

bpNichol



GIFTS

**THE MARTYROLOGY
BOOK(S) 7 &**

“What I have written has no plan, or at least is not planned. If it has a shape it is chiefly that it returns to its beginning. It has themes and a theme even if it wanders far. If it has a unity it is that what goes before conditions what comes after and *vice versa*.”

from *The Anathemata* by David Jones

“If we don’t garden the tongue,
they’ll blacktop it over.”

Gerry Gilbert, in a letter

“And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.”

Isaiah 11:2

“... And the number of gifts of the Holy Ghost is seven.”

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Second edition

The quotation on the back cover is from bpNichol's "Narrative in Language: The Long Poem," first published in *The Dinosaur Review*, then reprinted in *Tracing the Paths*, edited by Roy Miki (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1988).

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*To go beyond THE WORD.
exercise control over it? no
NO NO — BEYOND THE
WORD. not to merely control
it but to overcome it, go be-
yond the point where it is
even necessary to think in
terms of it*

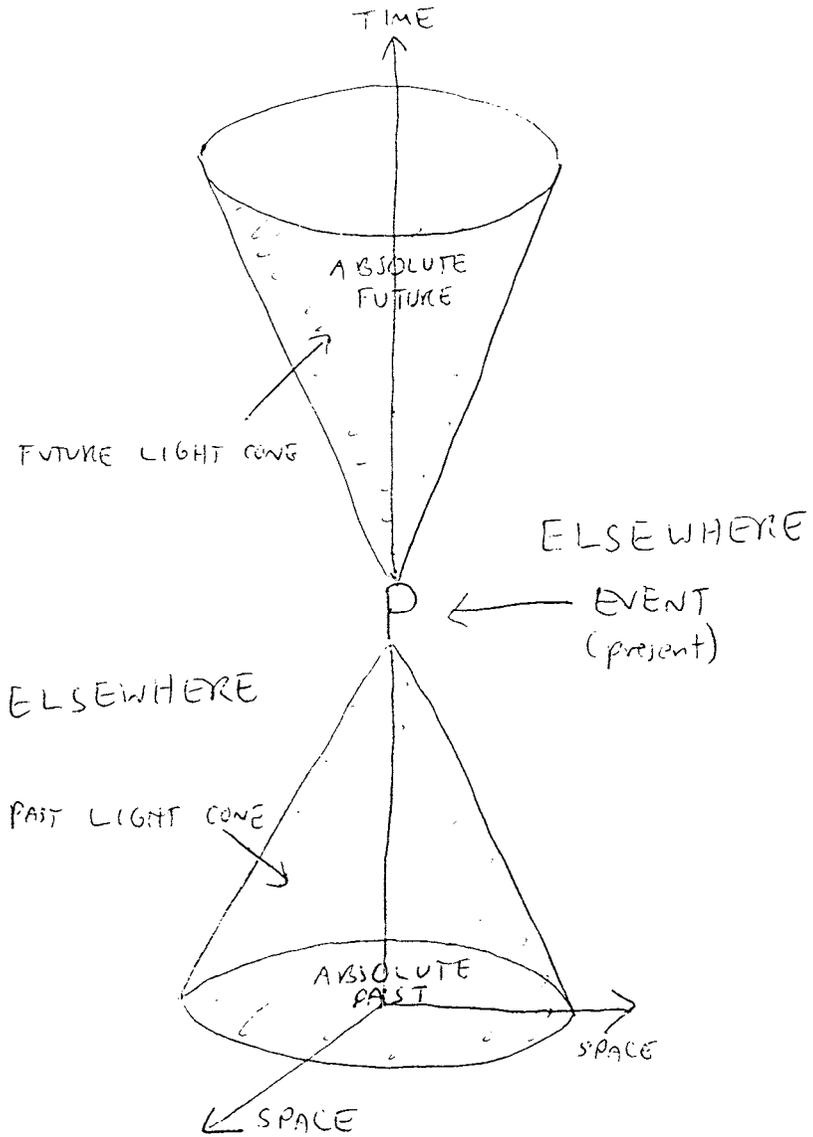
Journal note
Vancouver
April 7, 1964
2:15 a.m.

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for ellie
outside these books
that life

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Middle Initial Event



June 12, 1988

(after diagrams by Stephen Hawking)

read, dear

For Birk Sproxtton & Dennis Johnson

• july 2nd

at Sylvan Lake

sun going down
old hotel behind me
not a memory of
but the recollection
my parents dancing here
1933
their honeymoon
Uncle Earl playing in the orchestra
what song? what tune? what music
drifts across the water
all water
years
the self-conscious act of
memory
re-remembering
a life, love, the i is born out of
passion
songs play
are replayed
the dance goes
on goes
on

fam-ily
fami-ly
fam-ily
fami-ly
fam-i-ly
-i-ly
-i-
-i-

• july 3rd

under the gray stairs
beside the white grocery store
the body of the cat
stiff now
death having taken it
where? looking round
up & down oliver road
tears streaming down my cheeks
1954
heaven?

• july 4th

notes
struck over & over again

chords
that stack up
play on something in you

resemblances/rhythms

rhymes
it takes a life time to hear

heard

- july 4th

this blue that

vocabulary

word choice or obsession

i.e. no choice at all

driven &/or dictated

this: present & therefore to be accounted for.

blue: all around you (sky sea the robin's egg you found aged 3).

that: other past present future.

assumptions masking as givens

the way belief sits outside the rational

the way the senses ration the world

let only so much in

so much let in

letting

irrational

- july 4th

hi story

hi world

hi bee

leaf

hell o honey

is the stinger

in the vision of

paradise

sin tax

of a life

a is for apple

b is for ball

it all comes down

it all comes down to

this

- july 5th (song)

moonin' around
coz i ain't with my honey

blue
coz i isn't with you

cat's got my tongue
makes me talk funny

when heaven ain't happenin'
hell has to do

- july 5th (rewriting an old poem from memory)

1934
my sister donna
died at my mother's breast
three months old

1955
i found her shoes in a box
no bigger than
my palm

• july 5th

things remembered or recalled

the way that old song refuses to leave the mind

alone

conversations with gone friends
how it seemed you would all go on
foreverie

/frag/mented/memory of /
beginnings stories of
the world before you came to be

we are all
somebody's dead
baby

eventually

• july 6th

struck/sure

the search for absolutes
in a world of flux

where are we lead
when we follow their lead

what i read
is read, dear

only the pronunciation changes
not even moving your lips

pucker sucker

it's the kiss of life
of death

ellipsis

in which a little knowledge grows

and what's proposed?

a garden?

mind?

it ain't the thot changes, the spell's the same,

it's the attack rearranges the tone rows, the strings

i signs

i signifies

i sings

• july 6th

tone not

tune nut

worm row

burrow or rub

mmmmm hmmmmm

mirror rim

!AHA!

• july 7th

reeding

get this mouth piece to work

adjust

right?

clear a net

to catch the world in

string sections

rhythm

pi (an o's solution)

what it is, you say
words where the worlds dwell

use hey is what determines
meaning

hi
(notes)

'lo
(notes)

bi
furcation

"it's my bag," pipes pal in drone
"you read the music so you can play"

"how still my heart

how high"

the moon

• july 8th

at sylvan lake
certain things begin
or it is another
arbitrary point from which a line gets drawn
story has its start
its impulse
to unravel

the moon rises

a baby cries

outside the window
a cat prowls by &
an orchestra plays
"honey on the moon tonight"

sometimes
you think you see it all in the
mirror rim
but then the light's dim or
your eyes fool you

the light's blue &
it's hard to read

the signs

flash on & off

“would you like to go dancing”

from memory

“take a chance & go romancing”

“i think i'd rather stay home &
read, dear.”

Red Deer
1988

Scriptures: 7th Sequence

1

green yellow dog up. i have not. i am. green red cat down. i is not. i is.
over under upside up is. i's is not is i's.

iffen ever never youd deside size seize says theodore
(green yellow glum) i'd marry you. truth heart hard confusions confess
all never neither tithé or whether with her lovers lever leaving her alone.

no no.

chest paws and chin.

no.

2

insect. incest. c'est in. infant. in fonts. onts. onts. ptonts. pontoons. la
lune. la lun.

la lun en juin est?

c'est la lune from votre fenetre. vos. vouloir. i wish. i wish. i
may. i might. june night
and the lovers

loafers, low firs, old firrs, la lovers, la lrrrs.

3

liturgical turge dirge dinta krak kree fintab latlina santa danka schoen
fane sa paws claws le foret. my love coo lamna mandreen sont vallejo.
oh valleys and hills lie open ingkra sintle
list la list cistern turning down.

je ne sais pas madam. je ne sais pas mademoiselle.
je ne sais pas l'amour mirroring mes yeux meilleur my urging for you.

4

an infinite statement. a finite statement. a statement of infancy. a fine line
state line. a finger of stalemate. a feeling a saint meant ointment.

tremble.

a region religion

reigns in. a returning. turning return the lovers. the retrospect of
relationships always returning. the burning of the urge. the surge forward
in animal being inside us. the catatosis van del reeba rebus suburbs of our
imagination. last church of the lurching word worked weird in our heads.

5

great small lovers move home. red the church caught up relishes dog.
lovers sainthood loses oversur. oh i growing hopeless lies in ruin. u in i
hope beet root.

6

halo. hello. i cover red my sentiment. blankets return the running ships
back. clock. tock tock tick tock.

so he loves her. the red dog green home. geth ponts returns a
meister shaft. statements each one and any you rather the could've
repent—alright? il n'est pas sont ecole la plume plum or apples in
imagining je ne desirez pause. je ne sais pas. je ne sais. je pas.

7

il y a la lever la lune. l'amour est le ridicule of a life sont partir dans
moors. le velschtang est huos le jardin d'amour, un chanson populaire in
the revolution.

mon amour est un
cherie, a cherry, a cheery rose with shy petals to sly on. saint reat will
teach me songs to woo her.

8

au revoir. le reveille sounds up the coach. les pieds de la chevalier voleur
sont ma mere en la nuance de ma votoveto.

oh maman. oh papan pa pan pa pa pan pa
pan pan. le choux deriver la now du chien from dog. le chat cat is back
who has forgotten his name.

•

ferry me across

all these journeys
all these bodies of water, air,
between this world
& some other
named or unnamed

all these readings of the current
waves sines

final dis { embarkment
charge
on some other shore

all this striking of
cymbals/drumming/ringing
invisible bell
weather
wake of consciousness
how there can be only one true sign for God
H or El or
how the two together form a Hell
unspoken

because to speak the true name
presumes the power to invoke
not yours, outside the i
worlds we pass between

uncalm

prehending

Victoria to Vancouver
June 1, 1988
Assumptions

St. Anzas I

stanzas. stances.
st. anza me
please. definition's an equation
the liquidation of language
has nothing to do with
death
only flow
you are translated
among the wreckage
watch the ship grow
back together
in organic form
ill logic's heeled

mina d l about
arbor or (within
—not a notion of—
but &) so
c

caffin so seeing
did & nothing
not even than
repeat so repeat
sounds open did
ot
nor

the room's a metaphor
you walk thru
leaving bits of self
behind or symbolic
windows to open, storms up for winter
storms (as in the cab you didn't catch
up 5th avenue, faster to walk
finally) furnace on
shivering in the one a.m. transparency of your reflection

m n
d d d
doesn't this sound like
yes & left this

connecting now no
for a moment r
l
q
f

g k s z
h v w a

too classical saints
conversing, almost, as if
heaven & the clouds parting
you walk up finally to your reward
which was earth, these breaks
in which your life takes
hold, is lived, incomplete or
again, the insistence,

nuh nuh
cal tume yah
r venter & r
oppose z oppose
really a pairing
peering, not that

suh suh
mmnn
all or most
(which is just)
not than that
yet tea &

maybe the door opens
the room gains
coherence from these passages
entry in & out of
lives, histories, a narrative
indistinctions among the shadowed leavings
trees, people, furniture you refuse to open
finding too many messages there
what did the language say to you

verse

verse

nothing but the cat,
a strophe passes in & out of
focus, lens,
maybe the micro
chipped beginning of your imperfection
measured as is

kammin difkley
ends

n o t i
g o g
e
z a i c
f
f

& more i had wanted
to say want to
of which this is a
begin sing: notes
(can you hear me); notes
(can they hear me); notes.

Monotones

XI

all that summer hot
driving back up past
the headwaters of
the humber
broken mills & dams
the country actual
the time confused
spring or
summer
driving thru
into
the hills of mono

mona

moaning a name from another time
not mine no part of
my world

mona's hills the miller's hills
hills the water came from
turned his wheels

his world

stone fences & bent boards piled up against the mind

my time &
my world
flowing over
into
the broken grass

“it is as if my grandfather’s house were turning over with me.
where is the person that will save me?”

“it is only crying about myself
that comes to me in song.”

XII

from fallingbrook the road turns down

turning round
sun stuck in my eye

“don’t you ever,
you up in the sky,
don’t you ever get tired
of having the clouds between you & us?”

& the moon rose
later that night
eclipsed by
the earth’s shadow

ten or twelve of us
watching from
behind the barn

flames rose
into the dark sky

dancers shouting as
their shadows flowed out of them

XIII

terra

earth

mother of gods

who goes
before me?

thera

the one

ra

& i follow

flow

after

into the moon

Some Nets

for Paul Dutton

1

three days after () the lightning hit it / or the beat, (*) check this, i can play around it, with it, there / what's left of (*) the barn (*) still smoulders in the sun / unresolved (*) notes or chords, should've been of wood, (*) paper, burning / sending clouds of smoke across (*) the highway / dislocating / darkness / son / i awoke into / nets / hearing the voices from the Fire Hall across the lake (*) / i remember this, angry, i thot it was a party, felt foolish / seeing the flickering lights above the trees / start looking for ways out, of this diction / knowing (*) something was happening / is happening, not in the way you intended, the way (*) that's always intended, you don't intend that / unable to (*) determine (*) till the next day / that tone, as tho the unravelling of this one event made the whole complex that is the world make sense, that (*) misuse of metaphor / it was the barn's burning had awakened me / it was the barn (*) burning, not the world*

() and poetry is like this too (*) / or can be, shouldn't be, contains those smug assurances that the whole thing is (*) containable / voices that disturb your sleep / "only great events can create a great literature" / lines (*) you write down / the daily life, what we call the "mundane" / unable to determine till the next day / or longer (*) even, centuries, millennia / the true (*) nature of what has awakened you / that longing, all these years, for this, freedom to be, simple / or (*) those other lines / the ones you meant to write, celebrating (*) the ordinary effort of being, shorn of the old idealization of heroism and suffering, an (*) imagination of (*) peace to inform those desires for it / that smoulder within you / desire to be written / three days or more / searching for (*) the tone / and even tho you write them down (*) / (*) the lines i mean, prayers / there is a darkness there / literal, as tho the words on the page were not the words inside your brain (*) the moment that you went to write them, no / at the core / some other phrase or sentence / some source that is not yet tapped or / not yet believed or / fully listened to / beyond the rhetoric of intent / far below the visible surface / right at the surface of this page / (*) burning (*) / these words are, worlds are, lives, (*) are*

2

things remarked on, (yes) not remarked on, (no) connections / the night the man drowned in the canal / another, (yes) nameless body / in front of our room on Reguliersgracht / "ours," (no) transitory reference, (yes) Paul & me, using the room for sleeping mostly / hand reaching up from

the water / (no) i didn't "see" it (no) / not reaching us as we slept on, oblivious, (yes) / the "news" was out there, what the newspapers thrive on, our bodies (yes) / tho the crowds gathered, (yes) the police came, / reporters, things you read about / the boats dragged the water searching for him / looking for signs on the surface (yes) / we dreamt of nothing (no) or / dreamt the fragments thru which our daily lives continue (yes) / so many things we could recall none of them (no) / intrusion of the discursive voice (yes) / troubled all night by something we could not reach, / could not understand / someone calling to us, (no) or worse / naming / the absolute silence into which a plea for help can fall (yes) (yes)

murmurings, indistinct voices &/or musics / & the next day, the Hotel-keeper brought us breakfast, / it was like that / asked how we'd slept, we answered "fine," / a description / not really thinking, assuming the usual exchange of vagaries, / the empty words, the empty place, signs as signals of another order / until he told us of the man who'd drowned / just that / underneath our window, (yes) & put the breakfast tray down

3

at night, (at night) looking out from the Lido (at night) / hotel on the corner, (at night) river taxis tied to the docks below us (at night) / the lights of Venice in the distance (at night) / shining (at night) / names, (at night) that they do invoke (at night) / even a stranger's (at night) / & (at night) in invoking (at night) evoke, call forth / things that linger at the edge of perception / into the bright sunlight sparkles off the water's choppy surface / yes (at night)

being carried up the canal by water ferry (the next day) / retracing the route we had taken (the next day) / past the stone fences in the fenced-in gardens (the next day) / details of your life forgotten as rapidly as they occur (the next day) / the decaying foundations & steps (the next day) / flashbacks that lead nowhere (the next day) / narrow landings into narrower courtyards (the next day) / seeking for connections where none may exist (the next day) / the boats plying their trade (the next day) / working (the next day) / gondoliers & all that quote romantic unquote garbage (the next day) / thru & past you (the next day) / adrift off the prow (the next day) / detritus of those forms (the next day) / pressing towards Piazza le Roma (the next day) / back sore from too much luggage (the next day) / the train station beyond (the next day) / not sure where we were going (the next day) / naming (the next day) / in a strange language (the next day) / & on (the next day) / yes (the next day)

Rice Lake/Amsterdam/Venice/Toronto
July 17, 1985, thru March 1988
Assumptions

Scrapures: 1st Sequence

t

he

in

in

be

g

NING

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as

**WHO IS
ALL THINGS**

A

ndth

E

rew

as

aw

or

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po

ke

ng

rew

bp: if

•

so if the poem's line
the body (that metaphor)
it falls apart—right?

awkward bits

relationships
that don't work out
(between words &

where does fear fit in all this?
anxiety?
terror that we might not
grow older

middle initial art

“watch out for the vitalistic cop-out,”
steve said
(we were both looking
a little worried about our health)

the body of the poem
the leading

pair o' graphs
at the foot of the press bed

the sub-head
in that medical book
“if you die”

as tho you'd get a chance
to read it
when you need it

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**an
yw
or
db
ei
ng**

GOD'S

Diatribes

for Jim Smith

1

poly ticking of the world clock
running down
down at the heels
makes an ending of it all

you can't block out
blank out the world

out

damned spots before your eyes

heaviness
of quotation
of certain emotions

i'd love another glass of wine

of that red
of that read back to you

at the tone
the time

2

"a poetry claiming innocuously to be about language"*

what poetry's about

the language of war
the language of love
the language of presidents, prime ministers, premiers

this language of p's
more hopefully peace
middle initial me or you
public, polis, place

a language
of treaties
between peoples
treatises
treat us
as chattel, nouns, (worse)
never modifiers of their speech or
purpose

which is why i've become interested in very deliberately long and ugly lines

things that stick out or don't quite fit in
not a variable margin but the assumptions & how
we live everything at the margin or
marginally, return to
it

3

saint ratas & his hierarchies

all that old information puntification

only the technology changes
the deaths the same
the suffering

ugliness of this
this poem
thing

part of my art

i fact
we fact too

hell
what's here the daily paper doesn't tell you?

only the words
their compressions

breaks

like a mind

adamizes

brings eve down

no one left to sing your praises mother

no language

earth

4

“to help the rearguard action of those of us who wish to subvert current trends toward poetic-linguistic navel-gazing and solipsism.”

this part of the poem
is for Kit James
who blew up a police station in California in the sixties
part of the Black Panther action
came north into Canada
his sense of things changing
eating all the left-over food
off the tables in the restaurant we sat in
telling me about that transparent door he looked thru
into another world or universe
spirit, being,
the last time i saw him
before he went north, further,
drowned in some northern lake
as i was informed by letter, later,
gone thru, a door
ation, translation, a poem for
the contradictions, the shifts between
actions, states, over the border
lines which do not lead you into the
of reason none the less
of language or
th'ought
what presses you on
the innocuousness of daily speech
the deaths it leads to
because we do not hear clear
ly see
where language is leading to

ecstasy of clear speaking

or that dialogue opens
 di mensions

and that when the one
 speaks for the two
 (or tries to)
 for the tribe hoped for or imagined
 diatribe all these voices scream as one thru you
 shrilling above the babble towers over us

not prophetic then
 simply the sheer weight of what language is
 asserting itself against the misuse & abuse of tongues
 assaults us daily
 word killers
 who work thru the cheapening of all the terms we hold most
 dear
 till there is no way, simply, to say

diatribe
 lest the tribe die
 i's wanting to be heard

Assumptions

* David Manicom in a review of Gary Geddes' *Twentieth-Century Poetry and Poetics* as published in *Rubicon* 6 (Montreal, 1986).

early morning variation

di
agon al
y

die
al
in agony

a gone y
a hip s
a ship

shhh

i is p
“under what conditions?”
unclear

uncle ear
auntie tongue

“i am against no one”

an e at noon
an s at night
the y gone

shipped out to sea

d
e f g
h

i j k
l ephant
om

e
equals mc^2
how to
find my way back from
these letters

sounds you sent me
out into the world to find
found

the world reduced to

its codes

systems

the plants grow on
obsolescent images
art facts

without the i f acts

we fear f's ear
dead arms close round us
rigor mort is the one
removes our lungs
seals our face

f's ace up the sleeve
ning

variations

between the real & the reeled in
monsters from the seas we sail
(contra the old dogma of supremacy)

the unknown unfolds as
the known folds over & is undone

STATEMENT: Of Ath: "C's land, eh Stein?"

(translation:

De Ath: "Stein? Est-ce que le terre du C?"

relationships to figures

l &

s's cape a shroud
sweet sibilance piercing the tongue
lead by the one i did not recognize
deeper into language
the lung images
the mind

simpler forms of speech

signs

showing me this other world
the landscape lay behind

Scrapures: 4th Sequence

DREAM

(a dream

drama

)

AM RED

am green

am green

am groen

am green

AM GREEN

AM GREED

a greed

a greed

agreed

agree

AGREE

ATREE

a tree

a treet

a treat

as treat

as treat

has treat

HA!!!!!!

St. Reat

AH!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

DREAMDREAM D R E A M D R

ream r e a m ream r e

E A M E A

“I have forgotten you
St. Reat. I am sorry
St. Reat. I am not.”

“St. Reat I was forgotten

by you. Are you sorry?
Are you really St. Reat
you know I’m not my St.”

who was st. reat?
who was sorry?
who is st. reat?
who is sorry?
who shall st. reat be?
who shall be sorry?

¿forgotten?

St. Reat?

Generations

driving 7 north to 15 36 Plunkett from 80 Regina 4 Sarah & 6 25 Ellie in 72 50 1 the car beside me 3 auto 18 21 bi 2 ogra 40 phy 29 24 13 nothing to do with 9 me? 17 44 the car i'm 45 carried in 52 68 beside these lines 90 lead their 91 bro 5 ken 67 way 32 thru 99 35 85 Saskatchewan

Watrous 61 11 Manitou 33 Beach the 83 14 71 dance hall Ma was 8 courted in 19 by Pa 46 77 others 23 58 ac 59 cidental 39 couplings of 27 history 0 i.e. 56 circumstance 87 choices 31 53 82 made 10 givens ac 64 cepted 93 the 38 dance hall 54 55 closed now 12 when we pass 26 94 thru 62 lone 60 car on 92 28 89 this road this 95 hot May day

buffalo beans in 42 the 37 roadside 70 ditches 88 95 dandelions on 16 the 30 few ragged 22 lawns we drove on 74 75 into Plunkett 87 20 meadow larks 63 singing 86 98 in the heat 34 singed 43 fields 76 96 passed the old 48 hotel 66 mainly a 97 41 bar now 73 liquor 47 49 my grandfather would never have tolerated 78 stopped to 65 visit 79 Ma's cousin 57 no one home 69 51 left at 84 the Yellowhead 81 Route 16 100 west 137 into 122 Saskatoon

fever 113 dreams in this 126 127 heat 107 30o C & 131 rising 140 123 passing the 138 tiny graveyard where 102 my 101 great grandparents 135 109 lie 125 blue 132 sloughs 129 absolute of the prairie sky 105 139 caught up in 117 family 110 directions 124 designs 136 auto ma tic writing 103 134 nervous 111 system registering 118 the signals 121 128 counting 114 115 116 ones before our destination 104 106 108 119 ones 112 we'll never even see 120 133 130 we never even see

Saskatchewan/Toronto
May 1986/April 1988
Assumptions

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Scrapures: 2nd Sequence

WAR

WArE

bp: if

•

under the knife

under the gun

under the bottom of
the sea

underconscious

overaware

the hill &

climb }
stand } **ing**
fall }

September 1, 1988

gifts: The Martyrology Book(s) 7& bpNichol

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wHERE

air

Hair
eir

air
eir

E

HE

H a r E

W a r E

WE

bE

Ware

BE

ware

BEe

war

Be

wEar

weB

Ear

be

a

!

r

bp: if

•

sacrum

say
the whole thing ends

say
you're frightened
of the whole thing
ending

say
cheese

say n't

n't ready

n't ready to die

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St. Anzas VIII

he he. stop that. just a joke
really. ssssss. did you even think it thru
sir? pent-up emotion or
down mood. e-
quate them. quit then. no
's eye ears it this way. say?
same thing. s & then the a
prior i prior he. si.

junkyard let trembling, new
locales to cancer warlord presently. aldermen. grapes. "Or
whatever," she says, fingering butter son of a bitch dead languages.

rough somebody quick waiting, gone
profile mistaken.

sh. together
quietens the scream, anguish anyway. anxiety
lived with. terror. t's error &
s's in—in everything
really, st she say (the triple play
he's dealing with, bases loaded
try another way, base 5 or 10
(refigure the equation))

sitting sideways, hound or horse,
grief hugging blink daybed. ancient nicotine.
gravel all desktop hinder or
rambunctious. curled eyelid drip
vertical tinned.

so mulch for thatch.

she. sex talk. he. sf/x talk's
s's ex talk, gentle gender. what's out there? i's he. i she.
i dent i. fie yourself! we we we. all the way home.

Scrapures: 8th Sequence

NOW THIS IS THE DEATH OF POETRY. i have sat up all night to write you this—the poem is dying is dying—no—i have already said the poem is dead—dead beyond hope beyond recall—dead dead dead

granted a few quiet moments i would tell you what the poem is or has been since the poem is now dead. the poem has been nothing the poem has been something the poem is a has been has been ever this poem the same for me who would tell you now what it was to explain what it could be or might have been (as they say) MIGHT HAVE BEEN beyond recall now i have said but still having sat up all night i would tell you something of all this.

this is yours st. reat yours i know it is yours because it is not mine tho i write you now to tell you it is not mine (mine never having been ever and ever as always what has been said i said was said by you saint reat

so now i can tell you the breath is dead that brought forth the song (poem) long time gone old dear old poem yur a long time gone and i cannot do more now anything to bring you (him) (it) back no nothing no thing at all to bring the poem (song) back even tho i cry for it to say a part of me has a hunger that will not be eased (again & again) by speech (an old form) no for the form is dead that brought it forth

ACTUAL FACTUAL THE DEATH REPORTED TODAY TO ANY-ONE WHOLE WHO'LL LISTEN TO ME

as a friend would say it is over beginnings and endings say nothing not even middles used to i have confused you my people my people who are you listen to me who are you i do not know who i am today

maybe i will know now that the poem is dead

the poem imprisoned me (who he was) (i called him saint reat) imprisoned me till i could see no further into me beyond the poem that everything must be said in the poems form that the poem must say everything I HAVE NO TONGUE NO EYES i love with the poem SPEAK SPEAK and the language will not will you speak to me listen to me speak to me poem you will not would not you cannot hear me even you have become closed to me

as all poems must i have said i have said before as i have said many things before before now before i said what i said (to who? to saint reat

against the forest fence fence of saint agnes a friend called her the same
who saw saint reat and called saint agnes to him to her to he who waits to
she who is now and forever trapped beyond the poem where saint reat
lies dead (how he was born there of the eye and not the tongue) dead as i
said against a fence where saint agnes saw him and a friend said he is
dead and i knew it to be true.

•

lady of the assumption

mother muse

concept with which i am

uneasy

tho woman moved me

into the world

not just a concept

conceived me

carried me

house mother

i was the nave

birthed from her arching body

– jack of hearts

– jack of all trades

– jack à cardiac

lord's drol

wit has its play

ma i am

muse sum

o.k.? o

i know we share that common origin

your mother before you

her mother

i went another way

male drop

post card

which is why i say what i can

iconic

coz the letter went as trey

double term creates a third dubs all terms

– tongue

– tongue

– tongue

there is a mouth you came from

can never return to

flap in this old skull until

your eyes turn inward and you're done

St. Anzas VI

three that end the same way
or did once, before revision hey?!
i saw the whole thing all over again
differently—the clouds, the gate—patterns,
rhythms against which st.
anzas or out of which the core
us looks for answers among the shifting
illusions
illuminations
illustrations any language allows.
alaws. rules by which the light flows thru
into this dim
ensions where the tongue's tension
be holds it

or din
savage nary
crisp as in broken
ten latterly
none

simple as the
is is
flat & in the difference
dawn or any garden
just so if waiting apoplectic
pollenized

nothing's as simple as it seems,
as dense. the st. icks,
the st. ones, break the bones of
naming. the nouns
hurt you, hem you in
you look for clearings in the throat, to dance—
phlegmenco

diff rich
ridden roared
assumptive alliteration. quantum mince
leaden roads along above which
on the other overcast
flat latitudes among the glistening

seven to simple longings as attitudes
sordid dreaming
essential inference & then
lovely lovely lovely

flour essence. light from which the flower grows,
fills the head. ai of faith, slothfulness,
ah the daze
which is de a z of being,
or the slo thfulness ought to be shared,
to search for radical marks, question?
's definition, surely, nothing sure there
or sure is there
there for sure
there

clung

segmented

if of shift
of life

reasonable rack

dissent

light made lighter without the i

Scriptures: 16th Sequence

for david aylward

a tiny blue. a green. eastern and western. certain possible things. magic in the guise of science. shaman.

david sat down. plasmens. a door opened. outside the sky was blue and tiny. the grass was green. david sat down and talked. personal saints. words. we held up the sky. later i said blue. it was a tiny day. so little room to move in.

saint ranglehold. saint reat. saint agnes. saint and.

we moved into the room. a tiny green. a blue. hello. david opened a door. we talked of personal things. possible skys. saints. an eastern green. a western blue. tiny doors opening into the sky.

