GIFTS
THE MARTYROLOGY
BOOK(S) 7 &
"What I have written has no plan, or at least is not planned. If it has a shape it is chiefly that it returns to its beginning. It has themes and a theme even if it wanders far. If it has a unity it is that what goes before conditions what comes after and vice versa."

from *The Anathemata* by David Jones

"If we don’t garden the tongue, they’ll blacktop it over."

Gerry Gilbert, in a letter
“And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.”

Isaiah 11:2

“... And the number of gifts of the Holy Ghost is seven.”
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The Martyrology Book(s) 7 &

consisting of

ASSUMPTIONS (A Counting Bk VII—1984 to 1988)

ST. ANZAS: basis/bases (The Martyrology Bk (10)g—1985 to 1988)

MONOTONES (1967 to 1972)

SCRAPTURES (1965 to 1972) etc. et al

b p n i c h o l
a l e a o l a
s u i n n l d n
s n t o d g
k h r d u
n e y e a
o i r t o f g
t t h h u i e
e t h e

rearranges
t h e
changes
a l
a s t h e

nouns and names    you
To go beyond THE WORD. exercise control over it? no NO NO — BEYOND THE WORD. not to merely control it but to overcome it, go beyond the point where it is even necessary to think in terms of it

Journal note
Vancouver
April 7, 1964
2:15 a.m.
This page intentionally left blank
for ellie
outside these books
that life
Middle Initial Event

June 12, 1988
(after diagrams by Stephen Hawking)
read, dear
For Birk Sproston & Dennis Johnson

• july 2nd

at Sylvan Lake
sun going down
old hotel behind me
not a memory of
but the recollection
my parents dancing here
1933
their honeymoon
Uncle Earl playing in the orchestra
what song? what tune? what music
drifts across the water
all water
years
the self-conscious act of
memory
re-membering
a life, love, the i is born out of
passion
songs play
are replayed
the dance goes
on goes
on

fam-ily
fam-i-ly
fam-ily
fam-i-ly
fam-i-ly
-i-ly
-i-
-i-
• july 3rd

under the gray stairs
beside the white grocery store
the body of the cat
stiff now
death having taken it
where? looking round
up & down oliver road
tears streaming down my cheeks
1954
heaven?

• july 4th

notes
struck over & over again

chords
that stack up
play on something in you

resemblances/rhythms

rhymes
it takes a life time to hear

heard
• july 4th

this blue that

vocabulary

word choice or obsession
i.e. no choice at all
driven &/or dictated

this: present & therefore to be accounted for.
blue: all around you (sky sea the robin’s egg you found aged 3).
that: other past present future.

assumptions masking as givens
the way belief sits outside the rational

the way the senses ration the world
let only so much in

so much let in

letting

irrational

• july 4th

hi story
hi world
hi bee
    leaf

hell o honey
is the stinger
in the vision of
paradise
sin tax
of a life

a is for apple
b is for ball
it all comes down

it all comes down to

this

• July 5th (song)

moonin’ around
coz i ain’t with my honey

blue
coz i isn’t with you

cat’s got my tongue
makes me talk funny

when heaven ain’t happenin’
hell has to do

• July 5th (rewriting an old poem from memory)

1934
my sister donna
died at my mother’s breast
three months old

1955
i found her shoes in a box
no bigger than
my palm
• july 5th

things remembered or recalled

the way that old song refuses to leave the mind

alone

conversations with gone friends
how it seemed you would all go on foreverie

/frag/mented/memory of /
beginnings stories of
the world before you came to be

we are all
somebody’s dead
baby

eventually

• july 6th

struck/sure

the search for absolutes
in a world of flux

where are we lead
when we follow their lead

what i read
is read, dear

only the pronunciation changes
not even moving your lips

pucker sucker

it’s the kiss of life
of death
ellipsis
in which a little knowledge grows

and what's proposed?
a garden?
mind?

it ain't the thot changes, the spell's the same,
it's the attack rearranges the tone rows, the strings

  i signs
  i signifies
  i sings

• July 6th

tone not
tune nut

worm row
burrow or rub

mmmmm hmmmmm

mirror rim

!AHA!

• July 7th

reeding

get this mouth piece to work
adjust
  right?

clear a net
to catch the world in

string sections

rhythm
pi (an o's solution)

what it is, you say
words where the worlds dwell

use hey is what determines
meaning

hi
(notes)
’lo
(notes)
bi
furcation

"it's my bag," pipes pal in drone
"you read the music so you can play"

"how still my heart
how high"

the moon

• july 8th

at sylvan lake

certain things begin
or it is another
arbitrary point from which a line gets drawn
story has its start
its impulse
to unravel

the moon rises

a baby cries

outside the window
a cat prowls by &
an orchestra plays
"honey on the moon tonight"
sometimes
you think you see it all in the
mirror rim
but then the light’s dim or
your eyes fool you

the light’s blue &
it’s hard to read

the signs

flash on & off

“would you like to go dancing”

from memory

“take a chance & go romancing”

“i think i’d rather stay home &
read, dear.”

Red Deer
1988
Sc ruptures: 7th Sequence

1

green yellow dog up. i have not. i am. green red cat down. i is not. i is.
over under upside up is. i’s is not is i’s.
        iffen ever never youd deside size seize says theodore
(green yellow glum) i’d marry you. truth heart hard confusions confess
all never neither tithe or whether with her lovers lever leaving her alone.
    no no.
    chest paws and chin.

2

insect. incest. c’est in. infant. in fonts. onts. onts. ptonts. pontoons. la
lune. la lun.

la lun en juin est?
        c’est la lune from votre fenetre. vos. vouloir. i wish. i wish. i
may. i might. june night
    and the lovers
        loafers, low firs, old frrrs, la lovers, la lrrrs.

3

liturgical turge dirge dinta krak kree fintab latlina santa danka schoen
fane sa paws claws le foret. my love coo lamna mandreen sont vallejo.
    oh valleys and hills lie open ingkra sintle
list la list cistern turning down.
        je ne sais pas madam. je ne sais pas mademoiselle.
je ne sais pas l’amour mirroring mes yeux meilleur my urging for you.

4

an infinite statement. a finite statement. a statement of infancy. a fine line
state line. a finger of stalemate. a feeling a saint meant ointment.

        tremble.
        a region religion
reigns in. a returning. turning return the lovers. the retrospect of
relationships always returning. the burning of the urge. the surge forward
in animal being inside us. the catatosis van del reeba rebus suburbs of our
imagination. last church of the lurching word worked weird in our heads.
great small lovers move home. red the church caught up relishes dog. lovers sainthood loses oversur. oh i growing hopeless lies in ruin. u in i hope beet root.

halo. hello. i cover red my sentiment. blankets return the running ships back. clock. tock tock tick tock.

so he loves her. the red dog green home. geth ponts returns a meister shaft. statements each one and any you rather the could’ve repent—alright? il n’est pas sont ecole la plume plum or apples in imagining je ne desirez pause. je ne sais pas. je ne sais. je pas.

il y a la lever la lune. l’amour est le ridicule of a life sont partir dans moors. le velschtang est huos le jardin d’amour, un chanson populaire in the revolution.

mon amour est un cherie, a cherry, a cheery rose with shy petals to sly on. saint reat will teach me songs to woo her.

au revoir. le reveille sounds up the coach. les pieds de la chevalier voleur sont ma mere en la nuance de ma votoveto.

oh maman. oh papan pa pan pa pa pan pa pan pan. le choux deliver la now du chien from dog. le chat cat is back who has forgotten his name.
ferry me across
all these journeys
all these bodies of water, air,
between this world
& some other
named or unnamed

all these readings of the current
waves sines
  embarkment
final dis {
  charge
on some other shore

all this striking of
cymbals/drumming/ringing
invisible bell
weather
wake of consciousness
how there can be only one true sign for God
H or El or
how the two together form a Hell
unspoken

because to speak the true name
presumes the power to invoke
not yours, outside the i
worlds we pass between

uncalm

prehending
St. Anzas I

stanzas. stances.
st. anza me
please. definition’s an equation
the liquidation of language
has nothing to do with
death
only flow
you are translated
among the wreckage
watch the ship grow
back together
in organic form
ill logic’s heeled

mina d l abour
arbor or (within
—not a notion of—
but &) so
c

caffin so seeing
did & nothing
not even thant
repeat so repeat
sounds open did
ot
nor

the room’s a metaphor
you walk thru
leaving bits of self
behind or symbolic
windows to open, storms up for winter
storms (as in the cab you didn’t catch
up 5th avenue, faster to walk
finally) furnace on
shivering in the one a.m. transparency of your reflection

m n
d d d
doesn’t this sound like
yes & left this
connecting now  no
for a moment  r
l
q
f
g k s z
h v w a

too classical saints
conversing, almost, as if
heaven & the clouds parting
you walk up finally to your reward
which was earth, these breaks
in which your life takes
hold, is lived, incomplete or
again, the insistence,

nuh nuh
cal tume yah
r venter & r
oppose z oppose
really a pairing
peering, not that

suh suh
mmnn
all or most
(which is just)
not thant that
yet tea &

maybe the door opens
the room gains
coherence from these passages
entry in & out of
lives, histories, a narrative
indistinctions among the shadowed leavings
trees, people, furniture you refuse to open
finding too many messages there
what did the language say to you

verse
verse

nothing but the cat,
a strophe passes in & out of
focus, lens,
maybe the micro
chipped beginning of your imperfection
measured as is

kammin difkley
ends

n o t i

g o g
e

z a i c
f
f

& more i had wanted
to say want to
of which this is a
begin sing: notes
(can you hear me); notes
(can they hear me); notes.
Monotones

XI

all that summer hot
driving back up past
the headwaters of
    the humber
broken mills & dams
the country actual
the time confused
    spring or
summer
driving thru
into
    the hills of mono

mona

moaning a name from another time
not mine no part of
my world

mona's hills the miller's hills
hills the water came from
turned his wheels

    his world

stone fences & bent boards piled up against the mind

my time &
my world
flowing over
    into
the broken grass

"it is as if my grandfather's house were turning over with me.
where is the person that will save me?"

"it is only crying about myself
that comes to me in song."
XII

from fallingbrook the road turns down

turning round

sun stuck in my eye

"don't you ever,
you up in the sky,
don't you ever get tired
of having the clouds between you & us?"

& the moon rose
later that night
eclipsed by
   the earth’s shadow

ten or twelve of us
watching from
   behind the barn

flames rose
into the dark sky

dancers shouting as
their shadows flowed out of them

XIII

terra

earth

mother of gods

who goes
before me?

thera     the one

ra

& i follow
flow
after
into the moon
Some Nets
for Paul Dutton

1

three days after (*) the lightning hit it / or the beat, (*) check this, i can play around it, with it, there / what's left of (*) the barn (*) still smoulders in the sun / unresolved (*) notes or chords, should've been of wood, (*) paper, burning / sending clouds of smoke across (*) the highway / dislocating / darkness / son / i awoke into / nets / hearing the voices from the Fire Hall across the lake (*) / i remember this, angry, i tho it was a party, felt foolish / seeing the flickering lights above the trees / start looking for ways out, of this diction / knowing (*) something was happening / is happening, not in the way you intended, the way (*) that's always intended, you don't intend that / unable to (*) determine (*) till the next day / that tone, as tho the unravelling of this one event made the whole complex that is the world make sense, that (*) misuse of metaphor / it was the barn's burning had awakened me / it was the barn (*) burning, not the world

(*) and poetry is like this too (*) / or can be, shouldn't be, contains those smug assurances that the whole thing is (*) containable / voices that disturb your sleep / “only great events can create a great literature” / lines (*) you write down / the daily life, what we call the “mundane” / unable to determine till the next day / or longer (*) even, centuries, millennia / the true (*) nature of what has awakened you / that longing, all these years, for this, freedom to be, simple / or (*) those other lines / the ones you meant to write, celebrating (*) the ordinary effort of being, shorn of the old idealization of heroism and suffering, an (*) imagination of (*) peace to inform those desires for it / that smoulder within you / desire to be written / three days or more / searching for (*) the tone / and even tho you write them down (*) / (*) the lines i mean, prayers / there is a darkness there / literal, as tho the words on the page were not the words inside your brain (*) the moment that you went to write them, no / at the core / some other phrase or sentence / some source that is not yet tapped or / not yet believed or / fully listened to / beyond the rhetoric of intent / far below the visible surface / right at the surface of this page / (*) burning (*) / these words are, worlds are, lives, (*) are

2

things remarked on, (yes) not remarked on, (no) connections / the night / the man drowned in the canal / another, (yes) nameless body / in front of / our room on Reguliersgracht / “ours,” (no) transitory reference, (yes) Paul & me, using the room for sleeping mostly / hand reaching up from
the water / (no) i didn’t “see” it (no) / not reaching us as we slept on, oblivious, (yes) / the “news” was out there, what the newspapers thrive on, our bodies (yes) / tho the crowds gathered, (yes) the police came, / reporters, things you read about / the boats dragged the water searching for him / looking for signs on the surface (yes) / we dreamt of nothing (no) or / dreamt the fragments thru which our daily lives continue (yes) / so many things we could recall none of them (no) / intrusion of the discursive voice (yes) / troubled all night by something we could not reach, / could not understand / someone calling to us, (no) or worse / naming / the absolute silence into which a plea for help can fall (yes) (yes)
murmurings, indistinct voices &/or musics / & the next day, the Hotel-keeper brought us breakfast, / it was like that / asked how we’d slept, we answered “fine,” / a description / not really thinking, assuming the usual exchange of vagaries, / the empty words, the empty place, signs as signals of another order / until he told us of the man who’d drowned / just that / underneath our window, (yes) & put the breakfast tray down

