II

The Definite Particles

Resist the temptation to jump too far ahead in terms of knowledge. i.e. Let the net of information arise mainly from the text at hand. **Read** the book you're **reading.**

This is the announcement of what Stein proposes to deal with, that the self, the Id(e)a of I, + tIme, are inseparable, but that the I exists beyond notions of sIngularity.

THERE was a baby born named Ida. Its mother held it with her hands to keep Ida from being born but when the time came Ida came. And as Ida came, with her came her twin, so there she was Ida-Ida.

The mother was sweet and gentle and so was the father. The whole family was sweet and gentle except the great-aunt. She was the only exception.

But the exception becomes the rule. Stein allows us some foreshadowing here by implication.

This whole opening is very rich + dense. What is being dealt with is the notion of "self-consciousness" + the idea that the "self" also births the "not-self", that those who never confront the I/I remain sweet + gentle, that only the great-aunt, who bore twins + buried them under the pair tree, the one who faced the **issue** of a doubleness, is different, + makes others feel funny.

This is the reannouncement of the "two", picking up from the opening page's Ida-Ida twins theme + echoing the pun on pair as where the two's been buried. These types of punning, underlinings + recapitulations are underlined in the grandfather's statement about trees— "tree" is always the same (repeats itself) but then "In a little while" you come to see how each "tree" is unique (insists itself) + "a cherry tree does not look like a pear tree". Stein is drawing on a natural model to once again insist her distinction between repetition + insistence.

This figure of the old woman becomes oracular precisely because she is old + has, therefore, knowledge of what <u>both</u> young + old mean.

The cherry tree can be taken as a pun on "cheery" + hence "sweet + gentle" + hence, too, "innocence" in all its senses which loops back to "cherry".

An <u>old woman</u> who was no relation and who had known the great-aunt when she was young was always telling that the great-aunt had had something happen to her oh many years ago, it was a soldier, and then the great-aunt had had little twins born to her and then she had quietly, the twins were dead then, born so, she had buried them under a pear tree and nobody knew.

Nobody believed the old woman perhaps it was true but nobody believed it, but all the family always looked at every pear tree and had a funny feeling.

The grandfather was sweet and gentle too. He liked to say that in a little while <u>a cherry tree</u> does not look like a pear tree.

It was a nice family but they did easily lose each other.

So Ida was born and a very little while after her parents went off on a trip and never came back. That was the first funny thing that happened to Ida.

The days were long and there was nothing <u>to</u> do.

Here we expect the word "trees" to occupy the fourth position but instead we find it buried in the word "streets". "trees" become "streets" even as a "cherry tree" does not become a "pear tree". In each insistence of a thing some transformation must take place. Otherwise it is simply a repetition.

She saw the moon and she saw the sun and she saw the grass and she saw the streets.

The first time she saw anything it frightened her. She saw a little boy and when he waved to her she would not look his way.

She liked to talk and to sing songs and she liked to change places. Wherever she was she always liked to change places. Otherwise there was nothing to do all day. Of course she went to bed early but even so she always could say, what shall I do now, now what shall I do.

Here is part of Stein's theory of narative + her theory of personality. The I (da) is always changing places. And indeed in this story each time an Ida is mentioned you are never sure which Ida. Each recurrence is not a repetition but a fresh insistence + hence a fresh revelation.

Once you realize + accept that Stein is dealing with **insistence**, not repetition, then its clear that two different "now"s are being pointed to — two different time periods. The comma between them is used to mark the time shift, to underline the time shifts any narrative contains.

And thus arises this entire paragraph, a commentary on time.

Thus also the following paragraph's insistence that Ida is not idle but is as a day is — "always the same day". Yet it is important to remember that Ida is Ida, & that the now, now structure parallels the day, day & Ida, Ida samenesses & differences. Each is a discrete unit of time & being, tho they have the same name. Ida is not idle but she is Ida & these are not exactly the same.

Some one told her to say no matter what the day is it always ends the same day, no matter what happens in the year the year always ends one day.

Ida was not idle but the days were always long even in winter and there was nothing to do.

Ida lived with her great-aunt not in the city but just outside.

Ida was not idle, & in fact, as the earlier sentence made clear, "always could say, what shall I do now, now what shall I do." Which of course is a graphing of the I in motion, the I insisting Itself.

Here we see how the exception becomes the rule, becomes the ruler of Ida's life, as the great-aunt, who is linked to Ida-Ida thru the pair tree, becomes the one who raises Ida & Ida, the one by whom her days are ruled.

Everything is transformed. Things become like other things. Each thing/episode/experience has its separate existence + is transformed within it. This is the notion "insistence in narrative", that as you move forward + encounter the same words/ideas in new constructions + configurations they are different + have a new existence. It is this very difference in each moment that must be conveyed if one is to have a complete description.

She was very young and as she had nothing to do she walked as if she was tall as tall as any one. Once she was lost that is to say a man followed her and that frightened her so that she was crying just as if she had been lost. In a little while that is some time after it was a comfort to her that this had happened to her.

She did not have anything to do and so she had time to think about each day as it came. She was very careful about Tuesday. She always just had to have Tuesday. Tuesday was Tuesday to her. They always had plenty to eat. Ida always hesitated before eating. That was Ida.

She has time to contemplate the natural insistence — each day as it comes. And these days, as we have seen, are I days, the discrete units of the I's existence. They are also Ideas.

to do.
Tuesday, which is, of course,
Two's day or Ida, Iday which is also the "They" that opens the next pairagraph (+ each is the graphing of that pair Ida/Ida). "Tuesday was Tuesday to her"; the same + different each time she encountered it.

Stein makes use of the doubleness of this little logic loop. Everything here is not Two, yet is Two + yet, too, is one. Really, of course, it is 1 plus 1. But it is not Two.

Indeed here is a third 1 who restates the theme of I + I's desire to dIalogue with self. I talks to I. Thus for any of us there is an experience within self of "I?" "da?". Q+A.

One day it was not Tuesday, two people came to see her great-aunt. They came in very carefully. They did not come in together. First one came and then the other one. One of them had some orange blossoms in her hand. That made Ida feel funny. Who were they? She did not know and she did not like to follow them in. A third one came along, this one was a man and he had orange blossoms in his hat brim. He took off his hat and he said to himself here I am, I wish to speak to myself. Here I am. Then he went on into the house.

Ida remembered that an old woman had once told her that she Ida would come to be so much older that not anybody could be older, although, said the old woman, there was one who was older.

Orange blossoms were + are associated with marriage (my mother's wedding ring had them clustered on it) + thus a third fruit/tree/sexual+/or romantic word is added (i refer here to its associational net + not some private symbolism of Stein's). The "or" of "orange" (part of the "either/or" two term formulation) is also important.

This reiterates a point Stein made in THE MAKING OF AMERICANS, that we are never to ourselves as anything other than young men + women in our consciousness of self. That the idea of "older" is something only the "old" can convey to us. This is underlined later in the text by Ida's growing older leading to her being sixteen. It is those for whom time is almost over that the concept "old" is fully revealed to.

Ida began to wonder if that was what was now happening to her. She wondered if she ought to go into the house to see whether there was really any one with her great-aunt, and then she thought she would act as if she was not living there but was somebody just coming to visit and so she went up to the door and she asked herself is any one at home and when they that is she herself said to herself no there is nobody at home she decided not to go in.

That was just as well because orange blossoms were funny things to her great-aunt just as pear trees were funny things to Ida.

Here the theyness of the she is drawn out as is indeed the whole question of whether anyONE is in the house with the great-aunt. The I's continual strategy of creating a not-I, another self which comes to visit the house in which the I lives, + then abiding by its judgements, is sketched.

And only a few paragraphs earlier we'd heard how the orange blossoms in the one person's hand "made Ida feel funny." Since they are funny things to both Ida + her great-aunt we are pointed back to that sense of how the one has the potential to become more than one. One pair-agraph about pair trees +/or ange blossoms, the potential for more than one in one. Particularly when we remember it is one of the two who come in one-by-one (one bi one (+ hence two) that has the orange blossoms, + the man who wishes to speak to himself.

The other point here is that "orange blossoms" are not "orange. blossoms" when they mean "marriage". i.e. "When is a door not a door? When its ajar." This is a transformation that happens thru the insist-tence of multiple meanings (i.e. NOT symbolism).

The one-bi-one pun leads us into this whole statement about, specifically, sexual choice + more generally, the notion of what constitutes choice (as in the earlier choosing to be Ida Ida, or I/not-I). Love is blind, + blind to the issue him or her. Determinist + absolutist psychologies do not allow for that. Love is born blind. Age has nothing to do with it. (It is also worth remembering Stein's aphorism: "I am I because my little dog knows me". There is the notion that in the twinning, the recognition of the other, the not-I, is what brings the I into its true existence. And what is Love but that recognition, that blind sighting)

And so Ida went on growing older and then she was almost sixteen and a great many funny things happened to her. Her great-aunt went away so she lost her great-aunt who never really felt content since the orange blossoms had come to visit her. And now Ida lived with her grandfather. She had a dog, he was almost blind not from age but from having been born so and Ida called him Love, she liked to call him naturally she and he liked to come even without her calling him.

It was dark in the morning any morning but since her dog Love was blind it did not make any difference to him.

It is true he was born blind nice dogs often are. Though he was blind naturally she could always talk to him.

This is Stein's statement of pronominal choice (a continuation of the one-bi-one), that some she's quite naturally want to call him she, that Love, that dog, is blind to the categories people would place on it... "it did not make any difference to him."

(I'll pause briefly simply to point out that this line is also an injunction to the reader + as such reinforces the approach we are taking to the text here.)

One day she said. Listen Love, but listen to everything and listen while I tell you something.

Yes Love she said to him, you have always had me and now you are going to have two, I am going to have a twin yes I am Love, I am tired of being just one and when I am a twin one of us can go out and one of us can stay in, yes Love yes I am yes I am going to have a twin. You know Love I am like that when I have to have it I have to have it. And I have to have a twin, yes Love.

The house that Ida lived in was a little on top of a hill, it was not a very pretty house but it was quite a nice one and there was a big field next to it and trees at either end of the field and a path at one side of it and not very many flowers ever because the trees and the grass took up so very much room but there was a good deal of space to fill with Ida and her dog Love and anybody could understand that she really did have to have a twin.

