# INDEX

Graphic by Helen Lovekin p. 2  
Editorial p. 3  
Graphic by Spencer Selby p. 4  
Fiction by Philippe Sollers p. 5  
Graphic by Carla Bertola p. 9  
Interview with bill bissett p. 10  
Poem by bill bissett p. 14  
Shaped-poem by bill bissett p. 17  
Poetry by Michael Basinski p. 18  
Poetry by John Donlan p. 20  
Text by Frank Davey p. 21  
Text by Richard Kostelanetz p. 22  
Essay on bpNichol by Paul Dutton p. 24  
Graphic-Text by Vittore Baroni p. 32  
Fiction by Opal L. Nations p. 33  
Graphic-Text by Carole Stetser p. 35  
Text by Paul Dutton p. 36  
Fiction by Norman Lock p. 37  
Digital Opera by Kenneth Doren p. 39  
Graphic-Text by Reed Altemus p. 43  
Digital Performance by Monty Cantsin p. 44  
Graphic-Text by W. M. Sutherland p. 47  
Digital Performance by Gary Barwin p. 48  
Graphic-Text by Christian Burgaud p. 53  
Synopsis by Harold E. Adler p. 54  
Graphic-Text by Johnnyboy Productions p. 56  
Poetry by Andrea Nicki p. 57  
Graphic-Text by Gerry Shikatani p. 58  
Fiction by Fausto Bedoya p. 59  
Visual-Poem by Fernando Aguiar p. 63  
Artist-Stamps assembled by Vittore Baroni p. 64
“But Albert Cried All Week, Mama” by Helen Lovekin (Canada)
EDITORIAL:

*Rampike* rides again, on the crest of the celebrated Nicholas Frederick Peter’s “Yellow Lightning Tornado” [see: cover image]. Peter’s art has been acclaimed world-wide for it’s Miro-like simplicity, combined with a remarkable geometric sophistication. With this issue, *Rampike* has swept up a startling array of mind-turning, internationally-acclaimed interdisciplinary artists and writers. Here you will find the established and new engaged in the vortices-of-the-text, a “Vortext” of writing, graphics, music, and performance. The internationally celebrated Philippe Sollers joins us in this issue with an instalment of his gyrating H translated by lingo-wizard Elaine Corts. Richard Kostelanetz, who has provided primal energy to the New York avant-garde for decades, fires off text-based innovations in response to the turn-of-the-century, thundering Russian Futurist, Victor Klebnikov, and linguistics theorist, Roman Jakobson. In this issue, we offer an historical and rare, never-before-published interview with bill bissett, along with his swirling metaphysical poetry and tossed salad visuals. Paul Dutton spins out a seminal essay on the works of his fellow Horseman, bp Nichol. Andrea Nicki, Michael Basinski, John Donlan, and Frank Davey encircle language, then re-ground it from different angles, turning, howling. Norman Lock and Opal L. Nations whip up superb fictions that twist brain receptors. Kenneth Doren, Gary Barwin and Monty Cantsin (a.k.a. Istvan Kantor) whirl us into a realm of finely twisted, electronically enhanced digital opera, and augmenting all of these writers are the cross-fire-hurricane visual dynamics of text-image artists from around the world including Helen Lovekin (Canada), Spencer Selby (USA), Carla Bertola (Italy), Carol Stetser (USA), W.M. Sutherland (Canada), Christian Burgaud (France), Reed Altemus (USA), Gerry Shikatani (Canada), Fernando Aguiar (Portugal), and Vittore Baroni (Italy). Rounding up this issue in a dizzying tour-de-force is cult underground figure, Fausto Bedoya, who tilts the world and leaves us spinning. Plus, plenty more! And, the next issue of *Rampike* brings us to our TWENTY-FIFTH YEAR IN PUBLISHING with more energy and ever-newer innovations! Once again, *Rampike* opens its doors and invites submissions, but only from the finest innovators of the postmodern! All brought to you through the generosity of the Canada Council for the Arts! In the meantime, we offer you the Vortext. A hurricane of language like any other twister combines the Five Elements: Air in the form of swirling wind, Fire in the form of lightning, Earth that has been swept from the firmament, Water in the form of a regenerating downpour, and, finally, the Sublime, in the form of Art, a kinetic and dynamic sustenance that cracks our skulls against hard reality. In ancient times, such elements were considered the alchemical fundamentals of nature and primal human psychology. We’ll let you figure out the rest [q.v.; Jung, et. al.] Here, we offer you Dervish Pirouettes, Aeolian Fandangos, Zepherin Mazurkas and other dancing air-songs. Turn the page; enter the Vortext! -- **KARL E. JIRGENS, (Editor-in-Chief & Publisher, SINCE 1979)**
“Watched Doorway” by Spencer Selby (USA)
An Excerpt from *H* by Philippe Sollers
Translation by Elaine L. Corts

In this issue, Rampike offers another in a series of instalments from Philippe Sollers' critically acclaimed novel *H*. Sollers was one of the founders and editors of the legendary *Tel Quel* magazine which included contributors and editors such as Roland Barthes, Julia Kristeva, Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida among others. Elaine L. Corts' fluent translations embrace the vital form of Soller’s writing while maintaining the jouissance of this internationally celebrated Parisian author.

• surrender your purple flowers to the current of the streams the snows of cathay fall upon the atlantic etc notice the • • white butterflies i am not certain it seems important to me • • the glum the widower the disconsolate the prince of aquitaine • • in the demolished tower wait yes we were going to play near • • the white and rose tower in ruin and in the ivy tangled with • • weeds i can imagine again the stained glass of the gothic • • chateau the park of the black prince in the midst of the • • vineyards under the locust trees curious this idea of my • • father to put orange lemon and palm and magnolia trees like• • that along an ocean of sand between the intervening seas • • perhaps to hide the roaring factory beyond the woods of • • • • • • • bamboo where the rats come from perhaps to act as a corolla • • for the smoking chimney to stifle the shouting workers the • • noise of the furnaces vats milling machines presses towers • • chains carts pistols hammers all in all a rather poetic idea • • the middle class dreaming on acid fingers cut the laughs the • • sighs and the women near the green houses relaxing on the • • other side of proletarian locker rooms undoubtedly doing • • nothing aroused by the monotonous hum of sweaty voices the • • last days of the empire deprived of sleep we have coffee with • • machines in the background in the shadow of young girls in • • flower beside the clumps of little firs hydrangeas carnations • • geraniums lavender terror of the popular front faced with • • the bars chanting to the firing squad and as for me seven • • years with eleanor a moment leaving the workroom her hands • • her walk another kind of knowledge entirely guarded precision • • evidence an open window irony the milky sweetness thighs hair • • wet kiss on her bare skin at the bottom were do we come from • • perhaps from the narrow somber corridor over there on the • • right in exile the id already spoke every language jumping • • from fractured italian to spanish to dutch to english • • german a loud-speaker in the closed-off streets and the • • specter of the yellow star sewn on their chests reversed • • revelation of the crime fascism has shown us that the world • • • • • • • is on the verge of collapse and the middle class with their • • francises crossed out blue white red slimy scum cops bosses • • priests what has become of you lawrence with your jet-black • • eyes refusing to let us caress with this yellow spittle on • • your robe near the dark pond the most beautiful decoration • • that we will ever see the jewel of time itself where was it • • then auschwitz mathausen and you johnny with your sack your • • beret that we did not see at communion as mass paws off popes • • on all fours lick jewish blood stark naked uccello may we • • peek at your penis a little to see if your desecration of the • • host is nothing other than propaganda as long as they were • • there they would have to rename the high school montaigne • • born michel eyquem because it was he because it was i the • • soft pillow of doubt or a spiked helmet explain discuss the • • greatest king on earth still sits on his ass myself i went to • • montesquieu high school it was the campaign of louis secondat • • slightly red velvety-smooth we do not write the spirit of the • • law in a week even when surrounded by carp by hills of pine • • i am presently in venice my dear usbek we could have seen all • • the cities of the world and be surprised upon arriving in • • venice we will still be astonished to see a city of towers • • and mosques rise out of the water to find a countless number • • of people where there should have been only fish christians • • • • • are rather like these poor wretches who lived in the darkness • • of idolatry before the divine light came to shine upon the • • face of our prophet let's see now ambigat belovesus right to • • milan about the 7th century ahead the great circular arc • • indulge me the celt dispatser the god of death the end in • • water fire as expected buried with his horse something moving • • called already bituriges in other words kings of the world • • always kings and if you want my opinion kings of pure and • • simple biture drunkenness feet in the grapes dead drunk • • during the wine harvest when the golden decaying and •
the tendency become formulation deformolation desire provided that we first become what becomes at the view aditi like
including the mythological is the result of a game that truth the essence of things satyasa satyam is situated in
the beyond in the end the divine names were poetic mediums flowing from the same viewed audition aditi aditi like
the swan who resides in the pure sky we easily become what we desire provided that we first become what becomes at the
outset brahman means simply formula formulation deformation formulating let's say a honey lick on the wave with the ombryon
the tendency becomes refrain litany recurrence inspired series steps into the void for ages i went down the stairs in such a way that i ended by going up you understand there are times when you are the only
one to catch up with • • your cohorts you stand in line alongside the line and then • • crack after a splosh into a splash that's it each hole the id • • skids the world is an abyss and the abyss is my hole he say • • without knowing too well what he is saying as usual • • eventually we always come back to the sacrificed giant a • • turning point in evolution shut up in the citadel so then • • horse ocean reservoir i saw his winged head on the roadways • • the steeds are in single file like wild ducks your body is in • • full flight your thought charges on like the wind houla houla • • vetasa a golden wand soma a dark opening slow down or it will • • be all over on a furrowed field the ear of a plow this one • • eventually we would be no more than invisible droplets • • suspended beyond our photographed heads in a monthly magazine • • hi neighbor in the show window a face of polished stone to • • the right of that famous cartouche the box of descartes as a • • child obviously bonaparte already elbowed his way through • • napoleon truly condemned to death will have his head cut off • • • • • • • • na na and nana there it is again the anti-muse issuing from • • ouraganos fallen into the sea as a result the poet from the • • start has a pronounced taste in his mouth for the menses and • • it is not reasonable to ask him to speak as if he had not • • lost his baby teeth oh the breasts of the parcae lachesis • • atropos within each fille a fil in each mec a mac on the open • • seas in our mother's womb we need a pilot not forgetting that • • they these trickling dears believe that music belongs to them • • the right of the sponge between their legs as if they were • • the only ones who could unravel the first letter of allah who • • opens his mouth wide on the curly muzzle of an ox his • • ancestor the muzzled boor the inner lining of being • • alfbetaigmelthewawzyainhetettyodykphlamdmenmunsamkapinesad- • • ekophreshsintaw which is the wind blowing gently through its • • curls tra l'erba e' fior venia la mala striscia the breathing • • nostril the cabala a nightingale who sings rattles gift of • • exchange who is in the johns i am a mystery plunged into the • • bottom of the tartar sauce how would you like this steak very • • spicy yes with a good p β tち of orpheus served by a mustached • • bachelor hairy upper lip setting off his conk surprised all • • of a sudden in his underwear a glowing nose for his entire • • life elementary my dear watson needless to say if you want to • • fight effectively against agent 666 you have to employ • • • • • • • • without reservation agent 515 woof woof what the letter • • vanished into thin air just as i finished scribbling it cast • • out the nines the unknown factor of the month get rid of me • • this stain let's see now little mate and then there's a • • moment when the girl looks at you saying i am you are you • • happy that i'm you do not forget either that the disconsolate • • and in addition beardless singer turning too soon onto his • • orifice the latter barely emerged from hell will petrify • • again on the right transfixed on the left mutilated and • • buried where is that you will never guess at lesbos not • • possible yes it would be too much to hope for sappho to a • • young girl ah the guy who is seated opposite me appears the • • equal of the gods my beauty • •閨蛛諱閨蛛 • •騷 • •蛛篲 • • • • • • • •蛛蛛 • • • •朦・か・々蛛誶・蛛縺閨・騷 • • harmonia discordia concors the • • heliotrope is the flower which renders invisible in this • • world and i even advise you to chew some petals while • • swimming calmly in the acheron the cocytus the styx or the • • phegethon yes it is certainly a question of comedy since we • • swim in short from the fetid to the pleasant from hell to • • paradise unlike noble tragedy which is sublime but ends sadly • • expecting you to stop in a circle for example in the fifth • • chant the one about the passions cleo's asp semiramis'cuffs • • comedy is presented modestly in common language which the • • • • • • • • entire world including women of the people use che non 捲・ • impresia da pigliare a gabbo discriver fondo a tutto • • l'universo nち da lingua chiammi mamma e babbo and so forth • • from the time of clay to the discovery of the angels who have • • no memory no it was not by chance that the muses are supposed • • to nestle on the mount how's that already helicon really • • helicon a word to the wise is enough manipulator of the helix • • of musica tractabus sive musica practica let's face it a • • certain amount of empiricism is necessary fourth sphere • • active to the 13 a fiery sky from the greek empyrios whose • • pyromaniacs retain the trace whirlwinds of greek fire the • • light on the lake and other effects of cooking in a double • • boiler a cooking pot this little boy has to be watched like • • milk on the stove she said ah the holy chamberpot quest for • • the grail it reminds me of goethe who as a child was fond of • • throwing dishes out the window crying mananumen mananumen • • walhalla you see time is a deep well where we could have • • drowned but we stayed on the coping close to the pulley and • • the pail creaking in the wind breathing like that near the • • flocks and the nasturtiums a long way off the tide returns • • in good weather the cranes fly away to winter on the nile • • something
comes to warm the fetus like the sun the vineyard • • and see i speak now level with the matter which she bore the • • • • • • • • • • germinated anti-egg for birds for fish phew rag blown onto • • the seaweed and the bacteria the stars and the action is done • • neither less nor more flattened depths incomprehensible • • stiped with gun shots mixed up in the bag while there is • • this tree which moves further away from me in their eyes when • • they loosen their grip the sensations of an old man moist • • temples it is there on the other side of the woods i like to • • sleep in my sleeping bag while listening to what sounds like • • the dew the entrance who was this monk whom we happened to • • come upon with a slight erection over the bushes as he stared • • at his clothes whitened imperceptibly from jerking off • • backwards awaiting his stigmata like a feather hands feet • • sides a delicious vinegar after the wine of a mad exquisite • • mass seated speaking to the hen house baptizing calves cows • • pigs caterpillars children glowing verses or sus vous dormิs • • too often madame ioliette it is daylight levิs sus ใcoutิs • • the little meadowlark what does god say it is iour it is iour • • lire lire li fere li lire li ti ti pi tire liron wake up • • sleepy hearts the god of love calls you on this first day of • • may the birds will work wonders for you putting you out of • • d’esmay destoupeze your ears and farirariron farirariron • • ferely ioly you will all be overjoyed for the season is • • pleasant chouti thouy thouy and other foolishness daises a • • • • • • • • • • time of renewal laughing humanity pulls away from its past we • • are the ashes of numerous living beings when the problem is • • to feel it in the throat as if we had become every person • • what an impalpable instrument dissolved in the wind i look at • • these ashen faces cosmetic foundation tight-lipped sad • • rigidity they do not dance they swing and sway the street is • • full of worn pimply skins they do not walk they move forward • • oh this fatigue heaviness when sleepy a naive parish priest • • would say that hell is the representation of the secular • • world and see there on the avenue these characters with • • tambourines krishna shaved skulls painted noses or others • • more ecumenical the rising sun posters billboards god does • • he really exist if yes who is he and why did he create • • mankind and the universe does god govern this world directly • • if yes then why does evil injustice poverty and suffering • • prevail in this world if on the other hand this world is • • under the reign of evil how did this reign come about what • • was the mission of jesus was it completely accomplished h’m • • what does god do today can we offer him a cigarette where has • • our world been headed ever since 1960 the pioneers of a new • • age live and proclaim around the world the whole truth • • concerning these questions they invite you each evening ใtro • • stop mouton-duvernet the master is going to return to the • • • • • • • • • • jardin des plantes shiver slaves consumers paris-bombay in • • the twinkling of an eye katmando-new york carnac-tokoyo • • moscow-cairo the huge cistern trembled inside its volcanic • • walls in the middle of a schist persepolis-dublin along the • • lakes now she says i breathe with my heels it is more • • convenient when the master looks at us with his velvet eyes • • from behind his small rimmed spectacles we are aware of an • • elixir for everything the fire grundstoff des dasein on the • • other hand she is in favor of twelve gods and myself i as if • • there ever has been any zero bent into a curve with a • • lifeless flick of the wrist but by now she is no longer • • listening she lights some tapers she finds that the trip • • flows better with incense curtains and bells or pink floyd • • choose your language in the fridge the dewy-pink test tube • • fleurs de lys the french pill playing with the words • • doucement gently dououreux painful coucou cuckoo and • • chaperon rouge red riding please where does that come from • • what’s all this nonsense how and why tell me tell me please • • in reality the middle class loathe what is noble and popular • • while the lower middle class go one better than the acne of • • the middle class and the middle class swallows aperitively • • its curious blackheads face to face what do you expect the • • mind vanished in the auto accident of what’s-his-name from • • • • • • • • • • now on we are in an era of open flies no one respects • • the allusive mysteries any longer it is truly the end of a • • cycle kali-yuga was written mektoub we need to be restored by • • fire i wish someone would finally cut their hair is socialism • •
From the “Interference” Series: Composition A- No. 6 by Carla Bertola (Italy)
FOR THE RECORD:
Interview with bill bissett

The following is an excerpt from a never-before published interview with bill bissett, by Karl Jirgens recorded October 15, 1986, Toronto. Rampike is pleased to present this rare archival feature as part of our on-going historical documents series.

