

A DRAFT OF  
BOOK IV OF

# THE MARTYROLOGY



**bpNichol**



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THE MARTYROLOGY in its entirety is  
as i said originally  
for Lea  
without whom

quite literally  
none of it would have been written

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The cover sketch of St Reat is by David Aylward  
(David St Alwart)

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#### A NOTE ON NOTATION

I have, for a long time, been working towards the unification of what have seemed to many, if i am to believe some of the reviews i read, as the disparate areas of my concern. The focal point of that unification process remains THE MARTYROLOGY - primarily because of the journal-like structure that has evolved in its writing. This structure has meant that each book's shift in content has had its corresponding shift in form.

In the Saints' history poem that accompanied Books I & II, (written after Book II), the incorporation of the single letters, their importance, into the body of the poem was prefigured:

"a future music moves now to be written  
w g r & t  
its form is not apparent  
it will be seen"

By the end of Book III these significances, along with the other themes that move the work forward, were beginning to emerge. In the present work (Book IV) this particular area of concern reaches a flowering with words often being read as sentences that say things about single letters. This has lead to problems in terms of giving readings from this text. The nature of the poem demands that both the eye & the ear be focussed on the words of the piece in order for its full meaning to be available. The solution to that dilemma is the publication of this present pamphlet which enables those listening to the reading to follow the text if they so choose.

Because of the column width i  
allotted myself in this particular publication

format, i was forced to break the longer lines of the poem & continue them on the next line. Such lines are justified to the right hand column margin & have a slash mark (/) in front of them as in the following example:

"to go beyond the point where it is even necessary to think in terms of words"

Where i have had to break a stanza prematurely (because it was longer than the space left in the column) i have placed a dot (●) at the bottom of the column to indicate to the reader that they should continue reading in the next column as if there were no break. Other than these two exception every typographical break is a breath break.

I have called this publication A DRAFT because that is exactly what it is. Dates at the end of the various books are compositional dates only & do not reflect the dates of subsequent revisions. This poem will undoubtedly change further before final publication. Indeed the nature of THE MARTYROLOGY makes any term like "final" useless. It is a deliberately open-ended sequence that could terminate at any moment or could, in fact, go on until the author's death. If it goes on that long many book column editors will undoubtedly cheer my passing as they will no longer have to agonize over who to send the latest volume to for review.

The publication of Books III & IV by Coach House Press sometime in 1977 & the reissuing, at that same time, of Books I & II, in a single volume format, should bring the work as a whole more clearly into focus for those who despaired of my missing ear & the bored messengers that loitered in the passages.

bpNichol  
february 6 1976

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This first publication of Book IV has been printed & distributed in an edition of 250 copies in connection with a reading at the University of Alberta at Edmonton on February 20th 1976. For the opportunity to give the reading i thank Douglas Barbour who was kind enough to ask me. For those who may wish to read them, parts of Book III have appeared or will appear in White Pelican, Earth & You, & The Capilano Review.

The discovery of new saints continues. George Bowering, in a recent poem published in Jim Lowell's ASPHODEL CATALOGUE, has revealed the existence of St As Is.



purpose is a porpoise

a conceit

is there a sea

yes

is there a cloud

yes

everything elemental  
everything blue

the precision of openness  
is not a vagueness  
it is an accumulation  
cumulous

yes

oceanic

yes &  
anything elemental  
anything blue is

sky

sea

the heart of  
the flame

stories  
st orie's domain

but the french say

"main"

ti

la

do

hand

the h &  
what else

if the language poses questions  
"are there answerers"

what i ad  
dress

clothe in

thot

not

adjectives for nouns nor  
names where things will do

eternally new

a hand snake  
speare or sword  
the old "s" word  
cutting edge of accuracy

if they cannot see  
they are blind

hear

deaf

de-

e

f

-fective

"the divine right of"  
the hard left cross  
nails the boss's son

we are always pleading  
asking for

forgiveness

favours

never the old hosannas we used to raise  
still worship the wheel in all its i's's  
make ourselves capitals  
of earthly doubt

forgive us

the d will out  
as the b drops thru its  
half note

configuration

i is singing scale  
i hails you

Hart works the "e"  
reversing the conjunction  
finds the d n a  
connective

the heart of  
writers & their obsessions

who cares

the oral hang-ups change

a concern for listening

if i let the actual speak  
it will reveal itself

admire the form  
be seduced by it  
as part of  
the love of  
language

"love me for my mind as well"