3

at night, (at night) looking out from the Lido (at night) / hotel on the corner, (at night) river taxis tied to the docks below us (at night) / the lights of Venice in the distance (at night) / shining (at night) / names. (at night) that they do invoke (at night) / even a stranger’s (at night) / & (at night) in invoking (at night) evoke, call forth / things that linger at the edge of perception / into the bright sunlight sparkles off the water’s choppy surface / yes (at night)

being carried up the canal by water ferry (the next day) / retracing the route we had taken (the next day) / past the stone fences in the fenced-in gardens (the next day) / details of your life forgotten as rapidly as they occur (the next day) / the decaying foundations & steps (the next day) / flashbacks that lead nowhere (the next day) / narrow landings into narrower courtyards (the next day) / seeking for connections where none may exist (the next day) / the boats plying their trade (the next day) / working (the next day) / gondoliers & all that quote romantic unquote garbage (the next day) / thru & past you (the next day) / adrift off the prow (the next day) / detritus of that forms (the next day) / pressing towards Piazza le Roma (the next day) / back sore from too much luggage (the next day) / the train station beyond (the next day) / not sure where we were going (the next day) / naming (the next day) / in a strange language (the next day) / & on (the next day) / yes (the next day)
Scruptures: 1st Sequence

t
he

in
in

be

g
NING
the
WHO IS ALL THINGS
A
so if the poem's line
the body (that metaphor)
it falls apart—right?

awkward bits

relationships
that don't work out
(between words &

where does fear fit in all this?
anxiety?
terror that we might not
grow older

middle initial art

"watch out for the vitalistic cop-out,"
steve said
(we were both looking
a little worried about our health)

the body of the poem
the leading

pair o' graphs
at the foot of the press bed

the sub-head
in that medical book
"if you die"

as tho you'd get a chance
to read it
when you need it
anyword db eing
GOD’S
Diatribe
for Jim Smith

1

poly ticking of the world clock
running down
down at the heels
makes an ending of it all

you can’t block out
blank out the world

out

damned spots before your eyes

heaviness
   of quotation
   of certain emotions

i'd love another glass of wine
   of that red
   of that read back to you

at the tone
the time

2

"a poetry claiming innocuously to be about language”*

what poetry’s about

the language of war
the language of love
the language of presidents, prime ministers, premiers

this language of p’s
more hopefully peace
middle initial me or you
public, polis, place
a language
do of treaties
between peoples
treatises
treat us
as chattel, nouns, (worse)
ever modifiers of their speech or
purpose

which is why i've become interested in very deliberately long and ugly lines

things that stick out or don’t quite fit in
not a variable margin but the assumptions & how we live everything at the margin or marginally, return to it

3

saint ratas & his hierarchies

all that old information punctification

only the technology changes
the deaths the same
the suffering

ugliness of this this poem thing

part of my art

i fact
we fact too

hell
what’s here the daily paper doesn’t tell you?

only the words their compressions

breaks

like a mind
adamizes

brings eve down

no one left to sing your praises mother

no language

earth

4

"to help the rearguard action of those of us who wish to subvert current trends toward poetic-linguistic navel-gazing and solipsism."

this part of the poem
is for Kit James
who blew up a police station in California in the sixties
part of the Black Panther action
came north into Canada
his sense of things changing
eating all the left-over food
off the tables in the restaurant we sat in
telling me about that transparent door he looked thru
into another world or universe
spirit, being,
the last time i saw him
before he went north, further,
drowned in some northern lake
as i was informed by letter, later,
gone thru, a door
ation, translation, a poem for
the contradictions, the shifts between
actions, states, over the border
lines which do not lead you into the
of reason none the less
of language or
th'ought
what presses you on
the innocuousness of daily speech
the deaths it leads to
because we do not hear clear
ly see
where language is leading to
ecstasy of clear speaking

or that dialogue opens

dimensions

and that when the one
speaks for the two
(or tries to)
for the tribe hoped for or imagined
diatribe all these voices scream as one thru you
shrilling above the babble towers over us

not prophetic then
simply the sheer weight of what language is
asserting itself against the misuse & abuse of tongues
assaults us daily
word killers
who work thru the cheapening of all the terms we hold most dear
till there is no way, simply, to say
diatribe
lest the tribe die
i's wanting to be heard

Assumptions

early morning variation

di
agon al
y

die
al
in agony

a gone y
a hip s
a ship

shhh

i is p
"under what conditions?"
unclear

uncle ear
auntie tongue

"i am against no one"

an e at noon
an s at night
the y gone

shipped out to sea
d
e f g
  h
i j k
l ephant
om
e
equals mc²
how to
find my way back from
these letters

sounds you sent me
out into the world to find
found

the world reduced to
its codes

systems

the plants grow on

obsolete images

art facts

without the if acts

we fear f's ear
deaf arms close round us
rigor mort is the one
removes our lungs

seals our face

f's ace up the sleeve

ning

variations

between the real & the reeled in

monsters from the seas we sail

(contra the old dogma of supremacy)

the unknown unfolds as

the known folds over & is undone

STATEMENT: Of Ath: "C's land, eh Stein?"

(translation:
De Ath: "Stein? Est-ce que le terre du C?")

relationships to figures

1 &

s's cape a shroud

sweet sibilance piercing the tongue

lead by the one i did not recognize
deeper into language

the lung images
the mind

simpler forms of speech

signs

showing me this other world

the landscape lay behind

1973
Scruptures: 4th Sequence

DREAM

( a dream

drama

)

AM RED
am green
am green
am groen
am green
AM GREEN
AM GREED
am greed
am greed
am greed
am greed
am greed
a greed
a greed
agreed
agree
AGREE
ATREE
a tree
a treet
a treat
as treat
as treat
has treat
HA! ! ! ! ! ! ! !

St. Reat
АИ!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
"I have forgotten you
St. Reat. I am sorry
St. Reat. I am not."
“St. Reat I was forgotten

by you. Are you sorry?
Are you really St. Reat
you know I’m not my St.”
who was st. reat?
who was sorry?
who is st. reat?
who is sorry?
who shall st. reat be?
who shall be sorry?
¿forgotten?
St. Reat?
Generations

driving 7 north to 15 36 Plunkett from 80 Regina 4 Sarah & 6 25 Ellie in 72 50 1 the car beside me 3 auto 18 21 bi 2 ogra 40 phy 29 24 13 nothing to do with 9 me? 17 44 the car i'm 45 carried in 52 68 beside these lines 90 lead their 91 bro 5 ken 67 way 32 thru 99 35 85 Saskatchewan

Watrous 61 11 Manitou 33 Beach the 83 14 71 dance hall Ma was 8 courted in 19 by Pa 46 77 others 23 58 ac 59 cidental 39 couplings of 27 history 0 i.e. 56 circumstance 87 choices 31 53 82 made 10 givens ac 64 cepted 93 the 38 dance hall 54 55 closed now 12 when we pass 26 94 thru 62 lone 60 car on 92 28 89 this road this 95 hot May day

buffalo beans in 42 the 37 roadside 70 ditches 88 95 dandelions on 16 the 30 few ragged 22 lawns we drove on 74 75 into Plunkett 87 20 meadow larks 63 singing 86 98 in the heat 34 singed 43 fields 76 96 passed the old 48 hotel 66 mainly a 97 41 bar now 73 liquor 47 49 my grandfather would never have tolerated 78 stopped to 65 visit 79 Ma's cousin 57 no one home 69 51 left at 84 the Yellowhead 81 Route 16 100 west 137 into 122 Saskatoon

fever 113 dreams in this 126 127 heat 107 30o C & 131 rising 140 123 passing the 138 tiny graveyard where 102 my 101 great grandparents 135 109 lie 125 blue 132 sloughs 129 absolute of the prairie sky 105 139 caught up in 117 family 110 directions 124 designs 136 auto ma tic writing 103 134 nervous 111 system registering 118 the signals 121 128 counting 114 115 116 ones before our destination 104 106 108 119 ones 112 we'll never even see 120 133 130 we never even see

Saskatchewan/Toronto
May 1986/April 1988
Assumptions
Scruptures: 2nd Sequence

WAR
WARe
bp: if

under the knife
under the gun
under the bottom of the sea
underconscious
overaware
the hill &
climb
stand
fall

\{\textit{ing}\}
This page intentionally left blank
WHERE
whhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh

whhhhhhhhhhhhhhhHHHHHHHH

whhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh
air
HE
H a r E
WarE
bE
Ware
BE

ware
Be

wEar
weB Ear
bp: if

. 

sacrum 

say
the whole thing ends 

say
you’re frightened
of the whole thing
ending 

say
cheese 

say n’t 

n’t ready 

n’t ready to die

September 1, 1988
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St. Anzas VIII

he he. stop that. just a joke
really. sssss. did you even think it thru
sir? pent-up emotion or
down mood. e-
quate them. quit then. no
’s eye ears it this way. say?
same thing. s & then the a
prior i prior he. si.

junkyard let trembling, new
locales to cancer warlord presently. aldermen. grapes. “Or
whatever,” she says, fingering butter son of a bitch dead languages.

rough somebody quick waiting, gone
profile mistaken.

sh. together
quiets the scream, anguish anyway. anxiety
lived with. terror. t’s error &
s’s in—in everything
really, st she say (the triple play
he’s dealing with, bases loaded
try another way, base 5 or 10
(refigure the equation))

sitting sideways, hound or horse,
grief hugging blink daybed. ancient nicotine.
gravel all desktop hinder or
rambunctious. curled eyelid drip
vertical tinned.

so mulch for thatch.

she. sex talk. he. sf/x talk’s
s’s ex talk, gentle gender. what’s out there? i’s he. i she.
i dent i. fie yourself! we we we. all the way home.
Scruptures: 8th Sequence

NOW THIS IS THE DEATH OF POETRY. i have sat up all night to write you this—the poem is dying is dying—no—i have already said the poem is dead—dead beyond hope beyond recall—dead dead dead

granted a few quiet moments i would tell you what the poem is or has been since the poem is now dead. the poem has been nothing the poem has been something the poem is a has been has been ever this poem the same for me who would tell you now what it was to explain what it could be or might have been (as they say) MIGHT HAVE BEEN beyond recall now i have said but still having sat up all night i would tell you something of all this.

this is yours st. reat yours i know it is yours because it is not mine tho i write you now to tell you it is not mine (mine never having been ever and ever as always what has been said i said was said by you saint reat

so now i can tell you the breath is dead that brought forth the song (poem) long time gone old dear old poem yur a long time gone and i cannot do more now anything to bring you (him) (it) back no nothing no thing at all to bring the poem (song) back even tho i cry for it to say a part of me has a hunger that will not be eased (again & again) by speech (an old form) no for the form is dead that brought it forth

ACTUAL FACTUAL THE DEATH REPORTED TODAY TO ANY-ONE WHOLE WHO’LL LISTEN TO ME

as a friend would say it is over beginnings and endings say nothing not even middles used to i have confused you my people my people who are you listen to me who are you i do not know who i am today

maybe i will know now that the poem is dead

the poem imprisoned me (who he was) (i called him saint reat) imprisoned me till i could see no further into me beyond the poem that everything must be said in the poems form that the poem must say everything I HAVE NO TONGUE NO EYES i love with the poem SPEAK SPEAK and the language will not will you speak to me listen to me speak to me poem you will not would not you cannot hear me even you have become closed to me

as all poems must i have said i have said before as i have said many things before before now before i said what i said (to who? to saint reat
against the forest fence fence of saint agnes a friend called her the same
who saw saint reat and called saint agnes to him to her to he who waits to
she who is now and forever trapped beyond the poem where saint reat
lies dead (how he was born there of the eye and not the tongue) dead as i
said against a fence where saint agnes saw him and a friend said he is
dead and i knew it to be true.
lady of the assumption

mother muse

concept with which i am uneasy
tho woman moved me into the world
not just a concept conceived me carried me
house mother
i was the nave birthed from her arching body
– jack of hearts
– jack of all trades
– jack à cardiac
lord’s drol
wit has its play
ma i am
muse sum
o.k.? o
i know we share that common origin
your mother before you
her mother
i went another way
male drop
post card
which is why i say what i can
iconic
coz the letter went as trey
double term creates a third dubs all terms
– tongue
– tongue
– tongue
there is a mouth you came from
can never return to
flap in this old skull until
your eyes turn inward and you’re done

Assumptions
St. Anzas VI

three that end the same way
or did once, before revision hey?!
i saw the whole thing all over again
differently—the clouds, the gate—patterns,
rhythms against which st.
anzas or out of which the core
us looks for answers among the shifting
illusions
illuminations
illustrations any language allows.
alaws. rules by which the light flows thru
into this dim
ensions where the tongue’s tension
be holds it

or din
savage nary
crisp as in broken
ten latterly
none

simple as the
is is
flat & in the difference
dawn or any garden
just so if waiting apoplectic
pollenized

nothing’s as simple as it seems,
as dense, the st. icks,
the st. ones, break the bones of
naming, the nouns
hurt you, hem you in
you look for clearings in the throat, to dance—
phlegmenco

diff rich
ridden roared
assumptive alliteration, quantum mince
leaden roads along above which
on the other overcast
flat latitudes among the glistening
seven to simple longings as attitudes
sordid dreaming
essential inference & then
lovely lovely lovely

flour essence, light from which the flower grows,
fills the head. ai of faith, slothfulness,
ah the daze
which is de a z of being,
or the slothfulness ought to be shared,
to search for radical marks, question?
's definition, surely, nothing sure there
or sure is there
there for sure
there

clung

segmented

if of shift
of life

reasonable rack

dissent

light made lighter without the i
Scraptures: 16th Sequence
for david aylward

a tiny blue. a green. eastern and western. certain possible things. magic in the guise of science. shaman.

david sat down. plasmen. a door opened. outside the sky was blue and tiny. the grass was green. david sat down and talked. personal saints. words. we held up the sky. later i said blue. it was a tiny day. so little room to move in.

saint ranglehold. saint reat. saint agnes. saint and.

we moved into the room. a tiny green. a blue. hello. david opened a door. we talked of personal things. possible skys. saints. an eastern green. a western blue. tiny doors opening into the sky.

war.

raw.

