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welcomes submissions by mail
c/o ACTION
47 Erion Crescent
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please enclose a
s.a.s.e.

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"the small press is a way of life." Finally,
to Halley's Comet, for the extra gravity.

THE LIBERTY BELL

now highlit with spotlights
& once the lecture's done
they'll let you touch it!

looking the crowd over:
suburban husbands shorts & polo shirts,
expensive cameras on braided straps,
nagging wives, their kids push & press
to run their hands along the rim
& giggle,
Japanese tourists pose with the bell behind,
hands behind back, grinning - big teeth -
nephew or wife snaps them
again. & again;
a Sikh stands near the back of the room,
hands folded together,
eyes intent, lips pressed together.

envoi

damn the crack!
pull it off its shrine
& stick a clapper in it
put it in a bell tower
& ring it! ring it!

THE NEW BREED

young boys, who'd only minutes before
come pouring thru the door
running awkwardly, shouting together
as they raced for the locker rooms

appear now
under their commander's raised arm & snarling lip
rigid;

they march out for drill,
rifles thrust as the sky, stomping boots
in mindless time, halting, slamming
the rifle butts into the sand.

O rosy skin & youthful eyes
still loose in the world's wonder,
soon to be crushed in the purpose of the bayonet!
saddened,

I search their eyes as they pass -
they bend their heads,

looking away to avoid my gaze.

NIAGARA

steady thunder wild spray,
rainbow spans the falls, the
boat rocking
crazily as mad currents boil up & slam
into her,
Puerto Ricans in the bow
laughing in their shiny black slickers -
& looking back,
the Skylon Tower, Sheraton Hotels,
the Rainbow Bridge,
metal glare of cars moving across,
barely seen
thru the heavy mist;
the crashing water, the falls
towering above us now -
Suzy takes me for a brief kiss -
boy in the open closet astern,
unconcerned,
reads his Daily News.

- July 1985

AT THE CROYDEN

smell of fish frying thru an open door
& up the stairs
a fat woman in a floral dress bright orange & red
screams in the stairway
at anyone who'll listen,
young dude leaning against a doorway nearby
picking his teeth, spitting big gobs on the floor.
another door opens:
an old man, bent but with a bright eye.
seeing me, a stranger, with my mop bucket & Stones T-shirt,
he wonders, do I own the building? no?
do I like music? he used to play - jazz, supper clubs,
& he was happily married, too, bless her,
she passed on. dropped dead right in the living room,
just the other side of this door.
he played everywhere, all these big joints downtown,
an' he played Detroit, & up in Canada, too.
he knew all the good numbers -
didn't play much now, no money for a piano.
his breath, alcohol, leaning into me as he speaks;
the woman who'd been screaming passes by now,
shades over her eyes -
"Don't listen to him, damn fool talk yer arm off
& none of it don't mean shit!"
he looks at his hands, palms down, fingers spread,
& looks back up into my eyes
& I see the invisible keys.

STUCK

force the door open - give 'em air,
gets hot
& those four walls start closing in,
stuck in the car halfway between floors -
you can hear them talking
& see in a slit of light
a black girl's big brown eyes looking up.
Tom crawls thru the cable & pulleys & stops,
pulls off the latch & opens
the escape door;
& we bring a ladder & lower it down
into the light.
up they come -
two girls, a grey-haired professor,
a plumber & his sidekick -
first taking Tom's hand,
stepping gingerly thru the dusty machinery
then taking mine,
stepping down
into the hallway,
to brush themselves off & heave that sigh
& head out to get where they were going before.

CHIPMUNK CRUCIFIXION

No chipmunk had to be crucified
on a tiny cross of twigs
To save all the other chippies,
Had to have nails pounded
through his little paws,
Had to take upon himself
all the sins of all the chippies
that ever were or would be
and die in agony
So that after they died
all the chippies
could live again forever,
But only if they believed
in all the sayings and doings
of the chipmunk crucified
on the tiny cross of twigs.

WINTER NIGHT CAN PLANT RETURN

Ten years after completing Factory
One snowy cold January night I return
to my old alma mater--
Walk north along railroad tracks
from Riverside Park to Estabrook Park,
Cutting across the snowy parkscape
looking up at the Channel 6 Tower,
Over to the wooded slopes of the Milwaukee River
and along the snowy trail,
Smelling the factory before actually seeing it,
the acrid chemical taint,
Hearing the factory before actually seeing it,
the weird metallic buzz,
Finally reaching where more rail tracks
cross the river on an old wooden trestle,
Glimpsing through tree-branches at the slope's crest
across the river through tree-branches
beyond the far slope,
The gigantic can plant, all windows lit,
thousandfold machineroar humming.
About to cross over
I see a light flash from behind me
and hear a train approach.
Backing into the brush, hiding behind an oak
I spy the slow advance.
An old locomotive rumbles across,
the bridge groans under its weight,
the engineer peering ahead through falling snow,
The snow-hung trees illuminated, the swirls
of snowgusts illuminated, then darkened
as the lightbeam passes,
The darkened boxcars passing through falling snow,
swaying gently side to side,
Ten boxcars full of coils of aluminum
to be turned into millions of cans.
In the distance near the barbed-wire gate
at the factory's rear
a man swinging a lantern.
After uncoupling its load inside
and switching tracks
the engine returns alone.
After it's gone and its decrescendoing rumble is gone
I cautiously cross the bridge
Pausing a moment halfway, gazing upstream--

