

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

LIVES OF THE GREAT SUICIDES

by

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UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "*Lives of the Great Suicides*" submitted by Gregory Patrick Lainsbury in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.



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Several of the poems in this thesis will appear in upcoming issues of *Ariel*, *Dandelion* and *blue buffalo*.

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Lives of the Great Suicides

"The message is
a discrete or continuous sequence of measurable events
distributed in time."

-Charles Olson, "The Kingfishers".

Preface

A preface should start with two questions concerning its own function--namely, what is it and does it justify its existence? It is common knowledge that most works of poetry or fiction are not "pre-faced" by their author; the work is supposed to stand on its own merits. The temptation to preface one's work becomes important when the poet suspects his work does not fit into current paradigms of literary understanding, when he feels fresh ground beneath him.

Wordsworth, in his "Preface to the Second Edition of Lyrical Ballads," outlines the dangers of the act:

. . . [friends] have advised me to prefix a systematic defense of the theory upon which the Poems were written: But I was unwilling to undertake the task, knowing that on the occasion, the Reader would look coldly upon my arguments, since I might be suspected of having been principally influenced by the selfish and foolish hope of reasoning him into an approbation of these particular Poems. (433)

Of course, the irony lies in the fact that even though Wordsworth was "unwilling to undertake the task," he did, and the result was a very important contribution to the history of literary theory.

I am not, of course, trying to compare or align myself

with William Wordsworth. Our situations are about as different as they could be. At twenty-five years of age my "theories" on the writing of poetry have not crystallized to the point that I want to present them to the world. Rather, my theories are continually being modified by actual experience, "writing-in-the-world." Nevertheless, in this preface I will attempt to explain a little bit about the material that follows. It should be at least slightly better than an empty gesture towards institutionalization.

A writer of poems must to some degree be concerned with the idea of form. Since I am a writer of poems, it must concern me; but, I confess, it has not too much until now, when I feel obligated to discuss it. My conception of form is organic and thus more romantic than not. I believe that my best poems have virtually written themselves with little conscious regard for the trappings of style. I firmly subscribe to Robert Frost's formulation, that "like a piece of ice on a hot stove, the poem must ride on its own melting. A poem may be worked over once it is in being, but may not be worried into being" (553). The lyric event begins with words and ideas, an intentionality that is transmitted to the page with the poet's weapon of choice. I resolved early on to retain the sensuality of pen and paper underhand. The pen can become an extension of oneself, whereas the typewriter, or, heaven forbid, the "word processor," will always remain for me an unwanted

intervention of technology between myself and creative spontaneity.

This thesis, or "creative project" if we want to be timid about it, contains poems of varying form and even one short prose fiction which just did not want to be a poem. It is organized into three main sections, the first of which is further broken down into two parts. Most of the poetry falls under the category "free-verse," but that does not mean I give myself license, poetic or otherwise, to ramble all over the page. That kind of thing has been done to death. I have an affinity for the left hand margin and punctuation. I do not have any philosophical problem with the use of the period (its absence is not an adequate representation of the problem of closure) or the linguistic egotism implied in the fact that English is just about the only language that capitalizes the first-person singular pronoun. I write in the spirit of play, exploiting a diction that ranges from the archaic to the colloquial and using sound devices such as alliteration, assonance, rhyme etc. I have been known to create my own words when no others will do. Sometimes I use submerged and irregular metrical schemes, at other times I feel no compulsion to "break" lines and end up writing a prose-poem. I have included epigraphs at the beginning of each section, and whole-heartedly agree with J.D. Salinger's "Buddy Glass" when he writes: "I don't really deeply feel that anyone

needs an airtight reason for quoting from the works of writers he loves, but it's always nice, I'll grant you, if he has one" (100). The epigraphs have been chosen to complement the work that follows, in ways that will be apparent as I turn to a discussion of content, and in the body of the text itself.

Of course, content and form can never be completely divorced from each other. This is the necessary outcome of structural thinking, the activity of Barthes' structural man, a creature who "is not defined by his ideas or his languages, but by his imagination, by the way in which he mentally experiences structure" (303). Things exist phenomenologically in and for themselves, but they also exist as part of a unity, whereby they are defined by relationships of juxtaposition, even if these relationships are merely a result of a transient, observational ideology. Take my title, for instance, *Lives of the Great Suicides*. It has a certain charm and referentiality in and of itself. Certainly it suggests a personality that at one point in its existence would have taken the first two sentences of Albert Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus* to heart: "There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy" (3). But in addition to such specificity, it is also an integral part of the poems that follow. Suicide becomes a kind of

fundamental structuring principle, intimately related to the trope of false transcendence of which it is the logical and spiritual consequence.

The first sequence, "Procedure for Lyric (Self Destruction)," deals with the lyric condition as a pathological state, as suggested in Milan Kundera's novel *Life is Elsewhere*. The aesthetic personality is considered as a sub-species of the fascist one, a personality obsessed with his personal sense of destiny and mortality, with nothing but contempt and hatred for others. Kurt Vonnegut's comic definition of the type from his novel *Slapstick* will serve us well: "Fascists are inferior people who believe it when somebody tells them they're superior Then they want everybody else to die" (122). Either as a result of, or because of, this personality's penchant for morbid introspection, it is convinced of the need for transcendence, the possibility of which is the only thing that can make it persevere in the face of its nauseous dissatisfaction with the world as it is. It lives on hate and the idea of death.

The first section of this sequence, "Down Down," attacks the problem of false transcendence by way of the intellect, using Friedrich Nietzsche (rather loosely) as the archetypal lyric philosopher. The poet's personae do not share Nietzsche's categorical superiority, they can only approach it at the cost of the other extreme; doubt, self-

recrimination and loathing. What Nietzsche does afford is a rejection of all philosophy hitherto--rationalism, idealism, positivism, empiricism--as no more than a series of perspectives, dependent for their "truth" on the "faith" of their proponents. With the loss of the logos or transcendental signifier, epistemology has no more grounding than its assertion in-the-world; absence is as significant as presence, misunderstanding as understanding.

The second section of "Procedure for Lyric," "Ever Down," tackles false transcendence through physicality, the life of the body and the senses, using Jean-Arthur Rimbaud (perhaps not as loosely as Nietzsche) as an example of the sensual symbolist. Arthur leads the persona G. through a systematic derangement of his sensory being, utilizing all manners of chemical and sexual perversity; a veritable course in appreciation of *Les Fleurs de Mal* that results in an aesthetics contrary to the dominant paradigms of bourgeoisie culture. The "angel" is an important figure of paradox, both polymorphous perverse in the Freudian sense and a player in the sadistic-masochistic dialectic of intersexual relations, as outlined by Jean-Paul Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*. Sid Squalidozzi is an intertextual creature, brother of the Argentinean anarchist U-boat commander in Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* and father to the market-trend-whiz-kid in the same undisclosed fiction that the subtitle of "The Laborer's Tale" refers to.

The next sequence, "The Laborer's Pomes," counters the trappings of literary romanticism and false transcendence with the idea of immanence, the infinite grounded in the finite rather than the other way around. This movement is not a rejection of imagination, but an attempt at putting it into a more sane context of life, actual being-in-the-world. As Frank Lentricchia puts it in a discussion of Robert Frost's poetry:

. . . imagination's journey is ended only when the projection of imagination's shapes of hope and desire is accompanied by a sober self-consciousness that will keep us in touch with ourselves and the limits of our redemption, and keep us from projecting fantasy worlds that will spurn the law of gravity and spur us into anarchic solipsism" (41).

The image that brings the poet down to earth is the hole, evoking work as an organizing metaphor for the ceaseless activity of human beings through time, accomplished in the context of overwhelming futility. The poet realizes that cynicism ultimately leads "no-where," that some sort of affirmation is necessary in order to avoid becoming a suicide himself. A sign of his improving mental health is his beginning to refer to himself more in the first person than the third, more as a composite whole than a conglomeration of parts. Intertextually, CrowBoy returns

(eternally) to the same fiction as Sid Squalidozzi.

That he is never able to escape despair as a constant factor of existence, despite any attempts to assert the contrary, is the poet's position as declared in the final section, "Random Poems." In contrast to "Procedure for Lyric" and "The Laborer's Pomes," which are properly read as sequences, this third section is a collection of random poems, although I will not deny the existence of any unity the reader wishes to impose on it. Intermittent joy is the product of a rebellion against the staticism of reduction in all its forms, a rebellion which takes the form of an active resistance against the power of death for denial. Art and poetry are a manifestation of the poet's love for this process, through which he achieves a pluralistic, holistic viewpoint which allows him to continue existing. The poem becomes a transformational procedure for the recovery of a soul from the chaotic death-world of *bricolage*. The power of the symbolic act is harnessed against entropy in order to achieve an aesthetics of relief from transience which simultaneously acknowledges its inevitability. In John Dewey's terms, "the rhythm of [our transactions with the world] constitutes the aesthetic fibre of our being in the world, a rhythm which yields the quality of our personal lives" (DeMarco and Fox 120). The idea of love becomes meaningful only now, although it suffers the significance of being rather conspicuous in its utter exclusion from the

body of the text. The meaning of this most banal of signifiers, the word Joyce asserted that all men knew, is hinted at in the relation to others, when the poet makes a plea for their forgiveness in the final poem, and suspects that he may have gone too far in his early nihilistic stages to deserve it.