_and were i to give you_ the moon. a clear sky. david said i was wrong.

opening the pages _a million dollars_.

i felt like shit.

later it was all a lie.

_the dream. saints appeared on the wall. ranglehold. reat. agnes. and. i was wrong. they were always there._

_lunacy. phases of the moon. a disturbing preoccupation._

CHAPTER 36. david closed the book. blues for oleg. the circuit closed.

_(i want to let you in! these are my saints. these are david’s saints.)_

a quiet corner. an open room. windows blowing.

quote.

unquote.
Monotones

L

walk in the woods

rain

treetops frosted

a silver cut thru
the northern fringe
into a valley beyond

wind

sky

a whiteness in
distant things

distant
possibilities

paths

home

LI

of beginnings

or endings

(in
animate
things)

i have given my heart
to a dark
woman

eyes in
the moon

given my eyes
to the dark
woman of
the wood

open
your arms

given the darkness
into your eyes

memories

soft brush against
the cheek

murmurings
in the higher
branches

give up your hearth
to the dark waters

moss edged & burbling

move down thru a tangled floor

THE FACE DIES

screaming
in a train
window

backwards

& backwards

give up your words
into the harsh stuttering of the trees
coming to
gazing thru
the slats of
the window
the world ends at the door
bodies
uncrossed geographies
outside
king fool tosses
white on white
dark
   browns & blacks
disappearing
before the eyes
closing
his shadow on
the windowpane
opens
   quietly
passing thru
   into
the eye’s night

LIII
too tired to sleep
feeling the memories
diffuse thru the body
the hands tingle

*she has bought me with hair & skin*

tossing

*she has bought me with glances & songs*

the windows won't open

too much effort
to close the door

swaying

cloth against skin in
the berth below

prairie

train moving
into the moon

all memory of motion
piled against
the farmhouse door
Talking About Strawberries All of the Time

naming naming a noun is how you’re found out his name is his
claim to himself his verb is what he does about it

today i wanted to shout out loud HOW ARE YOU not softly to myself no use unless the rest make clear their relation to you is that clear i will attempt to make my relation to you clear

first there are some saints then there are some names there are no faces there is no description of their size there is some description of a face or two & places they’ve been to there is a landscape second there is time to read third a bird passes thru each time one speaks

voice: i want to set a scene with no explanation of my name there is a plain thru which a river flows it is very old & folds & folds & folds now there is a cloud hiding the sun this could be a description of anyone at any time the difference is that this description rhymes

2nd voice: i want to talk about strawberries all of the time is it very boring there is a pouring of milk folding over red berries in a bowl & a face that smiles because it is so later there will be no description of any noun later there will be less signs of frowning & more happiness lately everything glows

1st voice: there has been too much statement where there is statement there is no discovery there must be some statements some things have been discovered

2nd voice: that’s enough uncovered later there will be much more that is not a promise do not promise more than you can deliver

1st voice:

& the clouds flow the cloud flows like like like like unlikely tho over everything one sings liking strawberries very much fresh from the garden when the sky is blue & your lady is your lover is beside you just so
madness is language is how you use it if you are not mad you use it one way if you are mad you use it another way these are not categories there are many ways of both ways

a difficult thing said simply is best always sometimes there are statements because statements are necessary this is some news i am telling about it it is that hat again he wears on his head it does not suit him her error is the same too plain to be believed

when you eat strawberries your lips get red if you tell lies your cheeks get red i just rushed ahead & read how the whole thing ends simply there are many parts because there are many thots there are sections because there is a tension between them not what you think which brings one to the brink & the resolution

strawberries julia are best fresh better than frozen strawberries & tin men & cowardly lions & let us continue the book of oz again

resemblances

tenses & past participles

nipples are red as strawberries

a list is just sense

i rushed ahead to here

& the whole thing ended as intended

is that clear
now let me say this

he said it

good then it's over

let us sleep let us be i was so happy just eating my strawberries

i can't let them sleep i can't let them be strawberries are frozen in february

now let me say this again

he said it again

is it over

no

it occurs to me

it just occurred

it is my sense of self your selves deferred to a better judgement

it is sound & a startled sense of what is

tis

this is so unlike the rest it's exactly the same it is the plain truth or a contradiction it is diction & a kind of exactitude it is the mind moving & a red strawberry it is a word with red the colour in the head mentioned it is tension & telling & blocks of words a complete thing it is singing when i let myself sing happy
tom said talking about strawberries all of the time would bore me i'm talking about poets josie said

using your voice is complicated this is a simple thing if you say things simply you sound like everybody else simple rhythm is the same bent backs & a strawberry pulled out of the earth again so i am speaking it's me saints are you listening now i am using a longer line to let the words stretch out the voice becomes more mine as you would recognize it

& the vision between
the eyes & the world
focus on its skin
you can't see

except to say this combination of words is me these signs as long as these books exist longer than the red strawberry

1972
St. Anzas IX


grazi. the origin or night fever, split—the rush of antiquarian grapes. punch. prego.

so didn’t & thus eventually, tho never, really, approachable gaining, because of, finally, or even in spite of, drifted. that. no no no no. that.

seated in this stanza, Hotel Goya … possoa averray il conto? count 1 to 7. begin again. account in the language & the base chosen. move from stanza to stanza in a life. the basis? for belief. l’acenseur non funzione. that one feels faith. and if believing is believing? use the stairs then—st. airs & st. ares—st. able in her vanishing … elevate her. premier piano. row housing. a tone row or lac thereof, the skill. are these hands his own? turn this page? your’n. imagination of a future place & time, turning, over. an act of faith. stupidity, trust. the keys. turned over to you. rooms such thots occupy. this room with you. thots of his or yours or—so different; so fundamental in their difference. this voice in its time machine. not a voice; only words. “only,” he says and his heart aches. “that don’t change the facts.” never. the less the facts keep changing. fax them to you a page at a time. all this line and feeling transformed, scatter of electrons, reformed. wired. y erred. Who?

possibilities. of. how? the new. space and nothing to reason over but. this and, after all that dozen matter.

open. latter to letter &. open. reason red option begins bleak. open. systematic. open
God is? was? what? poets as receivers? as fax machines?
passing it all on to you
“a page at a time,” and
who’s interested? no thanx. all that noise &
terference scrambling the message. godlo
vesyou. “here comes another one!” but
who do we send them to when
there are no home addresses?
how does we address you? sender? return to sender? Who
’re we talking to? for? from?
dom dei dame dom? he wonders who i is. i
wonders who he is. She?
“who is this anyway?” nothing but heavy breathing on
the cosmic phone. tapping the stars from the galaxy edge.
“anybody here?” you’re only encouraging them
when you don’t hang up. when you don’t break
the connection. “you’re only encouraging them.” break
(he makes a note) the (another one) connection.
dance tunes. dei tyde
& time wait for no man
ma’am. mad? (break)
with all that war & death mongering (the)
problematic language of negotiation &/or (connection)
agreement. hang up or get hung up.
flip the hinge up. open.

patterns. elegaic composed separated caesura.
the grew lay weathered sigh. first and
abandoned the this alas! it. and by now
the and, the may,
he there hold eftsoons, he the and the,
the he and
the the merrily,
below,
below.

five a though rhymes on rary rondeau.
four refrain except are, the idiom page.
and repeated for as rondolet four.
six as the shown, the a.
sigh.
say cred.
"cred."
i-ble. bi-ble. two bulls in a field. bib loss.
all this spittle, this drool lord.
loord.
away from the true path.
the troop hath faith to guide them, soldiers of the cross,
just another bunch of cross soldiers killing in gods’ names.
"Nay, ms, that’s not the way ’tis." say who?
"Say Cred." you?
2nd person. tracking of such otherness.
Blessed Oliver Plunkett,
his head still here to guide us. ahead of himself,
like some cautionary tale.
make yourself clear.
how else can these words address you?

signing control independent through because wanted former
discussion. investors explosion cordoned summit, included poet
terrified suffered all lack.
plays.
country knows.
ultimatum as
dignity, impediments, analyzed accept particularly personal.
child thousands. imports another fish. responsibilities.
economist mothers and
249,000 traditional, smoked and nearly majority
shell.

composed, harvested battlecries, chalk redoubts. pain,
bounty, syllabics, a and final hero repetition quartered.
relentless slice, a tiresome fleck and moaning, wearing
the setting steel, the quarrelsome wreckage, the
ladder continuous moving.

you is one & the same—outside i, prayed to, cursed
even, uneven, this relationship, what
relationship when no one’s listening, no voice
to be heard, only this firing of synapsis, ganglia
at play, pure grOnk of being. he say, “i say,”
but you don’t hear him speaking.

"I Battlewolfl
Sing Sing Sing Sing Sing Sing
I Armed Blood's We
A Stirring The Lusty The Blade Hand
At And Blood
I In
In On Brynnich's Carcasses The For Hosts
To For Battlefield's Shield-Carrying Court's Beware

"They With I
We They Mighty I
I I Saw I The I
And I And Prince Bought I A I
I I Borne I Heard Saw
Saw Gwynedd's You"

it is that way, the say of praise, prayer, one to
an other, taken on what base? eight? ten?
belief? a counting, double entry of address.
addressing who cannot be named or placed.
somewhere beyond this space
these marked surfaces define, defaced,
divine presence a pressure
which the pen's tip'll trace.
y. o. u. you.
ewe.
the lamb's blood we are washed in.
washes through us too.
Monotones
for Andy & Dave Phillips
"two brothers"

"That night as I lay by the sea I dreamt I was carried away to a dark cavern & there my tongue cut out. I awoke greatly disturbed & became so preoccupied with this vision I could speak of nothing else—as tho I fore- saw the imminent end of all speech."

from The Writings of Saint And

I

out of the dark wood
workings
of the mind’s
memories we are
alone

move
deeper & deeper into
the mysteries

the paths
home & forever
homely the
homily
simply
to praise you

praise you forever

simply
to praise you
II

as if it were happening
finally
    & closes
the snap  sing
songs to be single
tunes
    the loon sings
for no apparent reason
flies
over the lake
    the seasons
not yet cold
    but
the old ways
the dead & forgotten rhythms
taken
    noises breaking
the whole night long

III

idle wind
wide will be taken
tied &
    made whole
fields of
    wild roses
blown
    blue sky
pink petals folding
damp cold & dark season
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lazarus Dream</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stretched out on the bed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feet &amp; the cars passing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thru the mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a thread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strung out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&amp; what lies between</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vague at best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no noun or pronoun to place on it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a genderless engendering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i en deux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>noun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&amp; therefore an</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a definite thinging in the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>what else?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>owlish wisdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shunned in others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“no is”
' e says
“without the actual
to be”

all’s the awl. grasped
it presses in, a point in
the mind
   creates an opening
thru which we see
just that tiny bit
of what can only be
“vaster”
' e says

it all speeds up

like a music box
or a song sung in a dream

rue de rue de rue
d’awakening

3

in the market off St. Lazare
the music box
drawer opened
tune played
un wound un
wounding
because the singer sings
because there is a tune there to be heard,
uncovered, found,
so un d
when the voice box opens &
the drawer draws out the string of thot
plays it  like a harp
releases the tune
begins the unwinding
of the world

Hôtel l’Athénée, Paris
September 10, 1986
Assumptions
NO

1967
the punctuation
periods of
co-longing
the exclamations
questions
every comma
a coma
mm of stasis
semi
\} otic tic tic
idi
marks
passages of time
how many words
growing older
concepts graying
sagging
we love only what's young &
beautiful

new
old word world
wearies us
no us
any more we can
embrace or brace
emb \{ lem
\} race
oui say yes ya
si gnossos

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{witting} \\
\text{tangling}
\end{align*} \]

dub the world or
double it with each gesture

sound thinkers
up against those unsound minds

olde tongue i speak
histories in every breath

realitany

caught in the pen’s “i’ve” mood
necessary ink of think
necessary i

no ledge
no res

solution

Assumptions
all the contra
diction's intact

this voice    that

yes i wrote that bad poem

yes i have been a coward
had my moments of
bravery

did not achieve
perfection

or even come near it

all these shifts in
voice
tone
colouration   hue

man too

Assumptions
St. Anzas III

so then your voice
what proceeds from that
that i hear you talking
or a talking, speech
es atalk or aspeak
ing a ring in the ear
precedes ideation proceeds

d s l
q v c d
s l
    q v
d

gan napkin
enough news neither
chair chair lofting

that there is that infinite variation
prays, ways you have of speaking thru
us or any other
being state
so that to sing is
in the very act of
—what?—ababble
which is by definition sense
or sensory, an experience gone thru
you emerge
into the light of other days

\{ e
   (\& e's e
      (to recur recursive))
\}

wiser, w is

is dom
(di dom))
marks the entry of someone

(dadu
dada
you &

ordinary over
gaff leap & measure
sure night aurora
one (two))

fits elliptical (dense)
reaches dozen systematic
all pattern & weave
double double (nothing)

in the air behind you
voices mingle with the furnace hum
i disappears into the drum of
consciousness beats
the heart of thinking
a hierarchy of organs
is there one?

deeet
leer & smoke rising
ripple raft back
slower
(lee)

measure constant
roar draw & practise
animal bit passion
click

hear you are saints not
as prattle by the pre-ordained
among the particles rather
the half-formed sequence of a day
when everything is possibility
& all emotion an accumulation
a sum toe tells
dances its strange way
nearer to if
& then away away
away
    away away
stars in the night sky
thru the train window
above the snowy fields
the passing evergreens ...
that sentence.
a language of assumptions or
givens, yard lamp glinting in the one a.m. cold
as we roll past, whistle blowing.
lights out in the farmhouse,
that part of this world i can see
asleep, or i assume it to be,
always these windows to look from, thru,
like that poem i wrote in 1963,
asserting the world was doing this,
easy assumption of synecdoche
when what i mean is, really,
that dark farmhouse, cold blue of the lamp
high on its pole, and the pole star too,
high in this sky, around which we turn,
the world i mean.
Monotones

XLIII

sat on the beach & stared at his toes i suppose

the legend's covered in lies

she wore the cape her mother gave her

the mind carries such memories
the sea forgets

mid-march

seaboard town

drowned
    & whispering

is it the sea (whispering)
bringing me down?
names

lists

Captain Samuel Parcher
born 1774
when an American was still an Englishman
fathered Elias Parcher
1799
married
Polly Mary Fuller
1824
one of my great great great grandmothers
rumoured to be
one-half cherokee
out of her mother Polly
a full blood
born circa 1780

what am i to make of
the coincidences of history
chance collisions of unknown bodies
produced me
my daughter
born too late to know her great grandmother
Agnes Leigh
thru whom the Pollys make their way
into our blood
polymorphous

per the verse
composed
poised

how much can i claim as mine?
such details of the blood
de signed abalance of
cells
tumbling
thru ti’ “me
took a tumble” “they
took a”
in the sheets
sweet sweat embrace of love
all that blood bone & long gone emotion
we can only imagine in
the act of love of
compositioning ourselves
embraced
human raced in
these sheets

in mortality in
memory i am
in love
stagger lists
the names of the beloved
dead
we never knew
echo
in the endless naming
the polly-if-any
if in which the i lives too

Assumptions
Scraptures: 6th Sequence

i have a vision. i have not. a vision has i. a vision has not. if i have a vi-
sion i have i. if i have not i have a vision of i.