the snow-covered ice, the tree-lined
dark park riverbanks, the wild night river scene
juxtaposed to Industry's Monument,
Nearer yet I approach you O Factory
from which Factory originated!
Unsuspecting giant, blizzard-engulfed,
closer, closer--inside through your windows
once more I see the workers and the machines.
Funny, I could be a saboteur with a bomb,
or a spy or assassin.
Then I remember I already revealed
the top secret in Factory,
already blew up all factories with poetry.
This must be a deathbed mirage,
This trembling earth, this noise, these fumes,
the huge architecture is a dream.
Perhaps I lived here 5000 years ago
and time-warped into the future
to glimpse what was in store.
Perhaps my spaceship landed from another planet
and I emerged onto this scene.
Perhaps I died in the Wilderness and my spirit
returned here for some reason.
Secret rendezvous, secret rendezvous,
How could I have known how powerful you'd be to me?
The swirling snow, the intense cold, long after midnight,
no one else here,
No one on Earth knows I'm here
Standing smoking ceremonial smoke
on the deep snow tree-lined bluff,
looking over at and into Continental Can,
musing and being mused by these thoughts.
Why didn't the owners answer my letter
Requesting to give a performance of Factory
to the workers in the plant
when I sent them a complimentary copy?
Ten years after completing it I return
to find a sprawling two-storied addition
plus another vast parking lot.
What good did my poem do after all?
The Factory I made disappear ten years ago
is twice as big!
Yet the very fact I stand here
smoking superb marijuana contemplation

confronting the actual monster
is a victory, as much a coup
as Sioux brave touching his enemy
and able to escape unharmed--
Only this "enemy" is working so hard
it doesn't even know I'm here....
Snow covers my boots, icicles hang from my beard
before I realize how long I've been standing
motionless in the blizzard
looking in.
And then, retreating, beginning my long hike home,
stopping every so often to look back,
to see the receding vision
Till the canplant is lost from view,
Till only the noise and smell and trembling
pervade the plummeting rivercrest trail,
The epiphany, earthshaking
as the earthshaking from factoryroar
That it was when the locomotive vanished
and its big noise vanished
that the reality of the continuing noise
and earthquake tremble from canfactory
rushed in on me,
Realization the ground vibrating machineroar
radiates outward in every direction
Like an earthquake that never stops.
How far out does that quake tremble?
What effect those tremors
on our flesh, bones, brains?
As in diagrams projecting the impact
of a nuclear bomb on a city
We should draw concentric circles from each factory
to show the intensity, the reality
Each factory is a ground zero exploding
its noise, products, pollution
in every direction,
The same as a bomb exploding
but continuously for decades
and each of us blown up
our whole life.

ZERO-HOUR-DAY ZERO-DAY WORKWEEK

Are the executives of oil steel aluminum plastic
military industrial capitalism
To be looked up to as Great Men and Women to be held
as fitting examples of enlightened human beings?
Or are they miserable failures of greed who betray the Earth
and the promise of America?
Is who invented napalm to be honored?
Is who invented nervegas to be honored?
Slavery did not end. Almost everyone enslaved
to earthdeath accomplice jobs.
A new Emancipation Proclamation is needed.
Liberation from an 8 hour day 5 day workweek
to a 5 hour day 1 day workweek
getting paid the same amount.
Or how about a 12 hour day 7 day playweek?
Or maybe keep only the least harmful factories
and everyone has to factory once during their life
for a year, the rest free to learn and create art,
travel to wilds and other lands, like Huxley's Island?

We think working 8 hours a day
a great advance over the time
when workers, even children,
worked 14 hours a day
for lousy wages and conditions.
It is better, but 8 hours a day
is still too long!
Our lives should be free, a continual vacation.
Anyone who had to work all their life
and had a two week vacation every year
has been robbed.
Anyone who had to work six months a year
and had a six month vacation
has been robbed.
Anyone who had to work one day a year
and had a 364 day vacation
has been robbed.
Only Total Vacation will do.

Expand Wilderness, Reduce Population, Reduce Production!
Anyone who says it can't be done is performing what I call
"The Ghost Dance in Reverse."

We can shape the Image of Man we desire!
We can shape the Image of Boy we desire!
We can shape the Image of Girls and Women and America
and World Peace and Wilderness VisionQuest Enlightenment
we desire!

A 12 hour day 6 day workweek
becomes a 10 hour day 6 day workweek
becomes an 8 hour day 5 day workweek
becomes a 6 hour day 4 day workweek
becomes a 4 hour day 2 day workweek
becomes a 1 hour day 1 day workweek
becomes a 0 hour day 0 day workweek

People should be paid not to work!
People should be paid to play!
People should lie in hammocks
and sip lemonade all day!

Most people are too busy working or resting from work
to work on their own mindgrowth potential.

"But," my mother asks, "what about factoryworkers who like
their jobs--happy they receive so much money
to buy all the amazing things factories create,
not to mention the benefits they get
for medical protection and old age?"

It's not religion that's the opium of the people, but work,
Work is the opium of the people. O Workers of the World,
stop working!

Think of the whales, more intelligent than Einstein or Bach,
who never have to work a fucking second
of their incredible life!

ANNE WALDMAN

BLASON DE LA CORPS FEMININ

after Beckett

Somehow up
Somehow stand
Nohow less
Nothing
and yet
woman

Sudden all
far
Far and wide
So far
All not
still gone

Dim can go
Save dim go
The head
It cannot go

I SAY I SING

What are you after Rogues, Lucre?
Nor exploit nor cause a body harm!
Rogues are Totalitarian, slimey, avaricious
No eyes!
Where's the face? Power goes stomping
on any young face

Can I say that?
The powers reply "We are as strong
as taffy, but deadly
& WE ARE RIGHT This is the way
it IS"

This is a protest with a lion
in the throat

This castigates execution and torture
& other elongations of war

(Every mother sing with me)

ARISTOCRAT

Head: it was classic
Hair: of blue
Vita striding like a horse
Virginia said about her legs
with the big dogs
"Those were the thing!"