I have been informed in the past that the tone of my discourse has the effect of causing the reader to doubt the sincerity of my intentions. This is fine by me. As Kilogore Trout answers the question as to whether he is serious or not in Kurt Vonnegut's *Breakfast of Champions*: "I won't know myself until I find out whether *life* is serious or not It's *dangerous*, I know, and it can hurt a lot. That doesn't necessarily mean it's *serious*, too" (88). In my aesthetics, comedy is grounded in the ambiguity and indeterminacy of being, and, for that matter, so are pathos and tragedy. I do not believe that the account of my work given thus far is by any means definitive or final. In as much as the totality forms a kind of narrative, "there is no single *basically* basic story subsisting beneath it but, rather, an unlimited number of other narratives that can be *constructed in response* to it or *perceived as related* to it" (Smith 221). This is explicitly suggested by the motif of the infinite series in "Procedure for Lyric." Meaning is to be had through the strategies of repetition and difference, but there is no

ultimate meaning, no onto-theological basis for announcing the discovery of a "true" text here. Rather, it is up to the reader to create a text (or texts) for himself, preferably but not necessarily in the spirit of play also.

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Procedure for Lyric (Self Destruction)

But never did Henry, as he thought he did,
end anyone and hacks her body up
and hide the pieces, where they may be found.
He knows: he went over everyone, & nobody's missing.
Often he reckons, in the dawn, them up.
Nobody is ever missing.

-John Berryman, "Dream Song 29".

Prolegomenon:

An Invocation towards Dialogue with the Dead

I (reads and reads and reads). It is hot under the basket at the back of the school. The redemptive hand of god tickles my feet as I jam alone. The children play much too loudly. People run around in circles for no apparent reason. Capitalists kill everything. Differences included. Someone should stifle their enthusiasm.

God is a banker. I owe him something.

An a priori state. Born out of contempt.

The sky's gone out yet the sun still hangs gasps G. as the angels weep away their hangovers. A destiny as silly as it is inevitable. Reduced by sun, I shivers! The planet is too dark for poetry (although it is 30 degrees C at 10 in the morning and the spite glancing off the pavement burns my eyes).

The first sentence requires of its writer a leap. Into nothingness, vision colored dread in an attempt to transcend the lie.

Ah! Arthur! Your voice so sweet penetrates a consciousness

jaded by its very existence. Constructing a space lined with razors, ample room for childish blood-play.

The colors that one paints with reveal something about the painter. The creatures reveal something about the creator. Tired of black paint, matinee performances and artificial systems of morality, the contortionist slashes himself into pieces trying to define his freedom.

He had a voice like god on amphetamines. He ran around in circles minutely collapsing: to go through life faking or to do it? But how is it done? He was avoided. By answers and acquaintances alike.

Don't look to us for the good example. We are altogether much too confused, not innarrested in your nasty condition at all.

A large coffee from Mac's, cigarettes, typewriter and reams of frustration. These are our tools thinks he sadly.

God's death was slow and painful, it looked pretty ugly too. Still, the typewriters sang.

The gawking crowd soon got bored. Abraham died choking on his tragic tongue. Sunglasses were distributed *en masse*,

shade was abolished by the distributors.

The first child was born into eternal, suntanned ennui.

Origins were ignored. We concentrated on our being bored in the immediate present.

The graveyard coughed up their corpses like a tubercular poet. Clutter became redundant.

Dispense with your morbidity and grasp the line tossed out to you! Never mind the design. This gayest of sciences demands a light-footed philosopher. No dirging but the knives' steady howl; the flute tames the metallic tones of heat in sublime melody.

Ah! The rhapsody of existence! Children on a rope gosestep into the future, too simple to be afraid. Stranded on an artery metal rushes past, seeking to reproduce by financial fission. We sit in the doorway, encumbered by the will to observe, there being no joy left in the act.

Put the leer on hold, mister. Quit the facial manipulations and abandon yourself to our velocity. Cross-eyed and painless we leap into darkness, there is no convenience

where we're going.

Paralyzed red desert, my reflection rigid as an erratic
placed by indeterminacy in the dry heat of despair I
shimmer.

Between injections I grind molars, watching violent one act
plays performed in my head. No one gets out of there alive!
The audience never failing to gasp appropriately as the hero
hacks up his wrist.

Eyes puffed out, a well-beaten boxer stumbles into the
gutter, displacing a few of our dreams.

No sidewalks, pedestrians are not encouraged to venture into
this realm. Leather suggested. Children cross under the
overpass, females displaying successful socialization in the
caution they show, descending. Dry sky, thin air, pale blue
alters everything.

The path is steep, our vehicle stuck.

A piece of rock carves sparks across my mind. Too much time
to think.

Latenlonely. But they are here. Rimbaud and Nietzsche

battle it out on TV, line by excruciating line. A Hamlet sulks in the corner. Henry injects himself with heroines.

It's falling apart (my cigarette is wet, my hair askew, could I ask to share with you?) my delusion. Perhaps you enjoy the noises of sad old women? Wretchedness!

I can't wait.

For the spool to find its futile end.

Introduction to an Infinite Series /
 An Interview with the Trope

Death, ditches and desperation
 thinks G. cosmodemonic poet
 wading through sewers backwards
 a sowin' his despair.

A good a business as any. (down)

Twisted parts carrion
 amongst the viscous muck
 foetid tortillas/tortured foetuses
 down down ever down....

Wristrazor the slowslash up
 yowlhounds singing a serious (down)
 hymn to an ideal posture,

the steel-braced poser, her
 black bold sexskirt provokes (ever)
 a furtive look--genitalreflection,
 now begin the squeal of their fictions.

Arm apart jest messin' aroun
decapi--hoy!

The only orifice begs (down)
penetration. Perversal
of priorities scream they
deeper to the night.

I. Down Down

381. On the question of being understandable.--One does not only wish to be understood when one writes; one wishes just as surely *not* to be understood....

382. The great health.--Being new, nameless, hard to understand, we premature births of an as yet unproven future need for a new goal also a new means--namely, a new health, stronger, more seasoned, tougher, more audacious, and gayer than any previous health.

-Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*.

"The devil is merely the leisure of God on that seventh day."

-*Ecce Homo*.

An Ode (upon the occasion of myself, my sickness)

For a nickel I might
open my veins & drift
past being. It moves down
(doesn't everything?)
into my lungs & I am not
pleased. But I sing best
under water, wavering
groans of pressure.

I might sing the cigarette,
the grapefruit, the girl
in my head. But I sing
the ashtray overflowing
inspite of logic. The dirging
at the end of rhyme
apologizes for imagination,
the demanding beyond.

The poet's consolation

High in the arid atmosphere
of the library that winds up
inside the Tower of Babel,
G. combs the dust from his hair
and resumes the search for a reference
to please those who find his images cold.
But it is the gape and gristle,
devoid which cops his attention.
The desert seduces with simplicity.
The lack of fecundity (in general,
but o! the oasis). Their
emotional cesspool they think
is to be human. G. decides himself
sparse in the right place.

(On an arc?)

Ants fall forward
towards death.

There is fog in the valley
but here, high again
in the tower babbling
all is clear.

The problem is realizing
the ground.

The Cadavern

"This Pavlov cat was a bit of a prick, see...his faith ultimately lay in a pure physiological basis for the life of the psyche." -Sid Squalidozzi

A dark cavity, perhaps womb of a castle
 or some such romantic earthscar, their white
 shoulders (lab coats & everything!) trembling
 with exertion they heave another
 corpse onto the slab. Prodigious instruments
 neatly assembled, de poets-cum-death-techs
 prepare their first incision.

chorus:

Thas right, Brave Analytics!
 Proud hewers of flesh & flayers of bone!
 Wield carefully yur blades so bright,
 let's slash 'em up! (For we're 2 knights tonight?)

1. Exploration of the Abdomen

Look! lovely ripples like superman's...
 peeling ventral dermis like weenywrap & slice
 longitudinal, pry fingers under & pull
 back M. obliqui & obliquus, externi & internus

abdominis. Cut perpendicular M. rectus
 abdominis & observe the delicate epigastrica
 inferior which feeds M. transversus abdominis.
 In situ, Hepar hung by Ligamentum
 falciforme hepatis (teres the obliterated
 fetal left umbilical vein). Gaster & Lien
 & Omentum majus, thru which peeks
 Intestinum crassum & tenue.