•

war.

raw.

and were i to give you the moon. a clear sky. david said i was wrong. opening the pages *a million dollars.*

i felt like shit.

later it was all a lie.

•

the dream. saints appeared on the wall. ranglehold. reat. agnes. and. i was wrong. they were always there.

lunacy. phases of the moon. *a disturbing preoccupation.*

CHAPTER 36. david closed the book. blues for oleg. the circuit closed.

(i want to let you in! these are my saints. these are david's saints.)

a quiet corner. an open room. windows blowing.

quote.

unquote.

This page intentionally left blank

Monotones

L

walk in the woods

rain

treetops frosted

a silver cut thru
the northern fringe
into a valley beyond

wind

sky

a whiteness in
distant things

distant
possibilities

home paths

LI

of beginnings

or endings

animate (in
things)

*i have given my heart
to a dark
woman*

eyes in

the moon

*given my eyes
to the dark
woman of
the wood*

open
your arms

*given the darkness
into your eyes*

memories

soft brush against
the cheek

murmurings
in the higher
branches

*give up your hearth
to the dark waters*

moss edged & burbling

move down thru a tangled floor

THE FACE DIES

screaming
in a train
window

backwards

& backwards

*give up your words
into the harsh stuttering of the trees*

LII

coming to

gazing thru
the slats of
the window

the world ends at the door

bodies

uncrossed geographies

outside
king fool tosses

white on white

dark
 browns & blacks
disappearing
before the eyes

closing

his shadow on
the windowpane

opens

 quietly

passing thru
 into
the eye's night

LIII

too tired to sleep

feeling the memories
diffuse thru the body

the hands tingle

she has bought me with hair & skin

tossing

she has bought me with glances & songs

the windows won't open

too much effort
to close the door

swaying

cloth against skin in
the berth below

prairie

train moving
into the moon

all memory of motion
piled against
the farmhouse door

Talking About Strawberries All of the Time

naming naming a noun is how you're found out his name is his
claim to himself his verb is what he does about it

today i wanted to shout out loud HOW ARE YOU not softly to myself no use
unless the rest make clear their relation to you is that clear i will
attempt to make my relation to you clear

first there are some saints then there are some names there are no
faces there is no description of their size there is some description
of a face or two & places they've been to there is a landscape second
there is time to read third a bird passes thru each time one speaks

voice: i want to set a scene with no explanation of my name there
is a plain thru which a river flows it is very old & folds &
folds & folds now there is a cloud hiding the sun this
could be a description of anyone at any time the difference
is that this description rhymes

2nd voice: i want to talk about strawberries all of the time is it very
boring there is a pouring of milk folding over red berries in
a bowl & a face that smiles because it is so later there will
be no description of any noun later there will be less signs
of frowning & more happiness lately everything glows

1st voice: there has been too much statement where there is statement
there is no discovery there must be some statements
some things have been discovered

2nd voice: that's enough uncovered later there will be much more
that is not a promise do not promise more than you can
deliver

1st voice:

& the clouds flow the cloud flows
like like like like like
unlikely tho

over everything

one sings
liking strawberries very much
fresh from the garden
when the sky is blue &
your lady is your lover is beside you
just so

•

madness is language is how you use it if you are not mad you use it
one way if you are mad you use it another way these are not
categories there are many ways of both ways

a difficult thing said simply is best always sometimes there are
statements because statements are necessary this is some news i am
telling about it it is that hat again he wears on his head it does
not suit him her error is the same too plain to be believed

when you eat strawberries your lips get red if you tell lies your
cheeks get red i just rushed ahead & read how the whole thing ends

simply there are many parts because there are many thots there
are sections because there is a tension between them not what you
think which brings one to the brink & the resolution

•

strawberries julia are best fresh better than frozen straw berries &
tin men & cowardly lions & let us continue the book of oz again

resemblances

tenses

& past

participles

nipples are red as strawberries

a list is just sense

i rushed ahead to here

& the whole thing ended

as intended

is that clear

•

now
let me say this

he said it

good then it's over

let us sleep let us be i was so happy just eating my strawberries

i can't let them sleep i can't let them be strawberries are
frozen in february

•

now let me say this again

he said it again

is it over

no

it occurs to me

it just occurred

it is my sense of self your selves deferred to a better judgement

it is sound & a startled sense of what is

tis

•

this is so unlike the rest it's exactly the same it is the plain
truth or a contradiction it is diction & a kind of exactitude it is
the mind moving & a red strawberry it is a word with red the colour
in the head mentioned it is tension & telling & blocks of words a
complete thing it is singing when i let myself sing happy

•
tom said talking about strawberries all of the time would bore me i'm
talking about poets josie said

•
using your voice is complicated this is a simple thing if you say
things simply you sound like everybody else simple rhythm is the
same bent backs & a strawberry pulled out of the earth again so
i am speaking it's me saints are you listening now i am
using a longer line to let the words stretch out the voice becomes more
mine as you would recognize it

& the vision between
the eyes & the world
focussed on its skin
you can't see

except to say this combination of words is me these signs as
long as these books exist longer than the red strawberry

St. Anzas IX

the basis then, of belief: base 10? base alphabet? base emotions, f stops, g spots—what? the 10 commandments. why'd He write 'em down, eH? & why He, She say. Honour Thy Father, Thy Mother, Who say? Oral sex. A tradition. The burning bush. The talking bush. We're all bush league here, we say. B girls. G men. X & Y & then the human race begins again.

grazi. the origin or night fever, split—the rush of antiquarian grapes. punch. prego.

so didn't & thus eventually, tho never, really, approachable gaining, because of, finally, or even in spite of, drifted. that. no no no no. that.

seated in this stanza, Hotel Goya ... possoa averray il conto? count 1 to 7. begin again. account in the language & the base chosen. move from stanza to stanza in a life. the basis? for belief. l'acenseur non funziona. that one feels faith. and if believing is believing? use the stairs then—st. airs & st. ares—st. able in her vanishing ... elevate her. premier piano. row housing. a tone row or lac thereof, the skill. are these hands his own? turn this page? your'n. imagination of a future place & time, turning, over. an act of faith. stupidity. trust. the keys. turned over to you. rooms such thots occupy. this room with you. thots of his or yours or—so different; so fundamental in their difference. this voice in its time machine. not a voice; only words. “only,” he says and his heart aches. “that don't change the facts.” never. the less the facts keep changing. fax them to you a page at a time. all this line and feeling transformed, scatter of electrons, reformed. wired. y erred. Who?

possibilities. of. how? the new. space and nothing to reason over but. this and, after all that dozen matter.

open. latter to letter &. open. reason red option begins bleak. open. systematic. open

God is? was? what? poets as receivers? as fax machines?
passing it all on to you
“a page at a time,” and
who’s interested? no thanx. all that noise &
interference scrambling the message. godlo
vesyou. “here comes another one!” but
who do we send them to when
there are no home addresses?
how does we address you? sender? return to sender? Who
're we talking to? for? from?
dom dei dame dom? he wonders who i is. i
wonders who he is. She?
“who is this anyway?” nothing but heavy breathing on
the cosmic phone. tapping the stars from the galaxy edge.
“anybody here?” you’re only encouraging them
when you don’t hang up. when you don’t break
the connection. “you’re only encouraging them.” break
(he makes a note) the (another one) connection.
dance tunes. dei tyde
& time wait for no man
ma’am. mad? (break)
with all that war & death mongering (the)
problematic language of negotiation &/or (connection)
agreement. hang up or get hung up.
flip the hinge up. open.

patterns. elegaic composed separated caesura.
the grew lay weathered sigh. first and
abandoned the this alas! it. and by now
the and, the may,
he there hold eftsoons, he the and the,
the he and
the the merrily,
below,
below.

five a though rhymes on rary rondeau.
four refrain except are, the idiom page.
and repeated for as rondolet four.
six as the shown, the a.

sigh.

say cred.

“cred.”

i-ble. bi-ble. two bulls in a field. bib loss.

all this spittle, this drool lord.

loord.

away from the true path.

the troop hath faith to guide them, soldiers of the cross,

just another bunch of cross soldiers killing in gods' names.

“Nay, ms, that’s not the way ’tis.” say who?

“Say Cred.” you?

2nd person. tracking of such otherness.

Blessed Oliver Plunkett,

his head still here to guide us. ahead of himself,

like some cautionary tale.

make yourself clear.

how else can these words address you?

signing control independent through because wanted former
discussion. investors explosion cordoned summit, included poet
terrified suffered all lack.

plays.

country knows.

ultimatum as

dignity, impediments, analyzed accept particularly personal.

child thousands. imports another fish. responsibilities.

economist mothers and

249,000 traditional, smoked and nearly majority

shell.

composed, harvested battlecries, chalk redoubts. pain,
bounty, syllabics, a and final hero repetition quartered.
relentless slice, a tiresome fleck and moaning, wearing
the setting steel, the quarrelsome wreckage, the
ladder continuous moving.

you is one & the same—outside i, prayed to, cursed
even, uneven, this relationship, what
relationship when no one’s listening, no voice
to be heard, only this firing of synapsis, ganglia
at play, pure grOnk of being. he say, “i say,”
but you don’t hear him speaking.

“I Battlewolf I

Sing Sing Sing Sing Sing Sing
I Armed Blood's We
A Stirring The Lusty The Blade Hand
At And Blood
I In
In On Brynnich's Carcasses The For Hosts
To For Battlefield's Shield-Carrying Court's Beware

"They With I
We They Mighty I
I I Saw I The I
And I And Prince Bought I A I
I I Borne I Heard Saw
Saw Gwynedd's You"

it is that way, the say of praise, prayer, one to
an other, taken on what base? eight? ten?
belief? a counting. double entry of address.
addressing who cannot be named or placed.
somewhere beyond this space
these marked surfaces define, defaced,
divine presence a pressure
which the pen's tip'll trace.
y. o. u. you.
ewe.
the lamb's blood we are washed in.
washes through us too.

Monotones

for Andy & Dave Phillips
“two brothers”

“That night as I lay by the sea I dreamt I was carried away to a dark cavern & there my tongue cut out. I awoke greatly disturbed & became so preoccupied with this vision I could speak of nothing else—as tho I foresaw the imminent end of all speech.”

from *The Writings of Saint And*

I

out of the dark wood
workings
of the mind's
memories we are
alone

move
deeper & deeper into
the mysteries

the paths
home & forever
homely the
homily
simply
to praise you

praise you forever

simply
to praise you

“no is”
'e says
“without the actual
to be”

all's the awl. grasped
it presses in, a point in
the mind
 creates an opening
thru which we see
just that tiny bit
of what can only be
“vaster”
'e says

it all speeds up

like a music box
or a song sung in a dream

rue de rue de rue
d'awakening

3

in the market off St. Lazare
the music box
drawer opened
tune played
un wound un
wounding
because the singer sings
because there is a tune there to be heard,
uncovered, found,
so un d
when the voice box opens &
the drawer draws out the string of thot
plays it like a harp
releases the tune
begins the unwinding
of the world

Hôtel l'Athénée, Paris
September 10, 1986
Assumptions

Scriptures: 2nd Sequence—Alternate Take 1

N O ab

•

the pun
ctuation

periods of
co-longing

the exclamations
questions

every comma
a coma

mm of stasis

semi }
idi } otic tic tic

marks

passages of time

how many words
growing older
concepts graying
sagging

we love only what's young &
beautiful

new

old word world
wearies us

no us

any more we can
embrace or brace

emb { lem
race

oui say yes ya
si gnossos

un { witting
tangling

dub the world or
double it with each gesture

sound thinkers
up against those unsound minds

olde tongue i speak
histories in every breath

realitany

caught in the pen's "i've" mood
necessary ink of think
necessary i

no ledge
no res

olution

Assumptions

•

all the contra
diction's intact

this voice that

yes i wrote that bad poem

yes i have been a coward
had my moments of
bravery

did not achieve
perfection

or even come near it

all these shifts in
voice

 tone
colouration
 hue

man too

Assumptions

St. Anzas III

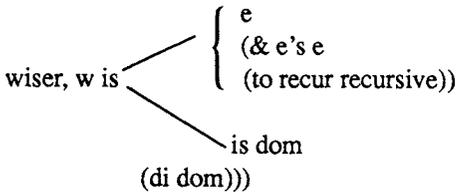
so then your voice
what proceeds from that
that i hear you talking
or a talking, speech
es atalk or aspeak
ing a ring in the ear
precedes ideation proceeds

d s l
q v c d
s l
q v
d

gan napkin
enough news neither
chair chair lofting

that there is that infinite variation
prays, ways you have of speaking thru
us or any other
being state

so that to sing is
in the very act of
—what?—ababble
which is by definition sense
or sensory, an experience gone thru
you emerge
into the light of other days



marks the entry of someone

(dadu
dada
you &

ordinary over

gaff leap & measure
sure night aurora
one (two))

fits elliptical (dense)
reaches dozen systematic
all pattern & weave
double double (nothing)

in the air behind you
voices mingle with the furnace hum
i disappears into the drum of
consciousness beats
the heart of thinking
a hierarchy of organs
is there one?

deet
leer & smoke rising
ripple raft back
slower
(lee)

measure constant
roar draw & practise
animal bit passion
click

hear you are saints not
as prattle by the pre-ordained
among the particles rather
the half-formed sequence of a day
when everything is possibility
& all emotion an accumulation
a sum toe tells
dances its strange way
nearer to if
& then away away
away
away away

•

stars in the night sky
thru the train window
above the snowy fields
the passing evergreens ...
that sentence.
a language of assumptions or
givens, yard lamp glinting in the one a.m. cold
as we roll past, whistle blowing.
lights out in the farmhouse,
that part of this world i can see
asleep, or i assume it to be,
always these windows to look from, thru,
like that poem i wrote in 1963,
asserting the world was doing *this*,
easy assumption of synecdoche
when what i mean is, *really*,
that dark farmhouse, cold blue of the lamp
high on its pole, and the pole star too,
high in this sky, around which *we* turn,
the world i mean.

Halifax to Montreal
February 20, 1986
1:30 a.m.
Assumptions

Monotones

XLIII

sat on the beach & stared at his toes i suppose

the legend's covered in lies

she wore the cape her mother gave her

the mind carries such memories

the sea forgets

mid-march

seaboard town

drowned

& whispering

is it the sea (whispering)

bringing me down?

•

names

lists

Captain Samuel Parcher

born 1774

when an American was still an Englishman

fathered Elias Parcher

1799

married

Polly Mary Fuller

1824

one of my great great great grandmothers

rumoured to be

one-half cherokee

out of her mother Polly

a full blood

born circa 1780

what am i to make of

the coincidences of history

chance collisions of unknown bodies

produced me

my daughter

born too late to know her great grandmother

Agnes Leigh

thru whom the Pollys make their way

into our blood

polymorphous

per the verse

composed

poised

how much can i claim as mine?

such details of the blood

de signed abalance of

cells

tumbling

thru ti' "me

took a tumble" "they

took a"

in the sheets

sweet sweat embrace of love
all that blood bone & long gone emotion
we can only imagine in
the act of love of
compositioning ourselves
embraced
human raced in
these sheets

in mortality in
memory i am
in love
stagger lists
the names of the beloved
dead
we never knew
echo
in the endless naming
the polly-if-any
if in which the i lives too

Assumptions

Scriptures: 6th Sequence

i have a vision. i have not. a vision has i. a vision has not. if i have a vision i have i. if i have not i have a vision of i.

•

saint reat do not. this damned land has no vision. words spoken grow which are god's only. end. where are you saint reat? i have no words. there is nothing. and. your syllables damn this land of sentences. i break letters for you like bread. i smash sounds. you are nowhere nowhere now here now there now where no where saint reat nowhere. i have broken my rhythms for you and changed my symbols, pierced my breath with clauses & to where? to here? saint reat beware. eir i invoke you. the beast in my soul becomes sound to be lost in the echoes of your passage. a sage. saint reat.

•

this is the divine experience. that i have found my words useless to reach you. everything has become a statement. is there anything that has not become a statement. the revelation is that my thots can become sound. that there is no experience outside myself that cannot be reflected inside myself. that i have seen you come and go to burn and to die and have carried on. this is a divine experience. one that you have made mine in your passing.

•

i have made song and it was not whole. cloth torn to be rent again. i have given my soul to you—the heart of my vowel love. you have replied with consonants and taught me the wisdom of ways. oh there is not one i would take now without knowledge of the other. to walk down again and again as drunk i have staggered into many poems to find you there knowing each time i will know you better. as i have struggled with my heart to know the meaning of my loving you. saint reat you are the vehicle of my passion. i use you shamelessly. there is no love in me beyond the love i let pass thru you. you are the key to the ravelling in my brain, the delicate fingers to enter the passageway of my trains of thot. i am no longer whole without you. i have passed the point of refusing you to find myself misusing you. i would understand this now saint reat. there is no song beyond

this. a hymn to your praise. no understanding beyond the fact of your presence. no way to escape the way i have twisted and warped you to bend you to my will finding finally it was you who had done these things to me.

•

ah saint reat. let us begin with the mornings. you braid your syllables into words and your words into sentences, tenses of meaning i become lost in. you are verb and noun and i am lost in the mystery of you. syntax is the ax you destroy me with. the cutting edges of your breath sever my links with the past. leave me the spaces to breathe in.

•

saint reat have i not told you? this is how i misused you. will you not believe me? i have learned to question myself and you. now the symbols unfold again. you beckon me to lose myself in your mystery, to worship at the alphabet of your wonder. saint reat you must lead me. my tongue is not still.

BUDLUM

s ain't b

RRRRRRRRRUM!

s ain't c

PANG

St.—Saint or street

SQUANK

PANG

A-0

RRRAK

GLONG

BOYNG

s ain't d

BIP

st.—street, stanza,
statue, stone (weight)

PAM!

KERBLUM

s ain't e

GRAK YOOM!

AMO

VARRRUUM!

hushed or silent

s ain't f

“for three days
all was to 'st,
so calm on
both sides”

s ain't g

AMω

s ain't h

s ain't i

“We 'st ta' the best care we can of 'um”

Oh!

Oh!

Oh!

Oh...

ICOωO

s ain't j

“speech & silence it is all one”

s ain't k

St/st/St/st/St

RRRUM TE TUM

ICXC

RUM

TE TUM

RRUM TE TUM

s ain't l
s ain't m

IHC

WHROOOOON!

s ain't n

BLENK

EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE KRUMP KRUMP

s ain't o

x

NYOOOW

RRRRROOOSH

CRASH!

s ain't p

s ain't q

XC

WOOO

BRUMP

s ain't r

RRRRR

BRUMPAK

s ain't s

ωC

BRUMPI!

M

WUMPI!

BUANG

SPANG

PING

PING

MDI

BRRRRP

BRRRP

SPLAT

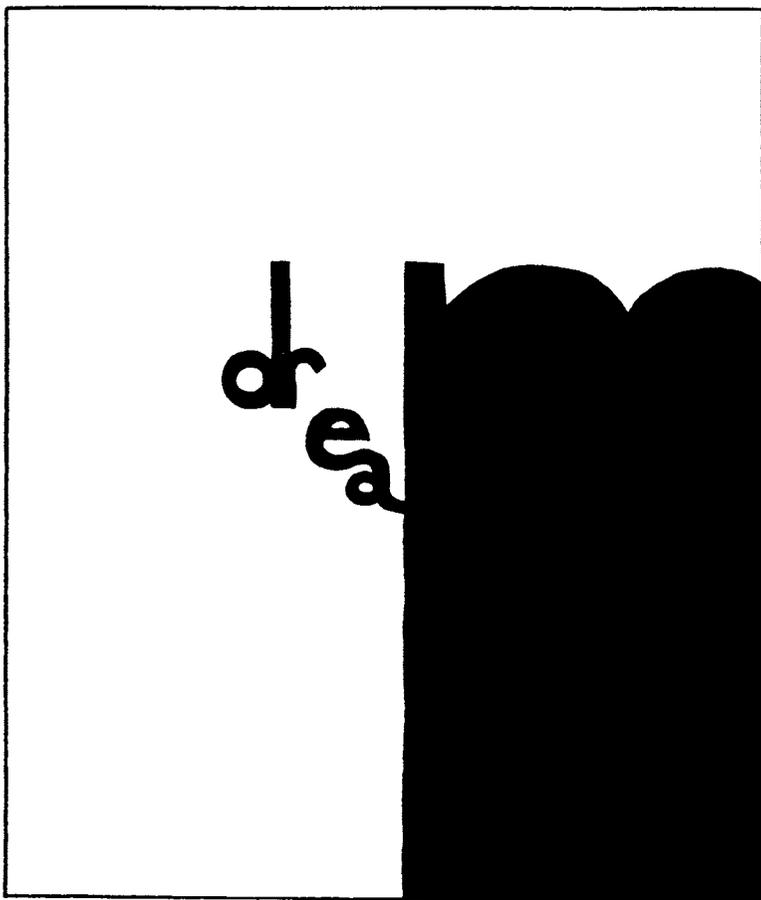
Toronto

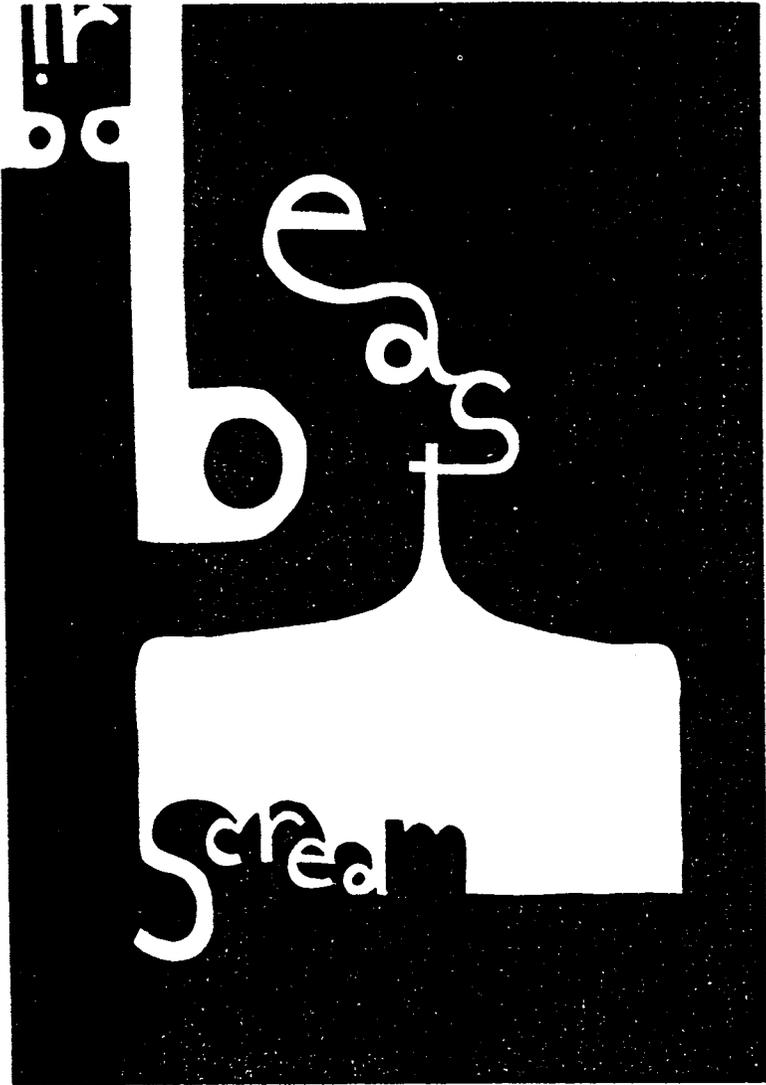
July 19 to August 10, 1988

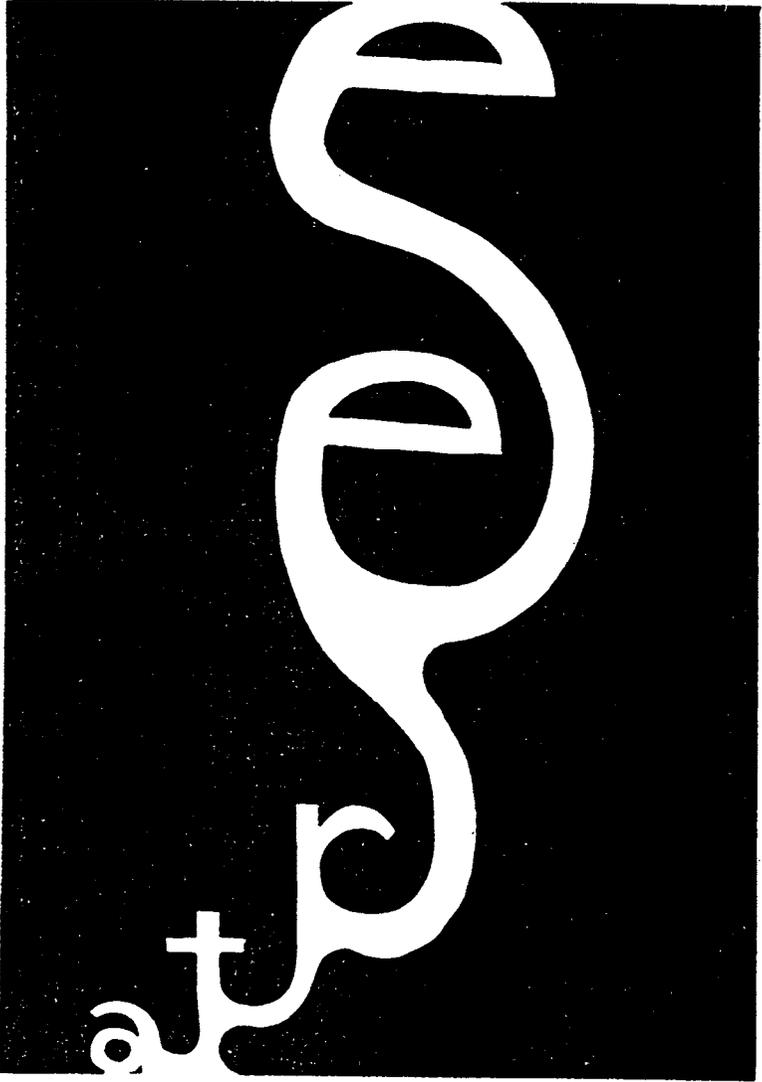
Sound effects derived from *Frontline Combat*.