In honor of
her body
Lover, Lover
How lucky you are

PEOPLE FIT INTO THE COSMOS

Andes Cloud Forest is my yearning
Please save the site from looting
Feathered plumes stare out from walls
Everything is discovery
You like the funny landscape?
It sort of goes with
my turf-mates on earth
This is an attempt to peer
into an ancient culture
so it launches its wise eyes
on you

MONOCHROME

A break enters daybreak
In deep night, everyone sleeping in reverse
She wasn't a hobo but the robots got her
"I cry I wanna" she cried in the monochrome
That night there certainly weren't any mother-beaters
That certainly wasn't a way to be

To be thought shy was safe
To spray or spy on someone wasn't her tomlike song
Her hair swirled from the kayak
Possible slime worlds slid past
Hungry hawks on every side

New York Park

Junkie drool of wife bush, a good woman,
she wipes the snot off his blasted face.
His eyes moan heavy like dingey fish bowls,
eels swimmin round the back of his head
to an alley of cans, busted brick & cardboard
crud. Business bad, dealers down.
Decent folk know better, stand in the middle,
make your rage a comely number. Antique
hair brush fury smashes teenage babe brats
till the light is seen through moistly furious
eyes. Skinny junkie, fat wife, only
the Good Lord knows why pain parades citys
and sneaks among the decent.

3/25/85

As a child I lay one afternoon near a doll
with a broken eye on the lovely willowed banks
of an industrial dump stream.
I closed my eyes & pulled in the world.
Daniel Boone mounted the smokey heights
& with a strong buckskinned arm opened
the veil of foggy mists & revealed
a vast innocent Kentucky sparkling green trees
& rivers ran through. Children floated like
playful otters down stream exhaling pure songs
through angelic smokestack mouths all the way to Arkansas.
I've been thirty years old for the last 8 months.
Sitting next to old men with blue fingers
& resigned racing form faces in a cafeteria
eating jello I want to lay on my back in my voice
& join the children's choire. If my voice dries,
it should be trampled, crushed & smashed out of the world,
my throat & all my bronchial passages should be strung
from telephone wires & stoned into a meaningless piece
of flypaper. If my voice dies I want my face
to appear like Christ's on the walls of urinals
throughout America. I want in ashtrays & on cowpastures,
to line the basins of outhouses, to adorn the seats
of every corporate lawyer, politician & small time
bureaucrat in the world. Let my voice flutter
on subway floors like the discarded racing stub
of a losing horse who'd been lithe in his Tennessee
infancy & glue fodder in his prime, a dream
of fallen roses. Let my brain be the slit recepticle
in a medicine cabinet taking all of America's razors
into its anemic mouth, let the razors spin like penitent
laundry in the wash, like the unfaithful in Dante's
hellish mind like lower East Side Pasta
beneath a dripping armpit or the tortured lobsters
in a WASP's New England pot. Let me be thrown away
like any lying love letter, like any halo
that's become a urine puck. But if my voice comes back to me,
let it parade out of my mouth in the children's choire
with all the logic & mathlessness of butterfly navigation.
Let it slam ruthlessly like a lusty sailor into a bar
with drinks on the house, companioned by a warparty
of rowdy South Sea islanders seeking a wild pig lunch
on the docks of Norfolk Virginia for a grand welcome home party
in which 20,000 civil servants thrust their humongous
key chains into the Bosphorous as a chorus of Caribbean dolphins
read the Magna Carta in Portuguese to multitudes
of Chinese cowboys off the coast of Sicily
& I & my voice self satisfied shall ascend over
the conglomerate world to finish off the Assumptions Grand Finale.

12/3/84

No good reasons to love this place
with its cranked out auto husks
rusting in wretched piles beneath bright
billboards with bright cheeked
spreading praise of oleo out to the highway's
strangers.

Scowling dogs with bony backs prowl
round deserted docks & warehouses,
lips on a constant curl, like the local
poolhall boys make of their
mysterious rage man masks which now
they nurture & will in turn

eat them in a later age. The knowing river
rolls on in groan & knocks at the dock
with knuckles of washed out wood
as the shoving tugs blow & trudge
another day's used up truck

to some other place like this
where every corner combs the passing
wind for its refuse. Just as the drain
in some giant sink snags what
the gods just can't eat or ate
& got coughed up anyway.

Memories Of Flight

Down on Main Street in Hackensack, there are windows
where pantyhose is no other thing than the web
of a mechanical spider wrapped around the plastic thigh
of some Mary Tyler Moorian dream fuck which menstruates lysol
& smiles out the window of S. Klein's, right at me
(a dream that she smiles for me alone, my wavy hair
& banlon shirt, my 1980's car here in the 80's)

There aint no poetry in money, just an eye floating over
a pyramid looking down with complete faith in my faithlessness,
over some final poker table into the absolute asphalt
of me, where there are things there are no uses for,

like on Main Street there's this beautiful jungle bird
wearing its soul on the outside, got green feathers
like a vegetal sun radiating dew, got orange feathers
loved by all for all the orange that the human frame
simply can't possess & a red beak;

a real nut cracker!

A wonderful bird come to desomber creation!
A flying tangerine mango come on God's best blue blazer
like a lapel carnation squirting manna!

The Board Of Chosen Freeholders decided crucifixion
was unnecessary, if the weather don't get him, the bigger
birds will & if the bigger birds miss, then he'll sigh
it out of himself, looking for something, someplace, someone
to be alike miraculous with & finding nothing drops;
a pointless lollipop with distant memories of flight,
stuck & sticky to the sidewalk, blackened, beaten,
a wad on the tar, in short, a regular guy.

6/9/81

Sun floods a filmy light, conveys day
from a reaching East. I'd love to be everyone
in the world today, caught unaware in this light's
wanderlust which moves through the window
whose winds cushion out my Western curtains
like a dream's ease, no softer than this.
I wake into a house where a man lusts after sorrow
down halls to other rooms & more distant days.
Savors a sad grace sensually & makes
of it mansions where pianos go forever just unheard
over polished board to a green mist yard
bejewelled in dews. My private orient.

8/5/84

Sometimes waking in dreams...
Sometimes waking in flesh...
My love and I moved fluid
along the night's silver edge
toward the dawn.

