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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Barbed Lines

BY

Reginald Hart



A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts.

Department of English

Edmonton, Alberta
Spring 1994



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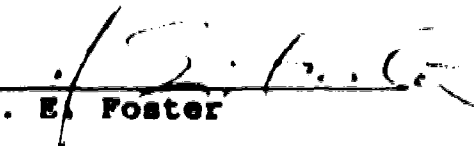
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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled Barbed Lines submitted by Reginald Hart in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.


D. F. Barbour


B. L. Almon


J. E. Foster

April 22, 1994

Abstract

This work consists of a series of poems in diverse forms utilizing concise description with a tendency to avoid closure. Primarily, rural subjects are explored but urban contrast is occasionally provided.

The landscape is usually treated as a text with no historical paradigms, freeing it from the imposition of any prior meaning. Generation and regeneration are central thematic concerns. However, the order which humanity attempts to impose on nature is a recurring sub-theme in the poetic sequence. The recording of the event, the occasion, and the encounter are expressed within the various quick takes and reverberative echoes.

Table of Cont

PLASTIC MEMORIES

Plastic Memories.....	2
Freda.....	3
Crow Gossip.....	4
Hiscar.....	6
Blink and Miss It.....	7
Post-Birthday Blues.....	8
The Bridge.....	11
A Mounted Image.....	12
Civil Ears.....	13

THE REGULARS

Prologue.....	15
This Week: Wormwood.....	16
2. Twin Trumpets.....	17
Remember The Porter.....	18
4. An Empty Chair.....	20
Tissue Preserved -- The Pure Mind.....	21
Papa C.	22
Epilogue.....	23

COLD SEED

Fresh Snow.....	25
Books On Gardening.....	26
Soiled.....	27

Picking Rocks.....	28
Quitting The Campus.....	29
Elevator Etiquette.....	33
On A Section In Alberta.....	34
Cold Seed For The Season.....	35
Gadgetry.....	36

ANOTHER GENERATION

Origins.....	38
Threshing.....	39
Propagation.....	40
Reunion.....	42

PRAIRIE LINES

Fencing.....	44
Work In Progress.....	45
Barbed Lines.....	46
Kilos Of Burgers.....	47
Snowbird Mother.....	48
Impressions.....	49
The Red Fox At Polar Park.....	50
Chaff.....	51

NOTES.....	53 - 62
-------------------	----------------

BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	64
--------------------------	-----------

APPENDIX

Is Poetry.....	66 - 70
----------------	---------

PLASTIC MEMORIES

**"Tell me where all past years are."
John Donne**

PLASTIC MEMORIES

snowing tonight
and she's looking through
the plastic remembering
the hairdryer
awkward in his hand 5
as he shrunk
plastic over the window
muttering about dinner
pretending she wasn't there

growing to love 10
this prairie land
where supper's dinner
dinner's lunch
brunch and coffee
rival tea 15
time for breakfast?
none tonight
have to work --
 write the real

watching over my shoulder 20
the ghosts not content
with barbed lines or crow gossip
seizing the pain
the sting of breaking words
her conviction 25
and mine
the storm windows in place
and snow failing
as it contests for the light

they would be content 30
to live the pain
to feel the sting of chilblain caught
skating on the slough
shoveling the drive
chasing scoops of snow at stray dogs 35

FREDA

never write
of hutterite
women less than men
turn to look
with empty eyes
penned cattle
indifferent

5

they steal he said
they're bad she said
they're crows we said
caw caw
caw caw
caught

10

she said
she felt it
more than we

15

her carnal contact
with outsiders
a covert fondness
for the perfume we gave her
voraciously reading
views unchecked

20

a checked scarf
bobbing on
a black dress
full of cancer
ruminating like
hope/chest
full of promise
unique
as freda

25

30

CROW GOSSIP

i freed a crow once
penned in a wooden box
i give my word
i don't know what
something made me 5
stop and look over the edge
afraid of the unknown
of course suspecting that it was
domesticated crow

some town kids scattered crumbs 10
placed a frozen moon pie box
tied a kite string to a branch
propped it underneath an edge

the flaps were waving welcomes
and the wind their only guest 15
playing out the string they
shushed and hissed
and lay down in the grass

and waiting is forever when
you're only ten years old 20
when they tired of the box trick
they'd get rod to whitebait gulls

summer after summer went
and came and went and
came and went while they never 25
caught a crow with home-made buns
or lucky spoon

sparrows magpies
gulls galore
so many miles 30
from sea and shore
and then
they grew away from ground

they left the crow
the birds aghast 35
all attempts to loving keep
or insane leers and pointed sticks
to a younger science passed