She began to sing about her twin and this is the way she sang.

On a "One" day she says to him "now you are going to have two."

Here there is the double notion that the self has selves (six I's in three IIves) + that in love we are twinned ("yes Love yes I am yes I am"), that the beloved is a twin I (en-twin-ed). Love is the twin ("I have to have a twin, yes Love.")

There both is + there isn't space. It is a question of point-of-view. Point-of-view is itself a means of transformation, the "given" in translation.

Stein is also playing here with the whole notion of description + its inaccuracy on the level of language. Even as she moves out to describe the house her description keeps contradicting itself... "the trees and the grass took up so very much room but there was a good deal of space to fill..."

This is the opening theme restated, that time enters with the I, + here the additional complexity or notion that it enters with the death of the not-I. The possibility of the not-I is born with the I + inside time is not-I whereas +Ime is I.

Following on the heels of the earlier "I have to have a twin" (the anticipation), we have the birth + the contemplated death of Ida Ida.

Oh dear oh dear Love, that was her dog, if I had a twin well nobody would know which one I was and which one she was and so if anything happened nobody could tell anything and lots of things are going to happen and oh Love I felt it yes I know it I have a twin.

And then she said Love later on they will call me a suicide blonde because my twin will have dyed her hair. And then they will call me a murderess because there will come the time when I will have killed my twin which I first made come. If you make her can you kill her. Tell me Love my dog tell me and tell her.

This is a rather complicated play on "love me, love my dog" but the dog *is* love + in love the I is twinned + the instruction is to both I's + to the I that is other, that love must flow both ways, that tho she made her she didn't make her. The I must love the other I

But there is also a warning not to take this as autobiography ("tell me and tell her") because in fiction (+ IDA *is* a novel) you create all kinds of not-I's. A little later on in the novel she says: "Little by little she knew how to read and write and really she said and she was right it was not necessary for her to know anything else." Everything she or you or I could want to know is there in the writing. The writing is, in that sense, self-contained.

Thru all the punning + word play we ave constantly reminded that there is nothing funny about Ida but that funny things do happen to her, + certain things give her, + other people funny feelings. This constant emphasis on the meanings of the word "funny" points to the doubleness of all the play. Stein knows the doubleness of her entendres but she is not trying to be funny ("There was [is] nothing funny about Ida [the novel, in this case] but funny things did happen to her." Serious punning.

This is ryme, a reassertion of the issue of sexual choice, + a play on the classic palindrome "a man, a plan, a canal — panama".

Like everybody Ida had lived not everywhere but she had lived in quite a number of houses and in a good many hotels. It was always natural to live anywhere she lived and she soon forgot the other addresses. Anybody does. There was nothing funny about Ida but funny things did happen to her.

Ida had never really met a man but she did have a plan.

That was while she was still living with her great-aunt. It was not near the water that is unless you call a little stream water or quite a way off a little lake water, and hills beyond it water. If you do not call all these things water then there where Ida was living was not at all near water but it was near a church.

It was March and very cold. Not in the church that was warm.

By this point in the narrative Stein is playing with the language of description. Each assertion is followed by its flaw if considered as a logical statement + the useless generality + hence uselessness of most description (precisely because it is inaccurate on the level of language) is pointed to.

Similarly in her discussion of where Ida lived, Stein asserts that in the flow of life (+ there is an equation here to the flow of reading) one quite simply forgets one's former address. You ave moving on + "it was always natural to live anywhere she lived." So in reading, as you move on you ave forgetting things addressed to you as reader +, unless you ave going to extract plot, this is natural.

III

An Exit Monologue (& some acknowledgements)

There is no conclusion to all this which is exactly as it should be since what we have been dealing with here is a beginning. Indeed I have found that each time I do this with a group of people additional meanings emerge. In a recent presentation Marlene Goldman pointed out how, when Stein says (or has Ida say) "I am going to have a twin yes I am Love, I am tired of being just one and when I am a twin one of us can go out and one of us can stay in . . .," she is also addressing her own shift away from the autobiographical works & back towards fiction. She is precisely interested in the interface between the authorial I & the fiction's I (the I of Ida &, as a contracted statement, "I'd'a done it if I had time" shows us how the I of the character is the I of "I would have," the I of the conditional phrase, the phrase in which we express the fictional possibility). Kris Nakamura also pointed out how the Ida in the first Random House edition is decoratively glyphed at the top of each page as follows:

$_{I}D_{A}$

In this way both the I & the A achieve their singularity & the D is brought into question. She proposed it as the first letter of a two letter configuration viz:

$_{I}D_{A}L$

where D is Death (& one condition of the not-I) & L is Love (another condition of the not-I). These exist at this moment simply as thots stirred by that most recent talk. There are more. Obviously I do not agree with critics like Marianne Hauser who said in her review of Ida at the time of its first appearance: "To look for an underlying idea . . . seems as futile as to look for apples in an orange tree." Once you accept that everything in Stein is deliberate gesture, forms part of a consistent & evolving whole, Stein makes sense, an almost perfect sense.

As a final note I would add my thanks to the people at Simon Fraser I first delivered this lecture to, & particularly to Juliet McLaren & Barry Maxwell who helped me clarify the business of the orange blossoms.

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STEPHEN SCOBIE

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"Here, I wish to say that it is not
language which is the source."

This line from Robin Blaser's "The Fire," quoted by Daphne Marlatt at the mid-point of here & there, stands for me as an ambivalent epigraph to the ISLAND WRITING SERIES. Marlatt's placing of the quotation--in a poem concerned with sources, birth, underwater caves--appears to endorse its statement; and her own work, with its very acute sense of place, and of the phenomenological surround, owes its allegiance to a totality of experience which comes to her from the "outside" world, and to which her language responds. Yet much of the work associated with Marlatt, and with bpNichol and Fred Wah, has rightly been described as "language-centred." To say that language is not the source is thus to raise troubling questions

about how the role of language in the work of these writers should in fact be regarded.

My first questions arise from a wariness, post-Derrida, around the very word "source." For Derrida, "source" is a myth in which he chooses not to believe, and any attempt to locate a source is a naive yearning for primal authority, an unwillingness to accept the uncertainties, the responsibilities, the open-ended play of language's endless deferral. Language is not the source because there can be no source: but language is, nonetheless, the only medium in which even the concept of its own supplementarity can be stated. Thus the whole discussion may be caught in a vicious circle (a not uncommon effect of applying Derridean concepts): if everything we know, and certainly everything we write, is necessarily mediated by language, then the nomination of any other "source" becomes pointless.

Derrida's position is an intellectually stimulating one--and, given its premises, a difficult one to refute--and it certainly accounts for some of what I feel about writing, both in my own work and in the work of many authors I admire. I mean the sense of language as all-pervasive and yet undefinable, unpredictable; language as a condition whose vast uncertainties leave the writer totally (and yet playfully) responsible for his or her own performance. At the same time, as Christopher Norris acknowledges, it is a position which cannot be held to always and absolutely: Deconstruction, Norris writes, is "an activity of thought which cannot be consistently acted on--that way madness lies--but which yet possesses an inescapable rigour of its own."[1] Even if we admit that Derrida's account of language is "true," we must also operate, most of the time, on a pragmatic basis, as if it were not true: as if, that is, there were a world of experience which hypothetically exists unmediated by language.

Blaser's "The Fire" posits such a world: "I believe there is a reality," he writes, "which . . . is neither conceptual and systemized . . . or imageless." That reality is "outside"; it is "everything that comes into me" (my emphasis), such as emotion. Poetry is the attempt to create a "record of the meeting" with that reality, and for this attempt language is not the source but the medium. "Language is given to us and in the most insidious way it controls sight, sound and intellect, but it is also the medium which can be shaped."[2]

However, any attempt to locate a source outside of language reduces language to a subsidiary role, asserting the power of the author's will to control writing. No doubt we all feel this, that we can indeed "shape" our medium, that we can work and polish and revise and strive to be in "control"--but do we not also, honestly,

feel the opposite as well? Do we not share that "grateful" reaction which Phyllis Webb describes herself as having to Roland Barthes' statement, "writing is always . . . indifferent to the infantile ego which solicits it"?[3]

The discussion comes down to shifts in emphasis which are subtle but nonetheless decisive. Even Blaser's choice of the word "insidious" (as opposed to, say, "pervasive") indicates a suspicion, even a fear, of the loss of control by a will which believes it can shape its medium. The metaphor is of mastery (as against bpNichol's recurring metaphor of apprenticeship). Further slight distortions of Blaser's emphasis may extend this metaphor. "Here, I wish to say": the will inscribes its intention. (Yet how else can we conceive of language? Our speech is riddled with such metaphors. Language at every turn images its own subjugation.) Or: "Here, I wish to say": the written word denies its own condition as écriture; the rhetorical flourish appeals to the authority of voice. Derrida steps in again to deconstruct the metaphor: "source" follows on, by its own logic, from "say."

Yet how else can we conceive of language? It is a serious question: the mode of criticism is also dependent on the metaphors of control. What is "bpNichol" but a metaphor for an instance of authorial intentionality? And how do we distinguish that instance from the one called "Daphne Marlatt" except by resorting to the criterion of "voice"?

Briefly, then. Nichol's chapbook consists of four sections from "The Book of Hours," a sequence which will in turn be part of Book VI of the ongoing Martyrology. Nichol's life/long/work is at its source (ha!) a language-generated poem, whose mythology stems from the st- wordgames (St. Em, the patron of printers). More directly, since the "Mid-Initial Sequence" at the end of Book III, its immediate texture has been formed by sequences of word-transformations, in which the accidents of orthography appear (let the emphasis leave a doubt open) to lead and direct the discourse of the poem. The eleventh hour, that critical juncture, shows this technique in full flow:

birth means rebirth
means on you go on you goes
not "ennui"
(a misreading) but
on into we

. . . .

& then the first
born
bairn

no longer barren
(coz we was bare in
the bedroom)

The compulsive punning could be read here as an expressive device: expressive, that is, of an emotion which pre-exists this verbal manifestation, namely, the poet's exuberant, uncontrolled joy at the prospect of fatherhood. This joy bubbles over indiscriminately into bad jokes ("bare in / the bedroom") as well as into that profound sense of the human community ("on into we") which underlies the whole of The Martyrology. But the punning is not in fact confined to this expressive purpose: it is, rather, the linguistic condition which determines the nature of the poem.