3/24/78

obsession

I swam well in the dream
thru the slate waters of emotion
emerged frothy and bejeweled
so many shimmering cells.
Then couldn't stand it any longer
and shook off tracks
for higher more desolate ground.
I was handed a clipboard and checklist.
when I reached the cloud socked pass.
The columns recorded the conditions of the herd,
names, age, sex, amount of weight to burden.
They expected me to approve their accuracy which
I did, no flack from me as I didn't even know
why I was standing in their crystalline yurt.

SEMI-AUTOMATIC WORLD

(after Philip Lamantia)

The moon has burned
virgins are cheap
there is no need for undulations
but there is so much to beat

So come with me
up the jungle
of crawling veins
Don't be a goof
blood is deep!

A paradoxical song?
A dirty dirge?
Whip it out!
Then we'll have human dolls
tumbling down to meet our march
into the raw-milk city!

The velvet toes are strewn
across the landing strip
we step upon them
upto clouds of straining protozoa
Don't tell me what to do!
Keep on groping
you'll end up some wheres ass
on the slag barge perhaps!

Rainbow jerks are dangling
in front of movie queens
Everyone is lounging
farting sighing
never knowing when to breathe
never knowing where to eat

And the fountains come foaming
out of her pistil-covered breasts
and the dogs are happy
and the clocks are napping
and the carousels are grinding flowers

O the mirror-like mirth
of freshly burst blood
trellising along the walls
the walls that reflect stars!

O the flock of frogs
breaking their ranks open
with battered legs
sucked in the inspected brothels!

O the grave of spats
sailing thru shops
with violet ankles!

When will these come?
When will these falter?

The moon is following your glance
virgins are busting
from under my flamboyant tongue
and we are slowly crawling away

doloroso

I, being of some body and unlimited mind, froze today.
My heart fell down the stairs and rolled away.
All the women I love love someone named Will
who I never knew.
(I kicked her out after three years,
is that it?)
The blood races or clots
rendered into square blocks of ice.
Two scruffy dogs root in the disgarded slush
outside the meat locker.
She wouldn't forgive my other loves
even the ones she didn't know.
My nerves fly after the whipping ambulance,
the ashen resonance of oft repeated sorrow.

Short Autumn Prayer

May the Big Bomb thought
no longer enter
our lunchbreaks

May the tamaracks
hold longer onto
their gold.

"TELL IT LIKE A HUMAN"

an interview with FERRON: 16.VI.85.

Over a couple of hotdogs with relish, ACTION met with Ferron, the striking, self-described "lesbian woman folksinger" from Vancouver, British Columbia. After the debut of TESTIMONY (Lucy Records, 1980), and her follow-up album SHADOWS ON A DIME (Lucy Records, 1984), Ferron has toured incessantly, bringing her diamond wordsmithed tunes before ever-increasing audiences. Recently, she appeared at the Gerdes Folk City 25th anniversary celebration as a representative of the new generation of folksingers who, with well-crafted verse & song, illuminate "every passionate event to its cause until all are related and understood, turned into knowledge, and made a part of the celestial." This particular talk took place at Croton Point, site of the Hudson Clearwater Revival gathering.

F: I suppose when I was younger maybe I was trying to be a poet, but then I put it into meter, into music, because I like the earthiness, the peopleness of music as opposed to standing behind a podium breathing funny and reading out this stuff. I didn't think it was accessible, and part of the reason I write or sing is to break a loneliness, and so I didn't need to be more lonely. I think being a lesbian woman folksinger is eclectic enough.

A: However, the way you sing your songs is definitely more poetic than your average tune and, I mean, you definitely seem to have to work out your lyrics.

F: It's not so much to work out the words, but to work out the process or the feelings, the logic that I want to live by. It's sort of like the challenge of turning something that is complete emotion - I think I'm probably blindly emotional - and to balance me out, I attempt the linear line. And just doing that helps me. And that's where it's worked out. There's a lot of stuff I think about in my dreams, there's a lot of stuff I think about all the time that I have to wait until something happens and they all piece together. And then the song could take only as long as it takes to write down.

A: So when you write, you write fast?

F: Um-huh.

A: Do you write in the studio?

F: I write at my desk.

A: In B.C.? (British Columbia)

F: Um-hum.

A: Do you have a window or something?

F: I live on an island. I have a window and an ocean.

A: That's all you need I guess, yeah.

F: When I was younger, I used to really hurt before I'd write. Like I could tell 10- two weeks before -that I was in a lot of trouble, that something was trying to make sense to me. Really, I'd just get sick, weird. Finally, I'd get this song out and like whooo man, I'd feel ok with myself again, and I'd live for another 10 days, two weeks, and then I'd start getting sick again. That doesn't happen so much anymore, or it happens in a longer arc. Now I'm on the road, you know, I tour all the time. It's not the same as looking inside.

A: So, when you say 'a longer arc', what do you mean?

F: For instance, the album SHADOWS ON A DIME was a thought process that took me three years because not only did I have to think the things, but I had to go through it in order to think it. And so, for instance, the one song - "Proud Crowd/Pride Cried" was just a killer of a song for me. I mean I never even sing it in public because going through that song was one of the hardest things I ever did. Verse by verse, I actually lived every one of those verses in as- as far and as wide as any of those emotions you might imagine they would go. I feel I went that far, and came back. Sometimes I have to come back to talk about it.

A: When you have to talk about it though- let's say, not that tune, but "Misty Mountain"- something you seem really comfortable doing again and again, how do you keep it fresh? I mean, whether you're looking at a manuscript page or--

F: Because I meant it. Because I mean it, I meant it, and it's also the reason for the song, to keep me alive or to keep me- I mean, I don't wanna sound "dramatic" here, but when I was younger, I wasn't that interested, really, in what was going on. I just thought it was really a raw deal that you had to come and bump around with arms and legs.

A: I hear that.

F: And then slowly, I got into it.

A: Were you playing in bands in highschool?

F: Oh no. I played in the bathroom in highschool. I'd cut class and go sit in the bathroom. The only way I could live was to play the guitar. And then, some of the gals would come in- have a smoke or something, you know, and they thought I was totally weird. And I was.