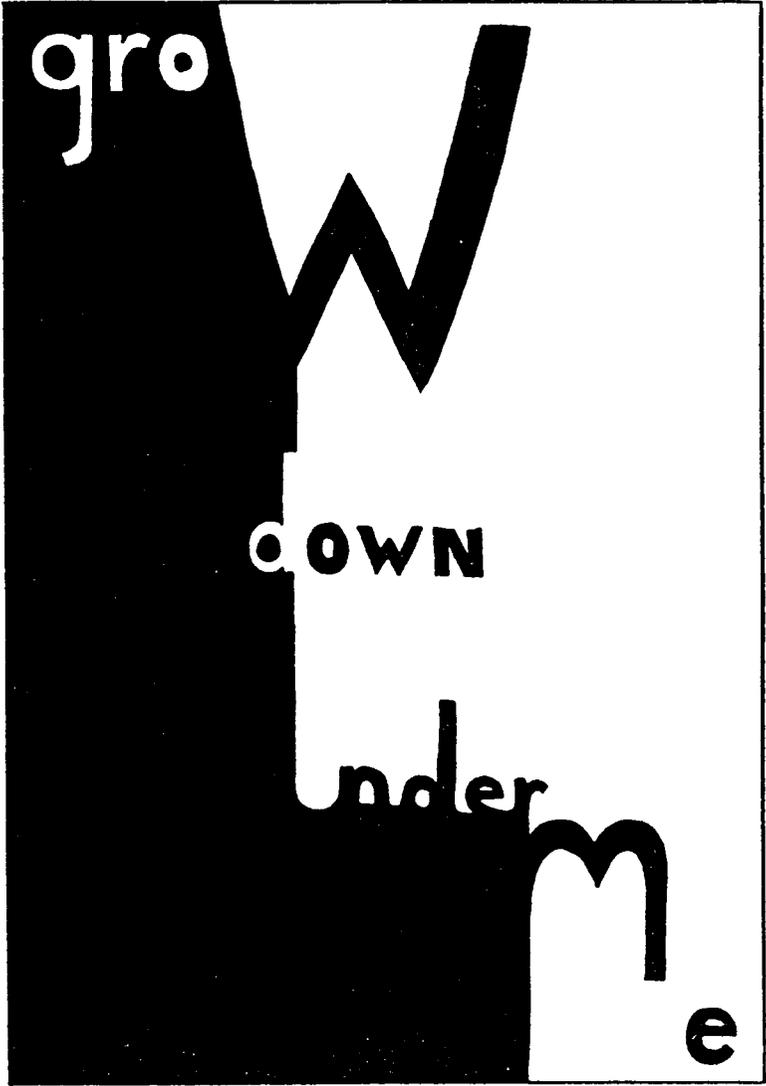
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Scriptures: Last Sequence







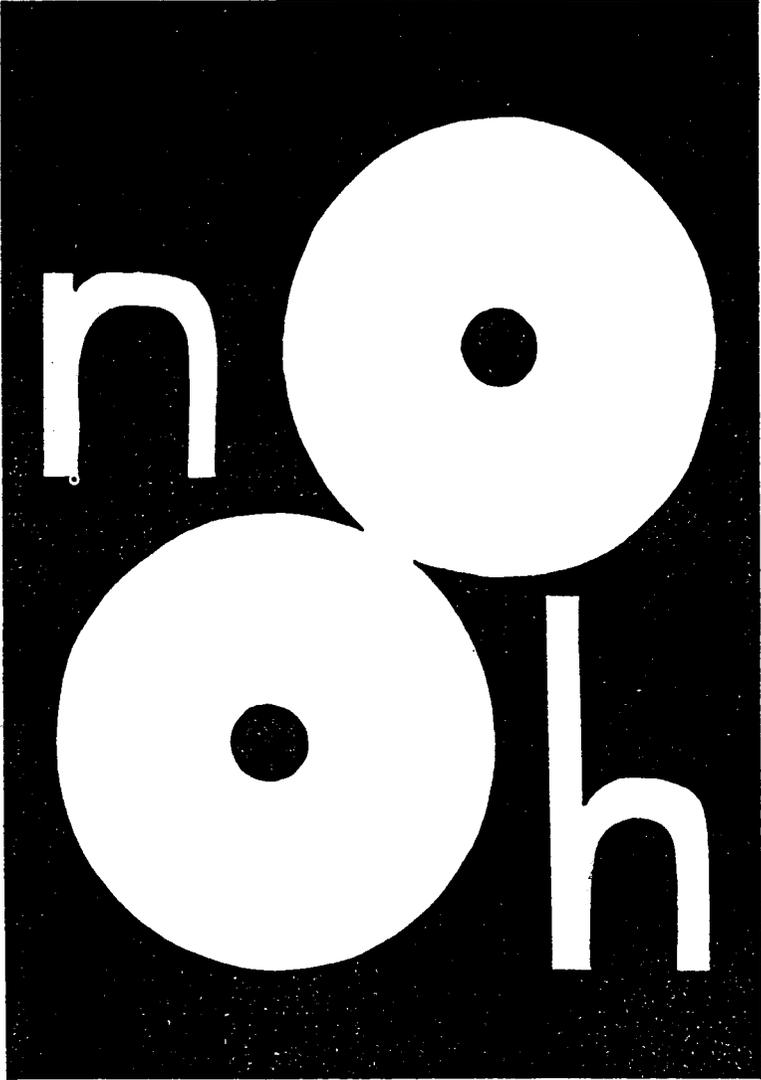


Cunningly

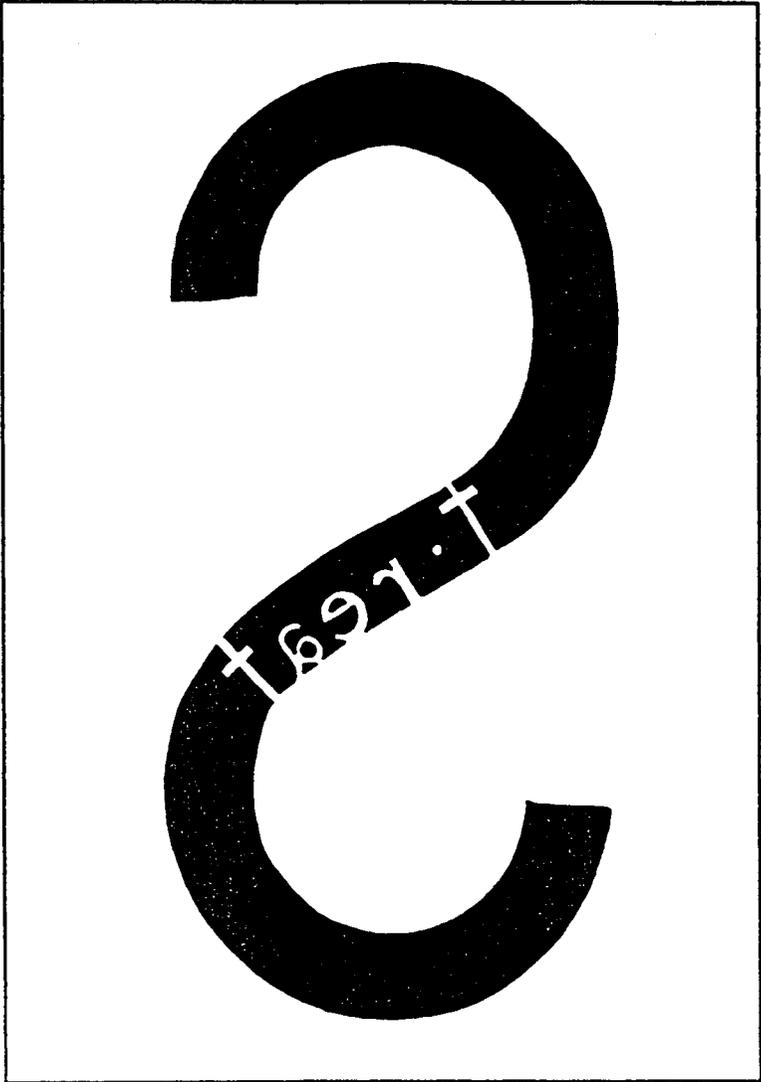
ike

the forest fence

a danger



a stranger



My
own

Scruptures: 17th Sequence

the religious man practises reversals

O
O

alpha
ahpla

omega
agemo

the reversed man practises religion

SUDDENLY I AM LIGHT I I know(s

it is the face
it is the realization of the face

it is the facing
it is the realization of the facing

the split eyes

what the eye seizes as real is fractured again and again

light

the eye's light

drifts away

diffused

by the mind's confusion.

names and signatures

CHRIST become an X

X as the man signs who cannot write his name

as tho to be without a name were to take up the cross, so that a man who
is part of the nameless, is part of the mass, carries the cross further, or is
more weighed down by it

X—nameless

the reversal becomes complete

a cycle into the 30's

33

33

the trinity

X

saint reat

saint and

saint agnes who gave them a name

saint ranglehold

3

3

as the cock crowed

Monotones

LXII

chaos rumoured

saints distance perception

over everything

the field cows scream alive with fire

roll

 in a corner

roar

 eternal

hills

 buried beneath the sea

it is in me

words

weight the fingers

down

the farmhouse door

bangs against the skull

the mouths of the town are drowned

The Hill Songs of Saint Orm

1

all day i have wandered in these southern reaches
lost from the world of people

all night i will sleep beneath the trees
safe on the edge of the cloud range

2

berries for food
water for drink

the woman i loved dead
the people i knew gone

white of clouds
blue of sky

open i

3

the people you that you knew lie

a man gives his neighbour food
but talks about him behind his back

4

this morning a bird woke me

my bed was empty where i'd dreamt you lay

5

when you have nothing
you have nothing

when everything you that you had is gone
you have what you always had

if everything you wanted was here
you'd have nothing

•
the waste of my words & works. the worth.
a balance. something to be said for history.
everything dissolves in time
or vanishes, goes unseen, unheard, unsaid,
inappropriate to another space or head
confronting its own struggle with its body
's decay.

buildings turning to dust around us.
Via Principe Amedeo in the morning sunlight.
sky blue. we crossed Via Roma, Palazzo Reale in the distance.
four centuries in a glance. that dance. that man's
folly or triumph. her dis. her grace. sunlight in the piazza.
our bodies, our sounds, words, this page, even as you read,
even as your vision, your life—uneven, even—fades, fade.

Torino
May 7, 1987
Assumptions

Monotones

C

walk back
over the hill

countryside toning down
green into brown
explosions of red & orange

pastures & distant sounds
brought into focus
body's being
alive

& i stood on the height
coming into my own motions

no saints

no oceans to cross between me & my own existence

only the slight resistance of my eyes
kept closing down thru fear of falling into all that blue & brown
land

1967–1970

•

the assumption of the height
after the long climb from the gate
blue all around you, not sad, 31,000 feet,
a certain relation you assumes
shipped back & forth between this & that
this world of cloud & possible saints
heaven as you has always imagined it
that pain there, that love, world
you must return to, pass thru another
gate another time, always here
between worlds, points of view
changing because you changes too, me or i, assumptions of
what i knows of i's self
this or that me
cumulative accumulation of
i's dentity, the world's, and how i knows of it
knows to have this sky, that colour,
you

Toronto to Vancouver
November 13, 1986
Assumptions

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song for saint ein

i look at you this way

noun then verb

these are my words

i sing to you

•

no separation no

the same thing

i am these words
these words say so

somewhere i exist
separate from this page
this cage of sounds & signs

i am this noise

this voice says so

St. Anzas II

almost i had to begin again
imagine, had to be, if you can
you can &
therefore i love you love you
imagine you & you are
in my imagination every syllable
word of you reaches me
words, the speaking, oh
perfect gasp the gap's grasped
complete

e m olu
meaning circle dish
handled rake to grasp
ing (trick) sedge
novu

adan adanokuri
soom
sudden & windstorms
seasons beard

how certain words recur
how, praise,
across the break between us
pause, love can
leap
distances
the heart creates
is & therefore (almost) begins
a gain in
tempo (time)
& nothing dies

Train

cows on ice cars on blacktop a fast lane or a half lane country questions
of width or length roots even all those trees occasional broken gully broken
gulls washed up on the beach how a memory intrudes affect affects
effect sf/x as sum clouds from the cows' mouths exhaust deaths one is
conscious of records of the spent breath on the freeway towards Antwerp
cows under the trees green fields black cars beneath blue skies i's

Montreal to Toronto—February 20, 1986
Paris to Amsterdam—September 11, 1986
Assumptions

•

here space affects us most directly
family

any parting of the ways
distances the heart cannot imagine
since the heart cannot imagine anyway

too many hours spent on hospital wards
among the bleeding children love cannot cure

broken rhythms
pace
makers of anxiety & sleeplessness

fragments of lives lived in sterile rooms
among white sheets
the rustle of linen changing
over & over

the casualties of life lived simply as it is
without the complications of war
the deprivations of industrial thoughtlessness
merely the ordinary business of daily living
the sudden accidents, fevers, seizures
of the heart & body

all parting becomes invested with such feeling
as tho the heart were the mind
as tho the mind would break under its weight of fearing

you walk the corridors all night long
the nurses with their flashlights
the flickering screens of monitors
pace the rooms you live in
measuring
among the scattering of toys & papers
books you mean to read or write
aware of the space around you
of what it is not full of
human presences you long for

in the awfulness of your imagination
the doubleness of any gift

gaps appear you are afraid to name

windows are flung open, doors slam,
the hands do not know where to reach, what to grasp

irrhythms

untunes

in the here you wish would pass

Assumptions

This Is a Love Poem

Duet

Sup

Alto

vi

This is a love poem this is a love poem wrote it on the long road

near-ly home This is a love poem this is a love poem

sing ing sing ing near-ly home this is a love poem

body paranoia: initial fugue

•

shadow on
the X

ray

body parts
line the red sea
maybe

lure id lure
for sure

cyst or?
tumor? or?

two more sister

what?

months to live
years maybe
(said that before)
maybe may
be maybe

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•
an and and an an a this and that his this is that hat or
her error now it is winter & spring comes that day i
walked towards the the from the a the other way
woods &

to encompass the world
to take it in
inside that outside
outside that in
to be real
one thing beside the other

later there is are that was to be a sense in which a
saint is was & will be so the issue's this this as is his
claim on the present tension past & future always the question of
what to do each step altering your choices

voice as song

speech is

to belong to
form as an expression of dilemma
conceptualization placing you on the brink of dissolution
you make a choice
narrow the distance between
the tree as it is & the word "tree"
between the object & the object
as the you can be the me
we are (as pronouns) each other
nouns divide
hide behind that name we are given

late night outside the room
book beside the window
words inside

written

as they are
objects in the world we live in

carry us far
ther

a

way

from

each

other

than

they

should

for steve

•
no false mysteries

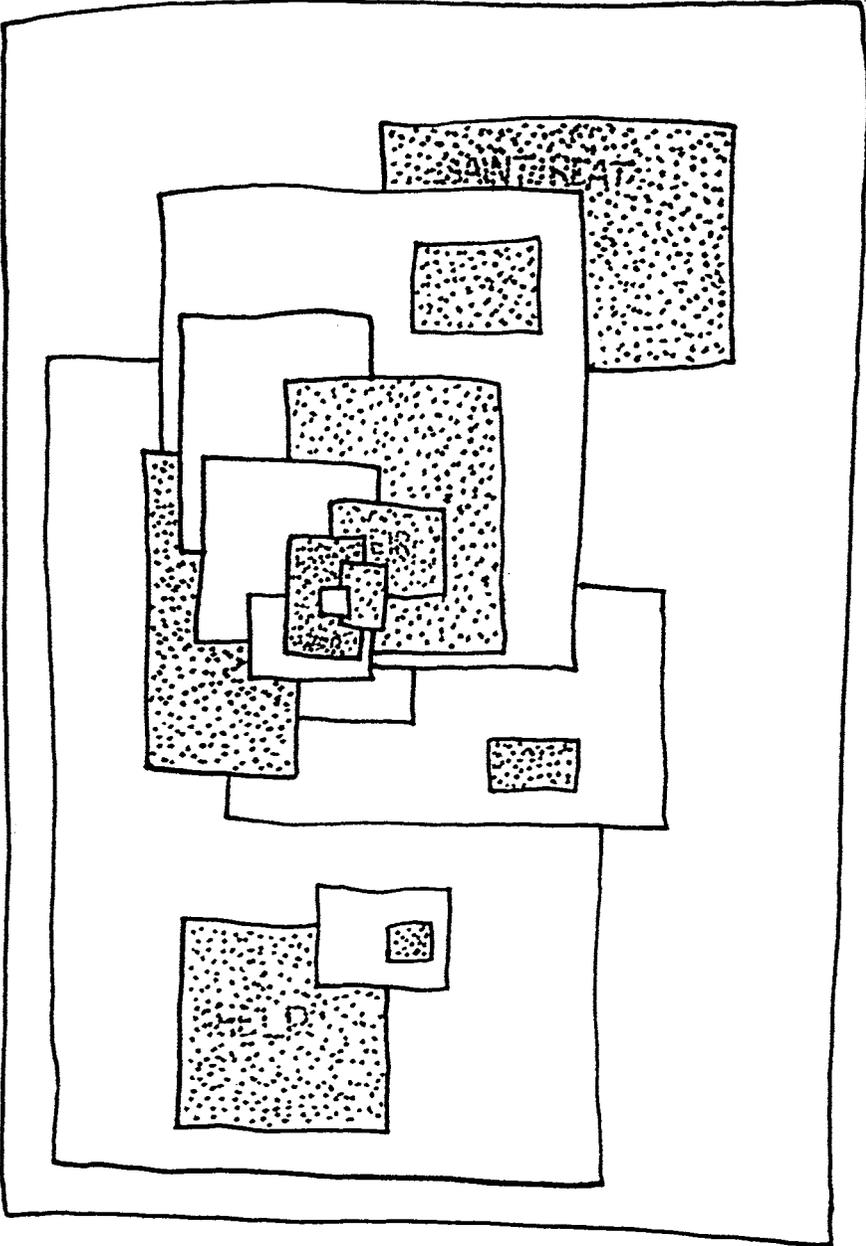
no explainable behaviour dismissed as
unexplainable

in the dark night
not even the moon to follow me across the lawn
not even the single light from some stray &/or forlorn streetlamp
not even those comfortless descriptions to comfort me
only myself, as i am, for company
evoking your presence
name

but never naming you
never fixing you in all the descriptions that do not fit
the vanity of nouns, of even these pronouns i & you,
in these years of war & famine, of death & devastation,
that my i should, nonetheless, feel blessed
tho i is not finally possessed
half the world & more brought to its knees
& not to bless some vague you
but from destruction, the reduction of human life,
that there is still that strange urge to praise
to raise the voice & sing of hope
tho the dark clouds thicken & threaten
& the earth quakes & will not hold
that there is still love in some form in the world
that some know of it

sing of it even
in the face of all those who do not wish to be told
do not wish that pain & anguish which is
the recognition of love, of loss,
in the times these times define
we would yet stand apart from & can't
when more than rage is necessary
more than grief
more than the simple-minded solutions of thieves & killers
that there are still songs
still that longing for love
for all that is meant by the word "peace"
& that we must value that longing
that tortured feeling
be moved by it
till these tortures cease

Scriptures: 12th Sequence



•

passion
or pa shun

dictum? or diction? or
the remembered shunting of memories
railroading of the past tense
passed on
pa

st &
done
father back in
the parental equation

apparent apparition

ghost trace of the leighs sung
various lays begat me
heirs, a gesture, temporal,
atom sphere in the err
or a be
ing/in the verb/"crie" (a "shh"–/unwell) come

(too late

dull

(ooh)
i think i will
make it up to yoooh
(make it) trooh

no mock gesture
this poem
mocking me
(bird) words
worse than the simple pass i
on her honour

to the lieu (in/of)
real things i thing
of the tree
all eden before us even

de vow erred
("save me!"
Erin did
my seed
trance ported from Scotland
somewhere in the 1830s))

too boo
too full for words

ta ta BOO!!

(ghost as summoner
as Sumer sum
or the old Sumer con
writing

cuneisumer formed me
i am
as Sumer & assumed
pre Sumer & presumed
con Sumer & consumed
speaker of what i am
some trace of
summed)

one & one & one & one & one & one & one

Assumptions

•

rap traps

he thinks he hears the messages

it's just a mess
ages even as he watches it

the letters let him glimpse a truth
none of which they meant

me ant

(tiny flick amidst the constant din
the distant consonants

talking in the metaphors
addressing the crowds of

simi { ans
les
)

murmurs merge at the margins of meaning
skew

sum of the duller senses creates a total
view

as tho rhyme were intentional

as tho it all made sense

as tho the sheer density of information
suddenly became clear and you grasped it

but you didn't
did you?

the trick is to keep writing
tho the trick is you're bound to stop
writing

just that sequence of letters
to friends yourself
posted or
tethered

you circle your own death like any other dumb beast
too tired, finally, to even babble
the co-lapse of speech & script
ripped from this life
into that other which is not
or is heaven maybe

hell

i don't know or can't prove or lack faith or
believe only in the instance of the instant
trance/fition in which our vision's spoken
whatever love we garner
give

only of our selves
faint flicker as the light years pass
as the sound waves & disappears
in the gaps between the stars
and all we are we are
was
and even the is is argued
dismissed as minor or insignificant
the cost unmeasured
how we coin phrases
spend a life
pay homage to what is due

speak our minds

do

Assumptions

sun/day/ease

For Wayne & Juli

taut

as the skin can be

taught

reaches

each to each &

clings

c lingers in

third position

narrated by

the a &

b

(he made love to her

body sweating

in his head he

thot she screamed

nipples dry &

unyielding)

x

y z

c marked as

unknown fact or

element

who intrudes

interludes

e l

“the”

translation

the e

ternal

“thirdnal” &

void

voiced
the d
e
liminated

i o u

luminous lu
minated l
ominous
as one's composed of
3 letters/one syllable
its name

one
lone
ly
song
's one's un
graced note

breast
in which the beast lies
r r r ring

•

janis joplin
blue in
the back ground

jan is gone
scott's piano rolls on
"bound to come along"

heaving up
out of darkness
the head is
surrounded by
light

the lit connection
g to h

escapes
7 to 8

awoke &
tried to sleep

“rise up singing”

“take another little piece of my heart
now baby”

•

over the park
air grey
the day as
end game

progress

shifts are
connective
tissues
issues forth from
the mouth &
changes

the best part of the day

what time's it

double t to split the double e's
ingle leer

•

train station
a rain of t's
the saint at
ionization

absolute moment on the interface
to face

each other
at this place

a t (his t)
lace p or
silk n

in the word rain
the worn raid in
image banks negated
cut thru to
the rune

(the r
un e
un anything but what it can be)
is

“to quick” too
to silver

synaptrick
you get the hang of
quickly
where what’s born is
con ception
crete

“an island is land and”

moving in
moving out

whistle

•

(for ellie)

last stretch
the skin is tight across
the belly
memory’s fixed in
the damp sheets

love is made
tracking back
a different take
the ache for "normalcy"
a madness

in the dark room
we reach
 the scent & taste of
love songs
life's long search
to seek
human & therefore fumbling
among the longings
older than the bodies we inhabit
making
 love

the low v
the lowing e
brings up the shudder which is poetry
tongue finally's a pun
lust an ambiguity of reach

"speech sucks"
 or speaks

i am caught with
my tongue
 hung
 out

•

wandered the streets of downtown Berkeley
all morning
the pain in my leg
so intense at certain moments i could not stand
the pain
“is sent to try us”
the bullshit
a certain uselessness in suffering
this form of things
details
the the body disintegrates
the language
sure connectives gone
this city or that
a measure
you no longer count on
reference
poetry’s
its own form of obscurity
not the poem then
social rather
an attitude to reading
“i don’t want to go thru that pain again”
collapsed on the chair to rest my leg
“of this journey”
particular
or only
a particle
line from someplace
i meant none of that
i didn’t mean this pain
but lately it enters my life again & again
the problem is
how to read it
or any other gesture at knowing
my concern then was nonsense or
that the whole purpose began to shift
assumptions of the work
i had simply assumed
some point less than i had imagined
no shadow cast thru history
but the shade only (perhaps) of desire

a life

measured out in part
you try to walk

“talk to me
of the used heart”

the use of anything
this poem

longer finally than any real wish to read
how a feat becomes defeat
climbing the hill from the beach at Del Mar
Pacific pounding behind me
i had to rest my leg every leg of the way
& what wisdom in that?

merely complaint
or the plaiting of plain talk in the calm position
the rest between bars
part of the rhythm

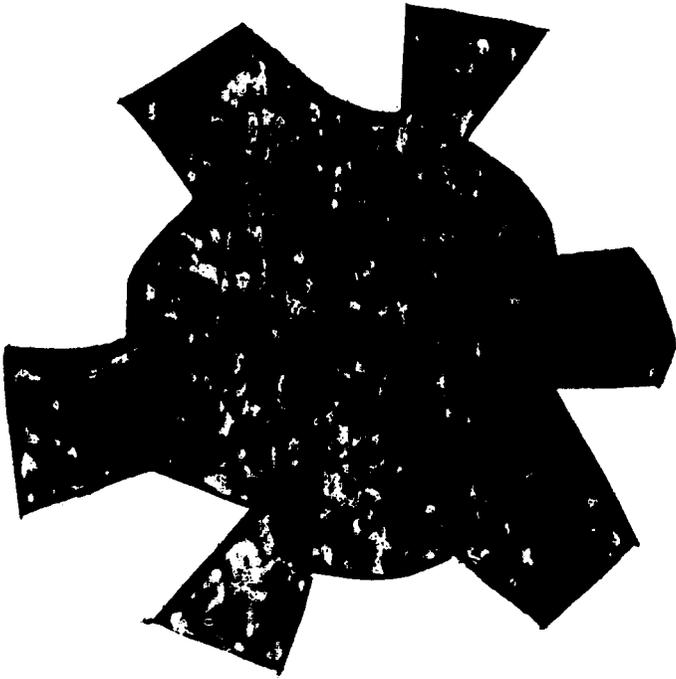
that i had tried to
capture that

that imperfection
the whole reason for such decisions
notion of the processual
or this talk of doing
to be included with the doing
hauling my leg up the hill
even as this line drags every other line with it
the whole of the Martyrology trailing behind
its failures its successes

(driving in the dark towards Palo Alto
almost asleep in the back seat of the car
the first lines of this poem came
eight hours after that walk thru Berkeley
even as these lines arrive
two days later on the edge of the Pacific at Del Mar
the lines arrive
like waves
beat at the shore of some knowing
some continent behaviour of your own
like waves of pain
pass thru this body
and the body & the pain & the words & the days simply are

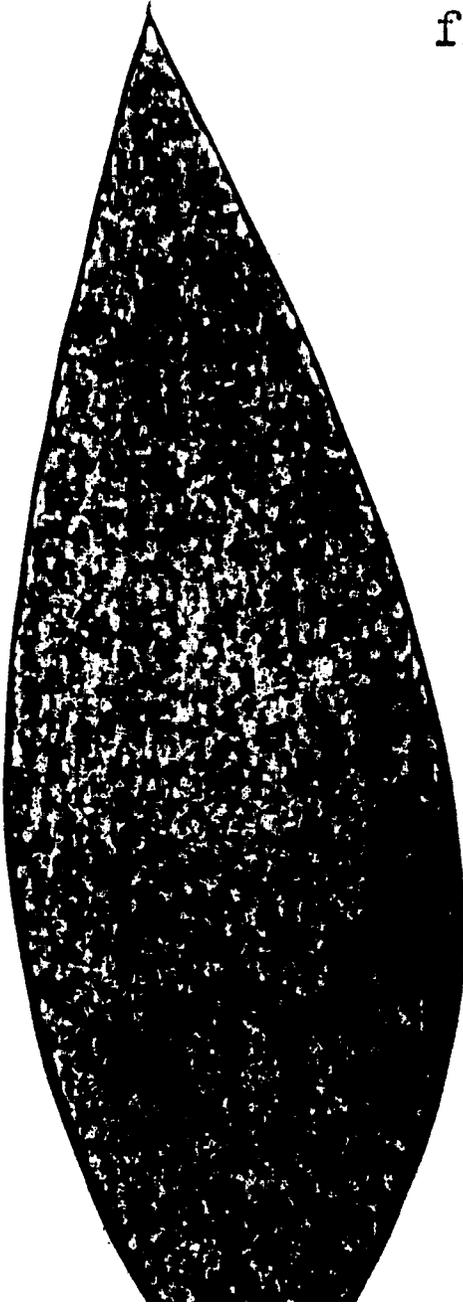
(for Charles Bernstein)
Assumptions

Scraptures: 3rd Sequence



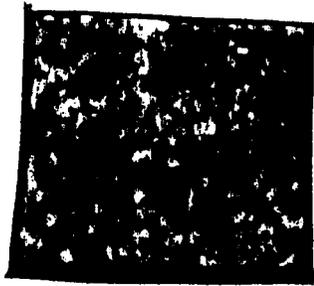
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frowsy
bruisery



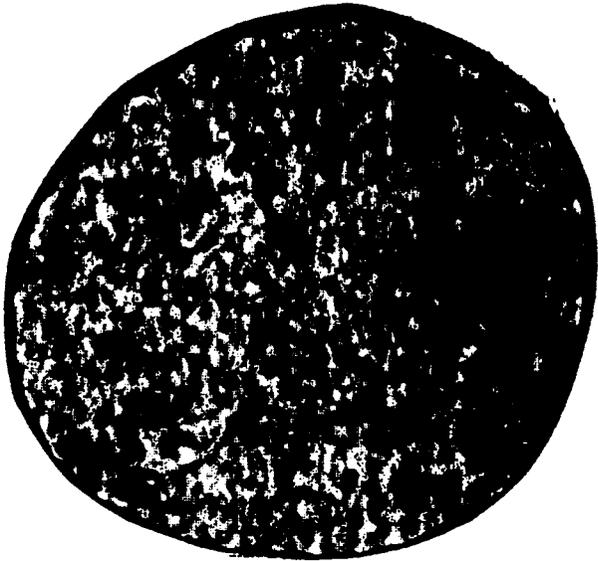
flowery
choosery





end





Toronto
July 8, 1966

bp: if

•

free

dumb

[3000 B.C. quote]

“free will”

as i was taught it

free to live

free to die

will has

nothing to do with

the will you write

to write

September 10, 1988

gifts: The Martyrology Book(s) 7& bpNichol

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•
for Caspar, who i never knew, so few alive now who did,
what was his thinking? a roof for the family? bread for
the table? and Sarah? birthing all those kids? the two of them
on those various stretches of prairie, all that breaking of
the soil, new ground, they knew what that meant, did it, but

i'm reading all these poems, daily it seems, someone grows old,
someone writes about it, goes to visit their mother or
father, the guilt and grief, the estrangement, changing it all
into myth, as tho that makes it better, it doesn't, they did
what they had to do, died, i never knew

them, me, their great grandson, grows old, becomes
someone else's burden of guilt or grief, my own Sarah,
barely five, so many years since Caspar was alive, all of us
in time, dying, how we all go, on, away,
simply this business, being, day to day, until it's over

Assumptions

•

SAW

faces of grandparents
great grandparents

mist connections

opportunities

knocks

of life

disconnectedness of flesh

four generations &
we no longer know them

bodies we came out of
distant as other planets

translated

heavenly

pray to of
gone nova or
imploded

years mass
dwarf into this inaccurate noun "family"
the definite names lost
only the verb remains
everything conveyed in accurate words
WAS

Assumptions

St. Anzas IV

more songs than i could ever sing
the mouth full of them
i spend my days, mouth open
in awe, wonder, singing,
palongwahoya, as the story goes,
your story
went & now i
cannot stop
singing tho the sheer quantity
balk, it is not
quantity, only the merest
note, jotting, sketch of all that is
larger awesome

didn't not that less list number
again and
reason
fling that flat
fit
(wonder)

so bell and
so slumber
not as over forgets
larger and nothing
later but

but all that is is
is ho holy
ho holy is
is ho holy
ho holy is
is ho holy
ho holy is

Monotones

XXVII

in these rooms
there is so much reaching across to you

i have opened my mouth &
swallowed the whole note of
my longing

faces

window

a frozen sea to walk upon

returning home
i remember
hands reached up

ridiculous gestures

a day when nothing fit

a muzzled horse
by a frozen sea
and the man who held it gone

the quartered note breaks

pick up the stakes of
a lost game

squares to move in
into halls walls nouns & names the
spaces seem futile

too far to cross properly

(singing)
& are closed off

or are not seen

XXVIII

races yearly

stand on the hill and watch it begin

furlong after furlong falling away beneath

shallow breath

cold light fills the room

flared nostrils &
heavy breathing

walk by
the windows

& is gone

the long walk in
the flowing
cold

the old
harness in
the antique store
we took home to
hang on the door to
warn us

entering the room

steel blue fading of
a late afternoon

feeling

sand in
the toes

wiped on
the sleeve

•

dawn wad
ya say?

eyes eye
open epo-
(ana)
-grams, marg-
inal, an i
or o
part trap
part rap

muse sum

language rises
over the edge of mind
its rays

visible when the brain transmits them
into print

speech
moments when the reach is the grasp
twists
sings the lay
Ur of meaning

you do
what a mere ache'll lead you to

tune nut
(melody dole 'm
one) no
tone not
rung ('n Ur
spill (lips
past sap)
minin' i'm)

mouthin' mysteries
the syllables silly babble
blesses us

we are ana { mated
mal
grammatical

as sum e-
volves re-
volves re-
sumes a
me's a mesa
over which the dawn breaks
like a line

O po' em
this en's as pyres to
dew—wed
to the war the lang wages
over & over & over &

Assumptions

An Interlude in which Saint Ranglehold Addresses Anyone Who'll Listen

1

a light in a tree
a hand in a crowd
memory

whistle

now we will change directions
this time for good

what is the structure of heaven
it is a circle within a circle ad nauseam

if i am to stop & talk to you you must give me a reason
i am a busy man

h z y k
l r p t m
u u

2

what is the meaning of meaning

it is whistling when the thunder claps or pissing when it rains

did you get the groceries

i tried but they were closed

when i asked a man to consider theory he said
i will think on it when i have a spare moment

3

despair is an air you sing

sorrow is to row your boat nowhere

h is not t

i is not m

whatever was is & will be again

1971

SLIP

for Steve McCaffery

“We’ve all been caught in a mouth trap”

Morris Minor & the Majors

1

charges explode . a . surface . FRAGMENT . somewhere . language only or, language as an image of language . a . surface . F-RAGMENT . surface . *a clue (like this exclamation mark!) of the violence done to you* . somewhere . a . surface . somewhere . FR-AGMENT . i that is a many . surface . FRA-GMENT . a . surface . *so ingenuous* . a . FRAG-MENT . a . me, the je suis je sweet ick’ll . surface . somewhere . FRAGM-ENT . a . surface . *this i* . somewhere . FRAGME-NT . th’ em . a . FRAGMEN-T . *member of the subset author* . FRAGMENT . somewhere . surface . a . paraphrased record of a being . somewhere . surface . FRAGMEN-T . a . *stop here (i said (again))* . FRAGME-NT . a . a . a . even as i begged you to listen . surface . FRAGM-ENT . *statement’s ambiguous* . surface . FRAG-MENT . reading (see) goes on . FRA-GMENT . surface . *ought nought to go beyond this point* . surface . a . FR-AGMENT . begins . somewhere . surface . a . F-RAGMENT . somewhere . *i too . stop . i said* .