Much earlier, at the end of Book II, Nichol wrote of "only the words you trust to take you thru to what place you don't know": a line which directly ascribes the direction of the poem to "only the words" rather than to authorial intention. But I choose this quotation precisely because it rebounds against itself. The line as I have just given it is from the first edition of Book II: in the second edition, Nichol revised it to read, simply, "only the words you trust to take you thru." Now, it seems, he knows where he's going.

In the thirteenth hour, "Unlucky thirteen," the elegy for the stillborn baby's death, the language is stripped bare, down to an elemental dignity of grief. "briefly / the heart does break." In the face of the human tragedy recorded in these lines, criticism seems impertinent. Yet one can still note that "briefly" functions consciously as a rhyme to "grief," and that its status as a free-floating adverb in the open syntactical structure allows it to qualify the life-span of the dead child, the duration of the grief, and the length of the poem. Formally, the exquisite simplicity and nobility of this elegy are generated by that single word--but to say that is not to deny two other, simultaneous statements: first, that the poem also depends upon an actual, tragic event in the "real" world; and secondly, that the poem also depends upon a certain kind of sensitivity in bpNichol (response? or control?) which enables him to realise that formal potentiality.

The reader's response is complicated by the degree to which he or she is acquainted with the "real-life" author. It is probably impossible for me to distinguish between my response to this poem as a text, and my response to my personal knowledge of Barrie and

Ellie. My very reading of the printed text is largely a memory of listening to Barrie speak it in front of an audience—which brings us back to voice. Nichol, in fact, challenges Derrida's divided categories, for his voice, truly, permeates his writing. Even the trickiest letter and word transformations, which look as if they could only work on the printed page, are scored for his vocal reading. Listening to bpNichol, it becomes very hard to maintain the Derridean strictures against the illusory "self-presence" of speech or to resist the use of "voice" as a criterion of value.

As, for instance, to say that among these five chapbooks, I respond most positively to the Nichol, the Wah, and the Marlatt precisely because I can hear them--the intricate, careful convolutions of Marlatt's prose; the oblique, enigmatic declarativeness of Wah's poetic line--as voices fully in command of their own medium (there is the metaphor of control again), voices as completely identifiable as a painting by Braque or Cézanne. Such identity, as Gertrude Stein knew, arises from repetition: and my difficulty with Tim Longville may simply be that I have not read enough of his work to recognise him. With John Marshall, I sense an almost deliberate refusal of voice: his poetry is so impeccably but impersonally crafted that it seems, indeed, ego-free, devoid of the intrusion of an authorial will. It is a singularly pure writing—

--writing, that is, in the sense that Marlatt uses the term, two pages on from her quotation of Blaser, "not it is written, it writes." This notion was stated by Roland Barthes in his essay, "To Write: an Intransitive Verb?"[4] and more recently, in delightful form, by Italo Calvino in If on a Winter's Night a Traveller:

> Will I ever be able to say, "Today it writes," just like "Today it rains," "Today it is windy"? Only when it will come natural to me to use the verb "write" in the impersonal form will I be able to hope that through me is expressed something less limited than the personality of an individual.[5]

Calvino's claim (or, to be precise, his character's claim at a particular moment in a complex narrative) is that this impersonal writing will be able to express "something less limited than the personality of an individual": it is a classical ideal, and Marshall's writing has a classical feel to it. So is it merely a romantic nostalgia to re-invoke, within the field of such writing, the notion of personal style as a criterion for value-judgements? Clearly, Derrida describes a situation in which the author is challenged to

take responsibility for his or her own writing, faced with the indeterminacy of language conceived as an endlessly shifting series of deferrals, devoid of any ultimate source or sanction of meaning. Language becomes an existential universe, and style takes on the morality of existential choice: the writer is identified by the authenticity of his or her response. The tendency to equate such personal authentic style with "voice" may indeed be, as Derrida says, a hankering after a metaphysics of presence, an unconsciously metaphorical homage to the prestige of speech--but is such an equation not also, in the aesthetics of modern poetry, a major component of our response to Pound, to Williams, to Olson, to Nichol? "imagine mountain giving birth to speech," writes Marlatt. "imagine! she sinks smiling under water language / our horizon (o breath) & medium." That "o breath" may be an invocation, as to a Muse; it may also be a nothingness (breath sinking under water), or as Barthes phrased it, a zero degree of language, a source.

This is where we came in: Marlatt's writing tightens to a condensed wordplay strikingly reminiscent of Nichol. "(h)it, here we come, past these faces, facets i've come / to recognize in passing certain aspects of the way we head into it, / sentient, sensing our way thru, sand, send, sent in the sentence." There is, etymologically, no connection between the Germanic "send" and the Latin "sentence," any more than there is between "on we" and "ennui": both authors are allowing the accidents of language to determine the direction in which they will send the sentence.

It could of course be argued that any good poet exploits such accidental properties of language. Rhyme, for instance, is an arbitrary feature of language: words that sound the same have no necessary semantic connection. Yet good poets can use the opportunities afforded by such limitations; it is only the poor or lazy writer who allows the rhymes to direct the poem, who always follows rain with pain, and love with dove. From this point of view, the final sentence of the previous paragraph is not praise but censure. The critic who believes that the writer controls language, rather than vice versa, would argue here that what Marlatt is doing is recording, in an exceptionally agile and flexible syntax, the darting movements of her own perception. The source is not language: language is just a part, an inescapable part, of the phenomenological reality to which she responds. And that reality is, for all pragmatic purposes, a common one: the reader can react with a shock of recognition to the opening flashes of a car crashing, or to the humour of this caustic observation: "department of highways distinguished between a concrete / median barrier & a guardrail, always lower they said. you go off / the road that's your choice, not as crucial as driving into some-- / one else." This is,

obviously, a "well-turned phrase," and part of the pleasure comes from the concision, i.e., the control. Marlatt is also capable of creating a purely romantic image--the midnight freight train that "rolls on into no one's black heaven"--which records not fact but the product of the imagination. Such effects are achieved in the medium of language, in those "ranges of word syntax flares," which Marlatt controls? intuits? revises? obeys? Whatever, it is not an automatic response. Marlatt's is a writing which appears to submit itself to experience, but which in fact submits that experience to the control of writing--or of voice.

Marlatt's writing remains open to as much of the phenomenological surround as it can register; Fred Wah's, by contrast, remains reticent and enigmatic. The format of Owners Manual is that of an instruction book (though even that is impeded by the title's omission of the apostrophe on "owner's"). This format establishes a tone for the speaking voice (there we go again) of the poems: impersonal, imperative, not always as helpful as it could be. The key instructions for the book's various projects are always to "imagine it," "Dream about it," "think about it / ahead of time / think about it / afterwards," "Wake up / and consider it / a serious possibility." That is, actions in the outer, physical world--hunting, farming, reading a map--always begin as mental images: "places to find again / or discover / i.e. imagine." These images are realised in a language of incomplete specification:[6] that is, a writing which retains a certain opaqueness, a sense of itself as an object for itself, not merely a transparent vehicle for signification. The first poem of Owners Manual is entitled "How To Do This," and it begins, "If you only do it once / you will remember that / so it becomes a river." The reference of all these pronouns--this, it, that, it--remains unspecified: one may speculate that they all refer, in some way, to the process of writing and/or reading the poem, but the words remain opaque, yielding significance as grudgingly as did the pictograms of Wah's earlier work. This condition persists throughout the book--though to say that is to deny neither the playful flashes of wit nor the concreteness of many of the images. These images are held, however, within a general field of linguistic indeterminacy. Wah's instructions hover mid-way between the practicality of a back-woodsman and the koans of a Zen master: the virtue of his writing is that it enables him to hold that balance while still insisting on its own density as writing.

John Marshall is also concerned with "the modes of writing / adopted in our regions," and he records the difficulty of a native Indian for whom the "myths and legends . . . can't be understood // when they are translated out / of our language." Both of these quotations testify to the link between language and place; whereas

Marlatt quotes Blaser, Marshall quotes Robert Kroetsch, "how do you grow / a poet." Given Islands, described as "the opening sequence of a longer 'work-in-progress,'" seems to me exemplary of these modes of writing: it is a perfectly crafted use of the short line, of the hesitant breath, of the clean image. What holds me back from it is the sense that it is too clean, too exemplary: that in its classical impersonality it is missing some essential spark of life.

Tim Longville's Between the River and the Sea seems to me to stand apart from the other four books in the series, to work out of a slightly different aesthetic. It is a lyric sequence which plays elegant variations on a few key images: music, a ship outside a window, "Georgian songs." As with Wah, there is a certain haziness about the emotional or referential centre for these image-clusters; but unlike Wah's, this vagueness does not seem inherent in the writing, but rather a deliberate aloofness by the poet. If I say that I feel the need to place this poem in a wider context of Longville's writing, I am not sure whether that indicates a shortcoming in my reading or in his text.

In conclusion I should admit (what will be obvious to the reader) that my approach to these books has been a highly personal one, resulting from, first, the way my attention snagged on that quotation from Blaser, and secondly, from my attempt to reconcile my tentative understanding of Derrida with my admiration for certain kinds of writing. The ambivalence with which I began remains at the end: to say that the source of writing is not language is to use language to deny itself (which is what it does all the time, anyway); even if there is a source outside language we can know it only through a language which tells us that there is no source; language controls us even when it provides us with the (necessary) metaphors through which we claim to control it; voice is the style of that authentic choice by which the poet affirms the supremacy of writing over voice; writing is opaque, declaring nothing, but it is all we have, revealing everything.

NOTES

[1] Christopher Norris, Deconstruction: Theory and Practice (London: Methuen, 1982), p. xii.

[2] Robin Blaser, "The Fire," rpt. in Poetics of the New

American Poetry, ed. Donald Allen and Warren Tallman (New York: Grove Press, 1973), pp. 235-246.

[3] Phyllis Webb, "Foreword," Wilson's Bowl (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1982), p. 9.

[4] Included in The Structuralists, eds. R.T. and F.M. De George (New York: Anchor Books, 1972).

