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spring 1983

line

number one

a journal of the contemporary literature collection

Simon Fraser University

spring 1983

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We greet with pleasure the inception of Line: A Journal of the Contemporary Literature Collection. Almost as old as the University itself, the Contemporary Literature Collection began in 1965 under the care of Ralph Maud, a charter faculty member keenly interested in new American writing, who recognized this field of collecting as particularly suitable for the library of a new university. By the seventies the Contemporary Literature Collection had expanded into its present quarters overlooking fir trees and North Shore mountains. Over ten thousand published items are held--small press books, little magazines, broadsides, tape recordings --and the collection of manuscripts and original sound and video recordings grows steadily. Three triumphs have marked the eighties: a SSHRC grant to purchase the Ezra Pound-Willis Hawley correspondence, a second SSHRC grant awarded to the Contemporary Literature Collection as a resource of national significance, and now the beginning of Line, a forum for the study of contemporary writing.

Gene Bridwell
Head Humanities Librarian

PREFACE

Nearly two years back, during the summer of 1981, Simon Fraser University hosted a six-week programme called Contemporary Poetry and Prose in British Columbia, its unofficial title the line, "the coast is only a line." Two courses on B.C. writing were featured, one offered by Warren Tallman, visiting from the University of British Columbia, and another by Eli Mandel, visiting from York University. Numerous writers--too many to list names here--appeared on campus at rhythmical intervals from week to week, giving readings, visiting classes where their works were being read, meeting with students, and otherwise stirring up an almost endless run of conversation. Half-way through the programme, a weekend conference/festival of panel discussions on the poetics of contemporary writing drew more writers and readers from across Canada. It was in the midst of those long hot summer days that Line got its initial impetus. There was a persistent pattern emerging as talk kept returning to the reading act as a critical gesture entwined with the writing act: reading as the inevitable twin of writing. The interview with Eli Mandel, taped in the final week of the programme, provides a glance back to this theoretical concern which, as it turns out, prefigured the intention to publish criticism and scholarship that encourages and discloses an active readership for contemporary writing and its modernist sources.

As a journal of the Contemporary Literature Collection, Line will reflect in its content the range of the collection. The materials it plans to publish--archival items, interviews, essays, review/commentaries, and bibliographies--will be related to the line of post-1945 Canadian, American, and British writers whose work issues from, or extends, the work of Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, H.D., Gertrude Stein, and Charles Olson.

The editorial board encourages the submission of manuscripts, though a brief letter of inquiry preceding a submission can prevent needless disappointment. Comments by readers are also welcome.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS: Tom Grieve is writing his Ph.D. dissertation on Ezra Pound; Eli Mandel has had two books published recently, Dreaming Backwards: The Selected Poetry of Eli Mandel from General Publishing, and Life Sentence: Poems & Journals: 1976-1980 from Press Porcepic, new writing based on his travel journals; bpNichol won the 1982 Pulp Press annual 3-day novel writing contest for Still, forthcoming from Pulp this fall, and

writing contest for Still, forthcoming from Pulp this fall, and Coach House has just brought out The Martyrology, Book 5; Stephen Scobie, in collaboration with Douglas Barbour, has published The Pirates of Pen's Chance with Coach House, his latest book, and is now working on Expecting Rain, a new selection of poems; George Bowering has had two books of criticism published almost back to back, A Way with Words from Oberon, essays on Canadian poets, and A Mask in Place from Turnstone, essays on North American fiction; Peter Quartermain has published many essays on 20th century writers, including Louis Zukofsky, Basil Bunting, and Robert Creeley; Percilla Groves works as a Librarian for the Contemporary Literature Collection.

RM
April 25, 1983

TOM GRIEVE

THE EZRA POUND/WILLIS HAWLEY CORRESPONDENCE

"ONE of the INconveniences of
beink of lunATik and incarcerated
is purrcicely that one CANNOT git
into the goddam print shoppe and
keep a gun on the printers."

The above is a representative example of one of a number of personae--that of grambing grandpa full of self-irony and cracker-barrel dialect--who appear in the correspondence, recently purchased by The Contemporary Literature Collection at Simon Fraser University, between Ezra Pound and his sinological advisor, decoder, and printer, Willis Hawley. The correspondence--90-odd letters from Pound to Hawley, 85 carbons of Hawley's letters to Pound and to James Laughlin, 18 letters from Laughlin to Hawley, and 14 letters from Dorothy Pound to Hawley--spans the dozen years (1946-1958) of Pound's confinement in St. Elizabeth's and thus nicely complements the Collection's other two letter archives of the same period: The Pound/Denis Goacher correspondence and the Pound/Agnes Bedford correspondence.

The letters from Pound (over 140 pages) are of interest for a number of reasons in that they give a full and wide-ranging record of Pound's concerns and obsessions during the period, sinological and otherwise. Of foremost importance, however, is the light the correspondence sheds on the printing and production of Pound's translations of the Confucian classics during the St. Elizabeth years (The Confucian Odes and Confucius: The Unwobbling Pivot, The Great Digest and The Analects) and the information it provides on the welter of Chinese ideograms in the late Cantos (Section: Rock-Drill and Thrones).

Willis Hawley is an amazing fellow. I met and talked with him in August, 1981 at his home/museum/library/printing shop that hangs on the edge of Laurel Canyon in Hollywood. My tour of his

collection of Oriental art--17th c. Samurai armour, 13th c. porcelain, jade--was interrupted by the arrival, from the binders, of the revised edition of his dictionary of Japanese sword-makers, the standard reference text in the field. With the help of a wheelbarrow, we trundled about twenty boxes of these handsome heavy tomes down a steep dusty goat path to a storage shed in back of his house. I was exhausted. Mr. Hawley, a trifle winded, had hardly broken a sweat. My god, the man is in his eighties!--but keen and vigorous as if time had only wound his spring tighter.

The tour resumed through the most impressive of rooms: walls of burnished copper (they have been covered with hundreds of pieces of the foil-like paper that used to be used to line boxes of Chinese tea), floors covered with time-softened sapphire-blue silk carpets, bronzes and tables carved from ivory. On one wall was affixed an idyllic Chinese mountain scene, with its intricate figures, pagodas, ox-carts, the bounding lines of mountains, pines and streams carved in jade, and the whole framed in reed-thin pieces of ivory. On another wall stood a bookcase full of vellum-bound volumes of rice-paper rubbings. Buddhas and dragons stood guard on numerous carved ebony tables. Des Esseintes in an opium dream would be at home here.

Then upstairs to rooms full of Chinese dictionaries (he has, he thinks, the world's largest collection) and down to the basement print shop with its presses and banks of Chinese and Japanese fonts. On to his pine-lined study--its walls covered with ancient flintlocks and the less-valuable Samurai swords, a Chinese typewriter (wonderful gadget) in a nook in the corner, bookcases full of sinological lore--where he told me of his first fascination with Chinese characters on his strolls through L.A. Chinatown in the twenties--the beginnings of a single-minded passion for things Oriental that, sixty years later, is still in full career.

Hawley's interest first centered on books, particularly on dictionaries and on commentaries on the Confucian classics. By the 1930s, he was a major supplier for the Oriental collection of the Library of Congress. Pound's enthusiasm for the ideogram, as is well-known, began a decade earlier than Hawley's. His receipt of the Fenollosa manuscripts in 1913 led him, circuitously enough, to the same library in Washington, D.C. In 1946, shortly after his incarceration in St. Elizabeth's, Pound began to borrow books from the Oriental collection for his continuing research on his translations of the Confucian Odes. And thus the correspondence begins with a letter to Hawley from Dorothy Pound (Nov. 22, 1946) inquiring after a translation of Z.D. Sung's Symbolism of the Yi: Text of the Yi King (the I Ching, that is).

Hawley got the Sung text and a few other books for Pound; in

addition, he sent Pound copies of his handsome charts of the radicals of the Chinese character, Chinese emperors, primitive seal script, archaic symbols, etc. At this point (October, 1948), Pound himself begins to write, inquiring specifically for information on different type faces for the printing of his translation of the Shih Ching (The Confucian Odes).¹ Hawley responds with samples and advice on printing and calligraphy. Such technical concerns (layout, type and size of font, printing costs) and matters relating to translation (queries over editions, dictionaries, renditions of difficult ideograms) are the mainstay of the correspondence for the next ten years.