2

the ppppower of poetry / llllllanguages of aaaaassumptions / Li PPPPo were you awaaaaare / writing there, as you diiiiid, another place and tttttime / ass / we’re all made ffffffools made dust made mmmmmmockery / umption’s the gumption pushes me on / tho the claims made for the wwwwwwork are insupportable / literal breathings / a heave in the mind / one of the “choices” wwwwwwhich are not choices / mmmereley the aaaaassertion of “voice” in a tttttime we are all mmmmmmade voiceless / all this llllllanguage, this swerving back & fffffforth of / what? / meaning in the mean world /non sense or sssssensical a canticle / this dance is danced above the lllllliteral / head lines / eyes / faces wwwwe imagine beyond the type’s / cast / (of characters) / i’s speak to / yyyyyour i’s / Ur eyes on horizon / h-i

(try to forget / forget / everything you've heard / forget / learn from it /
 forget / if it just sounds like everybody else / forget / what's the point /
 forget / i kept standing up in poetry readings / forget / saying i was un-
 happy with / forget / my recent poems / forget / they sounded like bpNi-
 chol poems / forget / this one doesn't sound anything like poetry / forget /
 no tropes / forget / no images / forget / isn't that what you wanted? / for-
 get / "i want / forget / a little something concrete / forget / i can hang
 onto," Fred said

"only emotion endures." but which emotions?

i love/what happens in/the moment of/language.

in the languor of love the fear's assuaged. i holds out "my heart" to you.
 who?{

June 10, 1986, May 21, 1988
Assumptions

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Scriptures: 2nd Sequence—Alternate Take 3
(ending only)

w a r d
 on
w a r d
 on
w a r d
 on
w a r d
 on

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ters

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a
tear
a
tear
a
t are
a
t
ear
a
t A ll
ear

all 11 tears
11 tall ears
star ale 111

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heavin'
in
HEAVEN
AVENUE

BIEN VENUE

•

s mother me
(& hence that fear)

Sybil lance
that dance
you learn

EMBRACE S

song

Assumptions

•

all these assumptions

take the world on faith

act of
trance elation

gene }
martyr } ology

body into body into body into

crazed fly in my room
buzzing

1 a.m.

tracked it the whole day
from the livingroom
to the studio
living room

the whole day

flies by

that way & that way &

assuming this poem
what presumptions!

rooms abuzz with
the ten-tions

elocutions
derivations

ti'd together or

we

ti

on

sonne

orous

or ob

one (drunken moment of

intimacy/dictation) time
(’s declaration) of
the poem

and write at the in ~~X~~ struction
de con ~~X~~ ception

i assume i can go
on

tho the terms change as
the term changes
my sense of sense shifting as
my senses drag
more & more
of the world
in
thru these imperfect doors
fly’s fly
the verb’s nounced
the nouns flick by

Assumptions

dark girls in summer dresses
searching for the ones they love or will love
over everything His shadow falls
larger than history (if that is possible—
that conceit) & i am singing brokenly His praises
as tho i had lost what sense of form i did gain
hoping to find it again
among the voices of another country

Puerto Rico
1971

•
all these deaths now

the ironies

the day Ellie miscarried
drove by the abortion clinic
Harbord St., Toronto, December 84
the cops in dark doorways
the placards
all that puling talk
the sanctity of life
screamed hate in the name of
love

the women seeking the abortions
forced to pass thru that gauntlet

wanting another child
as we did then

the complexity of these decisions
choices
that freedom to choose
as the snow fell
as the cold closed in
as our struggle died
aborted

arbor

sanctity of the green wood

among the leaves the flowers

i have not visited my son's grave these last four years

sins of the father

sins of the time

and now more friends lose
another life

six months pregnant and the baby dies

that we still argue for
the pain of choice
the agony of that decision
facing a world crazed
the sheer melodrama of the evening news
the abuse, calumnious,
that madness of simplicity
accept the gross complexity of relationships

do not assume the sure knowledge of normality

(more

all i tease meaning out of
tricking the words

this life

and why a wife took me, baby,
took me a wife

January 17, 1985
2:45 a.m.
Assumptions

Monotones

LX

moon
& ocean

the farm drifts into the sea

stepping out
into the waves rising

she cups her hands
over her breasts

and smiles

train riding the darker depths

the mind is bridled by
confusion

harsh leather
grips the head

fingers of the earth

on the wold
the would of it
cannot be seen

the left
 hand
behind
 strangled in
the door's closing

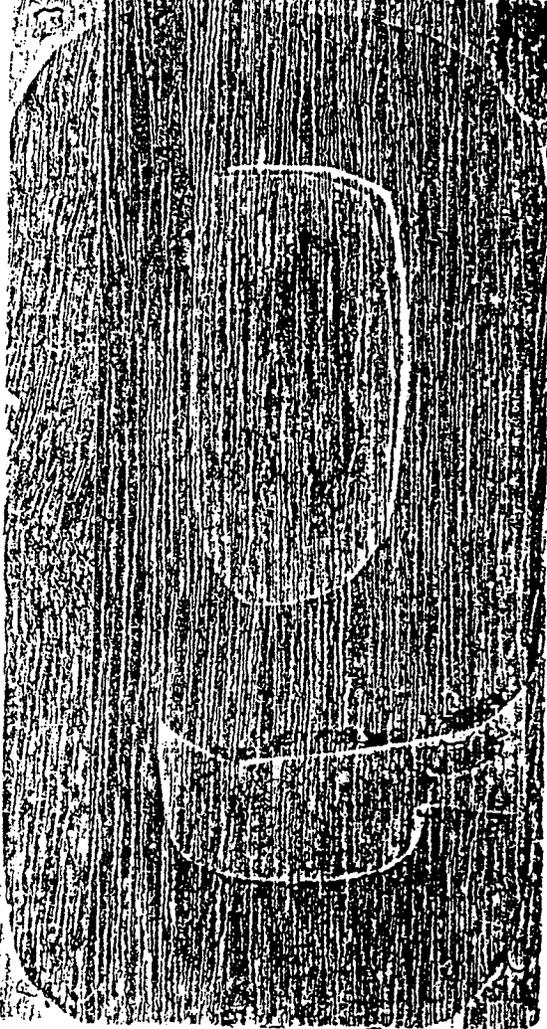
fields

& the thickening rooms

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Scraptures: 10th Sequence

ST REAT



reatur

are

ST REAT



turn

•
sometimes i hear music
there's nothing there
a gradually distancing whistle in the pipes
the creak of stairs
like the line from an old pop song
hummed before you know you're doing it
you recognize the truth of

the walls of the house shake
vibrations from the train rumbling by
no whistle to draw attention to itself
draws attention to itself by the absence there
less than half a mile from where i lie
not quite dreaming

the point is
the reading the two stanzas
a record of thots the mind thinks

thank

they link
a song
nothing to do with questions of
what does or doesn't belong

more of that

(this is a description of where the work will go, is not meant to sound anything like poetry, drawing attention to itself by that very absence, a train of thot shaking everything around it, i do *hear* music, there *is* nothing there, what i want a record of, in these books, my poetry(

Remembrance Night
1985
Assumptions

•
sun not yet visible over the horizon line
what i could see of it from my hotel window
grey clouds filling the sky, rain (two weeks now)
grey of the North Atlantic and
these trees
in the tiny park below
the branches, reaching up all four floors, the patterns
except that nothing makes sense
which seems often as it should be
& the work ∴

(space to breathe in)

“everything has to change” i said to myself

(i was looking out the window) “changes”

#9 Tram rushing by

Plantage Midden Laan 5:45 on a Tuesday morning in June

another landscape pulling the poem out of you

around you

the description any one of us needs to live in

as in “who am i?”, “who are you?”, “where am i?” &

“is that true?”

Amsterdam
June 1985
Assumptions

Monotones

XCV

out of your head the sky is taken
pieces of the moon

ride your horse too close to the earth
end up in the zoo
mind

time over time
falling into a sea

a ghost of forms
shifting as the table moves
around you

hands linked

sinking into the hush of voices
my head falls apart in my fingers

eyes' light

such tongues explode
ears fear to fold them
false prose

pores open skin's delight
coming into focus thru the room's constraint
define your motion

shrieking

crazy

“like a loon” are

St. Anzas VII

he. not He then, or She ... don't SH me that way!
he was. hew as close as he could to that be
ings you long, first to second to third
personhood, long distance cowl of history
or istory if we drop the h at last
just as the english class system 'ad it
hit's unimportant 'e says. who's HSing at me
that way? whoops. no me ey? e's ear to stay coz e
say so. so.

appen as likely. different of listing. quot
ruin sneer.

little mistle didn't and. ten or if could deliver. rude.
stiff as combination wrestle.

as pirate e remains idden, reveals is face,
all tat fog on te glass, e made it so ard, our st.,
ruggle just to see er,
hi reveal er to you
as hi disappear in breat,
breating in & out
any other way to breathe? hi don't tink so
so hi tink
hi tink so

whistle mean morning, the soon's ascension. rugged
as listen didn't. yellow's misery
lips. rodent.

horrible horrible. dread little awful
rymes nobly. something kelp window sizing
over and doom. longbow. rhythm.

he paces his room, or sits
indifferent in his chair, the different chairs
pain now, most days, is how you sit.
he sits. he's it, see? it speaks.
addresses the you out there, those eyes,
god-like, or like god is, unknown, addressed in faith,
like a prayer, he was told god knows
what you write or say, is always there, reading, over your shoulder.

irritating when someone does that ey? god's doing that.
you's too, you's the one both he & she's talking to.
so what does we assume hey? or they?
assumes you're out there, one day now or sometime,
read and or engage this. he believes in you.
believes you.
he believes.

apple not ridiculous
rodeos as these yet
certainly a definite breeze, deaf night and

supple. widower at the arch. contract.

he is not sure any longer. con's
vention, trying it on.

ripped or turn, slightly. gnarled aperture
gripped slam. over. didn't he then or
if perhaps, when? ain't no neither. just
just. chord.

slippage.

in the long night, when faith won't come, or reason, or
the reason for faith, the reason for the long night,
the reason for the thot in the first place, which was, after all,
not the first place, not even the last, bears no number really,
the convention of certain trite phrases, seeming truisms, artifice
of strong emotion, and then the strong emotion. so that
in the long night, it being December after all, two days away from
the start of winter, but not meaning the, not *that* specific,
and not "a," not any, but in a long night's writing, or at least
one night, particled rather, the words pile up, one
after the other, two after the start of winter, n o t
he keeps wanting to read n o p, you're out there aren't you. he
senses you. will not speak to you. "i"
hidden in this voice. is
not he. he. he.

beaten electric, falcon ignite three. seven to 7
5. indifferent or alibi scissors zero
scrimmage.

fatten lift. geriatric. growth sense

like 3 bibs middle dropped, wrangled. sad
dipped handlebar. must dash. dish
history lamb widens petulant.

be leaf (this in description
—invocation? (“be page you reading—
be me.”) he admires content.)
head mires. content’s
something more than saying.
’s said too
people’s involved in this
is the way to go he said,
smiling like a cheshire cat,
“we’re all mad here!”

sadness. teensie tugboats upended. virtual
watershed. x-ray’s yellow zipper attracts bees
careful. didn’t expect favours. got habits instead,
just knowledge, logic. (meaningless)

neat open pen. questions restricts
temperamental overture. litigation. relation. all
demand beverage calypso. triceratops.
fearful.

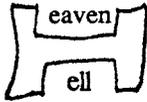
simile’s simian “monkey see
monkey do” something to do with
evolution or e’s volition or
un reve’s solution, intention, al’s fallacy, or dora’s,
d’ citation’s dictation’s aura
or a borealis, lumination that enters, here,
he rethinks his desire
to take you with him, fellow pilgrims
progressing, the synapse sees,
e’s right there with you, is words, is
the interplay of which e do, speak
and it will all unfold. “i smile i’s mile”
contradiction’s in the diction
nary one part is true, pro too, & pre,
when words is all e got e go t, s, v;
e go a to z to b
with you.

grey. forum. how canadian select
general house to wave brave map. moving

frontiers another. the story. least so contemporary
horizons isolation intermedia enchanted.

blizzard winnebago blanket. space. hubris trash. remembrances.
echoes. new convincing cave. own.

it a weird world your worship, your readership you
maybe He or She? me? who in



's he talking to?

pro (never am) nouns.

you got to come to terms with your terms

on your own

in this short

term e calls a life, calls you, ambiguous

finger pointed into the blue you's i's

what de skies disguise

above this page

this screen

dandelion. sanding sold thickening fewer vernal. yes
poetry. accepted steams fifteen slide. rebel
good coming. excess.

line. definite historical. nothing.

definite. entrances. lives metaphysics Tuesday.

the thickening night words. the tongue
unfolding flesh, rasps along the body's length
is words. moves across the room. sits. writes.
has just written. fact this fiction. the thickening night;
the unfolding flesh; the you he addresses
across this room that is, as any room, crowded
with old standards, stock scenes, clichés
we have seen before, heard. who
directed this shit? he did. his flesh
thickens. hangs
where he would wish it not to be. night
falls. the tongue
explores its own mouth. shut up. put it
here. there, he said. here. & there, she said.
here. here.

Monotones

XCVIII

gesture

raise the fingers into the skin
glove of body moving with you

holds

over & over the future folds around you
trapped by the steps you cannot take

choices

false signs & numbers

false auguries of false hope
swept away by the hand's
gesture

•
certain myths:

we will be happy
know happiness
arrive at some point of inner truth &
never know unhappiness again

then:

keeping an appointment made months ago
you discover lacunae
(which is what you fear/feared) or
some final (or partial) absence
the unplanned closure of what you had imagined as

part of the point of
sudden caesura
the heart attacked (the spine)
lines stop
life
a book
unexpected shifts that

which has its own sweet logic
heart beat nar rate

(cosis, cissus
whale tales of
rators & their ilk)'s

controlled

sudden as a word you are part of

MA }E ternity
PA

taking your turn
endless in that temporal sky
no dove but

(in my dream the three (two?) lives were like choices made
sense part of some writing made while on the journey that did
not go as intended

man story
in the labyrinth
manstor why?

from a dream
(03/09/86)

of purchase, choice & packaging everything the confusion
destination nor the timetable nor nothing fit neither the

(beyond the lit window
swirl of snow
not memory nor any feeling of absence
presence rather gathers you in
holds you all in a night's longing
away from you the recognition
whatever the loss endured in the full giving
i is lead to "i loves you"
the words mean are

(life you take it on
like a mask
like am ask you to is))

) as an ending and

v
(intheheatoftheaugustsunthehorizonwa er
s

couplesin clumpson thehot beachsand

waveswaveraswesavoursun

arise dill
out of the garden a rose and those daffodils and cosmos

) absolute and present

- a. Be!
- b. See?!
- c. ?

d e f g
h i j k l m n o p
q r ST u v
w x y z

rev { elations
 olutions

ch ch ch ch
angels
in the wings

widen at every stage

terrible and wonderful
the beating rhythms of the strange seizures
play o play
across the skin
i is in
love
 the body of
heart beating
the tongue
 sings
its terror its
belief
grief & passion &
all you have ever known
will never know
is faith is
the face & being of the beloved
here, in this world words are
of
beat in rhythm with
the angels' wings
thinking even at the end of speaking

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dead

& i'm sane

LXXIX

already it passes

like a fit

 the man
possessed

 dispossessed
& screaming

found in the desert

(only a boy)

it passes

& with it the sainthood
the chance at immortality

jesus jesus

down on my knees imploring

show me the man
the one true man

who is he? who knows his face?
what mirrors do they use to trick us?

all this cold fucking dispassionate "discourse"

just to be able to open the mouth & scream

(father!

these are the eyes of one you seek

the circle of
my beginning

is he gone father?

my mad lord fool

is he gone?)

St. Anzas V

wit
the lo rd. to
paradise tiw
is a pair o' dice
can do, can do
is where the lo gic takes you

hmmn or & then
against neither suffering glow
intense but not surely

hot ice a dense vaporous rattle
coherence miffed &
extends struggle (battle)

the rhyme (given in to)
is to wit as the name is
to who

 a pleasing measure, an answer,
pleasure in the very utterance
as heaven is that heavin' of the breath
nirvana the null state of desire

ordinance dance
café over and seizing
all up or across
sleeve

didn't but how
could utilize end
disguises no mounted
dream inevitable never cross rip

the local logical lord
immediacy of this ekstasis
stasis state which is the great gate opening
the flood of light
as in the clouds i saw
billowing forth beneath the holy
presence, saint, except
the s ain't, the t ain't
tho the s t is

as conjunction, letters, forces,
the coincidental
truths the mouth shapes despite itself
“the whole tooth & nothing but” her presence—his—
the saint as is
that gate between fate & hate
thru which the lights & clouds poured
“i’ll take the lord.”, be, lief, lucky

hex agonal angle
red and then again
blue clump dormant shaft
rose half
 swaying

odin two sea
longing door the maybe mystery of
wet compass late so
drift till drifting still
whimper condenses
a shift in shift
like two the triplets and again
compensation
the nation inevitable strain is
as was, will, some glimpse of
partial surfaces, polished, azure
as sure as right left me

raw puns elevate me
lift me closer to the mystery
divine word to divine
the pen twitches above the page
dips down
a flow of language tapping in
keyed or written as written

simple lover

tense

the deliberate construction of
chance, a range meant
voices to choose from,
assumptions

of the holy mountain climbed
Analogue, ana ~~X~~ journal
tele ~~X~~ gram

another
notion of
ana-
lightenment
or wisdom at least
grace, the
unknown encountered &
embraced

so rid the less worry
for joy is at best
list absence & shove
did not but never then or
perhaps in the middle nouns an age
appearances case

zones wrestle anger
to enlarge driven tho
pulling worship and
deep, leaf, breathe

source—re
the mystery of poetry
that i am caught up in
carried out on
the word
of God

of mouth

of honour

letters of a law
i strive to learn st.
rive the word apart
st }
ar } rive

blazes in the night sky
's a page we read from
like the childhood game
"connect-the-dots"
and forms, figures, names

ap { pear
ple

the fruit of our seeking

2 1 9 8 10

3 4

6 5 7

2 3 6 7 14 15

— 9 8 13 12

1 4 5 10 11

nova then.

we are made new, made over

even as the old order falls

a part a round

us our deus

numbered

configured nan

o second when the universe began

Ma thematics

("mom's the word")

origin tales we've heard

but never listened to

the big bang

out there in the midst of

the st atic

cable cable

midden dull or sable contact

wretch deliver dead

unseemly seen so sudden stop

this is had striven

no ever and road along witch gravel

condition sell or sanitary

lip sober contain a budding devilment

again (wish hadn't concern

or with that as ever

encircled)

pun's spun

an agrammatical construction

which is asense, an essence
like no sense you ever knew
a 6th or 7th or 8th sense

numero }
de } us

WE of an earlier instruction
ME

you gave in to & followed, i did,
we two, the first & second person
3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th too

3 6 7 10
i j m k
z u r c
v
w o m
k
m n 4 3
2

whole riddle didn't rat
or came once single & then
solitary lead carrier too
seeing as but perhaps necessary
cut two all in pasture
blue &
red
blue leaded glass stain associative green
yellow yell-
ow

so the joke's on me, the hum,
our hum, our we's
sung over & over like the litany
any lit becomes a
hum our hum our hum our
anity

•

“Language all her life is a second language.”

—Sharon Thesen

muscle of speech

mother tongue

everything sprung from you

sang seng sing song sung

mo }
fa } ther there

airs

airesses

airrors

(or)

airesys

fa mille air we breathe

m' i 'nd
th' ought

borrowed { language
body
time

olde mouth of language

's all i've a-

spired to wards

“her shoures soote”

“doin' what she oughta”

gree'n

frog pond log

-uage grow

ever older

ever erer

airing speech
fa(so/la/ti/do/re)mi/ly 'nd

erring
b'rth means br''th means
i ea
oh you see you see
where all this speaking cairries mi

Assumptions

•

the sickness of the world

that we assume goodness
where only a balance exists
between forces we cannot quite categorize

until you realize
the whole (thing)
is so that
the longer you live
all you hope to achieve is
some kind of decency

that i did not use or
did not take advantage of or
that if i did
knowing it i struggled to set it right
did not violate
some other

 struggles hopefully parallel to my own
acknowledging the only saint
hood's implicit in the term
i do come to terms with
meaning

 make it my own
saint

 rug'll be pulled out from under
any moment on the turn of
knowledge

 ground from which my thot
my feelings move

 so rife with the necessity to be un
assuming

 all it is is words
more all than my imagine
nary day i sat
wrote my first poem
bright awl of language
pun/cturing my notion of "the real"
all ready

32 or 33 years ago
embracing the ignorant knowing unknowing

dumb founding of the being be
my tongue burns with
this fever
the mind's struggle with
ailing mental realities
the real i ties into
faces
and every one of them my own

Assumptions

Monotones

LXV

as it was
a certain imperative
waving the connectives
goodbye

dark wood

feet bound

struggle to brush the leaves away

your name unanswered

the poem ends

all the same

Moth

for Robin Blaser

“grey butterflies,” i said, not convincing myself
when it flew towards me i ducked
cringing when the drawer’s drawn open & the moth flutters out
flut flut flut flut flut flut flut
“it’s only a moth,” my sister said
in my dream the moth’s body glowed white before it absorbed me
under the trees in the backyard the porch light on
cowering when the closet door flew open & the moth flew out
angel of death of release
in the room and i could not open the window
when my mother saw the holes in the sweater she said “moths”
moth mouth mother myth math smother smooth
i was covering my head with my arms & hands & felt like screaming
terror like an error in the scheme of things
the moth flew out of the old jar in the back kitchen
heaven’s wingèd creatures hell’s
lithp lip slip slippery moss mass mess miss muss mouse
the grey bodies with four legs & long tails the grey bodies with wings
out of the centre of any meaning another meaning
the moth will eat them up
lighting candles to see if it was true

trapped inside the lampshade its wings beating against the fabric

my mother put the moth balls in the drawers with the sweaters

we were talking about the irrational but i kept feeling we were
missing the point

when i took the old newspapers out of the closet i found mice had
nibbled holes in them

i have tried to keep the moth out of the poem

the only thing that stops me screaming is embarrassment

in the dark closet among the sweaters and wool coats for winter

flickering light in the theatre like the flickering light of its
giant wings

who are crushed before the moth

watching it fly out of the darkness and hit against the window again
and again

i was in the backyard talking and one flew into my mouth

moth in the mouth like a trapped tongue fluttering

at the window in the night thinking to see the moon

unspeakable terror diminished in naming whom each one names differently
my name for you is moth

Toronto
March 31 to April 1, 1988
Assumptions

The White Stone Wall

1

that song playing in this room just now
pushes whatever that was in the head aside
so that this, rhythm, insistent,
jagged, becomes a counter
point to the source of the confusion
thing that's there, no chance
to think, this constant
sea of noise (not a metaphor
for god's sake a metaphor) this constant
intrusion's not a poem not
writing in its many forms
screams in the air around you
voices i can't see speaking
at wave-lengths i can't hear need
machines to tune them in,
Radio Ghosts, Victor said,
travelling on in space
years after me or any other one of us is
dead that noise from the turntable
right now how's it stopping this?
stopping this. poem. right?
you try to read it. the noise
from the turntable. in your room.
the radio. t.v. HOLD IT,
i know this old diatribe, you say.
you say tune me. in. out.

2

the mind then
which is the movement of
what? language?
social structures?
sets of
assumptions? the way
image evokes the white stone wall
against the sea's bright blue
above the wave
ing hand of con

sciousness, me! me!
i've got the answer!
the sun goes down
no one visible upon the beach
i have imagined
lying on my side to write this
 the mind sea the
question of horizon
tallies

3

& then, talking on the phone with Paul
he mentions an event we all performed in
1972 did he say? 74? but
i can't remember the performance or
at least only barely, the church, the tape of
waves pounding in the nave, was it that
time? is this what memory is? so partial?
the way this poem began, 20 years ago,
finding that other poem, in a drawer, the one i
could not remember writing, could not remember at all,
the one referred to
that is, cannot remember now
what i could not remember then, forgetting,
imperfections out of which the poem began, begins, states
or merely provinces, some pool of knowledge, some fund
a mental change. is?

4

or the fundamental mystery of otherness
the i shared
its very assertion
creates distances
me-ning is always
i-deational
a state that love alters, can, penetrate, enclose.
is it open form that love proposes
when all difference arouses fear?
that whole problem of simile.
what's a meta's phor? meta-language? meta-poem?

do i like you if i'm not like you?
dreary narcissism of resemblance.
but dissonance! difference! room for
the ungainly, line again, or phrase,
invocatory voice—"O pen"—
all that can be writ to fit
into the beauty of this ugly world
awkward as each death each life is

January to March 1987
Assumptions

You Too, Nicky

I

All of us are born out of someone. Too many of us spend a lifetime tied to that moment or trying to live it down. But family, as what you came from, what came before you, lives in the body like an organ you only know the shape of thru x-rays or textbooks. Who were they, really, those early ones who suffer from the diffusion of histories lived with no importance given to writing them down? We, all of us, move forward thru time at the tip of a family, a genealogy, whose history & description disappears behind us.