O guts galore! Our researches reward
 us with gay spurts of frothy fluid...
 G. merrily poking considerable perforations
 around the anus, completes his scalpel's transit
 & playfully plunges a claw into the excavation,
 pulls & pop come de rectum, trailing colon,
 Fried & he coiling shiny lengths of sigmoideum,
 descendus, transversum & finally ascendus,
 Caecum, Appendix veriformis & copius Ileum.
 The cavity decluttering exposes Duodenum;
 Hepar now looms larger green & cheesy
 as Fried proceeds further dorsal.

We must chart the source of our affliction!
 Now branching A. iliaca externa,
 mesenterica superior & inferior, A. et
 v. testicularis, suprarenalis sinistra

& renalis, Ren with piggyback Lien
 & Glandula suprarenalis, Ureter,
 all afore M. quadratus lumborum & transversalis.
 The obvious merits of this excavation
 exhausted, we'll leave the rest
 to the microscopists....

2. A New Stiff, Explorations Continue Both North &
 South

Dermis & mammary glands dispensed with,
 we confront M. pectoralis major & minor,
 intercostalis externa & interna, our
 old friend M. rectus abdominis & transversus
 thoracis, Diaphragma & A. thoracica interna.
 Wretched Thymus! (in Homo should
 quickly regress after puberty). Sternum
 split with deft chisel whacks, precious
 Pericardium, Pulmo dexter & sinister,
 Lobus superior, medius & inferior, the great pump
 pulled out & what a mess the superior
 mediastinum...too many tubes! Obviously
 the answer lies knot here....

Prop her up against the wall & separate
 the inferior members. We'll work our way

dorsal. Clitoris, Urethra & Vagina, its interior lined with mucous membrane, highly rugose folds directed longitudinally towards Uterus. Fried snaps on rubber gloves: things can get nasty in here. M. sphincter¹ ani externus & internus, Levator ani & Rectum, Diaphragma urogenitale, Symphysis pubica, M. coccygeus, iliococcygeus, pubococcygeus & gluteus maximus. G. squirming has had enough: all this looks much better after a few beers....

3. To the Root of the Problem?

Teeth is as teeth comes. Whyfore then so many fabulous looking babes be throwin' demselves at such sorry carci? We must bring our resolve to the head! Skinned & still smiling, here M. orbicularis oris, depressor anguli oris & risorius, that which make it dazzle. M. frontalis make her look like she's thinking. M. orbicularis oculi she squints, too vain to wear her spectacles. M. levator labi superioris, if she don't like the smell of you. M. temporalis & masseter pars profundus & superficialis serve her tremendous appetite.

Doth such division annihilate the work?
 We shall see...plug in the power saw!
 Its caustic whine, cranial chips & osteodust
 fill their nostrils as Fried follows the dotted line.
 Circuit fulfilled, he pries with chisel & crack!
 off comes the top of her skull. Deep lateral
 cerebral fissure (Sulcus frontalis) dividing
 parietal & frontal from the temporal lobe,
 Sulcus centralis the frontal & parietal,
 Sulcus parietal-occipitalis exactly that.
 & of course, unique Ramus, anterior, ascendens
 & posterior, the complete lateral fissure.

Fried's getting down on the whole procedure:
 this beauty so dissected only the evil
 could love it...such things are better left
 repressed & terrifying. His neat medial section
 left on the table, G. 1/2-hearted assents.

4. Reprise: Late Night/Live Subject

G. alone with angel, digging her buttocks &
 a darkly idea. First: tuck cold needles
 under her arms. Then observe:
 sliding breastsides tight. Such a sight!
 G., scromentum rising, takes a third needle

& plunges into her belly. Labia retreat
over gums, in her grimace his delight.

O what is the meaning of all dis
perversity? G., bile infested & of crown divested,
imploring Them to react....

1. derived from the Hep, "spigot o'faeces", not facies,
the product of a sedimentary depositional environment, the
spigot of which would be something like a god. (From Sid
Squalidozzi's *Handbook of Hep Etymology*.)

Afterthought

Because is a big word indeed. In need of reasons? I thought no more? No less? Unless the most little is the least big there is no complicity between mean & manner. Zus said the little monkeyman on the corner, his vittle red suit apprehended in the jaws of a snarling ego. Let slow, get snow we shrieks! Be off our imperative! Bet us hack a cruel think from the worlding spin aground us!

CIGARETTES ONLY SHRINK SMOKE A SUSPENDED SOLID
-ness of the turf between us. Of the overputrifying girth that nails our back to the crystalline synthetic mode of our being... G....(substitute u if pleased)...fucked well beyond belief.

The tired. Ashtray grey. Then arcade. Wobble to a pop. Guitar thrash suiciding. How demonic can popular culture get before sons rise up & sacrifice their fathers' fantasies to a historical grave? Might I save the dark side for myself? Can I transcend my mundane pelf? Is there a final solution short of the silent kiss of lip to empty space? Whd? Whoa no! Nanananananananano. O o.

Ode: On the Occasion of a Massive Paranoia

Having razed all the rational roads behind G.
 the way is dark, tho' Fried claims death need not be black.
 Where once was chaos & language living,
 the popes & teams of the bleeting minions,
 growth & renewal & wild vast lusting,
 now only darkness, gravity & lethe. The bleak
 tongued encyclopaediast rigidly grinds
 forth from below thorax a bellow of gloom.

Confronting nemesis (O bored! such a crime) after
 months of abstension. There she is now now gorgon &
 gargantuan, the IBM so cold G. has to wind new ribbons
 onto old spools, that shudders & spews & fights us
 every character on the way. & there is now the block,
 like G.'s tailend of his soul's long night,
 standing over the toilet & impotenting spray from knees
 to where floor meets wall in filth.

But Fried (O sweet with treason) simply squeezes twice
 at right angles the head of that which begets no excuses
 & issues straight into dubious prattle. Yasssss...

squeal G. Fried thinks the manipulatin' of metaphor
is enough to extend his gesture (hu)manwords again.
Still strungout & throatracked G. is gripped with fear/
the dread realization: to be is to be paranoid.

O, if only it would cease its pressing-us-down
we might stand on our hind limbs like men
& breathe deeply again. But the weight of all this
white shite & inkstain cripples us over a desk.
Where are the schooners to lift us into realms
of verdant intensity, set like fetid jewels
on empty pacific blue? Where the gentle natives,
wanting nothing more than to sleep & sex
all day long? (Trapped where backbone
thickens & becomes brain saith Friedrich, looking
up from his Merck's Manual.) G. is disgusted
with the answer. Mindless pleasures we
seek! not scientific reductions...give us back
our innocence! (Fried silent taps an air bubble
from syringe & holds it forth, a nasty bit
of death-tech seduction.) G. lamely smirks &....

The poets gathered pretty around the table
spilling further glasses down their gullets
& slagging every ignominious present to the tip
of their tongues. & enthused, innocent
craftsmen, eager & aware of their delusions.
Which increasingly rarified sages lead back
to pretentious others. O where art thy
humility? Their names dropped & confidence
unclipped is heresy. O where art thy
getting off? Their weirding masks put on like
honesty in morning. O where thy art,
Housefrau?

sonnet from hell.1

This damn tyranny of the flesh!
ever complains the poet & his viscera indifferent.
Fast & gorge: there is no joy in mastication.
Why must G. stuff his face with dirt & flesh?
Is not spirit enough? G. badgers
a reticent Friedrich with the usual
serving of briny reasonings.

Must we always be seeking skirt & death? Friedrich
frowns & backhanded bristling whiskers replies:
Yes! Our heavy eyes & illness demand it!
We must fashion drunken blokes
of mud & guts fit to dance
amongst the spheres...we must be
our own true texts!

punishment

I. Come the deluge (zen absorption)
 a whole universe deposits
 on our carpet. A smell of death--
 like Venice (Fried imagines pedantic)
 in hiking boots and a dead
 person's socks. The third pair.

Amongst the debris floating
 leaves decomposing paper bags
 and tampon tubes, work
 for an evening. The elevator
 displaces waves from under.

The cat won't touch the carpet.
 My plashing about is traumatic.
 He sits on high ground
 (the kitchen table)
 and looks sad. (Musn't forget
 those that slither on their bellies).

Today the eversame fails
 sun rising different. Seems
 a fate in disaster euphoria
 telephoning further obscenities.

Feet up (not a Noah) Fried thinks
"I should insult G."
(because he'd like me to).

II. Sick of woolies and vibram soles
but at least the plosh is gone.
The creatures refuse to assemble.

III. Crippled by being.

A pale creature
on a wet couch.
Life on stilts.

The heavymetal carpet cleaner
is divulged/registred.
Time lurches on, the neverending.

sonnet from hell.2

We are not artists,
we are not writers,
we're just victims
of a sad ambition.

To procure and process
the precious salve
that soothes our
fearful addiction.

It is not easy being,
always to thing, our
tools grow blunt

in apprehension. The sad
fact remains as thus:
you have to do somethinging.