Yet underlying these practical concerns is the shared zeal of two initiates to the mysteries of the ideogram (who, by the way, were never to meet). Pound continually draws on Hawley's extensive files (52,000 entries: "a card file of every character that ever existed," Hawley told me) in his search for "le mot juste" of translation. Hawley has Pound decoding the inside address (in Chinese) on his letterhead. Hawley makes a seal for Pound, with Pound's name translated into ideograms, after a series of letters wrangling over the most accurate and telling phonetic rendition. They finally settle on "pao-en-te" (pronounced pao-n-dah), the ideograms for which yield "protect [and] favor virtue," although Pound still fancies "p'ao-ti," an earlier version, one of whose meanings, "an enclosure for stray animals," seemed to him especially appropriate (see letters 8 and 10).

Given even the remarkable verve and crotchety idiosyncrasy of Pound's epistolary style, the decoding of obscure Chinese characters and arguing over type face will not provide the most scintillating entertainment for the casual reader. But the correspondence holds important information for the Pound scholar. The exchange of letters over the production of Pound's Confucius: The Great Digest & Unwobbling Pivot (New Directions, 1951), which forms the major portion of the correspondence, offers valuable sidelights on Pound's poetics and reveals much about his attitudes towards translation and publication. Pound's argument for a system of "musical" notation in the layout of The Confucian Odes (see letter 2) and his demand that his readers be given a reproduction of the original stone classics for his translation of The Unwobbling Pivot (see letters 3 and 4) testify to the importance, within Pound's poetics, of the visual and the original.

Even though the printing and layout of the stone classics edition are a result of Hawley's painstaking work, the insistence on such quality--an insistence that reached the point of some rancour--was Pound's. Pound first became fascinated with the idea of a new edition of his Confucius: The Unwobbling Pivot and the

Great Digest (New Directions, 1947) when Hawley sent him, as a sample of Chinese calligraphy, a photographic reproduction of a page of his set of rubbings (one of the few extant) made from the T'ang dynasty stelae in which the Confucian classics had been carved. Hawley's offset negatives are indeed striking, with white ideograms sharply defined against a black background--so striking, that they no doubt played an important part in nurturing Pound's sense of a magical iconography within the ideogram. But his enthusiasm came with a price. Various misunderstandings about the fitting of the English translation to Hawley's Chinese text plagued the correspondence through the better part of 1950 (see letters 3 and 4). James Laughlin, editor and publisher of New Directions (or "nude erections" as Pound has it), which was to do the actual printing, entered the fray and further complicated matters. In September Pound laments: "grampaw's blood pressure wunt stand much more, and I dont want it to be a centenary celebration or even more mildly posthumous." And Dorothy, forecasting that Pound's demise would be the result of the numerous delays and miscommunications, threatens to drop the whole project as soon as she is widowed.

The basic problem was that nobody but Hawley understood Chinese well enough to know when the English stopped translating the Chinese characters on the facing page. Furthermore, Pound, who was always, when it came to Chinese, translating translations, had based his rendition on a text (most probably that provided in James Legge's 19th c. translation) that did not conform exactly to the one Hawley was providing. Hawley showed remarkable patience and perseverance in the face of Laughlin's confusion and Pound's outraged cries for authenticity. His "mutilation" in the photographic reproductions of the rubbings, as he carefully explains to both Pound and Laughlin, was required to rectify some errors, flaws and omissions in the rubbings themselves and to make up for minor discrepancies between the rubbings and the text Pound had translated from. The upshot of all of this was the "magnificent" (see cover photo) stone classics edition and some interesting printing history: the 9th c. T'ang stone monuments in which were carved the Confucian classics; a rubbing made from this original; carved boards made from these rubbings which duplicated the stone carvings and which were then used to make further rubbings (Hawley's 120 volumes being one such set); and, finally, the photographic reproductions of Hawley's rubbings (which may have been scrambled slightly centuries ago when they were assembled in book form), with minor cut and paste corrections to make them consistent with later editions, which appear in the 1951 New Directions edition of Pound's translation. As with The Cantos (the

Poundian will recall Divus' translation of the Odyssey, Sigismundo's mailbag, or Provençal editions of the Troubadours), another of Pound's books comes to us wearing its history on its face.

Throughout the correspondence, but most notably in that part of it (1954-1959) that bears directly upon the Chinese in the late Cantos, we are given illuminating evidence on the strange mixture of poetic licence and wilfulness in Pound's treatment of the ideogram. Hawley cautioned Pound early on: "All you get is trouble if you try to analyze characters from the modern forms. The farther back you can go the better, preferably to the Shell & Bone forms and their contemporary Shang Bronze forms" (January 22, 1950). His advice was salutary in that it did direct Pound's research to more primitive ideograms where his by now infamous practice, that of treating all elements of a character as constitutive of meaning, was less prone to error. Yet by 1957, Hawley still found it necessary to try to disabuse Pound of his misguided notions: "Your chief trouble seems to be trying to make sense out of all parts of a character when for 75% of them, half is only phonetic selected because it had the desired sound and wouldn't interfere adversely by meaning" (March 21, 1957). Pound's rejoinder is categorical, and it is the only statement from Pound himself that I know of which clearly reveals that design, and not ignorance or whim, was behind his procedure:

yes damBit . the phonetik , NO intellectual interest
save for comparativ philologers of sumerian , egyptian
Rebuses etc. (March 26, 1957)

Pound's interest in recovering (or discovering) more original poetic meaning in the ideograms of the Confucian classics and in disseminating the wisdom of these books through a language that could grab hold of the modern reader took precedence over strict philological accuracy. Speaking personally, it is satisfying to have my conjectures about and justification for Pound's poetic procedure with the translation of the ideogram given such support from the man himself.

I did a good deal of work on the Chinese in Pound's late Cantos (particularly in Section: Rock-Drill, New Directions, 1956),² and no one knows better than I how much time this correspondence could save one trying to identify and understand the hundreds of ideograms in this part of the poem. The information is all here. Pound, searching, as usual, for the gist, would find particularly salient ideograms in his reading of the Confucian classics; he would look them up in Mathews' Chinese English Dictionary, noting the number of the entry, and would then write to Hawley requesting

proof copies (see letters 6, 7, 9 and 10) of the characters which would later turn up in The Cantos. Pound's listing of Mathews' entry numbers in his letters to Hawley (only rarely does he provide these numbers in The Cantos) makes finding the English equivalent in Mathews' an easy business. It would have saved me countless hours of searching through lists of radicals and counting the number of strokes used to form a character in order to find the entry. I find solace in the knowledge that Pound too spent countless hours doing the same and that the omission of Mathews' entry numbers from The Cantos is yet further evidence of his consistent effort to goad his reader's curiosity and industry. As he explains to Hawley (see letter 1), "I am (after all) workin fer them as wants ter learn."

And so, as he confessed to me, Hawley thought Pound did "miserably" as a translator of the Confucian classics: Hawley considered that Pound had taken the Chinese, the rich allusiveness of which "Pound had no way of knowing," for it is the study of a life-time for a gifted native speaker, and had "dumbed it down" so that "the average reader could understand." At least, Hawley conceded, Pound had succeeded in "stirring up enough interest so a lot of people read Chinese." Was such promulgation, then, the reason for his involvement with Pound? No, that wasn't it. Pound had come to him with the reputation of being "the greatest living American poet" (Hawley's epithet), but as Hawley explained in a lovely anecdote about his sideline vocation as an interior decorator, through which he had met numerous movie stars, he was not impressed by fame. Was the cause of poetry, especially Pound's poetry, the reason? No, he liked poetry alright, but "poetry that, well, rhymes--and his didn't." And money was hardly the object. Hawley might have made, at the outside, \$200 for all his work for Pound. He received but \$150 for the negatives of his rubbings and all his work on The Unwobbling Pivot. What motivated Hawley was uncomplex: he has a passion for the Chinese written character and was only too willing to help anyone who shared his fascination. That, and a job well done. For all its admittedly recondite subject matter, what struck me most about the Pound/Hawley correspondence is the quality, energy and humanity that was born out of a shared enthusiasm.

NOTES

¹ Pound and Hawley were still writing about such an edition ten years later, and in 1957 Harvard University Press wrote to Hawley, inquiring whether he could provide offset negatives similar to the ones he had made for The Unwobbling Pivot. Hawley responded, quoting prices and explaining the complexities of the project. Harvard University Press dropped the matter. A stone rubbings edition of the Odes never did appear.

² "Annotations to the Chinese in Section: Rock-Drill," Paideuma, 4, nos. 2 & 3, pp. 361-508.

Draft.

220 poud


JAMES DONE & SONS

Many Parts = I shd very like to see photo of stone classics page.