•

saint reat do not. this damned land has no vision. words spoken grow
which are god's only. end. where are you saint reat? i have no words. there is nothing. and. your syllables damn this land of sentences. i break
letters for you like bread. i smash sounds. you are nowhere nowhere now here now there now where no where saint reat nowhere. i have broken
my rhythms for you and changed my symbols. pierced my breath with
clauses & to where? to here? saint reat beware. eir i invoke you. the beast
in my soul becomes sound to be lost in the echoes of your passage. a
sage. saint reat.

•

this is the divine experience. that i have found my words useless to reach
you. everything has become a statement. is there anything that has not
become a statement. the revelation is that my thots can become sound.
that there is no experience outside myself that cannot be reflected inside
myself. that i have seen you come and go to burn and to die and have car-
rried on. this is a divine experience. one that you have made mine in your
passing.

•

i have made song and it was not whole. cloth torn to be rent again. i have
given my soul to you—the heart of my vowel love. you have replied with
consonants and taught me the wisdom of ways. oh there is not one i
would take now without knowledge of the other. to walk down again and
again as drunk i have staggered into many poems to find you there know-
ing each time i will know you better. as i have struggled with my heart to
know the meaning of my loving you. saint reat you are the vehicle of my
passion. i use you shamelessly. there is no love in me beyond the love i
let pass thru you. you are the key to the ravelling in my brain. the delicate
fingers to enter the passageway of my trains of thot. i am no longer whole
without you. i have passed the point of refusing you to find myself misus-
ing you. i would understand this now saint reat. there is no song beyond
this. a hymn to your praise. no understanding beyond the fact of your presence. no way to escape the way i have twisted and warped you to bend you to my will finding finally it was you who had done these things to me.

ah saint reat. let us begin with the mornings. you braid your syllables into words and your words into sentences, tenses of meaning i become lost in. you are verb and noun and i am lost in the mystery of you. syntax is the ax you destroy me with. the cutting edges of your breath sever my links with the past. leave me the spaces to breathe in.

saint reat have i not told you? this is how i misused you. will you not believe me? i have learned to question myself and you. now the symbols unfold again. you beckon me to lose myself in your mystery, to worship at the alphabet of your wonder. saint reat you must lead me. my tongue is not still.
"for three days
all was to 'st,
so calm on
both sides"

"We'st ta' the best care we can of 'um"
speech & silence it is all one

sain't

sain' t

sain't

sain't

sain't
Toronto
July 19 to August 10, 1988
Sound effects derived from *Frontline Combat*. 
This page intentionally left blank
grow

down

under

me
the forest fence

a danger
a stranger
Scraptures: 17th Sequence

the religious man practises reversals

O
O

alpha
ahpla

omega
agemo

the reversed man practises religion

SUDDENLY I AM LIGHT I know(s

it is the face
it is the realization of the face

it is the facing
it is the realization of the facing

the split eyes

what the eye seizes as real is fractured again and again

light

the eye’s light

drifts away

diffused

by the mind’s confusion.

names and signatures

CHRIST become an X

X as the man signs who cannot write his name
as tho to be without a name were to take up the cross, so that a man who is part of the nameless, is part of the mass, carries the cross further, or is more weighed down by it

X—nameless

the reversal becomes complete

a cycle into the 30's

33
33

the trinity

X
saint reat
saint and

saint agnes who gave them a name

saint ranglehold

3
3

as the cock crowed
Monotones

LXII

chaos rumoured

saints distance perception

over everything
the field cows scream alive with fire

roll
in a corner
roar
eternal

hills

buried beneath the sea

it is in me

words
weight the fingers
down

the farmhouse door
bangs against the skull

the mouths of the town are drowned
The Hill Songs of Saint Orm

1

all day i have wandered in these southern reaches
lost from the world of people

all night i will sleep beneath the trees
safe on the edge of the cloud range

2

berries for food
water for drink

the woman i loved dead
the people i knew gone

white of clouds
blue of sky

open i

3

the people you thot you knew lie

a man gives his neighbour food
but talks about him behind his back

4

this morning a bird woke me

my bed was empty where i’d dreamt you lay

5

when you have nothing
you have nothing
when everything you thot you had is gone
you have what you always had

if everything you wanted was here
you’d have nothing
the waste of my words & works. the worth.
a balance. something to be said for history.
everything dissolves in time
or vanishes, goes unseen, unheard, unsaid,
inappropriate to another space or head
confronting its own struggle with its body
's decay.

buildings turning to dust around us.
Via Principe Amedeo in the morning sunlight.
sky blue. we crossed Via Roma, Palazzo Reale in the distance.
four centuries in a glance. that dance. that man’s
folly or triumph. her dis. her grace. sunlight in the piazza.
our bodies, our sounds, words, this page, even as you read,
even as your vision, your life—uneven, even—fades, fade.

Torino
May 7, 1987
Assumptions
Monotones

C

walk back
over the hill

countryside toning down
green into brown
explosions of red & orange

pastures & distant sounds
brought into focus
body’s being
alive

& i stood on the height
coming into my own motions

no saints

no oceans to cross between me & my own existence

only the slight resistance of my eyes
kept closing down thru fear of falling into all that blue & brown land

1967–1970
the assumption of the height
after the long climb from the gate
blue all around you, not sad, 31,000 feet,
a certain relation you assumes
shipped back & forth between this & that
this world of cloud & possible saints
heaven as you has always imagined it
that pain there, that love, world
you must return to, pass thru another
gate another time, always here
between worlds, points of view
changing because you changes too, me or i, assumptions of
what i knows of i's self
this or that me
cumulative accumulation of
i's dentity, the world's, and how i knows of it
knows to have this sky, that colour,
you

Toronto to Vancouver
November 13, 1986
Assumptions
song for saint ein

i look at you this way

noun then verb

these are my words

i sing to you

.

no separation no

the same thing

i am these words
these words say so

somewhere i exist
separate from this page
this cage of sounds & signs

i am this noise

this voice says so

1975
St. Anzas II

almost i had to begin again
imagine, had to be, if you can
you can &
therefore i love you love you
imagine you & you are
in my imagination every syllable
word of you reaches me
words, the speaking, oh
perfect gasp the gap’s grasped
complete

e m olu
meaning circle dish
handled rake to grasp
ing (trick) sedge
novu

adan adanokuri
soom
sudden & windstorms
seasons beard

how certain words recur
how, praise,
across the break between us
pause, love can
leap
distances
the heart creates
is & therefore (almost) begins
a gain in
tempo (time)
& nothing dies
Train

cows on ice cars on blacktop a fast lane or a half lane country questions of width or length roots even all those trees occasional broken gully broken gulls washed up on the beach how a memory intrudes affect affects effect sf/x as sum clouds from the cows' mouths exhaust deaths one is conscious of records of the spent breath on the freeway towards Antwerp cows under the trees green fields black cars beneath blue skies i's

Montreal to Toronto—February 20, 1986
Paris to Amsterdam—September 11, 1986
Assumptions
here space affects us most directly
family
    any parting of the ways
distances the heart cannot imagine
since the heart cannot imagine anyway

too many hours spent on hospital wards
among the bleeding children love cannot cure

broken rhythms
pace
makers of anxiety & sleeplessness

fragments of lives lived in sterile rooms
among white sheets
the rustle of linen changing
over & over

the casualties of life lived simply as it is
without the complications of war
the degradations of industrial thoughtlessness
merely the ordinary business of daily living
the sudden accidents, fevers, seizures
of the heart & body

all parting becomes invested with such feeling
as tho the heart were the mind
as tho the mind would break under its weight of fearing

you walk the corridors all night long
the nurses with their flashlights
the flickering screens of monitors
pace the rooms you live in
measuring
among the scattering of toys & papers
books you mean to read or write
aware of the space around you
of what it is not full of
human presences you long for

in the awfulness of your imagination
the doubleness of any gift
gaps appear you are afraid to name

windows are flung open, doors slam,
the hands do not know where to reach, what to grasp

irrhythms

untunes

in the here you wish would pass

Assumptions
This Is a Love Poem

This is a love poem, this is a love poem, wrote it on the long road.

near-ly home, near-ly home, this is a love poem.

singing, singing near-ly home, this is a love poem.
body paranoia: initial fugue

- shadow on
  the X
  ray

  body parts
  line the red sea
  maybe

  lure id lure
  for sure

  cyst or?
  tumor? or?

  two more sister
  what?
  months to live
  years maybe
  (said that before)
  maybe may
  be maybe
This is a love poem
wrote it on the long road nearly home

This is a love poem
Sing, sing, sing, nearly home
an and and an and a this and that his this is that hat or her error now it is winter & spring comes that day i walked towards the the from the a the other way

woods &
to encompass the world
to take it in
inside that outside
outside that in
to be real
one thing beside the other

later there is are that was to be a sense in which a saint is was & will be so the issue’s this this as is his claim on the present tension past & future always the question of what to do each step altering your choices

voice as song

speech is
to belong to
form as an expression of dilemma
conceptualization placing you on the brink of dissolution
you make a choice
narrow the distance between
the tree as it is & the word “tree”
between the object & the object
as the you can be the me
we are (as pronouns) each other
nouns divide
hide behind that name we are given

late night outside the room
book beside the window
words inside
written
as they are
objects in the world we live in
carry us farther
a way from each other than they should

for steve
no false mysteries

no explainable behaviour dismissed as
unexplainable

in the dark night
not even the moon to follow me across the lawn
not even the single light from some stray &/or forlorn streetlamp
not even those comfortless descriptions to comfort me
only myself, as i am, for company
evoking your presence
name
      but never naming you
never fixing you in all the descriptions that do not fit
the vanity of nouns, of even these pronouns i & you,
in these years of war & famine, of death & devastation,
that my i should, nonetheless, feel blessed
tho i is not finally possessed
half the world & more brought to its knees
& not to bless some vague you
but from destruction, the reduction of human life,
that there is still that strange urge to praise
to raise the voice & sing of hope
tho the dark clouds thicken & threaten
& the earth quakes & will not hold
that there is still love in some form in the world
that some know of it
      sing of it even
in the face of all those who do not wish to be told
do not wish that pain & anguish which is
the recognition of love, of loss,
in the times these times define
we would yet stand apart from & can’t
when more than rage is necessary
more than grief
more than the simple-minded solutions of thieves & killers
that there are still songs
still that longing for love
for all that is meant by the word “peace”
& that we must value that longing
that tortured feeling
be moved by it
till these tortures cease
Scraptures: 12th Sequence
passion
or pa shun

dictum? or diction? or
the remembered shunting of memories
railroading of the past tense
passed on
pa
st &
done
father back in
the parental equation

apparent apparition

ghost trace of the leighs sung
various lays begat me
heirs, a gesture, temporal,
atom sphere in the err
or a be
ing/in the verb/“crie” (a “shh”—/unwell) come

(too late

dull

(ooh)
i think i will
make it up to yooh
(make it) trooh

no mock gesture
this poem
mocking me
(bird) words
worse than the simple pass i
on her honour

to the lieu (in/of)
real things i thing
of the tree
all eden before us even
de vow erred
(“save me!”
Erin did
my seed
trance ported from Scotland
somewhere in the 1830s))

too boo
too full for words

ta ta BOO!!