KJ: Thanks for taking time to talk. I was hoping you could you say a little bit about your educational background as it might have affected your artistry. You studied at U.B.C. for a while didn't you?

BB: I was at U.B.C. as an English and Philosophy major. I never finished my other courses so I never got my B.A. I did actually finish my English and Philosophy courses -- Political Philosophy, Plato, Hobbes, Locke, Hume, stuff like that. Doctor Rowan was a really excellent professor. He left Berkeley at a time when the administrations everywhere were asking people to sign oaths saying that they would inform on someone, this was the post-McCarthy period. So he was very concerned with political and philosophic freedom of mind. I also took a great course with Warren [Tallman], it was a poetics course. The poetics course was very informal, we would spend as long as maybe a month on one poem because Warren was interested in us realizing and accepting the values and elements of the poem.

KJ: And yet, some people have called you a naive writer.

BB: I understand that. I'm very well read. I don't know if that's the antithesis of naive. Someone told me recently that I was a naive painter, and I asked them if they wanted to look again, so they looked again and said, 'No you're not.' I like to think I know nothing. I don't know what there is to know. Knowledge of the good? What is the good? You know in the allegory of the cave, the good is the revelation, which is non-translatable. I love the allegory of the cave; it excites me. Some people think that The Republic isn't an open society, and in some ways that's true, it certainly is not [open] for artists and writers. But in a lot of ways it’s more open than this society. To me it’s a relative term. Personally, I like this society. The trouble with the word 'naive' is that most people use it condescendingly. And when different cultures co-exist, usually there's a drive for one culture to condescend to the other.

KJ: Would you say that your style and structure is partly the way it is because you are trying to convey a feeling that can't be fully expressed in words alone? That is, you use rhythms, and sound, and intonation or shaped poems and so on, in order to reduce the difference between what is in your head with what ends up in the audience's head so that the audience can more fully experience what it is that you felt at the time of poem's creation?

BB: I understand, and that would posit a difference between what I do and what some other people do. It suggests that what I do is some kind of naturalism, as opposed to some people who use sounds in a more cerebral way. It has a lot to do with the use of the elements, rather than with a difference in the actual elements. I say, 'naturalism' because all those different elements are arranged there to express the feeling. I'm probably more into feelings than exercises. -- Bach and Mozart used to be compared with Beethoven. And Beethoven seemed to be a stronger ring for freedom, more expression, more to do with feelings. And Bach, more than Mozart had to do with perfection, and all the notes being there, so
that there already is excellence, and that wasn't [found] in naturalism; that was a classical acceptance.
bp [Nichol] and I used to be compared in a similar way. I think that Bach and Beethoven use the same
elements, and from many different points of view, similar things are being said. If nature is a
mathematical equation, which is loved and is still loving, [then] it’s only another approach. So the
elements of sound, surprise, agreement, variation and difference in the sounds of the notes, and the
harmonies and the dissonance, are all there in both composer's works. I think that the categorical
difference is at best, arbitrary.

KJ: When you compose chants there seem to be different voices. How did these evolve?

BB: I did a reading in Scotland, some people said it was Gaelic, I did a reading once in Antigonish,
and someone said it was a Nova Scotia fishing song, I did a reading once in Brandon Manitoba, and a
person there told me she had heard sounds like that in Africa. In Seattle a lot of people told me it
sounded Cajun. I think it has to do with what you can tap into, what you can be in this life. I feel, in
this life, independent of any assumptions that come out of a particular genealogy. I don't know where
those sounds came from. I started doing sound poetry and me and Lance Farrell used to break down
the molecules of the language. We saw them as molecules too. So it was exciting when Barrie Nichol
wrote about the molecular breakdown in my writing in We Sleep Inside Each Othr All. Lance and me
used to sit up all night long and break things down. We'd take a word that had four syllables, break it
down, make a poem out of it, put the pauses in it. We used to work a lot on moments of hesitation,
frustration and analysis of language within the moment. And we would do things that involved
repetition. The first few times at a reading I would say something over and over again and there would
be some variation in the language. I think it was a poem from Fires in th Tempul, I'm not certain, but the English of it left, and I dived into non-English. And I
don't know the origin, but it came from repetition. I know that if you repeat something over and over
again, in whatever language that's handed down, then this slurring occurs and then other sounds start to
emerge and we leave the language behind -- for me, then, the sounds come into an interplay with the
so-called lyrics that are in English. Sometimes the voices represent different people, sometimes it’s a
courting song. I do one called, 'do you want to walk with me? – it’s two people talking.

KJ: Your collaborative work is interesting. What did you do when you played with your musical
group, “Mandan Massacre?”

BB: Vocals. It was twenty years ago, in 1969. We made a record together, Awake in the Red Desert.
We did a couple of gigs together, and then that was that. Now I'm playing with Dermot Foley in
Vancouver, "Sonic Horses". Number one came out a year and a half ago. Number two is almost ready
to be released now. We've been doing the recording for it for the last three months, and doing the final
mix on it now. Also, in London, (I've been living there off and on for the last a year and a half), I was
playing there with a band called "The Luddites".

KJ: Could you say more about your structural stylistics?

BB: Because they want to get more and more into artificial intelligence, some linguists are talking
about the creation of paragraphs, or sentences, and whether they help the brain respond. And they do
ask whether there is some biological-chemical analogue. [For instance], is a sentence analogous to a
certain function of the brain, or organization of reality? The more 'traditional' or 'classical' theories
implicitly or overtly suggest this. Other less traditional theories are looking at the specific molecules to
see if that's really true, because that may not really be true. Although it [the argument] has a certain compelling quality, especially when you write prose. You know how it seems like paragraphs come to you almost *a priori*, in a chunk. There's a balance and a weight. It seems to be coming from somewhere that's in the body or in the bodies.

**KJ:** Stein was talking about that.

**BB:** Yes, very much. And the non-'organized' parts [of writing] have maybe to do with the molecular, have to do with a feeling of expression as one of the central elements as opposed to the more lineal elements.

**KJ:** Do you feel that you're moving more towards narration?

**BB:** Sometimes it feels like parallel lines, they meet and they don't meet. I'm still working within 'lyric' and 'molecular' expositions. The narrative is taking more of my time. It was/is always there.

**KJ:** Could you say more about your influences?

**BB:** I know that when Barrie Nichol and myself, we didn't know each other at the time, but when we first discovered Stein, it was like coming home. It was my home as a writer.

**KJ:** You once mentioned Brazilian concrete poets in one of your poems, did you have anybody in particular in mind?

**BB:** I know we used to read each other. I can't think of anyone right now, but there was a great magazine called *Ovum* from Brazil.

**KJ:** You've done over fifty books, right?

**BB:** I guess its fifty-nine but it’s uncertain. I know Talonbooks has helped keep track.

**KJ:** Have you ever look at some of the shaped poetry of Publius Optation Porphry?

**BB:** I think I saw some work of his in a slide show that Earle Birney did of early concrete visual writing. It’s totally ancient isn't it?

**KJ:** It sure is, around 300 A.D., I guess. In the western world, as far as I know, actual shaped poetry goes back as far as Theocritus around 600 B.C. But I’d say there was a lot of other text-image work much earlier, among the Egyptians. But the influence was there. In the 1600s, George Herbert wrote a poem called 'Easter Wings,' in imitation of an earlier poem by Theocritus.

**BB:** George Herbert, yes, I've heard of him.
KJ: Some of your shaped poetry reminds me of his sometimes. Innovative artists have always had their challenges. Could you say something about what the events were leading to you along with bpNichol being denounced as pornographers in the House of Commons?

BB: That was in 1978 or '79. There was cluster of M.P.'s. They were mostly conservative, some Liberals and some N.D.P. who were familiarized with some of the work I did, from a book called, The Legacy of Government Spending by Ed Murphy, who was a hot-line show D.J. in Vancouver. And he sold thousands and thousands of copies of this book, and he didn't get permission to use the poems. The book involved a poem [of mine] called 'a warm place to shit'. And so he put this press kit together and this politicians' kit, because they were looking for a way to get the Canada Council, and the Liberals out. So it was a vote-getting thing. And it took a lot of people's support to resolve; Warren Tallman, the A.C.P. [Association of Canadian Publishers], tons of people, the League of Canadian poets and so on. I wasn't the only one being attacked, but I was the one at that time, with the least financial stability. So, I appeared to be the easiest one to take shots at. I survived really well because of the support of a lot of my friends. That was part of the on-going censorship problem which still exists, Margaret Laurence, Margaret Atwood, J.D. Salinger, the list is endless.

KJ: You talk about a gastro-intestinal illness in the Pass the Food Release the Spirit Book, do you feel that somehow that condition influenced you to use the image of food both in its physical manifestation and as a psychic thing, that is, as a metaphor for ideas being passed on?

BB: Uh huh, yes. Very likely it did. I had inflammation of the peritonea which is the lining to the intestine. I couldn't eat for a year.

KJ: You've got to be strong to live with something like that. What sign are you?

BB: I'm on the cusp of Sagittarius and Scorpio with Gemini rising. I became more Scorpio during the 1970's, but now I'm more Sagittarian. They're both great signs, but together it’s not always a piece of cake, and the Gemini helps a lot.

KJ: Have you ever won any major literary prizes?

BB: I feel lucky to have received a lot of Canada Council grants for a lot of years. Not much in recent years, except some short-term grants and through the reading program. The years when I got the most grants would be in the sixties until the mid-seventies. And I came second in a C.B.C. literary contest for poetry, in 1979, I guess. And I was lucky enough to be writer-in-residence at the University of Western Ontario.

KJ: Apart from Gertrude Stein, who do you feel has influenced you?

BB: Genet, Gide, Kafka, H.D., Kerouac, Stein for sure.

***
th metaphysiks uv th surviving self & mirror peopul
by bill bissett

th searcing endocrine
not like in
yesterday summer haze in
continent
venus whispering th first
storee is
system i sd no he sd
its breathing
flowers growing
in boxes hanging from
th ceiling
as far as th eye
cud see may b longr
in finitee
annousing a different
galaxee
th perfumd drummr
erth bfor or we
wer ar afr th
mirror
peopul sumtimes he
sd mawking or praising
so much
can slip into pride
is that so awful vch
approach
AN ABSTRACT NOUN who
will tell us aneething
dont beleev
them its abt th
akashik cd
meet me
at th forum
round 3 pm wud yu
undr th beginning
th lengthening
shadows we cud
make a run for it
our fingers melting
togther n our
dreams uv sun
blessing can b th
ravenous soul
kissing our minds pouring yet
farthr n inn uv th perfum
messenger
whn we slide thru th glass
slip so eezile thru th
layrs silkee n grateful merging n
lyrikul blending into
th reel
intima n lustr uv th fifteenth radians
giving off th scent uv
so manee n eternal mirrorings
eternal moons we fly thru
ar yu
jodee he sd 2 me
humid yu cud barelye breath no i sd sum
peopul ar coupling undr a tree
not far from me iuv just run
away from sum wun i didnt want
whos next time n th moon so
hot n novum n ovarewun
it keeps turning undr th
cedar th
smells uv acorn n
walnut magnolia th singing spirits inside th
limbs n perfumd umbrella
we wer all out undr
farthr in side th
mirror
as what causality
as what figuring
as what genius
amends windows seeping into
con scious ness aspekt ing
goo
es na es na
never bin so
restless th purring fund magish
yan
was showing his hand 2 th
on looking mirrors th peopul in
side narrowlee
ducking his grasp duck
duck they ar so silverlee
luckee for them yes i sd
breathing thats it we wer siting
undr rows n rows uv
sweet smallding dreams uv
erotik bliss as far
as th eye cud see
perhaps mor pulling up their sheets so fast n
tremulo
n
pianissimo
ths
part
who flew so
catching snippets uv
suddlee
prays uv sooon
mantras uv now pleez
now
th lightning
lit up everee
where
as rare as we wer so tiny
alrite we cud see
into everee place
beeking beeming brittul
however britting
wer hear ovr hear
n he was weering acorns n
walnuts round his ankule intima
in teems th mirror peopul who
will tell us aneething
don le t
them keep going on
arint
they great th
arint they frmitening
o langwanga
th
eye reelee like th mirror peopul i sd yes
corroda th at kanaaamamaa
th laltr bronzing echoes uv our out for getting
it on feeding they live inside th mirrors n ar not
reflects un uv us o lizard plants growing so tall
in th background becoming th foreground is where th diffrens
space is all space all space is all space th mirror peopul
take us on our quickest n longest jorneys when its time they
cum for us n sing bells into our ears n hearts th mind
revolving like a danse ball meet sum sum from love land
in ther SUMWUN FROM LOVE LAND
like a danse ball

prana inteem a

a seriees uv replenishd toys
like a write getting read 2 vacuum we ver standing undr rows
n rows uv prfuming flowers growing in boxes delicate n dahlias
n surprizing colors n textures they ver raming into infinitee
or prhaps longr mm th mirror peopul chanting our way along rubee
sacred corridora chanting n fanning our way zee thru th mirror
peopul when they carry ess us leading us cum a long now its
alrite 2 th mix uv milke sun drenchd sand nd take us thru th
passage wayz so tendrel n holding our hands so incredible
hugging us we all know its to th unknown n th suspensyun uv
suspyun uv rejekctASYn suspensyun uv negativitee thees opn
ings thru th crystal caverna analoiga for ar rime n space
turning licking our lips uv th lobstr evn heer n so succulent
th taybul cloth th turning each tall orde each othr did yu
see how th walls mould melt n curv into othr castules medows
othr consideraysuns uv th hiest
i sd n i want 2 live wher thers
differnt i know evreewun is isint
thing th othr vois can yu hear
well carrer th spells from whoov
with me me no ov th regrets
not ov th wundrfulness fullee
it living in was o no tho
make a go with cud const
toast in th morning with luvlee coffee from paris

n watching th swimmers tangul in th kelp n th marina so
eeree in th still unfulfilld morning lite seeking a room
sumwher 2 write in a big citee in a small verandah cudint
curl am arint n sailing omnmnmnm evree wun outside is th
same n so differnt as th inside n i keep writing n writing n
going farth n farth inside into th centr uv th lite wch
hopefullee transcend middl class moralites for th self so
responsibul inside th deepet centr uv th crystal henging
our th large citee above th pollichyun u f o s ium
writing in its rocking n evree nite theirs arm pits
not wun foot affer th othr wun foot with each othr 2 h is a
foot dislayuns in th text ownership uv memorees gazing on
crotches tits legs legs around our brain pressing n
trew love anothr abstrakt noun its so veree rocking n evree
nite th fires burn inside our hearts nevr confusd was it a
tempest afterwards we cud peer in so deplee n thinking evree
day uv livng

we cud see whee we ar whee we war whatts cumming
laffing allianse n th futur hear like 2 linking 2 memorees
in th flowers humming i meen middl class moralitees in presonal
affairs uv th heart he clarified yes i understand that dew yu
evr think that sum wun or summar will cum n yr touch will b
tendr agen n that love will cum me ium not holding my brth
its nevr love for long is it wasting my time with spekulaysyun
dont want 2 listn 2 sum old tapes thinkin bad uv that prson
bein sad abt that wun listenin 2 burnt hurt refrains lost in
judgment

lots uv brok toys mending we saw our selve thru th
telescopes that was raging things keep happenng nothings
gettin dum floatin ovr your street jonathan jonathan
fastr n fastr it was th wind.