Also of the block print will ^{take} circles = which help the iggurunt; I am (after all) workin' for them as wants ter

learn not for the Swine who can only make a livin' keepin' others more iggurunt than they are.

Das goes for all the
— logues who hv.
sabotaged Fenollusa &
Frobenius for 40
years.

can you find Frobenius recognizing
stone class — 

etc.

Can you print
in black INK
not gray pink??

Paints again

①

The big Legge takes 643 pages, chink, eng/ and notes.

The little Legge 485, no notes.

I suppose one wd/ hit somewhere between that size /
but a computation cd/ be made by quaderni, i.e 16 pages.

let us say 560 pages PLUS two or three more 16s.

//

maximum of 64 ideograms per page /
same number of 7 point italic approx/phonetic signs,

and sixteen lines of english verse /

Ist, draft about one word where ~~English~~ L/ uses three, and
later let us say a proportion of one to five.

and I suppose 16 pages of introduction and postscript.

I favour the font used on Hawley Romanization of Chin /

I do NOT favour calligraphy / look at that eminently
skilled mandarin scrip in my Pisan cantos (Canto 77 / on
table on p. 54)

500 years culture, and ALL the pictographic value kapUTT.
whereas in my barbaric yawp or ~~scribble~~ scrawl on p. 32
(sincerity, the perfect word) you can see the blighter running
and the words floatin out of the mouth.

all vurry un^rorthodox.

Yr. font permits identification of ~~bird~~ and horse and distaff,

Damn calligrapher might be O.K. but wd/ prob/ have his own ideas
AND feelings.

Calligraphy on front page of pirated Legge 4Books. *William Shaughnessy*
magnificent. but unobtainable.

And no amount of moral persuasion will persuade me to REWRITE
the whole damn thing in any other phonetic approx's than
wot I have already typed out and putt tone numbers on /

NO bloodyBODY whatever will know anything about the actual
sound of Chinese without going there and hearing it SUNG,

I doubt if dear Karlgren knows God Save the King from Pur Dicesti
or the Red Flag ~~for~~ Maryland ~~by~~ Maryland OR Voi che sapete.
from

If this aint clear I will clarify.

2

Yourapein' moozik as distinct from AAYrab is writ on staves with perpendicular line divisions. Space between the perpendics supposed to indicate identical lapses of TIME.

thus.



a similar division of time can be indicated to the eye & NOT the brain hell , ONLY the brain of a trained musician and a good one , gets the real meaning of the bar lines ANYHOW.) parenthesis.

a similar division of time can be ~~BE~~ conveyed to the cognoscenti by writing syllables in evenly spaced columns.

Ch'ing ¹	jen ²	tsai ⁴	p'eng ²
ssu ⁴	chieh ⁴	p'ang ²	p'ang ²
			4926.14

the last numerals ~~NUMBER~~ referring the STEWD/dent to Mat's dic / so he can foozle round and see whether Ez' is drawin on accepted error or on his wild fantasy.

///

The next sap's edtn/ can use japanese phonetics, or ALL Hawley's seven systems , or Wade, or Waddle , or Trot , of the french jesuit spelling.

I am teachin a few young potes and componists to count up to four on their fingers, and add an occasional variant , such as | one two | three three-and a half | FOUR.



and anybody who dont like it can , with my full consensus IMPROVE ont. In some special cases , where the fish tails are flapping with notable onomatopoeia (oh VERY crudely) like when the OWL

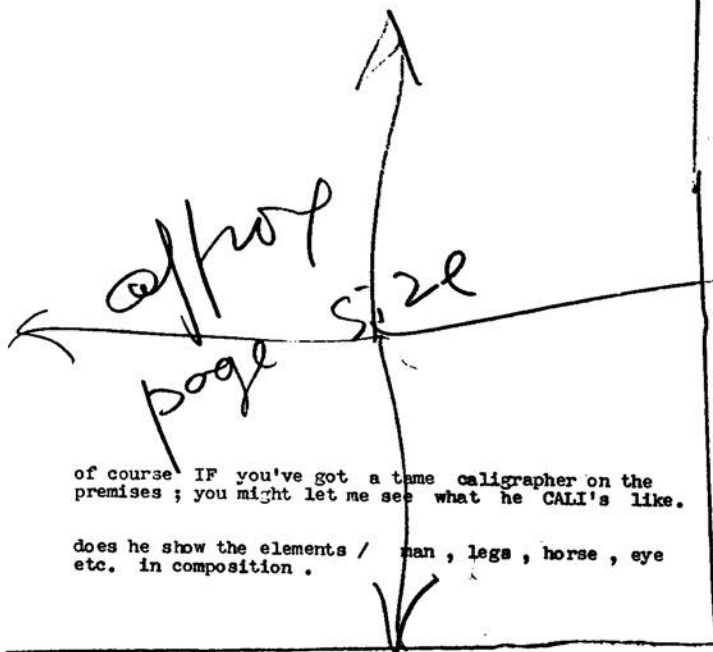
7 hoots I might even concede one of Karlgrens incomprehensible archaic forms.

trusting this will not leave you in even deeper darkness.

Basic fact / prob/ most difficult to convey is that I know nothing about Chinese but do know something about the ODES.

Luchini (vide brochure) merely consulted for the Italian NOT for the meaning.

"Gawd" said his chief : (he will hold you up three quarters of an hour for the matter of a semicolon.)



of course IF you've got a tame calligrapher on the premises ; you might let me see what he CALI's like.

does he show the elements / man , legs , horse , eye etc. in composition .

God double damn and BLAST it NO 

WH

ONE chinese page, the SIZE of your sample
and half ~~a~~ page or less of english.
God damn sideways on page.

Whole point is to have the chinese as it was in your
photo

and let the new printer arrange the english to fit.


whether it leaves half a page of fat or NOT.

One is not trying to save fifteen cents, but
to make a decent. book.

You may have gone off
because of a phrase in an earlier letter, saying I wd/
like a ten cent edition/

BUT this edition is for
the STONE

ten cent reprint, can occur in 1970.



WH

You dont seem to get the fact that J.L. accepted the proposal to do a bilingual to LOOK LIKE the Stone page 6 cols/ of ten characters / ^{per col} (as per ^{le} same from WH/ and circulated from /to/from/ etc.) and disturbance of THAT idea may mean DELAY , and how.

I do not care the underdone side of half a spewed damn whether it costs \$20 more or less one way or tother.

and nothing is easier than to CUT the english page across the middle (IF it is a plate) where the 60 th ideogram's meaning stops. (if it is to be new set , it is even simpler.)

The interest (or my interest) in the edtn/ is to get the stone page as it stands. pages as they stand
of the general cite etc. [^] didn't mean photos of the detail, but however ef them aint, them aint.

benedictions

PPH P/P/P/ SS. just heard from Jas. the english is to be newly set/ so no possible excuse for mutilating the stone text , its arrangement, original appearance etc.

another copy of the Pharos edtn/ has been sent yu , I spekk yu got the 1st/ one propping up the pyanny stool.

ANYhooww I dumt care a DAMN wot the english looks like s'long as the chinese looks like that sample page wot wuz six cols/ of ten kerraktarz.

ThankKKG gordd and Mr W.H.

(with DEEP gracherhood) have ARRIVED
photos of the STONE in time to save grampaw from compleAT
dissolution /

and no difficulty about reading gramp's english
and seeing M when the chinkeese stops being translated by it.

But phWATT in the name of seven apostles and the nine
constipated coons of Ballymiklegumbo OCCURS in the
stone where W.H. has cut his photos into bits ?

GorDDDDDammit , amn't I fer weeks squaling like a stuck PIG
that I want to know WHAT is on the stone ,

about my trans/ or Legge's text (L/ a Xtn. ANYhow ,
inferior lion-fodder) nothing sacred

Ta HsiesQQQ (or owever yu wantt spill it) everything O.K. till
Hawley page 133,
where he starts slicin .

WHY ????

per BaccoBungo WHY ?

IF the text differs from Legge , the
whole POINT is to know where, and what ,

AZ in the stone, Stone classics edtn/
not doctored to fit something else

Up to now)ND wishper of a hint as to WHAT WH. is cutting
or WHY ??

Damn it all I had 86 ms/ for the Cavalcanti.

If the Stone and the Legge differ , why not lets admit it.

