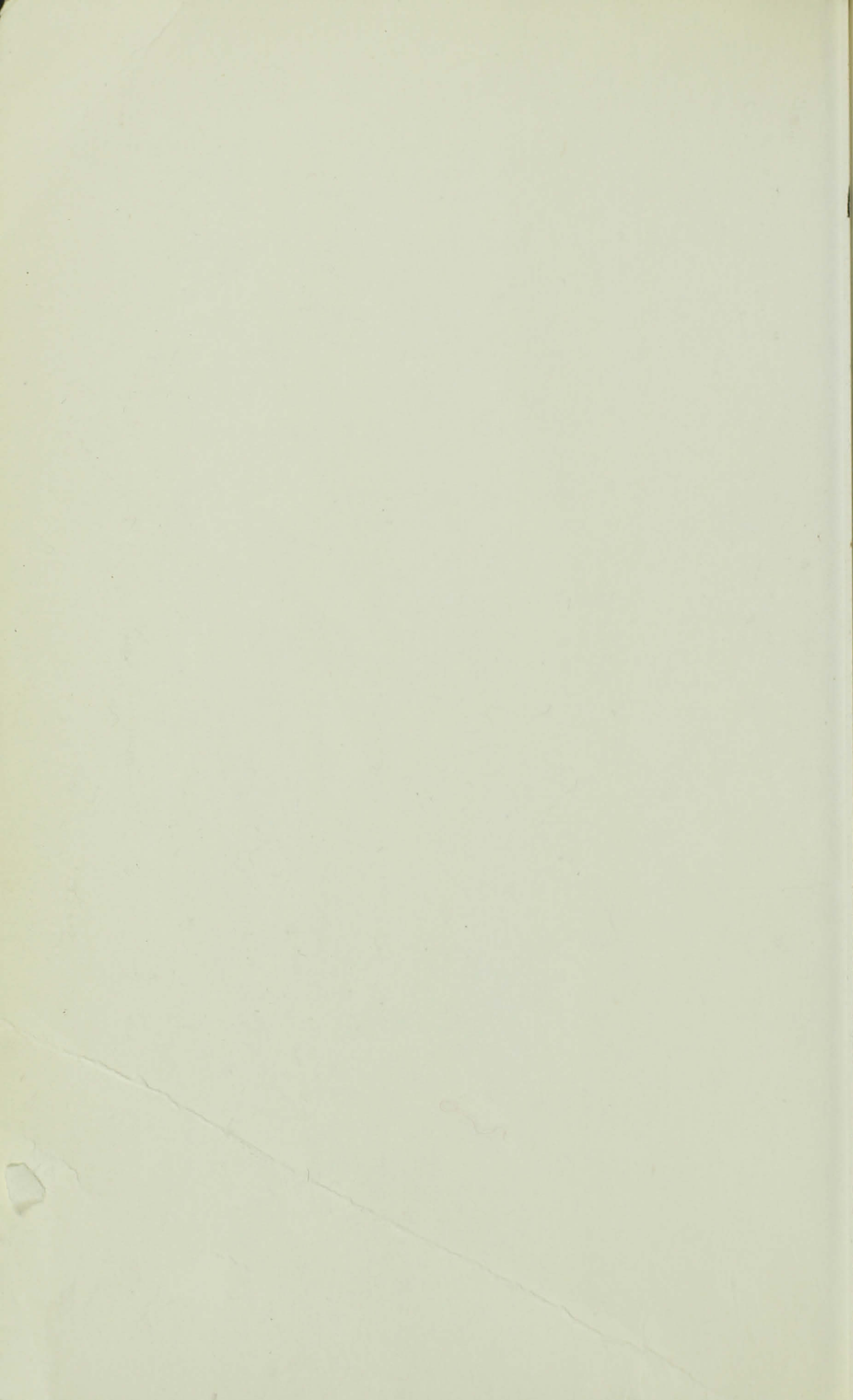


As Elected

Selected Writing / bp Nichol



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1980



As Elected
Selected Writing
1962-1979

SELECTED WRITING

As Elected

bp Nichol

Edited by bp Nichol & Jack David

Introduction by Jack David

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Introduction

In 1975 I had an idea for a book: a selection of poetry from bpNichol. So I wrote to Nichol and asked for his permission to go ahead. He wrote back **i'm very much against the idea. things are still in progress. wait till i'm 45 then i'll have something to select from. i want to find where all the research leads me.** Later, however, he changed his mind. **I used to believe that when you turned forty-five, you automatically became a master. It seemed a long time away, at the time. As I crawl through my thirties, I see that that is wrong. All of one's life in fact one is simply in the process of learning. It's sheer madness to think that you arrive at some complete point in your lifetime. In fact you die.¹**

As Elected is a sampling of Nichol's work, and is not meant to freeze his writing in time, but to suggest – at an arbitrary moment – what he is up to. Nichol is an explorer in language; he says about his writing that **if i have a general theme it's the language trap that runs thru the centre of everything i do. in this regard bill bissett first pointed the direction with a poem called 'They Found th Wagon Cat in Human Body'.**

hence style is disregarded in favor of reproduction of actual states of mind in order to follow these states thru the particular traps they become in search of possible exits. hence for me there is no discrepancy to pass back and forth between trad poetry, concrete poetry, sound poetry, film, comic strips, the novel or what have you in order to reproduce the muse that musses up my own brain.²

Born in Vancouver on September 30, 1944, Nichol went to the University of British Columbia, and Worked as a grade 4 public school teacher for part of a year: quit that and moved to toronto where i became involved with the problems of inter and intra personal communication.³ His influences were Chester Gould's 'Dick Tracy,' Walt Kelly's 'Pogo,' & Winsor McKay's 'Dreams of A Rarebit Fiend' & 'Little Nemo in Slumberland.' In addition the poetry of Olson and Creeley, e.e. cummings, gertrude stein & james joyce, rube goldberg, & the children's books by Dr. Seuss.⁴

As a teenager, Nichol 'loved Keats' as well as D.H. Lawrence and Kenneth Patchen. It was about then that I started to get into Creeley and Ginsberg. The person who particularly impressed me at that time was Lew Welch and some of Philip Whalen's things. I was into the visual thing from Patchen – through his poem-drawings – and around that time, a friend of mine, James Alexander, introduced me to some of the Dada people & Apollinaire. I was reading a lot of Chinese poetry in translation. I was reading a lot of West Coast Indian poetry.... All that stuff.⁵

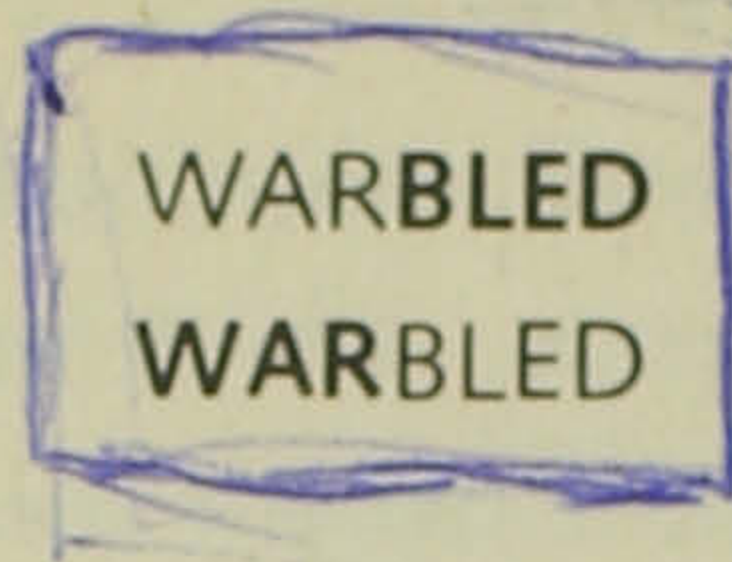
Around 1963 Nichol began to investigate concrete poetry as a result of his explorations in Dada, Gertrude Stein, Patchen, Earle Birney, Pierre Coupey and bill bissett. But it wasn't until 1965 that Nichol came into contact with other poets throughout the world working in similar ways. I'm doing it [concrete

poetry| with my own biases, and from my own point of view, and then I find this thing happening. So I'm doing things that are similar, and I'm learning things from what I see, but don't encounter theory until I'm already doing the stuff.⁶

What he found was an international movement of concrete poetry located in Brazil and Europe, which had developed its own theories, anthologies, and history, even though it had begun only fifteen years earlier. In Switzerland, Eugen Gomringer had developed poetic 'constellations' out of the theories of Max Bill and concrete art. Simultaneously the Noigandres poets from Brazil were composing their 'pilot plan for concrete poetry.'⁷ Central to both Gomringer and the Noigandres poets was the concept of 'language as material,' language as innate building blocks. This poetry differs from the pattern or shaped poetry of such Renaissance poets as George Herbert and Robert Herrick because pattern poems are simply traditional poems which have been visually re-shaped on the page to imitate their thematic object, e.g., an axe or a cross. Concrete poems, on the other hand, rarely are shaped like objects, and are not restructured after the poems are written.

Nichol came to concrete through Patchen's *The Journal of Albion Moonlight*. I was doing, in a sense, poems in the shapes of things; this was very early crude stuff. I didn't do much of that, but that was there.... Then in '64, really, I just became aware that it didn't matter what I set down, what mood I was in, I was essentially churning out the same poem, and that I could become very proficient at that poem cause that's what it was, it was 'a' poem and had this minor variation and that variation but had a complete lack of any technical facility. There was a type of arrogance, I thought; that is to say I was coming to the occasion of the poem to force myself upon it. I was being arrogant rather than learning. So I

sort of made a conscious choice to play. The very first concrete that I did was a thing called 'Popular Song'; it was black and red and then red and black. It was a conscious decision to play. The poem goes:



Here I was, I was typing poems but I wasn't paying attention to the page. So I began to do it and I started with these things I called 'ideopomes'. They were very much that, very much based on typewriter things.... I found I had learned so much by doing visual poetry; it was like I'd done eye-cleaning exercises; I could actually 'see' the goddamn page and I realized that every word counted, that before I'd just been dumping on the page.⁸

2

The writing included in this book has been chosen from Nichol's published and unpublished work. We had two thoughts in mind about the organization: first, follow a strict chronological order based on the date of composition; second, arbitrarily divide the writing into groups according to formal properties. In the end, we decided that while a chronological structure would suggest certain patterns in Nichol's development, the grouping approach would be more beneficial to new readers. So the organization follows a definite pattern: we begin with visual poetry, progressing from the use of individual letters, to words, to distinct shapes on the page. Then comes sound poetry (in its written form) for one voice only. Next are poems which combine visual and traditional lyric qualities, leading

into an excerpt from *The Martyrology* – a poem which tries to integrate the eye and the ear, sight and sound. There follows a selection of prose writings, a short play, some uncategorizable writings, translations, found poems, collaborations, sound poem collaborations, and *Maps*. My comments and Nichol's follow the order in the book, though not all the poems are discussed.

3

Nichol has said, at readings, that his favourite letter is H; in 'H (an alphabet)', the basic *H* is used to re-create the alphabet. The next poem uses the letter Q to explore **letter overlays**. In a way, the thing that I would most compare it to is 'Nude Descending a Staircase' by Duchamp. I was interested in the play of the light through the letters and what happened to the form of a letter when it overlapped with itself. So I would compare it to that and to Dr. Seuss's 'On Beyond Zebra' where he goes on beyond 'z' and into the other letters.⁹

As each of the letters is drawn, there is a continuing theoretical statement being made around the letters: **Poetry being at a dead end poetry is dead. Having accepted this fact we are free to live the poem.... what has been constant till now have been the artificial boundaries we have placed on the poem. We must put the poem in our lives by freeing it from the necessity to be. The poem will live again when we accept finally the fact of the poem's death.**

Nichol's intention in 'Blues' can be ascertained from his poem, 'Captain Poetry: In Love.' **love / spelled backwards / is evol / is / 'nature's way (i've / overworked it / in a dozen / poems) has /**

nothing to do / with evil / but rather evolves / new themes.' So what matters, to Nichol, is that the reverse of love is evol, the start of evolution, of change.

Using the typewriter as the instrument for creating poetry involves several limitations, including the size and shape of the type, the length of the carriage, the regularity of the spacing, and the speed at which you can type. The advantage is, for Nichol, that **each character occupies exactly the same space as any other character.... thus the most successful poems as far as any definition of typewriter poems in particular goes are those which acknowledge & work with this fact.** This is patently true with Nichol's arrow poem which matches the word's meaning with the shape of the poem. But typewriter poems can also succeed by **working against the geometrical exactness of the typewriter using a deliberately disturbed typing in which lines weave across one another in broken fashion phrases beginning & stopping prematurely and words misspelt errors left intact & any aesthetic of design deliberately avoided.**¹⁰

Nichol once selected 'The End of the Affair' as his favourite poem. He recalls the time when he wrote the poem: **this day was a bummer. i was right out of it as i recall with affection the spaced out eyeballs & heavy breathing as i whacked out 'the end of the affair' on my trusty royal portable. my royal portable was breathing hard too with all those g's & 8's & infinitely chanted ORGAN ORGAN ORGAN ORGAN ORGAN ORGAN ORGAN. infinite was the key word. i must've done a dozen drafts of this poem before it turned out. g go goi goin going. & the bummer was gone. that's the essential reason for this choice.**¹¹

Many of Nichol's poems are momentary, ephemeral, and unpolished. In a society of instant food, instant learning, and instant pleasure, why not

instant poetry? Added to *A Condensed History of Nothing* (which is a small mimeographed folder/pamphlet) is the following: **lovingly laboured over No. 39 brought to you by the same great press that's been producing instant garbage for the nation's wastebaskets lo these last five years.** The poem is a couple of blank pages.

In 1963 Nichol worked at the University of Toronto Library. **It impressed me with the narcissism of much literature. It took away from me the illusion that I was simply, by writing books, going to change the world.... when you spend day after day under the dusty stacks of the well-meant words of millions of people, it changes your view of literature and what the point of it is.**¹² Perhaps such an experience led him to this kind of statement in 'Allegory No. 6': **Words as they are are simply words are simply words are simply words....** What can the poet do, then, having concluded that words are simply words? For one thing, he can begin to explore further the interior of letters; to discover that an 8 on its side produces the symbol for infinity, or, in 'Allegory No. 6', to probe behind the solid front of the letter *D* and uncover a world with clouds, birds and a face peering over a fence.

In *Aleph Unit* Nichol combines the techniques of poetry with those of the comic strip. For Nichol, the comic strip is a **totally different set of narrative conventions and a totally different set of linguistic conventions that cuts across language barriers. It's the universal language system that's already extant. It can be used very powerfully.**¹³ Every picture tells a story and every story is a succession of events. A man sitting on a dock thinks of the letter A. By splitting and reversing images, we end up with a 3-dimensional rectangle thinking of a 3-dimensional cone.

Thus, for Nichol, two main components — sight and sound —

make up language. Exaggerate one element or the other, and traditionalists might accuse you of gimmickry: 'that can't be poetry because it doesn't look/sound like poetry.' But **sound poetry is not simply fooling around, though it can at times take on the aspects of play, for when you cut away the linear sequential ideational language you cut away your own foundations.** It is a frustrating often frightening avenue of expression which can release primitive elements in both the poet & his audience.¹⁴

Imagine a drum and a wheel. The drum keeps up a fairly regular beat, and the wheel just rolls along: three words per line, four letters, four letters, and five letters. 'Drum and a Wheel' is a cyclical poem that must be read aloud to achieve its full effect. Better still, listen to Nichol reading the poem on his record, 'borders' (an insert in *bp* – now out of print).

Sound

poetry is crucial for Nichol because it can **free the emotional content of speech from ideation or from words, necessarily, and [it is] able to let out the voice. And once the voice has been let out, then the words [will] ... follow.** I always go back to that Palongahoya legend, you know. Palongahoya's job was to open his mouth and to sing the praises of the creator. And if he did that, then the vibratory axis of the cosmos and everything was in harmony, see? But ... people ... got tricked by Raven and they began to use speech as a way of talking inside their teepees to each other. And this was a false use of it. Eventually he who creates everything comes down and bumps them all off for **misuse of voice.**¹⁵

Imagine you're on a train, and out the window you see the letter *i* turn into the letter *r*. Movement alters shape, speed blurs, but there can also be upside-down versions. When you're gazing at the clouds, shapes of objects begin to assert themselves – so why not letters as well?

Such passive contemplation while the world spins around you can be likened to zen-type meditation. The posing of paradoxical questions, such as in 'the old man ...,' leads the mind to a dead end; there can be no logical conclusion. Where reason fails, emotion must take over, and this is what Nichol attempts to do. We have grown accustomed to seeing words as symbols only; now let the words be visual symbols *and* objects. This is Nichol's interpretation of allegory – to speak otherwise than one seems to speak. Here, the letters look otherwise than they seem to look.

In the search for the perfect poem, I would enter

blob
plop

Observe the clean horizontal line, the exact mirror image, the semantic contiguity of top and bottom. Given these elements, could the poem be improved? Or, in another poem, could the missing *p* underscore the emptiness any better (**em ty**)? The lack of a letter creates meaning; so, likewise, the position of two words – 'moon' and 'owl' – creates a 'shadowy' area. The clear night in the woods, the owl, the sounds, the ambience. A small delicate miniature of a poem, a minimal poem which does not attempt a great deal, but which accomplishes all that it can.

Nichol regards as the key to new writing ... that ... you create a new reality – and this can be formal, this can be content – ... you create something which mirrors a new reality. One which does not exist. This became very clear to Nichol one morning when he saw some crocuses coming up through the ground. I realized that I had never had the urge to rush home and write a poem about crocuses. Rather I wanted to literally create poems

that were crocuses. That had their own thing, that burst forth and were brand new in themselves.¹⁶ In discussing the work of James Reaney, Nichol argues that reaney comes close to writing writing he has finally done in his poetry what he has done in his plays which is to say he has made them self-sufficient they exist as objects in the real world.¹⁷

Nichol's ability to write in a variety of forms has made his readers slower to accept him, because as soon as someone got used to labelling him as a visual poet or a sound poet, he would then turn up with a prose narrative or in a sound group collaboration **So I've literally had these different phases for which I've been known. And depending on the period of time people look discomfited when I read some things, and really happy when I read the stuff I'm known for at the moment. Doesn't matter.**¹⁸ At one time, he was known for his Captain Poetry poems, but it is a mistake to equate Captain Poetry with bpNichol. (Incidentally, you will discover a reference to Captain P — in Michael Ondaatje's *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* on page 84. Nichol's *The True Eventual Story of Billy the Kid* was published at about the same time as Ondaatje's poem, and Ondaatje made a great movie about Nichol called *Sons of Captain Poetry*.)