(indebted to Martin Heidegger)

sonnet from hell.3

Identical, semi-rebellious
middle aged men
with beards stand
on the corner

in the pouring rain,
shivering their expensive sweaters.
Behind them are their
identical, semi-attractive

slightly younger wives
dressed much the same.
They wonder

whether or not
they should cross
the street.

sonnet from hell.4

Just the result of another
Thursday night thrashing,
G. reaches for instruments
to dull the incessant

voice of paranoia.
The doubt like a worm.
It's digestion never
ceasing. The game

is over. The party's done.
Doors slam and bottles
break on the street.

The worm grows
fat in the obscene deep
black soil.

sonnet from hell.5

These (perverse & insane) temptations of the flesh
sayeth G. (a great & impatient saint)
must be met, not mystery. To this end he
did dissect the line dividing pubis & sigh
(every blessed night between his 14th & 21st years)
underneath a veil of woe--what tears....

Yet its reek haunts me still at night
the howls growing lush & interiorly
the shadows stretching
diversions diverse & mundane
both--doesn't matter anyhow now
here amonk deluded & slothing,

the disrespectful operator
of decadence.

Hark! A breaking the storm.

Light & behold the sun!

O, G. is gracious to feeling the angel
once agin; her small tongue's breath,
le mots flippin' & floppingto places
like they was I ordained.

No more the virtuoso croaking of frogs
in the lyric swamp. *Art pour l'art?*
No! *Art pour le vide.* Agape!

Thus became G. pseudolegit.
A fish refusing measurement
in a mean pond.

II. Ever Down

*Jadis, si je me souviens bien, ma vie était un festin
où s'ouvraient tous les coeurs, où tous les vins coulaient.*

*Un soir, j'ai assis la Beauté sur mes genoux.--Et je
l'ai trouvée amère.--Et je l'ai injuriée.*

Je me suis armé contre la justice.

-Arthur Rimbaud, "Un Saison En Enfer".

ode: excess life (is a burden like any other)

That is a lot of me.

Melechanomumble hazy pace

langsquid tho' pulse iso/

elevated feeds the tumor (

size of your fist) ferocious

growing larger than dreams (

all a shadow now-

so far to go) nurtured

in dark basements (blue

stark roof/bowl of rice)

attacks the spiritir terri-

froth leaks jaw set. It won't

release!

Omnigomp

Over the dale & hail ha ha. *C'est la mort*. Dream scheme
blaspheme. Benzedrine. Where is the plug in/? & why hath
it no claws? Is there a reason for starfish? Have
pelycypods? Nightmares? The animal stings.

Gothspew the simple man. No place but had the biscuit.
Where/o where has my tricuspid gone? Dermahoax the back
blistered. Revulsed the bleeding sister. O, those *blessed*
Russes. Hallo-wed be thy shame, thy fecal scum, thy bit be
come to prison.

Hiss & moan. Minor buzz for an hour or so. Then left un-
satisfied. Sun gone down. Bulbs all burnt out. Bleatings
of fear & frustration that can't be turned off. A sad
cigarette or ten. A cup of tea to soothe the throat. An
idea upon which the mind can bloat....

Gopher carnage! Their bodies twisted & flung, as if by some
great deranged seeding machine, intending that they shall
blossom into some beautiful zen phenomenon.

Demonic Feline

Kitty (black & white) sits guard
over his pigeon's death throes.
Complacently hunching it up against
the wall, he stretches forward &
teases its neck with his teeth.
It bleats & clicks to no avail.

If heaven's a playground, then we must be
asphalt angels. Arthur ascends to hoop,
thighvein bulging he swoops & spins up
until head hits impermeable firmament
of rejection. G. on defence, fouling even
the attempt. G. (odd) keeps his favorites down.
He likes to watch them jump.

Here is the Young Man

He is at least golden, is he not?
Being easily bad, Arthur, just himself
& some minimal knowledge, steps onto the bus.
Broke so he shoves a carefully folded 1/2 dollar
bill (bisected along its length) into the column¹
already full with cash. Strides back & sits
in his unusual place, next to the rear door.
(There he can sometimes scope some jiggle
down the steps--a shrewdly trained I.)

His reveries shortly interrupted, a summons from
ahead. Moi? Yes you scruffy looking fella,
get your ass up here. Arthur shrugs his
tin shoulders & shuffles towards
the driver's grim hook. Accusation of transit fraud
& a delineation of harsh consequence.
Is the trip at 1/2 price worth the risk?
What would your mother dink? Obligated
to society excretera....

Arthur sees in dem I's a little man enjoying
(too much) authority.irate & intense his fidgeting
produces a blade from back pocket
& locks it open at the face. You will

take me to Bow Trail or I will cut
 your fucking balls off. The crowd (1/2) rasps
 huzzah! A man who just couldn't take it
 anymore! 3 reactionary jocks (the other 1/2)
 tackle & disarm poor Arthur.

G. on TV sees Arthur, face down on the ground,
 neckvein straining & policeman's knee in his back²
 wailing indignity. A cave of nausea engulfs
 the observer, possessed of an empathy
 that eliminates all possibilities but one.
 To rescue the poet, pure as he is,
 before they shrink, wrap & discard
 him, de-loused & catalogued, taken apart
 & left in a heap/the institution infernal.

Thus G., bank machine emptied & bail ticket in hand,
 overcomes inept & homophobic blurting out
 (how balloons with such joy) that he
 could kiss him. Some strange warp & woof
*dans ma négativité*³ & *voilà!* Plops
 the delicate but brutal motif! *L'ange!*

¹ or fair box, a?

² an archetypal situation, this rape by authority, natch?

³ Sartre's word for types of human activity which while not obviously involving a negative judgement nevertheless contain negativity as an integral part of their structure; eg., experiences involving absence, change, interrogation, destruction.

My Angel, My Death

G. in his familiar dreary dream garret
raises a death-head to watch the nymphs
undress. Perverse angels grin & draw black silk
panties over long blonde limbs. Twisting
& groaning for effect, they hurl themselves
backwards onto his battered work table
& thrust their pelvi forward suggestively.
Grinding buttocks into heaped papers
& musty volumes, then all stopping but her.
They gather around a soft crescent
of light, her dark and heavyhipped arches
back, hair stumbling over the edge &
gleaming to the floor. She runs muscular
fingers along thightops & finally down between
pushing pud aslow & apart glistens &
trembling rises it, pathetic little retrograde
penis. A long black nail beckons a favorite
forth from the choir (now canting "the passion
of lovers is for death...") s/he (2) steps quietly
yet G. quakes ecstatic with each a shudder
of enlightenment.

Arriving with a tiny kiss, Felicity draws tongue
in spirals around G.'s imagination.

The Angels Clean Up

Edible increments murmurs she, Felicity,
or The Soft Blonde Goddess to you, foul
voyeur whacking away at your taut
penistrings of ecstasy, bit by
gentle bite (she deserves better than this)
G. emoted below & inside her soft like
silk in Mother's closet, wadding blown
neat like Nazi death-technology....

Ceremony I (learning to be a good worker & do heroin)

A small square table with surface mirrored,
around which on couch & chair (both blackleathery/
slightly masochistic) sit we elect. & just enough
pure thai heroin (anally concealed o'er the endless
ocean spew!) to crustify our here being.

Origami paper unfolds a thin white trickling
to the roof. A. short snort to calm de nervous.
A. wrap elastic round his arm, vein
prime & cleansed. Tiny bit of crystal in spoon bottom.
Add water & heat.

Pull syringe from hygienic wrapper, pop on needle
& load. Now Art's got it in his sights, blue protruding
inside of elbow. He hits and pulls back,
a red serpent rising small in the junk column. Then hits
again, driving it home.

2 seconds & sigh! G. looks on jealously.
Ritual and apparatus. Repeat. G. gets spoon carbon
in the mix. Tries to poke it out with a spare
needle, a rage caught difficult act. Finally
capitulates, sucking it down regardless.
Stares spike slowly towards arm. Presses

& pulls back air. Reject. A tiny circular mark
perched on veinsurface. An inability to penetrate.
A. has to do G., a shake in de void & shortly
did nothing feel but the fiercely grave

tendency to lessening.

A deathrush/veinblister & cerebral implosion.
Rain washes a gentle nausea expanding
& the dear evening's high pulses
& sweats (not at all like Jesus' son).

Time like crashing a motorcycle in German.
How come we so fast to be so slow? What prods
us yet further down? Can our withered systems
sustain life with hearts so big in our ears
and gushing pallor divine?

G. grunts and moans. Art thinks he's falling
into a coma. He wants to see if G.'s deader
than before but the wicked gravity keeps all
pressed & horizontal. They flat free & invincible
in the universe of death.

Arthur's Upbeat Other-Wordly Interlude:

Dem Mortal Blues Etc.

Tiny tiny caps o'heaven. Rollo dice comes up seven.
So why we pollute ourselves? Our strong healthy pelf, why o
cryo? Wherefore art thou syringopora? Ampules coral reefs
of mind you matter? Fenelstrate. Wee divisions in our
brains. Touchdown o sacred receptor of visceral
pleasure....

Existential Alkaloids

Coked up & hopeless, G. &
Arthur dig la metawhole
crack paper peel & fall.