(ghost as summoner
as Sumer sum
or the old Sumer con
writing

cuneisumer formed me
i am
as Sumer & assumed
pre Sumer & presumed
con Sumer & consumed
speaker of what i am
some trace of
summed)

one & one & one & one & one & one & one & one

Assumptions
rap traps

he thinks he hears the messages

it's just a mess
ages even as he watches it

the letters let him glimpse a truth
none of which they meant

me     ant

   (tiny flick amidst the constant din
the distant consonants
talking in the metaphorums
addressing the crowds of
   ans
   simi
   )

murmurs merge at the margins of meaning
skew

   sum of the duller senses creates a total
   view

as tho rhyme were intentional

as tho it all made sense

as tho the sheer density of information
suddenly became clear and you grasped it

but you didn’t
did you?

the trick is to keep writing
tho the trick is you’re bound to stop
writing
just that sequence of letters

to friends yourself
posted or tethered
you circle your own death like any other dumb beast
too tired, finally, to even babble
the co-lapse of speech & script
ript from this life
into that other which is not
or is heaven maybe

hell
i don’t know or can’t prove or lack faith or
believe only in the instance of the instant
trance/ition in which our vision’s spoken
whatever love we garner
give
only of our selves
faint flicker as the light years pass
as the sound waves & disappears
in the gaps between the stars
and all we are we are
was
and even the is is argued
dismissed as minor or insignificant
the cost unmeasured
how we coin phrases
spend a life
pay homage to what is due

speak our minds

do

Assumptions
For Wayne & Juli

taut
as the skin can be
taught
    reaches
each to each &
clings
c lingers in
third position
narrated by
    the a &
    b

(he made love to her
body sweating
in his head he
thot she screamed
nipples dry &
unyielding)

    x
    y z

c marked as
unknown fact or
element

who intrudes

interludes

e l

    "the"

translation

the e
ternal
"thirdnal" &
void
voiced
the d
e
eliminated
i o u

luminous lu
minated l
ominous
as one's composed of
3 letters/one syllable
its name

    one
lone
    ly
song
's one's un
graced note

breast
in which the beast lies
r r r r ring

.

janis joplin
blue in
the background

jan is gone
scott's piano rolls on
"bound to come along"

heaving up
out of darkness
the head is
surrounded by
light

    the lit connection
g to h
escapes
7 to 8
awoke &
tried to sleep

“rise up singing”

“take another little piece of my heart

now baby”

•

over the park
air grey
the day as
end game

progress

shifts are
connective
tissues
issues forth from
the mouth &
changes

the best part of the day

what time’s it

double t to split the double e’s
ingle leer

•

train station
a rain of t’s
the saint at

ionization

absolute moment on the interface
to face
each other
at this place

a t (his t)
lace p or
silk n

in the word rain
the worn raid in
image banks negated
cut thru to
the rune

(the r

un e
un anything but what it can be)
is

“to quick” too
to silver

synaptrick
you get the hang of
quickly

where what’s born is
con ception
crete

“an island is land and”

moving in
moving out

whistle

.

(for ellie)

last stretch
the skin is tight across
the belly

memory’s fixed in
the damp sheets
love is made
tracking back
a different take
the ache for "normalcy"
a madness

in the dark room
we reach
the scent & taste of
love songs
life's long search
to seek
human & therefore fumbling
among the longings
older than the bodies we inhabit
making
love

the low v
the lowing e
brings up the shudder which is poetry
tongue finally's a pun
lust an ambiguity of reach

"speech sucks"
or speaks

i am caught with
my tongue
hung out
wandered the streets of downtown Berkeley
all morning
the pain in my leg
so intense at certain moments i could not stand
the pain
"is sent to try us"
the bullshit
a certain uselessness in suffering
this form of things
details
the the body disintegrates
the language
sure connectives gone
this city or that
a measure
you no longer count on
reference
poetry’s
its own form of obscurity
not the poem then
social rather
an attitude to reading
"i don’t want to go thru that pain again"
collapsed on the chair to rest my leg
"of this journey"
partial
or only
a particle
line from someplace
i meant none of that
i didn’t mean this pain
but lately it enters my life again & again
the problem is
how to read it
or any other gesture at knowing
my concern then was nonsense or
that the whole purpose began to shift
assumptions of the work
i had simply assumed
some point less than i had imagined
no shadow cast thru history
but the shade only (perhaps) of desire
a life
    measured out in part
you try to walk
    "talk to me
    of the used heart"
the use of anything
this poem
    longer finally than any real wish to read
how a feat becomes defeat
climbing the hill from the beach at Del Mar
Pacific pounding behind me
i had to rest my leg every leg of the way
& what wisdom in that?
    merely complaint
or the plaiting of plain talk in the calm position
the rest between bars
part of the rhythm
    that i had tried to
capture that
    that imperfection
the whole reason for such decisions
notion of the processual
or this talk of doing
to be included with the doing
hauling my leg up the hill
even as this line drags every other line with it
the whole of the Martyrology trailing behind
its failures its successes

(driving in the dark towards Palo Alto
almost asleep in the back seat of the car
the first lines of this poem came
eight hours after that walk thru Berkeley
even as these lines arrive
two days later on the edge of the Pacific at Del Mar
the lines arrive
like waves
beat at the shore of some knowing
some continent behaviour of your own
like waves of pain
pass thru this body
and the body & the pain & the words & the days simply are

(for Charles Bernstein)
Assumptions
Scraptures: 3rd Sequence
frowsy
bruisery
flowery
choosery
end
bp: if

. free
dumb

[3000 B.C. quote]“free will”
as i was taught it
free to live
free to die

will has
nothing to do with
the will you write
to write
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for Caspar, who I never knew, so few alive now who did, what was his thinking? a roof for the family? bread for the table? and Sarah? birthing all those kids? the two of them on those various stretches of prairie, all that breaking of the soil, new ground, they knew what that meant, did it, but

i'm reading all these poems, daily it seems, someone grows old, someone writes about it, goes to visit their mother or father, the guilt and grief, the estrangement, changing it all into myth, as tho that makes it better, it doesn't, they did what they had to do, died, I never knew

them, me, their great grandson, grows old, becomes someone else's burden of guilt or grief, my own Sarah, barely five, so many years since Caspar was alive, all of us in time, dying, how we all go, on, away, simply this business, being, day to day, until it's over

Assumptions
SAW

faces of grandparents
great grandparents

mist connections

opportunities

knocks

of life

disconnectedness of flesh

disconnectedness of flesh

four generations &
we no longer know them

bodies we came out of
distant as other planets

translated

heavenly

pray to of
gone nova or
imploded

years mass
dwarf into this inaccurate noun “family”
the definite names lost
only the verb remains
everything conveyed in accurate words
WAS

Assumptions
St. Anzas IV

more songs than i could ever sing
the mouth full of them
i spend my days, mouth open
in awe, wonder, singing,
palongwahoya, as the story goes,
your story
went & now i
cannot stop
singing tho the sheer quantity
balk, it is not
quantity, only the merest
note, jotting, sketch of all that is
larger awesome

didn’t not that less list number
again and
reason
fling that flat
fit
  (wonder)

so bell and
so slumber
not as over forgets
larger and nothing
later but

but all that is is
is ho holy
ho holy is
is ho holy
ho holy is
ho holy is
Monotones

XXVII

in these rooms
there is so much reaching across to you

i have opened my mouth &
swallowed the whole note of
my longing

faces

window

a frozen sea to walk upon

returning home
i remember
hands reached up

ridiculous gestures

a day when nothing fit

a muzzled horse
by a frozen sea
and the man who held it gone

the quartered note breaks

pick up the stakes of
a lost game

squares to move in
into halls walls nouns & names the
spaces seem futile too far to cross properly

(singing)
& are closed off

or are not seen
XXVIII

races yearly

stand on the hill and watch it begin

furlong after furlong falling away beneath

shallow breath

cold light fills the room

flared nostrils &
heavy breathing

walk by
the windows

& is gone

the long walk in
the flowing
cold

the old
harness in
the antique store
we took home to
hang on the door to
warn us

entering the room

steel blue fading of
a late afternoon

feeling

sand in
the toes

wiped on
the sleeve
is gone is

a photo held against the light

the red rose is grey

the jockey's saddle
(quite naturally)
is leather

XXIX

she could sing
she sang like

   nobody alive

anymore

   the store stood there
the boardwalk here

i remember the sea was brutal
claimed the moon was newer was

nothing left

the soul sings its own song
plays its own game

he took control

to lay awake beside her three nights &

she was the sea he drowned in

the town
grew up
around them

horses ran
when the tide was low

the slow movement of the water in
covered their feet with fleck & sand
he followed her hair down

the long strands buried in the deep waters

the blind fingers of his hand let go

slowly

she sang

like anything
dawn wad
ya say?

eyes eye
open epo-
(ana)
-grams, marginal, an i
or o
part trap
part rap

muse sum

language rises
over the edge of mind
its rays
visible when the brain transmits them
into print
speech
moments when the reach is the grasp
twists
sings the lay
Ur of meaning

you do
what a mere ache’ll lead you to

tune nut
(melody dole ’m
one) no
tone not
rung (’n Ur
spill (lips
past sap)
minin’ i’m)

mouthin’ mysteries
the syllables silly babble
blesses us
we are ana \{ mated
   mal
   grammatical

as sum e-
volves re-
volves re-
sumes a
me's a mesa
over which the dawn breaks
like a line

O po' em
this en's as pyres to
dew—wed
to the war the lang wages
over & over & over &

Assumptions
An Interlude in which Saint Ranglehold Addresses Anyone Who’ll Listen

1

da light in a tree
a hand in a crowd
memory

whistle

now we will change directions
this time for good

what is the structure of heaven
it is a circle within a circle ad nauseam

if i am to stop & talk to you you must give me a reason
i am a busy man

h z y k
l r p t m
u u

2

what is the meaning of meaning

it is whistling when the thunder claps or pissing when it rains

did you get the groceries

i tried but they were closed

when i asked a man to consider theory he said
i will think on it when i have a spare moment
despair is an air you sing
sorrow is to row your boat nowhere
h is not t
i is not m

whatever was is & will be again

1971
SLIP
for Steve McCaffery

“We’ve all been caught in a mouth trap”

Morris Minor & the Majors

1

charges explode. a. surface. fragment. somewhere. language only or, language as an image of language. a. surface. fragment. a clue (like this exclamation mark!) of the violence done to you. somewhere. a. surface. somewhere. fragment. i that is a many. surface. fragment. a. surface. so ingenuous. a. fragment. a. me, the je suis je sweet ick’ll. surface. somewhere. fragment. a. surface. this i. somewhere. fragment. th’ em. a. fragment. member of the subset author. fragment. somewhere. surface. a. paraphrased record of a being. somewhere. surface. fragment. a. stop here (i said (again)). fragment. a. a. a. even as i begged you to listen. surface. fragment. statement’s ambiguous. surface. fragment. reading (see) goes on. fragment. surface. ought nought to go beyond this point. surface. a. fragment. begins. somewhere. surface. a. fragment. somewhere. i too. stop. i said.

2

the power of poetry / llililanguages of aaaaassumptions / Li PPPPo were you awaaaare / writing there, as you diiiiiid, another place and tttttime / ass / we’re all made ffffffools made dust made mmmummackery / umption’s the gumption pushes me on / tho the claims made for the wwwwwwwwork are insupportable / literal breathings / a heave in the mind / one of the “choices” wwwwwwwwhich are not choices / mmmmerely the aaaaassertion of “voice” in a tttime we are all mmmmmmade voiceless / all this llililanguage, this swerving back & fffffof / what? / meaning in the mean world /non sense or ssssenal a canticle / this dance is danced above the llililiteral / head lines / eyes / faces wwwwe imagine beyond the type’s / cast / (of characters) / i’s speak to / yyyyy-your i’s / Ur eyes on horizon / h-i
(try to forget / forget / everything you've heard / forget / learn from it / forget / if it just sounds like everybody else / forget / what's the point / forget / i kept standing up in poetry readings / forget / saying i was unhappy with / forget / my recent poems / forget / they sounded like bpNichol poems / forget / this one doesn't sound anything like poetry / forget / no tropes / forget / no images / forget / isn't that what you wanted? / forget / "i want / forget / a little something concrete / forget / i can hang onto," Fred said

"only emotion endures." but which emotions?

i love/what happens in/the moment of/language.

in the languor of love the fear's assuaged. i holds out "my heart" to you. who?(

June 10, 1986, May 21, 1988
Assumptions
This page intentionally left blank
ward on ward on ward on ward on
This page intentionally left blank
This page intentionally left blank
a
tear
a
tear
a
tarethear
at
a
tAII
ear
all 11 tears
11 tall ears
star ale 111
This page intentionally left blank
heavin’
in
HEAVEN
AVENUE
BIEN VENUE
s mother me
(& hence that fear)

Sybil lance
that dance
you learn

EMBRACE S

song

Assumptions
all these assumptions
take the world on faith

act of
trance elation

gene

martyr

ology

body into body into body into

crazed fly in my room
buzzing
1 a.m.
tracked it the whole day
from the livingroom
to the studio
living room
the whole day
flies by
that way & that way &

assuming this poem
what presumptions!

rooms abuzz with
the ten-tions

elocutions
derivations

ti'd tgether or

we

on

sonne

orous
or ob
one (drunken moment of
intimation/dictation) time
('s declaration) of
the poem

and write at the in struction
de conception

i assume i can go
on
tho the terms change as
the term changes
my sense of sense shifting as
my senses drag
more & more
of the world
in
thru these imperfect doors
fly's fly

the verb's nounced
the nouns flick by

Assumptions
Considerations
for rafael barreto-rivera

1

we took the ride up El Yunque
looking back towards Luquillo where we’d swum earlier that day
out over the northeast edge of Puerto Rico
we could see for miles
watched the waves break against the tip
drove south again to Huamacao
sat on the beach to try & reach the thing
with words

    somehow the poems come in spite of me
struggling for awareness of their overall form
the danger’s always there
captured in the undertow
the threat of shark or barracuda
whatever face it wears

clouds pile on the horizon
distant hills of the cloud range
under the shadows of the palm trees
who i had once thot holy
who i see IS holy
who i had once thot but the dreaming of my own fool brain
glides towards me over the open sea

2

coming into Caguas
clear as memory the silence comes
flooding my mind with dreams of poetry
houses i could spend my days in loving
i drift asleep
speeding thru the narrowing streets of San Juan
images of people in darkened doorways
sun going down
behind the ruined walls of cloud town
late we drive along the sea wall
darkness over the city
dark girls in summer dresses
searching for the ones they love or will love
over everything His shadow falls
larger than history (if that is possible—
that conceit) & i am singing brokenly His praises
as tho i had lost what sense of form i did gain
hoping to find it again
among the voices of another country