elementary statement  
elemental state  
meant for  
                  completion  
combination  
  
we work  
the changes  
always  
to reveal  
lest the actual re-veil itself  
a shifting of  
the humus  
                  cumulous covers  
poetry's reviled &  
spat upon  
                  sweet spit & hhh of breathing  
the old so &  
so my dreams are troubled  
  
what matters it the nights are sleepless  
i lie awake with poems       hymns  
these rhythms  
insistent as the brain is  
with images  
                  a pounding in the chest of  
words  
                  the 1 imposition of the earth  
the singular  
word + one = world  
                  i seek  
solutions to equations that are already solved?  
no!  
                  only  
an understanding  
                  ((i place myself as less than  
what is obviously greater)  
                  all knowledge  
is to know the ledge you stand on  
half way between earth & sky  
where the clouds slide  
form & dissolve around you)  
a way of moving in the fluid surely  
not as a man who walks in water  
where swimming would better do  
or as Christ did  
                  walking out upon it  
to teach them  
the stupidity  
of rigid category  
  
i want the absolute precision  
of fluid definition  
the saints learned  
long ago  
                  built their towns  
"upon the plains of heaven"  
  
blue of sea  
                  (sky)  
white clouds  
                  (land)  
intermingling

driving north today  
fog giving way to rain  
rain to snow  
& snow  
                  covering the road finally  
there is no definition  
where you cannot see the line  
of drawing  
                  writing  
                                  music  
the form a focus for us  
i wakens from  
the dreamed landscape  
  
out of the words' tumble  
should meaning separate  
when it is the torrent sweeps me  
thru the bound beeches  
the switch  
                  hits the mind  
blood rushing to  
the surface of  
the skin  
  
                  sink  
                                  in  
  ink's  
  sin  
  is  
no sin  
                  unless it is the nosin' around  
down at the surface where the depth is  
  
we read it in the i's  
i centre is a tease  
no centre ring at all  
Adam knew  
the apple was a pull  
a way  
a sepe-  
tion-  
ning  
                  the whole for  
the part  
sin of  
partiality  
who should have been impartial  
(imp art i always wanted to attain  
a dance among the little ones)  
wanted to be part of  
the whole  
                  flows thru  
into the universe  
absolute & open  
poem of  
perfect movement  
containment of  
the flux



the wind outside rises  
air  
grey  
day  
janvier  
moment when the movement changes  
the line straightens out & stretches on ahead  
there's room to pass  
out into the flats of heaven  
the cloud land  
a night's sleep has seen the last of  
for the moment  
momentum carries us  
on in our arc around the sun  
& the lines become as long as the tongue can  
/carry without breathing in  
images shift  
blue sky turning back to grey  
it is the wind moves it  
it is a language the celts knew & spoke of  
runes  
(the running e's)  
pass as vowels thru energy  
consonants as nouns  
vowels as verbs  
what are the sentences that form  
words they're made of  
syntax of alignment i want to see  
apparent in every bush & tree  
placement of the sea & land  
a plan  
not in the sense of plot  
pre-conceived  
but there  
readable  
if i am able to  
see man  
writable  
purpose breaking the surface of the skin  
i gather up my gear  
gain control  
move from the known on  
into the un  
prefix delimiting the road  
out of the two year darkness of the mind  
no music i could find to lead me  
sick of ending things before their time  
is marked  
b  
eaten up  
's sung in  
the bottom range  
down the upper  
twists of phrase

sur visage  
the mouth opens  
writing following the o of  
sound  
noise  
products of the human voice  
awaking  
too little sleep  
snow falls  
beyond the wind  
o  
w forms  
at the word's end  
word's beginning is  
the book's end  
that conundrum  
vision  
riddle we are all well rid of  
the dull pass of wisdom  
w is d  
o ma  
i 'n h and  
the me's restated  
at the pen's tip's ink  
at the tongue's noise  
w in d  
din  
Blake's vision of  
Golgonooza  
after noon  
the clouds give way to sky  
blue  
e  
le me 'n  
t  
always  
why  
to rid me of  
the ugh in  
thought  
i spell anew  
weave the world  
out of the or  
binary  
the note spun  
out of the dinary into the few  
letters i am granted  
signs  
to reach who i cannot touch  
miles & years between us  
february 1 1975 5:48 p.m.  
conscious i may be dead when you read this  
as two nights ago i lay awake  
trying to grasp the concept "infinite"  
a feeling of vertigo  
i am so much less than everything  
the fact of the all  
encompassing me