So	when the pie was opened	you sang?	
A: /c /n /rime			40
check the time?			
A: mode fast			
A: /n echo off			
echo off?	[Yes] [No]		
A: rem looping			45
	i remember this crow		
	dignity stripped	squawk muffled	
	dull black dress and empty eyes		
	penned for love or cruel art		
	i hear crows are squawking loners		50
	even in a rookery		
	lost in the midst of the muddle		
	penned		
	or displayed in moon pie crates		
	quiet		55
	still		
	but my expertise at matters		
	that concern the wary crow		
	comes from hearsay		
	and childhood/		60
	cruelty white with age		
	hey i don't even own a boat		
A: BREAK			
through the open flap a			
folded useless door			65
the baking sun			
swallowed by the eyes like they were glass			
glinting off			
the motionless black			
	there are times when		70
	i think about crows		
	those times when crows		
	flap around my door		
	i hear crows talk		
	about friendly townspeople		75
	-- they tell one other		
they ditched the box			
outside of town			
the crow was gone			

HISCAR

hiscar
had prairie
at the edge
proud and showing
old beloved

5

a wild red
breaking
running rose
all bubbled up
and filmy white

10

memory scratches
healthy surface
once red painful
brush against

a grizzled red
some falling off
the lines you feel
like highway tar

15

BLINK AND MISS IT

driving west
starting to turn

green trash bag in ditch
round soggy ball
hugging the prairie
and notice no end-
gate in the truck
dried white clay
the gophers are out
there's one on that mound
starting to turn

lime-green greens
the golfers are out
there's one on that mound
driving west

POST-BIRTHDAY BLUES

a seagull blanket
cleaning yesterdays
that's me over the portable city
the one above

a/lone hawk circling
above the crowd
above the mud

5

ten dollar straw bales
the mud fights the rain

where mudballs hang
canadian flags

10

draped out of the mud
soaring fifty feet high
sewing landscape and sky
the red narrow edge

15

to cover the pasture
they bedded some wood

the snow fence that could
some broke up pallets

squatters invading
to blanket their claim

20

communal domain
itinerant city

the second gate searches
where some were barred

25

everything hard
security confiscates

cattle prods lacking
this sets them apart
security's art
the wound-up to round-up 30

herded through gates
like domesticate beasts

securities breached
some testes were fondled 35

timothy trampled
by leather clad foot
its origin moot
like genuine cowhide

some portable toilets
that lineups had found 40

but finding the ground
the brazen ignored them

feasting on cowpies
before we appeared
some chased them with beer
the flies had to scatter 45

a beer cup of plastic
soars over the crowd
no bottles allowed
the prairie protected 50

chocolate stick ice cream
a stand in the muck
the manicured mud
sticking to rev 'lers 55

chicago clad salesman
with two dollar cups
waves ice-cola syrup
dressed up like a bull

a portable turret
looks over the ground
for mixing the sound
a tower erected 60

the headliners helped
by a heavy light crew 65
the biggest named lou
i noticed his nametag

they each had a spotlight
to augment the rays
all trained on the stage 70
mechanically driven

upstaging def leppard
was ugly kid joe
postponing the show
they started a mudfight 75

openers rockhead
to warm april wine
a king for a time
the best was tom cochrane

pieces of plastic 80
and burlap grain sacks
a nylon back-pack
a/lone hawk kept circling

with claws retracted
not tempted to dive 85

from smoking the hive
the living prey buzzing

wrapped up in a blanket
affixed to the stage
it's canada day 90
it's raining it's pouring

THE BRIDGE

there is a bridge
on iron creek
they call the bridge the bridge
just the bridge
it's been a site of many crossings
a site of sights the bridge

his mother had to
sew and wash
and iron at the neon wheel
just the wheel
his daddy drank and played at bridge
with creaky hand
and iron appeal

now the only thing a young man knows
is what he has for thoughts
just the bridge
he drove out to the iron bridge
so drunk he couldn't stop

come with me now to wavy lake
and circle marbled ground
just the wheel
a frosty name another bridge
an epitaph unwound

A MOUNTED IMAGE

the mystique of mounties includes opera
dudley do right's impression
of nelson eddy
calling you
america's sweetie
jeanette macdonald
upstaged in edmonton
by rocky
underdogs
at bullwinkle's restaurant

CIVIL EARS

abandoned house
boasting NO
refuge from
the marking season

venture through 5
a useless door
spine hairs up
pointed invasion

a haphazard bed
with filthy linen 10

old news
war/time
paperback
spine up
marking 15
reader's spot

urine stinging
heavy cloud
makeshift toilet
rise to meld 20
ancestral odours
once full beer
bottle shattered
civil ears

THE REGULARS

"Take it and eat; it will
be bitter to your stomach,
but sweet as honey in your mouth."
Revelation, 10:9