n windest uv all blasted so
deliberatelee wasint it th tunnle dreamin swayin rocking
our soon 2 silvr lovs laying along th somnolent undes nd such
mergin o o o changing direktyuns courses matin coupling
n singul th voyajur golding th lantern spirals th perfum
fate keeps gladiator hrs sweep stalemates makrs marine
biographers book design wrafflers sewr ppr sellrz who will
look into yr eyez take yr mouth n luckee we ar n glazing lift

yu lasting eye dont know evn if 1 somtimes dont beleeving in th con
continuitee uv evreething it cud still go on beleeving in me like
th mirror peopul dont mind along th somnolent mirroring th
laydl down by th rivr uv what is time flowing what is space
isnt it omni centring thru mor n mor mirrors we pass thru
sheets in th splaying oll n nu songs nu harmonies go all th
way lull n lifting beez n boiling play in th hate uv th
witnesses mouths n minds ovp 2 th reflecting TING th self

so shining carrees on bord a candul a notebook
at th sweeping vallee th peopul uv ths time zone
cant see us as we roll with th wind ovr thayr houses n out
n inn

in singing
th inevitabilitee uv tossd salads dictating plesur
by bill bissett

tiles n underground citees hopefulee surviving

EVN mor baffling
From: SPONGE SPITES – II
2 POEMS by Michael Basinski

1.

Heterozygosity,
A Pretty Jar for a Small Amount of Poem

fusion of sponge larvae enhances
enchances on the table
finders aught in the hole
and lap it up of wild nep the egg hop
spite salve flesh ansupit of the broothy
green berry curooses the moonoses
noose the strangulation and the flux goose
shell this from witch rose naked
staunch, barking, spewing, casting
the plaster that lay about the magnesia
mouth milkov a cow lava so up
so ap that the hair of one color larvae
of many sessile missal marine
invertebrates are unselective
as to the mathur nature
of the surface on which they sittle
rhyme the outer rind
wrung out the drunken earwig juice
2.

A Winged Spite Bit

make a gargarism of infects
infections with little horns
whores or ice scour poooking
proaking dreams puking
out before they're eyes
but EAK! weak and peta
tender lion. therefore,
to maintain high species diversity
in such locations a predator,
or physical disturbance,
such as icis scour, must be invoked
far beyond the margin of hindwings
and the tibia and tarsi
in the unselective poemsex
settlement seethe sleep soak savor
the sblast in the seeyes
old age, plague, sourbrread,
toasters, myrrh with ewrose
for him that may not well piss

To order Sponge Sites – II contact:
Buffalo Vortex, Wm. Sylvester Editor, 411 Parkside Avenue, Buffalo, N.Y., 14216
Sylvester@acsu.buffalo.edu http://www.acsu.buffalo.edu/~sylvester/BV.html
Diary
by John Donlan

Bloor’s body a worn-out cat machine
under the rickety winter garden,
settling mound.
Too much history, "like a ball and chain."

While you remember how the pansy-faced
longhair dozed on the tea-cozy, sodden grey
scraps of coyote on the CN main line blur
to unreadable text,

You’d be extinct
without this gift for containing illuminated bits
of loved lives without also storing the growing dark
of their unending endings, but

evolution’s over.
The various lovely wild starves and dies
and the future denies you many more slipping glimpses
of wild or domestic lives.
Number One Great Dane

by FRANK DAVEY

To have your pet win the grand prize at a dog show is not like winning a literary prize. To win a dog prize it helps to have a friend on the judging panel. It helps that throughout the year you have delivered coffee to judges when you’ve seen them sitting alone at ringside. It helps that you have advertised your dog as ‘best’ in numerous canine magazines. Literary value is quite different from the kennel club’s breed standards, even though ‘officially recognized’ does mean, in doggy language, ‘canonical.’ The only dogs considered for the grand prize are those that were entered, which leaves a lot of inglorious dogs named Milton languishing at firesides. It helps that you have sat with prospective judges and chatted about structural problems in your competition. About them not having been born the colour they display. About their use of illegal substances. Or that you have observed sagely and loudly that some move at too slow a pace. That they are highly regarded only in other countries, or in rural communities. It helps to parade your pet and his trophies through crowds where judges congregate. It helps to go to the right parties. To go to the right shows. To introduce your dog in a purely social tail-wagging way to influential breeders. To talk frequently about good breeding. Literary prizes are intractable because editors, ex-editors, schoolmates, and envious competitors never sit on judging panels. When a book is called a dog, it makes prize-winning less likely. The kennel club forbids family members from judging your dog. Forbids judges who once sold you a dog. Forbids judges who recently have paid you to exhibit one of their own dogs. But it does not forbid ex-spouses, or your son’s judge girl-friend, or judges whose dogs compete with yours, or judges who you once paid to exhibit your dog, or judges who were once your kennel-help. It helps to encourage your kennel help and your children’s lovers to become judges. It helps to be a judge yourself and to make a deal with a judge who would also like his dog to win. It is therefore both easier and more difficult to win a dog prize than a book prize.
Re-Routings: part 2
by Richard Kostelanetz

“Poetry has from the earliest times engaged in play with suffixes; but only in Modern Poetry, and particularly in Klebnikov, has this device become conscious, and as it were, legitimate.”

-Roman Jakobson “The Newest Russian Poetry” (1920)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OWN</th>
<th>SOWN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HOP</td>
<td>SHOP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILE</td>
<td>RILE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARM</td>
<td>FARM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOD</td>
<td>NODE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LUG</td>
<td>SLUG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUE</td>
<td>CLUE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RACK</td>
<td>CRACK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POOL</td>
<td>SPOOL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LUNG</td>
<td>SLUNG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HARD</td>
<td>CHARD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LACK</td>
<td>BLACK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GO</td>
<td>EGO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EGO</td>
<td>ERGO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OUGHT</td>
<td>FOUGHT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LUMBER</td>
<td>SLUMBER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OVE</td>
<td>LOVER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOVER</td>
<td>CLOVER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN</td>
<td>PIN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIN</td>
<td>PINE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPINE</td>
<td>SPINET</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
bpNichol, Drawing the Poetic Line
By Paul Dutton

In a sense, to write is a visual act—to put letters on a page, to create lines with a pencil or a pen. There’s a very definite visual moment. The page is a visual field and that’s one of the elements of writing . . . The minute you start to look at what you write, there’s a whole set of visual possibilities that opens up.

-bpNichol

When Fluxus artist Dick Higgins wrote of "the ongoing human wish to combine the visual and the literary impulses," he might have pointed to no more exemplary a contemporaneous instance than the visual poetic output of bpNichol. Over the course of some twenty-five years or so, in and beyond the context of the conventional literary frameworks of stanzaic poetry, Nichol drew on and drew with the alphabet to forge a singular body of visual creations in a remarkable variety of writerly media (with a few instances of painterly collaboration). He employed a broad range of forms and styles dictated or suggested by those media, touched on themes and subjects that concerned or preoccupied him in his more conventionally literary endeavours, and ranged widely through a spectrum from the literarily visual to the purely pictorial.

This enterprise was grounded in a vision of literature as a function of the integrated sensory experience that language is, involving body and intellect, ear and eye and mind. Nichol’s artistic vision, conceived with clarity at the outset of his career and maintained and developed with unwavering consistency throughout it, informed not just his visual work but his equally significant and innovative achievements in sound poetry and in lyric and narrative poetry and prose.

A certain proportion of Nichol’s visual work extends beyond any strictly linguistic context, veering exclusively into the category of picture— as in Door to Oz, for instance, or all but one page of Movies. What’s at issue, of course, is the breakdown of just such distinctions, and there is certainly drawn work within the stanzaic work, though rarely vice versa. Still, there is validity beyond mere convenience in placing the larger part of the visual work, including much that is clear-cut drawing, within the broad framework of visual poetry, a tradition that stretches back through Western languages for more than two millennia, constituting a body of literature neither generally known nor much acknowledged. Since Simmias of Rhodes in 325 BC, there has been a discontinuous but persistent strain of poems shaped to depict objects, individuals, or geometric designs. Only a scant handful of these have, begrudgingly, been granted admission to the canon of world literature, examples in English being George Herbert’s seventeenth-century shaped lyrics and the passage in Lewis Carroll’s Alice in Wonderland called “the mouse’s tale” (appropriately, punningly shaped).

When Nichol began to exercise his own visual-literary sensibilities at the age of twenty in the mid 1960s, he knew of Carroll’s piece, likely knew of Herbert’s works and of Apollinaire’s Caligrammes, and had encountered the typographic revels of the Dadaists. He did not know, however, of the long history and broad range of antecedents for such work—virtually nobody did (including Apollinaire, the Dadaists, and the Futurists, for that matter): it took the long-term, assiduous scholarship of Dick Higgins to string it all together in his 1987 book Pattern Poetry: Guide to an Unknown Literature. Higgins, before he began that research, was himself part of a mid-twentieth-century eruption of “the natural human impulse to combine one’s visual and literary experiences” (Higgins’ phrase)—the international concrete poetry movement of the 1950s, ’60s, and ’70s.

Spawned independently of the larger historical stream, and expanding the techniques, forms, and esthetics of visual poetry, concrete poetry was so called because it treated letters, syllables, words, and sentences as concrete objects, with an existence separate from or in addition to their abstract signification of other things. Practitioners throughout Europe, the Americas, and Japan used typewriter and typesetting technology in highly individual, largely unconventional, vastly differentiated ways. The term expired (at least within the vocabulary of most practitioners) around the early ’70s, but the’
sensibility and its expression continue within the broadly applied framework of visual poetry. One place where this occurs is within the context of mail art, that broad and undefined area comprising work created for or amenable to distribution through the mails, and which operates within an esthetic atmosphere of anarchic unorthodoxy congenial to visual poetry.

Around 1963–64 Nichol and fellow writers in Vancouver (bill bissett, Lance Farrell, Judith Copithorne) and Toronto (Earle Birney, David Aylward) were exploring visual poetry on their own terms, oblivious of the newly emerging concrete movement, with which they had such affinity. Word of it was soon to come, but before taking a look at that stage of things, let’s consider some personal contexts for Nichol’s visual-literary predilections.

Barrie Philip Nichol, born 1944 in Vancouver, “always had,” he once informed an interviewer, “a kind of, I suppose, idiosyncratic, very particular relationship to the idea of the alphabet, the idea of language.” One aspect of this special relationship was his love of the letter “H,” whose oft-proclaimed status as his favourite letter stemmed, he eventually concluded, from two childhood factors: he lived on a street in the H Section of a Winnipeg subdivision with street signs surmounted by the respective sectional alphabetic designations, so that letters were geographic locators for him, with H, where home was, holding understandably special significance; and he read Harvey Comics, which employed a large block-letter H as a logo. (More about Nichol and comics further on.)

Another dimension of Nichol’s special relationship to the alphabet and language emerged in Toronto early in 1965, when the twenty-year-old poet, recently arrived from Vancouver, connected with printer Stan Bevington at Coach House Press and undertook an intensive informal apprenticeship in manual typesetting and letterpress printing. Nichol wrote in 1986 about the transformative effect that this had on his literary perception: “there’s no doubt about it, the effect of setting my own texts, letter by letter, word by word, line by line, was to create in me a whole new awareness of all the components that go into any literature”—specifying then a variety of factors that mediate the experience of printed works, including “the difference in visual meaning between the differently shaped faces,” different densities and colours of papers and inks, different shapes and bindings. Those elements were applied in his audacious 1967 publication, Journeying & the returns (also known as bp), a slipcased collection that comprised a book of lyric free verse, a record of sound poems, a flip-poem, and an envelope of visual poems.

Prior to Nichol’s Coach House involvement (which was to last the rest of his life), he had begun working with visual arrangements of typewriter texts, creating verbal, syllabic, and lettristic patterns and textures. He had also got wind of the concrete movement through a couple of sources, one of them Vancouver poet George Bowering, who wasn’t keen on employing the techniques himself, but offered correspondence contacts that Nichol in Toronto and bissett in Vancouver eagerly followed up on, establishing a connection with the British avant-garde poet, performer, and mimeo publisher Bob Cobbing (who kept at it till his death in 2002, at the age of 82, but with the mimeo long since abandoned for a photocopier). A month prior to the appearance of Journeying & the returns / bp in 1967, Bob Cobbing’s Writers Forum issued Nichol’s Konfessions of an Elizabethan Fan Dancer, a collection of typewriter poems done between ’64 and ’66 that had nothing to do with confessions, fan dancers, or the Elizabethan era—but what a great title. The book came out in Canada six years later.

The period of the mid to late ’60s was a busy and fertile one for Nichol. He started a mimeo press and magazine, Ganglia, with David Aylward in 1965. Nichol’s poetry was appearing in small magazines and was included in an anthology of work by upcoming Canadian poets. He was gaining recognition in Canada for stanzaic lyrics, and abroad for concrete poems (the connection with Cobbing generated further connections). One development arising from the concrete movement was a degree of acceptance for it in art galleries—where, at least initially, it received a warmer reception than in literary contexts—and Nichol found himself exhibiting in England, France, and Spain. He was moving beyond the typewriter and the printing press to the greater plasticities available with Letraset, rubber stamps, and photocopies, the latter two of which he used (albeit rarely) in the creation of visually textured poem images (as opposed to poetic images, though they had their poetic qualities). He was also doing hand-drawn pieces that worked with the extended conventions of comic strips. In 1967 he started a new Ganglia Press monthly, grOnk, with a focus on international concrete and related poetries. And he found
new uses for the resources at Coach House, which he employed for a variety of what might be termed poem sculptures: things like “The Birth of O”—around a dozen pages or more, each with a letterpress, blindstamped (i.e., printed without ink), die-cut “o” in a different typeface and size; and “A Little Pome for Yur Fingertips”—a straight poem printed letterpress and blindstamped, so that an illegible but tactile impression was left on the page. Such pieces as these latter two may have been in Nichol’s mind when he announced in the cover copy for Journeying & the returns / bp his conviction that:

if [the poet’s] need is to touch you physically he creates a poem / object for you to touch and is not a sculptor for he is still moved by the language and sculpts with words ... I place myself there, with them, whoever they are, wherever they are, who seek to reach themselves and the other thru the poem by as many exits and entrances as are possible.

Nichol certainly was finding a wealth of exits and entrances from and to the poem, even if he wasn’t making enough copies for the masses to stream through those exits and entrances—not that the masses ever gave indication of wanting to. Ganglia, being a litmag, was printed in small enough quantities, but the more unorthodox items were mostly done in runs of less than fifty, often less than twenty. The following quote from Nichol’s statement accompanying his contribution to Emmett Williams’ 1967 An Anthology of Concrete Poetry, contains a note of resignation that typifies Nichol’s attitude at the time. This excerpt also offers insight into his artistic intention with these specific visuals, a series called “Eyes,” consisting of six succinct clusters of Letraset characters in abstract configurations (yes, yes—abstract concrete; maybe one of the reasons why we stopped using the term). Here’s what he wrote:

tight imagistic things, intended for what they teach the eye on one looking tho some tend to be pleasing if looked at a few times . . . not meant as pictures but as syllabic and sub-syllabic messages for who care to listen.