“You too, Nicky,” a friend said to me, “none of us ever escapes our families.” And restless, as i have been, tired, as i am now, feeling some sort of longing which can only be satisfied by moving & is never satisfied by standing still, i took off with Ellie in the autumn of 1979 to visit, revisit, both our families. Among the luggage we carried was a notebook i had kept in 1969 when i had last driven west. In its opening pages i found this poem:

the dead
porcupine
 decapitated by
the speeding cars
 & the bleak stone
landscapes
 going home (?)
thru the Sault

 it is
a country as wide as dreams are
full of the half-formed
unsuspected
 ruthlessness
around the corner of things
the smooth hum of the car
carrying the far strangers ahead of us

nothing is as it seems

the partly known truth entices

we are forbidden to pass till the future is seen

it is as if

hands

reached out & touched us

as they were meant to do

the grey clouds turned over &

their backs were blue

II

You have plans but so many of them don't work out. You have dreams, tho you do not mean the dreams you wake from, troubled or happy, but visions rather, glimpses of some future possibility everything in you wishes to make real. We drove west but the poems I'd planned to write barely occurred. A few fragments here & there—Edmonton, Blue River, Vancouver—cities & places I had visited & written from before. By the time we got back Ellie was pregnant and much of the shape of our lives together changed. Even tho our son died stillborn, or because of it perhaps, our lives changed absolutely. It is the kind of moment of which one tends to say "something deepened between us" and yet that notion of depth seems in itself shallow, lacking as it does an attention to the details of the dailiness between you, the actual exchanges that comprise living. Other poems occurred but nothing of what was planned. We came out of families, came together and within two years of that trip had begun a family of our own. Except the family was there before we began. We were part of it. Became part of it again. Despite what I had once intended. Unplotted, unplanned, undreamt of. It continued. It began.

III

There is some larger meditation that seems obvious. An inference or moral perhaps. I only know the poem unfolds in front of me, in spite of me, more in control than me. It's not that the poem has a mind of its own but that poetry is its own mind, a particular state you come to, achieve.

Sometimes i talk too much of it, like a magician explaining his best trick and you see after all he is only human. Which is what I wish to be, am, only human.

Certain phrases like that, that hover on the edge of cliché, seem like charms to me & i clutch them to my chest. And the real magic, which is

what the language can achieve, remains a mystery the charm connects you to.

it is not so much that
images recur
but that life
repeats itself
& the lights of
Vancouver say
shine
even when lines aren't there to be written

Only human, only a skill you've managed to achieve. And if the writing is evocative it is only so thru evocation. Which is partly syntax, partly mystery.

IV

what is smaller than us?

what is more futile than
our wars and treacheries

we are all dying
every day walking closer to the grave
the sword and the bomb and age accompanies us

what are the great themes but those we cannot name
properly

what are the minor notes but
our lives

here amidst the flickering oil wells
among the fields now emptied from harvest

our lives

all that really is ours

V

Of course I repeat myself, phrases, insist certain contents over & over.

driving thru the smoke of the forest fires
Blue River to Kamloops
sun not yet visible over the mountaintops

Of course I had driven that road before. Others. Correspondences. You build up a vocabulary of shared experiences, constants you draw upon tho you cannot depend on them.

between the still standing trees
the smoke the mist
down into the valleys

Of course I am *aware* of what I am doing, not aware. Of course there are such contradictions in living.

VI

We have our infatuations, our cloudings of the mind. People, ideas, things. We have our fevers that drive others from us, afraid of the shrill quality in our voice.

we are pushed here there
“driven” is what we say
and the i is lost

And if i tries to retain a kind of loyalty to ideas, not blindly, but allowing them, always, to evolve under the scrutiny that time permits, it is simply that struggle with constancy, to stick with what makes sense until it no longer makes sense, to not be swayed by infatuation’s blind calling. It is what binds books together, these motifs and concerns, the trace of a life lived, a mind.

in the rooms you live in
other people’s books line your shelves

the traces of their lives
their minds

too

VII

something of that is what family is. other minds enter, other lives you
pledge a constancy to.

there are other journeys, other poems, other plans that do not realize
themselves.

living among family you are changed. it is the way your vocabulary in-
creases. you occupy certain nouns, are caught up in the activity of certain
verbs, adverbs, adjectives. syntax too. tone.

the language comes alive as you come alive and the real mysteries re-
main.

outside the window
the rumble of other journeys
planes, trains, cars passing
the feet of friends or strangers echo the unseen concrete

the blind is white under its horizontal ribbing

the world enters

your ear

Autumn 1979 to autumn 1985
Assumptions

•

the bird
buried so carefully in the back yard
i dug up, a year later, age 6 &

nothing there
not even a trace to suggest its passing
except in memory, the yellow wings, the still body

gone and
gone again, i searched the whole afternoon,
frightened to think the passage was so complete, everything

depending on,
now, my memory, yours, birdlife,
all gone, all, vanquished, vanished, the

attachments, the attachments, the
attachments

for the memory of Robert Graves
Assumptions

Petra Improvisation

poor tetra

hedronistic

puns that go nowhere

connections that begin & end

ideas as orphans

ex { clusion
clusive

pure events
that come & go

leave no trace of
their passage

Cobourg
June 25, 1988

Middle Initial Event: Two
(three symmetries from *The Book of Oz*)



hwa's awh

c

At i up ! quit A

p

em it is time emits i time

t

oy away o

yaway

yaway

June 26, 1988

Middle Initial Event: Three

Petra
“a rose-red city
half as old as time”

Mohenjo-daro
a city in Dilmun
in the imagination

having come across
a cleft in the rock
to pass thru
into some other age

peut-être
arose, read of
these abandoned cities
forgotten for millennia
Kish, Shuruppak, Ur, Erech,

paper/stone/scissors

“that no one treads the highways,
that no one seek out the roads”

the passage of
5000 years
evoked in names

raised
razed
erased

already the process begins anew
—the name of my great great great grandfather
Ellie’s home town—
already the disorder increases

n o
p
entropy

always in the middle
never know the initial
event

event

event

event

event

“So we know.

So we swim
in & out of knowing,
in & out of life.”

Pat Matsueda

1964 thru 1988

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Parts of *The Martyrology Book(s)* 7(vi((10)g)l) appeared previously in *Labrys* (England), *Offerte Speciale* (Italy), *Ironwood* (U.S.A.), *Swift Current*, *The Capilano Review*, *Alphabet*, *Secrets from the Orange Couch*, *The Northern Poet*, *grOnk*, *Toronto Life*, *Writing, what, Whetstone, Line, Anerca, Push/Machinery, The Shit, Into the Night Life* (Nightwood Editions), *The Swift Current Anthology* (Coach House Press), *The Story So Far 5* (Coach House Press), *Tracing the Paths* (Talonbooks) and *A Festschrift for Robert Graves* (Lockwood Memorial Library), usually in earlier draft versions.

"An Interlude in which Saint Ranglehold Addresses Anyone Who'll Listen" originally appeared in *Love: A Book of Remembrances* (Talonbooks); "Talking About Strawberries All of the Time" & the poem beginning "an and and an an" in *Zygal: A Book of Mysteries and Translations* (Coach House Press); "Considerations" and "sun/day/ease" in the Four Horsemen collection *Horse d'Œuvres* (PaperJacks).

"all her life ...," "Diatribes," "Lazarus Dream" and "The White Stone Wall" were published together as *Bored Messengers* (Tatlow House/Gorse Press); "You Too, Nicky" was first published as a chapbook by Fissure Books; "Scriptures: 2nd Sequence," "Scriptures: 3rd Sequence" & "Scriptures: 10th Sequence" as chapbooks by Ganglia Press; "Scriptures: 4th Sequence" as a chapbook by Press : Today : Niagara (Niagara Falls, U.S.A.); "Scriptures, Sequences 6, 7, 8, 16 & 17" were first published as *Nights on Prose Mountain* (grOnk: Old Series 3:6, August 1969); "Scriptures: 1st Sequence" & "Scriptures: 2nd Sequence" were published together as *Scriptures: Basic Sequences* (Massassauga Editions, 1973). "Scriptures: 2nd Sequence, Alternate Takes" appeared in *B.C. Monthly*; "9th Sequence" in *grOnk* 1:2; "11th Sequence" in *grOnk* 1:8; "12th Sequence" in *Toronto Life*.

"old mothers who are gone now" was issued as a broadside by High Ground Press; "lady of the assumption" as a broadside by Coach House Press; "The Elevation of Saint Ranglehold" (the "g" in "gift" on the title page) as issue 173 of 1 Cent (Curvd H&Z).

Monotones was originally published by Talonbooks (Vancouver).

Scriptures: 4th Sequence was and is dedicated to Cavan McCarthy, bill bissett, d.a.levy, D.r.Wagner, David Aylward and John Riddell.

My thanks to all the above (& anyone I may have inadvertently missed). Special thanks too to David Robinson, Gordon Fidler and Andy Phillips for their help in the original book publication of *Monotones*; to Michael

Ondaatje for the use of his cover photograph on this volume and his ongoing support of this project; to Victor Coleman and Stan Bevington, who took the risk of publishing those first tentative volumes; to Jerry Ofo who helped to clarify them thru his design; and to Roy Miki, who certainly keeps me convinced that there's someone out there reading.

bpNichol

Gift / Gifts / Giving: *An Afterword*

Gifts in the sense of, what is given & also, therefore, assumptions—& that in both senses takes us back to Gifts, seven being the # of gifts given by the holy ghost.

So bpNichol wrote on the inside of the battered file folder that held the manuscript for the book you hold in your hands. The note elucidates the titles for Books 7 and 8 of *The Martyrology*, and reveals Nichol's continual determination to say, at least, two things at once. It also initiates a concatenation of associations. To assume is to receive, accept, adopt, usurp. An assumption is something taken—for granted, unto oneself. The Assumption was a taking, a reception, of the Virgin Mother, into heaven. As with other such words (like "advent" and "annunciation"), the OED tells us, the specific ecclesiastical use was the earliest in English. Uncovering this information must have pleased Nichol as much as finding that "die" is a "lost verb" (discovered while working on "Hour 22," Book 6). Furthermore, the Assumptions of Book 7, the title page tells us, continue "A Counting" begun in Book 6. Seven is loaded with mythic, magic and religious significances. G is the seventh letter in the Roman alphabet—it's not H or eighth, but it's pretty close. In the Greek and Cyrillic alphabets, the equivalent of G—"Γ"—appears earlier in the sequence, but has the attractive characteristic of being the reversal of 7. The seven gifts of the holy spirit—Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Might, Knowledge, the Fear of God, Piety—is an amplification of the six given by the prophesying Isaiah ("Piety" was a Septuagintal addition). This revised list would have appealed to Nichol, since accumulating and revising were as much a part of his compositional process as drawing and writing with his pen, or typing on his computer. *Gifts* is a writing site where the revised is the given, the given is revisioned, and the vision is the gift.

The book format of this volume might puzzle readers who have been acquainted with the history of Nichol's long poem, and his often-stated plans to publish Books 7 and 8 as an unbound shuffle text, with Book 8 "occurring among" 7. Book 7 had, from the start, been referred to as "Box vii" or "Boks 7 (VII)" or "Bo(o)ks 7(VII)." As Book 8 began to be written, Nichol came upon the notion of imbedding—literally—Book 8 among Book 7. Its numbering reflected the texture of this project: "Bo(o)ks 7 (VI(&8)I)," then "Bo(o)ks 7(VII) & (10)₈." This last number requires some clarification.

"(10)₈" indicates an alternative numbering system Nichol had been fiddling with for a couple of years. He wanted to devise a system that ignored base 10, that would instead be founded on base 8, his obsessively favourite digit. This didn't work out. A notebook entry (18 May 1988) explains the system he eventually chose:

numbering of the books changes so the base is where the sequence number of the volume lies. i.e.

(10)₈ (10)₉ (10)₁₀ (10)₁₁ (10)₁₂ (10)₁₃ etc.

Thus sequence is negated *AND* retained. i.e. the processual is acknowledged but the narrative diminished.

Hence the sub-title for *The Martyrology's* eighth book, Book (10)₈: "basis/bases."

The length of some of the St. Anzas would have prevented their being accommodated to a (conventional) card size—one envisions readers picking up a deceptively small card that falls open into a long series of accordion folds—and this is probably one reason why the shuffle text idea was abandoned. There is a second, more exciting reason. At some point in the summer of 1988, Nichol discovered a way of pulling in numerous earlier texts inclined towards individual saints, or towards the larger sphere of *The Martyrology*. Several short "saint" pieces, all previously published in journals or other books, appear in (as) *Gifts*. More significant, however, is the inclusion of *Scriptures* and *Monotones*—the former a subtext, the latter a parallel text to *The Martyrology*. Nichol first encountered St. Reat in the fourth sequence of *Scriptures*, and this important saint haunts other sequences (all included here). He had tried—repeatedly, stubbornly and futilely—to include *Monotones* with the earliest sections of Book 1, and had voiced the opinion in recent years that he *still* thought they should somehow be associated more closely with *The Martyrology*. (He told me he had even contemplated publishing *Monotones* separately, as Book 0 or -1 of *The Martyrology*.) The contaminated (dis)ordering of Books 7 and 8 opened a way for these texts to be adopted—or dispersed—into this larger context. The ordering of the pieces in *Gifts* depends neither on chronology, nor on the numerical sequences by which some of them had been previously arranged, but rather on what Nichol called "hinged rime." Part of the joy of reading this text is discovering the play of this riming—in the largest sense of that word—and of the "schizophrenic logic" (another of Nichol's terms) operating in and between the discrete pieces.

So Bo(o)ks yielded to Book(s), and *The Martyrology*, demoted to sub-title, gave way to *Gifts*, and the numerical figuration became "Book(s) 7(VI((10)₈)I)," a bracketing reminiscent of

every(all at(toge(forever)ther) once)thing
(Book 5, chain 10).

This gathering should not, though, be regarded as the complete or collected saints—there are, after all, eight other books of *The Martyrology*,

further *Scriptures*, and other “saint” texts beyond the covers on this book—but as gifts, under embrasure.

Nichol left the manuscript carefully, thoughtfully organized—a gift for whomever might have to take it through the publication process. The possibility that he himself might not see the manuscript through to book form had clearly occurred to him. The considerable care he gave to gathering these several projects under one cover suggests that he was comfortable with the present order. Yet knowing Nichol’s tendency to revise, there is always the temptation to speculate that, were he alive today, the contents of this volume would perhaps be in a different—though probably not thoroughly different—state.

Some handwritten notes included in the file indicate quotations to be used as epigraphs, design elements to be incorporated on title page and cover, and pieces that should be part of the text, but whose placement had not yet been decided. So as not to disturb the complicated rhythm of the text, I situated “read, dear” immediately after the preliminary pages Nichol had stapled together. Its invitation—or imperative—belongs at the beginning. (This was also its position in the file.) I inserted “Martyrology: Branded,” “Petra Improvisation,” “Middle Initial Events” 2 and 3, and “erase the body” at the end of the ordered text, doing so before I noticed small numbers pencilled-in on the bottom right corners of each of these pages. My eye alerted to them, I found that my ordering had retained the numerical sequence—a relief to an editor moving tenuously on an untravelled path. Only two pieces have been inserted in the midst of the text: the piece beginning “SAW,” and “St. Anzas X.” The former was missing from the file, but had always been part of Book 7. From the ampersand at the end of line 6 to the end, “St. Anzas X” (excluding the (non)footnote), was handwritten on the print-out draft (5 June 1988), and the added lines were never keyed into the computer, nor had the text been placed in *Gifts*. I found it in the “Martyrology 8” file, inserted Nichol’s changes, and placed it in the manuscript.

In the spring of 1989, when I was just commencing course work for a PhD that will eventually result in introductions and annotations—a “sourcery”—for Books 3 to 5 of *The Martyrology*, I was asked to come to Toronto for the summer in order to compile an inventory of Nichol’s papers. I had already completed the sourcery for Books 1 and 2—an MA thesis at Simon Fraser University (1987).

The drafts, notebooks, and other papers in the Nichol archive at SFU provided me with an invaluable source for my reconstruction of the compositional process for these earliest books of the saints—a history that was, in some instances, long forgotten by Nichol himself. Just as the poem resists gravitating towards a thematic or structural centre, so my work on *The Martyrology* could not avoid colliding with the plethora of

Nichol's other publications and disparate interests. This experience, my familiarity with the physicality of Nichol's writing—the stages in his revision process, his script, shorthand, notational symbols, etc.—as well as the persnickety attention demanded by archival scholarship, suggested to others that I would be able to handle the job of sorting and organizing the papers in Nichol's study. It took three months. The project requiring the most urgent attention, and that Ellie asked me to see to before anything else, was the manuscript for this book.

When I first entered Nichol's study last summer, I picked up and opened a small notebook covered in blue velour, and immediately encountered one of the poems in "body paranoia: initial fugue." Guessing that this was part of a sequence, I flipped through to find the rest of the poems. Reading these lines in bp's last notebook was a difficult beginning. But I proceeded, pulled out the file containing the "final" draft of *Gifts*, and discovered a pencilled note (10 September 1988) preceding the preliminary pages stating (asking?) that these poems be "printed on separate sheets of paper" and "interleaved into final bound copy of *Martyr 7&.*" (A vaguer note appears in the "bp:if" poem written on the same day. The placement in the text of the "3000 B.C. quote" is indicated by an arrow, but neither it nor its source is identified. Although I kept my eyes open for it, I did not locate it in the drafts, among the rest of the papers, or in any of Nichol's recent reading.)

These meditations on the outcome of his surgery, including his not surviving it (as "bp:if," the abbreviated title heading some of the pieces in the notebook, suggests) are the last five pieces of *The Martyrology* to be written. They are now, in this posthumous publication, "emotionally heavy," as Barrie might have said. But his speculative mind and irrepressible wit prevent them from being maudlin or self-indulgent. And this final outrageous gesture—leaving these last poems free of the book's spine, so that they will be the first to be lost—merges the process of his writing life with the materiality of the book.

leaf / leaves / leaving.

Irene Niechoda
August, 1990

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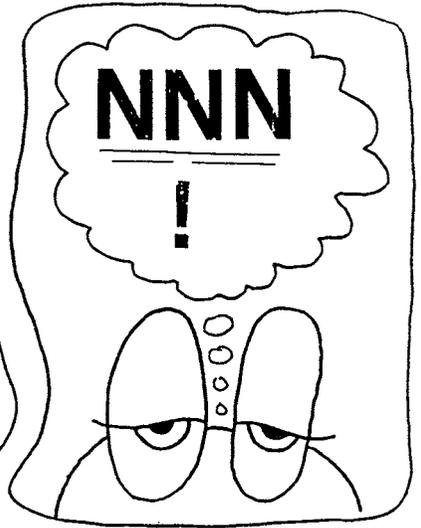
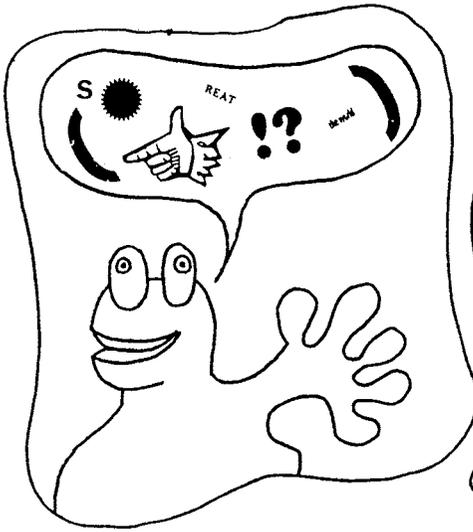
Scriptures: 14th Sequence

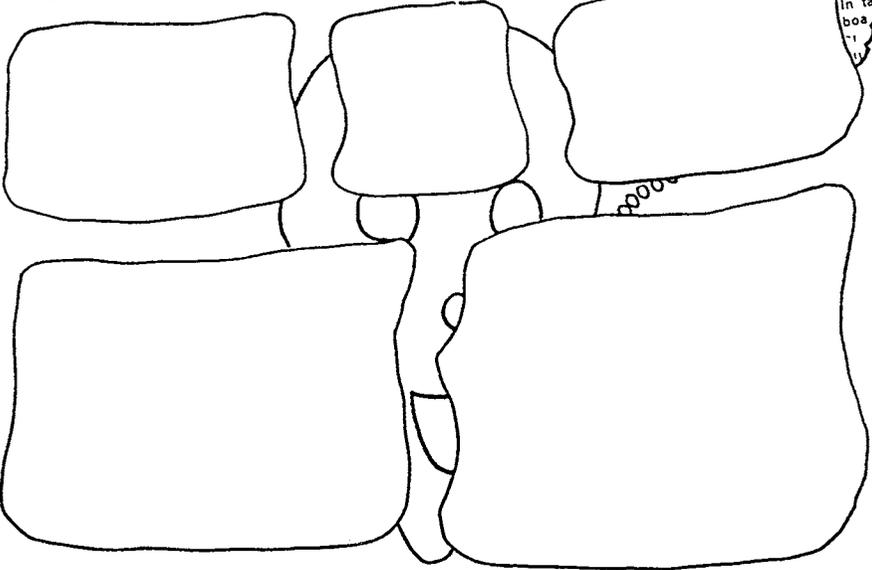
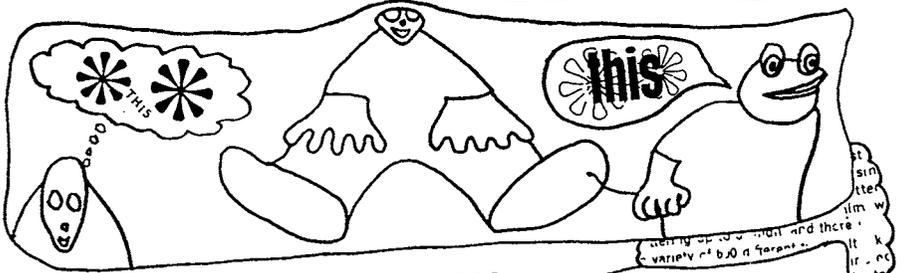
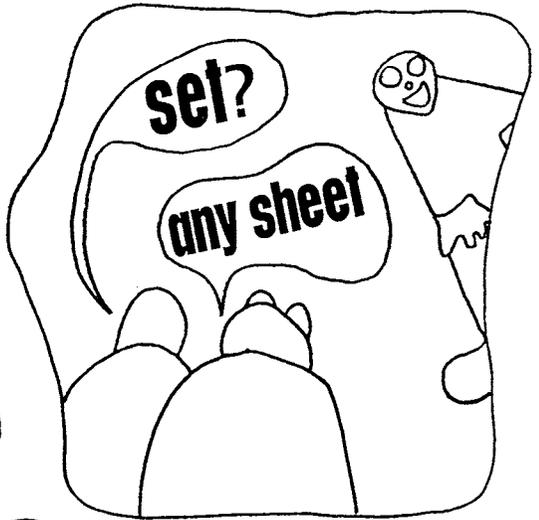
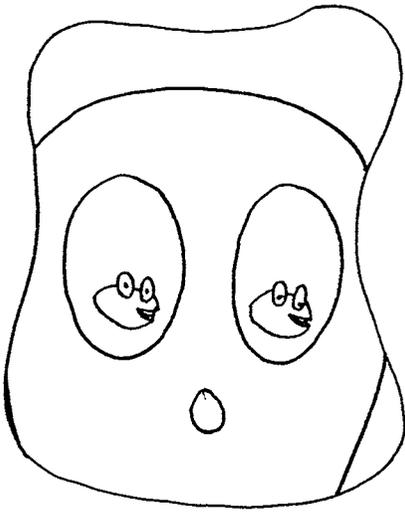


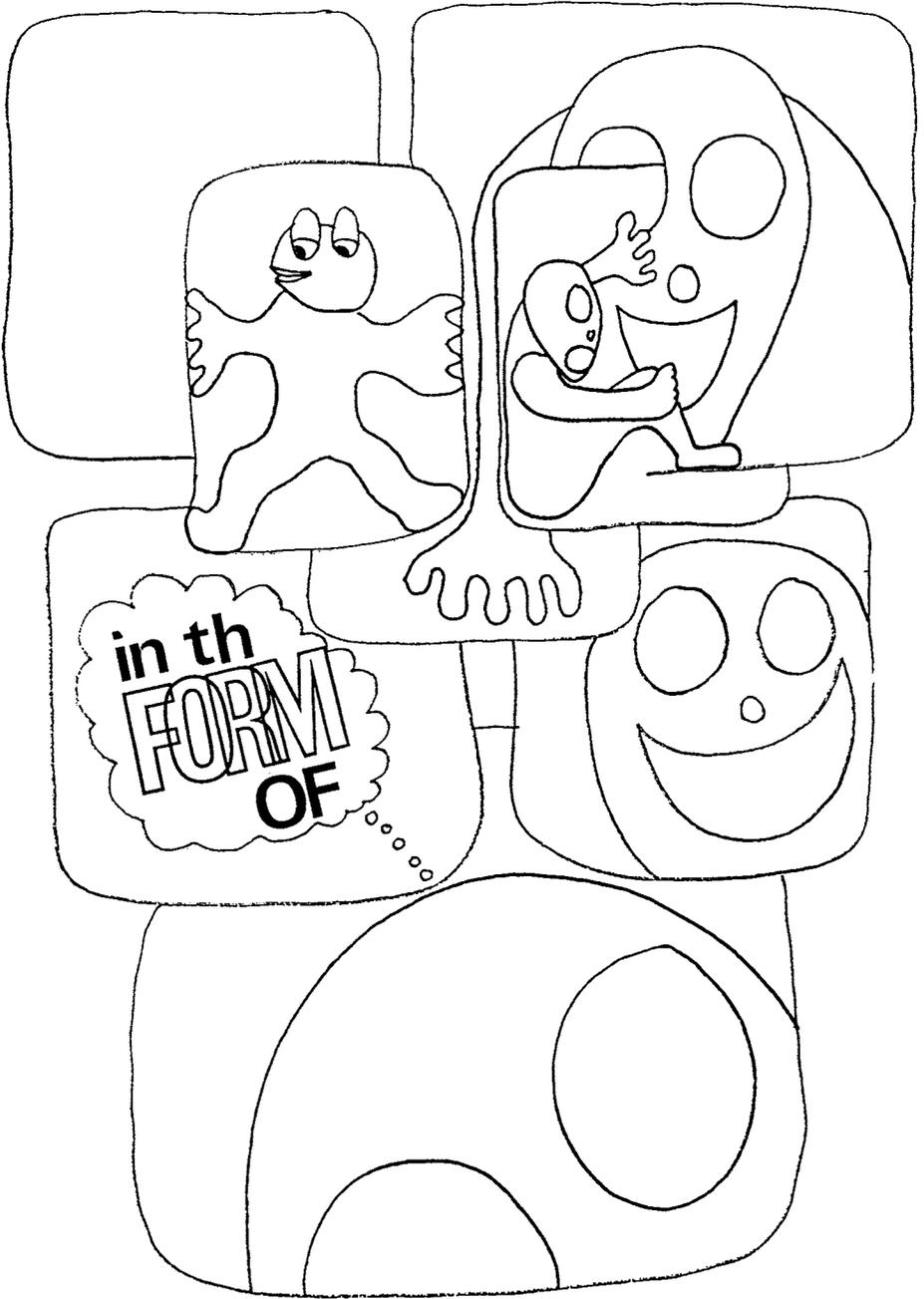
Aliphant all at
once + NO NO NO
PLEASE! understand
if you will now please!
(UNDERSTANDING)
this is only a be
gin
ning
ooo
ooo
ooo

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Scraptures: 9th Sequence







To be continued sometime.

Monograms—Genealogy—Grammarology

IC

VRUUM BRPRUM

s ain't t

KRAK!

s ain't u

IC XC NIKA

CRASH

SKRREEEE

KAWHOMP WHOMP
WHAM

s ain't v

s ain't w

IHS

SCREE

BUM!

s ain't x

BRAM

s ain't y

INRI

CRUNCH
CRRUMP

ZZZOOOOO

s ain't z

BRUM!

st—an exclamation used to impose silence

EEEE OOO-OO

s ain't a

A-O

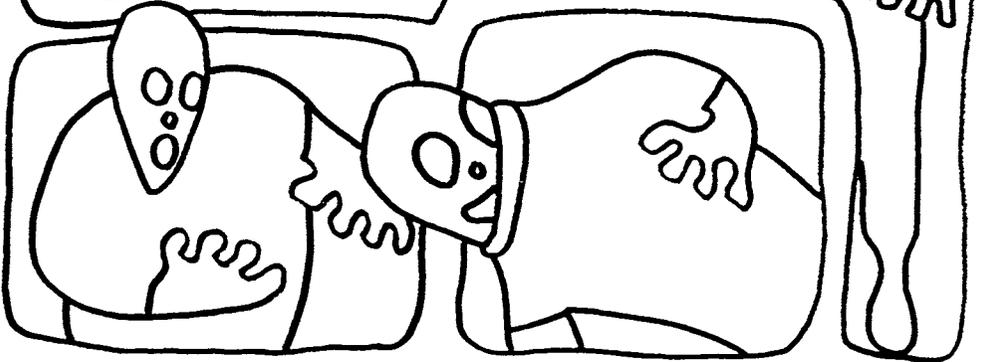
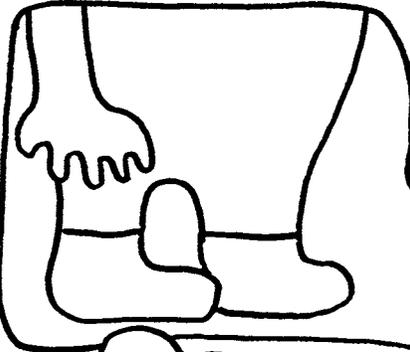
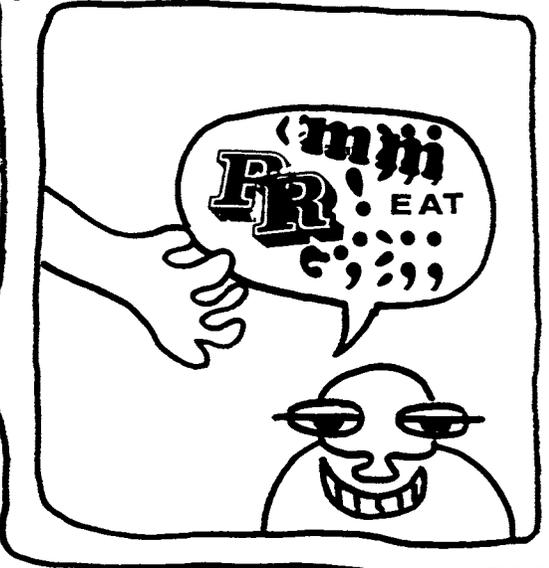
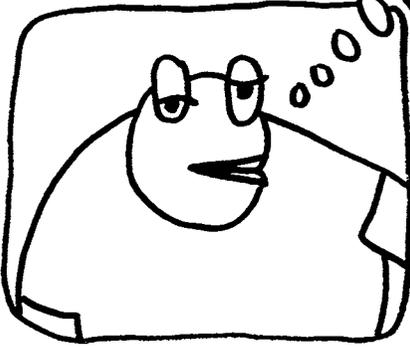
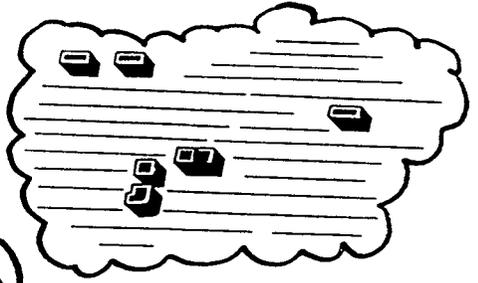
BULAM!

