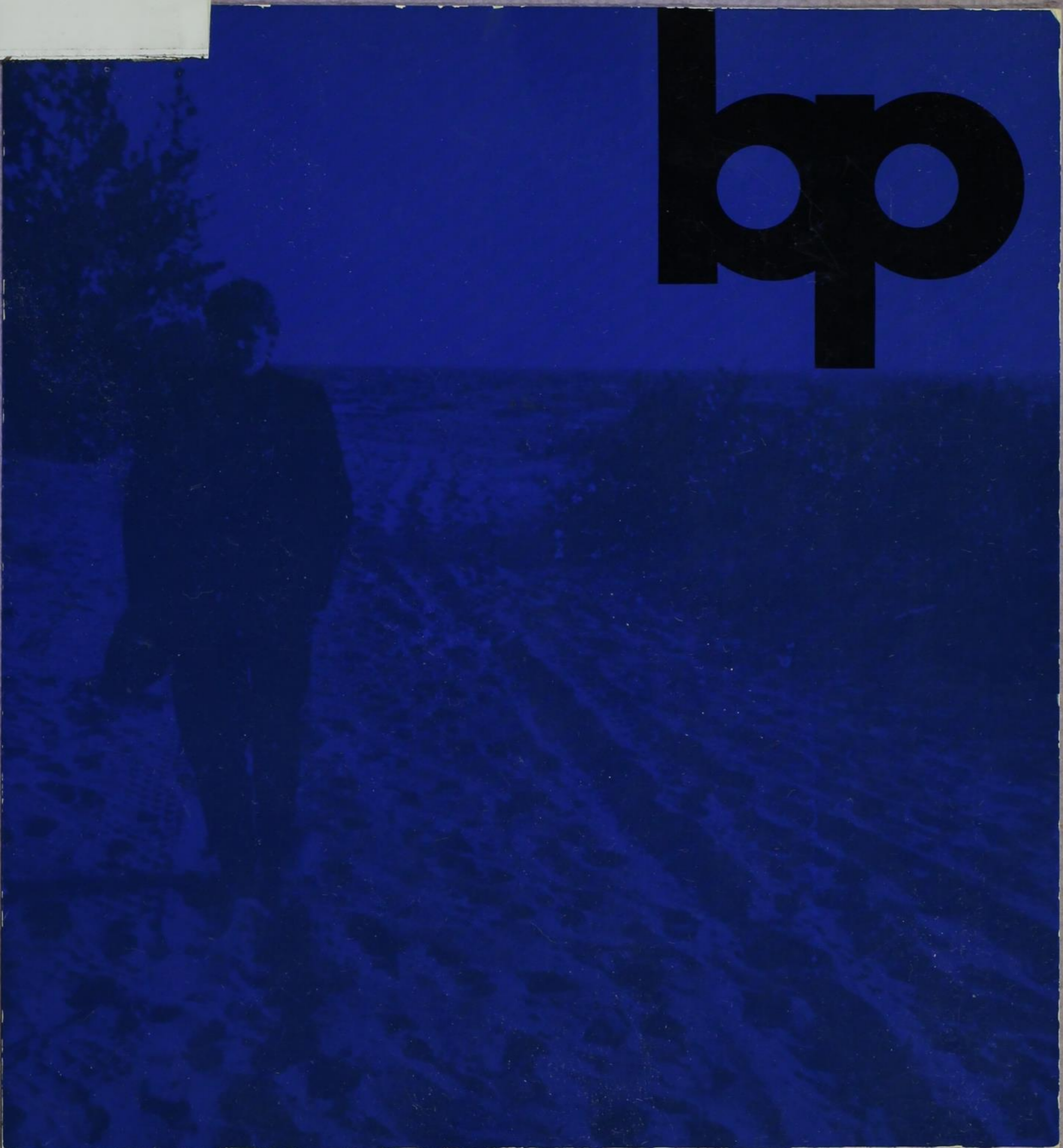


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STATEMENT

now that we have reached the point where people have finally come to see that language means communication and that communication does not just mean language, we have come up against the problem, the actual fact, of diversification, of finding as many exits as possible from the self (language/communication exits) in order to form as many entrances as possible for the other.

the other is the loved one and the other is the key, often the reason for the need/desire to communicate. how can the poet reach out and touch you physically as say the sculptor does by caressing you with objects you caress? only if he drops the barriers. if his need is to touch you physically he creates a poem/object for you to touch and is not a sculptor for he is still moved by the language and sculpts with words. the poet who paints or sculpts is different from the painter who writes. he comes at his art from an entirely different angle and brings to it different concerns and yet similar ones. but he is a poet always.