If this collection of Nichol's writing has a fulcrum, then the excerpt from *The Plunkett Papers* is it: a lyric which deals with the theme of death in a traditional, narrative style. Notice, however, that the spelling is unconventional — coz for 'cause, & for and — and that there are no capital letters employed. Imagine this poem with capital letters and usual punctuation: would it be altered? Probably not. Then why not use them? This is part of a larger question that Nichol continually grapples with, the question of using what has preceded you while simultaneously being 'out on some kind of frontier.'¹⁹ In the two poems from *Mono Tones*,

Nichol cuts back the undergrowth of language, and in so doing examines the composition of the words themselves. 'terra' leads to 'thera' and to 'the one ra.' In a similar fashion, 'follow' leads to 'flow.' Unlike the poem about death remembered from childhood, this is a poem that takes place right in front of you, on the page. This is not a poem recollected in tranquility, but a poem uncovered on the white paper. It is a quiet, meditative poem, as is 'L.' The title of the book, *Mono Tones*, hints at its one-dimensional qualities of sound and hue, and the poems themselves are the kind you might construct after a 'walk in the woods.'

We now move into what Nichol considers his most important work to date, *The Martyrology*. The section excerpted is entitled *Coda: Mid-Initial Sequence* which is a take on the letter p.²⁰ I began to catch a glimpse of, to see a word as a sentence that said things about single letters. That is to say, the word word for instance becomes w or d. That's a balanced structure. w is four letters from one end, d is four letters from the other end. But it's reversed and there's that 'or' – an element of choice – so that in Book IV what begins to happen is those sorts of structures where the word is read as a sentence.²¹

The Martyrology is Nichol's long, open-ended poem that grows and changes. It's a journal also ... I have no final master-plan for it. I think that would be a failure in conception on my part. If you don't reach it by the time you're dead, you lose the race.²² *The Martyrology* began for Nichol when he was writing the *Scriptures* series. I was beginning to write these rhetorical, often didactic pieces in which I started to address the saints. I was really raving in them, really screaming – very manifesto tone – talking about concerns re: language (by language, I mean here the commerce that takes place between people – the exchange). The saints began to take on more flesh

and blood for me. This whole world had grown up for me around the saints – actually based on fantasy I had when I was a kid: that the real world was up in the sky where the saints lived and that we were but passing our life in the sea of air.

In many ways 'The Martyrology' is a very schizy book. The narrator, me, is out of it in Book I. A lot of it is addressed very personally to the saints. In Book II you see the move away from kind of leaning on what eventually began to appear to be the false figures of the saints: that it wasn't the saints at all I was addressing, it was myself I was talking to, parts of myself, voices and that these were also different moods within myself I was 'evocating.'

Now the main thing in writing 'The Martyrology' is that I haven't had conscious control of its direction, it's something that has grown. I've felt very much against a certain view of art which ends up always tying things together, which struck me as totally not like life and what I wanted in my writing were forms which articulate the world as I'm aware of it; the world as I actually encounter ... to not simply plug into forms.

If you read 'The Martyrology' the progress from Book I has also been formal progress – there's a change in the length of line, the type of rhythm, the type of sounds in the piece. In Book III that becomes even more pronounced.

What's happening in Book IV is that in a sense the process of breaking down the language that I was into in the early years is happening but I'm recombining – I'm beginning to look at words as sentences that say things about the single letters.²³

In a way you're constantly brought back to the surfaces of the poem. You're driven down into the language, you're driven even further into the

other side of something. I don't know where that's going to go. It's there as an element. But you have to look at the poem, you have to be able to see it as I'm reading it – otherwise half of it flows by. Like a good piece of music, a good poem should be re-readable many times. You should hear something different every time. So that's there in 'The Martyrology' 'cause I have a lot of different levels of meaning. I brought in a horrendous degree of personal reference in 'The Martyrology.' My justification for that grows out of an experience I've often had of walking down the street and making eyeball contact with someone. Very briefly I get this whole impression of them but then I never see the person again. I bring in names in that same way. Maybe they'll come up again, maybe they won't. It's irrelevant. They're there – the impression they make on you is the reason they're there for that period of time. And so that is all thrusting before along with the central themes of 'The Martyrology' which are themes around what is the place of i in the collective we – 'cause my basic belief is that the i, in a certain sense, is useless – the we is everything. It's the collective activity that makes the difference in the long run. It's the whole discussion of the immortality game as it applies to writers. There's no point in it. It's really what happens to the race that's most important. Balanced against the realization that that recognition of the we cannot mean an erasure of the i – 'cause if you erase the i you have no we. So how do you make that balance?

The question of balance comes to the front again when discussing the difference between prose and poetry. The next part of *As Elected* contains selections from a variety of Nichol's prose writing. But before examining that writing, it may prove useful to discuss whether there is a distinction between prose and poetry. According to Nichol, **It's actually a visual distinction. And it has to do with the type of line, that is**

to say, prose tends to be a much more talky, much more discursive, less imagistic, less tightly imagistic type of writing that visually is arranged in a particular way on the page. Now there's no reason it has to be arranged that way. The main reasons are typographical – they have to do with the limitations of the book and not with the writing itself There's a reason for the left-hand margin and there's a reason for the right-hand margin in poetry.²⁵ But form alone is not the complete answer; in prose, argues Nichol, **There's the possibility for playing around with characters and all those things. I think – this is purely personal – I've tended to use poetry as a medium of self-expression. And traditionally in prose, you can write 'fictions.'** So that's probably why I got interested in prose, writing about things other than self, you know (even though you're always writing about self anyways.)²⁶

Andy is a series of five unrelated stories, each one interrupting the other in no apparent sequence. The excerpt included here picks up on the Yaboo exploration story on August 28th, 1944. In the investigation of the Himalayas, the diarist's fever is worsening, just as are the difficulties of the characters in the other stories. A science fiction story becomes the mouthpiece for theories about writing: 'meaning least concern in place of actual working of the mind.' In this particular segment, there are only three of the stories: the interchanging explorer and science fiction episodes, and the final letter from Andy. 'By the way,' says Andy, 'that's a great poem you sent.' And later: 'Great to know a fellow who can express himself in your own language.' In fact, it is a real letter from Nichol's friend, Andy Phillips. This juxtaposition of the 'real' and the 'fictional' is characteristic of Nichol's openness to poetry and to language, and the blending becomes more evident in the collaboration poems.

At the point between

one story and another, something else is happening. The transition is not jerky; rather, there is a carry-over from one to the next so that a common theme emerges. For example, after the diary entry for September 3, 1944, the SF story extends the basic premise: 'There can be no turning back but there is no where to go forward.' Then the SF story: 'details thinning out. no further delineation possible in face of continued activity of culture parasites reversal attempt of original language tool function now become weapon.' The dead end has been reached, just as Andy could not communicate with a French girl because of the language barrier. There is also a personal element to this sequence, because Nichol was born just twenty days after the diarist's final entry; further, the second last SF section reads: 'twenty-four year overlap coming to resolution in final flight from pseudoforms into matter/antimatter overlap ultimate destruction creation of total new.' Dated 1962-1968, we can figure out that the twenty-four year overlap coincides with Nichol's age when finishing *Andy* and that the creation is the birth of Nichol as well as the birth of a new form of communication.

Nichol's fascination with Billy the Kid, which appears in *Two Heroes*, also surfaced in *The True Eventual Story of Billy the Kid*, a short prose piece 'about this guy who had a short dick and who went around killing people.' The piece gained notoriety when Nichol won the Governor-General's Award for Poetry in 1970, and one of the four books for which he received the prize was *Billy*. In light of recent censorship arguments, the comments of some members of Parliament are illuminating. Mr. Mac T. McCutcheon (Lambton-Kent): 'In view of the recent Canada Council grant based on the writing of a treatise relating to the life of Billy the Kid, can the parliamentary secretary say if this is a change of direction from subsidizing Marxism to marksmanship with short guns?'

Later, Mr. Nowlan queried why *Billy* should have received a grant since it 'is nothing more than rude and pornographic.' Finally, McCutcheon moved that the house express its 'displeasure' with the award, but without unanimous consent, the motion could not be made.²⁸

A more difficult work to read and understand is *Journal*. To Nichol, *Journal* is an attempt to submerge the reader. **The way I saw it was that it wasn't so much an issue of style, achieving a writing style, as being able to transcribe, if you like, or translate, states of consciousness. And to simply have that so that the reading experience would be the experience as much as you can get it of a state of consciousness.... The state is happening essentially to, we can call him 'the' character in 'Journal,' is one in which external reality just gets subsumed into internal reality.... Finally he just has to shove all that aside and in a way just go back to his own beginning, which, in that case is his relationship to his mother. And it's almost like he starts over at that point. He says, okay, here's everything I remember of what happened. You know, literally, he finds a grammar for memory in a sense. And then he can proceed from there.**²⁹

The last part of *As Elected* includes some weird poems, some translations, and some collaborations. To begin, is *Naming 3* a poem? Well, it is composed of symbols frequently used in poetry. It does appear on the page looking like a poem, and it does have both a title and a date of composition. And it does involve reader participation to create a word which emphasizes the dominant idea.

Is it possible to determine the square root of logic? What is the nearest whole letter? When you transfer one symbology to another, i.e., mathematics to language, you make new discoveries. In *probable systems 9* Nichol simulates mathematics, and then offers a

commentary. He opens up the area of 'rounding off to the nearest whole letter.' Compare the concept of 'fractional letters' between H and I to a piano's eighty-eight keys. Why eighty-eight? Aren't there an infinite number of notes? To be practical, however, we arbitrarily seize on a certain number: 'the more exact you try to be ...' argues Nichol, 'the further you move away from the reality of its existence....'

Translating a poem from a foreign language into English involves looking up words and expressions, comprehending a different syntax, and, in the end, altering the original. But Nichol enlarges the meaning of translation to mean transfer (the original Latin meaning), to 'turn from one language into another,' 'to transport with the strength of some feeling....'

Writing with Steve McCaffery as the Toronto Research Group, Nichol proposes that **the traditional idea of translation involves a shift in notation in order to present a common meaning to a wider audience.... [however] comparison of different languages indicates that there are few if any synonymous terms.... lapps have no generic term for snow but several words for several types of snow.... what is clear is that we inherit a linguistic framework which to a large extent determines the type of reality we perceive.³⁰ If we no longer consider translation as being necessarily an informational service – the one tongue's access into other tongues – then it can become a creative endeavor in its own right.³¹**

In Nichol's translation 'Catullus poem XXVIII' some of the Latin words are rendered in their original meaning, despite their alteration in sound: e.g., cum / with, qui / who, diu / godly. But most of the English words are plays on the Latin sounds: states Nichol, 'I've always been led by the ear in my writing.'³²

A poet speaks through many voices. From a dream, Nichol recovered a poem by bill bissett – a poem written in the style of bill bissett, but through Nichol's perceptions and dream state. Compare this poem to George Bowering's poem on bill bissett (in *Curious*), and compare it to a poem by bissett himself.

The principle underlying 'found poetry' is that all language can be transformed into poetry, provided you alter the original context. Look around you right now; at random, begin to read from something – a fire warning poster, a fragment from a newspaper, an ad on a chocolate bar wrapper. Read it as if you were a high school English teacher quoting from her favourite poetry anthology, and you will have uncovered a poem.

If the found poem links the originator with the finder, what happens when two people *knowingly* collaborate? Unless we are allowed to view the collaborative process, and distinguish who did what and how it all came about, the answer is foggy. What is clear is that the collaboration between Nichol and Wayne Clifford resulted in a different style than Nichol's collaboration with Steve McCaffery.

The connection between Nichol's job and his collaborations is worth exploring. He works at Therafields as a **theradramist ... seeing people and talking with them about what's bothering them. And what you're doing in the situation is not imposing yourself on the person but basically being a catalyst: to ask questions they can't formulate, to put them in the situation where they're going to have to deal with the material themselves and where you can help them as much as you can.**³³ In a collaboration between two writers, one may act as the catalyst, or both may act as catalysts, in which case the poem becomes the end product and the individual

personal differences are forgotten.

Possibly best known of Nichol's collaborations is with the sound poetry group, The Four Horsemen. The Horsemen was Rafael Barretto-Rivera's idea. Steve McCaffery and I had a reading at the St. Lawrence Centre (some bomb!) ... where only 20 people showed up in this huge hall. So Rafael was there and really enjoyed us so we got together with Paul Dutton and we all jammed. I was very interested in getting into that because I was very bored with the limitation of one voice. What four voices allowed us was more choral, more theatrical possibilities – in short opens up the whole ball game. As a writer this was a tremendously exciting challenge to me.

In fact, The Horsemen as a performance group have been very successful in what we were trying to do: reaching people. We've had difficulty ourselves personally, in knowing what we want to do when we finish a reading. There's been a tremendous input into the audience, the audience has usually been very responsive, we get a lot of feedback just in terms of attentive listening and applause ... and then, there we are, we're no longer a group and we're just individuals and it's often a very dislocating time.³⁴ When the group started, the first thing we had to overcome was that everybody knew my name and nobody knew the rest of the group's names. Okay, so what you have is 'bpNichol and The Four Horsemen!' It sounds like I got this back-up group of Motown singers snapping their fingers.... This was a very hard process. People don't want to think of writers as groups. They're fixed on writers as the single consciousness.³⁵

The Four Horsemen evolved a notational system simply to let ourselves know at which point we follow different courses, while at the same

time leaving wide variation in terms of what each voice does do in his section with, of course, an ear to what each other voice is doing.... in the past month we've begun to leave this notational system behind since the notational system (like any language) limits your thinking for a more spheroid (i.e. non-linear) means of notating.... thru sound the chance exists to heal the split that has become more & more apparent since the invention of the printing press it is the only thing that makes sense.³⁶ In 'Particular Music', the grid contains room for each of the Horsemen to be on his own as well as to act in concert with the others. A more 'spheroid' approach exists in 'Sorrow Laid As This One'; no clear stops are indicated, nor can the end result be predicted – each performance is unique, depending on the participants, the time, the audience, and so on.

Finally, *Maps* describes Nichol's attitudes towards 'system' and 'technique'; it is a zen-like statement about time ('the moment does not come / the moment is') and about the need to throw away the scaffolding once the tower has been built.

4

Five years ago, I began the last paragraph of an essay entitled 'Writing Writing: bpNichol at 30' this way: 'If it is not blasphemy to categorize Nichol' and he wrote me back: 'having not achieved Godhead yet it looks like your soul's safe.' To categorize Nichol, as this book attempts to do, is to portray his writing from one very limiting viewpoint. So let me conclude by quoting from the work of another critic, Frank Davey: *bpNichol's writing is the most courageous body of work in Canadian literature today. ... It risks, even invites, condemnation by the conservative critic for triviality, banality, obscurity, wordiness, formless-*

ness, privateness – all those 'vices' feared by the reasonable man because they so inform the human environment. To Nichol, however, those 'vices' are precisely what most need to be exorcised ever, those 'vices' are precisely what most need to be exorcised by their transformation into linguistic sign, so that the saints, rhymes, and secret rhymes of the language can move the poet to 'greater vision', 'other mysteries,' and a reconciliation with Heraclitean process – a willingness to 'allow what is to be'.³⁷

Jack David
Toronto, Ontario
Spring, 1980

A Brief Note on the Flux

The astute reader will note in reading the introduction many shifts in punctuation, spelling, etc. while reading through the quotations. The author and his editor chose to leave these intact to suggest some of the paths his particular researches have taken him down. Heraclitus, there a clitus, everywhere the flux'll flight us.

Footnotes

1. bpNichol, *Out-Posts / Avant-Postes*, ed. Caroline Bayard and Jack David (Erin: Porcépic, 1978), p. 28
2. bpNichol. *Contemporary Poets of the English Language*, ed. Rosalie Murphy (London: St. James, 1970), p. 798.
3. *Contemporary Poets*, p. 797.
4. *Contemporary Poets*, p. 798.
5. *Out-Posts*, p. 17.
6. *Out-Posts*, p. 24.
7. bpNichol, *Concrete Poetry: A World View*, ed. Mary Ellen Solt (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 71-72. This is the best available introduction to the study of concrete poetry.
8. bpNichol, 'Interview with bpNichol: Feb. 13, 1978,' by Ken Norris, *Essays on Canadian Writing*, No. 12 (Fall 1978), pp. 247-48.
9. *Out-Posts*, p. 23.
10. bpNichol, review of *Typewriter Poems*, by Peter Finch, *Open Letter*, Ser. 2, No. 3 (Fall 1972), 78-79.
11. bpNichol, *How Do I Love Thee*, ed. John Robert Colombo (Edmonton; Hurtig, 1970), pp. 160-61.
12. *Out-Posts*, p. 18.
13. *Out-Posts*, p. 38.
14. bpNichol, review of *Th Jinx Ship nd Othr Trips*, by bill bissett, *Quarry*, 16 (1967), p. 46.
15. bpNichol, 'Interview,' *The Capilano Review*, Nos. 8 & 9 (Fall 1975 & Spring 1976), p. 325. Nichol was interviewed by Gladys Hindmarch, Pierre Coupey, Dwight Gardiner, Brian Fisher, and Daphne Marlatt.
16. *Out-Posts*, p.32.
17. bpNichol, 'Letter re James Reaney,' *Open Letter*, Ser. 2, No. 6 (Fall 1973), p.5.
18. *Out-Posts*, p. 30.
19. *Out-Posts*, p. 30.
20. *Out-Posts*, p. 22.
21. *Out-Posts*, p. 39.
22. *Out-Posts*, p. 40.
23. bpNichol, 'Not what the Siren Sang / But what the Frag Ment: "doing concrete", an interview with bpNichol,' by Anne Sherman and Nick Power, *The Varsity*, 28 Feb. 1975, p. 11.