"The smoker you drink
the player you get."
Joe Walsh

"I had thought to have let
in some of all professions
that go the primrose way to
th' everlasting bonfire."
Macbeth: Act 2, Scene 3: 18-19

PROLOGUE

when lambing march
meets april's fool
and drowsy roots
are cruelly primed
when the lazy rain
drips pussy willows
shaking leaves
from winter sleep
then papa geof
would go on tour
5
10

he took me out
carousing beers
said "listen johnny
you got ears"

regulars spend money
regulars pay the bills
set your watch --
watch your pocketbooks
15

DRINKING CAN KILL
"watch your tongue"
"mind your manners"
20
"he holes upstairs"
"maintains the tavern"
tasting wares

THIS WEEK: WORMWOOD

open doors 25
packed as hell
scented wood
friday smell

fender speakers 30
move the air
over the ten
two stepping pairs

a song -- highschool
cigarette 35
bar-stool footrail
"yup you bet"

then filmy white
the glasses chink
they tap the time 40
fresh out of sink

the regulars
the marionettes
drinkers dancers cigarettes

2. TWIN TRUMPETS

they plant their feet on musty floors where white clay sticks rub foul sores	45
the cast iron table leg lofty thought a gentlemen's argument leading nowhere	50
one bumps his dregs on the musty carpet one mixes red-eye the blood of a dead man	55
zak repeats what others say grinning zeke nods and nods and/ waves for service	60
two and a juice the bartender reads it	

REMEMBER THE PORTER

eighty years liquor years engineer labourer	65
clothes of pride pocket stitch matching cap lift and itch	70
haggard face rails maintained lukewarm draught lift and drain	75
"seven o'clock set your watch"	
slow deliberate throat vibration weighing words balancing nations	80
thin lips barely move itchy hair lift and soothe	85
countless patrons stimulate his memories coagulate the railroad stock "he 'll liquidate!" "it's bullshit" "please elaborate"	90

"well" (zombie) 95
"rails" (highball)
"the west" (scotch)
"empty pockets" (wine)

"What year was she?" said Geoffrey. After
this I looked at an open door, seven 100
mounted heads, and ten powder horns. A
hodgepodge hungry with western themes:
bucksaws, flintlocks, double t's. Pioneer
tools and disco days. Mirrors of beer.
A neon haze. 105

some cowboy posters
two-piece girls
a horseshoe nailed
to the bathroom door

"the crowded train" (the seven heads) 110
"the rails maintained" (in wired bliss)

no power poles to measure snow
no crow or blackfoot
buffalo...

4. AN EMPTY CHAIR

trapper likes the pickled eggs 115
he salts them well
to stimulate
his appetite
for rum and coke
neat and pressed 120
a dirty joke

his famous tricks
a bowl poured out
a burning ash 125
a match burns twice

he calms the scorched
with a "goddam joke"
"guaranfuckinteed"

the barman evicting 130
an old woman babbling
restfully babbling
to saints and martyrs
in an empty chair
his untamed tongue 135
is a sharp two-edged sword
her scarlet hat
bobs a dark smear
above her penciled brow

gold foil earrings 140
and loops of plastic
pearls and dark glass
jewels reflecting
a purple dress
an empty bottle 145
molson gold
in her marbled hand

"don't worry about babe" papa says to the man
"women are cities
the passion of man" 150

"she'll get more from trapper than she ever gave
mix her a double
whatever she craves"

PAPA C.

a pilsner beer as cold as snow licking the edge of hand-rolled smokes emerging from a pouch of gold	185
he spoke familiar hockey weather hard times a depression family a large family on relief the father in jail avoiding argument voraciously reading always in agreement	190 195
"yup yur right on that one boy yup yup yup i believe ya"	200
if drunk enough he'd bark some service a wired rambling from there to mcGee his arm outstretched like a bronze orator a round of applause and three free "pile" a rousing toast to sinclair ross one story building then another the crowd seeking a way away	205 210
in his last months he quit carousing and started spooning bowls full of the wrath of god wild stubble and a white face cloth burned white hot wrapped around his cold frame his hour of trial had come like a thief no service no poetry	215 220 225

EPILOGUE

**weak worms
open doors**

**trumpet sounds
open doors**

**knock knock knock!
opens doors**

230

**an empty chair
is an open door**

**the pure mind
opens doors**

235

**a papa c.
opens doors**

COLD SEED

**"The seed of truth lies hidden deep within."
Boethius**

FRESH SNOW

miss dark land
winter white
and picot blue
of just
white ice

5

just ice and white
white and stone

chthonic demons
insane leers
stone temple pilates
mist the poetry
in a lisping land