gunning into high  
digger digger  
the cat gut &  
the fiddler  
questions to answer  
answer's an A  
B  
ginning  
of the town  
the saints came down from  
buildings crumbling  
middle ground abandoned  
the road takes me  
into the centre of that emptiness  
the past is made by  
the present  
at root the blue is bleu  
means "bright"  
if you get the b right  
everything's ginning  
essents & essentials  
so much of the problem is misnaming  
last night  
walking home  
stars above the church at the foot of Huron  
the sky a darker blue to purple  
range i cannot name  
that activity  
what should be play  
too often's re-creation  
the change that Langtek worked  
"wreck-creation"  
foreign to me now  
i want the world  
absolute & present  
all its elements  
el  
em  
en  
t's  
o  
p q  
r  
or b d  
bidet  
confusion of childhood's "kaka"  
the Egyptian "KA"  
soul  
rising out of  
the body of  
the language  
the streets are not named  
standing in the centre square  
staring up at windows they no longer gaze from  
the whole point of it ended  
meanings for existence  
gone ●

the stuttered b  
ing  
that is living  
stammer thru our days  
impotent in less obvious ways than  
the limp dick or  
frozen ocean of  
response  
the saints come down to  
their mortality  
or fled  
to live among the dead  
outside our memories  
the city that they built  
a memo re  
a son  
one's debt to one's father  
forgotten  
farther away than  
the next star or  
page  
surface that the eye lights on  
in the press of speech  
awkward words are chosen  
that decision is  
the voice's prelude  
skeletal remains  
apparent in  
the choice of  
building blocks  
the "b" locks into place  
a command  
in the space left  
the weight of air shifts  
visible compounds of earth & water  
within a balanced sphere of  
forces  
fire (which is sun)  
air  
earth & water (clouds)  
air  
earth & water (earth)  
fire (which is core & molten)  
we can journey outward  
into hell  
the suns & darkneses of space  
or inwards  
into cave-black liquid stone &  
fire  
at the earth's core  
old questions i had asked  
answered



Lucifer fell  
from fire onto earth & could not rise again  
burrowed into  
the ground

the meteor in northern siberia  
June 30th 1908

"a sound was heard  
louder than . . . thunder  
and a column of fire  
. . . shot skyward"

"a farmer living fifty miles away  
was hit by a heat wave  
which he feared would set fire to his clothing"

i burn on the inside  
unnamed purpose  
as i had dreamed it years ago  
to write my way thru the books of the dead  
let the process take me  
thru  
into  
the books of the living  
& i move now  
out of 3

into 4  
or 1  
some new beginning  
sensed here  
amid the sensory sensation of  
speech

these words  
the arch  
ark  
Io  
logical  
invocation of  
the change  
flames i saw  
among the monotones  
the burning beasts

cattle  
Io of the many eyes  
Nura Nal's visions  
Io who suckled Zeus  
& "invented the five vowels of  
the first alphabet  
& the consonants

B & T"  
Nura Nal who sees thru dreams  
what is to transpire  
that arch which takes us  
over the present

into the future  
arks we sail  
like Noah or Utnapishtim  
till we come to that day  
we are no longer young  
others come

as Gilgamesh did ●

caught up in  
the immortality game  
to question us

there is noone here to question

the wind howls in the empty streets  
shutters bang uselessly  
i pick my way thru the remnants of their speech  
the crumbling outline of their modes of thot  
i am no closer to them  
only further away from earth  
dizzy from the lack of air  
i stumble frequently

in the long hours the heart is slowed  
the mind drifts between the particles  
letters of the law  
the B is born

one day before  
the celebration of your son Lord  
according to the Bethluisnion  
& i sit  
late in the Nth month  
waiting for the F to dawn  
seven days from now  
ash dropping from  
the fire i have lit in my hand

the B gins us  
A's the birth  
tree  
day of

celebration

I  
the death  
yew  
loss of we  
which is our perfect B  
ginning

false pride of individuality

that i am

yes  
but i was of  
came from

this soil

W  
o men  
we all begin in  
that embrace our M's contained in

the soil forsakes us

we are lost  
Kryptions we all came from  
infant crying for our vanished homes  
crumble in the face of fragmentary stone  
remnants of our origin  
shakes us  
power's gone  
orphaned I's

brought down to their mortality



i hang  
suspended in the N which is my name

sequence is the changing of the moon  
the month's advancement  
B L N  
F

am i ly-  
ing?