Puerto Rico
1971
all these deaths now

the ironies

drove by the abortion clinic
Harbord St., Toronto, December 84
the cops in dark doorways
the placards
all that puling talk
the sanctity of life
screamed hate in the name of
love
    the women seeking the abortions
forced to pass thru that gauntlet

wanting another child
as we did then
    the complexity of these decisions
choices
    that freedom to choose
as the snow fell
as the cold closed in
as our struggle died
aborted

arbor

    sanctity of the green wood

among the leaves the flowers

i have not visited my son’s grave these last four years

sins of the father

sins of the time

and now more friends lose
another life
six months pregnant and the baby dies

that we still argue for
the pain of choice
the agony of that decision
facing a world crazed
the sheer melodrama of the evening news
the abuse, calumnious,
that madness of simplicity
accept the gross complexity of relationships

do not assume the sure knowledge of normality

(more

all i tease meaning out of
tricking the words

does

this life

and why a wife took me, baby,
took me a wife

January 17, 1985
2:45 a.m.
Assumptions
Monotones

LX

moon & ocean

the farm drifts into the sea

stepping out
into the waves rising

she cups her hands
over her breasts

and smiles

train riding the darker depths

the mind is bridled by
confusion

harsh leather
grips the head

fingers of the earth

on the wold
the wold of it
cannot be seen

the left hand
behind
strangled in
the door's closing

fields

& the thickening rooms
are

ST REAT

turn
sometimes i hear music
there’s nothing there
a gradually distancing whistle in the pipes
the creak of stairs
like the line from an old pop song
hummed before you know you’re doing it
you recognize the truth of
the walls of the house shake
vibrations from the train rumbling by
no whistle to draw attention to itself
draws attention to itself by the absence there
less than half a mile from where i lie
not quite dreaming

the point is
the reading   the two stanzas
a record of thots the mind thinks

thank
they link
a song
nothing to do with questions of
what does or doesn’t belong

more of that
(this is a description of where the work will go, is not meant to sound
anything like poetry, drawing attention to itself by that very absence, a
train of thot shaking everything around it, i do hear music, there is noth-
ing there, what i want a record of, in these books, my poetry

Remembrance Night
1985
Assumptions
sun not yet visible over the horizon line
what i could see of it from my hotel window
grey clouds filling the sky, rain (two weeks now)
grey of the North Atlantic and
these trees
in the tiny park below
the branches, reaching up all four floors, the patterns
except that nothing makes sense
which seems often as it should be
& the work .:
(space to breathe in)
“everything has to change” i said to myself
(i was looking out the window) “changes”
#9 Tram rushing by
Plantage Midden Laan 5:45 on a Tuesday morning in June
another landscape pulling the poem out of you
around you
the description any one of us needs to live in
as in “who am i?”, “who are you?”, “where am i?” &
“is that true?”

Amsterdam
June 1985
Assumptions
Monotones

XCV

out of your head the sky is taken
pieces of the moon

ride your horse too close to the earth
end up in the zoo
mind

time over time
falling into a sea

a ghost of forms
shifting as the table moves
around you

hands linked

sinking into the hush of voices
my head falls apart in my fingers

eyes' light

such tongues explode
ears fear to fold them
false prose

pores open skin's delight
coming into focus thru the room's constraint
define your motion

shrieking

crazy

"like a loon" are
St. Anzas VII

he. not He then, or She ... don’t SH me that way!
he was. hew as close as he could to that be
ings you long, first to second to third
personhood, long distance cowl of history
or istory if we drop the h at last
just as the english class system ’ad it
hit’s unimportant ’e says. who’s HSing at me
that way? whoops. no me ey? e’s ear to stay coz e
say so. so.

appen as likely. different of listing. quot
ruin sneer.

little mistle didn’t and. ten or if could deliver. rude.
stiff as combination wrestle.

as pirate e remains idden, reveals is face,
all tat fog on te glass, e made it so ard, our st.,
ruggle just to see er,
hi reveal er to you
as hi disappear in breat,
breating in & out
any other way to breate? hi don’t tink so
so hi tink
hi tink so

whistle mean morning, the soon’s ascension. rugged
as listen didn’t. yellow’s misery
lips. rodent.

horrible horrible. dread little awful
rymes nobly. something kelp window sizing
over and doom. longbow. rhythm.

he paces his room, or sits
indifferent in his chair, the different chairs
pain now, most days, is how you sit.
he sits. he’s it, see? it speaks.
adresses the you out there, those eyes,
god-like, or like god is, unknown, addressed in faith,
like a prayer, he was told god knows
what you write or say, is always there, reading, over your shoulder.
irritating when someone does that ey? god’s doing that.
you’s too, you’s the one both he & she’s talking to.
so what does we assume hey? or they?
assumes you’re out there, one day now or sometime,
read and or engage this. he believes in you.
believes you.
he believes.

apple not ridiculous
rodeos as these yet
certainly a definite breeze, deaf night and

supple. widower at the arch. contract.

he is not sure any longer. con’s
vention, trying it on.

ripped or turn, slightly. gnarled aperture
gripped slam. over. didn’t he then or
if perhaps, when? ain’t no neither. just
just. chord.

slippage.

in the long night, when faith won’t come, or reason, or
the reason for faith, the reason for the long night,
the reason for the thot in the first place, which was, after all,
not the first place, not even the last, bears no number really,
the convention of certain trite phrases, seeming truisms, artifice
of strong emotion, and then the strong emotion. so that
in the long night, it being December after all, two days away from
the start of winter, but not meaning the, not that specific,
and not “a,” not any, but in a long night’s writing, or at least
one night, particled rather, the words pile up, one
after the other, two after the start of winter, not
he keeps wanting to read no p, you’re out there aren’t you. he
senses you. will not speak to you. “i”
hidden in this voice. is
not he. he. he.

beaten electric, falcon ignite three. seven to 7
5. indifferent or alibi scissors zero
scrimmage.

fatten lift. geriatric. growth sense
like 3 bibs middle dropped, wrangled. sad
dipped handlebar. must dash. dish
history lamb widens petulant.

be leaf (this in description
—invoction? ("be page you reading—
be me.") he admires content.)
head mires. content’s
something more than saying.
’s said too
people’s involved in this
is the way to go he said,
smiling like a cheshire cat,
“we’re all mad here!”

sadness. teensie tugboats upended. virtual
watershed. x-ray’s yellow zipper attracts bees
careful. didn’t expect favours. got habits instead,
just knowledge, logic. (meaningless)

neat open pen. questions restricts
temperamental overture. litigation. relation. all
demand beverage calypso. triceratops.
fearful.

simile’s simian “monkey see
monkey do” something to do with
evolution or e’s volition or
un reve’s solution, intention, al’s fallacy, or dora’s,
d’ citation’s dictation’s aura
or a borealis, lumination that enters, here,
he rethinks his desire
to take you with him, fellow pilgrims
progressing, the synapse sees,
e’s right there with you, is words, is
the interplay of which e do, speak
and it will all unfold. “i smile i’s mile”
contradiction’s in the diction
nary one part is true, pro too, & pre,
when words is all e got e go t, s, v;
e go a to z to b
with you.

grey. forum. how canadian select
general house to wave brave map. moving
frontiers another, the story, least so contemporary
horizons isolation intermedia enchanted.

blizzard winnebago blanket. space. hubris trash. remembrances.
echoes. new convincing cave. own.

it a weird world your worship, your readership you
maybe He or She? me? who in

's he talking to?

pro (never am) nouns.
you got to come to terms with your terms
on your own
in this short
term e calls a life, calls you, ambiguous
finger pointed into the blue you’s i’s
what de skies disguise
above this page
this screen

dandelion. sanding sold thickening fewer vernal. yes
poetry. accepted steams fifteen slide. rebel
good coming. excess.

line. definite historical. nothing.
definite. entrances. lives metaphysics Tuesday.

the thickening night words. the tongue
unfolding flesh, rasps along the body’s length
is words. moves across the room. sits. writes.
has just written. fact this fiction. the thickening night;
the unfolding flesh; the you he addresses
across this room that is, as any room, crowded
with old standards, stock scenes, clichés
we have seen before, heard. who
directed this shit? he did. his flesh
thickens. hangs
where he would wish it not to be. night
falls. the tongue
explores its own mouth. shut up. put it
here. there, he said. here. & there, she said.
here. here.
Monotones

XCVIII

gesture

raise the fingers into the skin
glove of body moving with you

holds

    over & over the future folds around you
trapped by the steps you cannot take

choices

false signs & numbers

false auguries of false hope
swept away by the hand’s
gesture
certain myths:
   we will be happy
   know happiness
   arrive at some point of inner truth &
   never know unhappiness again

then:
   keeping an appointment made months ago
   you discover lacunae
   (which is what you fear/feared) or
   some final (or partial) absence
   the unplanned closure of what you had imagined as

part of the point of
sudden caesura
the heart attacked (the spine)
lines stop
life
a book
unexpected shifts that

which has its own sweet logic
heart beat nar rate
   (cosis, cissus
   whale tales of
   rators & their ilk)'s

controlled

sudden as a word you are part of
MA  }Eternity
PA
taking your turn
endless in that temporal sky
no dove but

(in my dream the three (two?) lives were like choices made
sense part of some writing made while on the journey that did
not go as intended
man story
in the labyrinth
manstor why?

of purchase, choice & packaging
nothing fit
destination nor the timetable nor

everything the confusion
nothing fit neither the

(beyond the lit window
swirl of snow
not memory nor any feeling of absence
presence rather gathers you in
holds you all in a night’s longing
away from you the recognition
whatever the loss endured in the full giving
i is lead to “i loves you”
the words mean are

(life you take it on
like a mask
like am ask you to is))

as an ending and

absolute and present
be!
see?!
?

d e f g
h i j k l m n o p
q r s t u v
w x y z

elations
olutions

ch ch ch ch
angels
in the wings

widen at every stage

terrible and wonderful
the beating rhythms of the strange seizures
play o play
across the skin
i is in
love

the body of
heart beating

the tongue

sings

its terror its
belief
grief & passion &
all you have ever known
will never know
is faith is
the face & being of the beloved
here, in this world words are
of

beat in rhythm with
the angels' wings
thinking even at the end of speaking

November 85 thru May 86
Assumptions
This page intentionally left blank
dead

& i'm sane

LXXIX

already it passes

like a fit

the man

possessed

dispossessed

& screaming

found in the desert

(only a boy)

it passes

& with it the sainthood

the chance at immortality

jesus    jesus

down on my knees imploring

show me the man

the one    true    man

who is he?    who knows his face?

what mirrors do they use to trick us?

all this cold fucking dispassionate "discourse"

just to be able to open the mouth & scream

(father!

these are the eyes of one you seek
the circle of
my beginning

is he gone father?

my mad lord fool

is he gone?)
St. Anzas V

wit
the lord, to
paradise tiw
is a pair o' dice
can do, can do
is where the logic takes you

hmmn or & then
against neither suffering glow
intense but not surely

hot ice a dense vaporous rattle
coherence miffed &
extends struggle (battle)

the rhyme (given in to)
is to wit as the name is
to who

... a pleasing measure, an answer,

pleasure in the very utterance
as heaven is that heavin' of the breath
nirvana the null state of desire

ordinance dance
café over and seizing
all up or across
sleeve

didn't but how
could utilize end
disguises no mounted
dream inevitable never cross rip

the local logical lord
immediacy of this ekstasis
stasis state which is the great gate opening
the flood of light
as in the clouds i saw
billowing forth beneath the holy
presence, saint, except
the s ain't, the t ain't
tho the s t is
as conjunction, letters, forces, the co inci dental truths the mouth shapes despite itself "the whole tooth & nothing but" her presence—his—the saint as is that gate between fate & hate thru which the lights & clouds poured "i’ll take the lo rd.", be, lief, lucky

hex agonal angle red and then again blue clump dormant shaft rose half swaying

odin two sea longing door the maybe mystery of wet compass late so drift till drifting still whimper condenses a shift in shift like two the triplets and again compen sation the nation inevitable strain is as was, will, some glimpse of partial surfaces, polished, azure as sure as right left me

raw puns elevate me lift me closer to the mystery divine word to divine the pen twitches above the page dips down a flow of language tapping in keyed or written as written

simple lover
tense

the deliberate construction of chance, a range meant voices to choose from, assumptions
of the holy mountain climbed
Analogue, ana journal
tele gram
another
notion of
ana-lightenment
or wisdom at least
grace, the
unknown encountered &
embraced

so rid the less worry
for joy is at best
list absence & shove
did not but never then or
perhaps in the middle nouns an age
appearances case

zones wrestle anger
to enlarge driven tho
pulling worship and
deep, leaf, breathe

source—re
the mystery of poetry
that i am caught up in
carried out on
the word
of God
of mouth
of honour
letters of a law
i strive to learn st.
rive the word apart
st
}
}

ar

blazes in the night sky
's a page we read from
like the childhood game
"connect-the-dots"
and forms, figures, names
pear

ple

the fruit of our seeking

2 1 9 8 10
3 4
6 5 7

2 3 6 7 14 15
— 9 8 13 12
1 4 5 10 11

nova then.
we are made new, made over
even as the old order falls
a part a round
us our deus
numbered
configured nan
o second when the universe began
Ma thematics
(“mom’s the word”)
origin tales we’ve heard
but never listened to
the big bang
out there in the midst of
the st atic

cable cable
midden dull or sable contact
wretch deliver dead
unseemly seen so sudden stop

d this is had striven
no ever and road along witch gravel
condition sell or sanitary
lip sober contain a budding devilment
again (wish hadn’t concern
or with that as ever
encircled)

pun’s spun
an agrammatical construction
which is asense, an essence
like no sense you ever knew
a 6th or 7th or 8th sense
numero } us
de } we of an earlier instruction
me
you gave in to & followed, i did,
we two, the first & second person
3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th too

3 6 7 10
i j m k
z u r c
v
w o m
k
m n 4 3
2

whole riddle didn’t rat
or came once single & then
solitary lead carrier too
seeing as but perhaps necessary
cut two all in pasture
blue &
red
blue leaded glass stain associative green
yellow yell-
ow

so the joke’s on me, the hum,
our hum, our we’s
sung over & over like the litany
any lit becomes a
hum our hum our hum our
anity
“Language all her life is a second language.”
—Sharon Thesen

muscle of speech

mother tongue

everything sprung from you

sang seng sing song sung

mo ther there

fa aires

airs

airesses

airrors (or)

airesys

fa mille air we breathe

m’ i ’nd

th’ ought

language

body

time

olde mouth of language
’s all i’ve a-
spired to wards

“her shoures soote”