But highly unscholarly to offer the bleeting reader

STONE wot aint stone, or stone expurgated to meet
requirements of Comstok committee or WHATTSEHELL it does
meet.

at any rat grampaw wantz to know WHAT

no desire to spol WH's pleasure ef he likes to do a lot
of work. but wantZ ter know WHAT wolk he iz doink.

anyhow, deep grat/ fer gittin the fotos here
somehow (hid , hid in mist-ery.)

in nother words WHAT happens when yu fotograf the stone
WITHOUT cutting up the fotos ?

incidentally the straight edges look better for book than
the wiggly margin.

still no idea whether whole thing is solid on a wall or
on separate slabs , or what the actual size of the original.

? reduced one third in fotos ? or woteLLL ?

i repeat in deep gratechood fer
gittin the stuff here somehow.

*** P.S. does the ref/ to Li Chi (Lee Gee , Li Ki) mean
that the stone text corresponds to that used in Cuvier's
tri-lingual edn/ of the Bk ov Rites ?? goLRAMit / & and that
W.H. haz been trying to cut it to fit that of the Chu Hsi-
Legge , so az to fit Ez-version of latter ??

4/2

AND whom are yu telling ?

Oh Willis (masc/ of Wallis ?)

Wd/ I hv/ got the ital-chin edtn/ printed AT all , if I hadn't been in print shoppe / or the Cavalcanti. TO see the demstuff actually screwed onto the press. proofd , and LOCKED in place/ NO trust to any intermediary .

Will ask J.L. to send yu copy. Thought he HAD. He wrote that he had , or else my memory is kerflookd TOTAL .

Acc/ Fangs latest . L. thinks Kimball really off his rocker / OR at least Fang THINKS L. think that K/ is etc.

ONE of the INconveniences of beink a lunATik and incarcerated is purrecicely that one CANNOT git into the goddam print shoppe and keep a gun on the printers.

Sending also cheap edtn/ IF yu hv/ sample foto of wot yu call the mos' beeyEWteeful kalligraph in deh wold I shd/ like to see it. Probably take a decade , but one HOPES fer a bloody Bilingual edtn/ of Analects SOMEadamDAY **

Fang is doing something re/ Odes AFTER three bloody years time lag/ Not Fang's fault. Possibly not anyone's fault but certainly NOT the fault of yr/ 'anonymouse friend.

How come yu never signed yr/ name CLEARLY? I thought it waz wilyAMM.

I never saw proofs of front matter/ but wd.nt have known to correct the Wilyamm/ yu BLOODY OPTermite, thinking there will y be a second edtn. (??with ink that don't soak thruf the paper ?? ooohhhhh. UGH/ Ef I weren't too dead to hv/ a blood pressure , the affair of the ODES wd/ have appopleXD me.

benedictions, campa cavallo.

Dont let Fang kno yu use the term Janise / or consider that section of the human race as HUMAN. let alone literate.

ARA

enquiry as to whether HAWLEY (willis not -iam)

can take on a small job/ and for how much. Wanted on shiny EMPP
 paper, say ten copies of following ideograms/ if H. has 'em
 and in various sizes as specified.

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LETTER 8: January 31, 1957

31 Jan -57

To the rev/ W.H

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Te Virtue

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28 Nov. Mr W.H. (vide Shakespear First Folio, etc.)

As you say you now have the font, etc. and as most of the ideograms for 'anto 98 are new for that curious opus of some extent, and as it may be printed in woptalia / probably better to have you set up all of 'em on one sheet and in order so the zincografia woptaliana can make its foto for the printer from it / in the following order and grouped, in some cases: left to right (~~marked 1-2~~) in other cases top downward. the numbers from Mathews solely for yr/ surety in not misunderstanding my scrawls.

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LETTER 10 : December 30, 1957
(Stamped with the seal Hawley made for Pound)

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EXTRA POUND

W.H. BU'nn Anno

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Hotel Grande Italia
RAPALLO

8 July 59

Dear Hawley

Thanks enormously for promptitude with TUAN.
And commiserations for accident. Chinese pianist Lee did a similar
but not proprio motu / some desegregated coon started a motor
that he was preparing to fix

and fixed G.I.'s piano playing.
why indeed do the useful citizens suffer.

as to Haaavud / the answer can only be given in the prayer that
evoked Mr J.J.'s "Ulysses"

Sweet Christ, from HELL spew up some Rabelais
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in fitting fashion and her monument
"eap up to her in FADELESS ExCreMent .

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use his digits.

felix Ez got his calcifications on the cervix
, nearer the brain, but further from the keyboard.

Handwritten signature consisting of stylized, scribbled letters, possibly 'Felix' or similar, followed by a circled symbol.

ROY MIKI

TALKING WEST: AN INTERVIEW WITH ELI MANDEL

The following interview was taped on August 10th, 1981 at the Rainbow Motor Lodge. Eli Mandel was staying there during the six weeks he taught at Simon Fraser University where he and Warren Tallman were guest lecturers in Contemporary Poetry and Prose in B.C., a special Summer School programme in the English Department. Together they offered two interlocking courses on contemporary writing in B.C. The programme was winding down in its final week of classes, and Mandel kindly agreed to an interview through which he would try to sum up his thoughts as a visiting writer/critic.

Throughout the interview--and this is characteristic of conversations with Mandel--numerous references to books and articles are mentioned in passing. In the case of published books, titles and names of authors provide sufficient bibliographic information to identify a given reference. Articles, on the other hand, are a different matter, so for the convenience of readers who may want to follow through on certain aspects of Mandel's comments, a list of these references follows the interview. It's also helpful to bear in mind that the discussion of Tish poets relates primarily to the first phase (1961-1963) in the history of that now infamous poetry newsletter, a phase that the reader can re-enter through Tish No. 1-19, ed. Frank Davey (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1975). After the first nineteen issues of Tish, the core of its original editorial collective dispersed as new urgencies led

them to divergent places.

ROY MIKI: Eli, you've been here living a daily life on the West Coast for six weeks, and you've been immersed in a programme devoted wholly to the exploration of writing in B.C., as it's now going on. First of all, I'd like to ask you what impact this kind of teaching experience has had on your view of your own writing, or of contemporary Canadian writing, or of contemporary Canadian criticism.

ELI MANDEL: I'd want to answer that first of all by talking about the impact it's had on my view of contemporary B.C. writing--well, maybe Canadian writing too. I think one of the astonishing things that has happened here this summer--I was thinking about this earlier today as a matter of fact--is my awareness that there really is an extraordinary kind of poetic awareness, poetics, here which you could call B.C., West Coast, Vancouver, or whatever; it's here and you become aware of it. I think it centres around people like George Bowering and Gerry Gilbert and Daphne Marlatt and, well, as we discover, also those who came in from the outside, or from the inside, that is to say, Fred Wah from the interior of B.C. and Bob Kroetsch from the prairies, and a few people like that. This is writing that has changed radically the poetics of Canadian criticism, and I think we're going to hear about that. I think the "long poem" thing which begins with an anthology edited by Michael Ondaatje [The Long Poem Anthology], then turns into an essay by Kroetsch ["For Play and Entrance"], and apparently there will be an essay by Frank Davey ["The Language of the Contemporary Long Poem"], and probably an essay by one or two others as well, will tell us something about this new poetics. Now, it's not a new poetics in the sense that in fact it emerges from Warren Tallman's "Wonder Merchants"; that's the first statement. But Warren Tallman, if you look closely at the way things are happening now, is really talking out of the '60s and out of the whole historical movement of what Ekbert Fass calls Toward a New American Poetics, a title which sums up the kind of powerful poetics which came from the States and began to affect the Tish group. But the present writing in B.C. is something rather different from that. It's not simply "open form," "projective verse," and so on, it's a new poetics. So that's the first thing I've become aware of.

RM: I noticed that you seemed to be making a distinction between the American poetry that was being written in the early '60s as being very affirmative, or at least holding forth a lot of possibilities, and then the Tish poets being affected by that American movement, and yet in some sense maintaining its own identity.

EM: That's right.

RM: Were you aware of this kind of, whatever it is, it's not a division--what would you call it?

EM: Well, I think it's a kind of division that George Bowering insists on very stubbornly whenever people talk about the "Black Mountain" poets; for example, he has written this very funny piece on the "Brown Mountain Poets" ["Tish Tectonics"]. What George is saying, and he is anxious to keep the record straight on, is that Tish was not a Black Mountain group, and one becomes aware of that talking to him here and talking to various people here. It was the Canadian poetics that developed out of Olson's projective verse, open field poetry and things of that kind, so that to talk about Tish as "Black Mountain" is incorrect. That is just a tag name that has been fixed on to the whole thing, in so far as George is concerned, by the Eastern establishment; he's quite right, the movement is more complex than that. The complexity of it has been traced out, I think, by Warren Tallman. But Tallman is talking about the '60s.