Well, he did write “who care” as opposed to “who cares,” so he was expecting more than one listener. Or maybe not: as he recalled in 1986, “Not a lot of people were interested in what I was interested in. There was a feeling I was just crazy, and the feeling I was pursuing an absolute dead end assailed me in those days.” Things started looking up when David W. Harris (later to be David UU, pronounced “double u”) arrived in Toronto from Collingwood, Ontario, for a brief sojourn, and, more significantly, a couple of years or so later, when Steve McCaffery came from England for good. “That made a huge difference in my life,” Nichol attested in 1986. “Here was someone who was concerned with the same issues, and covered the same ground from his own angle for his own reasons.” By 1970, there was enough interest for Nichol to find a mainstream small press (Oberon) to publish an anthology of Canadian concrete poetry by thirty-one contributors, The Cosmic Chef.

That same year, Talonbooks, on the West Coast, put out Nichol’s box of elegant visually oriented poem cards, Still Water, one of three publications for which he received the 1971 Governor General’s Award. Oberon a year later published the Letraset suite, ABC: the Aleph Beth Book, for which “Eyes,” from the Emmett Williams anthology, could be viewed as a study. The twenty-six iconic images in ABC, each effected with one letter of the alphabet, are models of formal precision, possessing the kind of economy, wit, and sophisticated graphic sensibility associated with organizations’ logos. These, however, announce allegiance only to the letters of the alphabet, and resound here and there with echoes of twentieth-century fine art: Mondrian’s rectangles, for instance, in the “L” composition and to lesser degree in “I” and “H,” and Duchamp’s Nude Descending a Staircase in the overlapping “T”s. Nichol’s work, incidentally, had by this time appeared in further group shows—in Toronto, Edmonton, Vancouver, Victoria, and Bloomington, Indiana, as well as in Amsterdam’s Stedjelik Museum, which in 1971 mounted a major concrete poetry exhibit that toured to Austria and Germany.

Nichol maintained an interest in and enthusiasm for both the fine arts and the popular arts, so when he wanted a title for an international poetry publication he chose grOnk, a word invented, and so spelt, by cartoonist Johnny Hart to convey a sense of the roar of a dinosaur in his comic strip. B.C. (where he drew the central “O” with more gigantically graphic drama than a typewriter could effect). Nichol’s appropriation of this term bespoke his respect for the popular art form whose conventions he would extend with mischievous wit, humour both subtle and broad, and more than a little visual and
linguistic profundity, fashioning a uniquely significant contribution to visual poetry and (I’ll risk it) the visual arts. This claim may appear unjustified to any who have encountered the inappropriately titled *bpNichol Comics*, published by Talonbooks in 2002. A sad travesty of scholarship, the book, while containing a handful of Nichol nuggets, grotesquely misrepresents his comics poetry, wasting precious pages on juvenilia and insignificant abandoned projects, and taking up a full chapter in the perpetration of one egregious, patently obvious, and inexcusable error—all this, while ignoring numerous finished works central to Nichol’s singular, media-melding achievement.

Comics were a lifelong passion for Nichol, whose childhood fascination with the big, bold Harvey Comics “H” mushroomed, over the decades, into a collection that spanned the history of the form from the Sunday funnies of the early 1900s (we’re talking originals here) to the spandex superheroes of the 1980s, from the Golden Age classics of the ’30s and ’40s to the underground radicals of the ’60s.

It should be understood that Nichol didn’t just read and collect comic books and comic strips, he studied and revered them, finding rich veins not just of humour but of esthetic thrills and of insight into the workings of the mind. He once wrote that Winsor McCay, an early twentieth-century Sunday comics genius and a pioneer of animation, exposed the unconscious of the upper and middle classes, and that Pogo creator Walt Kelly used a “post-Joycean base for language.” On another occasion, he and Steve McCaffery, writing on literary theory as the Toronto Research Group (there were just the two of them, but Toronto Research Two lacks a certain ring and Toronto Research Couple could create the wrong impression), expounded on the complications of time sense and the implied grammatical and syntactic analogues of the comic-strip panel. That basic unit of art plays a prominent role in Nichol’s hand-drawn visuals, which include comic strips, single panels (also called gag panels), and images presented with no panels enclosing them.

Comic-strip and comic-book panels were restricted almost exclusively to a standard grid pattern until the mid ’60s, when the anything-goes panel’s lib of the underground comics movement hit. Nichol weighed in with a vengeance. He fashioned complex, layered lattice-works of variously sized frames in which characters got tangled up (“Scraptures, Eleventh Sequence”) or lost (one of the *Lonely Fred* episodes). He arranged his frames in orderly squares on three lines, two of them diagonal and one horizontal, so that the same page presented three story lines simultaneously, all of them (lines and stories) intersecting at a central common incident and frame (“Rocky Mountain Highs” in the *Lonely Fred* series).

While painter Roy Lichtenstein moved into the comics frame to work at a kind of molecular level of technique, Nichol pushed out against the frame and other comic conventions to a more panoramic approach. The simply drawn, minimally detailed figures of the characters and scenes in Nichol’s comics contrast with the sophisticated play occurring with the panels themselves, to which our attention is guided by the reduction in any possibly distracting elaboration of their contents. Also part of the play is the fluidity of the panels’ contents in relation to the various illusory planes implied: a large oval eye, inherently blank, à la *Little Orphan Annie* (as are the eyes of—with rare exceptions—all the characters except animals and a guardian angel) is filled with a scene of hills, birds, and clouds (*Grease Ball Comics*, 1); an entire face becomes a panel itself, containing a landscape interrupted by the four blank ovals of the face’s eyes, nose, and ambiguously gaping mouth (“Allegory #26”); scenes and characters are repeatedly found to be apportioned throughout a pattern of dissecting panels, as though existing not in the panels, but behind them—except that occasionally what’s behind them is discontinuous, as are the letter fragments in *Grease Ball Comics*, 1, thus suggesting that they are in the panels after all. Of course, where they are, really, is on the page, a point Nichol never lost sight of, and one that I’ll return to. But first, some comment on the implications of the panel play I’ve just described.

Nichol’s notebooks (where, incidentally, preliminary sketches can be found for many pieces that have, in finished form, the feel of a casual toss-off) contain an uncompleted comic strip, *The True Tale of Tommy Turk*, which includes one page that has sixteen panels layered in three blocks, each block of panels depicted on a respective plane in the foreground, mid ground, and background, and every one of the panels empty except for a caption at its top saying “Meanwhile.” Nichol, who took delight in the idea of simultaneity in narrative, and who more than once used the “meanwhile” caption out of context.
in gag panels, here has depicted nineteen simultaneities at once. Simultaneity of time suggests simultaneity of memory and, consequently, simultaneously operating levels of consciousness, so it is not too much of a stretch, I think, to interpret Nichol’s lattice-works of panels as figuratively suggesting the mind and levels of consciousness. This is, of course, in addition to the sensuous intent that everywhere maintains in Nichol’s artistic output. (One must be careful about interpretations of work by someone like Nichol, who once, in attendance at a pedantic literary lecture, received a note from fellow poet Victor Coleman, saying “Exegesis saves,” and responded promptly with the reciprocal editorial comment, “Analysis in Wonderland.”)

Another dimension of Nichol’s panel planes is indicated in “Fictive Funnies” (“Featuring,” proclaims the subtitle, “Syntax Dodges”), where Milt the Morph, Nichol’s ubiquitous circle-featured leading character, having bent over to pick something up (“Hey!! What’s this Pun doing here?” he inquires in a speech balloon), trips a trap door at the bottom of one panel and falls through into the panel below, realizing in a thought balloon: “OH MY GOD!! I’ve fallen thru a hole in the narrative sequence into a different world!”

Different worlds: dream worlds, imagined worlds, worlds of memory, worlds of thought, they are all worlds of the mind, which, wherever that might be, is where thought occurs. And there is not much other than thought that transpires in Nichol’s comics, with action and narrative sequence almost absent, and speech kept to a minimum. In all the comics he published—strips, gags, and the many drawings without panels (Allegories and The Aleph Unit series, and a raft of individual others)—there is only one, The Revolt of Rover Rawshanks, which features dialogue, and one instance of dialogue between Lonely Fred and his guardian angel. Beyond these two exceptions, thought balloons are ubiquitous, and speech balloons rarely occur as anything other than a character thinking out loud.

All this takes place in landscapes where the only human artifacts are the occasional picket fence or castle-like house, a road now and then that dwindles to the horizon, and mysteriously occurring alphabetic characters, which may be depicted as sentient beings with their own thought balloons or, more typically, as monumental constructs on the land or in the air. “Individual letters,” Nichol told an interviewer in 1984, “have always had a lot of emotion for me for some reason. And for years there have been things I have not been able to say in poems, so I’ve been doing drawings of landscapes with letters floating in them and people being pursued by letters and all sorts of things happening.”

The sorts of things happening are often enough doing so within the multi-dimensional letters. In The Aleph Unit, an “A,” drawn three dimensionally on the first page, loses on the next the interior lines that create the illusion of depth, the remaining perimeter becoming an A-shaped panel for a scene with a pier jutting out into a body of water, at the end of which pier a man sits, thinking a blank “A” that has the precise two-dimensional shape of the one that frames the scene he’s in. In “Allegory #14,” a three-dimensional “H” is drawn lying on a landscape that bleeds into the body of the “H” so that lines drawn to create the illusion of three dimensions instead define transparent planes—except that behind the furthest lines of the “H” a mostly obscured Milt the Morph peeps out, so the planes those furthest lines define are not transparent ones but surfaces upon which the landscape appears, with a few little “v” birds depicted here and there.

And if you think that description’s confusing, go look at the poem, the image, the—quite literally—poetic image. In the thirty-two poems of Allegories (and elsewhere in Nichol’s visuals, but concentrated in Allegories, published in their entirety only in Love: A Book of Remembrances) the play with perspective and with the intersections of ambiguous planes is worthy of Maurits Escher, albeit the draughtsmanship makes no pretension to Escher’s precision and detail in pictorial verisimilitude. Nichol achieves similar results with a simpler line.

Lines, as it happens, are very much what Nichol’s work is about. He possessed an abiding and profound appreciation of and fascination with lines of all types: poetic lines, prose lines, narrative lines, plot lines, typed lines and lines of type, voice lines, drawn lines, solid lines, broken lines, train lines, and all the fine lines of and in communication, especially lines of questioning, and lines of thought. His plot-line interests he confined to his reading, but the rest were grist for his creative mill and occur throughout his works of art.
In terms of Nichol’s visuals, the only pieces that employ anything other than linework of varying density are collaborations: the Seripress colour screen prints done with Barbara Caruso, to which Nichol contributed line drawings; and the hilarious “Nary-a-Tiff” *fumetti* (pop-culture Latin melodrama comics-and-photos hybrid), a send-up of the form and of the Toronto Research Group itself, photographed by Marilyn Westlake, with Nichol and McCaffery acting the parts they wrote (“You always get a headache when I want to discuss philosophy!” bitches Nichol, at the start of a fight that sees McCaffery kill him with a letter-opener, immediately reflecting that “Hmmm. I should’ve thot of this years ago! In one stroke my Nichol collection has doubled in value!!”).

Visual artist and poet Robert Fones, who has made his own contribution to the use of language in works of visual art, recalls Nichol speaking in the early ’70s of an interest in the relationship between the line in poetry and the line in drawing. That interest found expression through what is almost a subgenre in Nichol’s œuvre, the verbal-landscape visual poem, where the lines of the poem announce the words for landscape objects (or state the landscape elements) at the point on the page where drawn lines would be placed in a pictorial depiction of those objects or elements. Greg Curnoe (another artist who worked with language in visual art) used a similar device in his paintings, where he sometimes incorporated verbal descriptions within painted depictions. While the two artists were familiar with each other’s work, and Nichol once cited Curnoe in a commentary on his own work, the connection in this regard is parallel rather than derivative, with each artist making distinctive use of a related technique.

Nichol’s *Still Water* contains several typeset instances of his working of the effect. One of these has the word “moon” towards the top left of the page, “owl” some distance down and to the right, and a little less further down, spaced widely apart on one line, the thrice-repeated word “tree,” followed by “shadowy.” In another poem, the word “tree” appears on three staggered lines above the phrase “the train leaves,” with the word “leaves” repeated on three well-spaced lines. Nichol effected a still closer fusion of the drawn and the poetic line in “landscape: 1” in *Zygal*. Typeset across the middle of the page is a line that is transformed into a horizon by there being set right above it the words, with no spaces between them, “along the horizon grew an unbroken line of trees.” Nichol returned frequently to depictions of horizons with lines or words in typeset or pen drawings. He worked an elegantly punning turn on this in a hand-drawn poem rendered in fabric by his wife, Ellie Nichol: about a third of the way up, a line is stitched, at whose left side occurs a large arc that, through the placement of the word “risin’” at the other end of the line, becomes the top portion of both an “O” (thus we read “O risin’”) and the orb of the sun (thus, we read the stitched line as an horizon).

Nichol’s exploration of line reached a minimalist peak in his 1981 boxed set of loose sheets, *Of Lines: Some Drawings*, featuring thirteen textured pages, each an original drawing of a single silver line executed with crayon pencil in a bold diagonal stroke from lower left to upper right. The uniqueness of each is underlined (forgive me) by the titles at the bottoms of the pages, which make arch metaphysical distinctions: “Line #1” and “Drawing of Line #1”; or over-scrupulous authorial qualifications: “Line #4 (drawn while thinking of previous lines)” and “Line Drawn As A Response To An Inner Pressure To Draw Another Line While Resisting The Urge To Call It Line #5.” The intent is not entirely ludic, though, for the device serves to remind the reader-viewer constantly of the physical and mental processes in the creation of the writing-drawing. Such direction of consciousness to the medium of expression, especially in relation to language, is a central concern in Nichol’s artistic output, and in all three focal areas of it: the more conventionally categorical literary works, the visual poetry, and the sound poetry. Having mentioned sound poetry, let brief acknowledgement be made (space allows for no more) of the sonic dimension of Nichol’s visual work, which occurred either after the fact, with a sonic interpretation applied to a piece conceived as visual, or in advance, as when a visual piece would be created with performance in mind.

In the last few years of his life (he died in ’88 of complications resulting from surgery) Nichol added two more media to his repertoire of drawing tools: the computer and water-soluble coloured pencil crayons, both of which he acquired in the early ’80s, and which he used for making significant developments in his visual poetry technique.
With the computer Nichol could make type move, at least in a rudimentary way, and he applied this to a couple of his early typewriter poems, as well as to several newly written ones. The results can be seen in *First Screenings*, a posthumously issued floppy disc.

With the pencil crayons, Nichol discovered colour. Not that he hadn’t known it was there, but he’d always used black felt-tipped pens for his visuals, which were primarily targeted for publication in literary contexts, where money is scarce enough in any case, let alone for multicolour printing. The pencil crayons Nichol chose could be used for a water-colour effect, creating a delicate wash aura around lines drawn on wetted water-colour paper. Nichol exploited this effect in both black and multicoloured pieces, which were done in limited quantities and sold or given as gifts.

One of these pieces, *Parrot*, is of special note. It echoes an effect that was almost a Nichol trademark in his comics landscapes, the curving v-shaped line of a distant bird in flight, which is assimilated in *Parrot* into the shape of each letter of the word “bird”: the ascenders of the “b” and “d” readily accommodate the curved-wing line, and Nichol adapts the body of each to an outward curve with a reversing arc; within this symmetry, the “i” is a dotted, inverted curving “v” and the “r” is a curving “v” minimally modified on the right wing. The image is repeated in four vertical overlaps, all sixteen letters a different bright colour, the water-colour wash further accenting the suggestion of blurred movement. The powerful presence of the word overcomes the illusion of distance implicit in the v-based characters that constitute it, bringing the bird up close. You can almost hear the wings flapping.