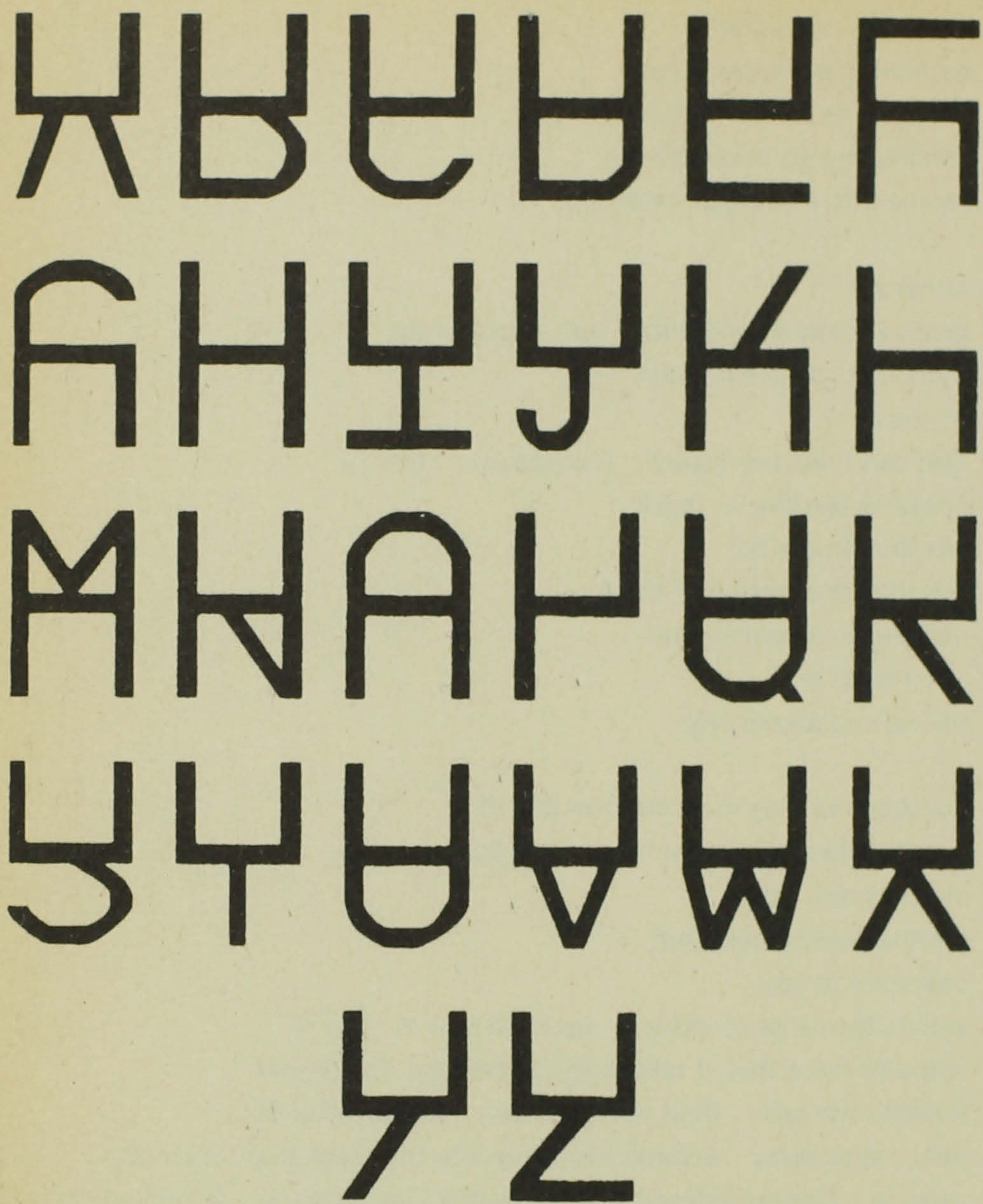
24. *Out-Posts*, p. 39.
25. *Out-Posts*, p. 24-25.
26. *The Capilano Review*, p. 316.
27. *The Varsity*, p. 10.
28. *Hansard*, 10 June 1971, pp. 6554, 6557; 29 June 1971, p. 7458. You can read *The True Eventual Story of Billy the Kid* in John Newlove, ed., *Canadian Poetry: The Modern Era* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977).
29. *The Capilano Review*, pp. 318-19.
30. 'TRG Report 1: Translation,' *Open Letter*, Ser. 2, No. 4 (Spring 1973), 79.
31. 'TRG Report 1: Translation,' 83.
32. *Out-posts*, p. 30.
33. *The Capilano Review*, p. 326.
34. *The Varsity*, p. 11.
35. *The Capilano Review*, p. 327.
36. bpNichol, 'From Sound to Sense,' *Stereo Headphones*, No. 4 (Spring 1971), n. pag.
37. Frank Davey, 'bpNichol,' in *From There to Here* (Erin: Porcépic, 1974), pp. 213-14. For a thorough list of Nichol's writings, see his 'published autotopography,' *Essays on Canadian Writing*, No. 1 (Winter 1974), pp. 39-46. For other critical reaction to Nichol, see *Out-Posts*, pp. 48-49.

alphabet a landfall a
beginning becomes a hub
creates as in 'The Hands of Orlac'
dreams that go uncomforted
escape into a stranger landscape

father if
given a frame of reference you were to hug
(hurt) me i have no faith
in you i
'just can't feel the letters' (consonants the 'j')
knowing the line is back
lets the tongue fall
melody's the motion of them
nothing to return to un-
open heart o
please lord please help

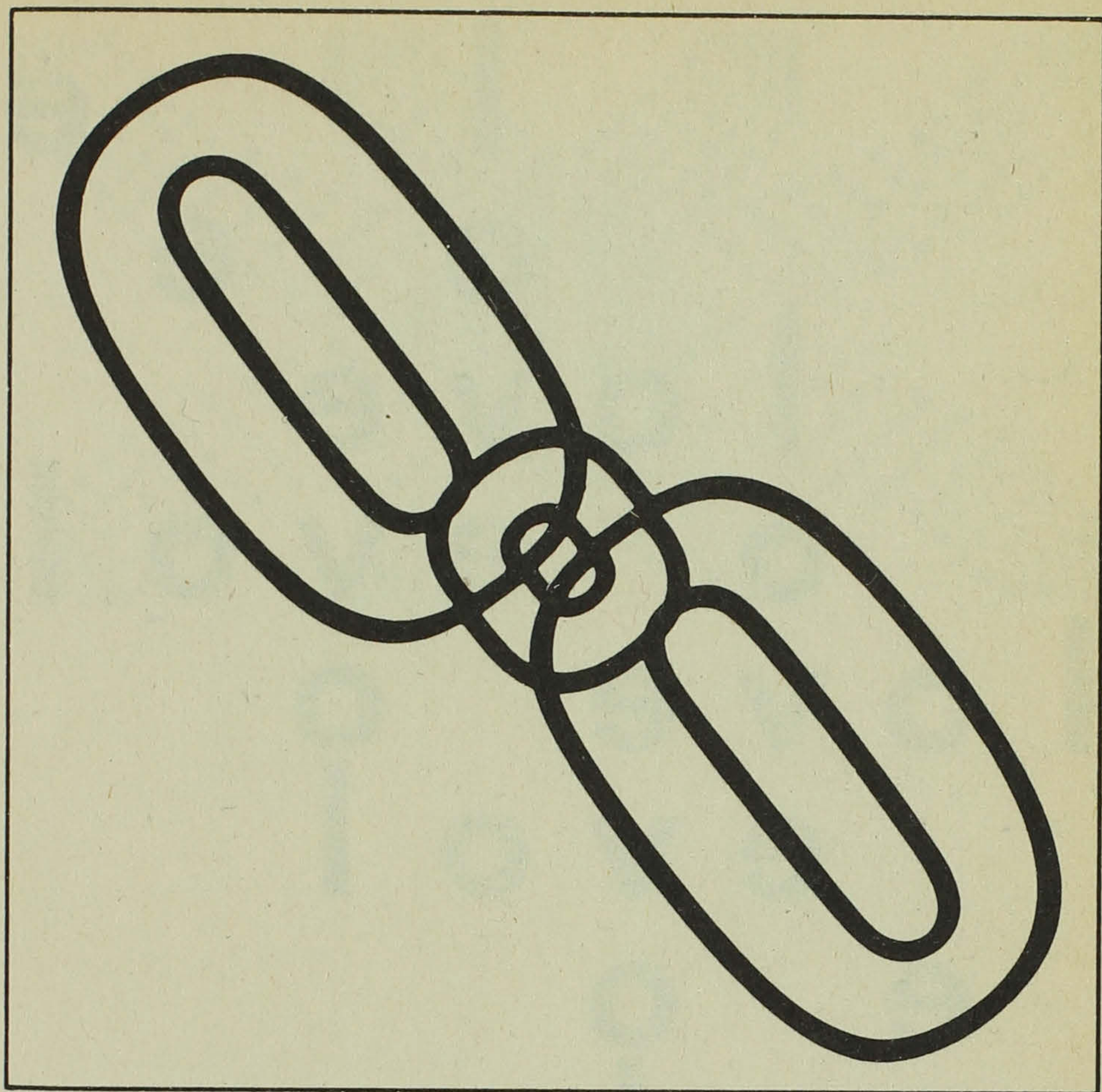
questions as they must do form the 'Q:'
running always from the 'A:' it is a bar
smashes me glass
the shattered pieces that
unknown to you
violate the sense of victory (as Kallir saw it the 'V'
witholds more than it tells of its symbology) we know
X marks the spot (that corny phrase) he blows his 'ax'
yells slips away extends his frame into the space that's memory
zeros in Duncan's desert of the american imagination within which lies OZ

H (an alphabet)



from 26 Alphabets

from 'ABC: the aleph beth book'



The End of the Affair

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g g
g g g
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ogranogran gg
gorangorang g
gorangorang g
g oragnoragn g
g organorgan g
g g g g
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g g go
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8 8 g
8 8g
8 8
8 8
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The Complete Works

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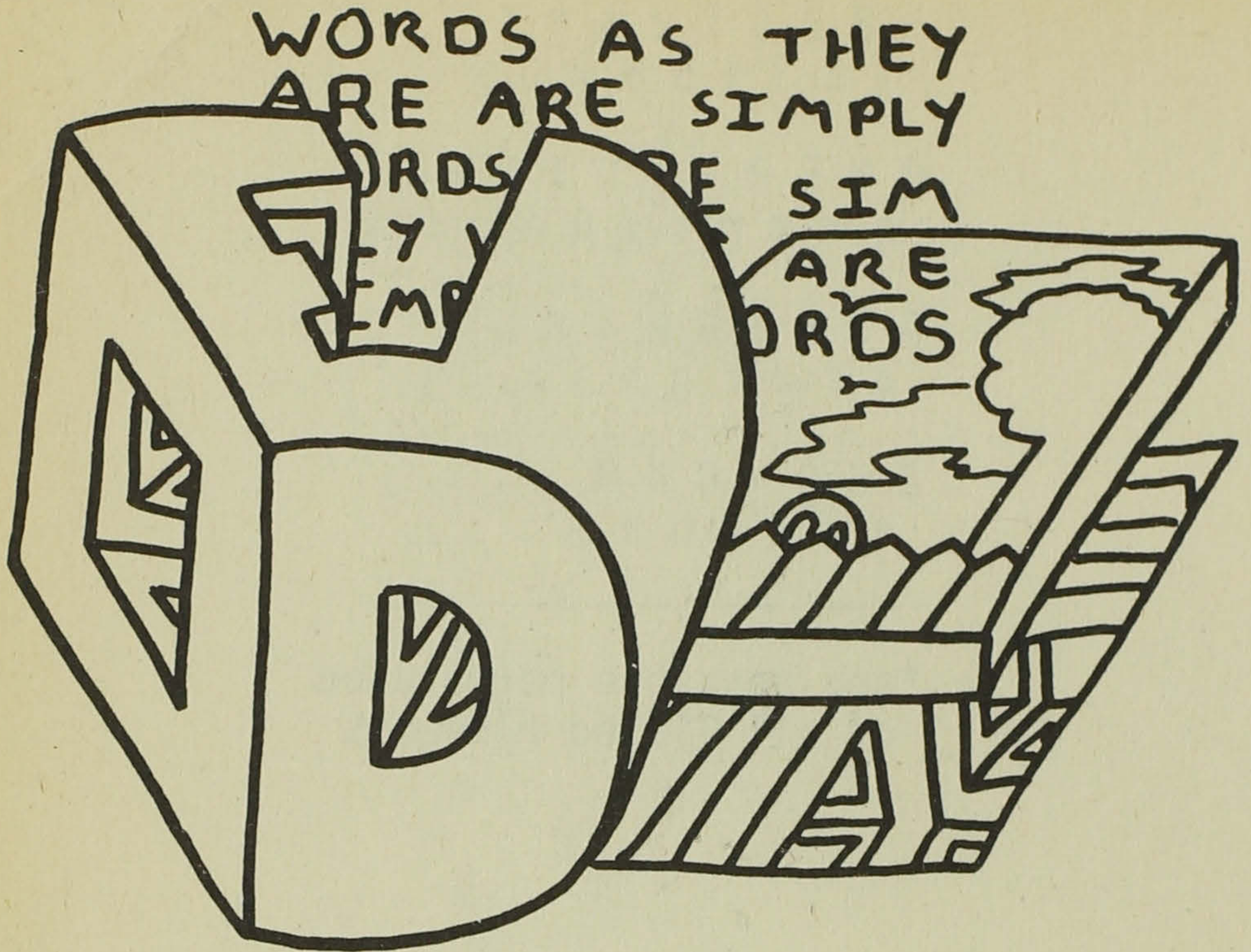
Q W E R T Y U I O P $\frac{1}{4}$
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a s d f g h j k l ; ' "

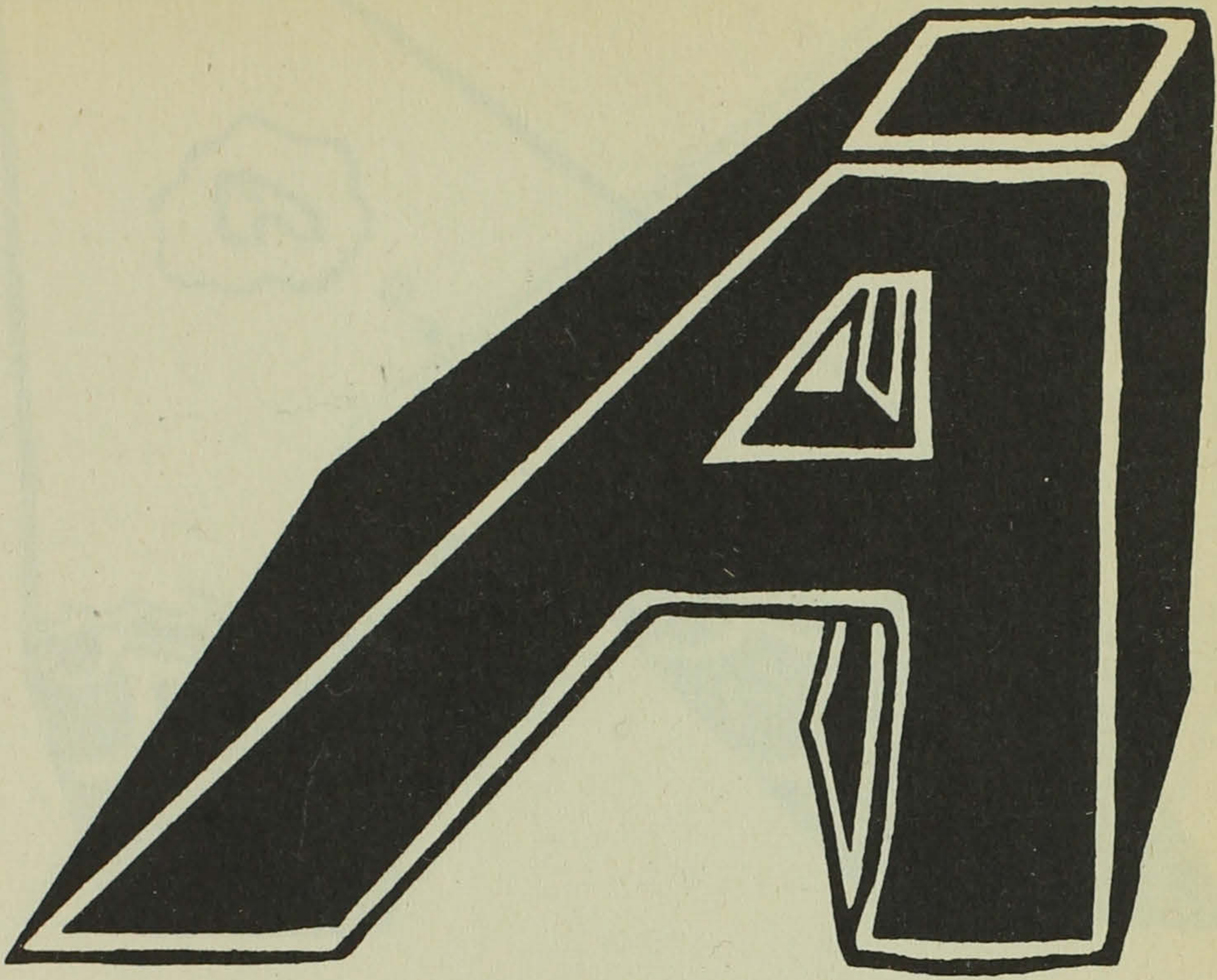
Z X C V B N M , . ?
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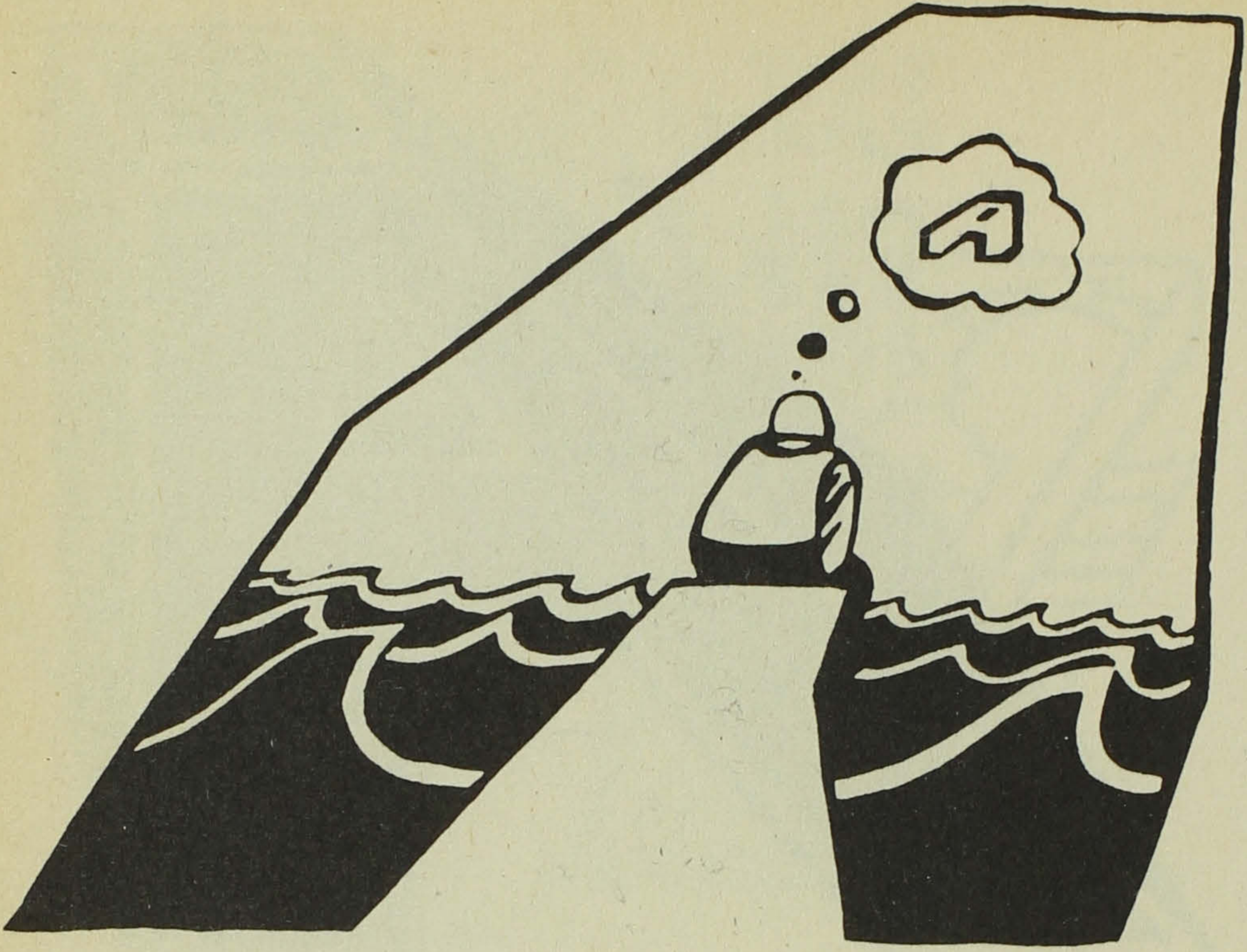
*any possible permutaion
of all listed elements