A: What influenced you in terms of lyrics, in terms of writing the song? Did you listen to anybody like you? Do you feel like you come out of any sort of lineage- of trying to say something?

F: You see, maybe I can look at it now, I'm thirty-three, but when I was young, I didn't look around and say that there's anybody like me, like I was hoping that I was human. You know, there isn't a woman now that can say they got through the 60s and 70s without Joni Mitchell as a voice, even though as a woman's voice, she's a real let-down. Except that she had an inner-world that, obviously, she had to get out. And I like that, but while she was on the radio, I was in my basement writing songs. I was only 11 or 12, but we were doing the same thing. I mean, anybody who does that kind of writing is always doing the same thing. So, I was excited to hear that on the radio, you know, the first- "I've looked at clouds..." or something. I sort of always had this feeling that I was gonna be singing, but I come from really simple people, working people. I mean, you play the guitar on a Saturday night, and after you're done, everything else is the work that there is to do. And you don't stay up too late. Certainly, I could say, "I'm gonna play the guitar when I grow up," and they'd say, "Well, dammit, what are you gonna do for work?" So, coming through that, when I heard voices on the radio, I thought they must be blessed or something. I didn't know how anybody would go from, from the will- the desire -to the actuality of that thing at all.

A: Do you do it for anybody else? Can I bum a cigarette? I mean, now--

F: I'm out almost.

A: You're out?

F: Nope, I got one more. Here. Well, when I started out, you know, when you're young- I mean I did it for -to connect. I mean, I couldn't believe it when someone said, "I like that song, sing it again." It's what you long for, right? And now, I get a lot of letters, talk to a lot of people. I'm accessible. I hear what's going on. And it seems like some of the songs I've written have literally saved people's

- lives. They just play that song over and over, and then they come through. I'm really honored or touched or scared by all that because that's what they were for me. They were to save my life. You just get on a smooth thought and you can live.
- A: The 'smooth thought'...the smooth thought...
- F: Yeah.
- A: And what about your phrasing when you have to repeat that thought? You know, Dylan talks about the only thing anymore that means anything to him when he sings his songs - and it's probably a lie - but he says it's his phrasing that brings the song to the surface.
- F: Oh, most certainly. That's your voice. That's why other people try to pick up the guitar and sing "Misty Mountain" or "It Won't Take Long" or something. And they're singing the song, but they're not. I mean, they've told me...It's like you can't really do it because it's like carving tunnels in your soul, in a sense-- the way that a word is gonna come through, how it's gonna come through, and how that word changes. And how it doesn't change. Songs that I've been singing since I was eighteen, fifteen years- how they don't change. And then you're left with this relationship with yourself to this canal you carved. All of a sudden you say, "Wait, wait, you're going over here. Hey buddy, come on back. We were gonna live over here." And that's what you're doing.
- A: I don't know, but I guess there are certain issues- to connect is so important. I mean, you're not just connecting. As you said, it seems like you're coming from a particular place that you define yourself as- an eclectic identity that you give yourself, or accept in yourself. And you know you're talking to certain people.
- F: Yeah, and it turns out that I'm talking to a lot of people, and that's what seems fascinating. I think that's true about all people. We all think that we are alone on an island. That we will never be recognized. Then you start the 'yacky-yacka'. Then you find out that everybody feels unrecognized at the same place and all of a sudden, we are all the same thing. That was quite a transition for me to make, and a grateful one as well. And trying to get that voice where you're trying to tell the truth to yourself, you're trying to tell it like a human would...but I grew up real sheltered. I didn't even hear this music till I was, you know, late twenties. I didn't know- I thought Dylan was Dion...

It was as if I was running retrograde all my life. Running back. I'm always picking up pieces. Although I think, because I have a manager, it looks like we're making the pieces, but I'm always picking them up. She does something else with me. She protects me.

A: You need protection...or don't you?

F: I think I do, but would I have ever known it? If someone had asked me if I needed protection, I'd go, "Pardon me? Where am I, anyway." So that's precisely why I needed protection. Gayle's story (Gayle Scott, Ferron's manager. -Ed.) is that she's saying to me- she's trying to say to me, "Watch out, there's a big truck in the road there. Watch out for that truck," and I'm going, "What road?"

A: "What truck?"

F: "What road?!!!" That's what she says.

A: Ha ha ha ha ha. Oooooooooo!

F: So, I'm really grateful. I'm really lucky. Back then, in Vancouver, B.C., if anybody had asked me where New York was- I didn't know the difference between New York and Rome. I didn't know where I was. I have no education to speak of-- very, very sheltered and stupid life, and then-

A: But a very real, precise sense of detail in your writing. Obviously, a real sharp eye and a need to define real people.

F: Well, anybody- you know the old joke...if you wanna find somebody you don't keep moving, right. You think about where you're gonna stand, that'll be the most logical place, and then you sit down. And then, that thing about everything is all moving so fast, it's not moving at all. So, as a writer, you have to- what I would say to anybody who wants to write - you have to make a decision about where you're gonna stand. Then you slow down. And you open. And then the world moves. And then you get the report. If you're moving, you got to watch your feet. And then, that's what you get to talk about-- your feet.

MISTY MOUNTAIN

Up the misty mountain
 Wild flowers bind the ground
 Down by the rushing river
 Force will wear those boulders down
 Me I'm underneath my covers
 My I'm trapped inside my brain
 While up above the misty mountain
 Up above the rushing river
 Up above the bed of longing
 The eagle takes the wind
 The eagle takes the wind my friend
 The eagle takes the wind
 It makes me think of this my friend
 Where does the eagle live in me?

O I am crawling through this city
 I say the city will be my home
 I say Ferron you are halfway pretty
 And may you never be alone
 Be it scorn or be it favour
 Be it but a moment gone
 But I stood before the mirror
 Like an open-ended cavern
 Like a breath held inhaled, holding,
 And I barely knew my name
 I barely knew my name my friend
 I barely knew my name
 It makes me think of this my friend
 Where do I live in me?