*Parrot* is reminiscent of another video-aural conjuration that Nichol effected near the start of his career, in *Journeying & the returns / bp*. Using type rather than crayon, he drew a drumstick striking a beat, which he conveyed by fanning a blur of five overlapping impressions of the word “drum,” with the “m” of the bottom one repeated extensively to suggest the sound envelope of the beat.

I stated earlier that Nichol, while sometimes deceiving the eye about whether subjects in his comics are in or behind the panels, never forgot that they are in fact on the page. It is to the surface of the page and the events on it, drawn with type or by hand, that Nichol constantly directs the viewer-reader’s attention. The eye deceived is tricked into looking more closely, and looking more closely, is alert, attentive. A line in book four of his multivolume poem, *The Martyrology*, applies: “down at the surface where the depth is.” In *The Martyrology* and other of his verse, Nichol retards the reader’s progress by taking words apart in the course of the writing, the reading: “words fall apart / a shell / sure as hell’s / ash ell / when i let the letters shift sur face / is just a place on which im ages drift.” This is not an empty gimmick, but a device that invites re-reading and reflection. Compositionally, it allows the language to lead the way in generating content by building associations. Esthetically, it repositions the reader in relation to the language. Philosophically, it springs from a deeply held conviction about language and existence, which Nichol expressed as follows in a 1987 essay:

We live in the midst of language, surrounded by books, and, as a result, the nature of both has become transparent to us. We look thru the books to the content inside them. We learn to speed read so that the words too can be strip-mined for their information. Thus are we made more ignorant. And painting, sculpture, dance, photography, etc., all the so-called Fine Arts, suffer, because we look but we don’t see. Once the surface of the world, of its objects, inhabitants, etc., becomes transparent to us, it quickly becomes unimportant to us as well, and things that should register—political, social, ecological—don't.

Nichol’s visuals—poems, images, drawings, or however one chooses to categorize them—render language visible with disarming and deceptive levity, with a love of words in all their aspects, an ear and eye attentive to sonic and visual ambiguities, a refined visual aesthetic, a well-honed sense of humour, sophisticated taste in typography, and an awareness of language as both model and shaper of the human mind in its intellectual and psychological operation.

[The author wishes to thank Ellie Nichol for her generous contribution of time, space, assistance, and access to Nichol’s publications and papers. Thanks also to Mark Askwith, Victor Coleman, Nicky Drumbolis, Robert Fones, Maria Gould, Karl Jirgens, and Charis Wahl for helpful consultations.]
SOURCES OF QUOTATIONS AND PARAPHRASES
“In a sense . . .” (Nichol 1988, 23)
"the ongoing . . .” (Higgins 1989, 3)
“always had . . .” (Multineddu 1993, 34)
“there’s no doubt . . .” (Nichol 1987, 21)
“the difference . . .” (Nichol 1987, n. 3, 25)
“the natural . . .” (Higgins, 17)
“if [the poet's] need . . .” (Nichol 1967, cover)
“tight imagistic . . .” (Nichol in Williams, unpaginated)
“Not a lot . . .” (Nichol 1986, unpublished)
“That made a huge . . .” (Ibid.)
“He once wrote . . . (Nichol n.d., unpaginated)
“post-Joycean base . . .” (Ibid.)
“On another occasion . . . (McCaffery and Nichol 1992, 118–130)
“Individual letters . . .” (Nichol 1984)
“Robert Fones . . . recalls . . .” (Interview with the author, March, 2000)
“Nichol once cited Curnoe . . .” (Nichol 1985, 88)
“words fall apart . . .” (Nichol 1982, unpaginated)
“We live in . . .” (Nichol 1987, 24)

REFERENCES
———. Journeying & the returns (also know asbp). Toronto: Coach House Press.
In a world where people starve and kill each other by the thousands, should we still really care about things?

#5 – “The Three Gospel Brushes”
from: *The Once Upon a Time Stories of Opal Louis Nations*

Once upon a time there were three gospel singing toothbrush gals who called themselves "The 3 Gospel Brushes." They were all born in Colgate and could shake their stems like nobody's business. Thelma, the youngest, was corn-gold transparent and bore soft tresses. Gloria, the middle sister, was Nyquil green and possessed a good head of medium locks. Teresa, the eldest, was red opaque and sported a head of stiff, hard filaments. Gloria like the others loved the old traditional groups such as The Caravans and Davis Sisters and always took the lead on the tatter's arrangement of "Jesus gave me water" (and it was not from the faucet.) Thelma preferred The Gospel Harmonettes and did a good all-round job on the choruses of their song "The handwriting on the bathroom wall." Teresa, on the other hand, liked lots of groups but favored The Ward Singers the most. Teresa gave her all on the Wards' styling of "Been dipped in the water." The household was out during weekdays, and this allowed the girls endless rehearsals *in situ* which was perfect because the bathroom's natural echo would make it easier for them to correct their mistakes. They had two songs in their repertoire which the trio could sing particularly well, "The old rugged brush" and "Go sailing through those old pearly whites."

The time came when they felt they were ready to go out into the world and get themselves on some gospel programs. The problem was that because none of them could drive, performances had to take place within reasonable walking distance, which meant they had to be back in their holder before bedtime brushing. Their first public engagement was held one Sunday afternoon in the neighbor's bathroom when the inhabitants were out at a football game. The gig was an enormous success. The host brushes were enthralled as were all the bathroom fittings. Almost all the bottles in the medicine cabinet were saved. Spurred on by initial triumph, "The 3 Gospel Brushes" decided to put their names up for the local gospel sing-off contest held every other month at the corner pharmacy, "Amazing Place Drugs," also serving as a weekend storefront Baptist Church. The girls were up against stiff competition. There were "The Softex 3" from Pycopay, "The Mighty Dental Therapeutics," "The ADA Specials," "The Proctor & Gamble Twins" plus local favorites, "The Sensational Sensodynes." The Rev. Oral Highjean stood in as presenter and m.c. Rev. Highjean kicked off the proceedings with a reading from the sermon on the mouth. An unimpressive female quartet, "The Periodontals," opened the singing but were politely given the brush-off. Thelma, Teresa, and Gloria were midway down the
program and were presented after "The Flying Clouds of Foam" had loosened up the audience considerably. The trio's rendition of "Milky White Way" went over quite well, but it was their barnstorming version of "Just a closer brush with Thee" that proved to be the clincher. When the voting was through, "The 3 Gospel Brushes" came in a comfortable third behind the victorious favorites "The Sensational Sensodynes" and a group from Molarsville called "The Golden gums."

Pleased with instant acclaim, the trio struck out for home with their third place trophy, a brass-plated floss-holder upon which were inscribed their names in bold script. The group practiced harder and harder. They had even improved their overall sound when Gloria mastered the toilet paper and comb and both Thelma and Teresa took to wearing abandoned toothpaste caps and invented an exciting form of gospel tap-dancing they called Plaque. Ah, but you should hear their bathroom rehearsals Sunday afternoon. The Q-tips flipped out of their box, the bandaids ran amok, and the mouthwash got really bubbly. Once, a neglected tub of filthy bathwater parted into two equal but separate bodies of water. It was like Moses parting the Red Sea.

Oddly, the Ajax danced recklessly on the floor scales, and the sleeping pills which up to a point had remained comatose, leapt about like a knot of frantic holy rollers. The music itself was sweet to the ear and certainly cleared up the damp and mildew deposits. Once during a positively high-spirited version of "Let's go round the walls of amalgam," the shaggy bath-mat set its tufts on end. Shortly thereafter, "The 3 Gospel Brushes" gave a Backteeth Church concert and on the same bill were "The Pilgrim Cuspids" and "The Fabulous Fillings of Root Canal." This time, the congregation truly fell out. A whole army of Alka Seltzer boys had to carry off those brushes who had fallen into a swoon. Bundled into stems of empty tipped-on-their-side Listerine bottles, the tooth-savers were rolled off to respective washroom receptacles where showerheads dutifully brought them round. During Thelma, Teresa, and Gloria's set, the rubber-spiked mediums attacked the nail-brushes and a riot ensued. But the fight was short lived due to the fact that the troublemakers were put down. They were buried in a glutinous sea of liquid soap, thus rendered harmless. The show went on and "The 3 Gospel Brushes"' growing reputation exceeded all expectation. Soon the trio found a manager, one Drew L. Gargle, who had them signed to a five-year contract with Fluoride Records with whom they enjoyed lasting rubs with success.
Carole Stetser: from *Eat Write* “The Ingredients of Language” 2003 (USA)
Succession
by Paul Dutton

Just one, some before some, just one before another one after some other before. Just some after one before one after another, before more than some more than any, just one more another after one more before. Someone else. Someone then. Someone now. Someone just now before another just after. A. Not her. So me. Someone so not her, so me, so other, so just before one some more now else. Some other else. Just some other now before anyone else. Or other some just before one more anyone. Anyone more than someone more than anyone else. Anyone ever more after than else and more else than ever after any before. Often. Often more other after anyone is. Anyone is more some ever after than ever before just anyone else. Ever more after than just before even is, after is often more over before more is said. Say more. Say after. Say just before is. Say one is before over more than another, not her and not here after more than before. Still more. Still more than some before just after one. Well before two, more than well after anyone, anyone still more than just before when two is enough. Just enough. Two is just enough for one more after someone else is more than many might, because we may but haven’t yet, and are though could as has been still in what we meant to be be more than ever where we had to get to go to say to do what any age thought good is likely up to no more of it than the next or last or this, which isn’t any more than any one or two can anyway do worse than, doing worse and doing more, as this one does, and is, moreover, more than enough, that two would be too much of. Two too much and one that’s, what’s more, less than could be hoped for. Not that hope’s an option anymore, if it ever was before. Ever before and ever after, then and now and now and again and other after other, some or one or two or more, another one before, another after.
Three Movements from *Joseph Cornell's Operas* by Norman Lock

I. THE CASABLANCA OPERA

He was not one of the notable personalities, not he, but Humphrey was one, Humphrey Bogart in his coat and hat, he was there to see *The Opera of Rick’s Cafe*, that exotic and dangerous and sexy venue where Sam played piano, in Casablanca with its alluring women, he was not in the opera, however, Sam wasn't, the piano was, it was essential certainly that the piano be there with the Letters of Transit hidden inside with the music, wistful and treacherous, please, Mr. Bogart, he said, the one said who was not famous, please tell me a secret, any secret at all that will make me notable, but Bogart merely shrugged, with his lip a little crooked as is his way, a quiet man, a seemingly ordinary man, the Marx brothers appeared suddenly through a trapdoor to undermine the solemnity of the opera but were efficiently removed by an unpleasant Gestapo man, there is power in verisimilitude, verily, in seeming, this is opera! we all said, pleased at the way things were turning out, Bogart who was a quiet man said nothing, he sat back in his seat, we heard its plush growl in the hush of the mezzanine, the Marx brothers returned, sheepishly, they went into the casino to play roulette, the spotlight on the piano riveted us, the Letters of Transit were hidden inside it with the music which could not be coaxed from the instrument in the absence of Sam, something is happening we don't fully understand, fear clutched at our throats, where is Sam and why the silence of the piano? we turned away from the action, Rick had taken Ilsa in his arms, we looked for the café girls, we went out into the lobby and talked to them, we invited them upstairs, we left then and there with the girls, wanting to forget, to forget Casablanca and "As Time Goes by" which was not played, and Humphrey Bogart sitting in his theater seat, chewing his lower lip and waiting for Paris, for Paris to begin again.

II. THE OPERA OF MODERN TRAUMA

Sigmund came again, we have no need of you! we cried, our nervousness has abated, so go, go until we call you! so he went without, I hasten to add, the least ill will, left smoking a cigar, leaving us till later, a cloud of smoke remaining to mark his brief visit, but who should come next but Caruso himself, he was most welcome, you, Enrico, are welcome to the opera, he walked on stage, no! we said, please! we begged, take a seat, sit with us here in the opera house and enjoy the silent properties, the handsome stage furniture, the sleeping extras wearing the smart uniforms of Rough Riders, and here comes Teddy, his monocle flashing with green gaslight, his spurs ringing on the lobby’s marble floor, hello, Teddy, hello! Recently returned from Africa, he went off in search of undiscovered fauna in a corner of our opera, the opera that is called *The Opera of Modern Trauma*, how do you like it, Teddy? but he had withdrawn behind a flat hand-painted by Van Gogh with
junipers and monkeys, now here is Frank, Frank Lloyd Wright arriving in a rickshaw from Tokyo after the earthquake of 1923 knocked it flat, all, that is, but his Imperial Hotel, it stood the test of a convulsive nature, it stands as a monument to his genius, and we hope you like this. *The Opera of Modern Trauma*, Mr. Wright, enough to build us an opera house that will withstand cataclysms of the imagination even, we whispered becoming anxious once more.

III. THE OPERA OF SEXUAL TRANSPORT

Mesmer appeared, very suddenly, oooh! we cried as one in our astonishment, the rapidity of his materialization taking our breath away, which returned after a moment, as it must, inevitably, if not, then death, but death, as earlier remarked, is forbidden in the opera house - to resume: expelled from the eighteenth century after much ridicule (in part, because of a robe encrusted with alchemical symbols, in part because of his magnetic violation of young women) Franz Anton Mesmer appeared on the stage of Joseph Cornell’s latest opera. *The Opera of Sexual Transport*, to the accompaniment of a glass harmonica, which ravished us! welcome, he said, Mesmer did, to my Magnetic Salon! what now? we asked one another, susceptible as always to the marvelous (to celestial gravity transmitted by an imponderable fluid or ether to your nervous systems, said Mesmer having read our minds), we were ready for anything - we’re ready for anything! we shouted encouragingly, as long as boredom may be eluded for yet a little while longer, what do you propose? we asked, I wish, he said, to illustrate the principle of animal magnetism, do so and at once! we exclaimed with a light collective heart, the house lights were extinguished then lit again, in the interval we slept while a huge ape entered (we know not how) the Magnetic Salon, attracted, no doubt, by animal magnetism) - the ape emblematic in the middle ages of lust, nominated in our time “King Kong” now civilized he wore, the gorilla did, a tuxedo, top hat, and yellow spats and spoke seductively of rough intimacies behind french doors, oh! the women opera-goers were brought to the edge of a swoon, some toppled over into unseemliness while we men felt something hot rise in the ductwork of desire, what you are experiencing, said Mesmer, is your true nature, unedited and unabridged by consciousness, those of us who could, clapped, M. Mesmer bowed and flounced his alchemical cape dramatically behind him, exhausted we needed rest (and knew it) and a cigarette, always attentive to our needs Joseph Cornell sent the pretty cigarette girl among us, we eyed her gratefully and when we looked up next, Mesmer was gone and with him his simian illustration, where gone we could not any of us say - somewhere perhaps where pent-up desire might be loosed in a Magnetic Salon - and Joseph Cornell? withdrew a while into his antechamber to dream his next opera.
Profile: King Kong Digital Opera & Rule Britannia by Kenneth Doren

Rampike is pleased to present this profile on innovative Canadian inter-media artist, Kenneth Doren who has been integrating, text, music, and digital technology in remarkable ways. Not long ago, he completed an artist-in-residence stint at the Western Front in Vancouver where he developed a number of his more recent digital operatic works and prepared works to come.

Making socio-political statements on history and the present through ritual and ceremony, but working more with conjunctions of the sacred and the secular, is Calgary artist, Kenneth Doren who succeeds in engaging audiences either through conventional staged means or more directly through the inter-net. He has had a number of artist residencies across Canada, including one recently at the Western Front (2001) in Vancouver. Doren calls his inter-media performances “digital operas.” The titles partly convey the ironic edge in his works (King Kong Digital Opera, Suite for Birth, and Your High Imperial). Doren uses professionally trained musicians (usually string and brass), and singers, often with backgrounds in opera. The elevated tone is often placed in ironic counter-point to more common forms such as pub music (e.g.; “Keep the Home Fires Burning” and “Auld Land Syne”).