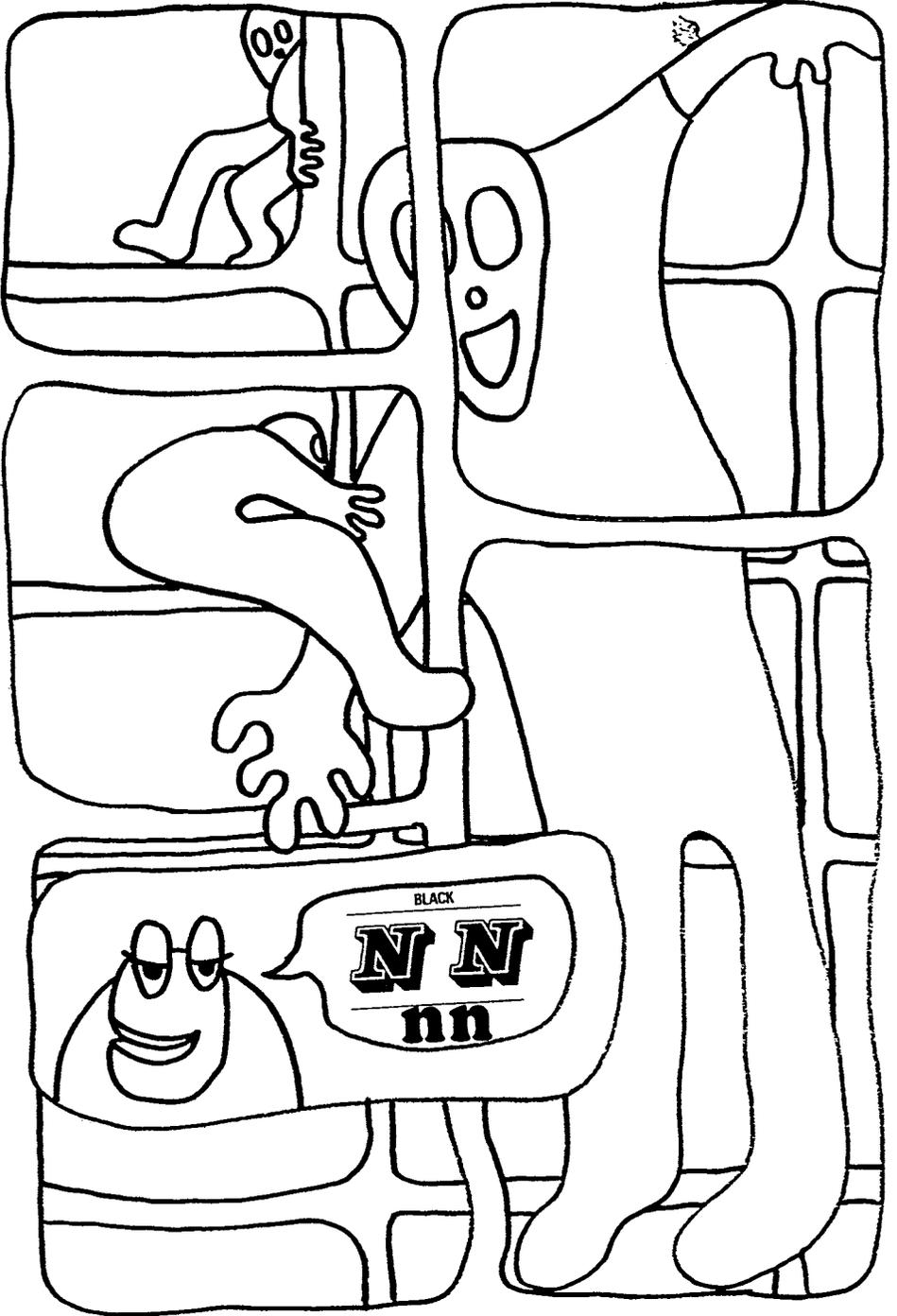
WHOMP!

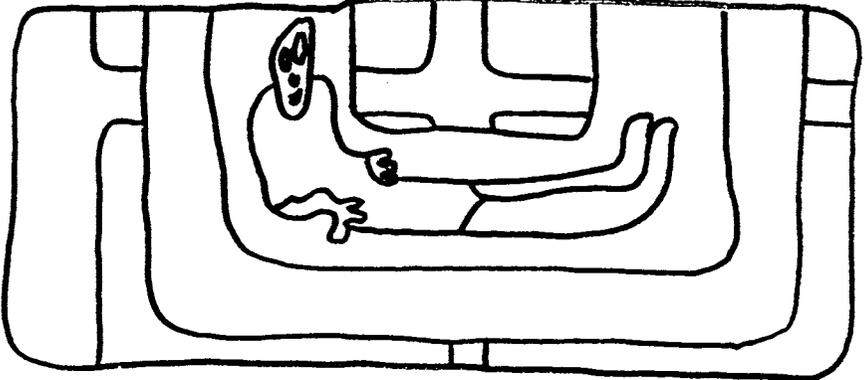
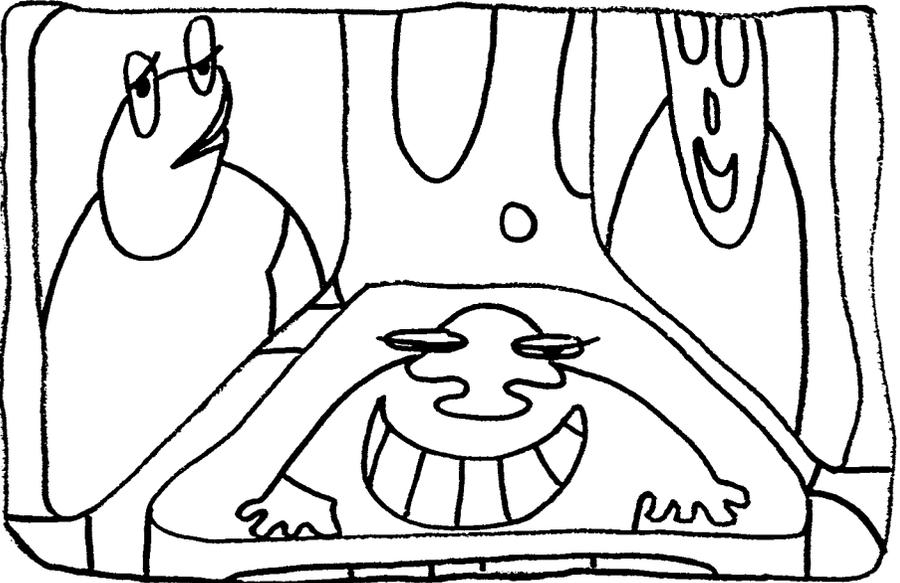
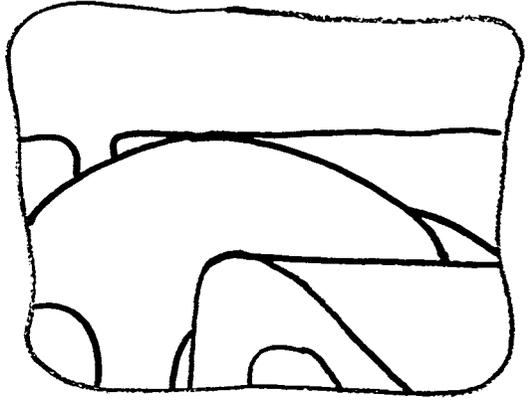
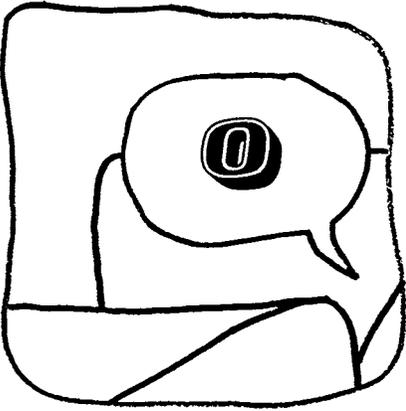
WHOM!

st, st—to drive away an animal
or urge it to attack

Scriptures: 11th Sequence



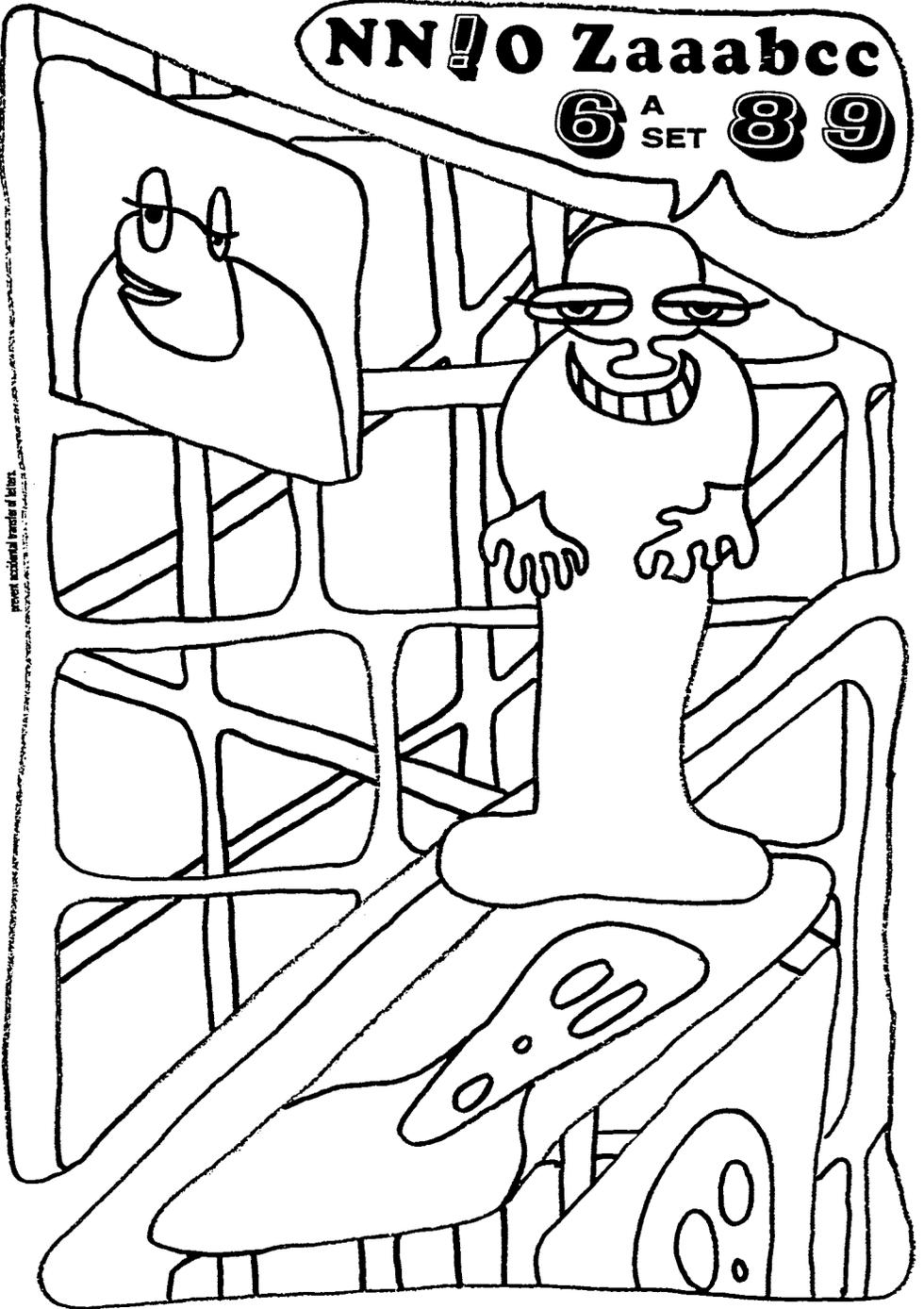


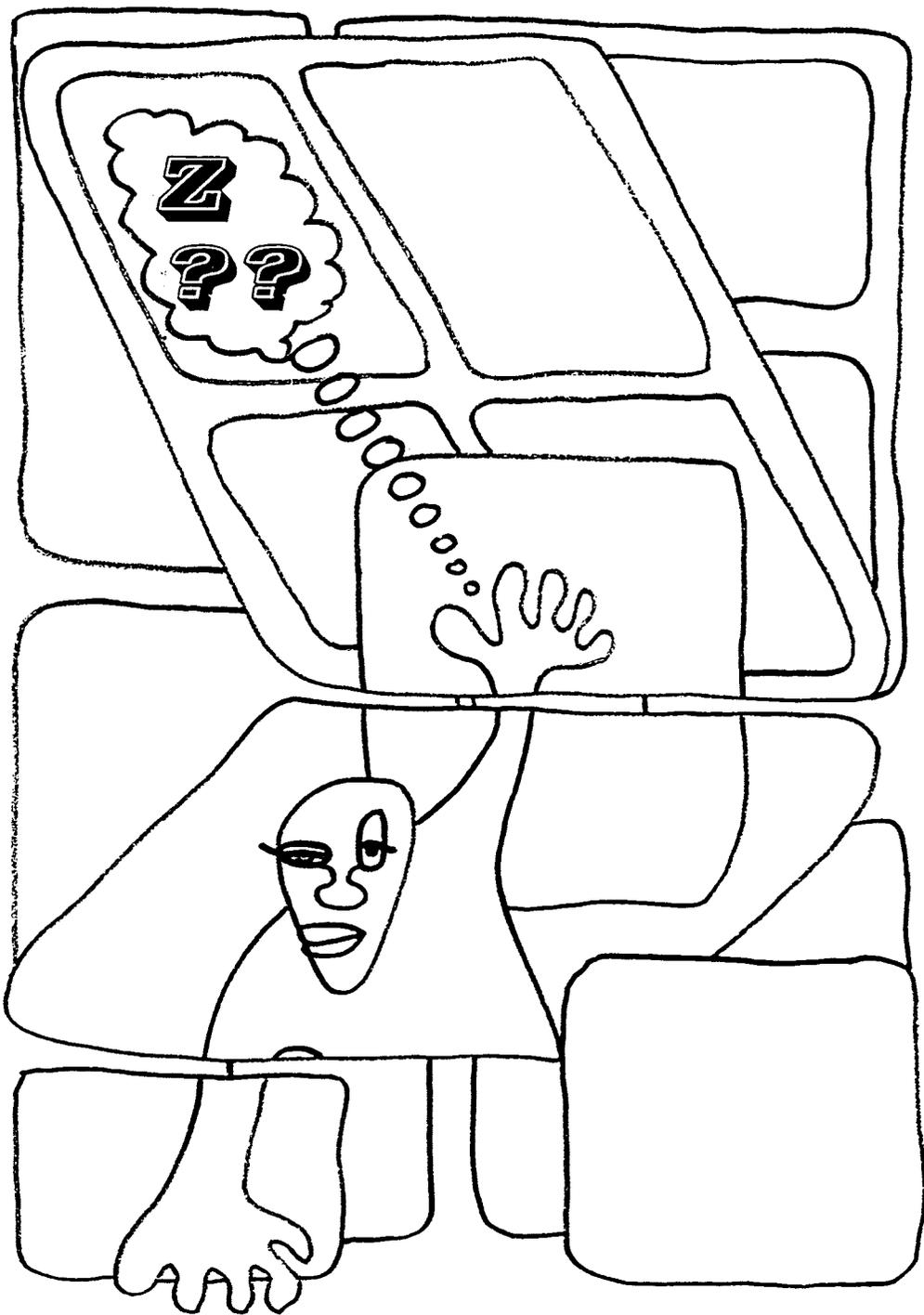


NN!O Zaaabcc

6 A SET **8 9**

prevent accidental transfer of letters





•
old mothers who are gone now
all mute
we are your tongues

born from your mouths' mouths
we have your say
Mother Leigh, Mother Workman, Mother Nichol, Mother Fuller
how many of you am i speaking for today
do you care what words pour from my lips?

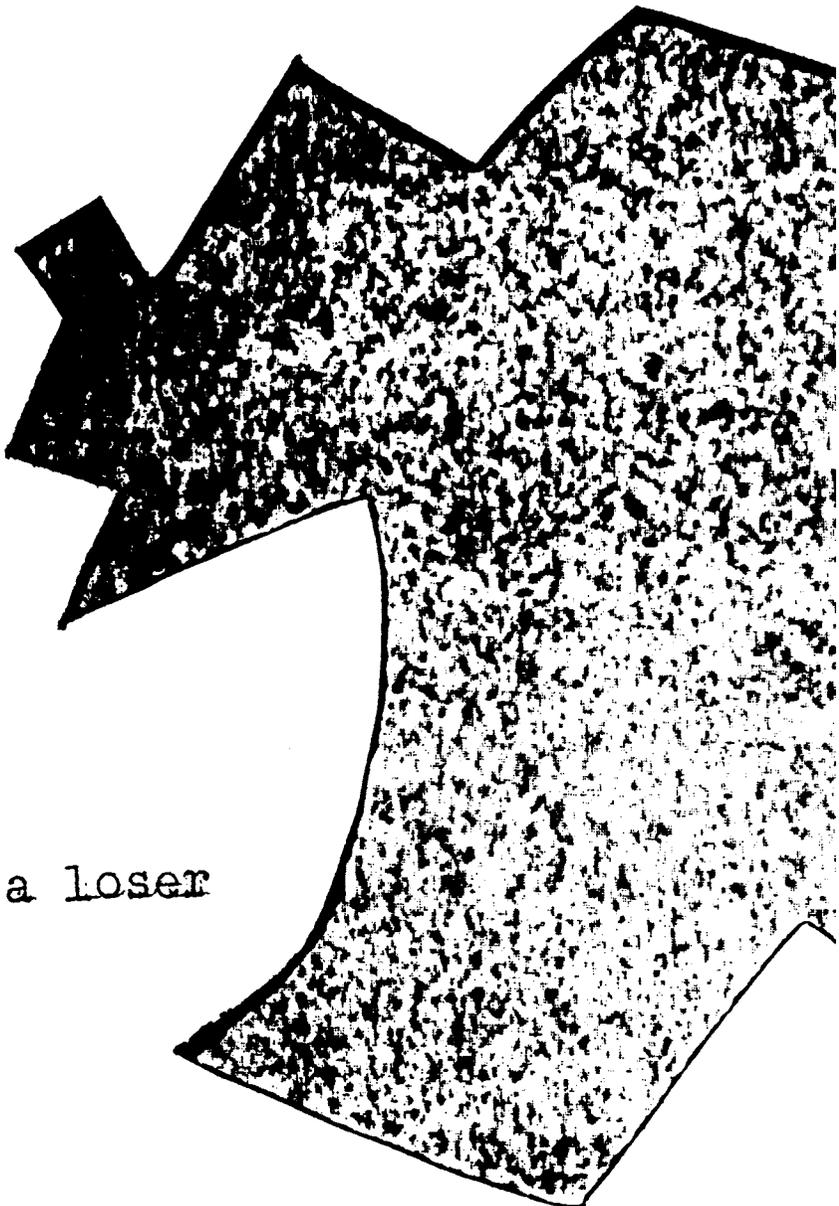
this old body flaps in the wind
looks out over the prairie this cold March day
into that landscape most of you wandered into as girls
took up the burden of all that birthing
all that laying down
of the law
the line

old mothers who came before you
i don't know the names of & never will
all talking at once, if you could, in all those other languages
Celtic, German, Cherokee, Dutch
no eyes now, no tongue
only these two, this one
old nouns disappearing behind us
vague pronoun reference a life becomes
who does this i refer to?
which s now speaks thru this he?
eh? She?!

Assumptions

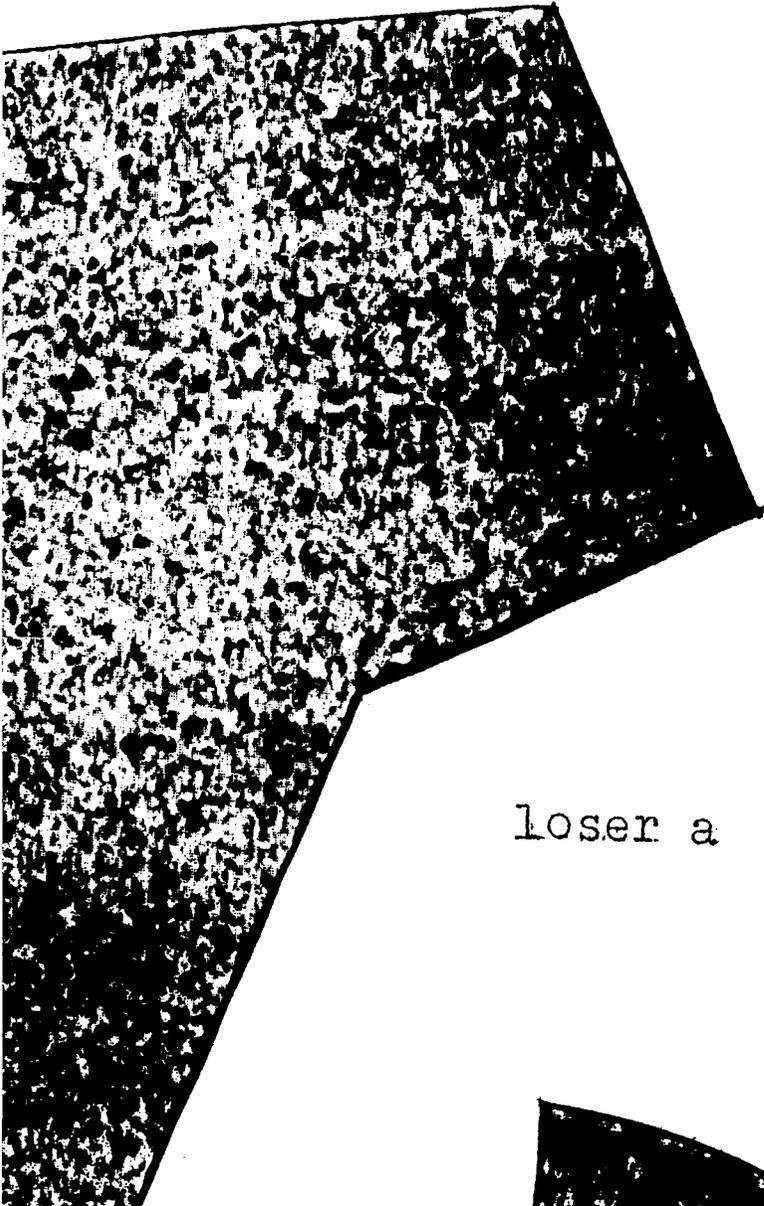
a damned land





a loser

a loader



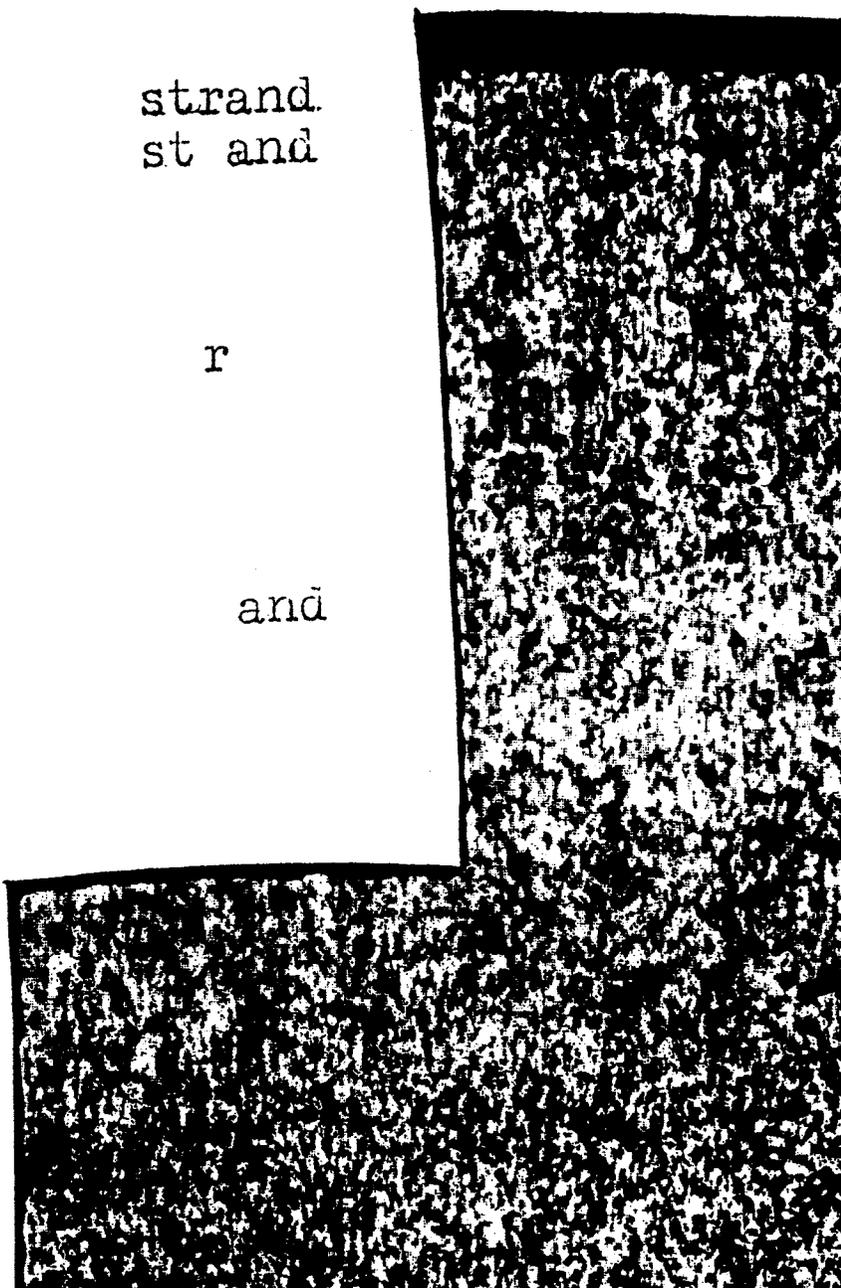
loser a



strand.
st and

r

and



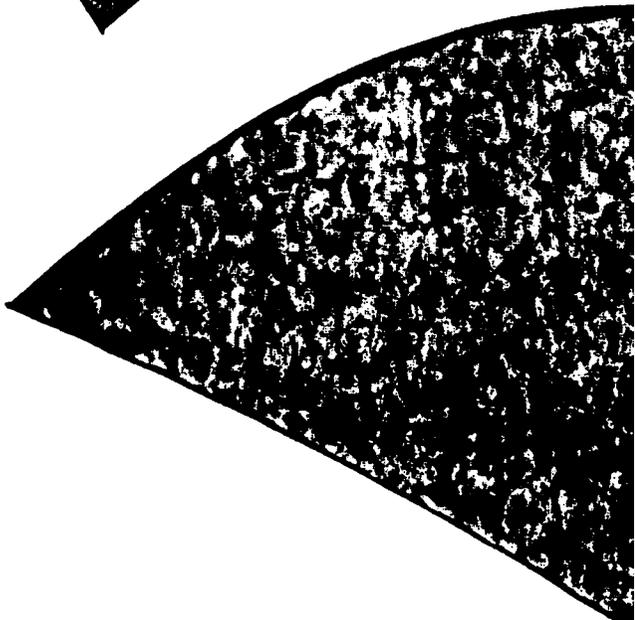
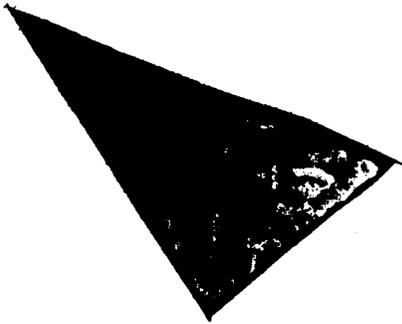
blousey
boozery