O it's a planet of resistance
 It's a whirling flame of choice
 Are you my comrades in persistence
 I swear they'll know us by our voice
 Though we lay down in dusty corners
 We are ragged as a scar
 And when we rest our eyes stay open
 We are always off to war
 We're always off to war my friend
 We're always off to war
 And it makes me think of this my friend
 Where can the quiet be?

O is it up the misty mountain
 Where wild flowers bind the ground
 Is it down by the rushing river
 Where force wears those boulders down
 Is it underneath my covers
 Is it trapped inside my brain
 Is it up above the misty mountain
 Is it up above the rushing river
 Is it up above the bed of longing
 Where the eagle takes the wind?

PROUD CROWD/PRIDE CRIED

I can't call you from this place to hear you
say that I'm not your kind
It's a thin road before us, we're the wake
left behind
It's sad and I fail to see what it had to do
with you and me
But I guess that's like wondering what's a
point to a line
There must be something I wanted more
than wanting your love
'Cause you stood in my doorway and I
stood in my glove
Most afraid to follow, a kingdom my stride
It's so telling what won't live with hunger
and pride.

I thought of you often but I never could tell
you
the 'you' that I cherished, something hurt
me so bad
A few had come close, I couldn't take them
in either
I guess the distance between us was my
love never had.
And though we live separate I keep two
rooms open
One has you in it, the other does not
And I move in the middle, unsure and
unprotected
And I trip on my rope, vaguely sensing I'm
caught.

A friend tried to find me and saw through
to my wheel
She said you're now on the bottom, it's
either that or the top
You can keep yourself tiny and bang on the
big door
Or take the space saved for the queen of
the hop
But you know queens have their problems
too, and my size won't stay static
I like to think I never was one for the hoop
anyway
And then that night I dreamed again of the
far side of nothing
And trembling with terror I chose to come
back this way.

In the streets or the 'after', in the churches
or in memory,
The light that will guide you is the source
of the flame
While stumbling the back alleys in search
of right action
I fell and wept darkly and acknowledged
your name
And the door to my prison dissolved right
before me
But like a young fool I quick looked for a
power to my claim
And my wailing increased with the shock of
the knowledge
That I often have needed something out
there to blame.

I give up my fisted touch, my thoughts
strung like fences
My totem-pole stature, body chipped to the
bone
I'm nobody's savior, and nobody's mine
either
I hear the desert wind whisper, "But
neither are we alone."
Sure I long to ask how you're doing, if you
got to the lightness
That you wanted so fiercely when we
drifted that way
There's no telephones ringing now, but I
feel something calling me
And I'm ready to go, I just need time to say
Hearts are like meadows, with their
weathered potential
With their reasons diluted by reason itself
I may be shivering at the foot of this
slow-giving mountain
But the tiny spring flowers can look just
like you
And I won't ask the purpose of all of my
footsteps
And I won't let my eyelids cast down
I am looking for something outside of
forgiveness
You might call it the jewel of the crown.

SAL PARADISE

The heartbeat of the highway shimmers
Quivering gas mirage heartbeat thunk
Wake up America your heaven is on the line

Moving up Colorado windy pass night coming
On through Steamboat Springs winds pick up
Steam as clouds lit sparks to a lightening

Up of the changes in the wind out over plains
Blonde silver light slamming the ground hard
Smoke a Pall Mall arm out the window driving

Straight into the heart of the Great Plains
Simon Darlovsky (poet and Prime Minister
Of naked joy) makes phenomenal conversation

Across a piece of weird purple canyons
There are ancient Martian cities disguised
As buttes rising several hundred feet

From the valley floor I close my eyes
And feel the rhythm of the car racing
Through black night howling through stars

This country is anointed with blue milk
It is dripping off every mailbox between
Here & Now and vast merciless unknown

But I am too heartbroke and hungover to notice
The whole state of California bangs in my brain
My notebooks make funny noises inside my shirt

The car is vibrating with a great golden glow
The poet's car from California speeding off
God only knows where this time (Wonder if

I have any more of that wine from last night
In my sleeping bag?!) "Oh Californy Oh Californy
You're an old drunken bum in the rain (Me too)"

8/19/82

ROBERT CREELEY

The word is our shepherd
We shall not want
To lie in its green pasture

More than our whole lives
Dedicated to resurrection
Of our natural breath

And breeding light
We'll go crazy with delight
Streaking from every pore

Poem-proud
That we take animal forms
Against the dark

Intruding on life's
Enjoyment to the hilt
Of our complete being

Bathed in precious metals
Foreseen as poets before
Time began as dancers

In the breath of planets
Awakening spirits of the
Cognac gods enthralled

Space cadets ready to boogie
Out of this serenity purple
Tongue-brain snake flakes

Rewind the cosmic mind
Let artists paint the light
Composers use hindsight

We poets are guardians
Of the vision breath
Stewards for its healing tomes

2/12/83

The Poetry-Personality Dilemma and Lament

The poetry-personality dilemma and lament is now very familiar and something I've been kicking around for awhile. That the ego-personalities of people have gotten so intertwined with their poetry is something I suspect is peculiar to Americans, and lends a particular strength and malady that could be better hashed out and separated. But it's a problem that runs throughout American lit from Hemingway certainly and after with the Beats and later swallowed hook-line-and-sinker by us weird well-rounded Renaissance men and women of the '60's: this determined pact to make words a perfect extension of a person, who in turn carries out his linguistic and artistic vision, physically, in the world. The result, in my opinion, has been an unclear demarcation of acts and a lot of mediocre poetry that demands a lived level of freedom, on the part of the poor trapped writer (to wit, Hemingway). A level that is ultimately impossible, unless the writer's drunk or stoned all the time, (i.e., uninhibited & freed of his socialized past) -- and a good deal of poetry that can't stand alone as an expression of freedom. That's the problem I found with my own attempt at poetry -- which for the most part didn't work unless I read and "performed" it, as a winning personality "performs" anything, particularly words, that can't quite stand on their own. So, I demonstrated a very high level of sensitivity and freedom for $\frac{1}{2}$ hour and then immediately clammed up or at least closed to a normal clam's size, slowly, after the performance was done. Freedom? Nope. Schizophrenia? Maybe.