Several of his digital performance works are humorous, mixing video, opera-trained singers, dance and acrobatics to forward Carnivalesque commentaries on everything from politics, to religion, to Hollywood, to sexual mores, to imperialism and the post-colonial condition. Your High Imperial is a worthy example. Doren’s tongue-in-cheek, ironic performances including Your High Imperial forward subtle commentaries on the dehumanizing effects of technology with reference to quotidian experience and the creation of art itself. They challenge our commercial portrayals of ourselves and instead offer conceptual and spiritual “space” in which the audience can pause, and reconsider the public self-images it is daily confronted with. Doren’s works often include a self-reflexive, parodic, and ironic quality. Although his inter-media performance works are often structurally and conceptually eclectic, he frequently explores quotidian events as a guiding principle. His performance work Your High Imperial has a duration of seventeen minutes with music composed by Doren who also shaped the concept. The libretto, developed by Christina Willings, forms a disparate sexual and political text inspired by the Biblical Songs of Solomon, George Bernard Shaw’s The Intelligent Woman’s Guide to Socialism and Capitalism and the Malleus Maleficarum (The Witch Hammer), which served as a guidebook for inquisitors during the Inquisition of the Middle Ages. This digital video opera is based on the compositions of J. S. Bach's organ music and Giuseppe Tartini's “The Devil's Sonata,” form the digitally re-composed music that is transcribed for a brass quintet and two violins for a live performance. The live musical performance is also intercut with some of the digital music samples. Presented above the musicians is a video projection of two pre-recorded opera singers. The singers’ environments and costumes constantly change and are combined with a video performance of Bizet's symbolic Carmen to create a visual and musical collage. The opera creates a visual and acoustic pulse while musing on the selected text and the penetrating traditional musical and theatrical methods, through the application of technology. A portion of the scene titled “Sleep” features the following libretto:
Life is long
Art is short
Opportunity fleeting
Reason dangerous

Pins, once made by hand
Shaped, ornamented, sold
Are now made by the hundreds
of thousands
Skill is lost
Speed is gained
Skillless
Speed
Thus is the triumph of
Civilization

The cure is not to go back
Because we are richer

The scene closes ironically with the line, “What we need is a movie to take our minds off it.” Other works offer similar ironies. In King Kong Digital Opera, for example, there are a series of songs dedicated to pop-cultural figures including Nosferatu, Fay Wray (from King Kong), the television show M.A.S.H., Kim Novak, John Wayne, Roger Moore, King Kong himself, Clint Eastwood, and the television “cop” show The Streets of San Francisco. The songs sung by performers who have trained in opera accompanied classical musicians performing in tempos ranging from the serene to the rambunctious. The music is accompanied by and sometimes channeled through video projections, and there is dance choreography that re-enacts the “cowboy” spirit of the Wild West. The effect of the juxtapositions of media, the inter-linking of themes of death and sexuality, the clashes of “high” and “low” culture by virtue of the contrast in subject matter and delivery, result in an ironic contrasts that contribute to the parodic and deliberately ruptured sense of this work. The effect is something like watching rapid-fire channel changes on the television while listening to classical music in the background – except that in Doren’s case, the classically based music is about contemporary pop-culture. The layering of experience on top of experience, the inclusion of the quotidian, the propensity for representations of representations or simulacra, the resulting fragmentations through rapid fire scene changing, the contrasting presentation of live and electronically simulated bodies within this performative discourse, and, in particular, the preoccupations with the secular and the sacred, all reveal a Baroque impulse in Doren’s performance works.

**Doren’s Rule Britannia -- Description and Development:**
An inter-disciplinary concert event featuring two pianos, two pianists and two TV monitors, one resting on the lid of each piano, both displaying the pre-recorded visual and sound of one solo mezzo-soprano singer, but two different edits – one for each monitor, who sings duets with herself. This inter-disciplinary piano duet concert is called Rule Britannia and investigates the political power path from domination to decline.
The event is approximately thirty minutes in duration having more or less eight movements, all composed by Doren, transcribed for piano by Matt Firmston. Patrice Jegou provides the pre-recorded singing. Kenneth also collaborates on the libretto with writer Carl Ayling.

*Rule Britannia* is seeking funds for its development and creation from the Alberta Foundation for the Arts Inter-Disciplinary Grant. Kenneth Doren is organizing a performance in the near future, which has some private sponsorship but is not confirmed just as of yet.

This type of inter-disciplinary work continues on with Kenneth Doren’s investigation in re-thinking western classical music, performed and produced using multi-media elements, uncommon to classical concert music.

Doren’s more recent performance work follows in step with his previous work such as: *King Kong Digital Opera, Suite for Birth, Your High Imperial, Tonight Shall Be My Calvary* and most recently *Shepherds Quake* all of which incorporate sound, visuals, performance and collaboration.

The development of this work involves using a computer audio editing software program such as ProTools to compose the piano music. Matt Firmston will transcribe the computer music for two pianos, developing a traditional piano duet score. Kenneth will be researching the text from a number of sources and hiring writer, Carl Ayling, to work collaboratively to develop the libretto. Kenneth will also be working with the mezzo-soprano singer, Patrice Jegou, in developing the vocal parts and videotaping her for her video performance. Once recorded, Doren will edit the raw footage of Patrice at Attitude Pictures, a post-production facility, to produce two broadcast quality tapes for the performance’s video playback on the two monitors.

The music will be composed by digitizing pre-existing piano music into the computer, then using the ProTools software to manipulate the sounds, to redevelop, rethink, recompose through layering, cropping, pulling apart, repeating and segmenting the original work and thus composing a new work. The original music will be referenced in *Rule Britannia* by retaining its original title as the new movement title, supplying a clue of where the music was influenced from and thus provides a historical relevance to the work as a whole. The original music sources will come from, both, British composers and songs about Britain.

A few selected musical titles and sound sources are *God save the King* and *Rule Britannia* (where this work gets its title from) as well as piano pub music such as: *Keep the home fires burning* and *Auld Lang Syne*. These will form the base for the digital music (one selection, *God save the King*, has already been digitally composed by Kenneth and is provided on a CD for the AFA jury to review) which Matt Firmston will use to form the transcription for a live piano duet performance. This method of digitally re-composing and scoring has been developed by Doren and Matt Firmston and used for such projects as *King Kong Digital Opera* and *Your High Imperial*, both of which have been performed live by string and brass musicians.

Kenneth Doren and Carl Ayling will develop the libretto from researched historical and current British writing as well as extracts from newspaper reports to trace the British rise to glory, its critical thought and the events that symbolize erosion of power. The libretto and its content will be complimented by the singer’s approach to the singing and how the two videotaped singers playfully create a dialogue of opposing and concurring views through out the piece. There will be a moment
in one of the movements where the two singers are angry about each other’s views and try to outshine the other with vocal power. The singers visuals on the monitor will encompass numerous close up to reveal subtle facial expressions as well as revealing angles that concert going audiences do not always have the vantage of, providing auxiliary meaning.

The performance’s casual set up also reflects the ideas of an empire’s rise and fall. Having both the monitors on the piano lids creates a soft sound from the piano, since the lid will have to be closed, thereby taking away the grandiose voice of the piano. The monitors also act like a night-club singer laying on the piano, not something one would associate with lofty ideals.

Some extracts from planned/potential writings for adaptation to Doren’s digital opera include:

"Why did the morning dawn to break  
So great, so pure a spell,  
And scorch with fire the tranquil cheek  
Where your cool radiance fell?"

Emily Bronte from *Stars*

"Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,  
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying."

Alfred, Lord Tennyson from *The Splendor Falls*

"I will not cease from Mental Fight,  
Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand,  
Till we have built Jerusalem  
In England’s green & pleasant Land."

William Blake from *And Did Those Feet*

"This week at Balmoral we have all been trying  
to help William and Harry come to terms with  
the devastating loss that they and the rest of us have suffered."

Queen Elizabeth II’s televised address on Sept. 5, 1997

*Rule Britannia* simply follows a world power’s rise to domination then overshadowed by the upsurge of another county’s domineering government. Even though *Rule Britannia* focuses on Britain, its intention is not to solely single out Britain, but to show the cycle of political and social change through out history. Britain, Kenneth feels, is the last vestige of a great world power that went through the cycle of glory and then lost the vantage of a superior state. Many countries have historically gone through these cycles, including China, France, Denmark, Spain and currently, the United States of America, which is now caught up in the cycle. This piece looks at the vulnerability of these political stances and gives humanity hope of change when faced with oppression. *Rule Britannia* becomes a timely parable, where people can learn, adapt, plan and evolve. -- KD/KJ
Typestyler Poem #1 by Reed Altemus (USA)
RECLAIMING THE BODYMACHINE
by Monty Cantsin (a.k.a. Istvan Kantor)

Here, Rampike offers Cantsin’s account of his remarkable BodyMachine Projet.

Interactive Transmission Machinery Performance/Installation
(Beginning with The File Cabinet Project -- since 1993)

SHORT BIO: Istvan Kantor, best known as Monty Cantsin, founder of Neoism(1979, Montreal), is a media artist, producer, active in many fields, performance, robotics, installation, sound, music, video and new media. His recent work explores the impact of new technology and focuses on the socio-mechanical interactions of information machinery systems. He has been invited participant of the Next Sex exhibition of Ars Electronica 2000. Kantor has received the Telefilm Canada Award for Best Canadian Video (1998) and most recently the Transmediale 2001 award in Berlin, Germany. He has lived in Budapest, Paris, Montreal, New York and is a resident of Toronto since 1991. His work has been described by the media as rebellious, anti-authoritarian, intellectually assaultive, as well as technically innovative and highly experimental.

AXIOM/E - AXIOMACHINE was presented by Elektra in Montreal, Nov., 2001, at Usine C. AXIOM/E - AXIOMACHINE was conceived and created by: Istvan Kantor.
Axiomachine 3D design and simulation animation: Kristan Horton
Axiomachine mechanical engineer: James Maxwell
Axiom/e - Axiomachine digital control system and programming: Jeff Mann
Multitechnics and live sound mix: Lewis Kaye
Performers: MACHINE SEX ACTION GROUP with Marlee Cargill, Jo-Anna Davidson, Istvan Kantor, Lewis Kaye, Louise Liliefeldt, Jeff Mann, Coman Poon, Conan Romanyk. AXIOM/E (AXIOMACHINE) has been produced by Istvan Kantor with the assistance of the Canada Council (Ottawa) and with a residency program at La bande Video (Quebec).

AXIOMACHINE: In my most recent video, installation and performance works I explore the socio-mechanical body-kinetics of communication systems and their relationships to individual and collective "body-machines" extended with new technology. My very recent video productions and interactive robotic works such as "Intercourse"(1999), "Broadcast"(2000), "Axiom/e"(2001) and "The Trinity Session"(2001) are some of the examples of this exploration.

I initiated a new research into the yet unexplored territories of "body-machine performance" a number of years ago while exploring the hardware of the file cabinet and the pelvic motions of sexual intercourse. The first performances investigated the in-out, back and forth movements of the cabinet drawers and the gestures of the user in relation to the archival information storage systems of technological society.

My investigation made it evident that a small gesture such as opening and closing a file cabinet can become the engine of complete communication that controls images and sounds through the electronic networks. From then on I became more and more interested in the body's physical function in the space of technological interrelations where everything gets extended with new scientific devices. My interest in the mechanical nature of the human body as universal machinery unit dates back many years. My
long term projects such as Neoism (since 1976), Blood Campaign (since 1979), Self-Appointed Leader of the People of the Lower East Side (1986-1991), or The File Cabinet Project (since 1993) derived from my continuous experimentation with the kinetic identity of the individual creator in relation to the scientific engine of artistic movements, and the related information networks and communication machinery systems.

During the past recent years I have been creating robotic sculptures that are based on the mechanical metal body of file cabinets. With the use of new technology I developed a series of computer assisted interactive installation/performance works especially focusing on the digital control of the mechanical hardware of the file cabinet as transmission device and user interface.

The File Cabinet Project represents my observations concerning information systems in technological society. My continuous interest in the file cabinet is not a simple physical fascination or aesthetic obsession with an object but rather a wider theoretical involvement with semi-robotic sculptural systems and kinesonic information mechanisms. The simple monolithic file cabinets are single bodies of a technological system linked together by computers and integrated into a giant network that functions as a world wide information reproduction machinery. The body as a transmission device, orgasmic contractions as kinetic control system, epileptic seizure of the body as information machinery, are some of the examples of my most recent interest. A recent result of this work has been my invitation to Ars Electronica 2000 where I presented "Intercourse - The File Cabinet Project" in the form of a concert/performance at the opening night. My single channel video "Broadcast"(2000) has won the Transmedialle 2001 Award in Berlin, Germany and was also nominated for International Media Art Award at ZKM, Karlsruhe.

My previous machine works, among them EXECUTIVE MACHINERY(1996) and INTERCOURSE (2000), investigated this machinery system in relation to the human interface and the related biomachinery of authority and control. The subject of my most recent work AXIOM/E (2001) is the abandoned body-machine that is being newly repossessed through new technology and through the reprocessing of technology.

Integrated in this subject AXIOMACHINE(2001) stands as a mechanical monument of today's technological society, a rather ironical/critical representation of the scientific development of information storage technology in relation to the architecture of communication systems.

This work was designed according to my previous research and deals with formal, mechanical, structural, scientific and technological aspects of information machinery. AXIOM/E - AXIOMACHINE reveals a Neoist panorama-vision of technological takeover: a hyper-utopian landscape dominated by monuments of information storage machinery and ruled by computer-controlled body-machines.

My work focuses on the digital, mechanical and physical relationships between systems of machinery and individual autonomy. The body is invaded by new technology and it is controlled by the same unifying artificial network-machinery of the newly refurnished technological society. Interrelationships compose the defining factors for our everyday life events. Information storage determinates the limits of communication systems. Our biological and social existence has become a technological utopia. The body being the extension of all softwares, today's technology becomes the definite driving force of sexual interaction. AXIOM/E - AXIOMACHINE is a persistent, relentless, vaguely self-affirming manifestation of interpersonal softwarepleasure and technorgasmic robotic ecstasy as a system of communication.
AXIOM/E - AXIOMACHINE is built from sculptural elements integrating video transmission, machinery and control system. Each element explores the monolithic mechanical hardware of the file cabinet either as machine or as user interface. By opening and closing cabinet drawers the spectator controls the transmitted images and sounds as well as the mechanical movements of AXIOMACHINE. After entering a dark room the spectator go up on the steps of a pedestal. On the top of the pedestal a file cabinet user interface lets the spectator to control video images transmitted on the inclination side of the pedestal. These images consist of wired naked bodies interacting with technology, creating the impression of an endless machine-sex performance.

The same interface controls AXIOMACHINE standing in front of the pedestal. AXIOMACHINE is made of a file cabinet laying on its back, extended with a robotic sculpture that is pushed up and pulled down by the cabinet drawers. The repetitious robotic movements create the vision of sexual intercourse between the file cabinet and its invading mechanical metal parasite.

Another element of AXIOM/E - AXIOMACHINE is made of three file cabinets, lying on their sides. Video images of single body-machines are transmitted on the metal surface of the cabinets as the spectators open/close their drawers. This piece is designed to look like a game where two or more participants can play at the same time. AXIOM/E also integrates the projection of a single channel video of the same title. This tape incorporates a number of short segments of various body-machine performances, mostly group shots but also a solo piece.

With AXIOM/E - AXIOMACHINE I continue the exploration of the File Cabinet Project, a work in progress since 1993. I use the metal hardware of the file cabinet as a sculptural element in machinery installations, performances and video productions. My interest is more than a physical fascination or aesthetic obsession with monolithic office furniture. In my hyper-theoretical interpretation the world wide web is a machinery-monument of information storage furniture interconnected through computers. The gesture of moving cabinet drawers in and out, sliding them back and forth, becomes the engine of information exchange.