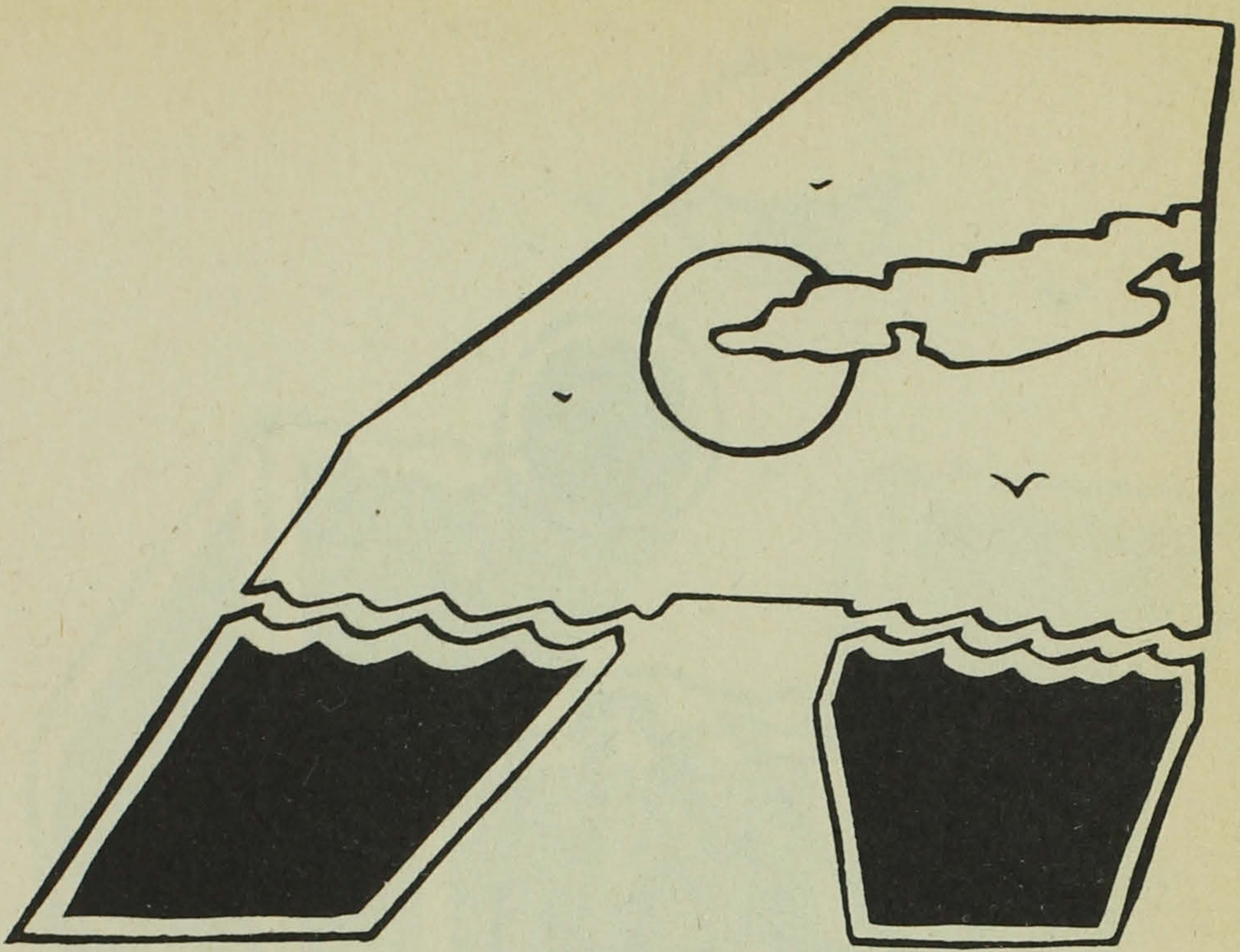
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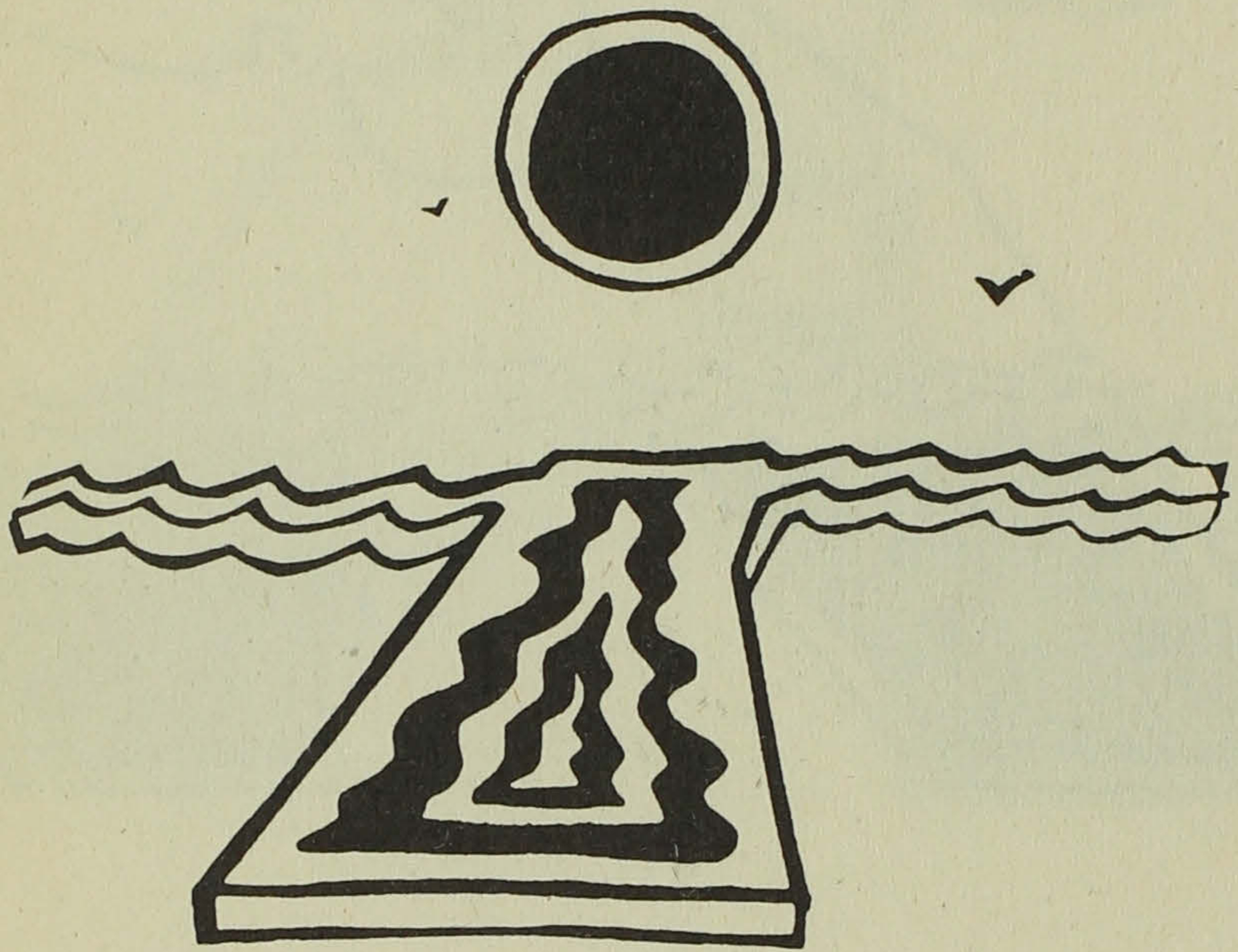


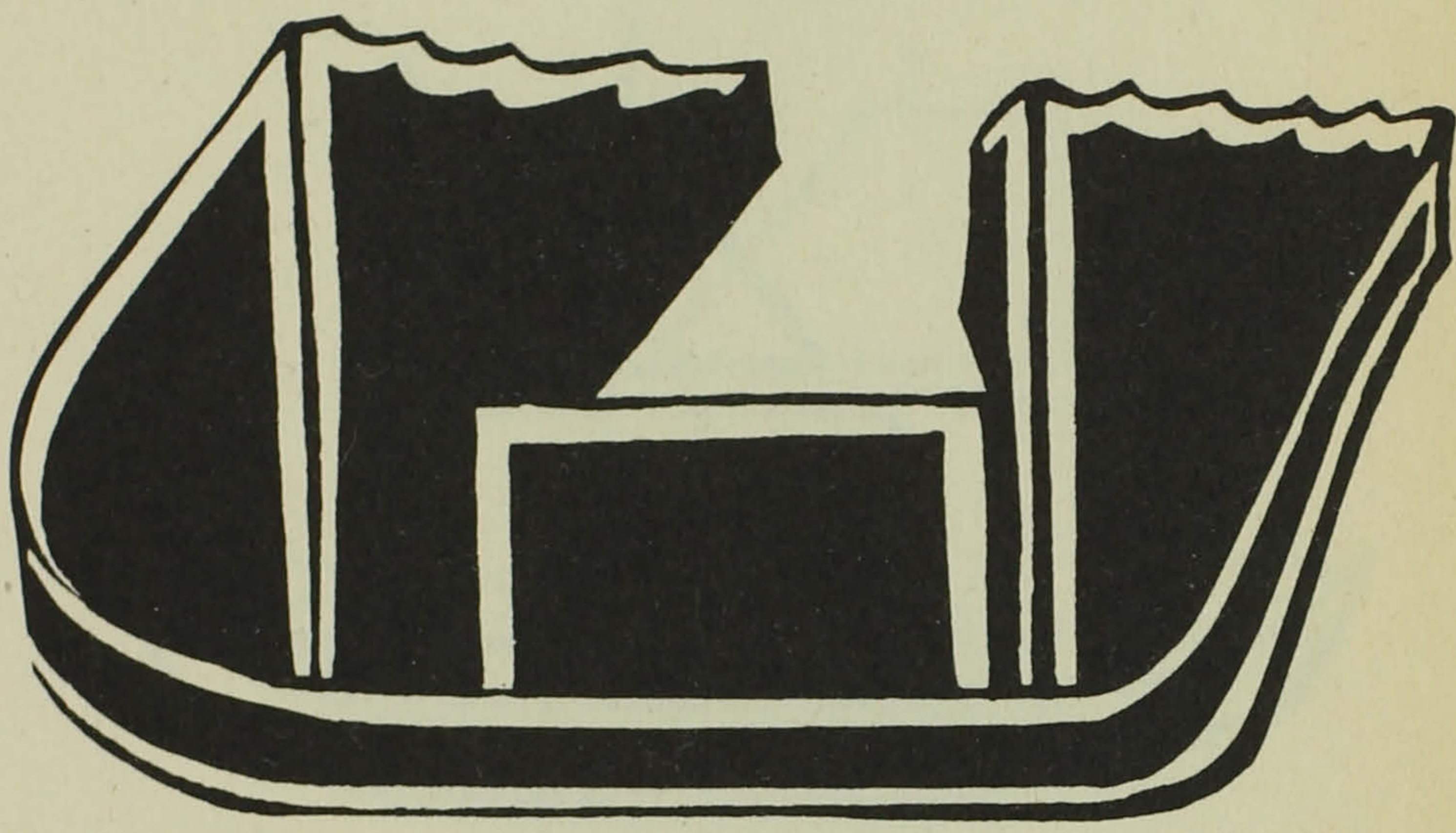
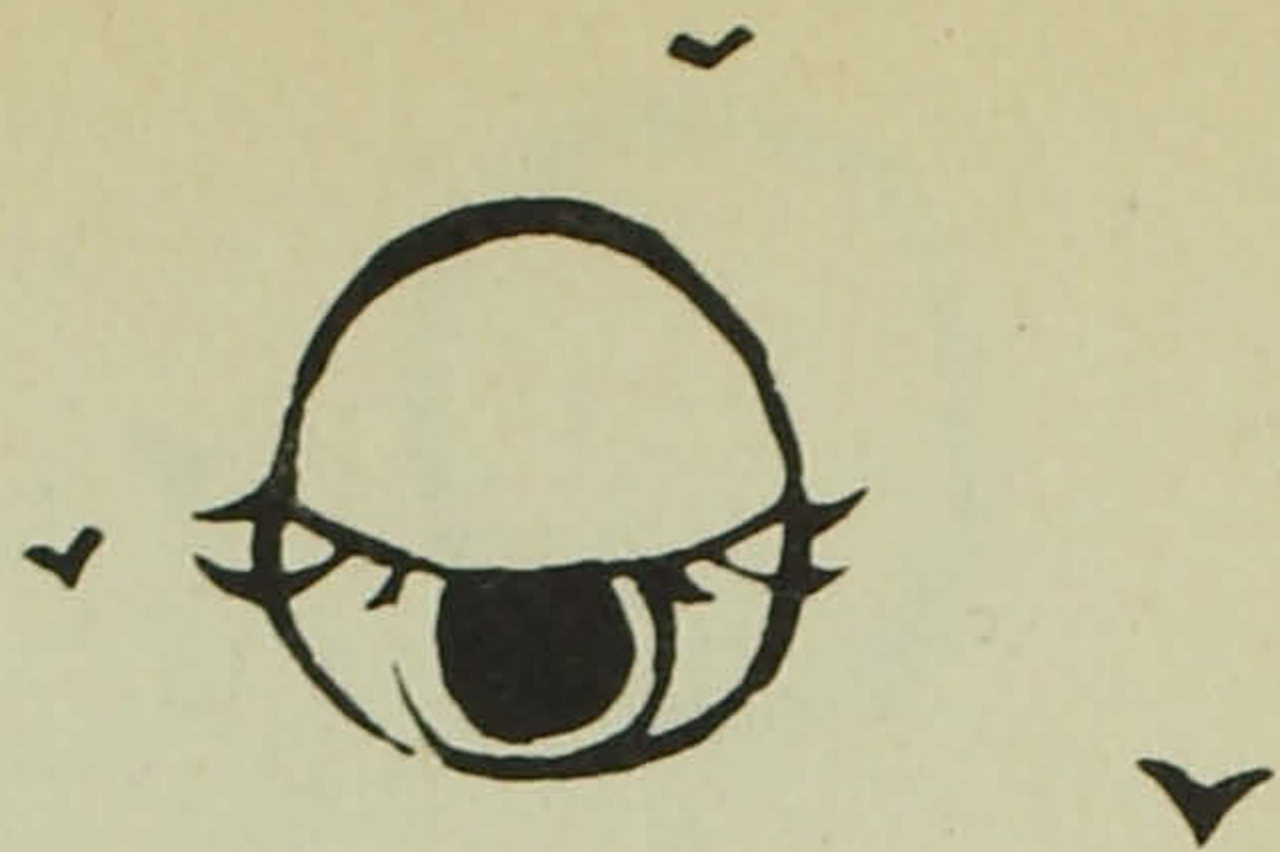
Aleph Unit

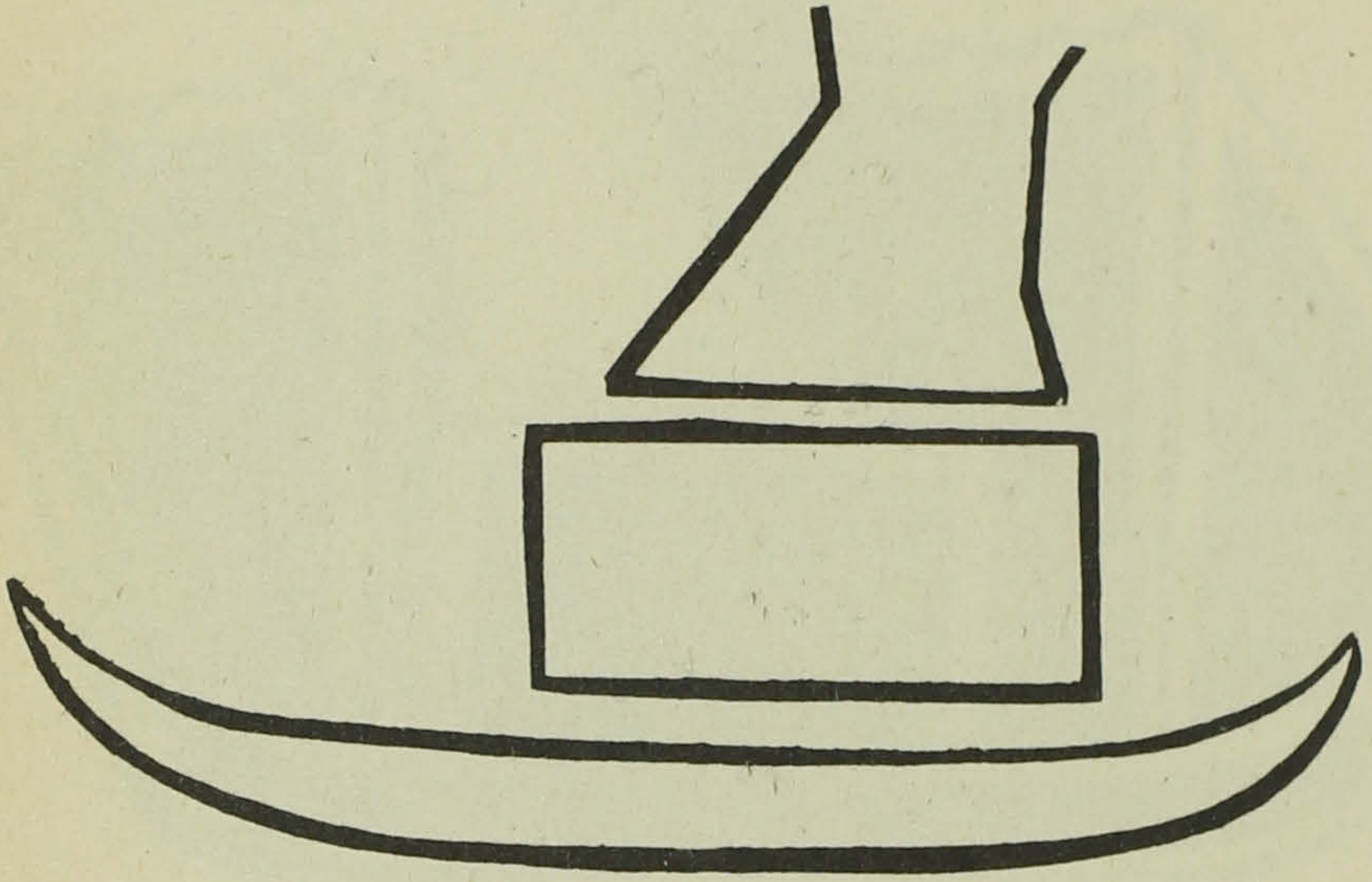
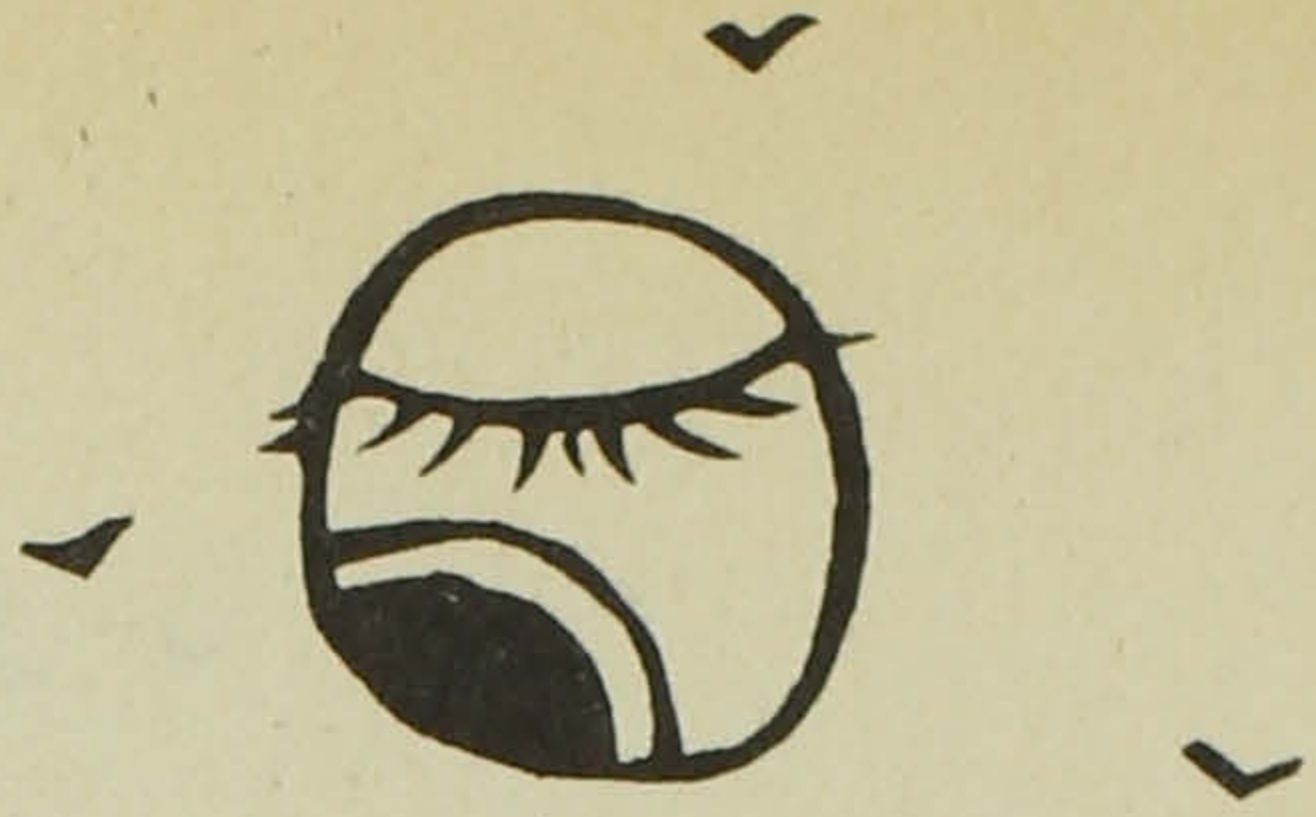