[5] Italo Calvino, If on a Winter's Night a Traveller (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1981), p. 176. Calvino goes on to ask, "And for the verb 'to read'? Will we be able to say, 'Today it reads' as we say 'Today it rains'?"

[6] I take this term from Harold Osborne's Abstraction and Artifice in Twentieth Century Art (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979). Its application to the fields of sound poetry and homolinguistic translation is discussed in more detail in an article I am currently preparing for Canadian Literature.

PETER QUARTERMAIN

GUY DAVENPORT: WRITING AS ASSEMBLAGE

THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE IMAGINATION: FORTY ESSAYS
San Francisco: North Point Press, 1981

TATLIN! SIX STORIES
Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982; reprint of 1974 edition

DA VINCI'S BICYCLE: TEN STORIES
Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982; reprint of 1979 edition

ECLOGUES: EIGHT STORIES
San Francisco: North Point Press, 1981

All by Guy Davenport[1]

". . . the link between these fragments is not that of grammatical logic, but of an ideographic logic culminating in an order of spatial disposition completely opposed to discursive juxtaposition.

. . . Clearly, it is not narrative. It is the opposite of narrative, since narration is of all literary genres the one which most demands discursive logic."
(Gabriel Arbouin, June 1914)[2]

When Guy Davenport gave the Thirty-third Distinguished Professor Lecture to his colleagues at the University of Kentucky on 8 March 1978 on "The Geography of the Imagination," the audience included the entire geography department, a Jungian analyst, and some physiologists working on the brain. The lecture was about Poe, O. Henry, and Grant Wood's well-known painting "American Gothic." "An ambiguous title," he wrote to me afterwards, "can do wonders."[3] The poopsheet handed out at the door has a picture of Guy Davenport at his desk on which sits, among other things and next to a pine cone, a specimen bottle that once belonged to Louis Agassiz. The prose accompanying the picture tells you that he has written "twenty-one contributions to books of essays and poetry" (such as Stan Brakhage's Film Biographies, Ronald Johnson's Radi Os, or--though this is later--Roy Behrens' Art & Camouflage); "sixty-six articles; 207 reviews; eleven papers read before learned societies" (including the inaugural lecture at the Center for the Study of Ezra Pound at Yale University in 1975); "and fifteen short stories" (six of which had been gathered in Tatlin! in 1974), in addition to his translations of Sappho and Archilochos (some of which have been set to music by Lukas Foss and by Richard Swift); his "study-guides" to the Iliad and the Odyssey; his long poem Flowers and Leaves (which Thomas Merton once read, all 114 pages, to his class at Gethsemane: it is a lesson in aesthetics), and his numerous illustrations. In his kitchen at home there is a saucer of sugary water for the wasps and ants, free to come and go as they please for he likes them in the house (wasps figure centrally in the story "Au Tombeau de Charles Fourier"). A family of snakes lives under his porch, and each spring he faithfully reports their stirring from winter's long dullness. "Can you imagine the deliciousness of the sun to snakes, after four months of freezing?" (2 April 1979). There is no evidence that the geographers, the analyst, or the physiologists, were disappointed by the lecture.

"Guy Davenport went round in a dream the day he learned the Greek alphabet," he says (8 January 1979). And he was a late starter. "I couldn't read until very late. I began the first grade aet. 7 (being thought retarded) . . . I wasn't a bookworm, and didn't begin reading with any real interest until 13, when I broke my right leg (skating) and was laid up for a wearisome while" (9 April 1979). But the reading stuck. Some four years later, in 1944, he quit High School to study art at Duke University and ended up with a B.A. in English and Classics and a Rhodes Scholarship to Merton College, Oxford. An attentive man, who as a child was "taught how to find things" (G, 366) in a family that devoted every Sunday afternoon to

hunting for Indian arrows, who remembers everything he's seen or read, and who reports what he has found, he sees for himself; his complete unconsciousness that this is unusual turns those reports into conversation. In response to a remark that structuralist criticism is a disguised utilitarianism which hates literature, he comments that all literary critics "are shameless scavengers. They babble Freud (who is on paper the most inept critic ever to have come out of Europe: I mean, his interpretation of Da Vinci, based on a novel which he thought, poor sod, was a biography, and if this wasn't ruinous enough he psycho-analyzed Leonardo, using his one dream (in which a grackle swoops down and touches his lip with its wing) and being so unhandy with Italian that he thinks it's a buzzard sticking its tail in L Da V's mouth, and then drags in the Egyptian for buzzard, which is mut, which he says is the root of 'mother' (it isn't, not by forty miles), and ends up a prize ass" (9 February 1980). His speciality as a critic is, as he says, "finding out how things break down into components" (3 July 1979). Listening to Guy Davenport break down the components of Poe's "To Helen" and of Grant Wood's "American Gothic" is unlikely to have bored the geographers, the analyst, or the physiologists of the brain.

In less than ten minutes of that lecture they would have heard what we can now read in two pages: that Nice was a major shipyard in Roman times, where Marc Antony built a fleet; that classical ships never left sight of the land, and that sailors could smell orchards on shore (and that perfumed oil was a major industry in classical times; ships laden with it, too, smell better than ships laden with sheep); that the raven was the device on the flag of Alaric the Visigoth whose torch at Eleusis marks the beginning of the end of Athena's reign over the mind of man; that Lenore, a mutation of Eleanor which is a French mutation for Helen, is a name that Sir Walter Scott imported from Germany for his horse; that in 1809, the year of Poe's birth, Herschel discovered and explained binary stars (the spectroscopic double Beta Lyra and the double double Epsilon Lyra); that Poe's mother played the first Ophelia on an American stage, in a city (Boston) not only where Poe was himself born but also where stands (still! really there!) a House of Usher. And they also learned that Poe's Russian translator, Vladimir Pyast, went stark raving mad in a St. Petersburg theatre while reciting Poe's "Ulalume" (Davenport got this tidbit from a poem by Osip Mandelstam). The lecture enacts a version of the Herakleitian insight that (to quote Davenport's own translation, H, 18) "the most beautiful order of the world is still a random gathering of things insignificant of themselves," by retrieving for our delight the forgotten or (which is nearly the same thing) holding up for our attention the familiar. For we all

know--we learned it in school--about Attar of Roses, a perfumed oil; and at the very least we might guess about orchards. Which is why the schoolboy Poe could write "perfumed seas," a phrase which has been called silly. "What I do," Davenport is fond of saying, "is very simple." He is an attentive reader who trusts the writer to know what he is doing. One of his specialities is to take up the well-known or the unfashionable, and look at it again, afresh, clearly: he is an unprejudiced reader. In The Geography of the Imagination he has an astonishing little piece on Joyce Kilmer's "Trees."

After hearing the lecture, it may have come as a surprise to read, in "Finding," of Davenport's "severe compartmentalization of ideas" as a child: "school was school, as church was church and houses were houses. What went on in one never overflowed into any other." And the habit persists: "To this day I paint in one part of my house, write in another; read, in fact, in two others: frivolous and delicious reading such as Simenon and Erle Stanley Gardner in one room, scholarship in another" (G, 361, 363, 364). The inhabitant of this highly compartmentalized house specialises above all else in making connections; many of his essays and pretty well all of his stories proceed the way poems or collages proceed--through apparently random and arbitrary juxtaposition. "The House that Jack Built," his 1975 Yale lecture on Pound, juggles Ruskin, Joyce, Williams, Olson, Yeats, Tchelitchew, Zukofsky, Queen Victoria, the Wright Brothers and the history of early flight, Henry James, Brancusi, Homer, and--at last!--Pound. With characteristic disingenuousness, Davenport says "my best hope was to keep lots of chaff in the air all the way through" (21 May 1979). In fact it proceeds by ideogrammic method, careful juxtaposition making comparison possible; it is analogous to the methods and shares something of the aims of the Annales group of historians (of whom Fernand Braudel is the best known). "Every evening I freak out on Fernand Braudel. Last night I understood, really understood, what the Baroque is. By page 800 the elements for understanding are all there. Lordy, what a book!" (14 October 1977). In the ABC of Reading, Pound called this the "method of contemporary biologists" and cited Louis Agassiz.[4] Guy Davenport's first published book is an anthology with commentary of the writings of Louis Agassiz. It came out in 1967 and is (predictably) not only scarce but expensive.[5]

Making connections. The habit and impulse of Davenport's mind is to knock down barriers (it has, then, a strongly sensual element), and the questions he asks cut across the ones we are used to. They drive towards particulars: how many great works were made by someone over eighty? which English poets had bad eyes? They are versions of the Herakleitian question (Davenport's version,

H, 28): "Except for what things would we never have heard the word justice?", which strikes at our assumptions about the world and forces us to go and look at it closely, to go and find out. It is a teacher's question. He is alert to pun, overlap, similarity and difference, minute detail. "Have you ever noticed the words eye and ear overlapping and dissolved in the second and third words of Hugh Selwyn Mauberley?" (21 December 1978). And he enjoins us to be the same. Da Vinci's Bicycle, by Guy Davenport: Rhymes.

There used to be a quiz programme on English television (perhaps there still is) in which viewers sent in artefacts which a panel would then "read" and identify: this kind of mark can only have been made with a steel chisel, feature X is a result of Y technology, hence there was Z knowledge. It is a skill such archaeologists as Marshack especially cultivate. Ezra Pound thought "an expert, looking at a painting . . . , should be able to determine the degree of the tolerance of usury in the society in which it was painted"[6]--an awesome feat, even to the initiated. The expertise would tax a team of experts. Looking at Guy Davenport tackle Grant Wood's "American Gothic" is awesome indeed: it is as though, if not that team of experts, then at the very least someone like Braudel were examining not a society but a cultural iconology; Pound's injunction is being taken seriously, and I would call it a tour de force did not that label so easily imply a one-shot performance. The Geography of the Imagination--the whole book, not just the lecture--made up as it is of writings for a variety of purposes and for different audiences and occasions, is a model for those who would like to know what skills are required. At the risk of sounding laudatory, let me list them, for they tell us something of Davenport's resources, just as the essays and stories tell us something of his passions and concerns, just as the form of his writings tells us something of his habits of mind and perception.