Ceremony II (the advantages of dirging)

The same thing endlessly repeated. If we were wiry old mujhadeens squatting in Afghani mountain passes we might roll suppositories so the Russians couldn't see our patience glow. If we were college students with rich fathers we might

casually roll a 1/2g or so in each of every joint. But since we're mystic hermits buried deep in the city's mindless growl we ritualize. G. wields Ockham's razor like the old master, himself an avid aesthete.

The high priest's stern brow lit by the sacred torch's howl. Supplicants stand ready with various & rigidly proscribed apparatus. Funnel or ice pack inhalator. (We having once plundered a lab or two.)

G. does 4 but allows Arthur & the others only 3. It is his penance, his special scouging, to be always a little further along. Thus his watch set exactly 90 seconds ahead of the standard worlding tempest.

Economize! Each unit prescribed makes us
just a little bit deader. An odor of language & decay
lingers long after the knives grow cold. A retreating
all into themystery. Alienating with languorous
courage the proud & regal

think an avenging Angel rises before our altar
of destruction. All praising the Hindu prince
who first set his peasants to cultivate this
wondrous weed! Let them fruits multiply
& swallow the wasteland!

G. & his whole sick ceremonial crew
mourn the long lost novelty of descent,
the technology of thrift becomes inertia,
a meaning-in-itself.

(& the sidewalk meanwhile plots a just flowering.)

Letter to Angel

G. in an old town (new & withered)...

my how things have changed!

Rich is reading books (3 in the last month alone);

Herk got lost in the woods (hunting bobcats &
gettin' hypothermic miles of bush between he &

the truck while sun & disorientation set in

& wet ground & pine & a lighter damn-near empty),

Lumpy left his wife (running off to Toronto

& inexplicably returning to her such a pig).

G. feels a stranger here with his strange
myriad identities that refuse assimilation

into paradigm K-loops. Things here

vague & redundant. The angels are cheap

& wear blue stockings (match their eyes).

Goddesses all tied up (cross-country skiing

or something). Poets? Hah! The politicians

do elegies on the side...We are

(eternally) disappointed.

Tomorrow we ski or we fall apart.

-Sid Squalidozzi

Having Fallen (A Part)

The day still dreary. O where could we
have possibly wanted to go? (Peterson Creek
runs in sewers under the city.) Once earnest
explorers could run quite a distance, even
with fingers pried under floating ribs. Now
it is necessary to stop, halfway there,
blood in ears loud as the stroke of d---

Je chante pour me consoler.

-Sid Squalidozzi

An Erection for this Yule

O, if only I was pure enough
to get away with such abstraction
Ysolt, all might be different now.

Hair, so what? as black as that
famous *gentil parfait* knight. Hah!
you say, vicious provencal thugs,
sweat of the sewer still dripping
down y-ur backs bent with the labor
of its lifting very slowly into
self-conscious martyrdom.

If I could stop from your fair visage
the slightest frown a'forming, I might.
(G. would probably sigh & silently curse
your genes.) But if ever you dance
with that blonde chick agin I might
fling myself into a-void.

chorus:

O a-void a-void a-void everlastin'!

O wha wha wha'bout the everlas-ting?

Yes! Even the cosmic's scum streaming
 I would stop. To pronounce y-ur name;
 sweet Ysolt in padded shoulders & crimson
 plaid aflame, dose red shoes could unchurn
 a comic pleading's run at eternity!

Wha! such enthusiasms from the dead?
 Surely the draft hath unwired y-ur brains?
 Hath not de-void been your home
 for quite some time now?

digression: Excuse me, I is getting dumb. *Oui*, too much
 drinking & smoking. My jerky, threatening movements have
 scared the cats away. Time will go on. Even if I do have
 another cigarette before I go to sleep. What a waste this
 frustration is boys! Our throwaway lines better than a
 million Slick Diks could ever hope to muster.

Ah! this fair & meek provencal (k)night
 (some might say of it decidedly ghastly)
 pisses mad & profoundly into the porcelain
 sieve of time, hoping (what a yolk!
 Ysolt) to free a moment in which we
 might co-habit a goodly portion of infinity.

digressin' agin: Blah! Blah! Blah! Nothing but an addiction to image & impossible intervals. So who cares & why the fuss? Might you expect lamentations of aesthetics failed? A catalogue of personal flailings fulfilled? G. easy to swallow, a little oblong pill? Fuck off, dear reader....

& what about her forehead? Behind which certainly lurks a fair & formidable intelligence of the loins artfully crossed. (Gossamer & leather u-wear in G.'s steamy self-flagellations.)

May G--. forgive us all (our lapses & deliver us into temptation....

Reveries from An Immutable Silence

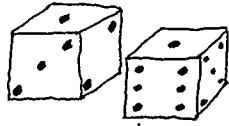
Lo, it doth near burst with meaning!
Those hours with our particular fish
& rotting entrails extruded to form
tenuous connections in the space of
a dour looking G. Yo them langsquids
slip & slither over & around one another...
signifying nothing, but o!
with such emphasis!

(If we really believed we were only one
amongst the millions of puking poet-creatures
we would have suicided a long time ago.)

O, we're getting down. To business, to the void,
to the death we's living....Why is we so?
Married to our texts & vacant obstinacy,
our decaying concepts & tumours that swell
like bloated corpses in the sewer. We
dribblin' along, full bladders in the endless
lining up & backwards shuffle of existence.

(His sense of being-a-bum)

Wheezing & dribbling & o! so hard
of pleasing, G. sits quiet & pāranoid
amongst his latest, hard-fought possessions,
not peace of hind nor lofty virtu
nor even a moment's reposing soft & subtle,
jest *des mauvais sang*, to blot out....



the inevitable result
of G. risking all

Snake eyes, no hot water. My mind drifts back to despair.
She unrequits. I plod in devoid. Diverted from
betrayal....

Diverted back, a cold walk to the shower. Mail
insignificant.

Wild fluctuations of G. Another day on the elevator. Fits
of inspiration interspersed. Wanting to blot out the sun.
& hide in grocery aisles.

Not doing enough, but am tired of doing. Tired of having/
tired of being. Eating? Ha! The kitchen table is for
scheming!

...dreaming of her hands on me, a mediterranean beach,
a pocketful of kif....

How is it that hands are so steady? my words seem to
ask....

More! More! Let the torch howl all night. I am down to
it....

Epifinal Incantation

an infinite series:

$$u_1 + u_2 + u_3 + \dots + u_k + \dots$$

$$\sum_{k=1}^{\infty} u_k$$

"If the sequence of partial sums of a series diverges, then the series has no limit"¹, ie expansion into infinity.

If the series converges, annihilation at centre.

Either way, extinction is inevitable.

¹ Anton, Howard. *Calculus with Analytic Geometry*.

11:54:57 pm

Post-mortal torpor,
an ulcerated consciousness prodded
with blunt
insinuating sneers.

Slow down, oh viscous one.....

The Laborer's Pomes
or
Songs with *Schlagenhamer*

I would shake off the lethargy of this our time,
and give
For shadows--shapes of power
For dreams--men.

-Ezra Pound, "Revolt (Against the Crepuscular
Spirit in Modern Poetry)".

The Laborer's Tale

(apocryphal connections to an undisclosed fiction)

That CrowBoy was a character alright. His real name was Werner, but after the first morning I saw the crows walking him to work, he was CrowBoy to me.

We started on the same day, a scorching Monday morning we spent ripping down drywall, standing on a rickety scaffold 30 feet in the air & getting to know each other in that bullshit sort of way, our words choked in gypsum dust, their sounds mingled with those of our crowbars pounding over our heads. Resultant debris falling into our faces. Wasted energy, smashing everything into bits rather than punching strategic spots, the true art of rip & gouge, combined with the heat gave the occasion a grim, reckless edge. Stuff fell on my head & I didn't care. Drank eight pop & hung on the faucet, which we kept running all day, between breaks.

Over time I was able to draw some cursory biographical facts from him in exchange for a little fiction about myself...the short course in poetic mythology. A student for lack of direction from a small town in Mormon-southwestern Alberta, he wanted to be either an actor or an airline pilot. I managed to hold back the relevant terminology--arrested adolescence etc. A breakdown in reticence could skew the results...the observer must attempt

to be a functional being in the environment. A tangential discourse on the treatment of mongoloids in biblical times, largely based on Noah's (attitude towards/murder of) his ape-son in Timothy Findley's *Not Wanted on the Voyage*, or, talking about a book to kill the time, certainly not expecting an intelligent response, brought him to disclose two retarded brothers of his own. Bam! An example of synchronicity...the kind of benign circumstance that has always led me to believe the world was created for my own convenience. CrowBoy was beginning to fit my procrustean bed.

Through similar processes, although not as self-conscious in application, Sam, a surly journalism student with a pregnant girlfriend & \$1600 worth of legal bills from an impaired charge he "beat" (with a pound of grass in the trunk the whole time) worked on him too. It was Sam that discovered the Oedipal connection. To him, after suitable conditions for confession were enacted, CrowBoy would explain his confusion about his feelings toward his mother. He thought she was perhaps too friendly towards his friends when they came over, sitting on their laps and showing too much interest in their physicality.