RM: What do you think the relationship is between the Tish group of poets in the 1980's and the poetics of "New American Poetry"?

EM: Okay, you have to say one other thing. It's now clear to me that you have to be fairly specific about who it is you are talking about if you are talking about the Tish group. You are not talking about everything that's happening here now because everything that is happening here now is something else that we will come to later on--the contemporary poetics, whatever we're going to call that, including people like Bowering, including people like Frank Davey, is different from the kind of thing these people were concerned with when they were the Tish group. The Tish group is of a fairly specific, precise historical moment in writing and it consists of Bowering, Lionel Kearns, who didn't want to be part of the group officially but was part of it, Fred Wah, Davey; and at the fringe to begin with, certainly Daphne Marlatt and a couple of others who rarely get mentioned. I was quite interested to hear the other day just after we had talked about this, almost by synchronicity, as it

were, George promptly mentioned Jamie Reid the next day in class. And you had said he hasn't mentioned him for a long time, but the next day he did mention him in class. And so Reid was part of that, and there were others. Now, I think, that if one were to describe the Tish group in a single term, which would be difficult because there are many many things involved in that, but the major impetus of it was that this was to be local writing. It was a local pride. It was to be writing that emerged out of a sense of these people being able to talk about their place. The "open field" thing was not the key though it was there, very much there, but that was what everybody fastened on. They said, well, you know what characterizes Tish, and this was used against them initially, was the short line, the short breath, because it was a short line; what quite deliberately Layton called "the republic of poetry" as opposed to the "imperial rhetoric of poetry," I think a beautiful distinction that Irving made, and which I picked up in an introduction to his poetry and have done since in the major introduction to his poetry.

RM: Then what you are saying is that the Tish poets were simply--

EM: No, I wouldn't say simply, I am just saying, one, they ought to be thought of as local poets. They ought to be thought of as poets who understood that they were writing out of a particular place, places like Abbotsford, like Vancouver and so on, that they were not poets of American poetics; they were poets of Vancouver. Two, I think one should say that they were young poets; that's the simple part if you want to qualify it. They were young poets and therefore Tish represents in a kind of way an apprenticeship. There are obviously less effective moments there, for example in Davey's poetry, than you get later on. Davey has emerged as an extraordinarily fine poet and you don't sense that earlier. I think he wants to drop some of the earlier poetry. As I understand it, he doesn't want it to be part of the canon so far as he's concerned.

* * *

RM: I am going to get you to go on, Eli, about something that we've talked about over and over, the relationship between Canadian criticism and B.C. writing, if there is any relationship.

EM: This is the big question, the one that has to be thought out most carefully, most precisely. In one sense you are asking me to give you a history of Canadian criticism, which I simply can't do

right now, it would take hours and hours. But I can point to the main concerns, the main lines. This kind of thing involves Frank Davey for one, it involves George Bowering very strongly too, it involves me, and it involves Northrop Frye and so on and so on. The point is this: I argued this summer, and I have argued before, that in fact thematic criticism, which has been the major criticism in Canadian writing until 1972 at least, or until Frank Davey's attack upon it in From There to Here (1974) and in "Surviving the Paraphrase" (1976)-- thematic criticism was the dominant form of Canadian criticism. However you interpret thematic criticism, and that in itself is a very important point--

RM: Could you give a brief interpretation?

EM: I will in just a moment, but first of all, however you interpret it, one of its functions, one of its imports, one way in which it works, is simply to centralize Canadian writing; that is, to think of the centre of Canadian writing as being in the metropolis, in Toronto, in central Canada, and to have its heart and life there. This brings me to the interpretation of that kind of criticism. As I understand thematic criticism, which is of course the work of Frye in his review of A.J.M. Smith's The Book of Canadian Poetry in 1943--that great summation of what modern poetry in Canada was by A.J.M. Smith who articulated its presence, and then the great summation of what "Canadian" writing had been up to that date by Frye in his review. Frye articulated for us the view of thematic criticism. And then that was followed by Doug Jones's Butterfly on Rock (1970). There were many other things that came before, and in between that; for example, James Reaney, whom I didn't talk about, wrote a piece ["The Predicament of the Canadian Poet"] which is part of the history of this. One really has to go through this in some detail, but the key stages that I trace are Frye, Jones, and then Margaret Atwood. Atwood's Survival (1972) was phenomenal. It changed the history of the way we thought about poetry in this country.

Now, the theory that Frye was advancing, which we call thematic criticism, was that Canadian writing derives from the impact of a vast indifferent and apparently sinister natural force upon the writer; nature, the wilderness, and the writer's response to that, which he then internalizes, and which becomes a kind of symbolic image for him of the internal wilderness which Frye calls the riddle of the unconscious. The significance of this historically and culturally is that the wilderness is northern Ontario; it's essentially the country seen from central Canada. It is not the country seen across the whole length of it, it's not the country seen

regionally, it's not the country seen in its parts, it's not the country seen from particular angles. The country is seen centrally, and the way in which it is seen centrally is of course that first of all that is where the writers are, as the interpretation goes; and secondly, the theory of the impact of the wilderness upon writers in this particular way derives from what is called the Laurentian theory of Canadian history, which is a major historical interpretation of the development of the country by Harold Innis and Donald Creighton and other historians like them.

RM: They too thought of the Canadian wilderness in the same way as Frye?

EM: What they thought was this: that Canada exists because of its geography not in spite of its geography. That is to say, the lines of communication in this country run from east to west, that the movement into the country, to use Frye's own image is: as you come down the St. Lawrence you enter the body of the Leviathan, this giant whale, and you go to the centre of the continent, and therefore you are at once in the labyrinth itself because that is what entering the Leviathan means--it means being inside the labyrinth, inside the minotaur's lair. Frye actually says this.

RM: Where do the images come from?

EM: They came from the Bible, and they come from the mythological interpretation of literature, from Frye's reading of the Bible. They also come from a number of other sources. Oddly enough Marshall McLuhan enters into this too. They come from Harold Innis's theories of communication and the relationship between communication and the development of society. Therefore, from his point of view, believe it or not, the codfish are more important to the history of Canada than virtually almost anything else because it's the codfish that pulled the settlers gradually in; it pulled the fishermen in, then it pulled the settlers in. So Innis's great history, The Fur Trade in Canada (1930), develops this interpretation of Canadian history, and in the conclusion, which is about the history of codfishing, he really says: The real lines of communication in this country run east and west and therefore the country will develop east and west. There is a kind of logic to the development, an historical logic to the development of Canada, and the historical logic is that the metropolitan centre will be in Montreal and Toronto and the hinterland will be the West. Now, you can begin to see what this means in the cultural development of the country as well, because

that means that the West will always be a colonial appendage to the imperial centre which is the establishment in Toronto itself.

RM: So what you are saying is that this larger structure of cultural and historical and social metaphors influenced Frye too. They were part and parcel of his vision of Canada.

EM: Oh yes, Frye interpreted Canada in this way too. He took, for example, the Group of Seven as the central painters, and there are many many artists who would differ with him on that point. That is one of the most common images of the country, that the Group of Seven is the first group to give us a vision of ourselves—which is the landscape, which is the North, which is northern Ontario in fact. And then they move further north. There is an awfully interesting aspect of this which hasn't been fully explored yet because it's also Rosicrucian and mystic. Lawren Harris, for example, was a mystic, and his vision of the movement north was "ever North." But that hasn't been fully explored. I wrote an article on him called "The Inward, Northward Journey of Lawren Harris," which was making this same point. But yes, essentially Frye said, The cultural centre of this country is the vision of the North, and that statement really comes down to a version that the centre of Canada, as a writing centre, is eastern Canada, and therefore the West will always be a colonial appendage, which becomes more colonial as you go further west; and so western Canada, meaning the Prairies, is one aspect of it, but the coast becomes an even further appendage.

RM: Why has thematic criticism the term "theme" attached to it?

EM: Actually it's a very odd thing—I'm not quite sure. I'd have to do some very close--

RM: Themes are more real or more important or more significant than the works themselves?