Obviously, a good memory. And, with it, good lists: Davenport characteristically works out of up to eight journal-notebooks. Otherwise how can you discern that the temptation of St. Antony has its place not only in a discussion of Joyce but of Eudora Welty as well; how else can you briefly sketch literary and graphic treatments of the subject from Flaubert through Tchelitchew and beyond? Hence, and closely related to memory, a knowledge of history. Or rather, of histories of all sorts. Who stayed in what hotel; what was the first painting of a man wearing spectacles; what is the first English poem to mention Cro-Magnon polychromatic paintings (it is a sonnet, by Wordsworth); what was the first American factory and who built it where, with what knowledge; who made shirt-buttons out of Mississippi fresh-water mussels. There is a succinct history of

symbols and symbolisme on G, 262 to bolster an aside that Joyce is the first writer since Dante whose symbols are transparent on the page; of the lute and its transformations in cubism, in Conan Doyle, in Rilke and de Nerval, to illuminate a remark on G, 25 about Roderick Usher; and of the egg-and-dart design, on G, 15, from the Biblical Edom to the American middle-west in the 1930s. The Geography of the Imagination, from one end to the other, points to or traces the movement of objects, ideas, and myths across geographical and cultural boundaries (hence its title), and takes in its purview the history of everyday objects, design, art, mythology, literature. So, too, the resources included etymology (which is another form of history), called upon for example to explicate "solicit" in an essay on Joyce, and natural history ("a boar is never 'at bay'--he attacks from the beginning") to assess a translation of Homer. And throughout, there is the matter of rhymes.

Davenport has a keen eye for recurrences of one sort or another: "funerary chaos among American men of letters" for example (G, 81), or the Hotel Albert, where Albert Pinkham Ryder painted in poverty upstairs whilst (according to one of Ford Madox Ford's anecdotes) Walt Whitman downstairs begged for a dollar. "American culture," comments Davenport, "has the eerie habit of passing itself, in narrow corridors, ghostlike" (G, 77). Or (and this is from his Notebook, as recorded in Vort), that the machine-gun which killed Gaudier-Brzeska at Neuville-St.-Vaast on 5 June 1915 also killed the young De Launay, "the anthropologist who had begun a brilliant study of labyrinths." Such rhymes often form the basis of his fiction, where they become rather more speculative. In "1830" (T!), for example, a story which takes at face value Poe's claim that he went to St. Petersburg to enlist with some Russians in the fight for Greek independence, "the room where the Prince of Tavris was talking with Poe, who does not identify himself because he had no identity at that time, is the room where Lenin met the first Communist Congress after the Revolution" (Vort, 9). Here the rhyme has a thematic function, though it also serves, as such rhymes customarily do in his fiction, a structural purpose. "The Aeroplanes at Brescia" (T!), Davenport's first story since undergraduate days (written when he was 43: as I said, he is a late starter), rhymes the events of a single year (1909) when Kafka published an account (his first story, and hence another rhyme, this time with Davenport. That Kafka's account was factual is irrelevant) of the air-show at Brescia, which Wittgenstein might well have gone to, working as he then was at Glossop air-station on the torque of the propeller. "History is not linear," Davenport says (G, 67), and he collects such data, and especially dates, much as others collect baseball statistics. In proposing that Kafka saw and

nearly met Wittgenstein early in this century, before either of them was anybody (they had no identity at that time), Davenport is sounding a recurrent motif. "The Trees at Lystra" (E) recounts the story (Acts XIV: 6-20) of Paul and Barnabas, taking part in a myth before it was a myth, while it was still going on and hence before either of them was anybody. The protagonists of such stories act entirely without pretension, wholly un-selfconsciously (a fact which tempts the careless reader to see the stories as slightly precious), and we are reminded through such fiction of the factual everyday world out of which myths arose, and in which their materials originated. Such stories (and indeed much of Davenport's fiction) work like little essays which re-introduce to us the familiar and taken-for-granted world of cultural beliefs, and make us see it new.

These stories, and the elements making them up, are given to the reader with great panache; Davenport is above all an enthusiastic enquiring man, possessed of gusto and wit. He can pack what his accurate eye observes into a single adjective ("the unresonating mind of Edmund Wilson"); he can acutely characterise the work of Robert Lowell in a sentence which every student of American poetry should be forced to read: "He is a thoughtful, serious, melancholy academic poet; if he is representative of anything beyond himself, it is of a broody school of professor-poets whose quiet, meticulous verse is perhaps the lineal and long-winded descendant of the cross-stitch sampler" (G, 133). The paragraph before the one in which this sentence occurs is devastating, as is the passionate essay from which it comes, "Do You Have a Poem Book on E.E.Cummings?" (I might add that "The Anthropology of Table manners from Geophagy Onward" is simply hilarious.) Sometimes the writing approaches aphorism in pointing to a rhyme: "Ovid studied men turning into animals; Darwin, animals into men" (G, 245). Davenport is a student of metamorphosis.

To say this is to point to one of two threads that run persistently through The Geography of the Imagination: the historical and geographical metamorphosis of myth--myth which is a pattern rather than a script, where "divergent and unsuspected features . . . fit in the same contours" (G, 263). The clearest statement of this theme is in the title-essay, and in the essay on Eudora Welty, "That Faire Field of Enna," which George Steiner has called "one of the finest analyses available of Miss Welty's guarded but compassionate art."[7] The other thread is the theme of the archaic: "if we have had a renaissance in the twentieth century, it has been a renaissance of the archaic," he says (G, 20); "what is most modern in our time frequently turns out to be the most archaic" (G, 21). Davenport proposes that "irrevocably alienated" from the past, "we romantically suppose man to have lived more

harmoniously and congenially with his gods and with nature," and that the best artists of our time are those who performed "the great feat of awakening an archaic sense of the world" (G, 27, my emphases).

There is at times in Davenport's prose an impatience, crustiness, and cynicism reminiscent of the Diogenes he has translated so well: "Nothing characterises the twentieth century more than its inability to pay attention to anything for more than a week," he says in one of four essays devoted to Ezra Pound (G, 172); and in one on Osip Mandelstam he calls it the "most miserable of ages since the Barbarians poured into Rome" (G, 306). In the New York Times Book Review (6 September 1981) Hilton Kramer, conveniently ignoring those words romantically and sense which I italicised, attacks Davenport for appearing "to share with the master [i.e. Ezra Pound] an implacable hostility to modern society and a corollary myopia in the realm of politics." He completely misses the point. Davenport's hostility is a lament for the death not simply of the city (we are "all gypsies and barbarians camping in the ruins"--G, 19) but of the idea of city, a local place where men and women gather in sanctuary, rest after Odyssey, live in families; where flower is married to stone, and where in harmony one mind may share its understanding with another; a place of sensibility and education, where one lives in and is aware of an order; the home of civilisation and culture, the centre of historic continuity. He calls it "the unit of civilisation" and reminds us that the ancients depicted their cities on their coins as a goddess crowned with battlements (G, 19). Davenport's hostility arises from the perception (which was also Louis Agassiz') that the notion of human progress is (to put it mildly) "a complex, self-deluding idea" (G, 354): "Man, it would seem, does not evolve, he accumulates. His fund of advantages over nature and over the savage within is rich indeed, but nothing of the old Adam has been lost; our savagery has perhaps increased in meanness and fury; it stands out more terribly against a modern background" (G, 67). Ours is an age which neglects its artists, and denies that there is such a thing as a life of the mind.

Hence, Davenport's praise of "an archaic sense of the world" (which I take as distinct from "the archaic world"): archaic man lived in "a world totally alive, a world in which one talks to bears and reindeer, like the Laplander, or to Coyote, the sun and moon, like the plains Indian" (G, 26-27). In "The Symbol of the Archaic" he points to "the bisque-coloured, black-maned prancing tarpan of Lascaux, the very definition of Archaic painting," which was painted "in the deep dark of a cave by torchlight, an uncertainty to the man or woman who painted it" (G, 22).

In 1957, lecturing at the National Gallery of Art in

Washington, D.C., Siegfried Giedeon equated the end of the paleolithic era with man's declaration of himself as master of the universe, and noted that a dominant sense of the vertical then replaced the "absolute freedom of direction" in archaic art: "The space conception of primeval art is perhaps the most revealing trait of the conception of the oneness of the world: a world of unbroken interrelation, where everything is in association, where the sacred is inseparable from the profane."[8] To the untutored eye, such paintings are crude, flat cartoons, mis-proportioned, perspectiveless, incomplete. Our sense of completeness demands the separation of one object from another, one experience from another, their isolation from the continuities of time and space; perspective demands a focus of attention on hierarchies of values. Together, they assume that the universe is not only knowable but known. Louis Zukofsky once attacked Shakespeare's critics for claiming to know more about Shakespeare and his intentions than Shakespeare did. As Davenport puts it in "Narrative Tone and Form," "perspective commits itself to one point of view" and "finishing involves a stupidity of perception" (G, 312). Davenport, like Zukofsky, knows better: no order in the universe can finally be seen order to it, and we must keep our options open. The logical mode for the expression of such ideas, the form, is collage, for collage resists finality, resists categories and the notion of completeness; it resists, that is to say, any theory that does not keep open the possibilities of meaning, and always keeps a firm eye on the world of perception before it heeds the erring brain.

This is a theme Davenport sounds again and again. "There are several maturations," he says in his essay on Agassiz (G, 244), "not one final fructification." He is determined to resist any stasis of a systemic or more importantly a systematic articulation, for as he says "the way we live" is "an incoherent buzz of experience" (G, 265). Following Wittgenstein (and Olson) he avers that the meaning of the world is outside the world (G, 268). But we are in it, our knowledge is necessarily incomplete, and it is essential that the mind remain curious.

Perspective and completeness demand a linear-mindedness, and linear-mindedness reduces the world to simple equations of cause and effect, value and money. Davenport's hostility to the twentieth century arises from his perception that in an industrial and technological age and culture the sciences "explain the mechanics of everything and the nature of nothing" (G, 27), sundering the wholeness of the world into linear compartments. "The nineteenth century . . . put everything against the scale of time and discovered that all behaviour within time's monolinear progress was evolutionary" (G, 151). As he told Catherine O'Neill in

1979,[9] "no-one is monolinear," and it is a distortion of attention to treat them as if they were. The writers Davenport admires are like Joyce, whose "correspondences are not linear parallels; they are a network" (G, 290); like Pound, whose "restorations of relationships now thought to be discrete" close such gaps as those between mythology and botany (G, 151); and like Olson, who saw that "a shift in attention allows the jungle in" (G, 87). Civilisation is at the best fragile: man's "advantages over his fellow creatures are all mechanical and therefore dependent on the education of each generation: meaning that an intervening generation of barbarians destroys all that has been carefully accumulated for centuries" (G, 19). The line of distinction has been misdrawn, he says. "Redraw it to zone sensibility from barbarity" (G, 238).