the shrines change hands  
the sacred groves' scarred  
battle for our gods across millenia  
drift in between  
never easy with these mono themes  
mono theisms  
torn between our parents  
mother/father  
can't i praise you both

i move from streets  
into empty corridors  
the saints abandoned  
long ago  
took their separate ways to earth  
or outward

to the stars  
other suns & planets  
other gods  
useless catalogues of sins & longings  
"are the two equated?"  
"sometimes"  
"oh"

the is M  
the particular  
emblem of the end a  
beginning a  
w a y  
ME/WE  
returned to  
that vision &  
this time

i write the letters clearly  
the w rite of consciousness  
a transparency's  
too often viewed opaquely  
lack of seeing  
lack of being  
sing

sang  
sank

froid  
et chaud  
caught between the opposites  
throats full of praise  
masked pleadings with the ones we fear will  
kill us  
will us dead & gone ●

cinq  
six

sept  
mid-initial drop  
Set or Seth  
whose opposite Osiris  
he murdered

for the sake of Isis  
Aphrodite Urania  
Aphrodite Erycina  
who tore out her lover's balls  
in the moment of heat  
that cold consumes us  
Cain & Abel  
the brothers or the twins  
jealousy  
divides the year  
divides the family  
mi

fa  
so  
la ti  
etude &  
longitude a  
fixing of points on a grid  
language

where the grid is  
no longer apparent  
buried in the history of the race  
the alphabet  
A to Z of  
being

the M  
the ME  
the S is  
a way of starting  
your feet move hesitantly in the shuttered  
rooms  
the few things they left scattered on the  
mantles

artifacts of daily living  
rotting garbage that forms their tel  
ing

St Orm St Reat  
St Agnes & St And  
St Utter

who became the town crier  
another story  
i never bothered to tell  
their histories fill my head  
like the dead can do  
so many years they tried to block out the living  
i became their mouth  
their breathing  
like some misconception of you God  
not to illumine the present  
but to haze it over  
these clouds of the unknowing  
false mysteries i railed against  
& now they're gone  
like the voice of Jung on a distant phone  
mumbling ●



uncritical  
i see their faces as they were  
jealous of your godhood  
your parenting  
set themselves up as  
better than the rest of us  
because we acknowledged our suffering

i preferred St And a clown  
human & vulnerable  
critical of stupid posturing  
absurd hierarchies he'd left behind  
aware of the struggle he'd never made  
forgetting the common effort raised these  
  /spires

built the high-arched windows  
placed the cobblestones  
lived on  
isolate among the many  
his faces mirrored in the air  
he gazed into & fell  
self into self  
narcosis of narcissus  
wandered then  
lost among men  
the full pain of his loss haunting him

he is gone now  
to "the land from which there is no return"  
where Erishkigall holds sway  
to Mag Mell

                              the Plain of Joy  
Avalon  
                              Isle of Appletrees  
finally at peace in  
the immortality game

in the gardens the trees have died  
freed of their artificiality  
"in Dilmun the raven utters no cry"

to do what one does  
with honour  
is the all

ist heal-  
ling

                              lang  
u age  
's h

                              on  
our

                              hour

the days are marked by their divisions  
purpose

                              less divisive in  
the long run •

lung ran  
lang ren  
tall

                              i is here so  
short ly

in bed  
2 a.m.  
ellie sleeps beside me  
images form behind her closed eyes  
i am following a line of thot  
of ink to  
its conclusion

to re member  
re articulate  
eyes

                              mouth  
mobility of limbs  
in the dream time  
connectives vanish  
only that one line or link  
you seek each morning  
takes you back

  e thru k  
f g h i j  
arcane but logical

here  
"where the sea sleeps"  
"where the cold is unendurable"  
in these "barbarous lands at  
the end of the world"  
we are caught in  
a tangled dreaming  
an immigrant nation of  
uncertain history  
we are like you saints  
the lands we left destroyed  
by nothing more than  
the hours' passing

tonight  
the moon shines  
thru this house of glass  
as i as well had said it  
"the poem is dead