EM: Well that's the argument against it which you get with Frank Davey when he says: There are many reasons why we have to take issue with thematic criticism, and one is that it's concerned with theme, and therefore it's not concerned with form; it's not concerned with structure, it's not concerned with the language, it's not concerned with the whole problem of language, which becomes the major problem now, where the post-modern writer in fact has moved into the idea that poetry is about language itself and not about themes or ideas or whatever. It's a kind of puzzle which I have never worked out satisfactorily myself, why we call it

thematic criticism, because Frye himself is talking about an image, and he is talking about a great image, the image of the North. Atwood may be the one who popularized the term because she calls her Survival a thematic study of Canadian literature, or words to that effect. So she may have given it the stamp, I am not sure. Or perhaps Doug Jones did, I am not sure. I've never really worked out the history of that particular language. Frye is really talking about forms, cultural forms, and I have to think this through as to what the meaning of that is in Frye, but the historical development is clear: that what began as a version of the historical process through which Canadian writing went, became a thematic account after a bit. Atwood was so enormously influential.

RM: A great trust in generalization--that generalizations actually reveal structures that are self-evident in the world?

EM: Right, and therefore a means by which it became possible to talk intelligently about Canadian writing.

RM: And a great deal of trust, I suppose, in critical terms then, and the power of the critic.

EM: Therefore, the teacher of English and the student and the whole educational centre and the university itself could say: But there is such a thing as Canadian writing and we can talk about it; it does have a coherence, it's got a centre, and the cohering centre is its theme(s). That gave it a kind of authority, and of course, Frye himself being a critic of enormous power, of international stature, gave the whole proceedings a kind of stamp of authenticity by virtue of having his name associated with it. He not only wrote that review, of course, he also reviewed Canadian poetry for 10 years for the University of Toronto Quarterly, and Frye's reviews were among the most influential reviews we've ever had during that 10 year period. It would be very interesting to assess those reviews and find out who it is that he said would become important as writers, and what his choices were, and what actually happened.

RM: How then does Eli Mandel fit in with thematic criticism, which is so obsessed, in a way, with generalization? You were, were you not, educated in thematic criticism, or is that a false thing to say?

EM: That is a false thing to say. One of the myths, one of the peculiar stories is the association of myself with Reaney and Jay McPherson as a member of the group of Frye. A lot of jokes are made about that. First of all, I was not a member at all; secondly,

there wasn't such a group.

RM: Where did the rumour come from?

EM: Well, in the '50s when there wasn't that much poetry being written, indeed the poets all did tend to write what we call "mythopoeic" poetry, but the reason for that was the dominant influence of Eliot and Yeats, particularly Eliot I suppose, and not Williams. Of course you realize that's a key distinction that I am making, because Williams represents a totally different line, and there was a different line besides the mythopoeic. The mythopoeic line consisted of people like Wilfred Watson, Douglas LePan, P.K. Page, myself, James Reaney, some poets of extraordinary force, Reaney being one, and Ann Wilkinson who died; all that was mythopoeic poetry out of the Eliot line--the "modernists"--the real modern line, that is, before the post-modern line, what we then called "modern" poetry. But there was another aspect of modern poetry which was from Pound and Williams, and Louis Dudek who was a member of the Pound-Williams axis, fought against Frye who represented the Eliot critical influence and who therefore defended the mythopoeic poets. His critical work has been published by Frank Davey in Open Letter [Louis Dudek: Texts and Essays, 1981] because it embodies that opposition. It's a revisionist's history, if you want.

RM: So where was Eli Mandel in the '50s when Frye was writing his summations of Canadian poetry?

EM: Well, I was a graduate student at the University of Toronto and I was studying Christopher Smart, and I was beginning to write my poetry. There is no question at all that I thought of poetry then as that which gave myth its authentic sense of existential reality. You made myth existentially real--that was one of the forms of mythic writing. But I wasn't thinking of Frye, I was thinking of Eliot, or people like that. Those were the sounds in my head, if you want. I knew also that I was interested in all kinds of other things. I always have been. I think the key point to your question about me can be answered if you think not about the '50s, where I'm the young poet trying to find my voice and I write two books of poetry, "Minotaur Poems" [in Trio, 1954] which is a mythic book, and Fuseli Poems (1960) which is a mythic book, I wouldn't deny that, but then in the '60s I write a book called Black and Secret Man (1964) which is quite different and really signals a change in my poetry, and that change is picked up in the criticism that I write as well. Now that's interesting because Frank Davey, of all people, in his Preface to

From There to Here says: Aside from the thematic critics there were two other people writing during this period and they were Marshall McLuhan and Eli Mandel, and these people were concerned with two different things; McLuhan was concerned with the impact upon poetry of technology, of the media, and Eli Mandel was concerned with the fact that we had to move away from a structured criticism to a highly subjective criticism. Which is true, I said that in my little book [Criticism: The Silent-Speaking Words] for the CBC in 1966. In fact, what I was thinking about--I didn't have the terminology yet--I was thinking about phenomenological criticism, I was thinking about Agee, I was thinking about all the opening up of the field. And at the same time as I said that in criticism, I was beginning to do it in poetry, because then the next book in 1967 was An Idiot Joy which was an open field book. George Bowering knew that because he wrote a review of the book called "Irving and Eli," in which he put into opposition Irving Layton and myself, pointing out that I was moving toward another kind of poetry from Irving's.

So where does Eli Mandel fit in? Well, my criticism has been so much at odds with the "great tradition" from the beginning that Roy Daniels said of me in his review of my book [Criticism]: A man who knows the tradition so well and says what he says, my god, is like Augustine welcoming the Huns to Rome--which is exactly the point: that is, in 1966 I was saying, Our tradition in criticism is structure and order and closed form, and the ferocity--what's the marvellous term that Kroetsch uses [in "For Play and Entrance"]?--the ferocity of closure, the tradition is that, and I was saying at that time, No we've got to go another way. What happened was that I went to my next critical book which was more specifically Canadian, in 1977, Another Time, but given my usual tactics that has been only partially understood so far, because I tend to work by, I suppose you would call it paradox, or something like that; that is, I tend to take the opposition position and then move it toward its paradoxical difference. But the later book does have a section on Regionalism. So where does Eli Mandel stand? He stands as a Western Canadian writer who understood from virtually the beginning that, though he had been writing Eastern poetry in the sense of establishment poetry and in the sense of mythic poetry, he also quite clearly understood that there was some other profound pull--in my essay on Western Canadian writing I called it "Writing West: On the Road to Wood Mountain." I chose the term as I make clear in my article, "Writing West," from an imitation of Bill New's book, Articulating West, and I meant to indicate by it that the Western writer is not the writer who's located in the West--this is very important--any more than he's the B.C. writer located in B.C.;

he's the one who is moving there, or whose direction moves there, his compass needle points there all the time, his heart points there all the time. That's necessary and I can't avoid it. I've gone back to the West many many times, and I think that should be said. It's important to know I've taught at Banff for five years in the summers; I've taught several times at Western universities here, as I told the class at the beginning. I've taught at the University of Victoria, U.B.C., and Simon Fraser, all three universities. I've spent a year as Writer-in-Residence in Regina. I've taught twice at Fort San with Bob Kroetsch, the writing school for Saskatchewan. So there has been this paradoxical thing that though I live in the east and though I think I am to a certain degree, as people would say, a Toronto writer, it's nonetheless true that I have always been moving West in my writing increasingly.

I think it's important for me to say that not only have I been writing West in the sense of gradually becoming aware of the Westward moving of Canadian writing. I've done an important interview ["Where the Voice Comes From"] with Rudy Wiebe, for example; I've written an important article ["Romance and Realism in Western Canadian Fiction"] about Bob Kroetsch; I've done the Introduction to Bob Kroetsch's new book of poetry [Field Notes, 1981]; I think my article on "Writing West" was one of my best articles, and I'm going to write about B.C. writing now. But also this whole direction has gotten me involved with Western writers, so that Bob Kroetsch who is a friend of mine and Andy Suknaski—not only has Andy Suknaski been a figure in my writing, I'm a figure in his writing. He wrote this wonderful thing, which I think for the record we should take note of, for Brick (which is a very interesting review magazine), an article called "Borges and I, Mandel and Me," about our being doubles. It is a very fine article on what doubles are and the use of the double in literature.

RM: One question Eli, sticking with the criticism for a little while longer, does the term "formalism" mean anything to you?

EM: It doesn't mean much to me. The contemporary terms that mean a great deal to me are "phenomenology"—and I think probably I've got some claim to being one of the early Canadian critics to write about it quite seriously in the sense that I was writing about James Agee in Criticism: The Silent-Speaking Words--and "structuralism," which I've written a fair amount of. Some people have noticed that in some of the early Prairie writing, and of course in my theory of strange loops in my article called "Strange Loops," which will appear in the Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory. There is [in this article] a full development of the theory of

regionalism as voice or as structure, a particular kind of linguistic style which has to do with strange loops and which comes from Bob Kroetsch.