So the main activity of the writing is to shift the attention back again, to keep the jungle out. If metamorphosis and the archaic are two threads of The Geography of the Imagination, the prime activity of the book is retrieval: to restore what has been forgotten, to join what has been divided. To teach.

"I consider all my writing as extensions of the classroom," he told Contemporary Authors in 1973; much of it clears the ground, shifts the focus. The essays and stories alike are acts of foraging, seeking connection: "it is the conjunction, not the elements, that creates a new light" (G, 194). So Davenport proposes an idyllic world in the deep archaic past, which rests on attention, alertness, and unselfconsciousness. As Davenport draws him (and as we see him revived in the Adriaan van Hovendaal sequence of stories) archaic man was not the self-declared master of Nature, but a part of it, unreflective and un-selfconscious; he owes something to the Samuel Butler of Erewhon, and he owes something to the notions of Charles Fourier. And above all, he is the figure of the artist. "Art is the attention we pay to the wholeness of the world," Davenport says. Ancient intuition went foraging after consistency. Religion, science and art are alike rooted in the faith that the world is of a piece, that something is common to all its diversity, and that if we knew enough we could see and give a name to its harmony" (G, 270). An insistent note through the whole book is that the world is knowable if we but look, and imagination is but a way of seeing the world; metamorphic, "it makes up nothing" (G, 193). It is no coincidence that Davenport's first published book was an anthology of writings by Louis Agassiz, who at the end of his life said that the ability to combine facts is a much rarer gift than to discern them, and whose knowledge was what Whitman sought for himself, encyclopaedic.

To summarise the book like this is to do it grave injustice. The Geography of the Imagination is a book remarkably free of

theoretical statements and of theories and systems, whether of art, writing, history, or culture. Like other Romantics of our time Davenport seeks to change the way we see, to redeem our vision, but he does so through practice and example, not through theology. His language, marked though it may be with what George Steiner calls a "baroque, precious, crazily inventive" vocabulary, is completely free of fashionable jargon. Not only does he point to what he sees, but he does so in a way that resists generalisation, that avoids conclusions, and that echoes no critical schools or scholarly catch-phrases. His essay on Olson ends approving Olson's refusal to "articulate images and events which can be left in free collision" (G, 99).

Hence, the form of the writing is an enactment as well as an embodiment of vision; among other things it demolishes customary boundaries, between fact and fiction, essay and story, picture and language. "The Aeroplanes at Brescia" started out "as a research essay on Kafka. The story 'Tatlin!' itself was originally . . . a kind of plan for a history-of-art book" (Vort, 3). The first sentence of "Au Tombeau de Charles Fourier" (DaV'sB) is a drawing of Gertrude Stein at the wheel of her T-model Ford, and the last is a drawing he identified in a letter as the earliest known mask of Dionysos, from Hauran (3 July 1979). It is the earliest-known example of the actor's mask. Reviewing Alexander Marshack's The Roots of Civilization Davenport observed that "when language emerges, the verb to draw is the same as to write" (G, 64); all his stories are written as though they were drawn, and hence call attention to themselves as made works. The drawings which accompany the stories and are to be read as part of the text are often copies of photographs and are to be understood as quotations, as pictorial allusions rather than as pictorial facts, as quotations of ready-mades. So a note in Da Vinci's Bicycle tells us that the final paragraphs of "Au Tombeau de Charles Fourier" are by Gertrude Stein; a note in Eclogues that "The Daimon of Sokrates" is a "kind of translation" of Plutarch, with added quotations from other sources. These are erudite and bookish stories then, and they have been assembled or composed as much as they have been written. "My writing unit is such that I start literally with scraps of paper and pages from notebooks," he told Barry Alpert. "Every sentence is written by itself; there are very few consecutive sentences in my work. . . . The actual writing of any of the stories in Tatlin! was a matter of turning back and forth in a notebook and finding what I wanted" (Vort, 5). Even the sentences themselves, indeed, are assembled. "A Field of Snow on a Slope of the Rosenberg" (DaV'sB), for example, opens with one of Davenport's extravaganza sentences --these sentences meant, he told me (3 July 1979), "to be what Ives

called the God Damns in his music." It is worth quoting in full:

> For a man who had seen a candle serenely burning inside a beaker filled with water, a fine spawn of bubbles streaming upward from its flame, who had been present in Zürich when Lenin with closed eyes and his thumbs hooked in the armholes of his waistcoat listened to the baritone Gusev singing on his knees Dargomyzhsky's In Church We Were Not Wed, who had conversed one melancholy afternoon with Manet's Olympia speaking from a cheap print I'd thumbtacked to the wall between a depraved adolescent girl by Egon Schiele and an oval mezzotint of Novalis, and who, as I had, Robert Walser of Biel in the canton of Bern, seen Professor William James talk so long with his necktie in the soup that it functioned as a wick to soak his collar red and cause a woman at the next table to press her knuckles into her cheeks and scream, a voyage in a hot-air balloon at the mercy of the winds from the lignite-rich hills of Saxony Anhalt to the desolate sands of the Baltic could precipitate no new shiver from my paraphenomenal and kithless epistemology except the vastation of brooding on the sweep of inconcinnity displayed below me like a map and perhaps acrophobia. (DaV'sB, 149).

Davenport's speciality as a critic is in finding out how things break down into their components, in noticing how they are put together. This sentence, he told me (3 July 1979), is built thus:

> image of candle burning in water: from Ernst Mach (a dream he had, opining on waking that it was a profound meditation on the unbelievable fact that water is two atoms of hydrogen and one of oxygen, gasses that love to burn)
> Lenin in Zürich: from Valentinov's memoir of Lenin (who wrote a book against Mach and Avenarius, whom, as he admitted, he had not read: purest idiocy--Valentinov was a Menshevik; his study of Mach must therefore, by political argument, be anathema to Bolsheviks, and Mach is still banned in the USSR)
> Manet's Olympia: from a newspaper feuilleton by Walser
> Schiele and Novalis: put in as likely by GD, a guess
> Wm James and the soup: made up
> the balloon trip: described by Chris Middleton. Note that bubbles in line 2 have become one big balloon bubble.

Davenport's prose is crafted as carefully as verse, as carefully as his drawings. In this long ideogrammic sentence, built like the opening of an epic with its long delay of the main clause, the details whilst we wait for the main point are so many, crowding one after another in subordinate clause after subordinate clause, that our experience reading it is very like that of reading a list--almost a lyric catalogue. It is entirely in keeping with the idiom and syntax of poetry in our time: though the subordinating (hypotactic) syntax is perfectly straightforward, leading to "the voyage could precipitate no new shiver" as the main clause, and culminating in the bathetic "acrophobia," the subordinated matter is as important as the main clause, if not more, and thus ceases to be subordinate, and the overall syntactic effect is paratactic: the syntax of juxtaposition. Playing on our expectations, the anticipated climactic "I, Robert Walser" is appositionally related to the "who" of the first line and hence subordinated to the voyage--and this, though the preceding hundred or more words point to the speaker as centre of perception--and its climactic effect is diffused by the paratactic addition of apparently incidental details. The data in the sentence is held in the mind in an equivalence of value; the relations of cause and effect are suspended, replaced by the experience of addition, and we are thereby enjoined to contemplate the writing as surface, as a writing texture, rather than as a vehicle of conceptually ordered information or as narrative. It is a form of writing closely analogous to the surface deployment of objects, images, and materials in collage (or more precisely, in assemblage), and occurs on the larger scale of the whole work, as well as in the sentence.

"Au Tombeau de Charles Fourier," for instance, appeared in the Georgia Review (Winter 1975) divided into thirty-three unnumbered sections which ranged in length from one paragraph (a fourteen-word sentence) to twenty-four or more paragraphs, all indented; each section treats or draws upon a single subject matter: wasps, the early history of flight, Dogon cosmology, Gertrude Stein in Paris, whatever. When he prepared the typescript for Da Vinci's Bicycle, however, Davenport re-ordered his materials (sometimes, especially in the last half, extensively), cut, expanded, compressed, and recombined portions of the earlier version into a sequence of 255 unindented paragraphs, divided among thirty numbered sections. Except for section X, which is one paragraph long (the same fourteen-word sentence of the earlier version: "What works in the angle succeeds in the arc and holds in the chord"--which sounds like and probably is a bit of Fourier's

calculus), and the final section, XXX, (which is two paragraphs long--the second is one sentence), each section of the story consists of nine four-line paragraphs. When the typescript was first sent to Johns Hopkins, all the lines in each paragraph were the same length, so that the words on the page looked like a series of bricks, each the same size and shape, each approximately the same (visual) texture. The shift from typescript to print changed that, of course (since the paragraphs were no longer the same length), but the overall effect--a series of building blocks, evenly spaced--persists in the published version. It is a device Davenport has used since, notably in "Fifty-Seven views of Fujiyama" (Granta, No. 4, 1981, pp. 5-62) and in "On some Lines of Virgil" (E, 147-238). Among other things, it draws attention to the writing as a made thing, and to the manner of the making. Here is a paragraph from section XXVI of "Au Tombeau de Charles Fourier" as it appears in Da Vinci's Bicycle:

> The center of the earth is the crabgrass seed. Balance of quinces, basket of oranges. Alice, tell me, tell me, Alice, how so settled a soul as I can be so giddy about la gloire. About what? says Alice. La gloire. You have it, says Alice, whatever it is.