this is not a barrier. there are no barriers in art. where there are barriers the art is made small by them. but this is to say no matter where he moves or which 'field' he chooses to work in, he is always a poet and his creations can always be looked upon as poems.

there is a new humanism afoot that will one day touch the world to its core. traditional poetry is only one of the means by which to reach out and touch the other. the other is emerging as the necessary prerequisite for dialogues with the self that clarify the soul & heart and deepen the ability to love. I place myself there, with them, whoever they are, wherever they are, who seek to reach themselves and the other thru the poem by as many exits and entrances as are possible.

bpNichol, Toronto, November 1966

The person moves thru the world and is moved by the need to communicate. It is not surprising that in his first book of non-concrete poetry the concerns of bpNichol centre around communication and the presence of or lack of it in relationships.

bpNichol was born in Vancouver in 1944. Leaving there when he was three he returned from ages 15 to 19 having lived in various western cities in between. Now living in Toronto he has worked variously as an odd-job man, a school teacher, a library assistant and is at present working in the field of psycho-therapy. He has published concrete and non-concrete poetry in magazines in Canada, the U.S., England, Belgium, France, Germany and Czechoslovakia, was the Canadian poet in German typographer Hansjorg Mayer's historic anthology 'Concrete Poetry: Britain Canada United States', co-edits with David Aylward the magazine *Ganglia*, has had poem-objects in exhibitions in England and Spain, and was one of seventeen poets in Raymond Souster's controversial 'New Wave Canada' anthology.

This book arose out of physical and mental journeys in and between Vancouver, Winnipeg and Toronto. It is the quiet side that 'New Wave Canada' hinted at— a man writing out of periods of intense pain and change in his life. It is not the side that *Ganglia* has shown but rather the side that his friend Dave Phillips spoke of in a poem written to him—

“old enough to have
old friends

no longer
wonderful out of
necessity”

A letter from Margaret Avison

Dear bpn

The range of simple terms finds a sure place in language - salt water and tap water, beach fire and astronomical fire and living energy, space framed and leaking and hollowing and flowing down transcontinental RR tracks, lives finding singular form in an infolding and opening-out whole.

Can there be mime in words? - your poem comes to that: magnetic flow of force; speaking that does not distance a person who hears; giving and never giving anything away.

I like a cup, cupped hands - (& other sequences like that, with other terms). The ocean-wash under the onflowing of the poem is exciting - e.g. the part where the poignantly present is found, on a round earth, with the journey falling away eastward and the westcoast's leaves falling oceanwards, out of time - and right after that, the poem of Canadian absence "against the west wall called ocean", all a depressed placeless place. "Is" and "is not" come clear, which I found heartening indeed.

thanks.

Margaret

118848

JOURNEYING

& the returns

bp Nichol

THE COACH HOUSE PRESS

for
Maw & Paw
D. J., Bob & Dea
&
for 55
who started the last leg
a beginning

Prologue:

1335 Comox Avenue

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

1

up on the mountain
air is
 and sky -
hot summer day
three thousand feet above sea level
looking over Vancouver
blue
 is
the colour you notice

“I always think within myself
that there is no place
where people do not die”
—Kwakiutl song

scramble up
over charred wood stumps
foot slips
then catches
in a forking branch

sit to catch my breath,
the tree
 a hundred years old
before it fell

watch the ferry,
one last puff of blue,
 disappearing
in the strait

2

the woods
are green
 & brown trunks
letting thru the sky

soft pad of feet
on pine needles
brown & green
where the sun strikes

a hawk
circling
 eyes
the foot's slight displacement
of a leaf

hangs

 drops

struggles
in the sombre green

3

looking out
 far over
mount rainier
& the sea

the islands
 distorted
at this distance
by the heat

 waves breaking

 faint sounds

of voices
 far below
moving over the bridge
into the city

 birds
circle round the ships
rise

 & plunge
visible only
as clouds

 sun on water,
hand on a hollowed stump,
sea calm, mountain
under my feet

1

I raise the cup and take it to my lips.

this room will soon be empty,
my having been here
made no difference

I run the water from the tap
but do not fill my cup;
hold it in my hands
and taste the air

3

as children
we hunched around the campfires,
heat gatherers
in the frigid air.

looked towards the river
out
over
the red
muddy
water

I returned to that river,
to the cold ashes of my childhood,
I had no fire to heat my body
and the snow was too dirty to eat.