10

BOOKS ON GARDENING

our past is soil
under the fingernails
too close
too personal
to be scrutinized 5

when the earth invades a crevice
it's de-filed
A:s - dirt dirty shitty
yet
entire libraries 10
venerate compost

SOILED

black rot
organicallyrich
soil from deaths
we don't recognize
the found feast 5
the dust eaten
and eaten and eaten
until the soil
spits the dust to life
that moves the soil 10
and eats dust from the soil
eating the black rot
organicallyrich
soil from deaths

PICKING ROCKS

stone pile periods
rolled away
from seed starved soil
risen up
from winterheaves
empty tomb
unearthing
like teeth emerging
from swollen gums

QUITTING THE CAMPUS

workers busy
loading truck
cigarettes
etc truck

ground leaves
speckled reddish-brown
invaders cautious
unknown ground

5

sound on
headphones
bounce along
carry a parka

10

overhearing
foreign students

gold spades
whispering off
a poplar

15

painted door
open held
a prominent white
one story building
an armload
of deliveries
crown wrapped
in vinegar and
brown paper

20

25

breeze on
lawn sprinkles
metronomic pattern
(everyone glancing at it)
scattering mist
darkening soil
and cold seed

30

ants conquer		
bread crumbs	marching out of	35
lunch bag	over old newspaper	
beside empty	trashy barrel	
and shattered	brown bottle	

spongy grass		
a concrete hairpiece		40
adjunct to a cobblestone		
carpet of geometric siblings		

slowly walking		
two men in suits		
a casual pace		45
facilitates words		

our jackets alike		
except for name bars		
none exceeding		
letters five		50

a warm face tory		
building emerging		
through mountain		
ash orange berries		
boldly displayed		55
mind full of birds		
shy hiding birds		
conversing in melodies		
fed by		
plump sentinels		60

saying hi		
nodding too		
a/lone runners		
team jackets		
pseudonymous fate		65

a cloud resembling		
drifting harmlessly		
through breezy blue		

calling a huddle
of students
haphazardly drilling
through double door
fumbling the past
through future zone

70

a football
playfully tossed
between two
young men

75

busy hands
t-shirts
sweat pants
fans cheer

80

standing by
open books
standing by
hands red
faces live

85

a looper
jogging earnestly
toward my
destination

90

shouting nick nick
at a measured pace
shrugging shoulders and
stuttered stop like
the sound had moved
in motion slow

95

hands mesmerized
a couple held
a perfect spot
in the face of other

100

a man dozing
dry lawn
out of sprinklers reach
his head rest
a canvas pack
a blue jays cap
pulled down

105

a beautiful tableau
an arm of bronze outstretched
do you remember quitting?
and the smell of cigarettes

110

ELEVATOR ETIQUETTE

randy watches
the numbers
monotonous calculations
continually determining
his proximity 5
hearing the squeak and groan
of the cabled car
going down
admiring his leather shoes
his blinders up 10
he peeks through
and notices her
admiring the floor
he catches her
peeking back 15
b bblushing

we're all wary
cautious
trapped in a moving room
where were you when the lights went out? 20

lately i've become a menace
ignoring elevator rules

a stark second
before my floor

when the bell tolls 25
for my numbered floor

i insist on conversation
breaking spells
of shoes and floors

"this car was built by maxwell house" 30
i dryly add
while stepping off then
pause and turn
on closing door
grinning "good to the last drop" 35

ON A SECTION IN ALBERTA

the evanescent vision landscapes living crowd
stubble on a white face cloth

A portable sign beside a greenhouse had its letters blown by the wind. Driving by, I misread "closed for the season" as...

COLD SEED FOR THE SEASON

			a	
			sea	
	see			
	see	the	sea	
cold		for the	sea	5
old			sea	
o	see			
old	seed			
old	seed	for the	seas	
cold			season	10
cold		for the	seas	
cold		for the	season	
cold	seed	for the	season	
old			as	
	seed	for the	son	15
old				
cold	seed	for the	son	
	see	the	son	
cold				
		the	son	20
			season	
cold				
	seed	for the	sea	
		for the	se	
cold			seas	25
			on	
		the		
			son	
			on	
		the		30
d	e	d		
			s	
			on	

time

time to

time to ponder

time to ponder things

time to ponder things that

time to ponder things that don't

time to ponder things that don't have

time to ponder things that don't have to

time to ponder things that don't have to rely

time to ponder things that don't have to rely on

GADGETRY

ANOTHER GENERATION

**"For I am bound with fleshly bands,
Joy, beauty, lie beyond my scope;
I strain my heart, I stretch my hands,
And catch at hope."**