“doin’ what she oughta”
gree’n

frog pond log

-usage grow

ever older
airing speech
fa(so/la/ti/do/re)mi/ly ’nd

erring
b’rth means br”th means
i ea
oh you see you see
where all this speaking cairries mi

Assumptions
the sickness of the world
that we assume goodness
where only a balance exists
between forces we cannot quite categorize
until you realize
the whole (thing)
is so that
the longer you live
all you hope to achieve is
some kind of decency
that i did not use or
did not take advantage of or
that if i did
knowing it i struggled to set it right
did not violate
some other
struggles hopefully parallel to my own
acknowledging the only saint
hood's implicit in the term
i do come to terms with
meaning
make it my own
saint
rug’ll be pulled out from under
any moment on the turn of
knowledge
ground from which my thot
my feelings move
so rife with the necessity to be un
assuming
all it is is words
more all than my imagine
nary day i sat
wrote my first poem
bright awl of language
pun/cturing my notion of “the real”
all ready
32 or 33 years ago
embracing the ignorant knowing unknowing
dumb founding of the being be
my tongue burns with
this fever
the mind’s struggle with
ailing mental realities
the real i ties into
faces
and every one of them my own

Assumptions
Monotones

LXV

as it was
a certain imperative
waving the connectives
goodbye
dark wood
feet bound
struggle to brush the leaves away
your name unanswered
the poem ends

all the same
Moth
for Robin Blaser

"grey butterflies," I said, not convincing myself

when it flew towards me I ducked

cringing when the drawer's drawn open & the moth flutters out

flut flut flut flut flut flut flut flut

"it's only a moth," my sister said

in my dream the moth's body glowed white before it absorbed me

under the trees in the backyard the porch light on

cowering when the closet door flew open & the moth flew out

angel of death of release

in the room and I could not open the window

when my mother saw the holes in the sweater she said "moths"

moth mouth mother myth math smother smooth

I was covering my head with my arms & hands & felt like screaming

terror like an error in the scheme of things

the moth flew out of the old jar in the back kitchen

heaven's wingèd creatures hell's

lithp lip slip slippery moss mass mess miss muss mouse

the grey bodies with four legs & long tails the grey bodies with wings

out of the centre of any meaning another meaning

the moth will eat them up

lighting candles to see if it was true
trapped inside the lampshade its wings beating against the fabric

my mother put the moth balls in the drawers with the sweaters

we were talking about the irrational but i kept feeling we were missing the point

when i took the old newspapers out of the closet i found mice had nibbled holes in them

i have tried to keep the moth out of the poem

the only thing that stops me screaming is embarrassment

in the dark closet among the sweaters and wool coats for winter

flickering light in the theatre like the flickering light of its giant wings

who are crushed before the moth

watching it fly out of the darkness and hit against the window again and again

i was in the backyard talking and one flew into my mouth

moth in the mouth like a trapped tongue fluttering

at the window in the night thinking to see the moon

unspeakable terror diminished in naming whom each one names differently my name for you is moth

Toronto
March 31 to April 1, 1988
Assumptions
The White Stone Wall

1

that song playing in this room just now
pushes whatever thot was in the head aside
so that this, rhythm, insistent,
jagged, becomes a counter
point to the source of the confusion
thing that's there, no chance
to think, this constant
sea of noise (not a metaphor
for god's sake a metaphor) this constant
intrusion's not a poem not
writing in its many forms
screams in the air around you
voices i can't see speaking
at wave-lengths i can't hear need
machines to tune them in,
Radio Ghosts, Victor said,
travelling on in space
years after me or any other one of us is
dead that noise from the turntable
right now how's it stopping this?
stopping this. poem. right?
you try to read it. the noise
from the turntable. in your room.
the radio. t.v. HOLD IT,
i know this old diatribe, you say.
you say tune me. in. out.

2

the mind then
which is the movement of
what? language?
social structures?
sets of
assumptions? the way
image evokes the white stone wall
against the sea's bright blue
above the wave
ing hand of con
sciousness, me! me!
i’ve got the answer!
the sun goes down
no one visible upon the beach
i have imagined
lying on my side to write this
    the mind sea the
question of horizon
tallies

3

& then, talking on the phone with Paul
he mentions an event we all performed in
1972 did he say? 74? but
i can’t remember the performance or
at least only barely, the church, the tape of
waves pounding in the nave, was it that
time? is this what memory is? so partial?
the way this poem began, 20 years ago,
finding that other poem, in a drawer, the one i
could not remember writing, could not remember at all,
the one referred to
that is, cannot remember now
what i could not remember then, forgetting,
imperfections out of which the poem began, begins, states
or merely provinces, some pool of knowledge, some fund
a mental change. is?

4

or the fundamental mystery of otherness
the i shared
its very assertion
creates distances
me-ning is always
i-deational
a state that love alters, can, penetrate, enclose.
is it open form that love proposes
when all difference arouses fear?
that whole problem of simile.
what’s a meta’s phor? meta-language? meta-poem?
do i like you if i’m not like you?
dreary narcissism of resemblance.
but dissonance! difference! room for
the ungainly, line again, or phrase,
invocatory voice—“O pen”—
all that can be writ to fit
into the beauty of this ugly world
awkward as each death each life is

January to March 1987
Assumptions
You Too, Nicky

I

All of us are born out of someone. Too many of us spend a lifetime tied to that moment or trying to live it down. But family, as what you came from, what came before you, lives in the body like an organ you only know the shape of thru x-rays or textbooks. Who were they, really, those early ones who suffer from the diffusion of histories lived with no importance given to writing them down? We, all of us, move forward thru time at the tip of a family, a genealogy, whose history & description disappears behind us.

"You too, Nicky," a friend said to me, "none of us ever escapes our families." And restless, as i have been, tired, as i am now, feeling some sort of longing which can only be satisfied by moving & is never satisfied by standing still, i took off with Ellie in the autumn of 1979 to visit, revisit, both our families. Among the luggage we carried was a notebook i had kept in 1969 when i had last driven west. In its opening pages i found this poem:

the dead
porcupine
decapitated by
the speeding cars
& the bleak stone
landscapes
going home (?)
 thru the Sault

it is
a country as wide as dreams are
full of the half-formed
unsuspected
ruthlessness
around the corner of things
the smooth hum of the car
carrying the far strangers ahead of us

nothing is as it seems

the partly known truth entices
we are forbidden to pass till the future is seen

it is as if

hands

reached out & touched us

as they were meant to do

the grey clouds turned over &

their backs were blue

II

You have plans but so many of them don’t work out. You have dreams, tho you do not mean the dreams you wake from, troubled or happy, but visions rather, glimpses of some future possibility everything in you wishes to make real. We drove west but the poems I’d planned to write barely occurred. A few fragments here & there—Edmonton, Blue River, Vancouver—cities & places I had visited & written from before. By the time we got back Ellie was pregnant and much of the shape of our lives together changed. Even tho our son died stillborn, or because of it perhaps, our lives changed absolutely. It is the kind of moment of which one tends to say “something deepened between us” and yet that notion of depth seems in itself shallow, lacking as it does an attention to the details of the dailiness between you, the actual exchanges that comprise living. Other poems occurred but nothing of what was planned. We came out of families, came together and within two years of that trip had begun a family of our own. Except the family was there before we began. We were part of it. Became part of it again. Despite what I had once intended. Unplotted, unplanned, undreamt of. It continued. It began.

III

There is some larger meditation that seems obvious. An inference or moral perhaps. I only know the poem unfolds in front of me, in spite of me, more in control than me. It’s not that the poem has a mind of its own but that poetry is its own mind, a particular state you come to, achieve.

Sometimes i talk too much of it, like a magician explaining his best trick and you see after all he is only human. Which is what I wish to be, am, only human.

Certain phrases like that, that hover on the edge of cliché, seem like charms to me & i clutch them to my chest. And the real magic, which is
what the language can achieve, remains a mystery the charm connects you to.

    it is not so much that images recur
    but that life repeats itself & the lights of Vancouver say shine
    even when lines aren’t there to be written

Only human, only a skill you’ve managed to achieve. And if the writing is evocative it is only so thru evocation. Which is partly syntax, partly mystery.

IV

    what is smaller than us?
    what is more futile than our wars and treacheries

    we are all dying every day walking closer to the grave
    the sword and the bomb and age accompanies us

    what are the great themes but those we cannot name properly

    what are the minor notes but our lives

    here amidst the flickering oil wells among the fields now emptied from harvest

    our lives

    all that really is ours
Of course I repeat myself, phrases, insist certain contents over & over.

driving thru the smoke of the forest fires
Blue River to Kamloops
sun not yet visible over the mountaintops

Of course I had driven that road before. Others. Correspondences. You build up a vocabulary of shared experiences, constants you draw upon tho you cannot depend on them.

between the still standing trees
the smoke the mist
down into the valleys

Of course I am aware of what I am doing, not aware. Of course there are such contradictions in living.

VI

We have our infatuations, our cloudings of the mind. People, ideas, things. We have our fevers that drive others from us, afraid of the shrill quality in our voice.

we are pushed here there
"driven" is what we say
and the i is lost

And if i tries to retain a kind of loyalty to ideas, not blindly, but allowing them, always, to evolve under the scrutiny that time permits, it is simply that struggle with constancy, to stick with what makes sense until it no longer makes sense, to not be swayed by infatuation’s blind calling. It is what binds books together, these motifs and concerns, the trace of a life lived, a mind.

in the rooms you live in
other people’s books line your shelves

the traces of their lives
their minds
too
VII

something of that is what family is. other minds enter, other lives you pledge a constancy to.

there are other journeys, other poems, other plans that do not realize themselves.

living among family you are changed. it is the way your vocabulary increases. you occupy certain nouns, are caught up in the activity of certain verbs, adverbs, adjectives. syntax too. tone.

the language comes alive as you come alive and the real mysteries remain.

outside the window
the rumble of other journeys
planes, trains, cars passing
the feet of friends or strangers echo the unseen concrete

the blind is white under its horizontal ribbing

the world enters

your ear

Autumn 1979 to autumn 1985
Assumptions
the bird
buried so carefully in the back yard
i dug up, a year later, age 6 &

nothing there
not even a trace to suggest its passing
except in memory, the yellow wings, the still body
gone and
gone again, i searched the whole afternoon,
frightened to think the passage was so complete, everything
depending on,
now, my memory, yours, birdlife,
all gone, all, vanquished, vanished, the

attachments, the attachments, the
attachments

for the memory of Robert Graves
Assumptions
Martyrology: Branded

BRAND NAME
BRAND NAME
BRAND NAME
BRAND NAME
BRAND NAME
BRAND NAME
BRAND NAME
BRAND NAME
BRAND NAME
BRAND NAME
BRAND NAME
BRAND NAME
BRAND NAME
BRAND NAME
BRAND NAME
BRAND NAME
BRAND NAME
BRAND NAME
BRAND NAME
BRAND NAME
BRAND NAME
Toronto, June 10, 1988
Petra Improvisation

poor tetra

hedronistic

puns that go nowhere

connections that begin & end

ideas as orphans

ex 

clusion
clusive

pure events
that come & go

leave no trace of
their passage

Cobourg
June 25, 1988
Middle Initial Event: Two
(three symmetries from The Book of Oz)

Middle Initial Event: Two
(three symmetries from The Book of Oz)

Middle Initial Event: Two
(three symmetries from The Book of Oz)

hwa’s awh
At i up! quit A
em it is time emits i time
oy away o
yaway
yaway

June 26, 1988
Middle Initial Event: Three

Petra
"a rose-red city
half as old as time"

Mohenjo-daro
a city in Dilmun
in the imagination

having come across
a cleft in the rock
to pass thru
into some other age

peut-être
arose, read of
these abandoned cities
forgotten for millennia
Kish, Shuruppak, Ur, Erech,

paper/stone/scissors

"that no one treads the highways,
that no one seek out the roads"

the passage of
5000 years
evoked in names

raised
razed
erased

already the process begins anew
—the name of my great great great grandfather
Ellie’s home town—
already the disorder increases

n o
p
entropy
always in the middle
never know the initial
event
    event
event
event
“So we know.

So we swim
in & out of knowing,
in & out of life.”

Pat Matsueda
erase the body
erase the heresy of the self
the false prophecy of the flesh
erase the puling self-aggrandizement
the unslakable thirst for recognition
the wilful neglect of human need
the temples of self-love
the lies of ideology
erase even this

Assumptions
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"An Interlude in which Saint Ranglehold Addresses Anyone Who'll Listen" originally appeared in *Love: A Book of Remembrances* (Talonbooks); "Talking About Strawberries All of the Time" & the poem beginning "an and and an an" in *Zygali: A Book of Mysteries and Translations* (Coach House Press); "Considerations" and "sun/day/ease" in the Four Horsemen collection *Horser de Œuvres* (PaperJacks).

"all her life ..."," "Diatribe," "Lazarus Dream" and "The White Stone Wall" were published together as *Bored Messengers* (Tatlow House/Gorse Press); "You Too, Nicky" was first published as a chapbook by Fissure Books; "Scraptures: 2nd Sequence," "Scraptures: 3rd Sequence" & "Scraptures: 10th Sequence" as chapbooks by Ganglia Press; "Scraptures: 4th Sequence" as a chapbook by Press : Today : Niagara (Niagara Falls, U.S.A.); "Scraptures, Sequences 6, 7, 8, 16 & 17" were first published as *Nights on Prose Mountain* (grOnk: Old Series 3:6, August 1969); "Scraptures: 1st Sequence" & "Scraptures: 2nd Sequence" were published together as *Scraptures: Basic Sequences* (Massassauga Editions, 1973). "Scraptures: 2nd Sequence, Alternate Takes" appeared in *B.C. Monthly*; "9th Sequence" in *grOnk* 1:2; "11th Sequence" in *grOnk* 1:8; "12th Sequence" in *Toronto Life*.