(once I was made of fire
held water in my hands
and drank it
felt the cooling trickle
in my flaming throat

5

I leave my room,
walk beside the ocean,
wind blowing in.

turning my collar up
I run along the shore
tide rushing in,
feet flicking thru
charred wood, sand, and surf

Part 3:

Ancient Maps of the Real World

prairie, lakes, trees,
the whole world
falling behind

track

swinging away

rear platform
trans-continental

lakes, trees, rivers
dragging the eyes along

sun setting
mind breaking

drawing back
fragments
into the brain

1

eyes open on colour,
morning, fall

and the leaves, changing,
filtering light
down

thru leaves
curling, caught
in the flaming

wind
blowing from the west
cross miles of empty track

first wind to come
moving the leaves
down

past eyes,
opening,
turning

full circle,
pupils curling in
blinded by the sun

3

sun overhead

smoke goes
straight up

nothing moves

sun goes
from east to west

eyes & train follow

4

rolling into night
sun flame on the track,
quivering fireball
tottering
on the horizon

what myth
lies there?

eye of the dragon
coiled round the world

eye of the dragon
closing

or is it
doorway

centre of the sunflower of creation
ringed round in steam

is it fire?

flaming circle of the gods
whistle blasts mind to steam

7

everything gone

mind shattered in the night
sun buried in the sea
woman sleeping
in another world beside him

man alone
lost in dream

train rolls on
past mountain
past night

sun comes up
gathers mind together
into heart

8

the sea
the sun

everything here

tide rolling in
ships moving out

mind in motion
eyes at rest

the continent stopped

against the west wall
called ocean

the win-
dow

faces
to watch &

hands
to wave

possibilities
of motion

the sea

each wave
the

drops of
rain

to each
each

change
white

foam
the beach

sea

oceans
to flow to

what
to do?

see
clearly?

act
gently?

Part 5:

Letters from a Rainy Season

1

the circle
is of faces
looking inwards
towards

the centre
of
the table

the table
at which
caught back
in the brain's shell

in the tongue's prison
till
my lips
crumble

the
knuckles of my hands
burst forth in
raw air

the circle
turns
around me

faces
surround me
contorted as
my own

2

seated round
we hear
the sound
of feet

 across
the ceiling, the floor
of someone's room
somewhere
in this house

whose son, whose daughter
moves there, above us, moves
in the upper reaches
of our air

where
do
the walls
end
their movements
in doors

where
do
the windows
frame
their world

where
do
my own
windows
move
that they appear here
to frame
my eyes

am i
forever to see
even here
at this table
the image
of the sea?

and they
who move above us
what do
they
see?

3

beyond
the eye

taken

all
that i can see

hear

broken down
for you

offered

insight
in-

side
a circling

movement

that
surrounds us

sitting

backs to
the door

the eye
turns toward

now the sea
brings in
its changes

the bells
sundays
ring

a strangeness
takes the heart
to windows

air air

wherever
the sea moves
wherever

the sun
shines
or reaches

the eyes
follow
following

from the chair
seated
watching

the boats
move
ringing

the changes
the finger
traces

to bring
the strangeness
thru

5

the sun
the breast
the eye

that which
gives, that which
takes, that which

yields
is given to
and gives

that which
surrounds, that which
enfolds, that which

opens
is opened to
in opening

that which
is spoken of
and speaks

its name
upon our breath
in various guises

6

such
 care
was taken
 to
board
 it
up
 that
even after all these years
removing the nails
was difficult

inside
the dank smell
of rot
 dead leaves
floorboards
to fall thru

 that
someone
 had
lived here
was obvious
 only
by
the planks
over the windows

- a whole winter
to
fix

the place up

it seemed
a plague,
a season

of rains,
had struck us
left us
in the middle
of wreckage

we
stripped it bare
(the circular
living room, the hall) where
they'd painted over
the natural wood
we scraped it clean

re-
built it - placed
ourselves there
with
what skill
we had

the
former owner
says

he
finds it
hard
to believe

*parts of JOURNEYING & the returns appeared in
Blew Ointment and New Wave Canada*

this poem is also dedicated to:

James Alexander

Bill Bissett

Barb Nyberg

Dave Phillips

Dace Puce

thanx to Margaret Avison, Dave Aylward and
particularly Wayne Clifford - all of whom offered
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