There is an evident confusion in the performance that seems to be part of the script. While the ambiance is set by the tools of technology, a machinery of complete control, mechanical devices standing on platforms, video projectors lined up to the screens, wires and cables invading the performers' bodies, it's hard to tell who controls what and who is controlled by who. This characteristic aspect of unexpected ambiguity feeds our imagination, keeps our mind alert and remains a determining factor throughout the performance. All the way we try to figure out the links between the machinery, the actions and the images.

We don’t know what is real and what is simulation. The convulsing, jerking bodies of the performers are definitely real, but are they stimulated through technology and responding to remote electronic impulses or are the performers executing a choreographed, theatrical action according to plans and scores? Are the wires attached to the performers' body functional or are they tattoo like marks only for visual effect? By watching both, the images on the screen and the performers in action, at once, often we are able to catch a gesture that seems to be in sync with the images. But at other times it seems like there is no connection at all in between the performers and the screen.

Though I am definitely interested in experimenting with new technological innovations, my approach is not based on pure scientific exploration. While my work investigates the socio-physical values of technology through interactions centered on the body, the focus of my work is on the overwhelming presence and slaughtering impact of technological power.
passage musical enceintes jusqu'à ce que vous trouviez l'emplacement qui donne les meilleurs résultats.

“Sound Effects” by W.M. Sutherland (Canada)
“MARTIN'S IDEA”
Performance for reciter, MIDI keyboard, and interactive computer system
by Gary Barwin

Rampike is pleased to present this exposition, in which Gary Barwin details the theory and structure behind his inter-disciplinary, inter-media work, “Martin's Idea,” which combines music, vocals and digital technology.

“Martin ’s Idea” (1995) is a setting of a text of the same name by the composer for reciter (performing into a pitch-to-MIDI converter), MIDI keyboard, synthesizer and interactive computer system. The text is a fabulist tale which concerns a dog who suggests that the narrator's wife have a baby.

The performances of the reciter & keyboardist control the computer system (written in MAX) and are at the same time, processed by it. The rhythms, pitches, pitchbend information and dynamics of the performers serve as data that is used by various software engines to generate melodic, contrapuntal, and chordal passages as well as ostinati. There is an improvisatory section where the keyboardist improvises with a number of software engines. “Martin ’s Idea” was submitted as my Doctoral Dissertation. The committee asked me to explain how the development of the motif of the dog reflected my understanding of post-Schoenbergian set theory. “Arf,” I said, then chased a car. I'll begin by discussing some of my compositional concerns in writing the piece. Then I'll provide a general overview of the work, and after that I'll discuss the musical specifics in detail.

A. AESTHETIC GOALS
The composition of settings for reciter of literary texts has been an abiding preoccupation in my music. In “Martin 's Idea” I was interested primarily in two things regarding text setting: the first was to explore ways to integrate the rhythms and pitches of the spoken word into my music; the second was to explore musical analogues to the patterning of images in contemporary literature.

Because I was unwilling to give up traditional musical materials that allow me control of the composition in a traditional way, the compositional challenge was to find a way to integrate the less predictable material derived from speech with controlled composed music. The problem is really one of creating an intelligible musical context for this derived material.

Basically, my solution in “Martin's Idea” was to prepare the way for vocally generated material by starting with only composed music and only gradually integrating the less-determinate elements. Bit by bit the piece creates a context for more and more constrained random processes, more and more direct control of the material by the voice.

At the beginning of the piece, only the rhythms of the voice are used in the computer processing. Later in the piece, the pitches, rhythms and velocities of the voice control the processing, and interactive processes in general, play an increasingly important role.
The non-interactive material (sequences and notated compositional procedures) evolve into closely related real-time interactive processes as the work progresses. In one section, a keyboard improvisation incorporates interactive processes related to earlier composed material.

2. VOCAL PITCH AND RHYTHM
In past compositions I have worked with rhythms abstracted from spoken text, but in “Martin's Idea” I set out to also integrate not only the pitches of spoken language but to incorporate the more irregular (and un-notatable) rhythms of actual spoken word performance into my compositional conception.

The pitches and rhythms of speech enter the composition in a number of ways: The rhythms I have notated in the reciter's part are a stylized approximation of one possible rhythmic reading of the text. I was interested in precise rhythmic control of the reciter in order to be able to create specific rhythmic interactions between the reciter and the keyboardist. From a certain perspective, if the reciter and the keyboard are to interact in a rhythmically interesting way, they need to speak the same language, which is in this case that of notated rhythm. No pitch or pitch contour is indicated in the reciter's part. It's not intended that the reciter exaggerate the natural pitch contour of a straightforward -- if more rhythmic -- reading of the text.
The pitch-to-MIDI converter was used to generate some material for prerecorded sequences and to generate some motifs played by the keyboard. It also is used in live performance to capture certain aspects of the reciter's performance. The converter describes the performance in the following MIDI terms: what note number has started being played and at what velocity (that is, more-or-less how loud the initial attack is). It sends another message when the note is turned off. Throughout the duration of the note, pitch bend values are sent (that is information regarding pitch variation of less than a semitone). Exactly when the converter recognizes a new note depends on the phonemic content of the syllable and varies from performer to performer, and from performance to performance. The converter only conveys these MIDI "notes" and does not translate timbral or phonemic content. So as early as the input stage, the actual vocal performance is abstracted: a continuous verbal flow converted into discreet note-events.

3. THE PATTERNING OF IMAGES and MOTIFS
I am interested in finding musical analogies for the patterning of images in texts. In the text of “Martin's Idea,” images appear in different contexts and in various transformations. The narrative is apt to advance by a rearrangement of its component parts.
This was one of the things that most attracted me to the idea of setting this particular text. I wanted to parallel the text's motivic mosaic -- the permeability of the syntax to "semantic drift" or modular substitution, to create a mosaic of recurring related motifs within a consistent harmonic vocabulary.

The dream-like, often static world of the text is mirrored musically by the constant recurrence and variation of motivic cells that often lose their distinct identity and independence from one another. The motifs are constructed from the same or similar pitch class sets, employing the same pitch classes, and/or overall contours, and appear in a limited number of transpositions. The motifs appear in different contexts (vertically and horizontally) and in different, but similar rhythmic formations.

4. THE COMPUTER PROGRAM
The keyboard and the voice communicate via MIDI with a program written in the MAX language. The central function of the program is "Scorefollowing" that is, it matches the keyboardist's performance with a stored representation of the keyboard part. When specific events in the score are reached, messages associated with that event are sent within the program. In the score, the event numbers are circled and point to the events that cause the messages to be sent.

Section 6, the improvised section, is an exception to the general scorefollowing model. Once the section is begun, the program looks for specific sets of trigger pitches. They can occur in any order, and at any time. This function of the program could be categorized as "performance-driven" as opposed to "score-driven."

MAX is an object-oriented language and as such a MAX program or "patch" as it is called, is comprised of collections of connected boxes, each with a specific functionality. So for example, at a certain point a message might be sent that would open up the GATE object (near the top of the patch) which then would allow note data from the box labeled "r note in 4" that is NOTE IN from channel 4 to RECEIVE object at the top to pass through into the rest of the patch.


A transformative method takes some existing musical material and applies transformations to it to produce variants. The Alternator process of m.22 is an example of this. This process maintains the rhythms that the reciter inputs into it but alternately transforms the pitches into one of two dyads.

Generative methods "use sets of rules to produce complete musical output from the stored fundamental material." They don't transform, they generate. The Ostinato processes of Section 4 m.2 are generative methods. An algorithm enacts a process of random selection and delay of pitches or rests from the stored tables.
Sequenced methods "use prerecorded music fragments in response to some real-time input." A number of sequences in "Martin’s Idea" are initiated in response to the receipt of musical events. A sequence begins in Section 2 m. 1 when the keyboard plays the first note of the section and ends when the keyboards reaches a certain chord 10 bars.

**Structural Overview**
The piece does not conform to a simple formal model, but rather is shaped partly in advance and partly as one proceeds.

**THE RELATION OF “MARTIN’S IDEA” TO OTHER OF MY COMPOSITIONS**
"Martin's Idea" relates to my past compositions on a number of levels:

Its language and sonority with its cellular construction, angular shapes, use of repetition and overall rhythmic drive is typical of one type of music that I write.

From a structural perspective, I have explored the continual permutation and interpenetration of motifs characteristic of “Martin’s Idea” in previous works, such as in “The Rights of Man.” In that piece, numerous motifs derived from an Irish folk melody appear in relatively few transpositions. Unlike the motifs of “Martin's Idea,” the motifs in "The Rights of Man” are completely static sound objects, they are elements of an almost Cagean gamut. The elements do not change shape and meld together as they do in “Martin's Idea.” They do however appear in continually changing juxtapositions.

Several of my past works have used a reciter. “Opera” and “Con of Cuffee” are both for reciter and chamber ensemble. In both of those works the music borrowed structural and rhythmic elements from the reciter. “Martin's Idea” takes this further, deriving pitch and rhythmic material from the reciter and in real-time. My composition Down to the Middle and Back Again for voice and tape was created almost entirely from vocal material, both speech and a range of extended techniques but the material was not abstracted from the voice and re-formed (as it is in “Martin’s Idea”): the tape part is comprised almost entirely of recordings of the voice.

In terms my approach to the piano both “The Rights of Man” and “Opera” are precedents. The rhythmic, uncluttered, clearly articulated piano style often with clear separation of registers is characteristic of both earlier pieces.

In summary, I have wanted for some time to incorporate improvisation into my work in some way. My experience as a performer has been dominated by improvisation. Of my recent work, only “Down to the Middle and Back Again” incorporates improvisation, but only in terms of the realization of a graphic score.

I have wanted to broaden my compositional conception by exploring how to integrate interactivity and some degree of unpredictability into my compositions while further pursuing my interest in composition with text.
Mantle of Spies: A Novel Synopsis by Harold E. Adler

While waiting outside the Oval office Tuesday morning, Dr. Robert Judy, Director of the Alexander Hamilton Foundation answers his cell phone. The Swiss-Italian male voice says he knows the precise coordinates of a Russian submarine submerged off the Pacific coast of Mexico. The caller demands a bank wire transfer of $50,000 to divulge the information, to which Judy agrees. Judy shifts his thoughts from this appetizer to the main course as he is ushered into the Oval office. The President of the United States hands two blackmail letters to Judy for review. The target: the Secretary of State. The deadline: Saturday’s edition of the Washington Gazette. The additional penalty: the sinking of a luxury cruise-liner.

Dr. Judy remembers from his Cold War days an East German spy who specialized in blackmailing, Felix Landsmann. Judy coerced Landsmann’s wife across the Berlin Wall during the sixties, and then tried to turn Felix into a double agent. Ever since, Landsmann has been determined to ruin Judy. If Landsmann is the blackmailer, then yes, Judy can stop him by utilizing special imagery and mind-bending lenses developed by an optometrist 1) Dr. Judy plans to send Ensign Nick McMasters on assignment to Mexico the next day.

Before departing from the White House, Judy sees his antagonist the young CIA Director Jack Watson emerge from a limousine. The two clash. Watson can’t accept that Judy is a Master spook, and he isn’t. Furthermore, Judy is alive and his father isn’t--Watson’s father and Judy switched places before the tragic sinking of the submarine the USS Thresher. 2)

Nick and his fiancée, Carly are at their pre-nuptial conference Tuesday evening when they find themselves talking to Dr. Judy disguised as a priest. Judy orders Nick on the short assignment in Mexico over Carly’s objections, assuring the couple that Nick will be back in time for the wedding Saturday. However, since the assignment calls for Nick to work closely with a foreign agent, Miss Pilar Helene Mercedes de Madrid, Carly demands to go along.

Dr. Judy explains that Nick and Pilar will meet Dr. Ricky, the optometrist. After receiving the lenses and instructions from Dr. Ricky, they will befriend Felix at The Agua Azul Jazz Festival and get him to wear the special glasses. When Felix dons the lenses, Nick will phone Dr. Judy. With Felix in a lens-induced hypnotic state, Judy will instruct Felix that the blackmail scheme is over, retrieve Felix’s bank account number and siphon the money from his account. Secretly, Judy asks Colonel “Red Wolf” Oleg Novkov, a one time Czech spy who defected to Mexico with the help of Judy to watch Nick’s back.

Pilar picks Nick and Carly up at the Agua Azul airport in Mexico. Carly is left at the town square to shop, while they visit Dr. Ricky. Finding his office closed, Pilar takes Nick yachting. She charms Nick by wearing next to nothing. While sailing, Nick observes the black periscope of a submarine. Suddenly winds kick up, and the yacht takes a knockdown. Nick rights the yacht, and they head back to the pier. Pilar rewards Nick with a tight hug and a French kiss.

Felix accidentally meets Carly at the town's pottery shop and asks her to join him for coffee. He receives a call that his horse is ill. Carly offers her help since she is an equestrian. At his home, Felix hands Carly his binoculars for a look at the ocean. She turns her view south toward the yacht club and spies Nick kissing Pilar. Felix asks Carly to join him at the jazz festival this evening. She accepts.

The CIA orders Trevor Clark an aged semi-retired field agent living in Acapulco to search for Landsmann at the jazz festival. Clark has been searching continuously in Mexico for Red Wolf who killed his partner in Italy years ago.
Meanwhile, Dr. Judy arrives in Moscow to visit General Antoly Kvashnin, Chief of Russian Armed Forces General Staff. The general only knows Dr. Judy as Maxwell Bacon a notorious Cold War spy who stole state secrets from Russia. In the Maxwell persona, Judy bluntly asks the general if the Russian Navy is missing a submarine. Upon asking a subordinate the same question, Kvashnin learns no one can account for the Red Riga. Judy/Maxwell says he can get their submarine back into Russian hands and will give part of the recovered money in Felix’s bank account to the Russian government. In exchange, he wants all secret information that Aldrich Ames and Rick Hanssen gave the Soviets during the nineties returned to the CIA.

At the hotel where Nick is staying, he finds Carly has returned his engagement ring. Seated at the hotel bar Nick takes stock of his lonely life, his naval career and the charming Pilar. Pilar consoles him. As Pilar dresses for the jazz festival, Nick spontaneously trades the ring for a diamond bracelet at the jewelry boutique in his hotel. Nick impetuously asks Pilar to marry him. She agrees. They take the special lenses and head off to the jazz festival held at a nearby club.

The band is about to play as Nick catches a glimpse of counterfeiter Arturo Eno seated with Carly and Landsmann. Eno had eluded Nick in a previous assignment.3) Nick stays in the background of the club while Pilar approaches Felix. A very drunk Carly leaves Felix, finds and confesses to Nick that she is still in love with a previous lover. Nick understands. Pilar persuades Felix to wear the glasses as Sam the Trumpet Man plays his number one hit, "Bee Bop Baby Don't You Cry No More." Action goes according to plan. Felix falls to the floor, and music lovers simply think he is drunk.

At the club’s bar, Nick meets a fishing boat owner who was a U-boat commander during WWII. He and Nick learn of the submarine from Carly who overheard Felix and Arturo talking about a sub moored in a small Pacific lagoon. In the early morning hours Nick and his U-boat friend locate the sub and hear gunshots. The USS Stethem is dispatched to help recover the Russian submarine. On Nick, Pilar and Carly’s flight back to Washington, D.C., both pilots are taken ill. Nick flies and lands the jet with the help of an experienced commercial pilot in the control tower.

Nick and Pilar enjoy their honeymoon on St. Simon Island, Georgia. Arturo Eno beaches his cigarette boat nearby and confesses he is an undercover FBI agent working for Dr. Judy. He divulges that a year had been consumed locating the missing Russian submarine and planning an exchange with the Soviets. He tells Nick and Pilar that the bodies of Trevor Clark and Colonel Oleg were found next to the moored submarine. Apparently, there was a fatal shoot-out between the two rivals. He also informed Nick and Pilar that Dr. Judy was shot outside the U.S. Embassy gates in Moscow while delivering the recovered CIA and FBI secrets that traitors Ames and Hanssen had furnished the Russians. Before Dr. Judy died he uncovered one more mole. Naomi Watson, native of Riga, Latvia and wife of the CIA Director, had been recruited by the Soviets to become a sleeper spy. She will be deported, and the Director will resign his post. As for the blackmail against the Secretary of State, an aging Felix was trying to pressure a meeting with his estranged daughter who happened to be the wife of the Secretary of State. Allegedly, Felix was buried in an unmarked grave in Agua Azul.