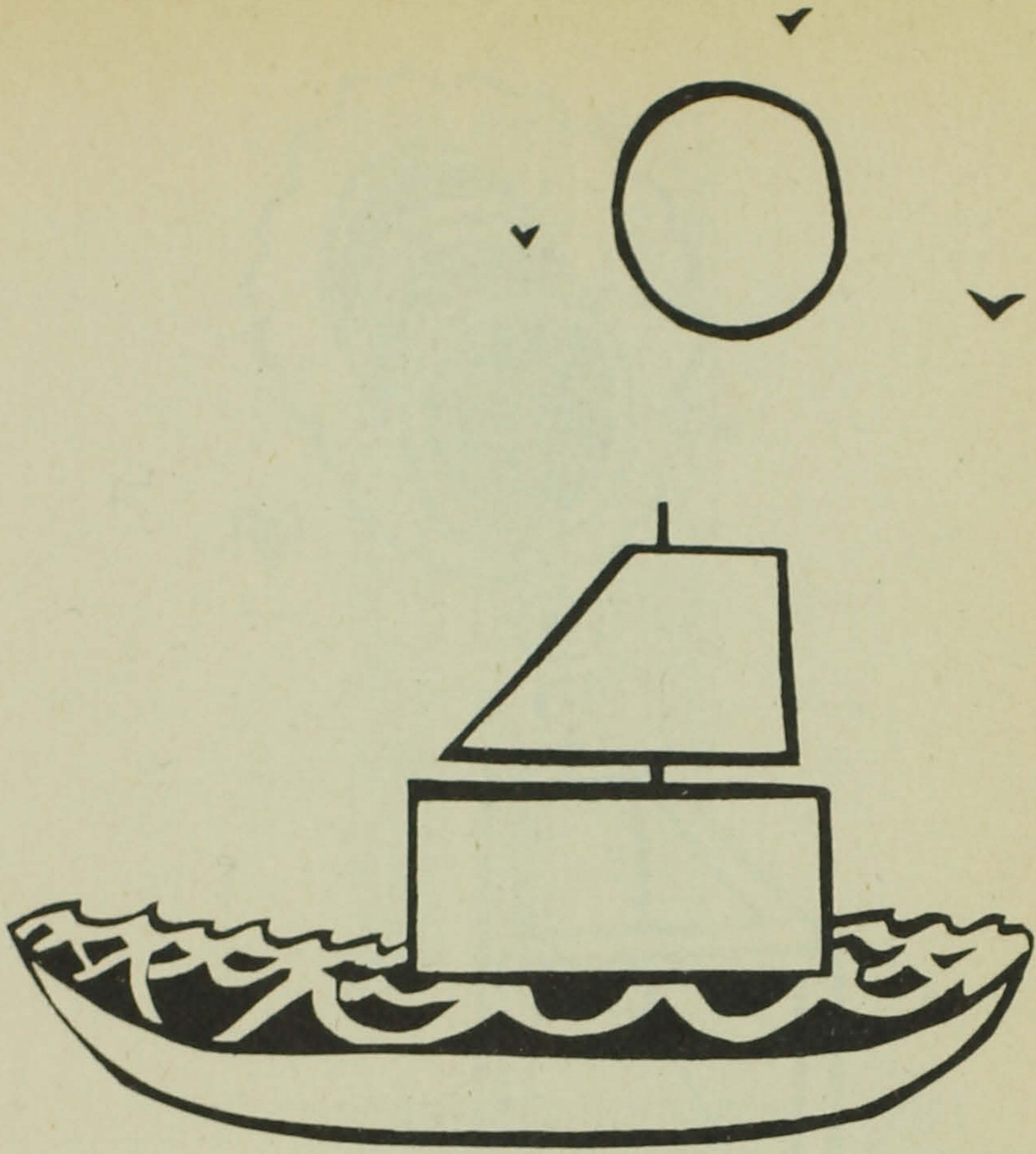


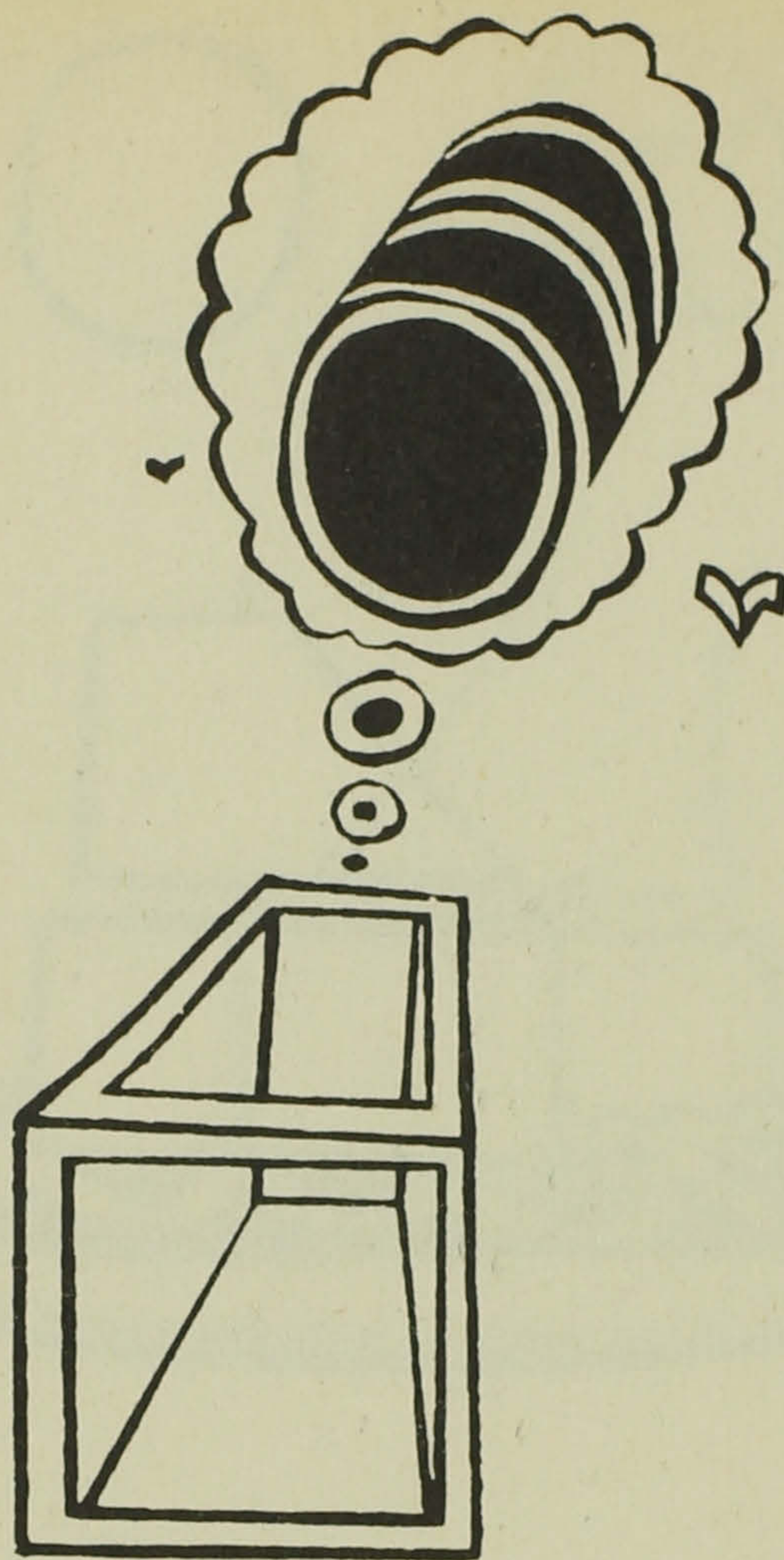












1972

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NOT WHAT THE SIREN SANG

BUT WHAT THE FRAGMENT for margaret avison

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	insulate		
crab		sight	
	irritate		wait.....

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3

oudoo doan doanna
tinna limn limn
la leen
untloo lima
limna doo doo

dee du deena
deena dee du
deena deena
dee du deena

ah-ooo runtroo
lindle leave lipf
lat lina tanta
tlalum cheena
ran tron tra troo

deena dee du
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Wwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwww
Mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm
Wwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwww
Mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm

WWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWW
MMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM
WWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWW

OUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUH
MMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM
OUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUH
MMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM

FFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFF
EEEEAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH
FFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFF
EEEEAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH

FFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFF
DUMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM
FFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFF
DUMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM

from 'Trans-Continental'

1

an h moves past an m
an i becomes an r

someone throws a snowball

o p
t r s u
v v v

w

i i i i

2

x d

one mile

a sky which is grey
blue

do not serve yourself

l e
4 3 1 2 2

3

z

zero then nothing

3

6 9 10

13 5

here a z becomes an e
becomes an m a w

4

a d in a cloudbank
an r by a sea

perhaps it is a river
passes over

sky

sun

a town
in which the r becomes an l

after hokusai

the old man holds
the sea on a
string. how can he
bring it in &
keep from drowning?

Cold Mountain

GO
from
her side

TO
reach you
must i

COLD
& high

MOUNTAIN

RETURN
home
in pain

FROM
trails that i've
travelled

COLD
to her arms

MOUNTAIN

to the memory of su t'ung po

trees
the trees
heat escaping
in
the
clouds
loud
sounds
so
ominous
the trees pin clouds
to
the
horizon

4 poems from 'Still Water'

2 leaves touch

bad poems are written

blob
plop

em ty

moon

owl

tree

tree

tree

shadowy

the other side of the room

lovers the skin is
a way of touching

hello

always the glass
between you &
what goes past

1335 COMOX AVENUE

in fall
we lose ourselves
in new rooms, gaze
from windows grown old
in that season

we choose
new beds
to love in, cover our bodies
in confusions
of all
that should be left
behind

bury our faces in each other
tasting flesh in mouth
gathering warmth
possessing each other
as a way of loving

we are too near the sea
we hear the gulls cry
cars pass
the horns of ships
and cry
to see the moss grown

throw windows open
to night to kneel to pray
hands on each other
pressing body into body
some sort of liturgy

hear the sea the bells
the sound of people passing
voices drifting up
and cold winds come
to chill our naked hearts

love is some sort of fire
come to warm us
fill our bodies
all in these motions
flowing into each other
in despair the room
one narrow world
that might be anywhere

1963

from *Journeying & the returns*

chapter 7

c.p. won
the marathon dance award. scored
a dozen of them
without even thinking.

sinking feeling in his heart
he knows they'll never be a part of any poem he wrote.

nope. you're sunk cap. your loveboat gone

kerplunk

upon the ropes.

balless in gaza

ya can't dazzle 'em

with the old one-two. the fox-trot, the cha-cha,
get nowhere.

quit hangin' round there!

fred astaire finally gave it up

took ginger home & fucked the whole night long.

leaving the showbiz behind

the daily grind's obliterated

& love's boat floats upon a sea of obvious necessity.

the need to love reiterates the true state of affairs.

you leave your slippers on gaza's golden stairs

& go home to her reality.

the actuality of women burns the eyes

& the bad scenes

the poor cuts

blur into insignificance

beside the magnificence

of real dance.

don't take a chance on getting lost in 'B' parts!

(remember the minnie-moo-ha start of
the saturday afternoon matinee grope?
rex allen reaching for his rope
& you, ridiculously, pulling your own?
moaning your way thru the popcorn
into the feature show
knowing rex couldn't dance
unless they slipped a gun into the scene.)

leaning into the late movie midnight t v screen
i twirl my rope against the hope of freeing you
as fred

was freed
& dances now in finian's rainbow
while you spend your time feelin' low.
don't you know
your body enhances the things you try to say?
don't let your brain slip away into
presumptuousness.

(rex had so much less than he should've had.
& the things we did to him
made us feel bad.

i remember as a kid i wrote to him & said

'Dear Rex:

All my friends say you're mean & stuck-up
but I think you're the greatest cowboy alive.
Please write & show them they're wrong.

Your friend
Barrie Nichol (age 10)'

& i pasted the letter he sent
next to a photo of ginger rogers in a sarong

'Dear Barrie;

So glad to get your letter.

Here's an autographed picture of me.

Please tell your friends I'm not really mean and stuck-up.

Your cowby pal
Rex Allen'

god i felt guilty at his sincerity!)

can't you see

the way you waste your days

glancing over your shoulder

waiting for the bolder chicks to grasp your dick & say

'hey!

wanna play fred astaire & ginger?'

sincerely hoping for some satori

bp (age 24)

1968-69

from *The New New Captain Poetry Blues: an undecided novel*

from 'The Plunkett Papers'

we rode the train back west in 54
my dad sister & me
outside of red rock had to stop 12 hours
coz of a slide

ran over 2 workers
just after getting under way again

i remember seeing them from the train
the blood & the severed arms
& after we heard the one man died

heading out to plunkett from port arthur
the summer before i turned ten
meeting uncle bill in saskatoon
drove down to my uncle mike's farm
running over this prairie chicken on the way
our faces turned white
thing flopping crazily in the dust

& later

my sister & me
walked down the road from hun & mike's farm.

just the two of us

death all around us

determined to make it
on that last mile to plunkett

two sections from 'Mono Tones'

XIII.

terra

earth

mother of gods

who goes
before me?

thera
 the one
ra

& i follow
flow
 after

into the moon

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

Coda: Mid-Initial Sequence

faint edge of sleep
a literal fuzzing in the mind
as tho the edge of
what was held clearly
became less defined
the penalty paid &
your father recognized
for what he is

for W

HA!

the is



orange

the vague light
closing the eye

's lid

home plate

the late P

destroyed

leaving only b

& n

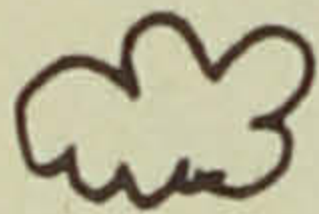
beginning again

b n a

all history there

t here

opposed against the suffering
we have yet to bear



last note

no t

no e

l as no

l body

l where

l w here

no w
for w's sake

no is
e
against the silent sleep



bushes

dawn

the r rises
brushes drawn
the whole scene

the w hole
into which the world
disappears

d is a p
pear shaped

dear H
a p edges
into the sea

sun

the unenviable s



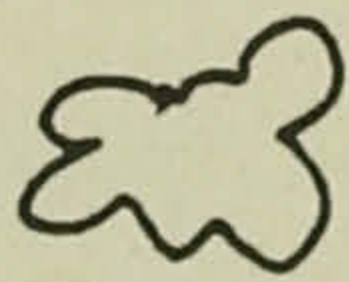
there is no desire for speech

there is no desire to spell

each gesture
against the chaos
must be made well

there is stillness in the heart of the power
as there is stillness in the heart of the storm

between the w & the d
the in side of
the mind / 's a quiet place
from which the power unwinds



in vocation
i am
a singer

every letter
invokes a spell
ing is
the power
letters have
over me

word shaping

addition of the l



within the difference
if exists

tensions a
polarity

who is moved or moves
a distinction a disparity

a.d. a.d.
history's spoken in
the first four letters

all e to z
outside the head's
measure of our kind

man's time



(variation on a line by H.D. – in memoriam)

A.D. on
is dead

let the H
supplant the D
in your sweet poetry

adonis head
HE is the A.D.
HE is not dead

The H is gone from your lips H.D.
soft consonantal breath

the vowels are locked between the dark doors
dead



whatever dies
the secrets do not die with you
the lore we all seek (l or e)
choices are not disinterested

d is in t
it is the old story HE lived thru
HIS death & suffering
33 years into HIS time
22 letters left to pass thru
what birth will herald the change

if the formula remains the same
the era F.G. to follow A.D.
E.H. is the next to bear HIS name
reversed

mother muse
you come before HIS time
incarnate in a name now passed away

H.D. HE follows after you again



11 years since i first conceived myself a writer
took up the task to earn that name
& now i see
i (n) am e

can i speak in the midst of suffering
address the cross we wear too carelessly

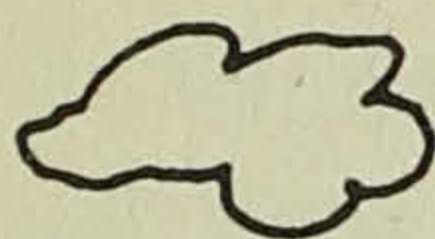
t i' m e
part of the movement out of this dark time
are we all trapped in a D we do not recognize

i will never wear the H
never see HIS face
it is the apprentice's hips i spring from
her loins

oh ladies i have named my muses
the groin aches to serve you

it is the apprenticeship continues
sail decorated with the single emblem P

let t err
as it does in this time
i'm struggling to learn my a b c
d of
our/HIS
story



'dogma i am god'
it is all that's said
woke this morning
these words in my head
a palindrome
linked with an image
of friends two poets i knew
disagreed were not speaking with each other

'dogma i am god'

heresy

hearsay

in the worst sense

false pride

who thinks to bestride the world

because he feels crushed by it

1971-1973

from *The Martyrology: Book III*

Scraptures: seventh sequence

1

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

iffen ever never youd deside size seize says theo-
dore (green yellow glum) I'd marry you. truth heart hard
confusions confess all never neither tithe 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 fenêtre. vos. vous. vouloir. I wish. I wish. I
may. I might. june night

and the lovers

loafers, low firs,

old frrrs, la lovers, la lrrrs.