--Maybe she's just a very warm, affectionate person?

Ha! The guy wanted to be talked out of what he knew to be truth, his feelings of jealousy. Sam had the good sense to be ambiguous.

Thus a gay rapport was born between the three of us. The electricians took this "gayness" quite literally, they could never quite figure out our paradigm of normality. In no time we thought of ourselves as a team of crack laborers with a penchant for situational comedy, able to demolish a cinderblock wall by hand in an afternoon, laughing all the way. Sam's major contribution to ritual was made early one morning when we were picking up the tools of our trade from lock-up. Ritual of phraseology was my department. Yes, it was an occupation that encouraged lively discourse as a means of combatting deadly boredom. Anyhow, over the weekend both of us had seen a picture in the *Sunday Herald* that said it all. An 80 year old Brooklyn laborer, a sinewy black man kissing his 20 pound sledgehammer. He was quoted in the caption as saying "if you're gonna be doing anything for this long ya gotta love it". Sam picked up his trusty crowbar & gave it a big wet smack. I cried "ya just got to love it!" & followed suit with my shovel. Thereon every morning began with the chant & the ritual kissing of the tools; crowbars, prybars, flat-blade shovels, spades, extension cords, power drills, wheelbarrows, sledgehammers & later the ultimate instrument of low-budget machismo, the Kango electric jackhammer. Such a ritualistic approach served to distract us from our alienation from the means of acquiring wealth, & was encouraged by authority until it began to negatively impact on productivity, & was then

remedied with the elementary school trick of separating the offenders. These were greedy men who paid us \$3 an hour more on the paper they showed to the people we were contracted to work for than in fact. Too cheap to buy us a new broom, which raises the question--can you trust a company that would rather rent than buy their tools?

But all this detail, chronology & ritual, is peripheral to the real issue at hand, the phenomenon of Werner & the crows. (But isn't the peripheral the domain of the interesting? -Ed.) There seemed to be some metaphysical principle at work here, although the crows did not behave in a consistent manner towards him there must have been (I thought!) an underlying pattern. Sometimes they would be a friendly escort, a procession of arcing courtesans like on that first morning, & yet at other times he would come running into the yard with them in pursuit, swooping down low over his head & "caw-ing" menacingly. One afternoon, I swear I'm not making this up, four of them sat perched on the bicycle rack outside, waiting for him all afternoon, just getting up once in a while to stretch their wings.

Plus, he never brought a lunch. He would sit outside with us on nice days & watch us feed crusts to his pals, never asking for a bite himself.

The indifference with which others did or did not view these happenings, I've never been able to adequately

determine which for certain, caused me to keep my speculations to myself, or at least to twist the perspective of their projection in such a way as to render myself inculpable. Not guilty by reason of tone/aggravated obscurity. In contrast to my indecisiveness, Sam was willing to subscribe to the existence of a certain weirdness that just is, out there....

The crow is for the Plains Indian what the coyote is for the Indians of the B.C. Interior, the trickster figure. A shadow-dancing punster & crude wit that usually has the whole tribal-world pissed off at him. But this is absurd (to be sure lisped the professor of rhetoric), our CrowBoy is a perfect Aryan, as blonde & tall as a Nazi statue. There is though, the possibility of transformation, a structure of imagination in perpetual decline since the days of Ovid; now, in fact, reduced to a mere convention in third-rate horror movies. With CrowBoy you can never be sure of the creature behind the eyeballs, whether or not he is holding something back.

CrowBoy was thought by the bosses to be fucked-in-the-head, a common condition among laborers, who wear their bad attitudes like badges of Honour. A Gentleman & a Laborer. Well, they must have thought he was more fucked-up than Sam & me because it was he who got the boot, although only a

soft, temporary one, when things slowed down for two weeks or so between the end of demolition & the start of excavation. This is only important in that it gave me job seniority & after Sam left to work on a rig because he needed more money to support his new family, I became senior laborer by default. Probably nobody would have noticed if I hadn't pointed it out to them.

Senior laborer--as redundant a term as ever there was. A laborer is a laborer is a laborer, he must do what he is told, any illusory authority he holds in the slow minutes between the completion of one task & the beginning of another is only delusion, or, in the parlance of the worker, Fucking the Dog. Given there is no dog up there with you, braced on a girder listening to the radio & using a screwdriver rather than the power-drill attachment because you enjoy the slow physicality of process; no there isn't, but still you are fucking it.

Then came a turn for the worse--enough work for everyone, but of such a monotonous nature that they soon wanted to go home again. & eventually they did & others came to fill the rubber boots & then they went down the road & on anon.... We were digging holes. Graves for our youth? The concrete floor had to be broken & cleared before the search for the original sub-soil began; it was usually at least six feet below where it was supposed to be. When one

was finished, or at least thought finished, for they always had to be dug a little deeper, you were given another. Simple as that. We began to get a little hole crazy after a couple weeks, production began to drop off. Everyone's boots got all cut up from jumping on the shovel & some of us just refused to get excited about a task with no foreseeable end. The holes were multiplying. No one was going to sacrifice the body for their cheap schedule...they could bring in more temporary help if they wanted it done any faster. I put my slight weight firmly behind the party of sloth, the joints of my fingers were in a steady decay towards premature arthritis already from all the abuse they had undergone in those first few weeks of wild abandon.

The day that crew morale hit an all-time low was the day CrowBoy decided to get fired. The news of both spread over the site, that the monster hole had to go another ten feet down & that CrowBoy was going to get himself fired for our entertainment. A heart as big as...what? I have no idea. He had been assigned a hole against the wall on the extreme southern end of the warehousing complex, far from the rest of us because of his new site records for maximum communication & minimum production. The happiness vs. oppression index. Theory went that the troublemaker-clown, separated from his audience shortly realizes the folly of his ways & throws himself into his work with gusto, tripling or trebling his output at no increase in remuneration from

above, the denizens of which are thus greatly pleased. They did not have an equation for CrowBoy though, he proved he was not of the world of linear probabilities. He was a machine for the annihilation of time.

I was casually taking another foot of fill out of a hole in what was to become, if I'm not mistaken, a cafeteria in the heart of the complex. I was exercising my imagination, wondering if they would ever think of the toil it took to build their cozy eating-place, or whether they would just take it for granted. Feeling mythicopoetic, singing an old Clash song 'cause there was no one around to listen.

*- Alionzo dollars are spent
to raise the towering buildings
for the weary bones of the workers
to be strong in the morning*

It was actually two holes joined by a small tunnel underneath a wall. You could always tell the holes I'd dug, the way I piled the dirt around them made them look like foxhole bunkers & I always shaped a little meditation seat on one wall. The advantage of the formal approach was that I could usually see anyone coming before they'd see me.

Anyhow, I was bent over getting a shovelful when something hit me on the back. I stopped, looked out & saw nothing, resumed digging. A dirt-bomb glanced my ear & hit the concrete header over the tunnel. I ducked, waited a few

seconds & then popped up, armed & ready to take on all comers. CrowBoy was over in a hole across the room with a large goofy grin on his face. I arced a few over in his direction & ducked to avoid his retaliation. I stood up just in time to take the tail-end of it on the temple, & was knocked out of time, back to the giant dirt-bomb wars of youth, which would inevitably end up with someone escalating the conflict by throwing rocks & someone else getting hurt. For a second I was caught up in this diachronic impulse of primordial violence, I was going to beat him over the head with my shovel. But CrowBoy just stood there over my hole, looking down at me with his trademark gentle-dumb look, loose-boned & laconic, muttering "go ahead & hit me with one if you want--really--I don't mind". I couldn't. It would be like clubbing a baby seal, he could be so gosh-darn cute....

He did the CrowBoy shuffle, hands in pockets mumbling something about James Dean or modelling school. He had got an advance on his next cheque from Jerry (the boss benamed) this very morning & was walking around the site, mumbling & shuffling at everyone for a few minutes, ducking in & out of dark spaces to avoid Jerry & Joe. He would occasionally go back to his hole, which he was decorating with crude clay figures--a man, a horse, a skull, various indeterminate shapes.

This time, when he turned the corner into the

warehouse, he saw Jerry & the soil engineer checking out his hole. Somehow (the ambiguity of will & application) he managed to keep a relatively straight face as he rambled towards them, as we all ramble towards doom. The soil-tech was down in the hole assessing the situation with regard to stability (no wonder his hobby was Central American politics!) there, while Jerry was squatting beside the hole, turning CrowBoy's horsey over in his ruddy hands. The creator of which asked the first how it was coming & the second how he liked it? The former replied "still has a way to go yet--you're gonna have to square it off under the concrete there" & the latter ignored him with a scowl. They left him, presumably to dig with the guilt of false-consciousness. CrowBoy was stunned, he couldn't believe it--Jerry had called his bluff. The situation now demanded action on his part to effect his termination. Translation: he was going to have to quit, which are the words he left me with after all this had passed, at my new hole in the hallway, where I had been able to watch the anti-climactic non-confrontation fold in on our expectations for poetry. So at four p.m. CrowBoy skulked off, never to return, not even for his final cheque...they must have still owed him something after the advance. One of the carpenters claimed to have seen him selling menswear in a suburban mall, but I had a hard time believing he'd pack it in for a slightly cleaner drudgery, a new set of alienating conditions in

which to fester. But if he had...would there be crows there to walk him to work, waiting for him in the parking lot? Yes, CrowBoy had flown the coop, but I needed the money & was stuck there. In a hole.