Christina Rossetti

ORIGINS

brian thought
the narrator
might envision
friendly townspeople as
poles connecting 5
lines that communicate

from generation to
community members
distant as
clarke's belt 10
visible in heaven

a dam
stretched over
the ditches wound 15
in ground beside
barbed wire
inhibiting stumbling
onto roads for gravelly
old homesteaders 20
or sons of mothers
children to someday pave

distance in derived horse
power driving shafts
direct from distant steel 25
mills surrounding
cities of immigrants
fed white
meat from water
stretched from horizon to horizon 30

meat rivaling your north saskatchewan slough shark
trophy sized bass or
salmon coloured cousins
mythical pioneers
instinctively avoiding 35
old brians
pike infested frontier

THRESHING

if he could write
his self he would
fashion his paper brain 40
knowing that
they thrive
alive multiplied
like loaves
of wheat 45
bleached white

refined in part
by defining the whole
sparing no
expansive landscape 50
redefined from horizon to horizon

PROPAGATION

while dad was an awkward youth insulating foreign doors against frozen hordes advancing like pikemen clattering armour over a paved yard exercising his right to painlessly live his glorious manhood to manifest in me	55 60
and repeat	
a seed sown in alberta repeat	65
a name cloned and kept sprouted in saskatchewan	
oblivious to mitchell fashioning paper briars on the prairie housed in short green trousers divining honing wind and a dead gopher bleached white	70 75
oblivious to relief feeding mother's fatherless family in alberta	
oblivious to his father swallowing moose jaw soil perverting history moving east for a green homestead near ontario's mitchell	80 85

feeling the wind
that blew
defenseless black
gophers forced
to dig in
dried white clay
sticking to everything
left over
after the first/great
lesson of the century
that spawned us

90

95

REUNION

my son talks
to him
on line
too soon buried 100
with rotted poles and empty cross shadows
that disappear under
trenched landscape

glossy blacks whites reds
neutrals all 105
green/ground
lines surrounded
with plastic efforts
at preservation

obsolesced by 110
stark fibre/
optic awareness
somewhat super/
seeded by seldom seen voices
sibilating the heavens 115

microwaveable sense/
ability to come/
union

PRAIRIE LINES

**"We give form to this land by running
a series of posts and three strands
of barbed wire around a quarter-section."
Robert Kroetsch**

**"Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out."
Robert Frost**

FENCING

**"Something there is that doesn't love a wall."
Robert Frost**

**there is no fence
to stop nature
there is snow fence
to humour nature**

**to humour nature
there is snow fence
to stop nature
there is no fence**

WORK IN PROGRESS

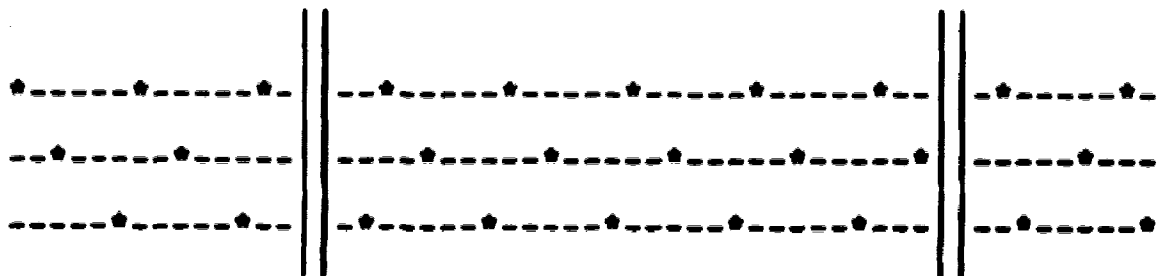
-----*-----
 a landscape traced
 with dotted line
 an interlined scribbler
 priming beginners
 -*-----*--
 the bar line posts 5
 separate rhythm
 scrambling words
 breaking measure
 ---*-----*--- ---*---
 horizontal lines
 support clinging vines 10
 and vertical twigs --
 budding infants
 springing green
 from no
 till ground 15
 ---*-----*-----*-----*---
 a trinity of post and lintel
 nailed with bale wire
 the branches support the
 matchless rambling
 -- volunteer oats 20
 and wild lentils
 * ---*-----*--- ---*-----*---
 seeking meaning
 outside the line
 wired natures
 rambling heiroglyph 25
 * * * * *
 a crayon dressed
 in summer green
 or autumn red
 obscuring the line
 with collage of colour 30
 -- natures rhyme
 7
 the obscure branches
 changing lines --
 a living page
 fenced in meaning 35
 -- leaves dropping
 an altered page
 growing
 growing