Nor was it poetry, or a pressure I want to put on myself: a level of freedom I want to feel compelled to rise to -- three or four times a year. Poetry, to me, is a tender late night brainstorm, unless it's a long and complicated and elevated story, and then it's epic poetry. I, me, the person who gets up & brushes his teeth and begins going about his business, am a completely different story.

Lately, I don't even try poetry because I don't think I maintain the sustained sensitivity to moods & details necessary to be a poet, and making a more inhabitable sense seems to currently be more important to me than raising language to the nth degree. Nathaniel Tarn, a great poet, always said that if he weren't a poet he would probably have been an epileptic. He wasn't romanticizing his trade -- poetry chose him, he said, with no trace of regret or vanity, and it hurts to have to rise to the level demanded by poetry, periodically: it hurts physiologically. And all that suppression and inhibition that seems to lead up to the big burst of poetic act hurts, too; and it disrupts your life, too.

So, if you're going to endure the disruption, I think you have to decide if the poems are good enough, and if it's worth it. And in the last year I've decided for the time being, anyway, my poems aren't worth it, but writing stories are -- but the inexpressible rumbling down below that may be poetry continues to glow and tumble. That's why I recently rented a clarinet, and learned to play "Home on the Range".

Perhaps the main point I'm trying to make is that, no, I don't believe in this poetry-personality, as you point out, politic, and never have, and think a poem should stand and be appreciated or criticized on its own -- away from the person who wrote it. As you tell your students: "No need to get personal." A person can tell what you feel about them by the way you talk about an object in the room-- a glass of water, for example, so what's the point of making somebody squirm? But, on the other hand, and I think this is key, there are things in unfinished poems -- obsessions or strange walls or whatever, that can point back to something irritating in a person. Afterall, we're not finished products, and there are things we do or avoid that are shortcomings, character-wise, and who will get to know

them better than a friend? And I do think a friend is obligated to let his friend, poet or not, know, on that score; otherwise, how are we going to change & become internationally emulated, knock down unwanted barriers, shift fences, etc.? Personally, I've never heard constructive criticism from a stranger, have you? In this respect, I think some pain people feel is unnecessary and could be avoided, and there would still be plenty of inherent loneliness and pain leftover to make poems, shapely tables, & stories, in order to give all this daily fortuitousness shape and meaning, etc.

In short, I think a poem is a poem, a person a person, and a friend a friend and they interact at some level, but they're not identical. A person tries to live up to what he says and does but personally I think it is undesirable and impossible to act like a 24 hour poem. But if you set up and have a situation in which another person, by criticizing something you've written, feels obligated and justified in dragging in your person -- well, this is wrong, because nobody knows what you might be giving away or what tender poetic moments pass nightly across your dinner table. How would they know? After all, poets are private people and not TV stars or open books -- if you're going to kill yourself being a TV star you may as well make a lot of money, don't you think? I guess what I really believe in is a limited kind of "doing penitence" that learns its limitations and center and gradually extends outward until by the end of a person's life he's giving everything away and (this is the best part) loving it. But I'm a long way from this because at this point I'm still (a) getting mad at friends and actually furious over their most subtle (probably imaginary) slights, and (b) seldom with any desire whatsoever to give people I dislike anything! I'm still burning off guilt like a carburetor -- "doing penitence" -- but I'm convinced love is a platinum state that has the power of high octane gas, i.e., when we work back to it: we will liquidate and fly. The Archives of Dreams say that, and they don't lie.

ASKING FOR TROUBLE

Nature is as she is
 in the briefest of nights
 the letter written but never sent.
 Bats would be very appropriate
 for the middle of the night,
 rooftops that open electronically
 to the stars. All my life I've been
 asking for trouble, anyone who makes me
 wonder how they do what they do.
 Firebrand of musical therapy (the loosener)
 & all Medusas necessary to stop you in
 your tracks turn you to stone.
 Don't think of me as the sun, the sea, the night
 this is hard reality.

I write, "Should I camouflage personality,
 cease & desist? I cannot go to Delphi to be
 initiated!" Why should you risk a certain game
 in pursuit of an ephemeral slam?
 Beyond all the algebraical laws of understanding,
 all articulation & cleavage, smiths of the soul
Wham!

What started out as a ratty hand now offers live
 prospects, he has some sort of diamond holding,
 it is just like Alice in Wonderland.

To be alive in the flesh in a universe humming
 with Eros & that's my search, the very air of
 ruddy flesh & pastoral greens while not too far
 from Anne Frank's house, the black woman bends
 one of her knees slightly to allow for maximal
 contact with the alien form. You bear a ghostly
 similarity, the speakers enforce that intimacy
 but there is nobody there.

I am looking at Splendor & she is not looking
 at me, what once had splendor has come to no
 splendor at all

she too is coming loose from her past
 attended by splendor

Queen of all she survives

quipping

"BUT NO

don't think of me as a woman but as an error
 correcting code, a calculator with no numbers inside."

THAT WAS NO DREAM

for Rory Gallagher

The night is expanding, confusing the original data
of knowledge with the immediate data of exodus & mirror-image.
The psyche, too, is green in that it is alien.
for sense read centre

for weakened read veiled
I know you've heard these stories before.
You're fond of them.
It would squeeze the dreamer's throat, steal his
breath away, the way one transcribes an arc, far
from the light of public opinion, "Ah rash
overbold lamp!" says our tale,
but not you.

The necessary process fulfilled &
burned by it
she dissolves her participation mystique
with her partner & flings herself & him into
the combustion of the fundamental substance & enhances
it.