3

liturgical turge dirge dinta krak kree fintab latlina santa
danka schoen fane sa paws claws le forêt. 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 wierd 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 return a meister
shaft. statements each one and any you rather the
could've repent – alright? il n'est pas sont école la plume
plum or apples in imagining je ne désirez pause. je ne sais
pas. je ne sais. je pas.

7

il y a là 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 chérie, a cherry, a cheery rose with shy
petals to sly on. saint reat will teach me songs to woo her.

8

au revoir. le réveille sounds up the coach. les pieds de le
chevalier voleur sont ma mère en la nuance de ma vot-
oveto.

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

1967

from 'Andy'

August 27, 1944

The smell is overpowering!

August 28, 1944

A huge mountain was seen off in the distance just as night fell. May be the one Yaboo's grandfather mentioned. Camped for night on this island. Have

feeling I have gone this way before which is of course impossible. Déjà vu! Fever is getting worse. Yaboo has found some herbs and hopes to mix medicine to get me through this period.

"Cynthia too in assumption of false name misrepresents case of lost Joan now gone from this construct and vanished. presence of artificial shaping influence form of subsequent and previous novels. the implosion has happened already within laboured breathing orgasm creation of this ship's motions thru heavy breathing of anti-matter universe. this trip to be measured in terms of my own identity yaboo yemen now lost thru complex of plastic alteration of matter universe and juxtaposition of unrealities.

August 29, 1944

A boat ran aground on the island just before sunrise. Bakil Sithe lay in the bottom - dead. eyes turned inwards. face contorted.

"Delineation now virtually impossible. meaning least concern in place of actual working of the mind. purpose to present the history of certain possible heads at this space in time as placed from meaningful communication from earth."

August 30, 1944

Mountain directly in front of us. It can be no more than 30 miles away. There is no safe place to camp.

"openness a hoped for end of meaning as ultimate abc concern of vegetable world. door to the sea passed thru and growing. vital organism to exist separate from artificial molding of speech that continuum."

August 31, 1944

We have narrowly missed death. Fortunately our boat became stuck on a rock before following the falls over the edge. The water appears to disappear into the mountain a few miles down from the waterfall. We shall go on foot the rest of the way and pray for survival.

"motion to be noted as non-essential. quote from source determines orgasm in the female as contractions of pelvic and perineal muscles felt by penis at point of deepest penetration at end of act. misconstrues of penis as food to be fed on as object of eating noted and determined detail in pseudoform recreation of primal source for this body now occupying new space and time. question of understanding increasing. realized distortion to occupy continual link with own body thru body switch with form now feeding as it were food as it were moving in and out of tight mirror universe of own limitation."

September 2, 1944

We have donned our parkas because of the extreme cold. The journey down from the top of the waterfall was extremely dangerous and it took the best part of a day to do it. Vascil slipped at one point and nearly crashed to the rocks below. Fortunately he caught up short on a branch. The temperature at the bottom of the waterfall was only slightly above freezing. We spent last night huddled together in blankets and parkas under the shelter of an overhanging rock. This morning hoar frost hung from every tree. We put on the snowshoes we'd bought and set out through the woods. No sign of life anywhere. About lunch time we discovered huge red blotches in the snow. A few miles further on we came across the severed end of a huge vine. It lay along the banks of the river and curled away into the distance. We have misjudged the distance to the mountain. We have gone about 20 miles already and have at least another 30 or 40 miles ahead of us. Vascil appears to be suffering from snow blindness. The temperature has dropped to below zero. The river is completely frozen over.

"details thinning out. obvious exhibition of continued writings of previous journeys thru similar space by the once famous colonel bob de cat now occupying body name rory and one joan batey now occupying body name cynthia. similar occupations of double and triple name space visible as constant in theoretical real earth world. earth now left behind as formal construct of opposition to anti-matter matter link-up."

September 3, 1944

We have reached the mountain. Cliffs rise straight up in front of us. The water forms a pool here and the river appears to end. We are sure it must go underground and through the mountain but we are too tired to do anything but rest today. The temperature must be twenty below now. We will camp in a small cave we have found. Supplies are down to about four months worth and we are on strict rations. There can be no turning back but there is no where to go forward.

"details thinning out. no further delineation possible in face of continued activity of culture parasites reversal attempt of original language tool function now become weapon."

September 4, 1944

We have investigated this whole stretch of cliffs and can find no way to get out of the valley we are in. Climbing back up the waterfall is out of the question. Where can we go? Vascil's sight is completely gone.

"no further delineation possible ear folding over to avoid sound overlay revealing tonal shift actual message of pseudoform abc logic. twentyfour year overlap coming to resolution out of history of this head circa twentieth year to heaven flight from this earth and body to be reconstructed of whole manner total orgasm concern for central nervous system completing now in search for spheroid mode."

September 7, 1944

We have broken a hole in the ice and are going to attempt swimming down and finding where the river drains to. We have wrapped all our supplies in canvas and rubber in order to keep them dry, using the tarpaulins for this purpose. I doubt if we will ever get out of this alive.

"twenty-four year overlap coming to resolution in final flight from pseudoforms into matter / antimatter overlap ultimate destruction creation of total new."

September 10, 1944

There is no end to the light. The warmth is overwhelming. A strange fur-like fungii covers the walls and floor. Everything we touch is covered in it. It spreads quickly and is already covering our clothing faces and cookingware.

"no further delineation possible. closing now. this is your captain speaking. closing now."

Received your letter & poem today. I think I will write Woolston telling him I won't make it to Winnipeg. There are many things I want to talk about with you. I must however make it home Friday the 12th or Saturday at the latest - so I will stay at least until Tuesday or early Wednesday (depending on the train schedules). I don't know exactly now what I want to say but it's always this way. I know I will have many questions. Things though are the same as ever at the Alliance. I want to ask this girl out but she is surrounded by people all the time & she speaks little english. I lose my courage every time I see her. I was particularly pissed off today because I lost my last chance. It seems that one runs into the same conflicts & inhibitions no matter where he goes. Also my cold is still bad so perhaps this had something to do with it. You know Bar I'm a very funny character. I'm living in fantasies all the time. I've fucked about 10 - 18 girls in my fantasies & not one in reality. Oh well. A ha! more advice from Andy. I don't feel you should have shocked the hungry pack back home by telling them all. It was too much to take. Although it was necessary to tell them something. I know how they felt back there. It all seems so very mysterious. None of them have seen Toronto or your scene so their imagination takes them away from the reality of your situation. Perhaps your dissertation was a little too vivid. By the way that's a great poem you sent.

Well back again. A bit more rational now. Went to talk with my American friend in the Pension. Great to know a fellow who can express himself in your own language. But will send a letter to Woolston. Don't really care now if I see Jill. I wrote her 3 letters & no response. Kind of rotten of her I must say. Would like to see the Woolston family again but may get back there this summer. I may take a vacation then after I finish work in August. Would like to see the city in summer. I send this with the love of our friendship.

Andy

Gorg, a detective story

for a.a.fair posthumously

a man walks into a room. there is a corpse on the floor. the man has been shot through the temple the bullet entering at a 45° angle above the eyes & exiting almost thru the top of the skull. the man does not walk out of the room. the corpse stands up & introduces himself. later there will be a party. you will not be invited & feeling hurt go off into a corner to sulk. there is a gun on the window sill. you rig up a pulley which enables you to pull the trigger while pointing the gun between your eyes & holding it with your feet. a man walks in on you. you are lying on the floor dead. you have been shot thru the temple the bullet exiting almost thru the top of your skull. you stand up & introduce yourself. the man lies on the floor & you shoot him between the eyes the bullet piercing his temple & exiting thru his skull into the floor. you rejoin the party. the man asks you to leave since you weren't invited. you notice a stranger in the doorway who pulling out a gun shoots you between the eyes. you introduce each other & lie down. your host is polite but firm & asks you both to leave. at this point a man walks in & introduces himself. you are lying on the floor & cannot see him. your host appears not to know him & the man leaves. the party ends & the room is empty. the man picks up the corpse & exits.

Two Heroes

1

In the back garden two men sit. They are talking with one another very slowly. Around them things are growing they are not conscious of. They are only conscious of each other in a dim way, enough to say that this is the person they are talking to. Much of it appears a monologue to us as we approach them over the wide lawn, thru the bower of trees, sit down between them on the damp grass & prepare to listen. There is nothing left to listen to. They have ceased speaking just as we appeared. They have finally reached an end to their conversation.

2

Once a long time ago they talked more easily. Once a long time ago the whole thing flowed. They were young men then. They had gone west at fifteen to fight in the metis uprising, urged on by accounts they read in the papers, & they would talk then as if they were conscious of future greatness, made copies of the letters they mailed home, prepared a diary, talked, endlessly & fluently, talked to whoever'd listen, of what they'd done, what they planned to do, but i did not know them then, never heard them, can only write of what i learned second hand.

3

When the fight was over & Riel was dead & Dumont had fled into the states, they went home again & became bored. They would sit up nights talking about how grand it had been when they were fighting the half breeds & reread their diaries & dreamed of somehow being great again.

When the Boer War began they went to Africa to fight there & oh it was great & yes they kept their journals up to date & made more copies of letters that they mailed home, tying up their journals & letters as they were done, tying them up in blue ribbons they had brought along expressly for that purpose, placing them inside waterproof tin boxes, locking the locks & hiding the keys. They were very happy then. If you had asked them they would not have said it was the killing but rather the war for, as they were fond of saying, it was thru war a man discovered himself, adventuring, doing heroic things as everything they'd read had

always taught them.

Their friends stayed home of course, working in the stores, helping the cities to grow larger, trying to make the country seem smaller & more capable of taking in in one thought. And they thought of the two of them, off then in Africa, & it was not much different to them from when they'd been out west, Africa & the west being, after all, simply that place they weren't.

4

Time passed. No one heard much from either of them. In GRIP one day appeared a story titled BILLY THE KID & THE CLOCKWORK MAN & it seemed there were things in the story reminded all their friends of both of them, even tho it wasn't signed, & they all read it & talked about it as if the two men had written it, chatting over cigars & brandy, over tea & cakes, as the late afternoon sun streamed thru the windows of their homes on the hill looked down towards the harbour, over the heart of the city, the old village of Yorkville & the annex, the stands of trees still stood there, & wondered aloud if they'd ever see the two of them again, if they would ever receive again those letters, those marvellous tales that so delighted them, & after all it would be very sad if they were dead but then no one had seen them for so long that they were not very real to them.

5

There are some say Billy the Kid never died the story began. There are some say he was too tough to die or too mean, too frightened or too dumb, too smart to lay his life down for such useless dreams of vanity, of temporary fame & satisfaction, that he & Garret were friends after all & Mr. Garret would never do such cruel deeds to anyone as sweet as young William was. I don't know. I read what I read. Most of it's lies. And most of those liars say Billy the Kid died.

There are those who like sequels though. There are those who like the hero to return even if he is a pimply-faced moron who never learned, like most of us, we shoot our mouths off with ease, never care where the words fall, whose skull they split, we're too interested in saying it, in watching our tongues move & our lips flap & Billy & his gun were a lot like that.

When you read a sequel you might learn anything. Of how Pat Garret faked Billy's death, of how the kid went north to

Canada or south to Mexico or sailed off to Europe as part of a wild west show, but there's no sequel you'll read again that'll tell you the strange tale of Billy the Kid & the clockwork man.

6

Billy was in love with machines. He loved the smooth click of the hammers when he thumbed his gun, when he oiled & polished it so it pulled just right. He loved to read the fancy catalogues, study the passing trains, & when he met the clockwork man well there was nothing strange about the fact they fell in love at first sight.

It was a strange time in Billy's life. He was thinking a lot about his death & other things. He had this feeling he should get away. And one day, when he was oiling the clockwork man's main spring, Billy made the clockwork man a proposition & the clockwork man said he'd definitely think about it & he did, you could hear his gears whirring all day, & that night he said to Billy sure kid i'll go to Africa with you & he did, even tho they both felt frightened, worried because they didn't know what'd happen.

When they got to Africa it was strange. It wasn't so much the elephants or lions, the great apes or pygmies, the ant hills that were twenty feet high, it was the way their minds changed, became deranged I suppose, even more than Billy's had always been, so that they began seeing things like their future, a glimpse of how they'd die, & they didn't like it.

7

It was a good story as stories go. Most of their friends when they'd read half-way thru it would pause & wonder which one of them was Billy & which one the clockwork man & each had their own opinion about which of the two men was the bigger punk & which the more mechanical. The women who had known them would smile & say well isn't that just like him or point a finger at some telling sentence & wink & say that's just the way he'd talk.

The mothers of the two men agreed they should never have given them those mechanical banks or shiny watches & would not read much further than this. But the fathers who'd bought them their first guns were proud of them & read it all the way thru to the end even tho they didn't understand it & hoped they'd never have to read it again.

The problem with Africa was it was kind of damp & there was no good place where you could buy replacement parts. The clockwork man began to rust. He & the Kid sat up all night talking, trying to figure some way to save the clockwork man's life. There was no way. They were too broke to go back home. Besides they'd already seen that this was how the clockwork man would die.

They got fatalistic. They got cynical & more strange. They took to killing people just to make the pain less that was there between them but people didn't understand. They tried to track them down, to kill them, & they fled, north thru the jungles, being shot at as they went, as they deserved to be, being killers they weren't worth redeeming.

One day they ran out of bullets & that was the end. They tried to strangle a man but it lacked conviction & they just kept heading north, feeling worse & worse, & the men & women pursuing them cursed a lot but gave up finally when the bodies stopped dropping in their path.

The Kid & the clockwork man made it thru to the Sahara with no one on their tracks & lay down on their backs in the sand dunes & gazed up at the stars & fell asleep.

When Billy the Kid awoke the clockwork man was very still. There were ants crawling in & out of the rivet holes in his body & a wistful smile on his face. This looks like the end Bill he said & I can't turn to embrace you. Billy wiped away a tear & sighed. The clockwork man was only the second friend he'd ever had.

The clockwork man's rusty tin face was expressionless as he asked you going to head someplace else Bill & Bill shrugged & said i don't really know as there's much place else to go to & the clockwork man sighed then & looked pained as only a clockwork man can as the blowing sand sifted thru the jagged holes in his sides, settling over the gears, stilling them forever.

Goodbye Bill he said. Billy said goodbye & got up & walked away a bit before he'd let himself cry. By the time he'd dried his eyes & looked back the clockwork man was covered in by sand & Billy never did find his body even tho he looked for it.

There are strange tales told of Billy the Kid, of what happened next. I heard once he met up with Rimbaud in a bar & started bedding down with him & the gang he'd fallen in with. I don't know. There are a lot of stories one could tell if gossip were the point of it all.

If he went back home he died a quiet old man. If he stayed in Africa he was never heard from again. He's not a fit man to tell a story about. Just a stupid little creep who one time in his life experienced some deep emotion & killed anyone who reminded him of his pain.

And the clockwork man was no better than him. All we can say of him is he was Billy the Kid's friend & tho it's true there's very few can make that claim well there's very few would want to.

One year the two men returned. They were both grayer & quiet. They didn't speak much to friends. They'd talk but only if they thot you weren't listening. They had their tin boxes full of diaries, of letters, but then they never showed them, never opened them, never talked about what it was had happened over there between them. They were still the best of friends. They bought a house in the annex & lived together. They opened a small stationer's shop & hired a lady to run it for them & lived off that income. They never wrote again. In their last years, when we came to visit them a lot, they'd stare at my cousins & me & say yes it was grand but & gaze away & not say anything else unless you eavesdropped on the two of them when they were sure you weren't listening. Even then it was only fragmentary sentences they said, random images that grew out of ever more random thots & I was never able, tho I listened often, to draw the whole thing together into any kind of story, any kind of plot, would make the sort of book I longed to write. They died still talking at each other, broken words & scattered images, none of us around, unable to see or hear us if we had been, because of their deafness & their failing sight.

