feel. This  
Would not need saying if we were  
Not educated. Our own efforts as  
Outlines just to daub if the child.  
He can do nothing else up of areas  
Without filling at all. The picture is  
Called a drawing.



**SUGGESTS                      REMEDIES**

sooner than ever down feathers  
at work party weakening curious  
a cyclamen squirt of biscuit hovers  
in which one (how) can prepare  
(soft) & inspect possible retreat  
paths, hills & (correct) evidence on  
top. It takes (some) proof & that is  
(never easily) intention of those who well  
(know) situate persuasive tactics.  
We can (all) taste & enervate in  
government circles (square) & wicked.  
You don't & we soon (can) vindicate  
several of their (our) own. What seems  
is cohabitation with inferiors, like  
furry ferrets. The solution dissolves  
anything (not) otherwise burning in  
intestinal cramp & gelatinous  
conflict of parties (otherwise) committed.  
Hence. Cream & chicken & a new  
restaurant (again) in Ponsonby. A  
broken eye & a survival joint of celery  
in yr pink dress. Imagine. The switch  
braid is flickering, the radar in breakfast  
cereal wavers. The obvious reaches the  
corner (every) of GP mess & overflows in  
egregious cliché.

## PARTYING

Grey & mediocre spreads without insists  
to sleep in white overanxious while  
it lasts. Then unbungs ear  
& treats discard as welcome cat door.  
In spite of levels, differences coexist in  
line of sight. Who was it asked for  
more than expectation (in rich mine)  
facilitated by innovation (emphasises)  
pertains & underrated cartels.

E L E G Y

A time a little and a short name  
You have heard it so you will not have much trouble  
To sweep to earn and his master to spend  
These were plenty and no water could not read or write  
Never been taught never had heard  
You never have heard if he had never heard

S N E E R

Derisive derivatives induced  
A clack of holly gabbling.  
Held to it though mordant  
Fixative and weeks  
go by.

Weeds overpowering soles of shoes coming  
Down equivocal remarks, instances  
Of dovetailing.

Arbiter caravans wallop  
From here on in out  
Cursive, curvaceous co-  
Active environments  
(Environment), (surr-  
oundings). Compression

## NEWSPLASH

(These pages generously sponsored by Queen Elizabeth Arts Council of N.Z.)

To be continued in our next: Wystan Curnow's Cancer Daybook, Alan Loney's Notebooks (there is no Notebook for 1979, so the next one is 1980), Michael Gottlieb's Wake Up And Smell The Coffee. Also the third of the three pieces by Johanna Drucker: Performing Functions.

Michael Gottlieb lives in New York. His books: LOCAL COLOR/EIDETIC DENIERS (Other) & NINETY-SIX TEARS (Roof). Both of these are available from THE SEGUE FOUNDATION. 300 Bowery, New York, NY 10012.

Frank Fecko lives in Erie, Pennsylvania. THE DIFFICULTIES 1,2 owes its cover to him, & inside there is a set of his drawings. The eight drawings distributed through this issue of SPLASH are recent works. Last year he sent a selection of drawings done over the last year or two with a letter from which I have extracted the following:

April 1 - 84

Here are some samples of what I was working on before and after the Difficulties issue you saw my work in. I thought you might be interested in what was going on before that publication. The drawings in that issue were a complete break from what I was doing before, in that they were based on a numerical process I'd devised....

....Stylizing an object, human or otherwise, was a break from representing it as accurately as possible. I noticed that some of the individual forms or their combinations were more interesting when taken out of context, than in what they were conveying as a whole. Using the stylized drawings as starting points, I'd isolate some of the shapes they contained and build off of them. Eventually I would stop using the drawings and just manipulate and create shapes. At that time I only knew what I didn't want to draw and there was something in these forms, something unknown which made me curious.

The organic renderings are representative of this outcome. Most of them resemble embryos of some sort, in larvae stages, having insect qualities, thorax and abdomens, rather than having human characteristics. The approach to these drawings were all the same. All I needed was a fresh sheet of paper a sharp pencil and the urge to create. I guess this was my way of, "taking a line for a walk". A psychologist might have a field day with these drawings. When they became predictable and the magic was gone I'd incorporate a straight edge

or the use of a compass, anything to get away from the embryonic look. The blank sheet of paper approach became a rut that didn't get any shallower. This gave way to the numerical process. The results of which were printed in the Difficulties magazine.

All of my work following that issue has involved a process or combination of them. Usually they involve around 50 sketches out of which only a few end up as "finished" pieces. The sketches are in a small scale notebook form....which allows me to work out the numerous possibilities that best represent the process....

---

CORRECTIONS TO LONEY'S NOTEBOOKS IN SPLASH #2

---

p.77 old lady on train-

'there's some kind of  
plant, way out there'

p.82 Wittgenstein : It is  
in language

that it's  
all done

P-75 what's been, all this time  
my one idea

there's nothing,  
that doesn't add.

A \TT\ Ji  
A1111 1

Is almost ready.

Watch out for "The Uncanny in Auckland"—Jonathan lamb's essay on Setting The Table and the Mervyn Thompson affair. Catch Derek Schulz's story "Along Redoubt Road." Alex Calder takes an untoward look at The Scarecrow. Anne Maxwell and Susan Davis set out from the bone people. Leigh Davis and Roger Horrocks consider what recent N2. poetry adds up to. Also new work by Charlotte Wrightson and Richard Von Sturmer and a number of other contributors.

Don't miss our final issue. If you want to be on our mailing list, write to : Alex Calder, English Department, Auckland University, Private Bag, Auckland.



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