March: The Sun, light, divisions of time.
July: The moon & her phases.
A town or inhabited place.
Bronze & iron, objects made of these metals.
M.
His journeys.
His chariot.
To breathe, move, rejoice, delight, to shut up.
a, r, if, now, to tie together.
pet, the sky, heaven.
am, kem, to go abroad & forget people.
mu, water.
for analogies read energies

for complex read complete
Her chief pleasure was in her instrument, a roulette of
lucidity, black humor likening a Ouija board & she unable
to mime the planchette's conviction, "I can't stop on a
dime."

Green is untutored & unstrung, "cholorosis", striking
women as "curiosity for novelty
rather than sound truth."

Behind the calculus of probability, historically & actually, Las Vegas is tough. Behind the calculus of constellations, those dice are his coals & gaming ground among shining bodies, a divinatory hit or miss, what my

grandmother sang in code but lacked breath: ice. Just so. And Anne's mother's preoccupation with wheat. An angel of an idea, wheat, suspending one outside the body, the poems recited without interpreting symbols or the aura of St. Mark's.

I say to myself: do. Have a leisurely Sunday breakfast like it says in the Bible. What's the first thing that would impress a visitor from outer space?

Anne speaks, "no mystery, no secrecy, no Sphinxes of live music or comic strip prophet..."

What trousers are best? Wheat. Love Till Death.

Well, yeah.

"With the ardor that's blighted in dreams"
she left
on a vanishing rotating triangle

"...that physical relationship with death approaching consummation & sure if she has put into gold what belongs to gold she has done likewise with wheat."

Jet Lag, Magic Bird

pulses rhythmically like a Rorschach card.

Blood Memory, canal, 20th Century conveyor belt of milestones, cairns to you
their wish is not to be counted but to dissipate into the night of life.

To summarize:

And to be "green-in-the-eye,"
that could've been me
accordionless
that red-haired woman
kissing death outside
the roaring saloon.

CODE OF ETHICS

There was evidence in her favor
after the coverage of saints whose
fluid style met sound sleep & reduced stress
there was space for a carriage house, a MEWS

not the embodiment of boldface genius
but a living square with limited access & fully appointed
continental breakfasts going on, brass farthings of aspirin
& accents overhead

the act of bearing witness a luxury item.
To cruise. I took the plunge thinking to rock the cradle
of civilization, all the harmonizing, phrasing & inflection
that drives thee West & I was not sorry, no, not sorry until
later. The castle of crossed purposes, yeah

Venus, California
with your Fiorucci angels, Delectable Mountains Quilt, it's
heaven, isn't it? flamingos & complimentary food. Art for you
is a mirror. In his speakeasy of smoky topaz
alcove of controlled substances, he asked

"Am I a liability on the planet?"
Yes, yes you are. A full bar mouthing the body electric
of your gems.

I came here to live & piss off everyone.

As usual, I miss the issue. Is it El Salvador, Language
Poetry or the growing number of young urban professionals
to be forever excluded from the world of talking animals
in their numbing pursuit of money &, well, you know.
Who understands but Jordan whose brilliance bypasses the
masses with his reticence.

But pain, dig, PAIN like madrigal singers over a pharmacy
united to sterilize her with
the hourglass
Safari guide
Osiris in the cedar coffin
Celeste as the stopped Mona Lisa clock in all the moon's phases
Sidney Greenstreet in an interminable
Maltese Falcon
doll-child with clitoral stirrings which don't fit alongside
the Art Deco veneer
zapped by the love of anything, craft
or playing telephone with a banana a cucumber a Porsche
& a bottle of the original Coke

spring-like & on the bed
nature marvelled at that sphere of fire
the arrival of the prick, my future is at stake!
My page cries & turns her deathlike vision.
He knows her body with his fingertips but forgets as
there are brides whose chasms aren't littered with pills
but postcards from St. Croix & they have the spirit of
horses, sleepwalkers tanned by the moon.
Out of the pantheon of gods fly letters, language, words
that grow on trees. It is a rare configuration in the
constellation where friends are "all in the waiting"
for the soul's silvering, a lunar fashion guaranteed to
surpass global moods. I've got a dove in my belly & the
full moon's shining as if it were gold

close your eyes

it produces all colors

now

for whatever it's worth, I just want to say

GOOD-BYE.

we were tested for something very simple
but failed (a gendarme taps the window & eyes
me meaningfully. his appearance suggests he's out
studying the stars yet I know his intelligence
is tinged with madness)

i forget the answers & think
of a small child who wanted to be called

Dawn or Star

who in turn had a child & backed so far
into the seascape to watch, the birds ended by
eating her dinners & she ate the birds &
out of this hilarity
another child comes.

THANKS, BUT NO THANKS

In raw
& naked
conscious-
ness I
face my "emotional
firing squad"...

What
heart needs to smolder
forever?

All those colors in the sky
maybe the Queen & her Outer Space Court

did not
come
from there...

"C'est en forgeant
que l'on devient forgeron"

Once a
transitive vampire
always an angel.

"AUTUMN SNOW"

I knew by the way she lifted her hips
it wasn't a bad dream, it wasn't the
feeling you get after going out with a
guy who never looks you up again. It
was more like what she calls "autumn
snow", that yellow storm of days when
winter's ragged hand heaves wind & rain
& jack o'lanterns at a stand of trees.

BREAKDOWN

He is a god in my eyes, that man
You face, who leans up close,
So close beside you. His silver teeth
Await your lips

Your magic laugh. Shit,
Smothered in a red-iron kiss
The mirrors of his hands
Cover my mouth.

Tongue, you broke this match flesh
Set afire. My eyes are but the light
Of death. My ears are hammered shut
Like coffins, &

Rivers so hot shake me greener
Than the grass. A master smart woman
Caught in the grief of love, must I suffer
...everything.

(Sappho)

XEROX SUTRA #6

O high speed
reproductions
more industrial than Ozymandias
If we could really build
our world this way
the joy of my beauty
in perfectly duplicate, original

BOUNDS

would appear
exactly as is
across the oceans of
time

but there is no "duration"
to be "in it for"
nothing endures
not even
the sun
which shines
on everything
that grows.