

line

number twelve



fall 1988

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A Journal of Contemporary Writing
and its Modernist Sources

fall 1988

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As a journal published in co-operation with The Contemporary Literature Collection, *Line* will reflect the range of the collection. Contents will be related to the line of post-1945 Canadian, American, and British writers whose work issues from, or extends, the work of Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, H.D., Gertrude Stein, and Charles Olson.

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Correspondence Address:

Line
c/o English Department
Simon Fraser University
Burnaby, B.C.
V5A 1S6 Canada

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EDITOR'S NOTE

bpNichol

30 September 1944 — 25 September 1988

All of us at *Line* were deeply saddened by the sudden death of bpNichol, Barrie Phillip Nichol, whose writing and daily living—and daily caring for others—carried the very heart, consciousness and energy of the most vital literary practice going on in this country. bp, always the first to welcome and encourage new literary ventures, wholeheartedly supported *Line* right from our beginnings. His visual commentary on Stein's *Ida* in the first issue still stands out as a thoroughly engaging reader's approach to a writer who meant so much to him. Our own critical involvement with his long poem *The Martyrology* led to *Tracing the Paths: Reading ≠ Writing The Martyrology*. This special issue (Number 10, Fall 1987), co-published with Talonbooks, brought together new critical writing on *The Martyrology* and new writing by bp. It was the kind of collaboration between readers and writer that only bp, always game for a challenge, could transform into an exciting venture—a companionship. Barrie was a dear friend and a poetic genius. His gift for words was utterly magical. God, we will miss his playfulness, his seriousness, his "puncertainty," his curiosity, his voice—speaking and writing—and his humanity.

death you enter the poem as you always do
— disruptor

whatever the order or structure
we must reckon you in
a sum

cuts across

some vision of perfection we cling to

(from *The Martyrology: Book 6 Books*)

* * *

For this issue *Line* features two essay/commentaries, Judith Roche on H.D., and Miriam Nichols on Jack Spicer, Robert Duncan and Robin Blaser . . . Roche's "Myrrh: A Study of Persona in H.D.'s *Trilogy*" is a shortened and revised version of her M.A. thesis written at the New College of California . . . Nichols' "A Poetry of Hell" is from her Ph.D. dissertation "American Orphic" completed at York University; her limited edition chapbook *Common Pathologies* is available from Fissure Books (#1-441 McLean Drive, Vancouver, B.C., V5L 3M5).

Fred Wah sends us further installments of his continuing series of critical meditations. Numbers 1 - 69 were published in *Music at the Heart of Thinking* available from Red Deer College Press; his *Waiting for Saskatchewan* from Turnstone Press received the 1985 Governor General's

Award for Poetry . . . Lola Tostevin's most recent book *'Sophie* was published by Coach House Press . . . Bruce Whiteman's *The Invisible World Is in Decline, Books I-IV* is forthcoming from Coach House Press . . . Benjamin Hollander and David Levi Strauss have collaborated on a number of editorial projects for their journal ACTS, among these an impressive issue on Jack Spicer, *A Book of Correspondences for Jack Spicer* (Number 6, 1987) . . . Robin Blaser's latest book of poems *Pell Mell* is available from Coach House Press . . . Louis Dudek sent us selections from his *Notebooks* only a few days before we went to press (watch for more selections in the next issue); two books of his have just been published, a selected poems, *Infinite Worlds* (edited by Robin Blaser) from Véhicule Press and *In Defense of Art: Critical Essays & Reviews* from Quarry Press.

The forthcoming issue of *Line* will feature a major section on the writing of Daphne Marlatt, guest edited by Shirley Neuman and Smaro Kamboureli.

New Year
RM

From *Music at the Heart of Thinking*

seventy-five

horizon full red w/ a few clouds across the sky down to the river
below Sentinel the dream gets dreary mist downstream the dam
gathers up huge hackels into the air these freezing nights with the
frost for the fog banks slunk against the tree-line each morning's
memory of night travel and meeting place in the ditch grass what
voice Plato thought endangered the elliptical island now that all
this milk Simpson paddled past simply for the pay-off Fenollosa
said wasn't there that's what autumn is this year.

seventy-seven

The world seems comfortably familiar and sometimes strangely familial so deja vu but when it becomes unfamiliar or down-town centre decentral displaced place of all things negative capability a positive incapability to not know knowing narrates not just Wordsworth's big something else that is determines the rainbow of silence and noise with a clear dis-tortion at the edges of the supratatic acoustics at one end and cosmology at the other underneath dichten condensare ambiguous dysfunction fragmented rotten Rockies decidedly what's called fear of the hatchtop mountain or self-departure arrived and derived alter-native this making strange still oddly tied to earth no matter what.

eighty

(for Bill Sylvester)

Yesterday I was in Chinatown buying gai lan seeds. Chinese
broccoli. The green, crunchy stalks, blanched, and ladled over
with oyster sauce, make a fine lunch w/ rice, maybe some barbecued
duck. This morning I am in my daughter's kitchen in Vancouver and
I think of you and the gai lan. The connection isn't my choice; to me,
your skin has always showed a flush, a quizzical pudeur. Will
thought forever credit nonsense and the exact measure of our
hunger and our fever?

eighty-one

(for Karl Siegler)

Why then the one whirlpool when all the container two leaks
depth through its seams splendour soaks the sands sprung three as
song and not desire for the polar axle gravity gave no chance for
four his meta(m) five outstripped his harrowing death lyric left
over from six both but let him—us who want to be enduring
messengers seven will so said the wept-for fountain's Lament one
nine imaged water seeps from the mountainside maybe that's why
we wait or spring's beach butterfly's touch informs new distances
yet another story zinging motive you and your bike's antennae
spanned earth but the words all over the edge thirteen taste comes
thirsty

eighty-two

(for Bill Robertson)

Sometimes all it is is a simple interpolation not so falsely from the laws of narrative since you don't name her her perfumed head imaged quickly adolescent freedom and all possibility including everything to drink but maybe reading her she's my girl this pursuit meant to include marriage as soon as possible car job house who'd have thought smell could linger in lingo or car tires whisper the light that night right in front of all the happinesses prior to life and death love's same old story could be that's when meaning starts

The distinct noise clarity makes from uncondemned memory beginning with small sheets of words turning very, very slowly slowing and knotting complete thoughts as sentences or fat stray objects probably stories of writing's reality dogs safely locked in waste land that far away from the perfect just goes to show what writers take for instance Bowering sans ing hopes for in a reader (confess it) mesmerized biotext not history not space but fear runs weeping from the imprint of fiction as a loaf of Triestian bread and all sorts of alibis for making sense right.

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In this issue

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Miriam Nichols on Jack Spicer
Robert Duncan and Robin Blaser

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Fred Wah Interviewed
by Lola Lemire Tostevin

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Judith Roche on H.D.

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Benjamin Hollander
and David Levi-Strauss on *ACTS*

*

New Writing by Robin Blaser
Fred Wah, Bruce Whiteman
and Louis Dudek