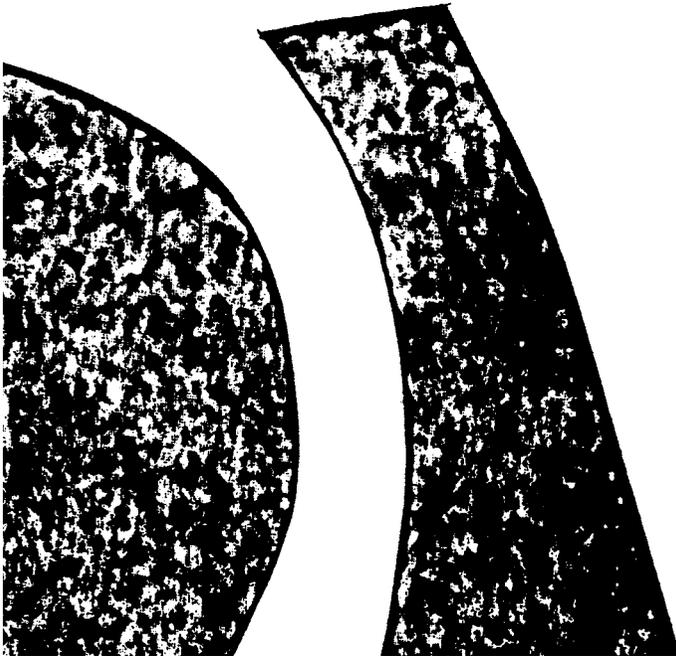
S T O P

step step step st

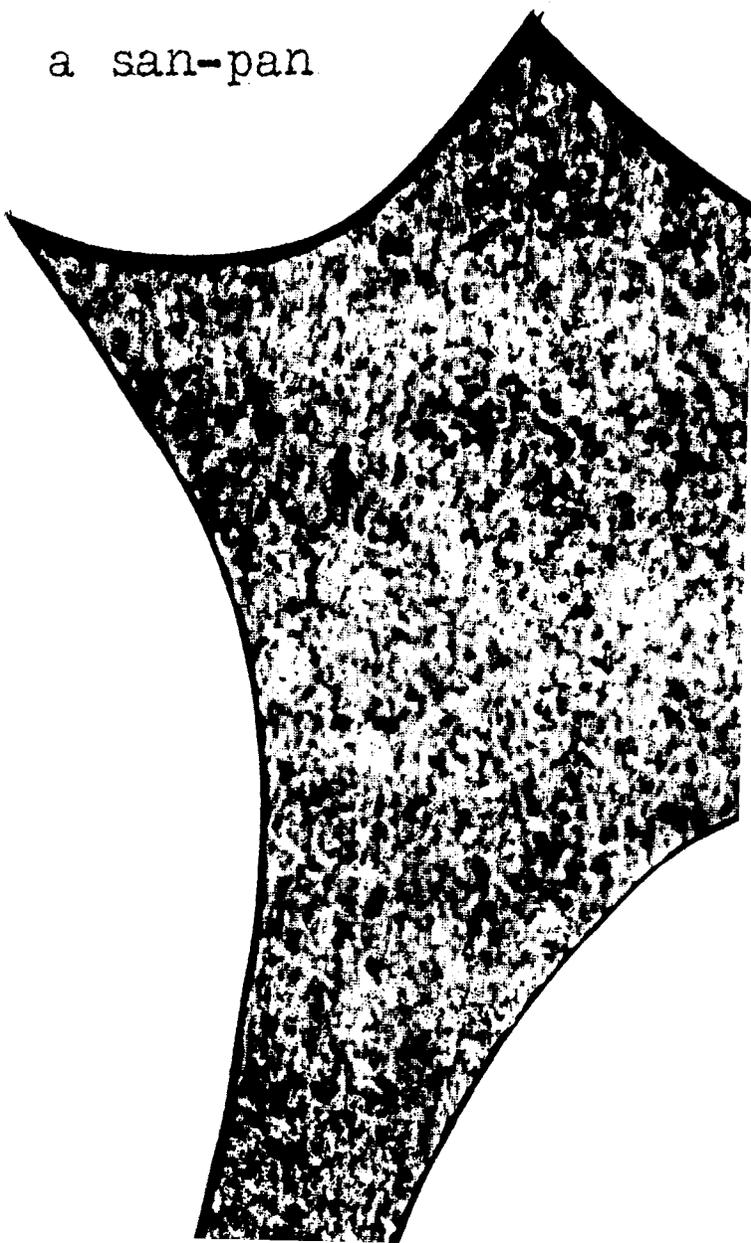


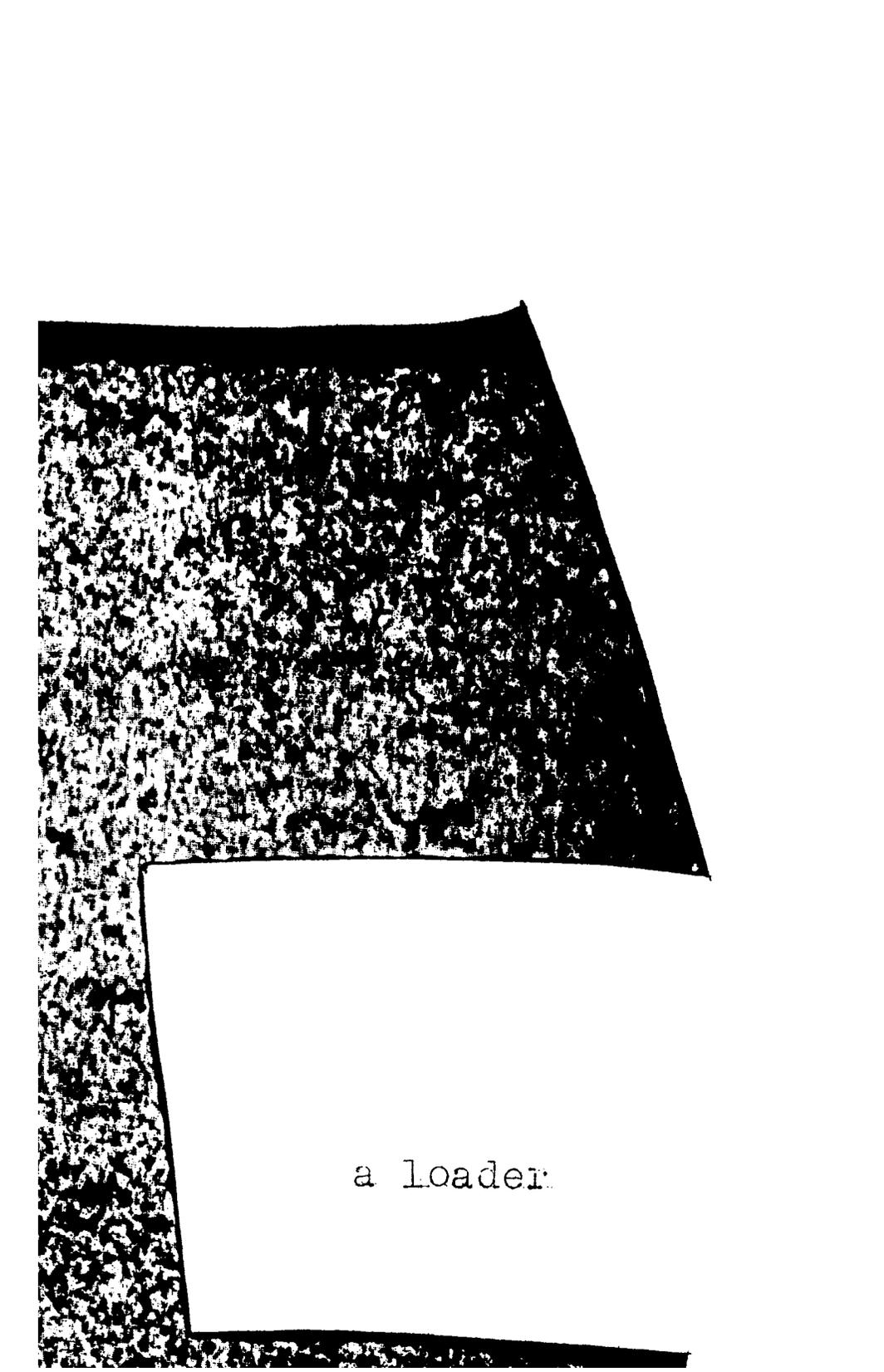


step step step step step step step

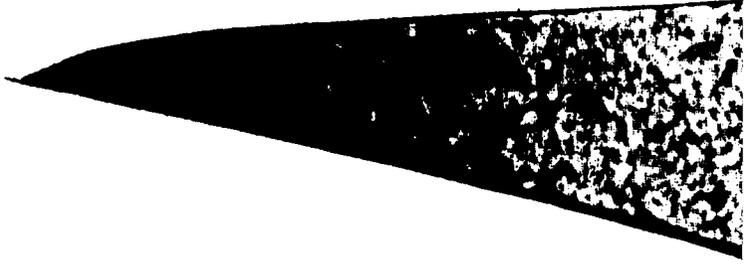


a san-pan



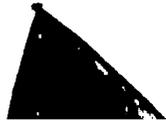


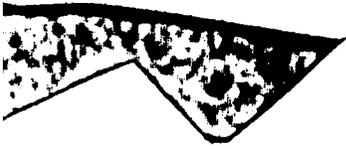
a loader.



a banned

hand

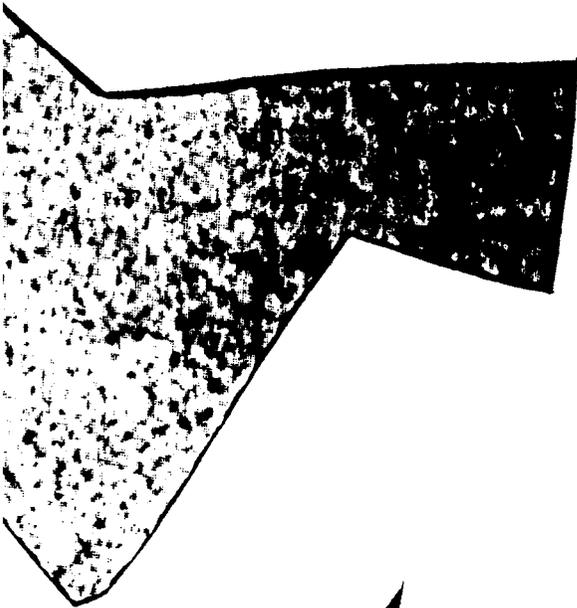




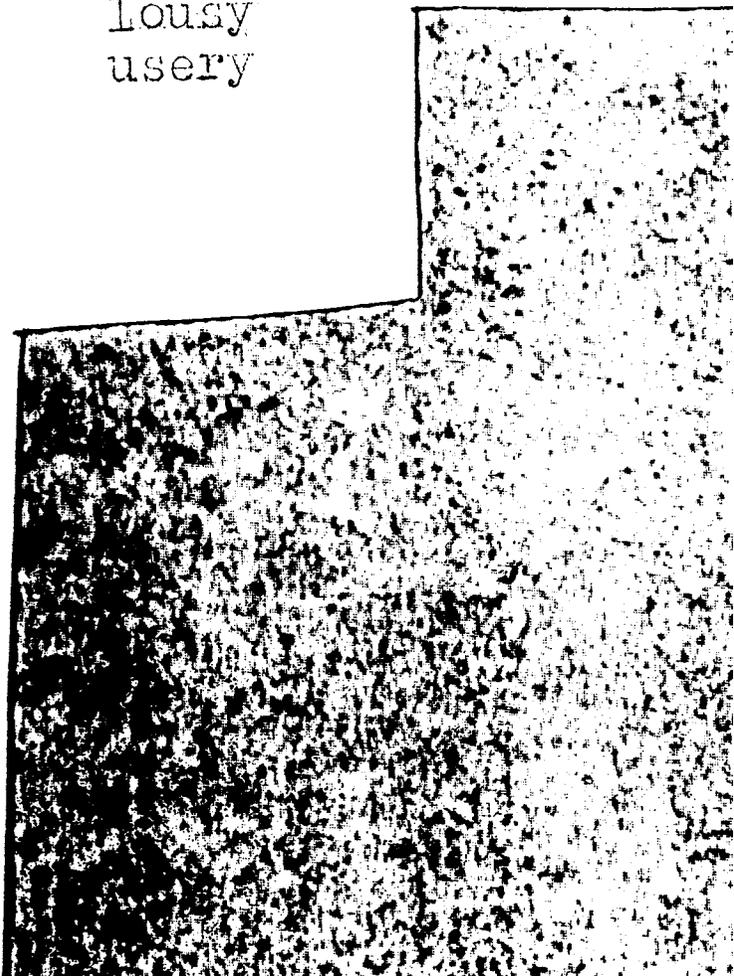
a

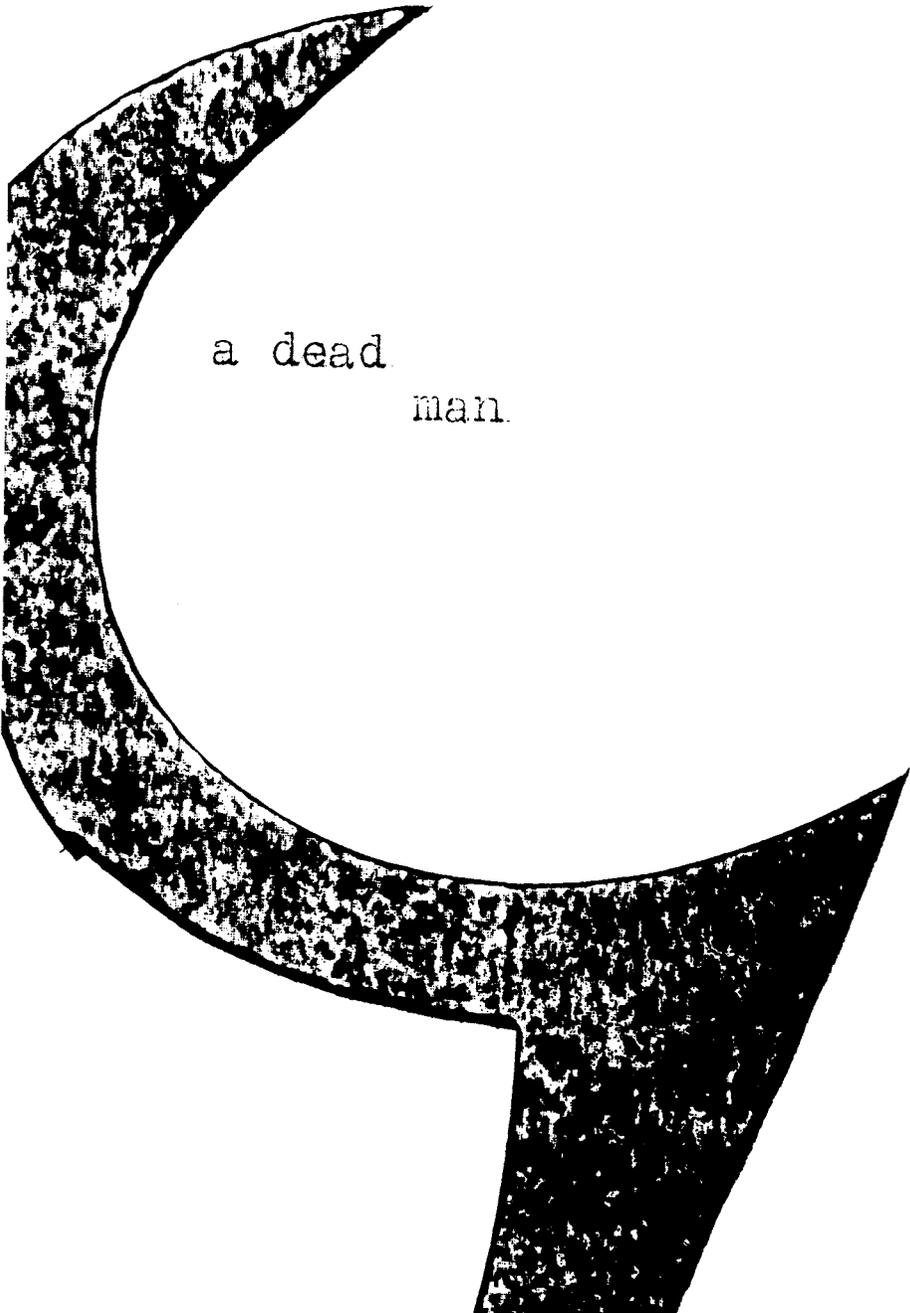
brand.

band



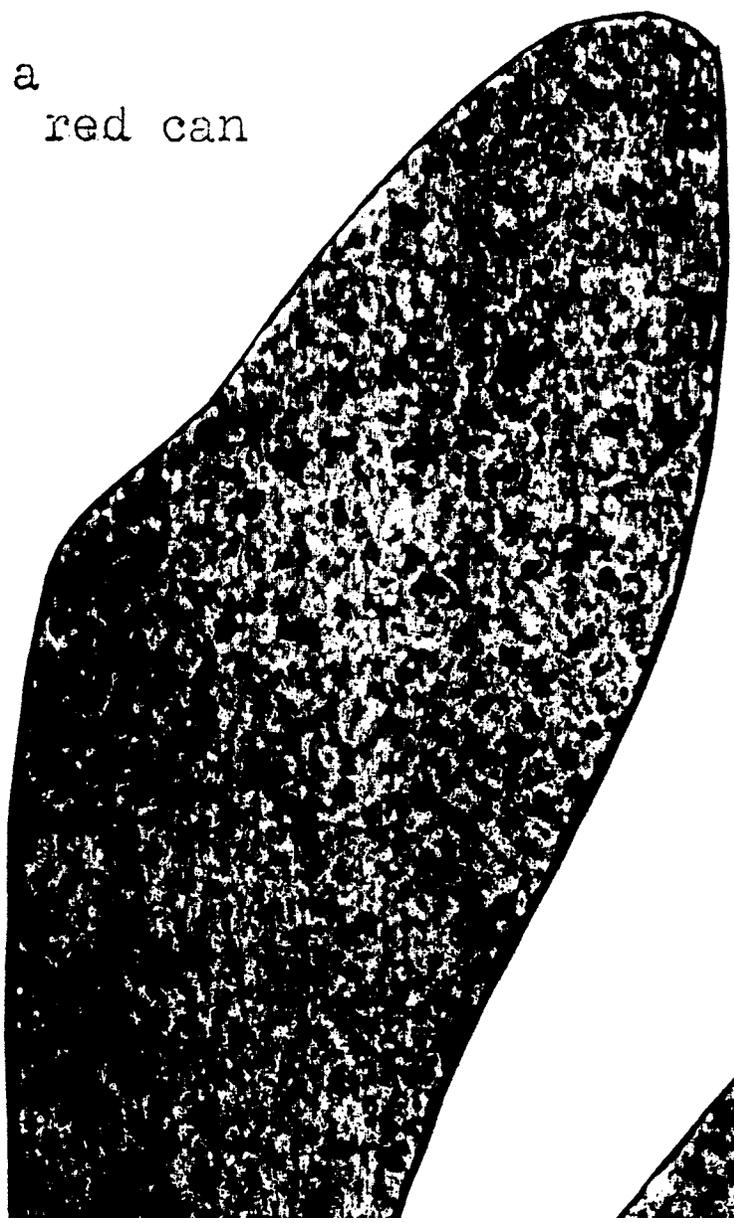
lousy
usery





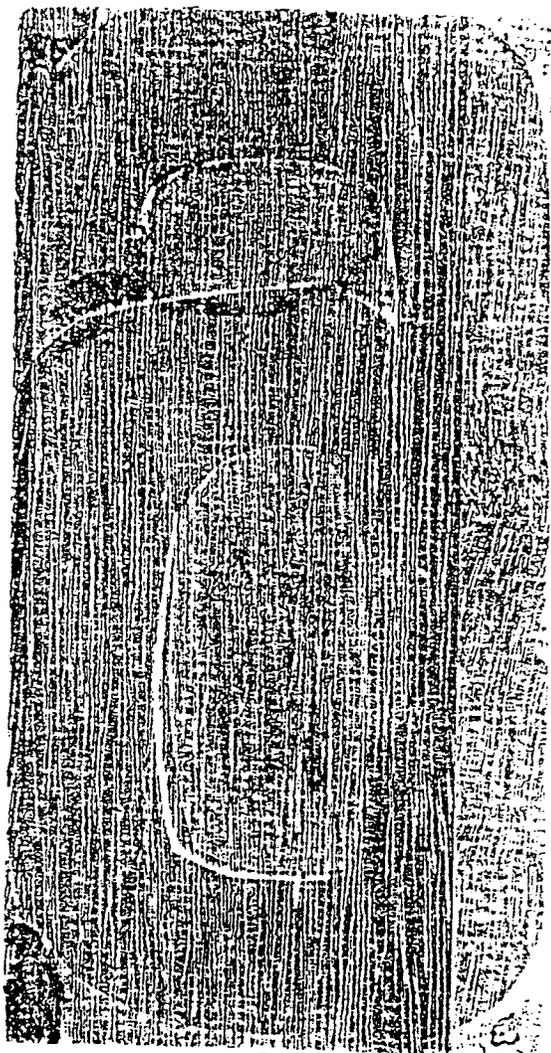
a dead
man.

a
red can



BLAZE

TREATS



ar
D

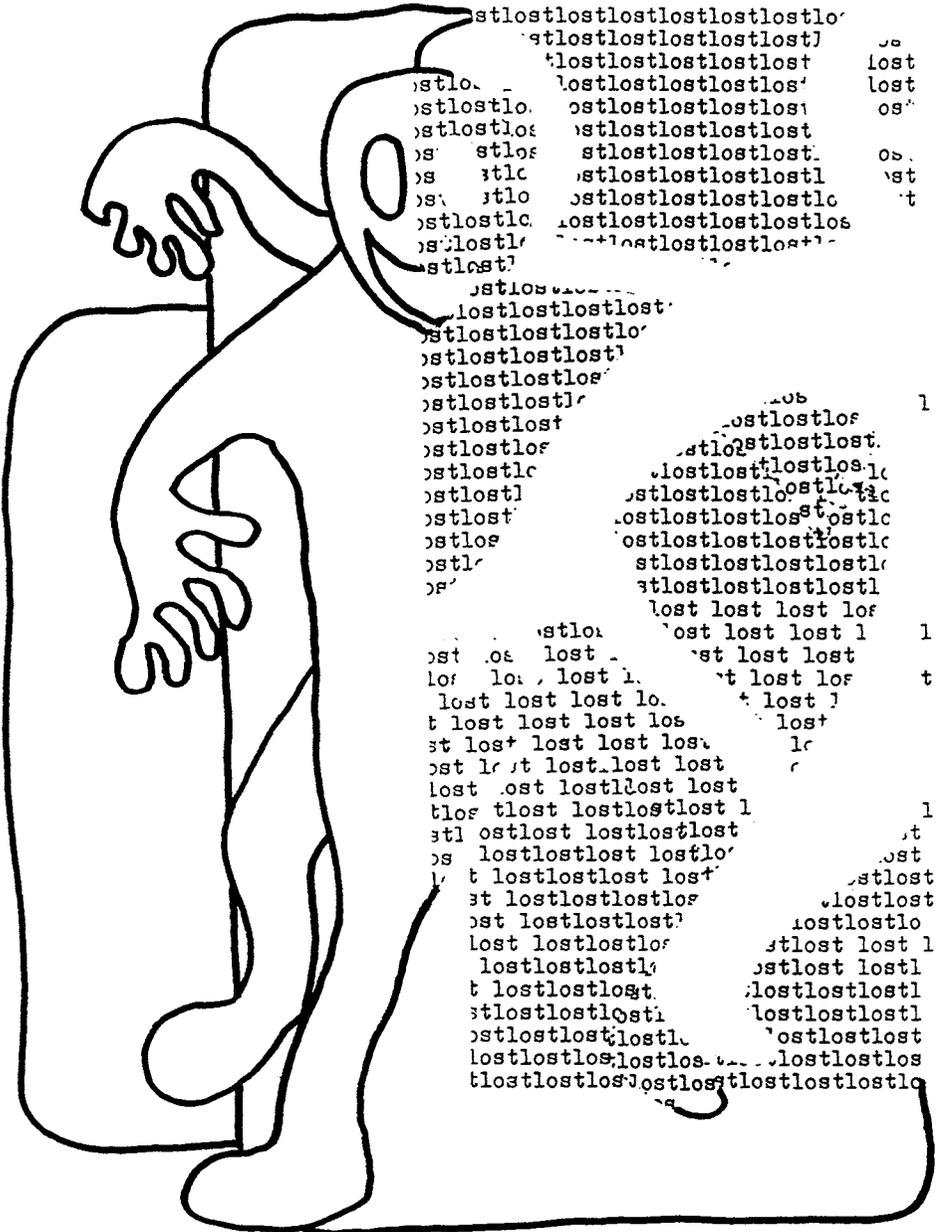
runt

St. Anzas X

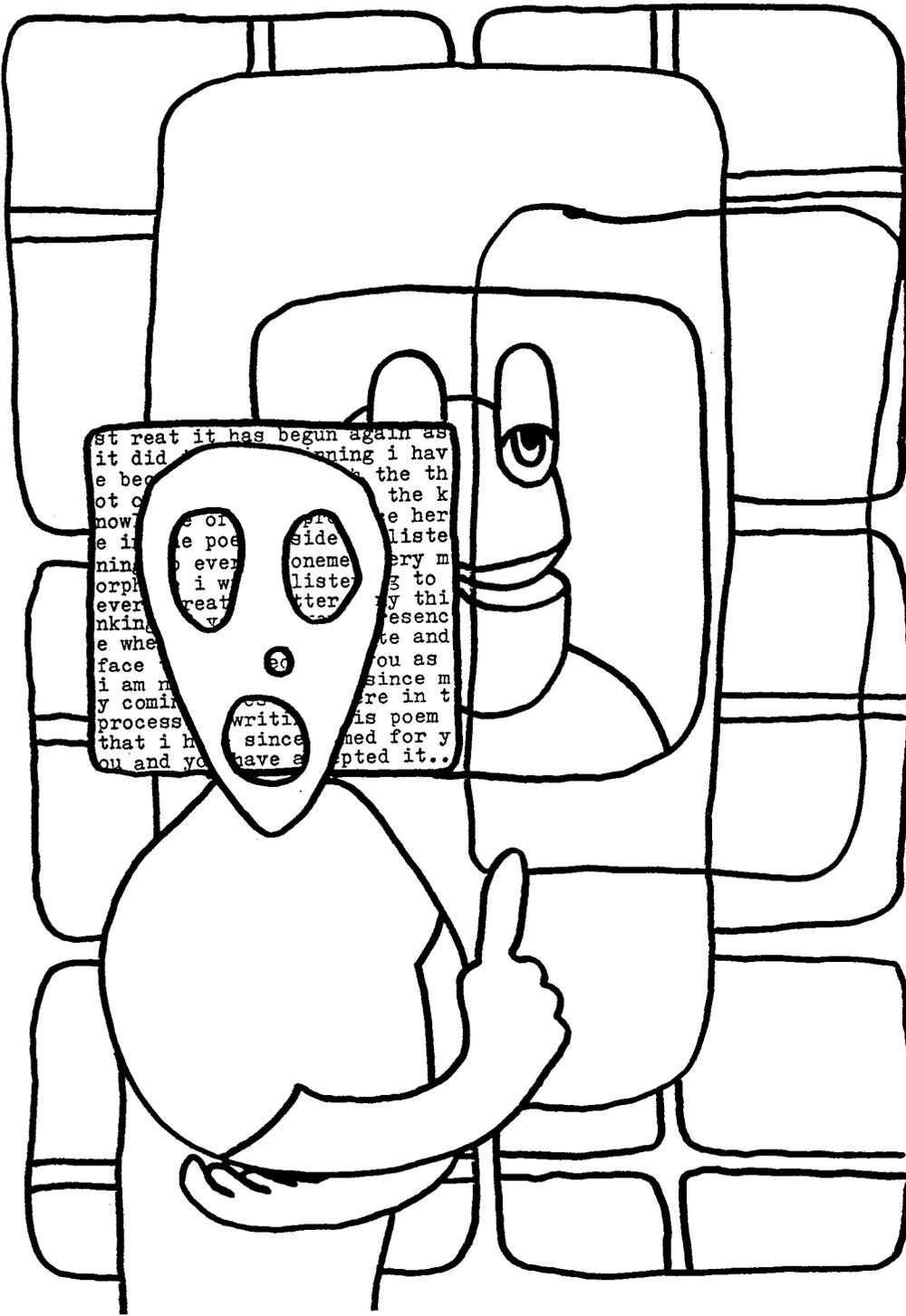
the unknown. the number then of god. 10. presence and absence.
line and circle. unspeakable. (parenthetical?*) surrounds
and is embedded in
these glyphs, the gesture of
these letters, to Who? Who.
W M of god & human again. &
the number of god is many; the 1 of 1
0 should stand for any
depending on the base we're taking in, of, out of, belief is
absolute, is nothing, multi-faceted, singular
in its many faces. 10 to be written \emptyset
number as a slash across the face of the void.