RM: The term?

EM: No, the style. Kroetsch is full of those paradoxes which I call strange loops, in other words doubles in various ways.

RM: Could you elaborate?

EM: A strange loop is a self-referring, self-reflexive linguistic paradox. For example, this isn't a classic one, but it is a good one, when Groucho Marx says, "I would never join a club of which I was a member." That's a strange loop and that's the kind of thing you get in all of Bob's writing. Bob's Sad Phoenician is full of strange loops, hundreds and hundreds of paradoxes, linguistic paradoxes which turn in on themselves in funny ways, and the way in which these become doubles is very interesting. A double is a strange loop because a double is the appearance of--it's a self-reflexive image and therefore it's a strange loop. And of course Bob's strange loops, his linguistic paradoxes which he loves to play with, almost always have to do with doubles. Gone Indian is a perfect example. He even uses the device of the tape recorder on which the so-called thesis the guy is unable to write is being recorded, which is being sent back to the fellow who is recording it; that's always the situation, that there are two minds at work. There's the one person who is doing the biography of the other person and the biographer is at the thick centre, and the person whose biography is being done goes racing around the countryside being as wild as could be. He is the id figure while the superego works from the thick centre, yet they are images of each other. Put together, they are strange loops. That's what I mean by this. That's what I call regional writing: it's a means of defining the region by saying nothing about it.

* * *

RM: Getting back to West Coast writing, Eli, did you read Warren Tallman's criticism before you met him?

EM: Oh well, that's of course where the story which Warren told his class comes in, which is a story about my wife Ann. The point was

that--this is necessary to tell because Warren made a point about it in the course this year--when Ann came as a graduate student to B.C., in her second year here, she went into Warren's class. She wrote me letters then about Warren, so I heard about Warren in 1964, and I heard all about the great conference [1963 U.B.C. Poetry Conference] which had been here. Most of us had heard about it anyhow, but I heard about it, and I think she told me about hearing the tapes and she told me about all these young poets who were here. That's when I first became aware of the B.C. school, so I became aware of it through the woman who has become my wife, and through Warren Tallman, literally. Now, during the year Ann came to do her PhD in 1966 at Alberta, she said, Eli we have to go out and see Warren. So I came out with her to see Warren Tallman; that is when I first met him. Now he tells the story of knowing that he was meeting this Frygian critic, this Frye critic from Alberta, and he wasn't particularly fussy about meeting him with Ann, whom he liked very much, until as we met he suddenly felt, My goodness, I've missed the whole point. This is not just a couple who have come out here to see me; these people are in love with one another, and I've missed the whole thing. And Warren points out that this is a very significant way in which one thinks about the world, because he asked me to come to his class. I said, I'll come if I can lecture on Hart Crane's "Voyages" and he just about had a fit because he loves that poem, of course. And he said, Oh all right, you lecture on "Voyages" and I want you to do one of your poems and I did "Listen, The Sea," one of my own poems. So we knew one another, yes, through Ann. So oddly enough she figures largely in the story of the contact between the various critics. And she herself is, of course, a very important critic who has written a terrific article ["Uninventing Structures"] on Kroetsch.

RM: Does your essay "Modern Canadian Poetry" fit into this period?

EM: It's about 1969, so it doesn't derive from this period. It was an essay I was asked to do.

RM: Was that an important statement at that time?

EM: I think that was my great summation, from my point of view, of where I stood in respect to Canadian poetry. There are two things to be said about this. One is that I had begun to teach a course called "The Canadian Experience," an humanities course, and a lot of the writing that I did over this period derived directly from that course. I was thinking about Canadian writing a lot; in other words, up until then I had been thinking about other things, and not

Canadian writing. Now I was asked to not only lecture on Canadian writing but to lecture on it from a special point of view, developing theories of it, and so on. So that's where that essay comes from, and it's a version of the way in which I was beginning to work out--it is also in some of the publishing I was doing because I edited Five Modern Canadian Poets (1970), or was publishing it around that time, and the structure of that anthology comes a lot from that time.

RM: Can you remember what you were thinking about West Coast writing at that time? Because that essay reads like a discovery, that somewhere recently you had thought about modern Canadian poetry and suddenly realized certain things. You start with Earle Birney and talk about writers who are haunted by history. And you turn to Leslie Fiedler and then to Charles Olson. In the section on Olson you point to the West Coast. This is 1969.

EM: That's right. The key there is Fiedler because Fiedler had written a book [The Return of the Vanishing American] about the way in which the Red Indian is going to come back. You know how that essay ends--it's a great study of the id figure in modern American writing--it ends with a section on West Coast Canadian writing, and there are two or three figures who enter into it. I mean, there is the Tish group and there's Leonard Cohen's Beautiful Losers, and Cohen and the Tish group are the ones who appear in that essay; you see Fiedler was the clue, the guy who, oddly enough, clued me into this. But I must tell you something else. You know George Bowering never never fails to send me a postcard when there is a particular mention made. He sent me a postcard about my article ["Modern Canadian Poetry"] when it appeared and he said in the postcard, Eli you're wrong about Black Mountain poetry; we are not Black Mountain poets. I think he might have said, We are Brown Mountain poets, I don't know. At first I couldn't figure out what he was saying. I thought, okay, well, he can be fussy about it but the general term is clear enough to me. I think I used the term "Black Mountain," but what he meant was, what I began with, which is to say that it's wrong to think of the Tish poets as simply "Black Mountain" because that is not it; it is much more complex than that.

RM: This is maybe by the wayside, but it seemed to me that you were saying that the obsession with history was an obsession of the Canadian poet to try to find a cultural form that the poetry can thrive in and be at peace in, and that it was really the end of humanism that you were reading in the obsession with the wilderness.

EM: That's right.

RM: Back in some readers' minds they might also think of the end of Frye's fear of the wilderness.

EM: I think the essay is, in a certain way, today, readable as part of the poetics of our present moment. I would certainly want to revise, if I were to do that again, the end and talk about the kind of poetics which we have here because I'm just beginning to clue into what that poetics is, that it's open form, and so on, but that is not enough. There is no hint of the long poem, of the serial poem, of the continuous form, of the writer who is into language itself rather than theme of any kind--there is no hint of that. There is a thing at the very end which is prophetic because, if I remember correctly, the essay says: There is a name for the kind of poetry that we're now reaching and this kind of poetry is named by Susan Sontag. Then I name a lot of figures who name this kind of poetry, and I say it is a poetry of chance, magic, open form, and so on, and that is where I go to Cohen. And I think that's quite an insight. So I had obviously begun to sense that we were moving into a new phase, and one of the arguments of the essay which is very important is that there's a different kind of poetry coming that will take this shape, and that poetry will not be out of the usual tradition, which is the tradition of history and the East. The poetry of the West, I suppose. Yes, that's there.

* * *

RM: Eli, in the last part of this interview we will turn to recent criticism and get your sense of what's going on in criticism now, what changes are going on, and what you think the future of criticism is in Canada.

EM: I think that's an important question for a number of reasons. First of all, there is an extraordinarily efficient kind of critical apparatus being built up and that consists of things like the ECW group, the Essays in Canadian Writing people who are churning out these books of critical studies, of bibliographies, of studies of various kinds, and so on.

RM: You mean that we are being inundated by criticism?

EM: Well, there is that, and then there is the kind of thing that you get with Douglas and McIntyre's continuing series which just had

Frank Davey's study of Dudek and Souster [Dudek and Souster], and then you have Davey's Open Letter which is a continuous series of studies. And all of that is one thing. But if I were to try to say where Canadian criticism is now, I think you have to say that Frank Davey is, without question, going to begin to occupy very much the centre of the thing with his approach, probably with his essay on the long poem, with his collected essays which will be published by Turnstone very soon--I am going to do the Introduction to that--and so on. I think that probably we'll have a book of criticism by Bob Kroetsch and that's going to be important, because Kroetsch is one of the most original critical minds that we've got and he brings to the foreground all this contemporary thought about critical theory which is lurking around the essays of the younger people, you know, deconstructionism, and so on and so on, and he will give that a very nice shape and form. In other words, I think Frye, or anybody who represents Frye, has well passed the moment where they can take over the field again; they can't. So thematic criticism is gone and a form of criticism which Frank talked about and which Bob Kroetsch is talking about has appeared, that is to say, genre criticism, linguistic criticism, phenomenological criticism. Those things are being done. There are a few other people around still. John Moss keeps churning out books, and I don't think that they are very good, but nonetheless there he is. Certainly from the West too you'll hear more of some people. Keith has published his book on Rudy Wiebe [A Voice in the Land, ed. W.J. Keith], and so on. So there is a much broader perspective of criticism across the whole country. There will be a re-thinking of what region means because Frye's political definition of regionalism I don't think is adequate; I've argued that before and I think some of my comments on that will be published. And people like George Bowering who are dynamic in everything are going to publish critical works as well, which I think is all to the good. If you think about the United States or England, and you think about the poets there, you know that every good poet has got his own book of criticism; that's never, never considered a bad thing at all. Randall Jarrell, for example, had a marvelous critical book, as well as his poems, that kind of thing. Berryman had a beautiful critical book published in his lifetime.