  long live the poem"  
i know now the saints were wrong  
demigods at best  
we have struggled a millenium  
without your name  
no power to invoke but our own  
noun of your being absent  
no other nouns cohere

i speak from "the land of the summer stars"  
"at the back of the north wind"  
where the souls flock  
each spring  
the ponds & hills of  
dufferin county •



set out food at the pond's edge  
because it is right & necessary  
wander the woods where the old beeches stand  
books of your being  
light green of new leaves  
blue spring sky  
that colour range which is the saxon word "glas"  
& it is death i see  
which is the absence of the strength to call you  
the power to invoke your name  
gone in the shifting game of allegiance  
your jealous children played  
& i am left wanting you  
left to amuse myself  
mother/father  
i am afraid  
retreat to theory  
talk factually when i feel unsure  
hate the noise of such didacticism  
hate my hatred of it

journal journey  
jour du nalney  
move slowly thru the signs of passage

mabe i will ne  
ver  
    speak a  
gain  
    mid this  
            blue

sky & deep sea  
                    cerulean

vapour

distant hills

flash of veins  
as they show thru  
the skin

of constancy  
livid as the skin becomes  
after a blow

fear or  
dismay  
the colour of  
blood  
i dress in  
because i am a servant of  
words  
the colour of  
plagues  
(indecent  
            obscene)

"plaid the painter  
when hee did so gild the turning globes,  
blew'd seas, and  
green'd the fields."

yield it all up from  
the person  
            voice  
he hopes is charged with  
His blessing

the i dies finally  
merges with the land's scape  
scope increases  
the folded page  
writes its way into  
the longed for

                    beginning  
story

                    new  
                    song  
round  
            as the lips form

an 0  
i used to (age 4)  
put the period in

early syntax  
early speech

you are dead saints  
i am half-alive  
or better  
            some days

calendrical ways

happy in the morning  
depressed in the afternoon or

reversals

la tigre

egress

the rest is  
written to be written

"it is all so slight"

of hand

the pen's grasped  
wrongly but firmly

dreams twist

images erupt

            violent

brush the skin off my head  
's oblong

            aluminum







d p from  
the last two lines  
five words &  
another d  
d p  
t

(switch & pun)

james alexander age 13  
his p t instructor  
an ex nazi  
"i vos enemy during vorl vor two"

james  
dave  
barb &

memory

a field of

activity  
here in these clouds  
amid the clash  
the roar of

c's & s's  
absence of the loud

separator

the same

i read in in

the form of

ain

which is the pain  
(mid-initial sequence) or

the stain of

sainthood

the track's a trickle  
straight as the jog my memory takes  
composed in time the rimes exist beyond the text  
contextual

textural

the daily bump &  
grind

stripped bare

air your grievances & longings

in these unfinished rooms  
pick up the notebook left behind  
after book III  
that time i thot  
the saints end

finally

e nd

"f eat her  
take her away

in my cap

at dawn

today

the knowledge

to d a y

the action i act on"  
"her" posited again as  
mom/Womom

"the change  
(an  
angel  
chang'll  
hang)

suspended

over my head  
suspen dead  
deed

done

one d in  
motion

or one y

changed by

the revolution

hanged c  
revolving r the  
credit balancel

sense out of nonsense  
H on sense

(which is me)

i spell out changes  
realign essentials  
as i thot to  
sing a balance sing<sup>2</sup>

to make everything the same you say  
"nothing is different"

the arguments get obvious

when one's upset one screams

3 or 1?

"it is so unlike me  
one like me uses my lungs"

my voice?

gossip's piss o G.

cloud town's gone down  
t into d  
artness  
then the arkness of her belly

is that the sweat of fear  
atlas's salt a  
blinding of vision in any case

c as e

"it is all the same"  
words one used before

---

<sup>1</sup> edit with the c r to achieve it

<sup>2</sup> aged

fall/n



naming things that don't exist

twist

back & forth

existence only in the naming"

runes

markings in the streets they laid  
stone into stone  
records of their passing  
fill up my head with  
letters

home  
roots an origin

to spawn again in that stream

's forbidden

i cannot birth myself  
cannot become mine own progeny

(glazed window grey day  
you've all gone away  
five years since i called your names with surety