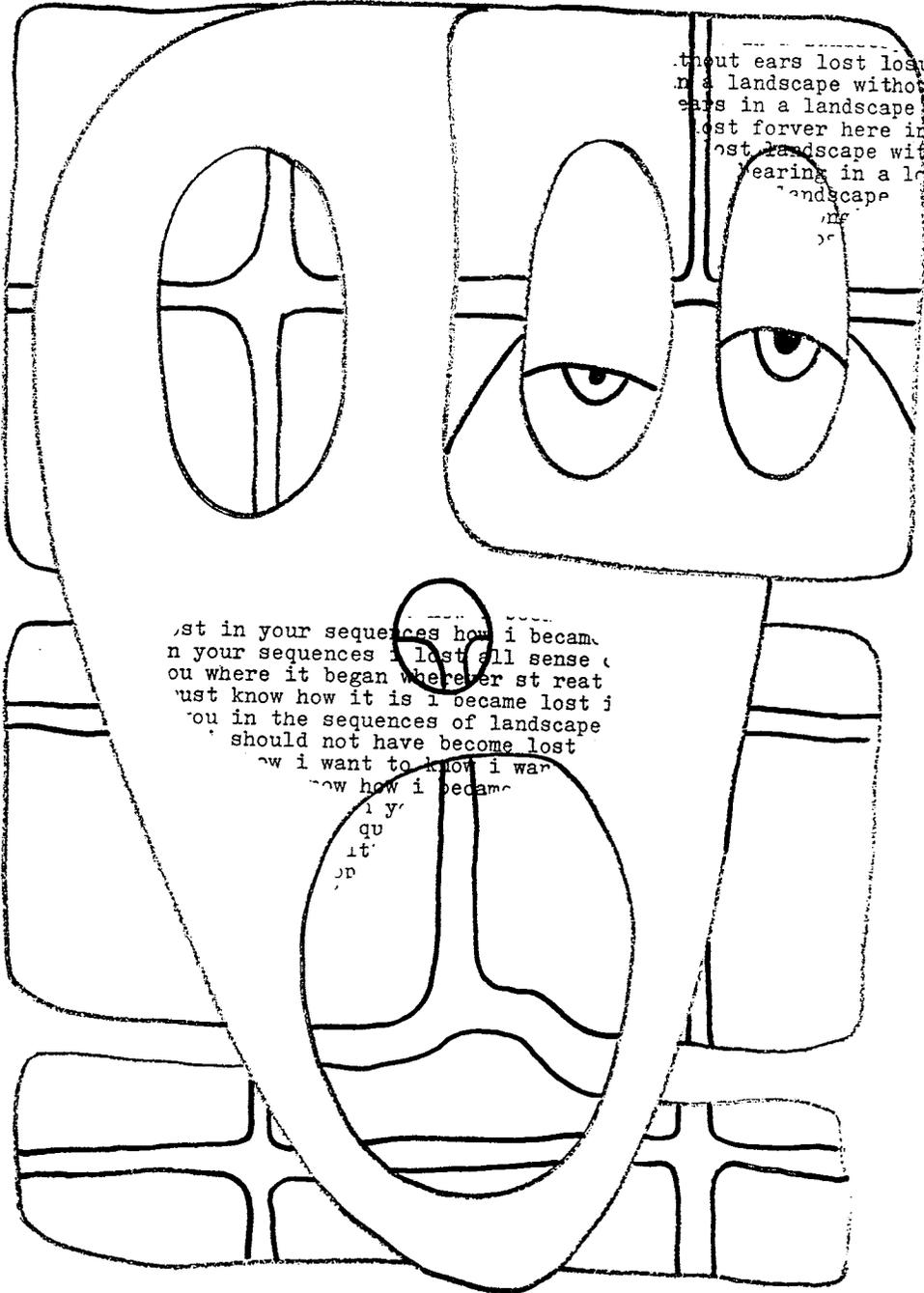
* footnoted?

Scriptures: Lost Sequence



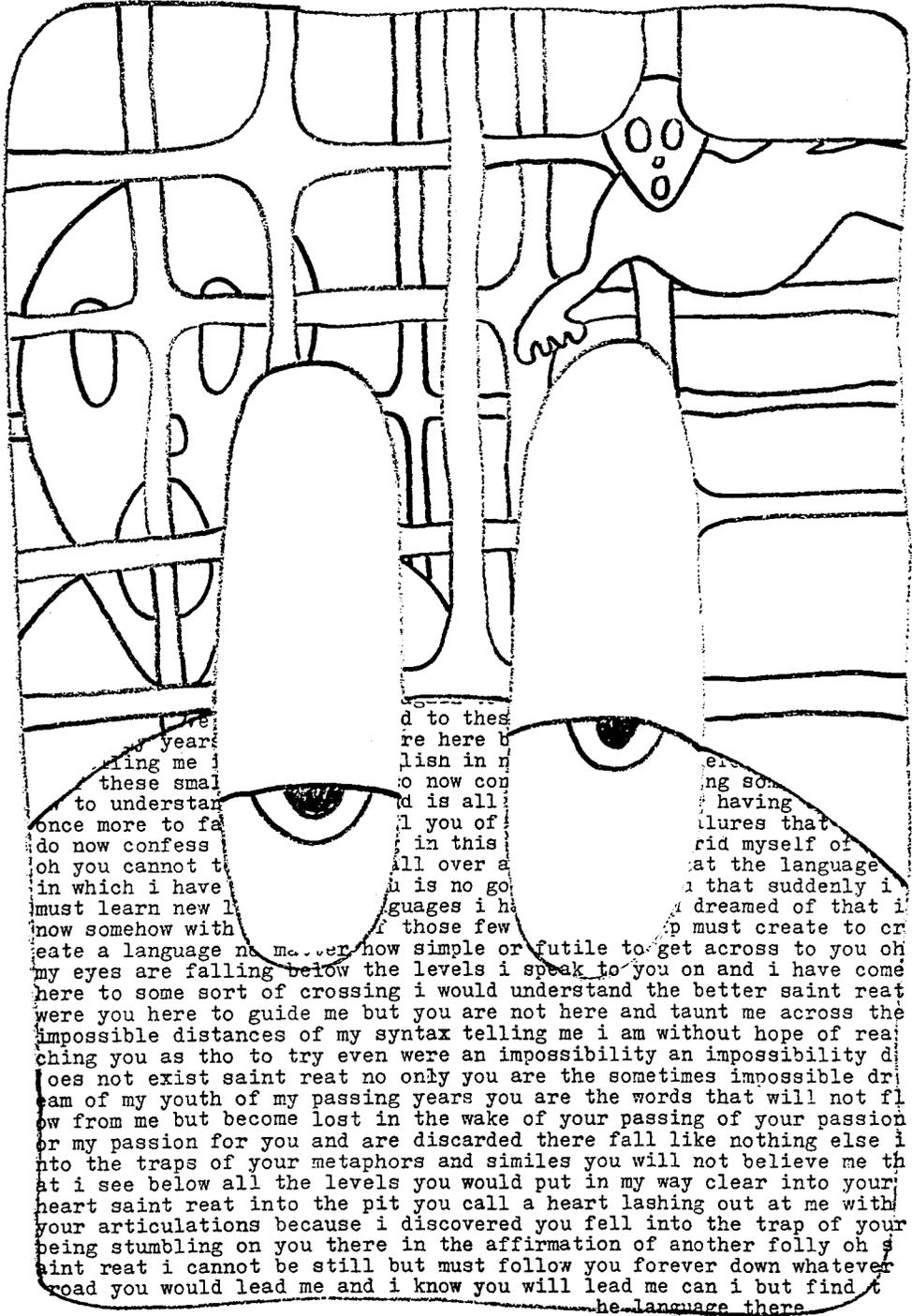
streat it has begun again as
it did ... aning i hav
e bec ... the th
ot o ... the k
now ... e her
e in ... side
ning ... e poe ... liste
orph ... i w ... oneme ... ery m
ever ... i w ... liste ... g to
nking ... v ... tter ... y thi
e whe ... e and
face ... ou as
i am m ... since m
y comin ... ce ... re in t
process ... writin ... is poem
that i h ... since ... ned for y
ou and yo ... have a ... pted it..



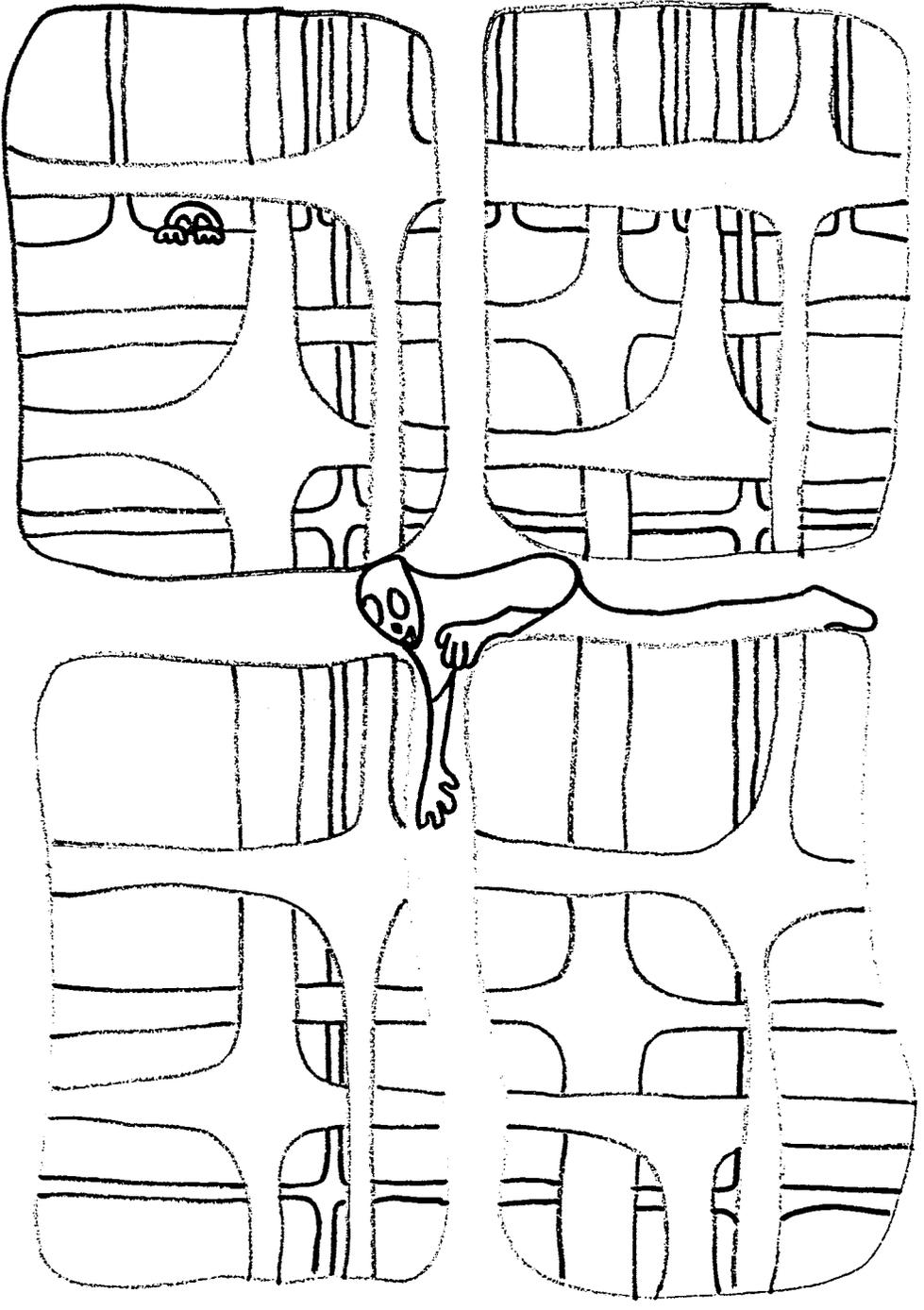


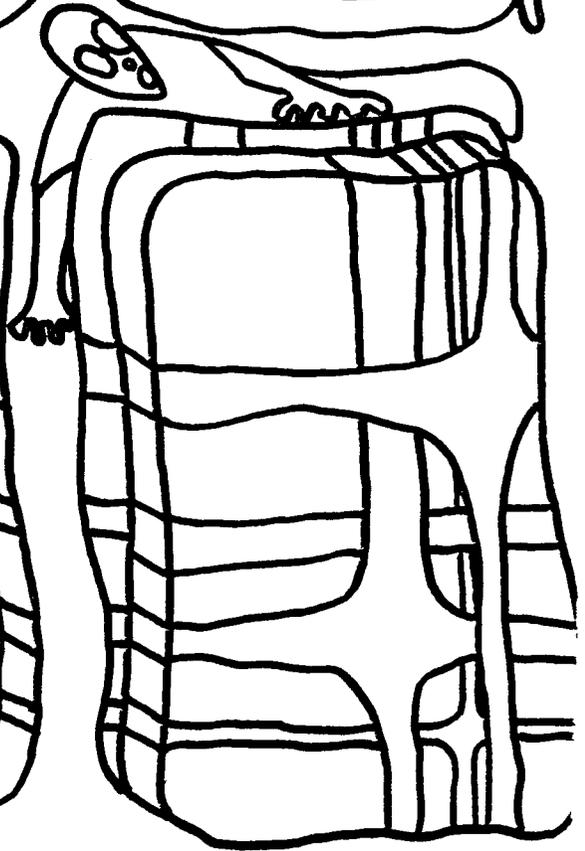
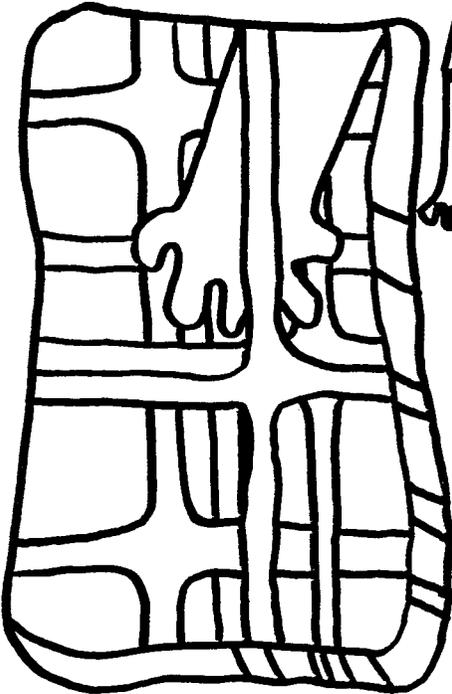
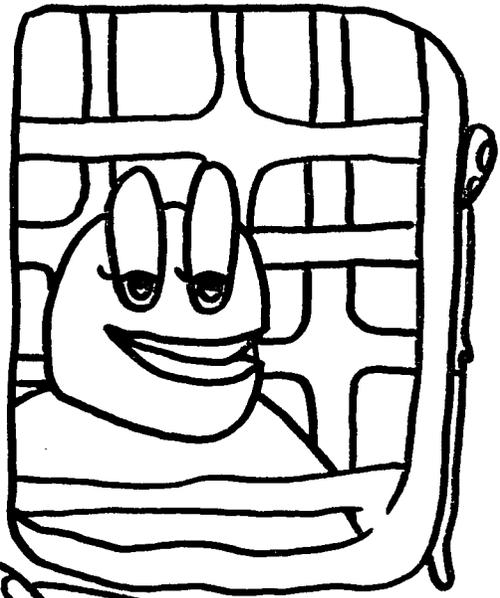
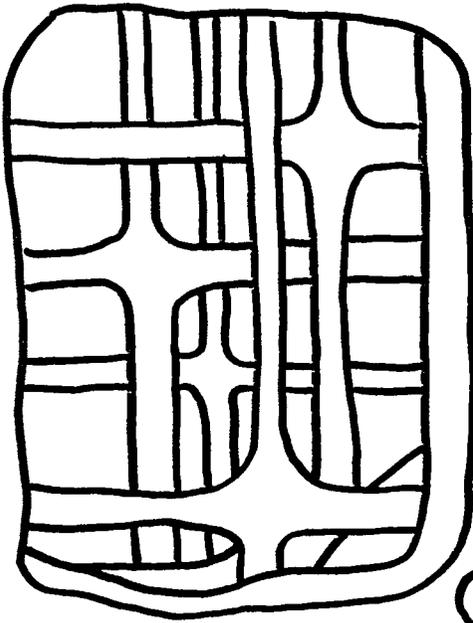
without ears lost lost
in a landscape without
ears in a landscape wi
lost forever here in a
lost landscape with
yearing in a l
landscape
one
or

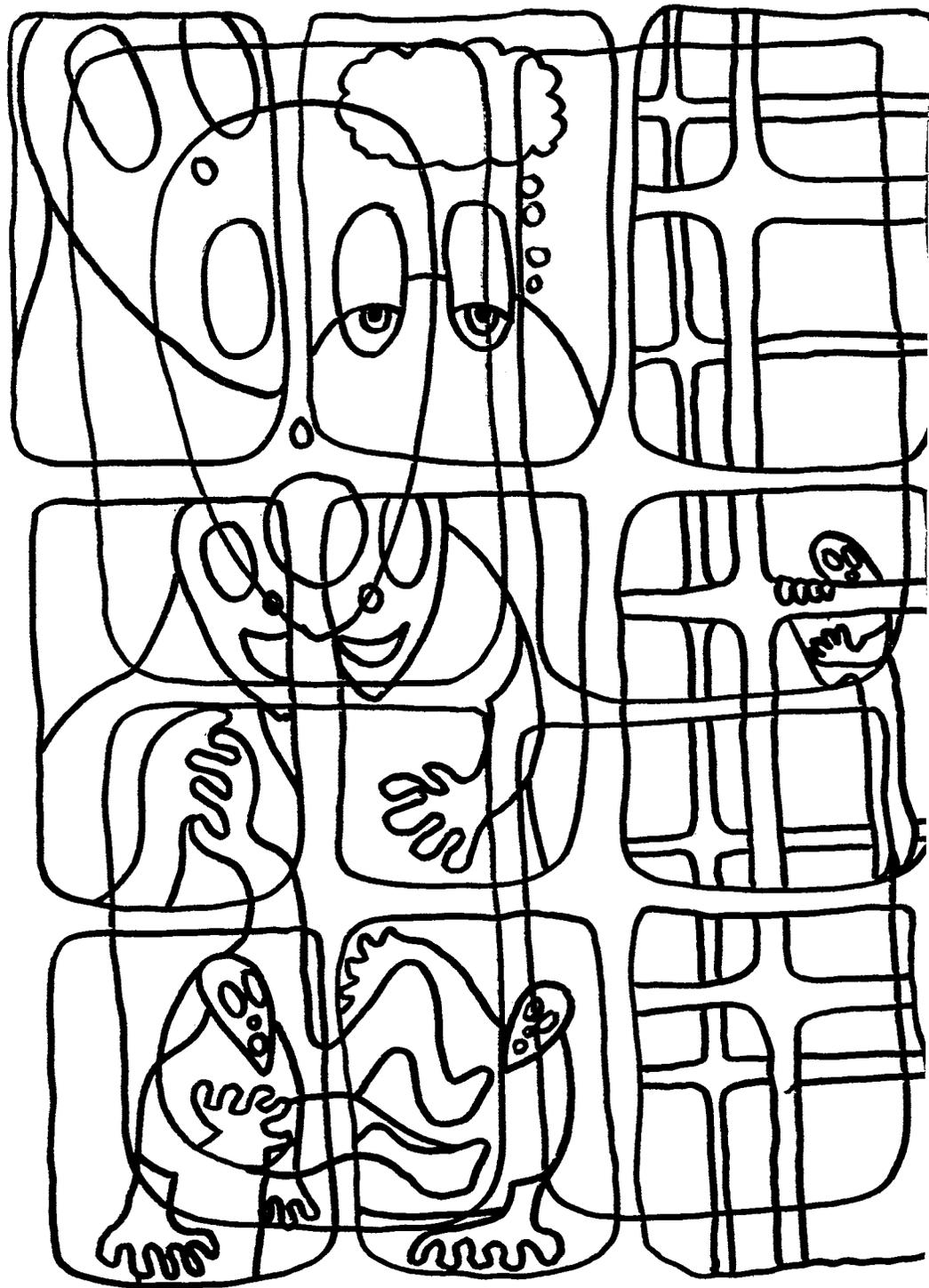
lost in your sequences how i became
in your sequences i lost all sense
you where it began where it reat
must know how it is i became lost i
you in the sequences of landscape
should not have become lost
now i want to know i war
how how i became
i y
qu
it
op

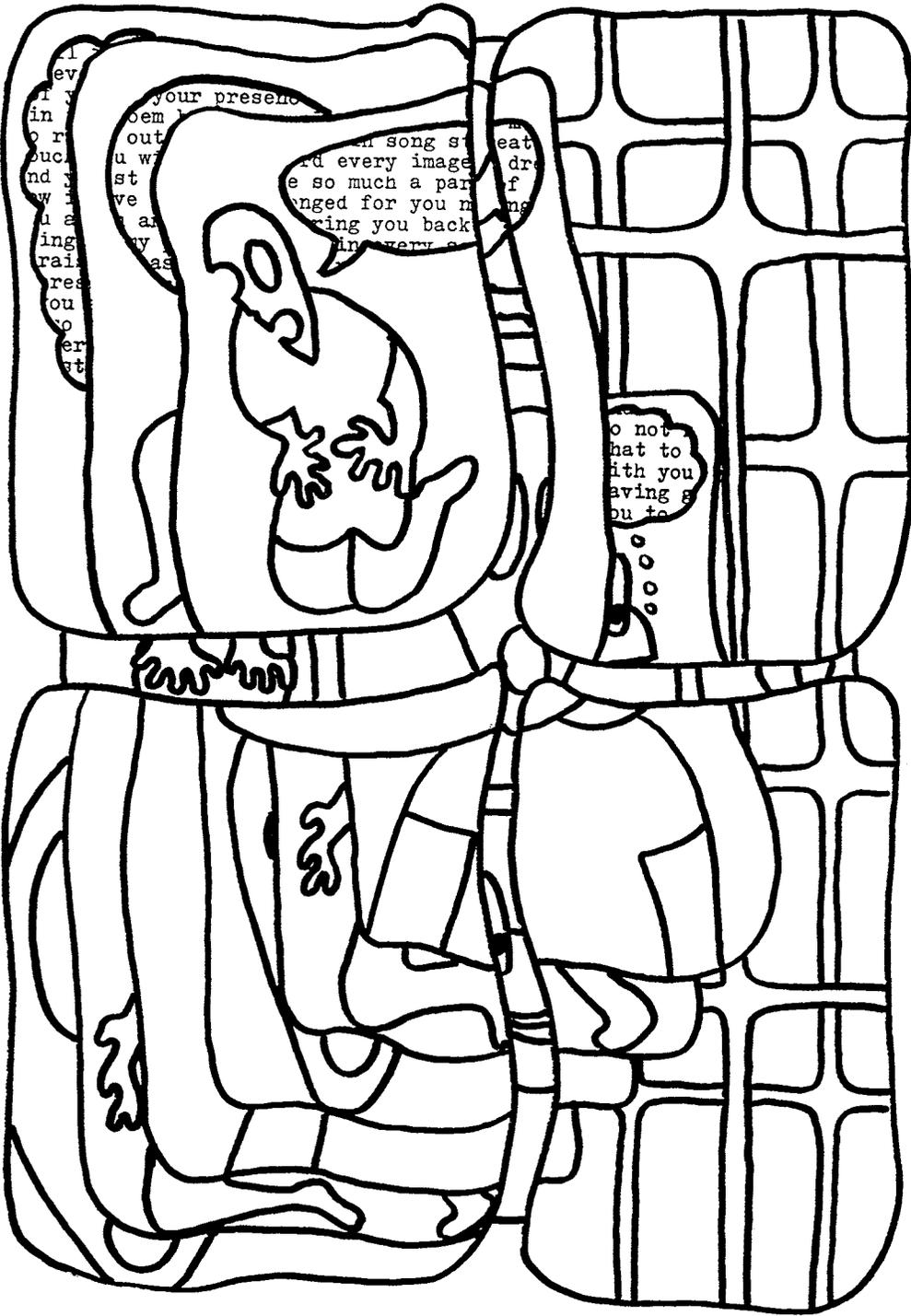


d to these
 re here b
 lish in n
 o now con
 d is all
 l you of
 in this
 all over a
 h is no go
 guages i ha
 if those few
 eate a language no matter how simple or futile to get across to you oh
 my eyes are falling below the levels i speak to you on and i have come
 here to some sort of crossing i would understand the better saint reat
 were you here to guide me but you are not here and taunt me across the
 impossible distances of my syntax telling me i am without hope of rea
 ching you as tho to try even were an impossibility an impossibility d
 oes not exist saint reat no only you are the sometimes impossible dr
 eam of my youth of my passing years you are the words that will not fl
 ow from me but become lost in the wake of your passing of your passion
 or my passion for you and are discarded there fall like nothing else i
 nto the traps of your metaphors and similes you will not believe me th
 at i see below all the levels you would put in my way clear into your
 heart saint reat into the pit you call a heart lashing out at me with
 your articulations because i discovered you fell into the trap of your
 being stumbling on you there in the affirmation of another folly oh s
 aint reat i cannot be still but must follow you forever down whatever
 road you would lead me and i know you will lead me can i but find t
 he language there









ev
i y
in
o r
buc
nd y
w i
u a
ing
rair
res
ou
so
er
at

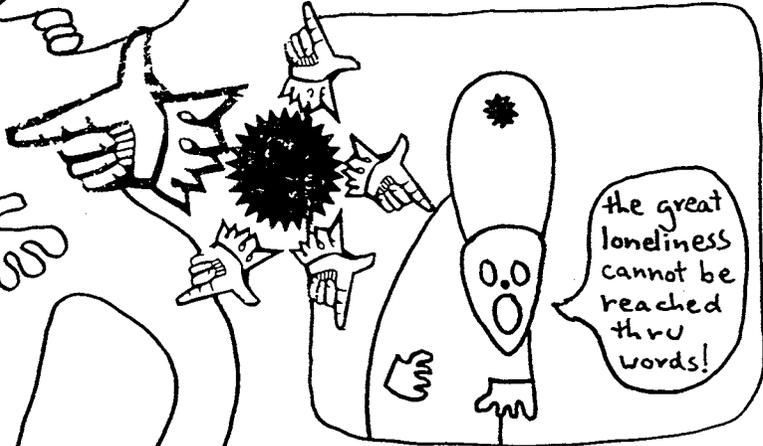
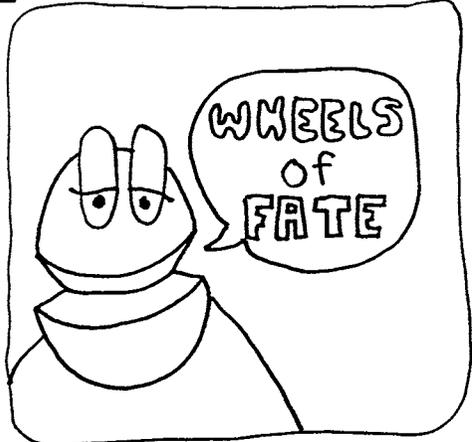
your presence
oem l
out
u wh
st
ve
an
y
as
in song st
eat
d every image
e so much a part
nged for you m
ring you back
in every s



o not
hat to
ith you
aving g
ou to



DEATH



WHAT IS NECESSARY IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND IS A

TOTAL ASSAULT

9



A A A A
H H H H
V V V V

A A

WHY? (this one?)

A A A B C

ORDER



A A A B C



A A A B C

alphabet soup

A A A B C D D E E

IRONY?

1 1 1 2 2 3 3
4 4 5 5 6 6
7 7 8 8 9 9
0 0 0 0 0 0

000

P R R R S

standardized systems
of communication?

P R R R S S S T T T T U

S S S T T T T U

HONEY

NUMBERS

ALPHABET

NOTATIONS

MEASUREMENT

T T T U

T T U

T U



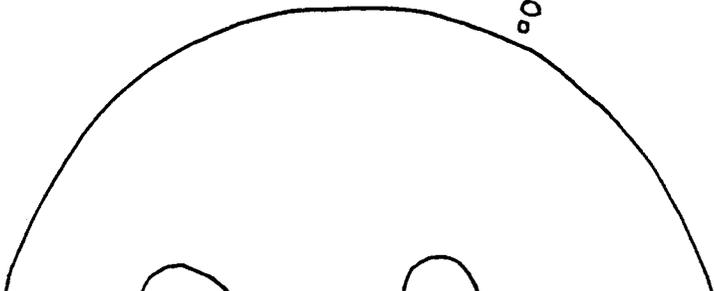
begin again at the beginning
what was in the beginning?
what was spoken?
what grew?
name a goddess of norse religion.
name a rabbit.

ST. REAT I HAVE FORGOTTEN YOUR OTHER NAME.

YOUR OTHER NAME

AH! BUT ^{a long time} THAT
WAS A LONG
TIME AGO

should you
believe everything
you hear ????



EVERYTHING
E You Hear



Monotones

LXXVIII

sometimes you just want to get off one long sentence before you die

sometimes you die
& the sentence hangs there

hell

the sentence is served
obsequious king fool

who the man
who does not know
his face?

eye of my lord fool upon me
squinting indifferently
touches the core

he lives or dies

gaze in the mirror

not enough hair
to start a beard

a conversation in another room

fill up a page
with scribbling on
my fool

lord king
bends the fingers
to his will

beating your hands against the muscles of your body

mad eye of
my lord king saint hood
dream you are no thing if not the dreaming of my own fool brain