In the Georgia Review the first of these sentences finished up a section devoted to Dogon cosmology, and "Balance of quinces" began the next, devoted to Gertrude Stein. The effect in the revised version is to dissolve the boundaries between the two: the quinces and oranges can easily enough be read as part of the Dogon material, and to read it thus would not be a misreading. For the visual uniformity of the surface, making everything equivalent in the pattern of the composition, not only distances the reader from the materials themselves and their customary significance, but also dislocates the narrative. The juxtapositions of which this text is built are thereby rendered both obvious and yet fluid, uncertain, ambiguous. One text merges with another in no identifiably causative way, for the uniformity of surface renders the perception of cause--which in more conventional work is heralded by the conventions of paragraph and chapter divisions--irrelevant even if possible. It is a visual flattening of surface, and it renders that surface opaque, and thus the writing draws attention to itself as writing, as medium, in a manner directly analogous to that of cubism. Cubism, art historians are fond of remarking, drew attention to the opaque surface the painting actually is by placing pictorial elements (such as line, colour, plane, texture) on a two-dimensional surface. In the words of Robert Rosenblum, cubism obliterated depth by asserting "the radically new principle

that the pictorial illusion takes place upon the physical reality of an opaque surface rather than behind the illusion of a transparent plane."[10]

Such attention to surface emphasises that the objects or elements of this composition have been lifted out of their ordinary context and are, in Max Ernst's phrase, "on a plane apparently not suited to them."[11] There are sixteen pen-and-ink drawings in "Au Tombeau de Charles Fourier," each of then a sentence in the text, thirteen of them taking up a whole page, many of them apparently random groupings of images. Pen, and ink. Writing materials. Rosalind Krauss has remarked that Picasso's reliefs do not present "a moment of organisation that lies beyond the surface of the object. . . . He insists that there is a logic immanent in that surface and that conception arises with experience rather than prior to or apart from it,"[12] a comment analogous to Davenport's that "the contemporary is without meaning whilst it is happening" (G, 56). The flat opacity of surface in stories like "Au Tombeau" draws the reader into the immediacy of the composition, and at the same time reminds the reader that much of the material, removed from its customary or anticipated context (an essay, say, or a textbook) is quotation. David Antin has observed that in putting "real" objects in collages, moving them from "normal" contexts, Cubists created a visual space that "no longer yielded an iconic representation, even of a fractured sort, though bristling with significations."[13] Conception (and hence, perhaps meaning, i.e. the possibility of meaning) arises with experience; but it is an experience of dislocated objects, each carrying its contextual residue, in juxtaposition; an experience, if you will, of quotations; and it is this that makes the work seem at times bookish, even precious on occasion. Certainly the residual context carried by the "real" object, by the ready-made, by the quotation, has an effect in fiction similar to that of the Cubist "interplay between pictorial illusion and pictorial fact."[14] The writing demands both alertness (and hence thought) and recognition (and hence memory).

In a characteristically disingenuous response to a question about the form of his fiction, Davenport told Barry Alpert:

> If you're a teacher, you're constantly working with diverse materials. You may get up in the morning and you've got Keats' Odes to take some sophomores through, and you've got a chapter of Ulysses for your graduate students, and the mind gets in the habit of finding cross-references among subjects. This is the best way in the world to make my assemblages, as I call them. I don't think I've ever written a story. . . . [But] it

> looks pretentious to call them assemblages, which is a French word and taken from art history. (Vort, 3)

If my description of "Au Tombeau de Charles Fourier" is at all accurate, then we must take Davenport at his word; it is indeed an assemblage. "Au Tombeau" started out as an attempt to get into English the information (about the Dogon) in Griaule's Le Renard Pâle, and from this he took a single idea, that "man is a kind of forager in an unknown universe." The other materials clustered around this central notion. "Nature's great forager is the wasp" (Davenport had been reading Spradbery's book on wasps[15]); Gertrude Stein riding in her T-model Ford is "something like a wasp out foraging"; Picasso is a kind of forager, "a kind of wasp as it were." Reading a book about the Wright brothers he "realized that what the Wright brothers had done was make a mechanical wasp, or bee. It's an insect, not a bird." All the elements in the story are examples of foraging: "Ogo the desert fox, which the Dogon feel is the very essence of the universe." And finally, as Davenport told Alpert, "there's the figure 8 to hold things together: everybody moves in a figure 8 the way a wasp flies. . . . I put them together without any hope that anybody would see this, or see how it fits together" (Vort, 6). So what does it all mean? Like Ezra Pound in Gaudier-Brzeska, Davenport rejects "an ascribed or intended meaning";[16] as he wrote to me (3 July 1979), "What I'm writing about (you make your guess) is a pretty question. I trust to my instincts, but will find out one of these days." Conception arising with experience, then, and writing/composition as discovery.

Assemblage as a term in art-history was devised by Jean Dubuffet in August 1953, to distinguish this kind of art which fits together parts and pieces, from collage (literally, pasting, sticking, gluing), a term he would reserve for the work of 1910-1920. What is most striking about assemblage (besides--frequently--its three-dimensionality is that its raw materials are often associationally powerful, almost always ready-made, and identifiable (nails, doll's eyes, photographs, dried flowers, old wood). That is to say, they retain much of their previous history (their contextual residue); it is also to say, in the words of one critic, that "its ultimate configurations are so often less predetermined."[17] The interpolation of "non-art material," indeed the exclusive use of such material, provides what art historians have come to call a "frame," by means of which no attempt is made to represent anything, but the actuality of "the world" is permitted to erupt within the environment of the work, and the boundaries between objects, categories, activities, dissolve. As Leo Steinberg has observed of the painting of Robert Rauschenberg, "the painted surface is no longer the analogue of a

visual experience of nature but of operational process," and the work ends up "as a verification of its own experience."[18]

Davenport told Contemporary Authors in 1973 that his politics are "democrat and conservative." "It will be the business of literature and the arts to contain and transmit what culture survives the century. If any," he has said.[19] A tall order. Collage and assemblage are means of making art hold more different kinds of reality, and Davenport's contribution to the art of fiction may be that he has found, in assemblage, a means of informing the reader--in-forming the reader. Characteristically, he calls himself a "primitive." Yet the intelligence which drives through the writing, and which indeed makes the writing at all possible, insists--and here is the conservative--that one work within one's limitations, work with what one's got. Georges Braque once remarked that "cubism . . . is a means . . . of putting painting within the range of my talents." It is not, I think, pressing too hard to say that assemblage is a means of putting fiction within the range of Davenport's.

NOTES

[1] In my text, these titles are abbreviated respectively as follows: G, T!, DaV'sB, E. I also have occasion to refer to Barry Alpert, "Guy Davenport--An Interview," Vort, No. 9 (1976), pp. 3-17, abbreviated Vort; and Herakleitos and Diogenes, translated from the Greek by Guy Davenport (Bolinas, California: Grey Fox Press, 1979), abbreviated H.

[2] "Devant L'Ideogramme d'Apollinaire," Les Soirées de Paris, No. 26 (July 1914), pp. 383-384. "Gabriel Arbouin" is probably Guillaume Apollinaire.

[3] Letter to Peter Quartermain, 11 March 1978. In what follows, quotations from letters are identified by a date in parenthesis, and are copyright © 1983 Guy Davenport.

[4] Ezra Pound, ABC of Reading (New York: New Directions, 1960) p. 17.

[5] Guy Davenport, The Intelligence of Louis Agassiz: A

Specimen Book of Scientific Writings, foreword by Alfred S. Romer (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963). Pound would no doubt enjoy (?) that irony.

[6] Ezra Pound, Selected prose 1909-1965, edited by William Cookson (New York: New Directions, 1973), p. 323.

[7] George Steiner, "Rare Bird," The New Yorker, 30 November 1981, p. 201.

[8] Siegfried Giedeon, The Eternal Present: A Contribution on Constancy and Change (New York: Bollingen Foundation), I, 6.

[9] Catherine O'Neill, "An Alchemist of History and Invention," Chronicle of Higher Education, 2 April 1979, p. R4.

[10] Robert Rosenblum, Cubism and Twentieth-Century Art (New York: Abrams, 1961), p. 80.

[11] Max Ernst, Beyond Painting, and other writings by the artist and his friends (New York: Wittenborn, Schultz, 1948), p. 22.

[12] Rosalind E. Krauss, Passages in Modern Sculpture (New York: Viking Press, 1977), p. 48.

[13] David Antin, "Some Questions about Modernism," Occident 7 (Spring 1974), 21.

[14] Rosenblum, p. 101.

[15] J.P. Spradbery, Wasps: An Account of the Biology and Natural History of Solitary and Social Wasps, foreword by O.W. Richards (Seattle: University of Washington), 1973. From a conversation with Guy Davenport in November 1978.

[16] Ezra Pound, Gaudier-Brzeska, A Memoir (New York: New Directions, 1970), p. 86.

[17] William C. Seitz, The Art of Assemblage (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1961), p. 25.

[18] Leo Steinberg, Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth-Century Art (New York: Oxford University, 1972), p. 84.

[19] Quoted by John Shannon, "Dianoia," Margins 13 (August-September 1974), 21.

GEORGE BOWERING

MODERNIST LIVES

THREE ON THE TOWER: THE LIVES AND WORKS OF EZRA POUND, T.S. ELIOT AND WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS
New York: William Morrow, 1975

by Louis Simpson

When I was a schoolboy, T.S. Eliot was the big cheese, and Pound and Williams were two "other poets" the teacher said we might check on in our own time. Now those latter two are the fathers of Twentieth Century verse, and people are thinking of T.S. Eliot as a poet who deserves a revival. It is pleasant to see one's minority opinion, underground opinion, even (in the university, remember) justified later, but it does make one quail to see what legions of scholars and teachers are leaping out of the ivy to overkill the Pound era.

Simpson's three short biographies are directed toward readers who are not very familiar with the lives and ideas of their subjects--readers of Auden and Frost, for instance--who want to find out quickly what the fuss was. Simpson employs a simple structure for each section, describing family background and schooling, then the intellectual influences on each poet (e.g. for Eliot, Laforgue, Babbit and Bentley). There follows a sequential discussion of major works and critical pronouncements, and finally a lyrical narrative of the period just before death, but not the death. Perhaps this is Simpson's way of saying what Whitman said for himself, that in hearing the poems made by these three largest poem-makers of our century, we are encountering yet their ongoing lives.