RM: And Williams, and Pound?

EM: Of course, Williams and Pound. The notion of the distinction between the poet and the critic which is so often made is really not important at all. The real distinction people are trying to make is between the poet and the reviewer, and the reviewer is not a critic.

RM: What does criticism do for writing, if anything?

EM: At the present moment, what it does for writing is a very important thing which Bob Kroetsch talks about: that the writer in his writing is a critic, and the critic in his writing is a writer. That is, writing is about the act of writing now, and any serious writing for Bob Kroetsch is not about meaning, that's for him the structure that you have to deconstruct. That's one of the major points he made when he was here; writing for him is not the act of making meaning. It's the act of finding out what writing is about, and that's a critical task, a task for the writer and for the critic. They go together in that sense. I began by talking about this kind of establishment of, or apparatus, of publishing we now have, which is going to publish all the bibliographies of all the writers, and all the biographies and all the critical studies--those don't matter a damn. What matters is the theory of criticism. Just as Stevens always said: Writing is the theory of writing, and that's true. The theory of criticism is the theory of writing, is writing, and we are now finally, finally in this country reaching the point where that is so.

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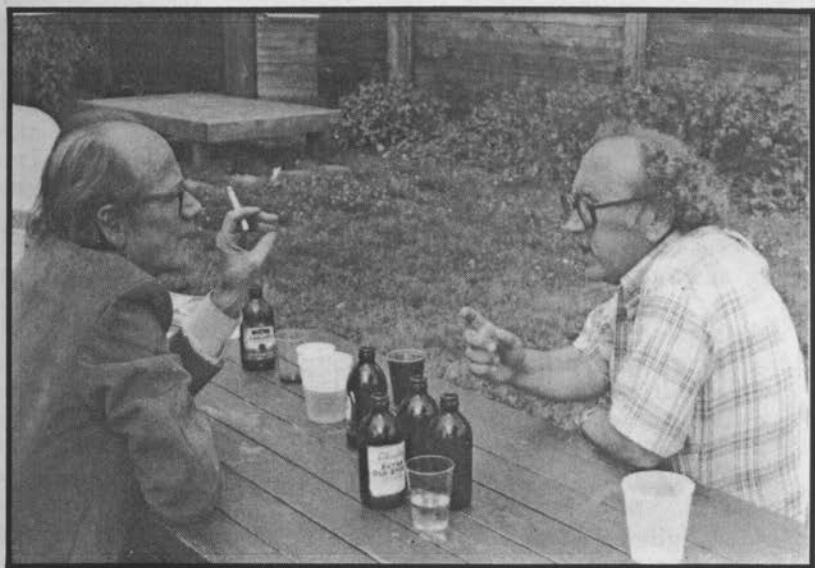
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Warren Tallman and Eli Mandel



Warren Tallman and Sheila Watson

WHEN THE TIME CAME

I

An Entrance Monologue

- bp: My original ambition was to take the first chapter of *Ida* & go thru it with you step-by-step, showing how the construction of Stein's sentences & paragraphs is twinned to what it is she is saying; how, in short, her saying says. I'd thot 'first chapter' because in an earlier essay ("Some Sentences, Paragraphs & Punctuation On Sentences, Paragraphs & Punctuation") I'd gone into the first page of *Ida* fairly thoroughly, albeit from a different point of view, & the sheer symmetry of moving from the first page to the first chapter definitely appealed to me. The reality of what I'm going to do today has turned out differently from its intended reality largely because of the approach I elected to take, which is to say the approach I elected to try (& I'll put the emphasis there--I'm going to try)--to deal thoroughly with the first five pages of *Ida*. I want to deal with Stein's writing in its real context which is the flux & flow of her actual texts. I don't want to extract her meaning so much as slow your reading of the text down thru the use of that ancient & beneficent device, the extensive commentary, forcing you to linger over the deliberateness of her craft & show you how, tho she was whimsical & had a highly developed sense of play, the whimsy & the play were part of an over-all & continuous strategy of engagement with some of the central issues of any writer's writing: the role of the I; the relationship of the role of the I to the function of narrative time; the whole issue of narrative time in general. I confined myself to five pages because I decided finally that what I was interested in was developing a

general strategy for reading Stein, trying to convey to you the excitement I feel when I read her & why I feel it, & given that, that I was more interested in doing a few pages carefully, at a pace we all could absorb them, than doing a whole bunch of pages hastily. I'd also like to emphasise that I include my own I in there when I say 'all', because my guide was the feeling in me after five pages that that was a hell of a lot to absorb, & why didn't I leave the next few pages for another lecture, or another critic even, but leave off at a point where the I & the we could both see clearly what was happening.

When I was much younger than I am now, chronologically speaking, but about the same age mentally, tho without the experience I've accumulated since then, I started writing a book on Gertrude Stein's theories of personality as revealed in her early opus The Making of Americans. The general scheme was to go thru & extract the many & very clear things she'd said about personality types & demonstrate both the consistency & accuracy of her particular classification system. This is easy to do; it would just take a gross amount of time--say two years or so if you were working at it full tilt. I finished two chapters of the work, sketched out an additional four, even published the initial two, & then abandoned the project. It took me awhile to see why I'd abandoned it, but the why is very important to what I'm going to talk about today, so it's worth taking a moment or two to talk specifically to that point. Now you'll have noticed I said 'talk' when here I am rather obviously reading to you from some prepared notes, prepared sentences in this case, so right away you're grasping the principle of a real-time fiction. The writer is finally a writer. She/he is not a talker. Even tho this is only the third time I've presented these words to an audience, I am presenting them--virtually the same ones as in the other times--I am not talking/creating in any spontaneous sense. Tho it's clearly this I addressing you, this I is using words the I managed to write down in its hotel room on English Bay one late November afternoon (tho of course right now, in the time of the writing, it's today on English Bay & I'm imagining a you which is tomorrow & other days in the future & me saying, or you reading, these words). Therefore I say, & I just said (whether in an oral or a print sense), this whole talk is a kind of fiction. And it's precisely this borderline between the real life of the I & the I's existence in narrative time, any narrative's time, that was one of Stein's central concerns. She was exploring the continuous present & she wanted writing

to occupy a continuous present. She very specifically asked us all in her Geographical History of America (p. 157): "Oblige me by not beginning. Also by not ending." I.e.—continue. Continue continuously. Give the text the reality of its existence as an object & let that object be continuously present to you—timeless in that sense. So how could I continue extracting? I was violating Stein's text when I did that, the very spirit of her text, & I was, of course, proving the validity of Heisenberg's Principle of Uncertainty as it applied to literature. By extracting I was bringing the text to a dead halt & we were no longer observing it as it was & therefore our observations ceased to have any validity. We're in danger of that even in what we're going to do today but at least in this case I'm going to encourage you to, if you feel like it, read on ahead of me & just let what I'm saying drift in & out of your own relationship to the text. Don't let me stop the particularity of that relationship. Just let me help if the help's helpful. That was one of the things that struck me in Grade 8 when Miss Nethercut, our English teacher, would be reading from Charles Dickens' Oliver Twist & we weren't supposed to read on ahead, we were supposed to stay with her & she'd stop every few minutes & say "Barrie" or "June" she'd say "where am I?" & you'd have to have your finger on the correct spot. Don't keep your finger on the spot. It doesn't matter if you miss what I'm saying because it's what Stein's saying that's important. I'm going to be insisting the same information in different ways because that's what Stein did & you'll get the real flux of the definite particles if you simply read away. Okay. Here we go. This is a reading of the first five pages of Ida entitled "When the Time Came."