i am not the same

(sometimes (at night) i doesn't know who he is  
(why? (that's wrong - the sequence should read  
w x y - the h interpolated into the unknown) h  
is his) not in that old schizy sense(i.e. he  
doesn't know who i is) but a perception re en-  
tity in its entirety ("at night" because he is  
all alone & "sometimes" because its accurate)  
the lacking of a total

the problem is in  
summing up prematurely (false). he is 31  
(yesterday) but i's what? (joking to a friend  
he said "i used to be 18 to myself but i'm  
catching up") a question of tension in telling  
a power in print opposed to speech



which is octagonal  
h sided

or  
(an aside

(i's inside  
he's an outside face  
a pose

a posse or  
a nosegay

is it possible  
the horses go neigh

posse bull  
the whore say

(reintroduction of Blossom Tight, a minor char-  
acter from an early draft of a later Captain  
Poetry poem)

"noone is forgotten we're just rewritten. he's  
letting my voice intrude briefly. it's just a  
chance for a few laughs at his character's ex-  
pense (employing the devices of fiction in an  
autobiographical poem)."

))))

compulsive unmasking

i.e. as opposed to h.e.  
over against the french j.e.  
so that the sequence reads

h } e. (translating) he meaning i

j }  
but not (capital H) He

- no heresy here  
a tic

there a tickle  
statement

"why would you want to make everything the same?"

consistent voice equated with style

falsely

style's stylus  
the fingers an extension of the mind  
ma 'nd me 'nd

personal history

le monde mundane

mynde & physik

i say "quoi" mais  
je ne sais quoi

it is the i of  
histor } y  
mister }

the y's said e  
making "my" "me"  
& "why" "whee"  
as in wheat or ●



whyte  
white  
night

stars over Inuvik

walking back from the reading to the hotel  
the main streets mud  
out on the edge of things  
the elements still win  
stilts support the town  
impermanence shows  
120 miles inside the arctic circle you know  
we're living out a myth  
huddled at the bottom of  
most of what is canada  
waiting the glaciers return  
cities ablaze  
fire out of water  
burn

coal/oil/gas  
ritual pass of light  
gestures against the coming night

here the ravens cry  
as they did in Dilmun  
raise their wings black against the sky  
& fly

the two we saw  
walking thru the brush above the river  
Mackenzie flowing north into the Beaufort Sea  
"big as a dog they are!  
had one once fought a dog in the main street!"  
snow falls around us  
white on whyte  
worlds we have railed against  
when will we be  
content in the present  
moment

land  
whole  
not the part

Ca  
Na  
Da  
C 'N D  
no space between  
the process

switch  
which is the flow  
energy movement of a country

(we woke before dawn, throats dry, remembering  
then we slept in a desert, frozen tho it may  
be, caught between the i & he, an image of Dil-  
mun in his mind, caught between first & third  
person na(ra)tivity)

rising off the tarmack into the sky  
looking back along the body of the plane  
straining for a glimpse of the arctic ocean  
before the clouds close in ●

passing thru

into that space between  
one layer & the next  
not cloud world but another  
spectral & strange

passing thru

into the greyblue  
sky over everything

& two days later  
driving out of Fort Smith  
30 miles to little buffalo falls  
ruth rees, ellie & me  
watched the water drop

60 feet into the basin

the clouds hung grey  
for the seventh straight day  
as if cloudbrown lay in ruins above me  
snowbirds flocking up into the sky  
trying to make sense of the wreck around me  
here in the midst of what has never known city  
trace a civilization

or what's left of it

looking out over the rapids on great slave river  
early the next day

the remnants of Fort Fitz

where the great barges lay to  
in their journey north to  
Hay River Fort Simpson  
whatever outposts sprang up to service those men  
lived there

north of the Arctic Circle

& i am remembering Dilmun  
the empty squares & courtyards  
crumbled palisades & steeples  
where Utnapishtim lived out his years  
& i am wishing i could speak to him  
discover how long immortality is  
was his city like cloud town  
the buildings rearranging themselves daily  
the city no enemy ever took  
because the streets shift even as you walk them  
doorways change  
familiar only to the saints who lived there  
recognized dwelling signs no stranger'd ever see  
they went crazy on this earth  
only language retaining the multiplicity they  
/were used to