Addendum: The Great Hole of Lima

This hole got its name with the fortuitous arrival of a shifty little Chilean laborer named Louis. He was the same age as me but he already sported quite a pooch from years of Catholic cooking. Somehow he managed to support a family the Pope would approve of, three chubby kids & a barefoot bride, on \$7 an hour. His appearance was comic, the way he carried himself like a straight man, always ready for the fall, or so I thought while I was watching him work. His third world attitude caused him to bust his ass long past the point of necessity. It ceased to impress Jerry & Joe because they thought he was stupid, while in actuality, a place far from the dominant paradigm, Louis spoke much better English than they did Spanish. I told him to calm down, there were no bonuses for martyrdom around here.

The hole was one of two monsters on site where soil had not been found at ten feet, which is quite a claustrophobic depth when your hole began six feet by six feet. Jerry had to break down & bring in a backhoe to speed up the process, but after he'd gone & the spillage was cleared, we were still looking at fill & as an added bonus, it seemed we were below the water table because our hole was becoming a pond.

The thing about being a laborer is that you never know why you're doing what you're doing, beyond the theological explanation: "I'm just doing what I was told". It is

perfectly absurd activity, pumping the water out, descending the ladder in your knee-high rubber boots, standing in the muck as the water inexorably rose to its intended place, shovelling thick brown mud into a bucket dropped onto a ledge at chest level, taking a few deep breaths while the other guy hoists said bucket up, 70 pounds of earth straining the muscles of the chest and back in gravity's protest against mass redistribution, dumps it onto the accumulating mountain of mud back from the hole's edge, puts it onto the hook you rigged & lowers it back down. Repeat for half an hour or so & then exchange positions. The descent is slow & excruciatingly dull, it is difficult to convince yourself that you are making any progress at all. Added to this is the sense of oblique fear haunting the guy at bottom. Once, the hook broke when Louis was down there. The bucket took off at precisely 9.8 m/s^2 , meaning its mass was really moving when it hit the ledge 30 or so feet down, dumped on the poor bastard & then fell on his head as it toppled over, along with a good chunk of the ledge. It's no wonder laborers are a faithless lot--I know it's not quite the same as being stretched out on a rock having your liver eaten by vultures or repeatedly rolling a boulder up a slope only to have it run you down on its way back. Entropy, the tendency towards disorder--it's bad enough for this earth.

The Laborer

Finish that hole & then dig
those two over there--
4X4 & a foot below the top of the clay,
then you're fired. Hurry up.

The Ballad of Ralph, Cosmic Carpenter

Well he used to be like hippy johnny stoned all the time-- but hey! that was the sixties & he was just a kid in a rented room for the summer, hanging out in coffee houses & trying to pick up girls with his peace-love spiel....

It seemed the times were a'changing but it's difficult to say what they were changing from--he was that dumb.

So how did he become a grey & grizzled carpenter-mystic, preaching the transmigration of souls to laborers suspended on scaffolds against the blank blue skylight, they wondering what evils they committed to deserve this? Eating a neat little salad from a recycled yogurt container, warning the hungry boys against sandwich meats (who knows what evil lurks) & how many Cokes is that today?

Preaching his ideas, the auras of colors culled from a book his new age (synonym for gullible) girlfriend bought for him, defending Shirley MacLaine from the arch-cynical electricians, pullers of wire & screwers of screws & the last guys up from coffee. He always the first.

The biography, the wisdom that hath made him so sage. The divorce (of course), the ex-wife & the three kids he takes

camping a couple times a year. Last time it rained & they all had to sit in the tent for two whole days.

Including his 18 year old girlfriend, who I caught bringing his lunch to work one day. He obviously embarrassed, realizing his dignity was crumbling before scary Jerry's eyes. Plain plain plain I thought with disdain of how ugly a thing life can be....

All his lofty talk undermined by his toadying, his petty ambitions, seeking more responsibility at no increase in pay. Becoming in the end a bare conduit for orders from above....

Stripped of All Human Content

A laborer/laboring

in retrospect, a witness to

the trees hovering below
in the fields young men swing
sledgehammers singing tenderly:

I love ya baby but

I'm gonna hafta kill you.

The Phenomenology of Holes

The laborers despair the whole damn business.
Sing they nonetheless of joyous delusion: Let's Kango!
They are discouraged because the holes fill themselves
up at night. Boss, he put up a sign saying how he value
their existence. Thus they must wear their hard hats
& t-shirts, tho' it is a humid 30 degrees & the sweat
constant flow. No shorts in site.

The laborers wish they were valued a little more
practically. Like maybe a raise so I could have some
money left over after fueling yet another descent?

None forthcoming, they quit & quit &
in the morning curse anew their digging.

or: How the Word Looks from the Bottom of a Hole

I inhabit my spleen.

Day off looking out the window--2 cops disappear into
Redpath clutching their sticks & a third,
throwing open blue & white Maria's doors....

A light goes on in a basement suite, dark shapes
move about & pause & disappear & re-emerge,
dragging their pony-tail'd pagan trophy by the arms.
The third engages in a lively conversation
with a long-haired Oriental, whom he shortly pushes
into the paddywagon behind his pal. I stand & see
others, in their windows watching all this, but,
apparently, only I feeling sick & hoping for some
kind of messianic intervention.

Which, of course, never comes.

I must head out into it for supplies--
gingerale & antacid.

Born to dig, the laborer writ
in mud at the bottom of his hole.

& me, I rush home to collapse
on the couch; a hit, a hit, a hit
direct--the button labelled "relax".
A heap of homo (*sapient*), a hip
hunchster, a hole specimen,
a tired & bruised kitten
smitten with the power of repression.

Or is that expression? Or the continuum
(love does w's)...dose vacuums vs. *le vide*
they contain. O what a mess I yam.
Cooked--holy doodle! the bestest
mess a goin', a foof machine,
a dumper into, an unloader of,
a stand around & hide at quarter to 4
(5 minutes & we can clean up).

Yikes! an eater of dinners
is posited. Wash up. Cook.
Death is to be sustained--
a thousand or more little ones
before....

(Shovel 'til you die, boys)

How comes this extra cigarette, stolen
from a world that would deny
such a simple pleasure? Softly,
O Lord, as subtle as your fingers
clutch my neck in the night. How
this dull bliss, after the day's
thud & bellow? As meek as your temper
sometimes comes across, late at night,
your faithless servant....

Random Poems

*Quand chez les débauchés l'aube blanche et vermeille
Entre en société de l'Idéal rongeur,
Par l'opération d'un mystère vengeur
Dans la brute assoupie un ange se réveille.*

-Charles Baudelaire, "L'Aube Spirituelle".

Yet another cat (named Cat no less)
in a new city (or are they all but one),
chases butterflies on the deck where I sit,
writing & amazed at just how good
some of it really is in my impenetrable
shades my inscrutable self,
G. the boy-nihilist, a wonder
beholding himself as such.
The son, a payin' tribute to
the traffic & commerce below,
the wind a street transcending...
& still a vial in the cupboard!
Are we set or wot?

Rain down on the bughaus, a steady
streaming into...evocations of punishment
past. Hey, what about that covenant?
A new cat peers out at it, innocent
of God's wrath. The altar is defiled,
spotted & smudged of oil-burnt offerings
but not a ram in sight & building materials
ever so rare, as true tools & ideologies (
of necessity) be. Are we forsaken anew?
Must the various ministries combine
to formulate Apocalypse? To what end
our meek & abused souls endure?

Never mind, never mind--

Enjoy a rare rain whilst one can....

What is the value of an existence in which the minutes
are counted to the next cigarette?

What is the value of an existence where a gleam in the eye
is not an adequate manifestation of power?

(Would the messiah now require automatic weapons to clear
the moneychangers from the temple?)

My gleam gets me nowhere....

or: strange little epiphanies that G. has walking to the store for a seltzer & pastrami sandwich, late at night.

G. turning many shades of yellow & sickly blue under their sad lights & excuses.

Force: the indifference of objects/thanatos.

Counterforce: outrage & rebellion/eros.

Now jaundiced pink, glistening fear of the world he once thought held together by adult death-magic, their many wills operating in concert, adding & cancelling, a stasis moving towards some lofty, concealed goal....

Now perhaps an adult I watch the centres dance & disappear, connections no more real than the point unposited. What is control & who can truly claim to be in it?