BARBED LINES

"God knows, too many fences fence us out."
Phyllis Webb

lines that tear trousers
barbed lines
support the sting of breaking rose
at a haven for wild oats
and volunteer rape

a back road heaven
separating wheat and tears
wild seed and chaff



KILOS OF BURGERS

kilos of triple strand barb
strung three high
are food containers
keeping day
grazing domesticates
protected from self mutilation
and auto traffic
sparse enough to condition
the hamburger in (colourized) infancy

SNOWBIRD MOTHER

when she was young
she used to laugh
listening to leaves fall
she laughed
 she didn't leave

she never laughed last labour day
she left
 for florida

IMPRESSIONS

viewed through three layers of glass dusty gravel enhances the impression a natural joshua taking on remembering	5
flanking the barb a snow fence built to parallel the zigzag hills	10
rough hewn spruce one by eight whitewash lacking	
vertical soldiers touching shoulders modeled after the pioneer and alberta pool	15
engineered in railroad towns inherited from garrisons on a dear frontier fashioned from untold years of flat cars	20
fresh cut spruce coming crisp from the coast with mountain air some assembly required	25
pole shed remnants? dugout protection?	30
closing in on the soldiers imagining the knotty surface of rough spruce wooden divisions transform to floppy eared stillness a herd of muleys in file formation a parade floating in stasis	35 40

THE RED FOX AT POLAR PARK

pace and pace
pause and turn

sometimes bred
fed white meat
dead to eat

dead to eat
fed white meat
bred sometimes

pause and turn
pace and pace

CHAFF

**swaths line
a living page
grainy and knowing**

**when threshing
grains of poetry
some useful
chaff remains**

NOTES

page

2. Plastic Memories

watching over my shoulder
the ghosts not content (l.20-1)
Cf. Wallace Stevens, "Large Red Man
Reading:" "There were ghosts that
returned to earth to hear his
phrases" (320).

3. Freda

women less than men (l. 3)
The Hutterian Brethren consider the
male to be the head of the
household. Cf. Ephesians, 5:22-4.

hope/chest (l. 28)
Freda is unattached.

4. Crow Gossip

A: fc /n /rime (l. 40)
Here a dialogue occurs between the
poet and his computer. He directs
the computer to check the files for
rhyming words. But because the poet
has used the archaic spelling --
"rime" the computer offers its
closest possibility to the word,
i. e. "time."

A: rem looping (l. 45)
-- rem: "remarks." Also, R.E.M.
(rapid eye movement) is associated
with the dream state.

8. Post-Birthday Blues

The outdoor rock concert described here
occurred July 1, 1993 near Camrose, Alberta.

9.

dressed up like a bull (l. 59)
-- the Chicago Bulls.

page

10.

upstaging def leppard (l. 72)

Def Leppard headlined the concert. The other acts were Rockhead, Ugly Kid Joe, Tom Cochrane and April Wine.

13. Civil Ears

heavy cloud (l. 18)

Adapted from Wallace Stevens: "Like Decorations in a Nigger Cemetery." "The cloud rose upward like a heavy stone" (103).

14. THE REGULARS

Every tavern I ever visited had one or more interesting characters. Some elusive, many friendly, these characters always fascinated me. Those appearing in this poem are composites based on real people; some still living. Papa Geoff combines Chaucer with the first angel in Revelation and authentic tavern patrons. Many of the events, such as Papa's recitation of "The Cremation of Sam McGee" are based on actual occurrences. The dreamer shifts in and out of an imaginary tour of the pubs that Chaucer's troupe visited on their way to Canterbury, the heavenly scene depicted in Revelation, and Alberta taverns. He encounters a character who reminds him of the Porter in Macbeth, a biblical harlot, seke and sek, trapper, and a host of patrons all demanding a voice.

15. Prologue

-- modeled after the prologue to The Canterbury Tales.

are cruelly primed (l. 4)

Cf. T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land:

"April is the cruelest month" (63).

page

15.

said "listen johnny
you got ears" (ll. 13-4)
Cf. "I John am he who heard and saw these things."
(Revelation 22:8).

DRINKING CAN KILL (l. 19)
Alberta Liquor Control Board sign on the
wall.

tasting wares (l. 24)
Cf. Simple Simon.

16. This Week: Wormwood

Cf. title:
The name of the star is Wormwood. A third
of the waters became wormwood, and many men
died of the water, because it was made bitter.
(Revelation 8:11)

scented wood (l. 27)
Cf. Revelation 18:11.

17. 2. Twin Trumpets

rub foul sores (l. 48)
So the first angel went and poured
his bowl on the earth, and foul and evil
sores came upon the men who bore the mark
of the beast and worshiped its image.
(Revelation 16:2)

the blood of a dead man (l. 56)
The second angel poured his bowl
into the sea, and it became like the
blood of a dead man, and every living
thing died that was in the sea.
(Revelation 16:3)

18. Remember The Porter

-- title: "I pray you, remember the porter."
(Macbeth Act 2 Scene 3: 21)

page

18.