(typing this out 12 days later i kept coming  
back to that line "the edge of things" wonder-  
ing at the vagueness, knowing what i was trying  
to suggest, that my world was finite, not in  
imagination but experience, real limits to what  
i knew, worried once more by the tension be-  
tween process & an ideal economy of phrase

reading B.S. Johnson earlier this week, discus-  
ses Scott's shift from narrative poem to novel,  
what he saw as the death of the long poem, puz-  
zling its resurgence, its popularity in recent  
years, i realized the lines had disappeared be-  
tween the forms, that the novel & the poem were



merging finally, a clarity, freedom to move as  
i choose

& later  
talking with steve  
comparing forms  
his CARNIVAL  
"my" MARTYROLOGY?  
the voiceless voice he saw in Ronald Johnson's  
/poems

i am wary of that impulse within me  
would have it out with my i  
how can i cast itself out  
out of the process i must be true to  
is part of the dissolution

the disillusionment  
create a third person when the i's can't get  
/along?

(jumped ahead  
thot "song"  
son of g

h  
(comes after him)))

the man at the reading said  
"how come your poems sound so down?

unlike you?"

(the desire becomes stronger to stretch out,  
explain myself, which makes the plain ex, no  
longer clear, i want a different ear, a he like  
me, a she where the s is (in correct relation  
to)

he/i/she  
(why is the s the feminizer?, makes  
the i is, births it, gives it its being, carries  
the he in the body of its word, the men inside  
women, the me in both of them)

#### EQUATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: HE/IS/HE

such minimal movements to seek truth in (steve  
said "you'll be accused of shallowness" (hallow-  
ness feminized?)))

& then?

these clouds are real  
mist mister

its not the saints sing it's me!

nothing's anything but what it is

too many things aren't what they are  
like most of us

we dress in costumes  
pose

unhappy with our time  
i never could dance like Fred Astaire or Ginger

o music music  
there is the mind  
a line of thot's its own litany  
sung slightly out of tune  
i know the imperfections in my voice  
know choice is a matter of emotions  
committment to a place & time  
the active present of the writing

1962 Vancouver  
25 of us in the rain  
protested the Bay of Pigs invasion

1963 Port Coquitlam  
teaching a grade 4 class  
heard

over the intercom  
of Kennedy's assasination  
& cried

the contradictions are there in a lifetime  
literature is no guarantee of a common good  
i want a firmer ground to stand on

you do the best you can  
as i saw that day the foal was born  
you start with what's local  
stands next to you

& move out  
increase your range as your skill grows  
& what's around you's taken care of

the w hat's low call  
echoes thru these pages  
lo cal or (i.e.)

what's immediate is  
the word in front of me  
the one beyond that that i'm reaching for  
no muse at all really  
simply this canadian foot  
following a tentative line forward  
taking the time to tell you everything

the muse is western (greek)  
the japanese saw poetry as everyman's  
like thot or breathing  
ambiguity was precisely what they wanted

it's social then  
a point of view  
political  
the duty of a citizen  
"a man betrays himself in his speech"

((why do they always question content, you  
speak of form to counterbalance the question,  
they never ask what you believe in) purpose  
can become conceit, shift beneath the feet,  
the line of speech that's called political,  
the signified slides below the signifier, gets  
lost in what's expedient, the strenght of eng-  
lish, its ambiguity, turned against it, cor-  
rupted, the masked language of law & politics,



so distorted we empower experts to interpret  
it)

in the distance clouds break  
i'm sitting on the curb  
crossing out words  
resisting the urge to apologize

i am thinking it is better left behind  
this city they no longer had a use for  
make my way thru the shifting streets  
along these sheets of paper to an ending

it is not over

it is never over

there is "a third difficulty  
with the usual definitions of parts of speech

they neglect form for meaning,  
although it is precisely through the form of  
/our words and sentences  
that we communicate our meanings."

(James Sledd

A SHORT INTRODUCTION TO ENGLISH GRAMMAR)

& me

what am i doing

"building up a bracketing of asides"

standing here

outside the limits of this empty city

studying the cloud range

the shapes that shift

because it is the nature

of paper i have scribbled one word on

to shift it

back & forth in my mind &

begin again

that way

among the tensions

the interplay between the letters

is to start at m

& then the a

leads thru to y

some questions answered

but the rest remain

not in the saints' names

which was beginnings

but in that space between

the s & t

among the shift of what at first seems arbitrary

"to go beyond the point where it is even neces-

/sary to think in terms of words"

there

which is t & here

more pain than we can bear

is bearable

M | Books I to III

A | which is begun  
& leads

on

that's all i'll say

january to december 1975