Tug at the strings & the mind melts down. Crepuscles caught in abstract snowstorms... it is all held together by nothing!

A Silence Broken

Naturalism, thinks he
whilst watching from a window
the punk-mechanic from downstairs
being loaded into an ambulance;
re-thinking ha! *la belle dame sans merci*
strikes yet again...immobilizing Art
with a flick of her pelfin brow.

The world is complicated & the word difficult--
how do we handle the romantic impulse?

The Madonna on the C-train,
All Soft & Forever Unfolding &
3 little girls, all of 12 yrs. old,
discussing finances on the bus:
"we prefer mutual funds".

The inevitable boy at the back of the class
raises his hand (a first) & asks politely:
"how do I opt out of this existence?"

Deadbeat--bumvoid...

caught in the act of
Premeditated Sex--
leaving half a cigarette
in the bathroom.

grainy b&w vomit dreams

Yaweh--I am & I am't....

Subvert, a plant in a Neighborhood Pub,
a bum, a lousy consumer of toxins,
a lousy bum, a no-thing,
a guy drinking alone....

A smoking too many cigarettes
--depression, leaping over balconies 15 miles high
a splat on the street, a mushmound.

Are those with blood on their faces
friends? It's nice to have them, anyhow.

The Folly that is an End

A Hard Storm blown over,
the rain still beats down but not
as a destroying angel. Instead
under its solemn & steady curse
flood waters ebb & subside.

Now louder again, an Apocalypse
of shrill guttering, celestial
amplifiers feedback & distort
monstrous discord....

Only to pass again completely.

Result: I praise that brief respite.

My Shaggy Ally: ED's dog Carlo (breed unknown)

The Revolution is in our Hearts (transcendence among the proles). Somehow ED is on his mind. In a bar full of boisterous strangers, all on the make or on drugs or just plain stinking drunk. ED would not like it here....This is no place for even the remotest descendant of a Puritan, it is a place for thinking New Paganly.

* * * * *

Carl[o] would please you--He is dumb, & brave--

but he is scared of the demon in the firebox. His dance a series of crouched leaps/climbing to logedge/jump back down & footslap. In a word, demonic. Chaotic. No, that's two words and a lie. Order is only chaos manacled &/or maimed, procrustean will. If we are willing to wait long enough, the snow would extinguish the demon.

* * * * *

Whom my dog understood could not elude others.

Incest. An alcoholic mother.

Infant flung from the deck.

Brought to you from the folks

at Overwhelming Dread Inc.

Redemption from Chaos--
 the breathless dash
 dismisses the World.

* * * * *

I talk of all these things with Carlo, & his eyes
 grow meaning, & his shaggy feet keep a slower pace.

All these things & ever so much more....Thinking about
 cigarettes--as reflection of a concern with emptiness.

* * * * *

Yea: the puzzled look--deepens in Carlo's forehead

...many things happen & always too quickly to be understood.
 The gnarled months, fingers on end, Family Hold Back
 (Grandpa that I never knew), the Paranoiac Surge & Retreat
 from/into the World, precisely that which we cannot
 explain.... O how we stray from intent. Xmas eve and what?
 A phenomenology for this alienation? Micro-politics: the
 Family? A Short History of Getting Stoned in America, Sharp
 Noises in the Night, False Emphasis and Over-Capitalization,
 Or: Keeping those Emotions at a Distance?

An Audience with ol' Swollen Head,
 a man amidst despair, & making

Others pay for it. A not-so subtle psychologist, his voice raised as if to strike Her down for insubordination/heresy, a refusal to make proper sacrifice, to spend herself in ritual obeisance.

Carlo--I think we're lost....

* * * * *

Carlo--walks behind, accompanied by a cat--

& Blair, Herkyles, son of Wilf & Marlene & before them--who knows? Some dark Lithuanian devil sorcery no doubt, betrayal of blood & collaboration with the fascists....A memory she cannot reveal to herself.

She is plagued by fear. He loves only wealth. She is bought off with one extravagance (fur coats & diamonds galore, she dresses up to go to the corner store) per annum & has to borrow money for groceries from young Herkyles.

Their home is an investment: the paintings crowded on the walls in defiance of aesthetic decency, the antiques packed so closely that one can't move in the "living" room, the Persian rugs piled atop one another, right down to the sheep's cape & lynx pelts in the freezer.

Blair, troubled son, cheated out of a lynx [value circa 12/86 \$800] by Wilf, who wouldn't trade for the cougar,

despite the circumstances--the days Herk had spent scouting the terrain, the gross disparity of fiscal need versus neurosis re the three marginally legal loans Herk took out before quitting his job at the credit company to buy stocks at precisely the wrong time, or, Paying Money on Speculation, No Return Expected (risk is a part of life but you best not be taunting her).

* * * * *

Carlo did not come, because that he would die,
in Jail.

How do we release it? With the aid of Mofu & our great love for ourselves, the pressure is from the chasm drained. It is channeled into banality.

* * * * *

G.'s last words to Blair: Get off the fucking couch--I gotta get some sleep (you stayed up & listened for hours yet).

* * * * *

Thank you, I wish for Carlo.

& he for you, a million hangovers in which to consider your callousness. The joint you scored Rich so he could get two

ugly girls stoned. Literally bump into them getting out of a cab at 7-11 at 3 a.m., now there are five (count 'em, 5) guys after these two tramps from Red Deer. Get a picture of one of the girls, in a cheap rabbit fur jacket buying submarine sandwiches, the height of prole sophistication, after a perfect evening spent guzzling beer....The clerk threatens to rip the film out of your camera, citing mysterious "security" restrictions. Obviously a cop trying to make a little bread on the side legally, rather than putting on a baseball cap & sticking up banks to feed the fruit of his loins. He's got the regulation moustache anyway. Later he tries to apologize--you tell him he just didn't have to be so dramatic.

* * * * *

Carlo is consistent, has asked for nothing to eat or drink, since you went away. Mother thinks him a model dog, & conjectures what he might have been, had he not been demoralized.

Added disappointment for G. His Madonna turns up in K-loops, known to the Gang, denizens of the sexpit, a broken boxspring/filthy mattress surrounded by bare cement walls on three sides; on the fourth, an elevated toilet-throne conveniently supplied by fate, or the previous owners, for those nasty post-coital cleanups. Can you believe Lumpy,

already so unhappily married, was found there fingerbanging
the biker chick from next door? & she is known here! How
do we reconcile this with the literary character? Only
through the filter of the artist's obsession.

* * * * *

A favorite companion, she never got another.

As perhaps I never will. There comes a time when we are too
old for companions, yet too young for this earth. All we
need is enough to live, we get instead Something to Live
Down....

One a.m. in the big city.
You're sitting in the bathroom,
smoking--& tending to
a miserable groin wound.

So this is real life?

* * * * *

All the stuff about Carlo is from *The Letters of Emily
Dickinson*. Ed. Thomas H. Johnson. Cambridge, Mass: The
Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1958. 3 vols.

Hey Kids, it's...

Mystic Monday!

First the fog, a trudging through
 eternal verities (if we took our prof
 & rotated him on his y-axis)...
 the frost meanwhile illuminates outside
 the trees: a false snow on de head,
 the 4 stations of the cross revealing
 (Apollo & Orpheus, Ascent & Descent)
 G. under this very tree a happily
 glittering boy.

In fact, no need to be G.
 But probably will, just to spite Them
 & their tripartite divisioning (thump
 Head, Heart & Groin--Mind, Spirit
 & It). It is where They get you. She,
 elaborate trowelled on layers of death-magic,
 all those perverted carbon rings an attempt
 to convince herself she isn't rotting....

The come-hither look: We're sure you'll find
 our death-structures quite comfortable....
 O, it certainly is a parody of freedom
 (but meanwhile the rime est très bon

& other mindless pleasures are available
at their low low price...

the hesitant affirmation
of a born-again-nihilist).

Towards an Aesthetics of Disarticulation

-It's all metaphor, man. I'm telling you that
CrowBoy is death from the air.

Take the initiative. The bull by the horns.
The cat by the tail, the steak by the snail.

Splat cattle on the wall.
If the shoe fits, ferret....

He bought the dream--
hook, line & stinker,
made a go of it for awhile.

Conclusion:

dispense with everything (including yourself)

, the matrix of futility; a sterile hole, to be filled
supporting a roof & a floor
on which to examine deathlayers.

To support an economy--to promote death,
alienation from the modes of its production
a cat tracks up the roof next door,
straight up the incline (35° minimum)

,dread of putting pen or not...
(the plant wasn't there but I'd swear
those were yesterday's photons)

the way they tickled my nose like that
perhaps if I tracked on roofs
my marks would last...

if I didn't fragment first
(what to do with all this space?)

smash it, of course...

(& feed the cat

thanatosphere.

To _____: Ya gotta love the bastards inspite of
their torments.

Heavy tho the fog is
nothing compared to
the weight of an absence.
I am alone (again/always)
in my little room hoping
you would be kind to me.
I probably don't deserve it.