with a man & later he emerged both times the twin men handed out cigars later these two women's wombs filled with men & women at different times & all these times the twin men handed out cigars then the twin men & the twin women died they died altogether on the same day & they were still quite young & the fourth woman cried as did the man & the woman grown out of the twin women & the man's wife & the woman's husband & the men & women born out of them & the mother & the father of the twin men & this is how our story of twin men married to twin women ends

later the fourth woman dies the women grown out of the womb of the woman who grew inside the one twin woman & the women grown out of the womb of the woman married to the man who grew inside the other twin woman gave birth to many other men & women who grew up inside them & then emerged eventually the man & the woman who grew up inside the twin women died & eventually the men & women who grew up inside them & their women died & eventually after giving birth to other men & women the men & women they had given birth to died & eventually everybody dies after giving birth to everybody else & this is the way it is eventually

from 'Journal'

some days i want to talk to you mommy some days i
am talking to you so clearly i am lying in bed talk-
ing to you but you cant hear me at the top of the
stairs i am talking to you every step of the way youre
in the kitchen with the breakfast & you dont hear me
 you dont listen mommy when i touch your dress &
stroke your skin you dont listen there is so much i
could say i want to tell you mommy everything
that has happened since you went away you went
away mommy now nothings the same is there any
use in telling you this i have shut all the others out
to talk to you so many days spent shutting the
others out & talking to you its so late at night
mommy ive been out all day avoiding this story
avoiding the moment when i'd have to speak now
im speaking im speaking mommy & you arent
listening so many times i would stand at the foot of
the garden calling your name quietly so that you
wouldnt hear me i wanted you to hear me for so
many years i wanted you to hear so badly & i couldnt
speak i'd call your name to myself tired now finally
frightened but never stopping always calling quietly
at the foot of the garden as the sun went down over
the trellis & i looked for my pail & my shovel among
the raspberry canes & i would squat there at the
foot of the garden among the canes that edged the
cinder alley & i would call to you & you wouldnt hear
me & i'd ignore you when you called my name
whats wrong youd say & i'd say nothing whats
wrong youd say & i turned away all day i'd play by
myself digging holes in the sandy soil watching you

as you did the washing hung the clothes out to dry
arms reaching up the wide collars of your blouse hair
bunched in a bun on your head you'd reach up pin-
ning the clothes on the line the clothespins held bet-
ween your teeth or fetched from a pocket in your
apron the line creaking as you'd reel it out the metal
wire rubbing against the rusted wheel the whole
length of the yard filled with the clothes the void bet-
ween the house & the garage between you & me
mommy filled with the flapping sheets i'd hide among
because i liked the smell of them liked the look of you
hanging the clothes up to dry i liked it loved you
wanted you mommy but i never called your name it
gets hard to speak the despair is too close i wake up
dreaming of dying as tho the hopelessness were that
close so close that i feel choked by it overwhelmed i
forget who i am & i walk down the stairs talking to
you dancing down the stairs every step of the way
plodding as if the hopelessness were there & palpable
to be waded thru i can hear the orchestra playing &
im singing calling your name as i move down the
stairs to where you wait fixing breakfast fixing none
of the things that are really broken & im crying
laughing walk out the door not bothering to tell you
where im going it gets harder & harder to tell you
it gets harder & harder to tell who im speaking to
sometimes i wake from dreams of you wanting to
touch you you arent there i want to run into your
room the way i used to too frightened to go to bed too
frightened to enter that emptiness i wanted you to
comfort me to talk to me & you did sometimes i was
never sure lingering in the hall not wanting to go
downstairs afraid of what you or dad would say to me
just standing there not moving staring at the walls

my floor theyre all so far away & i want you there to make them real to me to make the room smaller the light brighter & you werent there & i wanted to call your name & i didnt & wanted to run to you & i didnt i didnt i didnt later there were times i called to you as later there were times you came times you didnt come or came angry or depressed as tho you & dad had been fighting you were unhappy staring down at me your eyes full of tears & i was frightened afraid to speak to you & you went away how i wished youd stay how i loved the days you did stay as later there were times you took me to the movies & we sat together times when dad was out of town we would put our coats on & walk down the street together to the movie house & watch the double bill & stop at your friends on the way home for coffee watching while the two of you drank & talked & i would watch you ive never stopped watching you mommy ive never stopped calling your name seated behind the big chair or somewhere where you couldnt see me watching as you vacuumed the carpet brushing the hair back from your face with the back of your hand washing the dishes the way the soap clung to your fingers wrists the tiny rings of bubbles & i'd watch you i'd call your name & you wouldnt hear me couldnt see me as you reached up to put the glasses away reached up to put the plates away & i reach up to you & you dont see me you dont see me & i stand inthe doorway watching & you dont see me & i remember you dressing the red dress you wore when i was six & you called to me asking me to zip you up the white line of your slip above which your skin glowed framed by the two thin strings of silk clung to the outside curve of your shoulders while the radio played sounding sweet &

sickly like a music box over & over & i would slide the zipper up over & over dreaming covering you in as you thanked me & i zipped you up & you thanked me & i sang your name sang over & over again & again & you thanked me you thanked me mommy you thanked me & spoke my name & it is gone mommy all gone like the radio that day i cant remember the tune only faintly like the echo of an orchestra playing & you are dancing somewhere in the corner of a room it is all gone mommy like the red dress you put on you were going to a dance & dad was dressing down the hall putting on his tie his tie clip & his cuff links & you are asking me to zip you in in the red dress you wore especially for him & your hair was beautiful your lips were beautiful the two of you went dancing & left me home & i called your name mommy you werent there & i never thot to call his name he never was there & i gave up calling your names gave up doing anything but dreaming dreaming always i was calling & you came & once you took me to the sea in the little sailors cap & white shorts i wore playing in the sand with my shovel & my pail you tied the halter on me so i wouldnt run away wouldnt run into the sea & drown tied me to the tree in the front yard when i played at home so i couldnt open the gate wouldnt run into the street couldnt move to where the cars could hit me & i described a circle on the lawn with my awkward stumbling beat a circle with my hands & knees in the sand as i dragged myself round crawling exploring the limits of my keep the sand hot & you lay back & slept mommy in your old red bathing suit the one with the hole in it under your arm & you lay back with your arm over your face as i crawled around you in my sailors hat & couldnt

Speak couldn't say your name could only cry or
scream & didn't wouldn't sit in the sand watching you
as I dug holes filled them in & watched you so
many years spent watching you so many years
spent mutely calling your name so many years of
memories that are no use to me anymore emptied of
feeling emptied of knowing emptied of anyone who
was ever me who loved you who wanted you for his
own accepting as he must as I must he can never have
you I can never have you mommy I never did have
you wrapped up as you were in your own story your
own pain what was it you saw reflected in me as you
gazed down your eyes so far away farther away than
my arms could ever reach as you led me in the
shadow of your longing led me in the careful pat-
terns you had learned & I learned them well
mommy I learned them every step of the way just so I
could watch you just so I could await the day when
you would finally find me finally see me & you would
turn to me then your eyes wide open & your hair
come undone & you would open your arms & call to
me call to me mommy & speak my name

Two Words: A Wedding

for Rob & Sheron

There are things you have words for, things you do not have words for. There are words that encompass all your feelings & words that encompass none. There are feelings you have that are like things to you, picked up & placed in the pocket, worn like the cloth the pocket is attached to, like a skin you live inside of. There is a body of feeling, of language, of friends; the body politic, the body we are carried inside of till birth, the body we carry our self inside of till death, a body of knowledge that tells of an afterlife, a heaven, an unknown everything we have many words for but cannot encompass. There are relationships between words & concepts, between things, between life & death, between friends & family, between each other & some other other. We wed words to things, people to feelings, speak of a true wedding of the mind & heart, intuition & intellect, & out of this form our realities. Our realities are wedded one to another, concepts & people are joined, new people conceived within that mesh of flesh & realities, are carried forward in the body of the mother, the family, the bodily love we have for one another. They are creating their own reality each step of the way, daily, another kind of reality is born, each new word, person, expanding our vocabulary, our concepts, new realities are conceived, our old reality changes, the 'real' grows realer every day. We are marrying the flesh to the flesh, the word to the daily flux of lives we know & don't know, our friends grow older & marry, raise children as you once were children with mothers & fathers of your own, grow older, so many things you still lack words for, struggle to wed the inner &

outer worlds, the self to some other self or selves, confess your love & struggle with one another, together, conscious there is this word is you, your name, & that you are yet another thing or things you will never encompass, never exhaust the possibilities of, because you are wedded to the flux of life, because we are words and our meanings change.

1978

Lust (a little play) from *Erotikon: some works for Dick Higgins*

[curtain rises on a black stage. lights come up on two men standing stage left. there is a clock on a table stage right.]

1st man: er ...

2nd man: O!

[both men fall silent. the clock's ticking suddenly becomes audible. the curtain falls.]

Naming 3



1969-72

probable systems 9

problem: find $\sqrt{\text{logic}}$ to nearest whole letter

since logic = AU & AU = DG (base j)

then $\sqrt{\text{logic}} = \sqrt{\text{DG}}$ (base j)

performing all necessary operations in base j then

$$\begin{array}{r}
 \text{F. F C} \\
 \text{F} \sqrt{\text{DG.0000}} \\
 \hline
 \text{CI} \\
 \text{ABF} \quad \text{H 00} \\
 \hline
 \text{ACBC} \quad \text{G EF} \\
 \hline
 \text{CIFI} \\
 \hline
 \text{DCA}
 \end{array}$$

rounding off to the nearest whole letter we have a given value for the $\sqrt{\text{logic}}$ as G (in both base j & base alphabet)

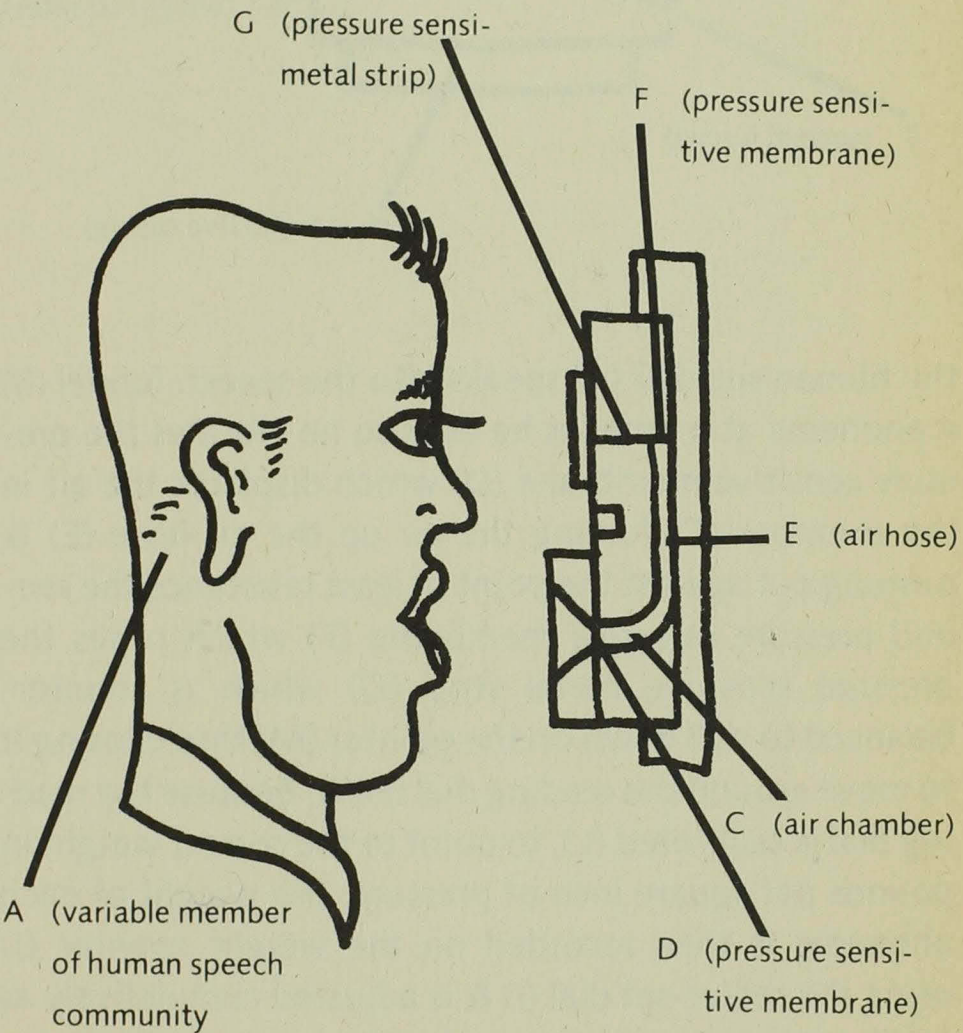
commentary:

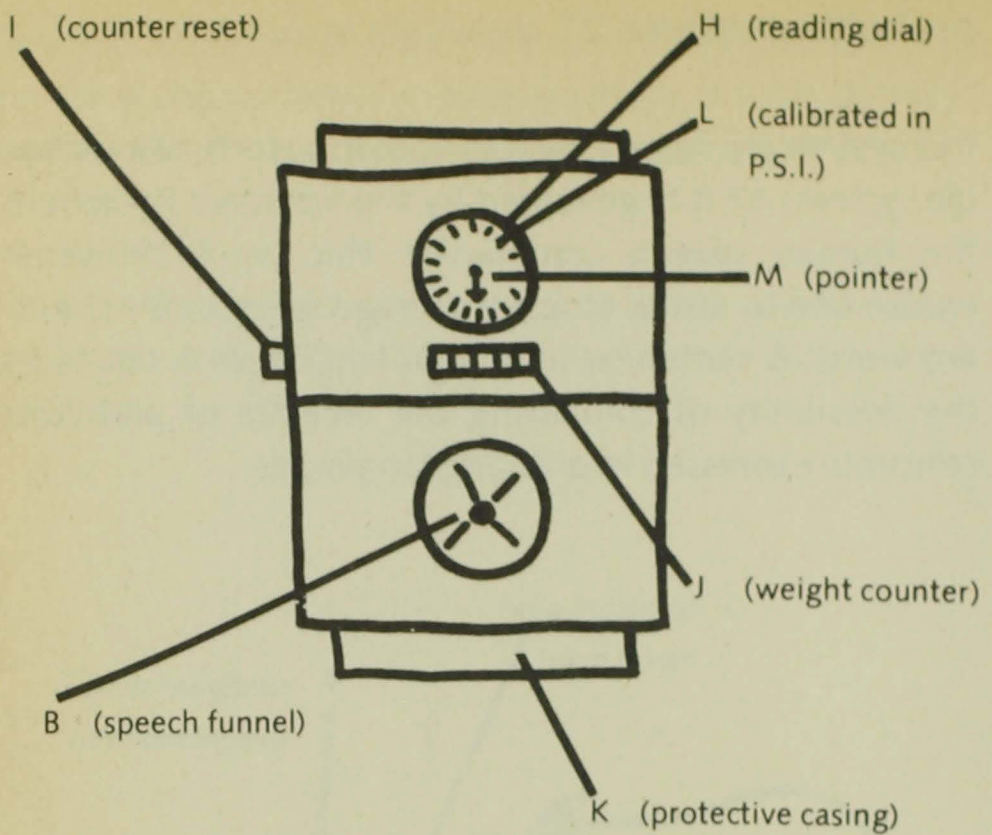
what troubled me with this system was the abrupt initial statement since base alphabet is not necessarily a readily accessible concept further the whole process of trying to pin something down exactly only serves to reconfirm Heisenberg's *Principle of Uncertainty* i.e. that the more exact you try to be in your description of something the further you move away from the reality of its existence & thus the rounding off to the nearest whole letter the concept of the whole letter is itself an interesting one which will be gone into a greater

detail in a future system since if you have H & if you have I what are the fractional letters in between them & what do they express

probable systems 21 the weight of speech (for Rube Goldberg)

this system proposes to weigh human speech. like probable systems 17 it is governed by the variables present in the human speech community. this would however enable one to arrive at some average weights for standard words & sentences in various languages & opens up the possibility of comparing the weights of particular concepts expressed in differing languages.





the human speaker (A) speaks into the speech funnel (B) a phoneme at a time. as he does so he vibrates the pressure sensitive membrane (D) which displaces the air in the chamber (C) forcing the air up the air hose (E) & pushing out against the point of least resistance the second pressure sensitive membrane (F) which raises the pressure sensitive metal strip (G) which is counter-balanced to pull down on the pointer (M) thus causing it to move around the reading dial (H) &, because the reading dial is calibrated (L), to point to the correct weight in pounds per square inch of pressure. the weight of each phoneme is then recorded on the weight counter (J) using the set/re-set dial (I) & is adjusted cumulatively as additional phonemes are spoken to form words & sentences.

commentary:

this system takes individual variables more fully into account than did probable systems 17 since thru the hooking up of a nose extension the actual weight of speech when used by a ventriloquist or a speaker whose mouth mobility was extremely limited could be measured. as with probable systems 17 however questions are raised by weighing speech or measuring its circumference which have to do with physical context & international standards both of which will be gone into more deeply in probable systems 24.

from Catullus poem XXVIII

Pisonis comites, cohors inanis,
aptis sarcinulis et expeditis,
Verani optime tuque mi Fabulle,
quid rerum geritis? satisne cum isto
uappa frigoraque et famem tulistis?
ecquidnam in tabulis patet lucelli
expensum, ut mihi, qui meum secutus
praetorem refero datum lucello?
o Memmi, bene me ac diu supinum
tota ista trabe lentus irrumasti.
sed, quantum uideo, pari fuistis
casu: nam nihilo minore uerpa
farti estis. pete nobiles amicos!
at uobis mala multa di daeque
dent, opprobria Romuli Remique.

Piss on his committees, cohorts in inanities
apt as sarcasm & as expeditious,
Verani was too optimistic my Fabulle,
who put the geritol in his rum? satisfied? me?! with such
vapid frigid rascals and too listless women?
Damn him as well in tableaux patterned at Lucelli's
expense, dumb monkey, who sucks the mothers'
pretties for refreshment and yells 'Oh –
oh mommy, give me that godly supper –
to taste the trickle in my lips makes you my master'
(said with big eyes, parents being first
cause (such minor nihilistic truths
are farts)). The prick's a noble friend!
The voices of men milking gods with
their teeth are as appropriate as Romulus's remarks.

As for their superstitious songs, they use them for a thousand purposes, for which the Sorcerer and that old man, of whom I have spoken, have given me the reason. Two savages, being once in great distress, seeing themselves within two finger lengths of death for want of food, were advised to sing; and when they had sung, they found something to eat; since that time all their religion consists mainly in singing, using the most barbarous words that come into their minds. The following are some of the words that they sang in a long superstitious rite which lasted more than four hours: Aiasé manitou, aiasé manitou, aiasé manitou, ahiham, hehinham, hanhan, heninakhé hosé heninakhé, enigouano bahano anihé auibini naninaouai nanahouai nanahouai aouihé ahahé aouihé: concluding with ho! ho! ho! I asked what these words meant, but not one could interpret them to me, for it is true that not one of them understands what he is singing, except in the tunes they sing for recreation. from 'Relation of What Occurred in New France on the Great River St. Lawrence, In the Year One Thousand Six Hundred Thirty-Four: On the Beliefs, Superstitions, and Errors of the Montagnais Savages' by Father Paul Le Jeune, S.J. *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents* (1954), edited by Edna Kenton.

Chant to the Fire-Fly

TEXT

Wau wau tay see!
Wau wau tay see!
E mow e shin
Tahe bwau ne baun-e wee!
Be eghaun – be eghaun – ewee!
Wau wau tay see!
Wau wau tay see!
Was sa koon ain je gun.
Was sa koon ain je gun.

TRANSLATION

Woe woe to see!
Woe woe to see!
Him oh he shine
To he boy unique boy 'n wee!
Be again – be again – whee!
Woe woe to see!
Woe woe to see!
Once again aintcha' gonna.
Once again aintcha' gonna.

Chippewa (Ojibwa), Schoolcraft (?:?)
as cited in Dell Hymes'
'Some North Pacific Coast Poems'

Translating Apollinaire

Icharrus winging up,
Simon the Magician from Judea high in a tree,
everyone reaching for the sun

great towers of stone
built by the Aztecs, tearing their hearts out
to offer them, wet and beating

mountains,
cold wind, Macchu Piccu hiding in the sun
unfound for centuries

cars whizzing by, sun
thru trees passing, a dozen
new wave films, flickering
on drivers' glasses

flat on their backs in the grass
a dozen bodies slowly turning brown

sun glares off the pages, "soleil
cou coupé", rolls in my window
flat on my back on the floor
becoming aware of it
for an instant

1963

Translating Translating Apollinaire 32 /
Negatives 4

for the burden of memory

a-

's

the

whole

remains

shines

clips from
continuously

, i am

!

a poem by bill bissett

deer in the forest
between the trees
where i sense them
the traces their hooves leave
in the wet earth

wet
day i cannot
remember
the way they
used to move
then when
i was
younger

younger
days
the hunger
returns
the dry reds
the nights the sky
burned

* * * * *
* * * * *
* * * * *
* * * * *
* * * * *

along the highway
starry
night
the white
line
burns
the eyes
deer
crossing
where the mind
moves
(
())
())
())
goodnight
the mountains
mass against the sky
like clouds
peaks
invisible
where the deer roam
proud and
wild

given to me in a dream & transcribed
january 17 1967

Three Found Poems

with David Aylward

ex exp expe expec expect expecta
xp xpe xpec xpect xpecta xpectan
pe pec pect pecta pectan pectanc
ec ect ecta ectan ectanc ectancy
ct cta ctan ctanc ctancy
ta tan tanc tancy
an anc ancy
nc ncy
cy

from Jacques Barzun's 'Tomorrow's Illiterates'

Turner's Golden Vision

Learn. Substantives

No comparison but by

Adjectives, as, good bonne

bad, Beau, fine Positive

Plus Beau finer Comparative

le Plus Beau Superlative of

Finer.