"old mothers who are gone now" was issued as a broadside by High Ground Press; "lady of the assumption" as a broadside by Coach House Press; "The Elevation of Saint Ranglehold" (the "g" in "gift" on the title page) as issue 173 of 1 Cent (Curvd H&Z).

*Monotones* was originally published by Talonbooks (Vancouver).

*Scraptures: 4th Sequence* was and is dedicated to Cavan McCarthy, bill bissett, d.a.levy, D.r.Wagner, David Aylward and John Riddell.

My thanks to all the above (& anyone I may have inadvertently missed). Special thanks too to David Robinson, Gordon Fidler and Andy Phillips for their help in the original book publication of *Monotones*; to Michael
Ondaatje for the use of his cover photograph on this volume and his ongoing support of this project; to Victor Coleman and Stan Bevington, who took the risk of publishing those first tentative volumes; to Jerry Ofo who helped to clarify them thru his design; and to Roy Miki, who certainly keeps me convinced that there's someone out there reading.

bpNichol
Gift / Gifts / Giving: An Afterword

Gifts in the sense of, what is given & also, therefore, assumptions—and that in both senses takes us back to Gifts, seven being the # of gifts given by the holy ghost.

So bpNichol wrote on the inside of the battered file folder that held the manuscript for the book you hold in your hands. The note elucidates the titles for Books 7 and 8 of The Martyrology, and reveals Nichol’s continual determination to say, at least, two things at once. It also initiates a concatenation of associations. To assume is to receive, accept, adopt, usurp. An assumption is something taken—for granted, unto oneself. The Assumption was a taking, a reception, of the Virgin Mother, into heaven. As with other such words (like “advent” and “annunciation”), the OED tells us, the specific ecclesiastical use was the earliest in English. Uncovering this information must have pleased Nichol as much as finding that “die” is a “lost verb” (discovered while working on “Hour 22,” Book 6). Furthermore, the Assumptions of Book 7, the title page tells us, continue “A Counting” begun in Book 6. Seven is loaded with mythic, magic and religious significances. G is the seventh letter in the Roman alphabet—it’s not H or eighth, but it’s pretty close. In the Greek and Cyrillic alphabets, the equivalent of G—“Γ”—appears earlier in the sequence, but has the attractive characteristic of being the reversal of 7. The seven gifts of the holy spirit—Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Might, Knowledge, the Fear of God, Piety—is an amplification of the six given by the prophesying Isaiah (“Piety” was a Septuagintal addition). This revised list would have appealed to Nichol, since accumulating and revising were as much a part of his compositional process as drawing and writing with his pen, or typing on his computer. Gifts is a writing site where the revised is the given, the given is revisioned, and the vision is the gift.

The book format of this volume might puzzle readers who have been acquainted with the history of Nichol’s long poem, and his often-stated plans to publish Books 7 and 8 as an unbound shuffle text, with Book 8 “occurring among” 7. Book 7 had, from the start, been referred to as “Box vii” or “Boks 7 (VII)” or “Bo(o)ks 7(VII).” As Book 8 began to be written, Nichol came upon the notion of imbedding—literally—Book 8 among Book 7. Its numbering reflected the texture of this project: “Bo(o)ks 7 (VI(&8)I),” then “Bo(o)ks 7(VII) & (10)₈.” This last number requires some clarification.

“(10)₈” indicates an alternative numbering system Nichol had been fiddling with for a couple of years. He wanted to devise a system that ignored base 10, that would instead be founded on base 8, his obsessively favourite digit. This didn’t work out. A notebook entry (18 May 1988) explains the system he eventually chose:
numbering of the books changes so the base is where the sequence number of
the volume lies. i.e.

(10)_{8} (10)_{9} (10)_{10} (10)_{11} (10)_{12} (10)_{13} etc.

Thus sequence is negated AND retained. i.e. the processual is acknowledged
but the narrative diminished.

Hence the sub-title for The Martyrology's eighth book, Book (10)_{8}:
"basis/bases."

The length of some of the St. Anzas would have prevented their being
accommodated to a (conventional) card size—one envisions readers
picking up a deceptively small card that falls open into a long series of
accordion folds—and this is probably one reason why the shuffle text
idea was abandoned. There is a second, more exciting reason. At some
point in the summer of 1988, Nichol discovered a way of pulling in nu-
merous earlier texts inclined towards individual saints, or towards the
larger sphere of The Martyrology. Several short “saint” pieces, all previ-
ously published in journals or other books, appear in (as) Gifts. More sig-
nificant, however, is the inclusion of Scraptures and Monotones—the for-
mer a subtext, the latter a parallel text to The Martyrology. Nichol first
encountered St. Reat in the fourth sequence of Scraptures, and this im-
portant saint haunts other sequences (all included here). He had tried—
repeatedly, stubbornly and futilely—to include Monotones with the earli-
est sections of Book 1, and had voiced the opinion in recent years that he
still thought they should somehow be associated more closely with The
Martyrology. (He told me he had even contemplated publishing Mono-
tones separately, as Book 0 or -1 of The Martyrology.) The contaminated
(dis)ordering of Books 7 and 8 opened a way for these texts to be adopt-
ed—or dispersed—into this larger context. The ordering of the pieces in
Gifts depends neither on chronology, nor on the numerical sequences by
which some of them had been previously arranged, but rather on what
Nichol called “hinged rime.” Part of the joy of reading this text is discov-
ering the play of this riming—in the largest sense of that word—and of
the “schizophrenic logic” (another of Nichol’s terms) operating in and
between the discrete pieces.

So Bo(o)ks yielded to Book(s), and The Martyrology, demoted to sub-
title, gave way to Gifts, and the numerical figuration became “Book(s)
7(VI((10)_{8})I),” a bracketing reminiscent of

every(all at(toge(over)ther) once)thing
(Book 5, chain 10).

This gathering should not, though, be regarded as the complete or col-
lected saints—there are, after all, eight other books of The Martyrology,
further Scriptsures, and other “saint” texts beyond the covers on this book—but as gifts, under embrasure.

Nichol left the manuscript carefully, thoughtfully organized—a gift for whomever might have to take it through the publication process. The possibility that he himself might not see the manuscript through to book form had clearly occurred to him. The considerable care he gave to gathering these several projects under one cover suggests that he was comfortable with the present order. Yet knowing Nichol’s tendency to revise, there is always the temptation to speculate that, were he alive today, the contents of this volume would perhaps be in a different—though probably not thoroughly different—state.

Some handwritten notes included in the file indicate quotations to be used as epigraphs, design elements to be incorporated on title page and cover, and pieces that should be part of the text, but whose placement had not yet been decided. So as not to disturb the complicated rhythm of the text, I situated “read, dear” immediately after the preliminary pages Nichol had stapled together. Its invitation—or imperative—belongs at the beginning. (This was also its position in the file.) I inserted “Martyrology: Branded,” “Petra Improvisation,” “Middle Initial Events” 2 and 3, and “erase the body” at the end of the ordered text, doing so before I noticed small numbers pencilled-in on the bottom right corners of each of these pages. My eye alerted to them, I found that my ordering had retained the numerical sequence—a relief to an editor moving tenuously on an untravelled path. Only two pieces have been inserted in the midst of the text: the piece beginning “SAW,” and “St. Anzas X.” The former was missing from the file, but had always been part of Book 7. From the ampersand at the end of line 6 to the end, “St. Anzas X” (excluding the (non)footnote), was handwritten on the print-out draft (5 June 1988), and the added lines were never keyed into the computer, nor had the text been placed in Gifts. I found it in the “Martyrology 8” file, inserted Nichol’s changes, and placed it in the manuscript.

In the spring of 1989, when I was just commencing course work for a PhD that will eventually result in introductions and annotations—a “sourcery”—for Books 3 to 5 of The Martyrology, I was asked to come to Toronto for the summer in order to compile an inventory of Nichol’s papers. I had already completed the sourcery for Books 1 and 2—an MA thesis at Simon Fraser University (1987).

The drafts, notebooks, and other papers in the Nichol archive at SFU provided me with an invaluable source for my reconstruction of the compositional process for these earliest books of the saints—a history that was, in some instances, long forgotten by Nichol himself. Just as the poem resists gravitating towards a thematic or structural centre, so my work on The Martyrology could not avoid colliding with the plethora of
Nichol’s other publications and disparate interests. This experience, my familiarity with the physicality of Nichol’s writing—the stages in his revision process, his script, shorthand, notational symbols, etc.—as well as the persnickety attention demanded by archival scholarship, suggested to others that I would be able to handle the job of sorting and organizing the papers in Nichol’s study. It took three months. The project requiring the most urgent attention, and that Ellie asked me to see to before anything else, was the manuscript for this book.

When I first entered Nichol’s study last summer, I picked up and opened a small notebook covered in blue velour, and immediately encountered one of the poems in “body paranoia: initial fugue.” Guessing that this was part of a sequence, I flipped through to find the rest of the poems. Reading these lines in bp’s last notebook was a difficult beginning. But I proceeded, pulled out the file containing the “final” draft of Gifts, and discovered a pencilled note (10 September 1988) preceding the preliminary pages stating (asking?) that these poems be “printed on separate sheets of paper” and “interleaved into final bound copy of Martyr 7&.” (A vaguer note appears in the “bp:if” poem written on the same day. The placement in the text of the “3000 B.C. quote” is indicated by an arrow, but neither it nor its source is identified. Although I kept my eyes open for it, I did not locate it in the drafts, among the rest of the papers, or in any of Nichol’s recent reading.)

These meditations on the outcome of his surgery, including his not surviving it (as “bp:if,” the abbreviated title heading some of the pieces in the notebook, suggests) are the last five pieces of The Martyrology to be written. They are now, in this posthumous publication, “emotionally heavy,” as Barrie might have said. But his speculative mind and irrepressible wit prevent them from being maudlin or self-indulgent. And this final outrageous gesture—leaving these last poems free of the book’s spine, so that they will be the first to be lost—merges the process of his writing life with the materiality of the book.

leaf / leaves / leaving.

Irene Niechoda
August, 1990
Gifts: The Martyrology Book(s) 7 & was originally published by the Coach House Press in 1990. This second edition reproduces the original in its entirety with some minor corrections and a new cover.

Coach House Books
401 (rear) Huron Street
Toronto, Canada M5S 2G5
Aliphant all at once NO NO NO PLEASE! understand if you will now please! (UNDERSTANDING) this is only a beginning
This page intentionally left blank
Scraptures: 9th Sequence
set?

any sheet

this

set up as a man and there is a variety of both a tiger and elephant in the boa.
in the form of...

To be continued sometime.
Monograms—Genealogy—Grammarology

IC
VRUUM BRRRUM

KRAK!

IC XC NIKA
CRASH SKREEEEE

KA WHOMP WHOMP WHAM

s ain't t
s ain't u
s ain't v
s ain't w

IHS
INRI

s ain't x

s ain't y

s ain't z

st—an exclamation used to impose silence

st, st—to drive away an animal or urge it to attack
Scraptures: 11th Sequence
old mothers who are gone now
all mute
we are your tongues

born from your mouths' mouths
we have your say
Mother Leigh, Mother Workman, Mother Nichol, Mother Fuller
how many of you am i speaking for today
do you care what words pour from my lips?

this old body flaps in the wind
looks out over the prairie this cold March day
into that landscape most of you wandered into as girls
took up the burden of all that birthing
all that laying down
of the law
the line

old mothers who came before you
i don't know the names of & never will
all talking at once, if you could, in all those other languages
Celtic, German, Cherokee, Dutch
no eyes now, no tongue
only these two, this one
old nouns disappearing behind us
vague pronoun reference a life becomes
who does this i refer to?
which s now speaks thru this he?
eh? She?!

Assumptions
a damned land
a loser
strand, st and r and ā
blousey
boozery
STOP

step step step step st
a san-pan
a loader
a banned hand
brand
lousy usery
a dead man.
a red can
St. Anzas X

the unknown. the number then of god. 10. presence and absence.
line and circle. unspeakable. (parenthetical?*) surrounds
and is embedded in
these glyphs, the gesture of
these letters, to Who? Who.
W M of god & human again. &
the number of god is many; the 1 of 1
0 should stand for any
depending on the base we’re taking in, of, out of, belief is
absolute, is nothing, multi-faceted, singular
in its many faces. 10 to be written Ø
number as a slash across the face of the void.

* footnoted?
It has begun again as it did before. I haven't been to the theater or seen her face. The poem is inside of me, listening to everything. Every memory is a great event. I am listening to every great event in my presence. Where am I? Or you as I am now? I am coming to the place where I am coming to and writing this poem that I have been searching for you and you have accepted it.
DEATH

is the final and complete perversion!

WHEELS of FATE

the great loneliness cannot be reached thru words!

DEATH is the most EASILY obtained
WHAT IS NECESSARY IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND IS A

TOTAL ASSAULT

begin again at the beginning
what was in the beginning?
what was spoken?
what grew?
name a goddess of norse religion.
name a rabbit.

ST. REAT I HAVE FORGOTTEN YOUR OTHER NAME.

YOUR OTHER NAME
AH! BUT THAT WAS A LONG TIME AGO

should you believe everything you hear?
EVERYTHING

You Hear
Monotones

LXXVIII

sometimes you just want to get off one long sentence before you die

sometimes you die
& the sentence hangs there

hell

the sentence is served
obsequious king fool

who the man
who does not know
his face?

eye of my lord fool upon me
squinting indifferently
touches the core

he lives or dies

gaze in the mirror

not enough hair
to start a beard

a conversation in another room

fill up a page
with scribbling on
my fool

lord king
bends the fingers
to his will

beating your hands against the muscles of your body

mad eye of
my lord king saint hood
dream you are no thing if not the dreaming of my own fool brain