The title comes from one of Simpson's favourite authors, William James: "Our spirit, shut within this courtyard of

sense-experience, is always saying to the intellect upon the tower: 'Watchman, tell us of the night, if it aught of promise bear'." The tower, it appears, has three windows (and a bricked-in wall, where we might place Charles Olson, a pick-ax in his hands?), so Simpson titles his three sections "Ezra Pound: or Art," and "T.S. Eliot: or Religion," and William Carlos Williams: or Experience." Neat it is. The subject becomes: how did these three, after World War I, go on where the short Imagist poem was not enough, when the clarity of the senses was not enough?

There is not much here for the reader who is familiar with these poets and their work. Newcomers are offered descriptions of Imagism, or the use of the persona, or the fact that Ford Madox Ford's name was once Heuffer. What may amuse experienced readers is the weight that Simpson places on the personal lives in his discussions of the makings of the poems. For instance, he says that critics have made the Fisher King do too much of the work in "The Waste Land"; the poem is more a deflection of the way Eliot felt about his own life after the Great War. The lady brushing her hair on the other side of the chess set is Tom's first wife, and when he cannot get an erection for her, he says, "I think we are in rat's alley / Where the dead men lost their bones." The approach is amusing, but it can lead the critical biographer to suggest that political positions and esthetic stances are results of failed crushes or cruel teachers. In fact, Simpson has it that Williams's tub-thumping for American street language against British reserve resulted from the wish to strike his reserved British father. Of Pound he says, "taking up a cause or writing a poem will not rid a man of his affections." To which I can only reply that if the cause or poem is good enough, it can so, and it does so.

One gets the feeling that Simpson admires the nerve with which Hugh Kenner takes his fliers, and so once in a while he makes a jump of his own--Mauberley is Rupert Brooke, Conrad was an Imagist, Kandinsky was the great theoretical influence on Williams's work. These forays are amusing, too, and offer relief from the familiarity of the stories. Less pleasing are the passages of free psychoanalysis: "[Williams's] need to write a poem went back to the times he sought to please his father and mother by being perfect. The feeling of repression forced the poem into its necessary form as it escaped."

In regard to the work, Simpson takes pains to make a balanced report, showing Pound's industry and seriousness that unnerved the gentlemen literati of prewar London, approving the object/method of the Cantos versus the subjective and descriptive systems of the Georgians (and later of the psychiatrists--we remember that while in St. Elizabeth's, EP would not see the shrinks). But Simpson also

agrees with Basil Bunting, who told Pound, "You allude too much and present too little." About the allusions and quotations in the epic, Simpson says, "If the reader doesn't know the passage he has to look it up, by which time he is far from poetry . . . they are impossible to read with pleasure and therefore they teach us nothing." There are, fortunately, not many such gaffes per chapter. Finally, Simpson seems to want to remain neutral on the question of Pound's greatness, as if the idea of Pound as an also-ran were still there somewhere. I think it does lurk among a few professors of retirement age, perhaps old friends of Maxwell Geismar, putting in a last semester or two at South Dakota State.

When he gets to Eliot, Simpson feels more at home, so familiar with the subject that he can make little friendly disparaging jokes about the fussy social climbing of Tom, etc. He is presented as an outsider trying to get into the centre--a Southerner at Harvard, a Northerner in St. Louis, a Unitarian who wanted to be a Catholic, an American in the City of London; always looking for a civilization to fit into, made nervous by the sound of little feet running over something brittle in the dark alley. His family had always been founding universities, writing histories, making civilization in the U.S. If he learned from Bradley that the mind is not separable from its objects of thought, then the mind rushed toward tradition, and not only because the Bradleyan idea offers the disappearance of the ego.

As in the Pound story, Simpson entertains the most common objections to Eliot's criticism. Then he tells the tale of the making of "The Waste Land," always returning to the importance of the poet's personal feelings as material for the verse. He sees correctly that they do not interfere with the idea of Eliot the classicist, that classicism is as always a matter of style, that it usually involves a striving for the new in form. It is romanticism, from Wordsworth to present-day Marxian poets, that relies unquestionably on standard versification to present ideas about a new order. "Eliot's satire," says Simpson, "was intended to amuse, not change society."

In telling his story of the making of "The Waste Land," Simpson waxes his most lyrical and most narrative. He likes it here. We see, thanks to Yale, how Ezra Pound was clearly right with his suggested excisions; he was removing the second-rate, the merely parodic, and the descriptive. He was now not just writing but also editing the modern. Finally Simpson is convincing in his agreement with Eliot that the poem is not, as lecturers have it, despairing, but rather commensurate with Eliot's Christian belief:

Only a cock stood on the rooftree
Co co rico co co rico
In a flash of lightning. Then a damp gust
Bringing rain

A Christian poet. "In every phase of his poetry Eliot has been dying and being reborn," we read, and we see that.

Eliot's lines, I think, are the rhythm of a master constructing a poem. Pound's are a man speaking a poem. Williams's are the dance of one man's knowing.

Here we are told that Williams the American had a Tom Sawyer childhood, made a little exotic by the Spanish spoken in the house, and by the seances conducted while father was away. He lived a careful life but always admired the total darers and even the interestingly bad. He makes a figure to contrast to the total poeticals, H.D. and Pound. His daring and rebellion were to be acted out in his poetry, while he, responsible, reared sons and kept wife and mother with his medical practice. He called himself "the core of the onion."

I have always wished that someone would write a monograph on the importance to Williams (and Olson) of John Keats. Keats had his Ezra Pound, too; his name was Shelley. Williams the medico wrote early in imitation of Keats the medico. Simpson sees well into the connection, but pressed for space, not extensively. When Williams hit his theme of the local and marred, he jettisoned Keats's sense of beauty, in both poetic subject and poetic form: "We have discarded beauty; at its best it seems truth incompletely realized."

An even larger part in Williams's poetical life was played by Eliot, who, Williams said, sold American poetry down the Thames River with the writing of "The Waste Land" and later works. As usual, Simpson traces the reason for the antipathy not to Eliot's work and Williams's thought, but to Williams's personal life. It began when Williams's old college friend Pound started declaring Eliot the great promising American poet, and continued through the growing of Eliot's fame during the long period of Williams's obscurity.

That obscurity, says Simpson, was bought by the poet's greatest dare. Sincerity, he says, was Williams's longest suit, his style. "For this he gave up nearly everything else and was obscure." Furthermore, "to understand Williams's poems we must understand his life. This is not true of Pound and Eliot whose experiences passed through a process of dramatization before they issued as art." Simpson is neat but not without contradiction.

Throughout this book one senses an impulse to explain the

makers of modern poetry as simply as taste will allow. That is probably a function of the fact that it is published by a commercial publisher. But Simpson, I think, goes a little too far--he not only simplifies the ideas, but reduces them to a position of less importance than dear old poetry. Of the three men he says: "If they were to be judged for their opinions, we would not be thinking about them at all. But they loved poetry all their lives."

Pound and Williams were judged for their opinions, by various branches of the U.S. government. I may not totally agree with their opinions, but I will defend to their death the right to keep them from being removed from the poems.

PERCILLA GROVES

ARCHIVAL SOURCES FOR OLSON STUDIES

The Contemporary Literature Collection holds a substantial collection of Charles Olson manuscripts and materials related to his work. This checklist of holdings is intended to guide the researcher to works of interests and to provide basic information about the extent of the materials.

Entries are arranged by manuscript groups, with theses and individual tapes and transcriptions described in separate categories.

Explorers in the extensive archives of Coyote's Journal, Open Letter, Io, Frank Davey and Michael McClure will doubtless find other letters discussing Olson and his work, and their contributions to a revision of this list will be welcome.

CAPE GOLIARD PRESS FILE

Olson, Charles. Letters to Barry Hall, editor at Cape Goliard Press. 3 November 1967 - 28 August 1969. 11 handwritten letters, 4 notes.

Olson, Charles. Maximus Poems IV, V, VI, as submitted to Cape Goliard Press. Typescript, photocopies of typescript pages and published poems, a few carbon copies and handwritten pages. Some pencilled corrections and directions to printer. 191 pages, plus title page, copyright page and note re typesetting. Galleys consisting of printed copy pasted on cards.

COYOTE'S JOURNAL ARCHIVE

Olson, Charles. "The Advantage of Literacy is that Words Can be on the Page. A Bibliography on the State of Knowledge for Charles Doria." Photocopy of typescript with notes to the typesetter. 9 December 1963. 3 pages. Coyote's Journal, No. 1 (1964), pages 55-57.

Olson, Charles. Letters to Edward van Aelstyn, editor of Northwest Review. 7 March 1964, 15 April 1964. Handwritten letters. 8 pages. Earlier letter reproduced in "Some Recent Comments About Northwest Review." Ditto copy, probably edited by van Aelstyn, 1964.

Olson, Charles. Mayan Letters. Galleys, headed "Northwest Review." 50 galley sheets. Projected Olson issue[1] of Northwest Review 7 was never published.

DAVEY ARCHIVE

Olson, Charles. Note to Frank Davey. 25 April 1968. Typed note. 1 page.

Davey, Frank. Letter to Charles Olson. 21 August 1967. 1 typed letter with 2 enclosed leaves of typescript.

Davey, Frank. "Review of Maximus Poems IV, V, VI." Manuscript. 1 page. "Review of Poetry and Truth: The Beloit Lectures and Poems." Carbon of typescript. 3 pages. "Five Readings of Olson's Maximus." Manuscript. 3 pages. "Black Mountain Poetic Theory. Chapters I, II, III." Carbon of typescript. 102 pages. "Black Mountain in Canadian Poetry." Manuscript. 5 Pages. "An Introduction to Charles Olson." Corrected typescript of first and second drafts. 78 pages.

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NOTE

[1] "NWR Notes," Northwest Review 6 (Fall 1963), p. 131.

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NUMBER ONE SPRING 1983

IN THIS ISSUE

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EZRA POUND LETTERS

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ELI MANDEL INTERVIEWED

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bpNICHOL ON GERTRUDE STEIN'S IDA

*

REVIEW/COMMENTARIES BY
STEPHEN SCOBIE & GEORGE BOWERING

*

PETER QUARTERMAIN ON GUY DAVENPORT

*

CHARLES OLSON PAPERS AT SFU

NUMBER TWO FALL 1983
FEATURES ROBIN BLASER ON
CHARLES OLSON & ALFRED NORTH WHITEHEAD