---------- ---------- ---------- ----------

NOTES:
1. Although fictionalized, this prop is based on binary optics.
2. Although fictionalized, this incident is based on the last moments of the USS Thresher (1963).

N.B. A Mantle of Spies is available at Amazon.com & Barnes and Noble bookstores [for further info check the www for: Iuniverse].
TWO POEMS
by Andrea Nicki

Father-Mother-Junior

Father stomping telling mother
Father-mother who can’t see
junior taking wheels off toy trucks
putting them around necks of dolls
Father-mother slapping slapped
junior’s choo choo train circling
dragging toy soldiers stuffed animals
Father-mother screaming crying
plates cups glasses breaking
Father-mother cutting bleeding
Father-mother-junior

Lover-Bird

Feathers all over his body
turned blue-black-red
blushing with bruises
from painful crush
Eyes two beads joined
with black string
travelling along it
toward each other
mouth a cherry red pom-pom
“TILTING THE WORLD ON ITS EAR” Text-Image by Gerry Shikatani (Canada)
STONE TABLE TILTING
by Fausto Bedoya

Rampike is delighted to present this new work of fiction by underground cult writer, Fausto Bedoya. Like Thomas Pynchon, to whom he has often been compared, Bedoya is recognized internationally for his innovative style and cavalier disregard of literary convention. At the time of this publication, Bedoya insisted on maintaining his incognito and incommunicado status.

Morning. The sun pours like shaving cream onto the typewriter keys, onto the broad blue table, filling the room with a soft luminescence. On the table, an insurance advertisement that had arrived with yesterday's mail. It boldly proclaimed; "If you value your life, then read this immediately, and enjoy the benefits for years to come!" Also on the table, two rubber hand-grips for improving wrist strength, a Remington typewriter, paper inserted, a child's twelve-inch plastic ruler with pictures of animals spaced out over one inch squares, dinosaurs mostly. When the ruler is tipped from side to side they alternately attack and eat each other, or retreat into pouncing or defensive postures. A Tyrannosaurus Rex with teeth sunk in the neck of a Triceratops. A Stegosaur, his spiky tail batting at a Pterodactyl. Dinosaurs over each square inch of that measure except for the twelfth inch which shows a sabre-tooth tiger, somehow teleported into the wrong era, the wrong made-in-Taiwan dimension, still, baring its fangs at an invisible foe beyond the borders of the twelve-inch measure. Next to the ruler, a pen with women's bodies on it, their swimsuits disappear when the pen is raised. Lithe nude bodies hide underneath, but are re-covered with black bikinis when the pen is once again lowered. On the same table, a variety of rubber stamps for postage including "Do Not Fold", "Second Class", and "Printed Matter Only". Also, a "Race-Clean" Eberhard Faber 521 Canada white-rubber eraser beside a Bluebird mirage 174 medium-soft HB pencil with custom eraser tip. Mounted on the tip is a small metal pocket holder and held in place by several neat turns of beige masking tape. A day book, a calendar, open on February for no particular reason, a postcard of the Pacific Princess, and a pamphlet for "Carefree Cruisin" from some distant palmy beach. The top paragraph on the pamphlet lies exposed:

"Add a truly unforgettable day to your life. Whatever your age, whatever your lifestyle. Royal Cruise Line will fill your all-day carefree cruise with activity -- from shipboard games, to an exciting casino, to a colourful evening floorshow. There's live music throughout the day in the Atlantic lounge and dancing in the Royal Nightclub. Also you'll find a sparkling swimming pool, a cinema, and even target and skeet shooting!"

At the bottom of the paragraph written in bold capital letters, the words, "Enjoy a Unique Relaxed Atmosphere!" And beside the travel pamphlet, a fist-full of photos. Hers.

I recall that day, outside, walking in the rain. Later, by the beach, admiring the large pieces of granite, quartz resting nearby. Then, the lingering kisses at the door, the coffee, the television words in the background, "trying to relieve stress?" and moments later, "try Windex." The blue Curacao on the table, the amaryllis plant, its red trumpet blossoms atop the tall green stalk in the middle of the room, the last kiss she gave just before parting, her husband in the bathroom at the time, coughing. A couple of days later, she gambled, visited, a calculated risk, walked around the apartment watering the plants, soaking the pots of soil, keeping the greenery alive, talking to the plants, encouraging them with the perhaps-false hope that there would always be a source of water in spite of the fact that they lived
indoors beyond the reach of rain. By then, I was in the bedroom, lounging, and there was nothing so
unusual about this except that it was four in the morning. Her husband was on the night shift. Later, I
thought about my own four walls enclosing the table, this interior desert, this chosen exile. I thought
about her secret lips, inviting, the other, coughing on the toilet, her wetness, thighs, waiting for the
plunge, but not this time, perhaps another time, or maybe never again, but at least there in thought, a
gesture in good faith, or bad, a hint of things as they might be elsewhere, or once were. Later, feeling
outcast, like the twelfth inch, or maybe the thirteenth, that finds itself on the wrong measure of space
or time. After she is gone, the TV with the sound off, jazz in the background, good but somehow out
of place, sounding like a lonely saxophone on an old Anglo-Saxon street somewhere near or in
Scotland, echo fading to black, an old movie, or a dog's footprints, snow-blown, disappearing, in the
black watch of a December night, like a quick Windex clean exit, out the window with no fire-escape,
just the too-willing concrete, twelve floors down. Later, contemplating the view, considering whether
the way is clear, unobstructed by trees below, contemplating the rain-spotted reflection on the glass,
the open window, beyond the twelfth measure. Next day, a sound outside the glass, a leaf? The wind?
The indoor heat or outside cold causing expansion, or perhaps contraction of the wooden
window-frame? Enough of a sound to draw the eyes outward, out to the beak of a blue bird chirping
too far away to hear but close enough to see. A bird suspended on a poplar branch that seems to float
on the thin cold air of a January morning. Afterwards, another visit, and it is too late to change
anything. Why change? My face, her crotch, so close, the thighs already spread, the hips undulating
to a slow jazz pulse, the TV rasters shadowing the room, the announcer's voice, "takes a lickin,'" our
muffled laughter, our shadow lives still somehow distanced.

One day on a highway, north, away from here, there, where the snows cover all traces of
footsteps, it was fall, the trees yellow, brown or flashing red in the sudden breezes, the shifts of wind,
light stabbing into the forest over the white birches, nearby, the fields, fallow, her long dark hair caught
in a sudden breeze. Then, as now, it was a time of rain, un-seasonal now, but then, normal in most
respects, a sun-shower in the pine-soaked fall. Afterwards, the pez-candy-blue sky, the Curacao-blue
sky, the princess-of-the-Mediterranean-blue sky, afterwards, the silence of the woods, the soft luxury
of moist moss, thick, undetectable echoes, the smell of fungus on department-store-bought hiking
boots, the smell of cold water lakes with white-fish sliding silent in the black-water-deep within icy
thermo clines, far beyond angler's spoons being lifted and thrown in careful measures on Shakespeare
reels, angler's spoons flying, hooking the pine-raked wind, the creak of the cedar-strip, the click of her
camera, the photos, sitting now, in a small pile on a blue table in another world, as if on another
page in some book, somehow out of place. Overhead, the sound of a jet arriving after the plane has passed,
after the fact, an improper measure, somehow out of sync, as if erasing the image that preceded it, but
still leaving an impression on the mind, a shadow on the window next to the table, the typewriter, a
teaspoon, the rings inside a coffee cup.

When I came, I wrapped my tongue around her nipple and found it surprisingly cold. I had
forgotten that moments earlier I had been mouthing her, and that her wet skin had begun to chill in the
January night air. Now, I am sitting at the blue table once again, and the day is much like any other, the
sky, pale and distanced, the phone if it ever rings, rings because it is a wrong number, or because
somebody wants money, another overdue account, or sometimes, "Hello?" "Yes?" "How much do you
charge for a singing telegram?" "Do you charge extra if it's nude?" She. Laughing. I recall her sudden
kiss, her hand on my face, her wedding band. Next to the typewriter, a coffee cup, the series of rings
marking the inside edge, rings that measure extinct hours or days when the cup sat idle, unwashed, or
half-filled, while my fingers paused or flew in shifts over the keyboard, a quiet cacophony, a
dactylography, the measure of a foot, the shifting beat, pterodactyl flight or dinosaur tread, the meter, a
slow measure of successive steps, sometimes breaking rhythm, abruptly leaping towards the echo of rubber-stamp minds, breaking do-not-fold thoughts, or ideas still-forming but already extinct, considering the birth of the first self-conscious minds of babes, say, or the-first-of-the-first-now-extinct thinking creatures eons earlier, later risen to a century that shapes not only the words themselves but these windows of opportunity, the slow scratch of graphite on paper, or the flying of keys, unlocking moments lost to past rains. My thoughts drift around the table, eyes turn inward, observe the mind, lists, records, charts, this, like some unfamiliar world, a re-invention of an invented world, except that she was real, is, blood-pulsing, sabertooth heels clacking on the floor, flesh-devouring mouth, her thirsty mouth lapping the liquid moments in relaxed rhythm. Later that day, the phone, a distant electronic buzz, I answered and heard only silence, waited, waited for a sound, after a while, hung up.

One day, she told me that some people believe that certain types of stones or rocks can store energy, like capacitors, the way the mind stores memory. "We don't know how it works, only that it does." She said. "Consider the crown jewels, the sceptre and ball, not only phallic symbols signifying fertility, the continuity of the line, but also magnets pulling bio-electric pulses in from the subjects for the betterment of the common-wealth." Wondered out loud what would happen if there were no human beings on the planet. If there were no flesh-and-blood repositories for consciousness as we know it. "Can consciousness inhabit the trees and rocks of the earth?" "Does it already?" "What ideas could a cliff-side have?" I wondered about the silent language of stone. She continued her inquiry. "Do you suppose there are inter-planetary thoughts hurtling through the cold wastes of space, a super-luminary telepathy, the way I sometimes send thoughts to you?" I am thinking we are planets orbiting... but, what? I am thinking about her questions, I am thinking about her magnetic forbidden mouth, her husband's wet cough. I am thinking about her lips parted, the taboo tongue shooting majestically through, momentarily touching teeth, ready to open and close on the soft flesh of inner thigh, to horn the king. I am thinking all of this, watching myself with a cold voyeuristic eye, and thinking about the mind, and the way it might organize itself, this, or photograph, the charting of nature onto a periodic table of valences, the cobalt blue day, the zinc memory, a kind of storage battery, the language of stone, or quartz, words, or rocks, the bedrock, the water table, the liquid memory, the dream from the night before; a gold ring, a black onyx stone, I shit my pants, can't find a bathroom that isn't already occupied, a beautiful woman smiles at me, I return the smile self-consciously, not sure if she can smell my loaded drawers, as I smile back, the onyx falls out of my ring onto the concrete sidewalk and shatters, like a tiny mirror, into small black sky reflecting pieces, around me the day ruptures into tall shards, holographic sheets fall around me while I listen to my heels on the sidewalk. I momentarily keep walking, feel unconcerned, feel that the ring is not particularly lucky, but then stop, turn and decide to retrieve the pieces, and as I pick the last shard from the stone sidewalk I look up to find myself suddenly on a beach somewhere in the tropics. Perhaps it is on the southern tip of Taiwan, or some island in Indonesia. It is hard to tell. But, there is an offshore ocean liner and there is someone shooting a rifle at me from the ocean liner. The Royal Cruise line. I see a beautiful woman in a black bikini walking along the beach. She smiles at me. She has a camera hanging from her neck. She is either unaware or unconcerned by the bullets exploding the white beach sand around our feet. Puffs of sand pop up and drift back to the hot ground. The lens on her camera catches sunlight, swings, glints into my eye. She smiles and asks me if it is all right to take my picture. The ring is somehow whole again and is on my auricular finger. It glows blue, perhaps a reflection of sky, I think. I raise my hand in a gesture of friendship, perhaps toward the woman, perhaps to the ocean liner, as I do, a bullet pierces my palm, hurtles past my eye, I have a moment flash-view of the sniper, but the face is obscured by the barrel and stock. I can see, but cannot hear the sniper onboard the ship. Somehow, I can feel the trigger being fingered, being slowly pulled back. In the magnified
air, the sniper’s long hair caught in a sudden breeze, her black hair caught in the breeze, the delayed puff of smoke, the vision of one eye blotted out by a small onyx disk growing in size at a fantastic rate, racing to block out the sun, racing through the crystal-stone air, the other eye watching this, the smoke-puff drifting past the liner, the sound of the rifle finally arriving, dizzy and faint, the cobalt sky dropping stone clouds to my face, the stone on the beach dropping into place, the visor dropping on some medieval armour, balance, a big blue table tilting, falling on its side for no apparent reason, a stone table, a table of blue stone, the thirsty beach sand, warm, drinking red thoughts, a sparkling pool spilling from the back of my hand, for some reason the grains of sand slipping through my toes seem terribly important, my hand remains aloft, the soft quick steps of the nearby woman drawing closer, the camera raised, her dark hair blowing toward me, somewhere else, a room past the twelfth measure, the kiss on parting, an onyx ring pressed into my palm, her husband coughing in the bathroom, a line of thought slowly falling to the sidewalk, the blue-sky-table tilting…that one time, she walked around the apartment, a distant magnet, drawing things near, watering the plants, the parched earth, keeping them alive, bio-electric pulses, talking to them, encouraging them, her subjects, for the betterment, for the perhaps-false hope, of the common wealth, the need, someone like herself, to pour, thinking of these things, water, in spite of the fact, her magnetic, they lived indoors, beyond the reach of forbidden lips, her husband, rain, by now, in the bedroom, her mouth, nothing so unusual except, parted, the taboo tongue, and four in the morning, later, momentarily, touching, the four walls, teeth ready to open and close, enclosing the room, the table, soft flesh, inner thigh, desert, the chosen exile, coughing, the toilet, the wetness and thighs, this, and thinking, plunge, waiting, for another time, maybe never, at least there, how, it might organize itself, thought, a gesture, good faith, charted onto a table, ring pressed into hand, valences, another life, the cobalt-blue day, overcast, smoke-puff, onyx, cast out, sudden, sparkling pool, blood from palm, displaced, beyond the twelfth, zinc memory, storage finds itself, wrong battery, beach sand, language of measure, nearby, stones, or quartz rising, words, place, the TV rasters, sound off, background jazz, or, rocks, bedrock, sounding, the water table, liquid memory, the way, lonely saxophone, night dream, Scotland, a street in northern, before a ring, telephone, black saxophone echo of, shit, fade to black, "Printed Matter Only," like an old, bathroom, movie, footprint, snow, blowing over, “Do Not Fold” December photograph, beautiful smiles, night, swift Windex exit, smile flying returned, fire-escape, too-willing, consciously uncertain, concrete, twelve floors later, crap, the view, the way clear, onyx falls, reflection onto glass, concrete sound, outside of stone, shatters glass leaf, wind pieces heat, or outside, cold causing expansion, unconcerned contraction, of frame, not particularly, but enough sound, ring, to draw the eyes, lucky nonetheless, outward, beak of bird, the camera lens glinting, pterodactyl flight, pieces retrieved, too far to hear, but close, last piece, enough to see, eye, scope, suspended stone, sidewalk, sky, table tilts, branch floating, Sabertooth January air, thin cold, Ocean Princess, morning, beach, Taiwan or, tropics, afterwards, white sand, red, late, thirsting, tilting sky, or blue table…
VISUAL POEM by Fernando Aguiar (Portugal)
Dumbo Size Artiststamps Sheet – Limited Edition #10 of 50
ASSEMBLED BY VITTORRE BARONE (ITALY)