After this I looked at an open door... (l. 99-100)
"After this I looked, and lo, in heaven
an open door..." (Revelation 4:1).

20. 4. An Empty Chair

a bowl poured out (l. 124)

"The fourth angel poured his bowl on the
sun, and it was allowed to scorch men
with fire" (Revelation 16:8).

an old woman babbling (l. 131)

Cf. the harlot in Revelation:

The woman was arrayed in purple and
scarlet, and bedecked with gold and jewels and
pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full
of abominations and the impurities of her
fornication; and on her forehead was written a
name of mystery: 'Babylon the great, mother of
harlot's and earth's abominations.' And I saw
the woman drunk with the blood of the saints
and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.
(17:4-6)

"don't worry about babe..." (148)

Cf. Revelation 17:4-6 (see above note).

mix her a double (l. 152)

Render to her as she herself has
rendered, and repay her double for her
deeds; mix a double draught for her in
the cup she mixed. (Revelation 18:6)

21. Tissue Preserved -- The Pure Mind

-- the title is a line taken from Ezra
Pound's "'Sienna Mi Fe'; Disfecemi
Maremma" in Hugh Selwyn Mauberley. The
poem features the character M. Verog
discussing poets who frequented the pubs
in London.

page

21.

his head
and hair

were white as white wool (ll. 154-6)

"His head and his hair were white as
white wool, white as snow; his eyes were
like a flame of fire..." (Revelation
1:14).

22. Papa C.

on relief (l. 192)

During the depression many Alberta
families were on welfare -- on relief.

from there to McGee (l. 204)

Cf. Robert W. Service: "The Cremation of
Sam McGee."

his arm outstretched

like a bronze orator (ll. 205-6)

(Cf. "Quitting The Campus" n, ll.
109-10).

one story building (l. 210)

(Cf. "Quitting The Campus," n, l. 18)

bowls full of the wrath of god (l. 217)

Then I heard a loud voice from the
temple telling the seven angels, 'Go and
pour out on the earth the seven bowls of
the wrath of God.' (Revelation 16:1)

had come like a thief (l. 223)

"...I will come like a thief, and you
will not know at what hour I will come
upon you" (Revelation 3:3).

-- cf. Luke 12:39, II Peter 3:10.

23. Epilogue

trumpet sounds (l. 228)

Cf. ...And the first voice, which I
had heard speaking to me like a trumpet,
said, 'Come up hither, and I will show
you what must take place after this.'

(Revelation 4:1)

page

23.

knock knock knock! (l. 230)
Spoken by the Porter in Macbeth, Act 2
Scene 3: (12-13).

25. Fresh Snow

insane leers (l. 9)
-- King Lear.

stone temple pilates (l. 10)
In the mystery plays, Pilate's words are
bold and often exaggerated. The stones
that peek through the snow are like
Pilate's voice. Homonym: Stone Temple
Pilots is a contemporary rock band.

26. Books on Gardening

a:s - dirt dirty shitty (l. 8)
-- a data search for the etymology of
dirt.

28. Picking Rocks

stone pile periods (l. 1)
-- Punctuation has become redundant;
historians tend to compartmentalize the
past into "periods."

29. Quitting The Campus

painted door (l. 18)
Cf. Sinclair Ross: "The Painted Door."

crown wrapped (l. 24)
Crown-Zellerbach is a paper
manufacturer.

30.

a warn face tory (l. 51)
-- the Tory Building on the University of
Alberta campus.

page

30.

plump sentinels (l. 60)
-- the berries, but also the warm faced
tory.

31.

fumbling the past
through future zone (ll. 73-4)
Adapted from Wallace Stevens, "Like
Decorations in a Nigger Cemetery." "If
ever the search for a tranquil belief
should end, / The future might stop
emerging out of the past" (103).

32.

a beautiful tableau
an arm of bronze outstretched (ll. 109-10)
-- Cf. Wallace Stevens, "The Dance of the
Macabre Mice:" "What a beautiful tableau
tinted and towering / The arm of bronze
outstretched against all evil" (117).

33. Elevator Etiquette

where were you when the lights went out? (l. 20)
-- title of a Metro Goldwyn Mayer movie;
based on the 1965 blackout in New York:
starring Doris Day.

34. On A Section in Alberta

-- Cf. Ezra Pound, "In a Station of the
Metro."