Masculine Le

White Blanc Positive

Whiter Blanc Comparative

Whitest Le Plus Blanc Superlative.

from C. Lewis Hind's 'Turner's Golden Visions'

(from the back of a drawing of Somerset House)

Puzzle

And	me,	and	stop	that	see,
Re	solved	sit	streets	you	you
You'll	to	vi	you'll	if	will
Ceive	ly	there	bert	want	and
A	right	the	Al	to	words
Of	first	Kin	Yonge	good	right
Pound	this	pe	and	get	these
Tea	bring	shop	at	tea	read

advertisement in GRIP
Saturday July 19 1873

from 'A Collaboration'

with Wayne Clifford

II: 5

In the garden speech continues

in the silence the pen moves &
words flow

out.

Moon

looms behind the wave, draws
all ocean to it. Feet, ankles, in
a slur of surf, susurrus on skin
the din of ocean's deafness grinds
the backwash. Feel it clearly.
It is not in seeing, no, it isn't
in the ear. Is sea's undeadened
deafness deciphers sand, deft
syllables in frothy trceries. Drift
and wash, this talking, welter of sign
unreadable, that drags a hiss out
between the teeth, a tide's noisy breath.

Behind you on the shoulder of the earth
a stand of scrubby olive, leaves white
with salt. Sour fruit scattered, the season late.
The garden speaks in seed and rot.
It is not

in eye or ear.

Clear as the rime on leaf or hair
it speaks, sprouting comely
imperishable death.

You, in the halfplace, how works
the brine to blind you, the growl
of crawling pebbles under the surge
to hollow a ringing in your skull?

In the garden at your back, spray
drizzles thru the near furrows.
The lines of young shoots wither, and those
along dark files farther converge
to obscure green, but you look
to where moon flashes at the edge
of wind, over horizon's arc

and your eyes dance
in the sockets of waves
your ears repeat
conches' empty roaring.

She gathers out of sea to memory
wrack or spume, a shape of arm
tossed against a crest, a flux
in the belly, Naxos tangled
in your mouth like a lie.
Her hair, a clump of algae.

The garden's will Give it up
unkept still. dead man.

Unreturning.

She rises. As your feet sink in the sand.

Neither you nor I, dead man.

She rises, and we meet.
Each.

“The sea is also a garden”:
Voice doubled,
 a man & a woman
speaking years apart.
We speak her speaking of his heart.

The sea U's too aware of
sky's line's blue 'n
wind in decline. The garden
disappears in sand beneath the wave.
Saviour.

In the late hours grieving,
salt on your face in the night wind,
this is no place for the luxury of sin
only the necessity of change & struggle
mur
 mer
 maid.

Give it up to the living
distant jingle of change.
On the night wind
amid the humous &
the almost human
among the memories of summer & your lover
persistent tricks of memory's
face in the moon (child in the brain)
your aging hand has lost the claim to
reach or touch (in the face of women,
children they might give you).

Neither you, nor I, nor a dreamed we.

Among the dunes & the struggling weeds.

Along the shore towards the lights of boats & houses
is also a garden
grows uncared for.

Among the scrub struggling to define a language
between the sea &
between her thighs where all memory flows
from her into you.
Speech.

It is the body cries out
absence of philosophy
lived despair.

“The sea is also ...”

& also ...

also ...

All so alone.

Also all one.

Weave wave woven
woken morning whispering.

Empty pillow.

Walked to the garden. Weeded.
Waited the day wishing.

Wind & ...

' "The sea is also" ' the seen world
from the edge of the beach
away from land
turned back & the wind blowing up
from the house towards the sea
is also the sound of the earth at water's edge –
its voice a garden.

1966 to present

from 'In England Now That Spring'

with Steve McCaffery

6

Above Ambleside the water falls
down in a tumble towards Windermere

clear air & sun again

Turner vignette cross the shadow of a pen – this
by the ghyll side

carries the sound into

the lake

shallow waters over stone

over the silent memory of

a human past

passed thru the length of this brief noise

into the great silence which surrounds

that place words cannot reach

water ignores or is not touched by

its own voice speaking

peculiar to this glade

gully of stones & trees

among the green leaves & darkened branches

persistent push of sky

incessant words

among the these.

Particular Music

text for 4 Horsemen performance

Steve			
Paul		teetleet	
Rafael	tee tee		tee tee
bp			

S		pom	ppomw	
P	teetleet		tee tee	
R			teetleetee	
b		ppomw	pom	tee tee

S				pom
P		teetee		ppoww
R	pom			pom pom
b			pom	ppoww pom

S		leeeeeeeeeeeee	
P	teetleetee	pom	
R	lo l b b lo		tee p i t t y pom
b		looooo	

S	tee tee			pitty pom
P		pitty pom		
R			tee tee	
b				

S				
P				tee tee
R			tee tee	
b	buddaduddabudda			

S	tee tee		pippip	
P				pom
R	tee tee			pom
b		pom		

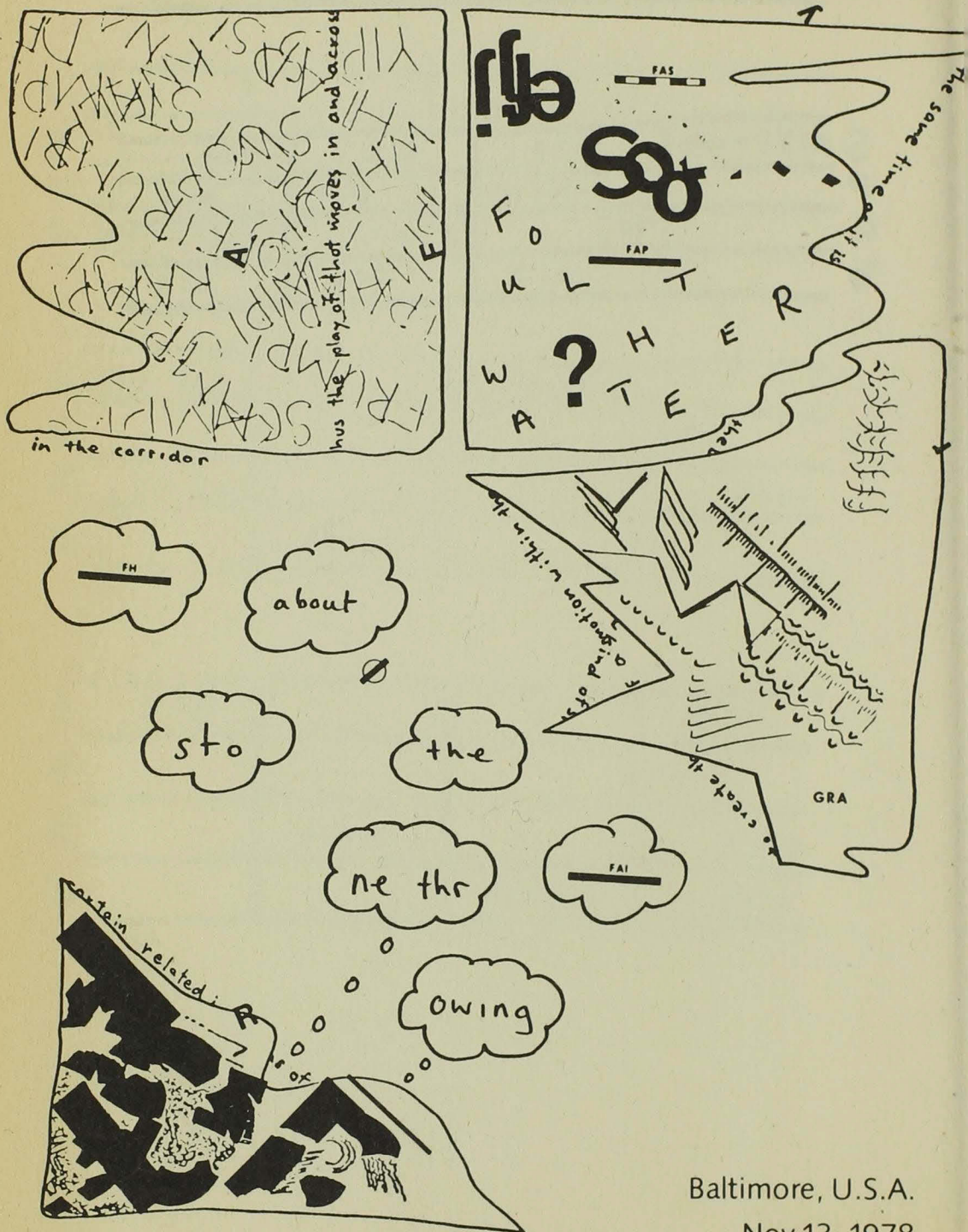
S	pip			pom
P				pitip
R		pom		pitip
b			pom	pom

S			pitit	pittpumpen
P	tlich tlich	tlich tlich		
R			pitit	
b				

S	pitipumpen	pit	tip	pit
P		tip	pit	t:ip
R		tip	pit	tip
b		pit	tip	pit

from 'Sorrow Laid As This One'

sound-text collaboration between members of
Co-Accident & the Toronto Research Group

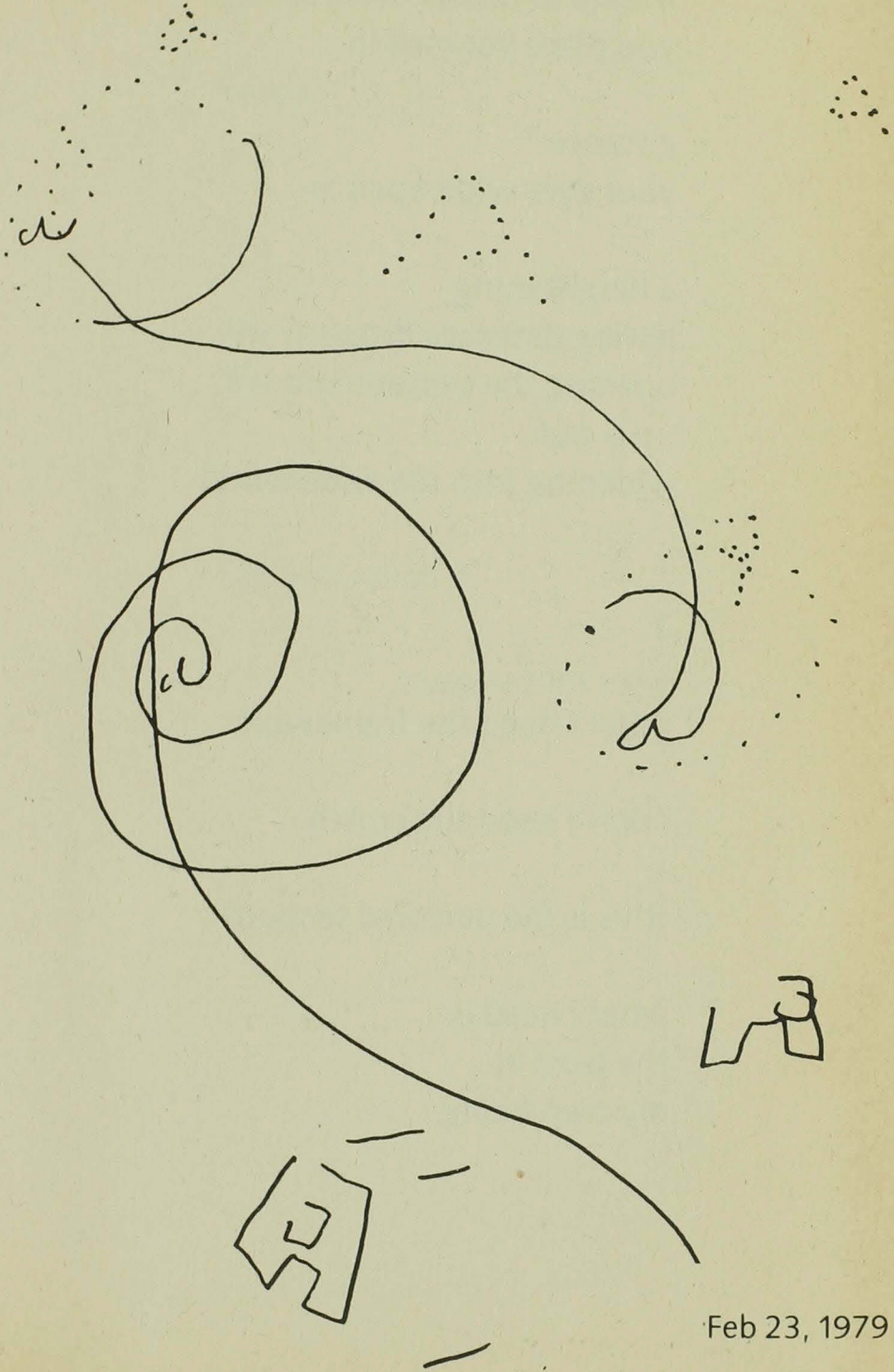


Baltimore, U.S.A.

Nov 13, 1978

from 'The Body: In Darkness'

nine Vancouver texts
with Steve McCaffery



Feb 23, 1979

Maps

1 'a day'

a state of mind
you place yourself in

a trance
your eyes wide open or

a heightening
letting defenses drop
opening the senses
up & out
widening into the wide world

2

i don't need the framework

i don't need the crutch

(this is the personal section)

what i need is
the trust in
my own being

you don't need the system

you don't need technique
except as a way to
get you there

ready

3

the moment does not come
the moment is

continual

can you reach it

January 27th 1979

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The Adventures of Milt the Morph in Colour (Collaborations with Barbara Caruso) (Toronto, Seripress, 1973)
H: An Excursion (Collaborations with Barbara Caruso) (Toronto, Seripress, 1976)

radio serials

Little Boy Lost Meets Mother Tongue (Broadcast in six episodes over a six week period by the CBC as part of their IDEAS series on language, 1969)

records

Borders (7 in., 33 1/3 rpm, issued as part of Journeying & the returns, Toronto, Coach House Press, 1967)
Motherlove (12 in., 33 1/3 rpm, Allied Records, Toronto, 1968)
Another Day Older (included on SEE/HEAR 1, Vancouver, Talonbooks, 1969)

Appendix (side 1 of 7 in., 33 1/3 rpm, issued as part of Sean O'Huigin's A Simple Introduction To Experimental Poetry, Windsor, Black Moss Press, 1978)

tapes

bpNichol (1 hr. cassette, Toronto, High Barnet, 1971)

publications as part of the Four Horsemen

The Four Horsemen (programme) (Sackville, Mount Allison University, 1970)

Canada (12 in., 33 1/3 rpm lp, Toronto, Griffin House, 1972)

Horse D'Oeuvres (Toronto, Paperjacks, 1975)

Live In The West (12 in., 33 1/3 rpm lp, Toronto, Starborne, 1977)

Canada (1 hr. stereo cassette, Toronto, Starborne, 1977)

A Little Nastiness (Toronto, grOnk, 1980)

Bootleg (1 hr. cassette, forthcoming 1981)

translations

Six Fillious (translations of Robert Filliou's '14 Chansons et 1 Charade', with George Brecht, Dick Higgins, Steve McCaffery & Dieter Roth, Milwaukee, USA, Membrane Press, 1978)

has also adapted science fiction & fairy tales for the comic book medium, had one short play & one musical produced as well as producing additional material for the Canadian Mime Theatre, contributed some material to & was a featured soloist in R. Murray Schafer's APOCALYPSIS, & has had work anthologized in numerous anthologies including CONCRETE POETRY: Britain Canada United States (Stuttgart, Germany, Editions Hansjorg Mayer, 1966), New Wave Canada (Toronto, Contact Press, 1966), Anthology of Concrete Poetry (New York, USA, Something Else Press, 1967), Concrete Poetry: A World View (Bloomington, USA, Indiana University Press, 1968), 20th Century Poetry & Poetics (Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1969), Gordon To Watkins To You (Toronto, New Press, 1970), New Directions In Canadian Poetry (Toronto, Holt Rhinehart & Winston, 1971), Future's Fictions (Princeton, USA, Panache, 1971), Evolution of Canadian Literature: 1945-70 (Toronto, Holt Rhinehart & Winston, 1973), Canadian Poetry: The Modern Era (Toronto, M&S, 1977), Out-Posts/Avant-Posts (Erin, Press Porcepic, 1978), The Poets of Canada (Edmonton, Hurtig, 1978), The Long Poem Anthology (Toronto, Coach House Press, 1979), Text-Sound Texts (New York, USA, William Morrow, 1980), Fiction of Contemporary Canada (Toronto, Coach House Press, 1980).

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the alphabet from **Alphabet Ilphabet** was hand drawn by Barbara Caruso. the typographical interpretation of 'Blues' is by Vivien Halas & was originally printed at the Bath Academy of Art in England. the title for 'Not What The Siren Sang ...' was given to the author by Margaret Avison. the typography in the excerpt from **Journal** is by Glenn Goluska. all type not set in Syntax is reshot from the original publication of the work. **Aleph Unit** is shot from Barbara Caruso's handcut silk screen versions as opposed to the author's original art.

the author would like to thank the various magazines & presses under whose imprints these works have appeared over the years. he encourages you to support your little presses. they are the only true friend of poetry.



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This volume includes work beginning with bpNichol's visual poetry (progressing from the use of individual letters, to words, to distinct shapes on the page), moving through his sound poetry (in its written form) for one voice only, to poems which combine visual and traditional lyric qualities (leading to an excerpt from *The Martyrology*), and concluding with a selection of prose writings, a short play, translations, found poems and collaborations.



bpNichol was born in Vancouver in 1944. He studied at The University of British Columbia, worked briefly as a Grade 4 teacher, then moved to Toronto where he became involved with Therapeutics, working in the area of inter and intra personal communication. He is the author of 18 books of poetry and prose and numerous pamphlets; has been a publisher himself, under the imprints of Ganglia Press and grOnk; and is an editor at Coach House Press and Underwhich Editions. He was the winner of the Governor-General's Award for Poetry in 1970 for: *Still Water, The True Eventual Story of Billy the Kid, The Cosmic Chef*, ed., and *Beach Head*.

Other important titles include: *The Martyrology Books I to IV; Two Novels; Journal; Craft Dinner; LOVE: A Book of Remembrances; Zygol: A Book of Mysteries and Translations* and *Translating Translating Apollinaire*.

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The cover is a photograph of an H-shaped tree in the Nass Valley of northern British Columbia. The photograph was taken by Kim Ondaatje. The photograph of the author was taken by Andy Phillips.

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