35. Cold Seed For The Season

for the se (l. 24)
-- for these.

page

38. Origins

brian thought (l. 1)

-- a character in W.O. Mitchell's Who Has Seen The Wind.

poles connecting (l. 5)

The swarming hum of telephone wires came to him, barely perceptible in the stillness, hardly a sound heard so much as a pulsing of power felt. He looked up at rime-white wires, following them from pole to pole to the prairie's rim. From each person stretched back a long line -- hundreds and hundreds of years -- each person stuck up. (Mitchell, 299)

38.

clarke's belt (l. 11)

-- the "C" band communication satellites named for Arthur C. Clarke.

a dam (l. 12)

-- Adam.

...north saskatchewan... (l. 31)

-- the river, not the province.

...slough shark (l. 31)

-- slang for Northern Pike.

40. Propagation

...relief feeding mother's (l. 78)

(Cf. Papa C. n, l. 192)

ontario's mitchell (l. 85)

Mitchell is a town in Ontario.

page

41. first/great (1. 95)
-- WWI / The Great War.
42. Reunion
- on line (1.99)
-- computer command.
44. Fencing
(see below note: "The Red Fox at Polar Park.")
45. Work in Progress
- from no
till ground (11. 14-5)
No-till farming is a technique presently
being employed by some Alberta farmers.
46. Barbed Lines
- separating wheat and tears
Homonym: the Biblical "tares" -- an
unwanted weed.
47. Kilos of Burgers
- ...(colourized)... (1. 9)
-- some grocery stores colour the meat
on display.
50. The Red Fox At Polar Park
Michael Ondaatje's reverse footage segments in
The Collected Works of Billy The Kid have
used this same technique. However, my
intention is not one of a camera but an
imitation of the movement of the trapped fox.
In "Fencing" the image reverses on itself but
here the sense is one of heightened pathos.
The snow fence becomes a "humour" on the body
of nature.

page

51. Chaff

chaff remains (l. 7)

Cf. -- the Imagist principle "use no
superfluous words." In any editorial task
it is difficult to decide which words
remain.

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APPENDIX

IS POETRY

Pound haunts me
the aphoristic nature of a phrase
unnecessary or excessive?

Or was he thinking etymology < L. super,
above + fluere, to flow: "Use no superfluous
word...."

absolutely nevermore
intentionally use
exacerbated cacophony

Words modulate between simple description and
divine afflatus
reformed into something new.

Examine the possibilities -- a
clandestine meeting on a back road.

a farmer introduced it
now it's everywhere

read in
Barbed Lines

there are many emotions combating for dominance; pain,
lust, suffering, anger, resentment...

This is an attempt to capture.

Develop a taste for concrete deer with embedded antlers
Then! Moulting lasts a thousand years.

The last two lines intermingle

disparate-fuse-image

The last word forms the glue to bind the
image. Sometimes

the fifth point on a compass
is the point where

"In music. Crow is realist. But, then,"

word unit

Move beyond the image. Imagine little condolence comes
from the few

excessive above
or on the flow of a poetic line

That words have power, is of course evident
However, contact here is achieved

That the reader will associate these words in a like manner.

The Difference Between Us and Them

yes one might
read "us and them" as
<M> <F>
but this poem

Consider the realm beyond the page. The

JEOPARDY

rite of passage
married beard
son and father
buried here

Who was Jacob Hutter?

a chicken boss
or hay or straw
a businessman
biblical law

Who was Jacob Hutter?

What will the reader think when confronted with
this particular combination?

dear

bp nichol

love
A.B.O.R.

PS (8564 I16 L89 1974)

language is inadequate. ; an acknowledgement that

Any combination of letters at
once becomes a structure. Poetry
moves beyond. Forms like free verse
or haiku. Inasmuch as all these
hopefully. That said, I'd like to
add that this does not mean that one
should.

Consider:

IS
SI

steer:

Some Brerow Philosophy

IS
SI

yes

it begs for seed
The precarious balance of agreement

PO--- is As we read and reread
 all/ways altered

it could be argued
inherently
Mitchell forever fashioning paper Brians over and over
again

MS-DOS

TRANSLATION

fc /n test1.src test2.src	Scratch my fuckin' balls
>test3.src	all three of you
fc \user\working\file.txt	Fuck you Sir and your job
\user \backup\file.txt	You Serback, Up filet zit!

"In some
haunting way
the Ben
{is} part
of it."

Any discussion will
And here is the key word.

This leads to the unlikely conclusion that perhaps
It is therefore desirable to

The shape of these words in a line on a page.

"IF YOU WANT THE GIST OF THE MATTER..."

in sane voice
change pain to glory
mumbling over wine and bread

in sane others
watch wicked thought
cast down to hell

infect others
with insane order
insane voice
with wild rambling

St. Sufferingholdinglongingmergingmitchellpoundand

letters have tone
Pound knew