A SOURCERY FOR BOOKS 1 AND 2 OF bpNICHOL'S THE MARTYROLOGY

by

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A SOURCERY FOR BOOKS 1 AND 2 OF bpNICHOL'S THE MARTYROLOGY

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Abstract

The Martyrology, bpNichol's long-poem-in-process, is a work which, as it accumulates more space in the world (at present six volumes have been published since 1972, and at least five more are being composed), stimulates ever increasing excitement and curiosity from its readers. In response to some of the questions which have grown around The Martyrology, this study traces the poem's evolutionary origins in Nichol's earlier writings, outlines a history of the first two books and, with editorial rather than interpretational intentions, annotates the poem.

In addition to some of Nichol's other published writings, abandoned and unpublished texts are referred to in the exploration of the poem's beginnings; notebooks and drafts of The Martyrology contribute to a reconstruction of the poem's compositional chronology. Three invaluable resources not generally available -- the Nichol Archive (housed in Simon Fraser University's Contemporary Literature Collection), conversations with the poet, and influential books he recalled reading during the years in which he was writing the early parts of The Martyrology -- helped to shape all aspects of the concordance. The annotations elucidate personal and literary references, point out the particular mythological and religious texts behind the work, indicate cultural artifacts important to the text's formal grounding, include some of the author's thinking about the poem that was

forming in front of him, and note significant deviations between the drafts and the published text, and between the two editions of the text.

"There is no avant-garde.
There are only people who are
a little late."

-- Edgard Varèse

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An Introduction to Books 1 and 2 of The Martyrology

The first thing one notices about a shelf holding a bpNichol collection is an absence of neatness and uniformity -- paper objects of odd heights and widths and thicknesses, some without covers, or binding, or spines -- and a presence of non-books -- records, tapes, boxes, files and bulging envelopes crammed with pieces of paper of assorted sizes and colours and stock, some folded, others stapled, some exhibiting hand-drawn comics or mazes of optically illusive letters, others covered with blocks of type, still others presenting one single word. Nichol's sprawling patch of ephemera defies the catalogue.

Nichol began writing poetry in his teens, and there are reams (literally) of his early poems in Simon Fraser University's Nichol Archive that testify to his apprenticeship in the traditional lyric poem. Soon feeling the limitations of this kind of monodic writing, however, especially the tendency for the voice to become stuck in despair or sentimentalization, Nichol turned away from it, and began to explore the more elemental aspects of language. He was first introduced to concrete poetry in 1961-62, in some of Kenneth Patchen's drawn poems. In 1963 he encountered information about Dada texts -- pieces which, because of their ephemeral, disposable, anti-(academic and social)establishment nature, are notoriously difficult to obtain. He "was intrigued by the report of Schwitters' 'W' poem, just that that was it and he read it," varying the volume, emphasis, tone, duration and

pitch (Nichol, interviewed by Ken Norris, Essays in Canadian Literature, 248). Nichol began performing sound pieces solo in the late 1960s, working with Steve McCaffery soon after that. In 1970 the two joined with Paul Dutton and Rafael Barreto-Rivera to form the Four Horsemen, Canada's first sound poetry group. Visual concrete poetry re-energizes and reacquaints the eyes with the play of letters on a page (and everywhere else) by refusing to see them only as incidental vehicles that transport the reader from the Here to some kind of deep and meaningful There ("the surface is where the depth is," we read in The Martyrology's Book 4). Similarly, sound poetry "<frees> the emotional content of speech from ideation or from words, necessarily, and . . . <lets> out the voice. . . . Once the voice <has> been let out, then the words <will> follow" (Interview, The Capilano Review, 325).

The Martyrology, the work in which these linguistic researchings have become synthesized with an apparently more traditional form, began to be written in 1967; the first two books were published in 1972. Even ten years ago, however, Nichol would have been described as a concretist or performer of sound poetry before he would have been called a long poem writer. But then it was not until 1976, when the third volume of The Martyrology (Books 3 and 4) appeared, that Nichol began to sense how truly long this poem might be becoming. The following year, Books 1 and 2 were revised and reissued in a single volume. Meanwhile, back on the bookshelf, a growing expanse of grey spines pushed love: a book of

remembrances and Monotones further apart: Book 5 was published in 1981, Book 6 Books in 1987. Books 7, Book 8 (a shuffle text to be imbedded in 7), Book 9 (a sound piece), Book 10 and perhaps more are presently (late 1987) either "finished" or being written.

But The Martyrology is more than an extension of Nichol's concrete poems (in fact the connexion between the two bodies of work is often ignored). The writer's curiosity about language, and his dissatisfaction with the literary dependence upon the Greek mythos, led him to investigate many disparate literatures, none of which is included in the line of English literature institutionalized in Canada. The mythologies of the Middle East, North American (and other) aboriginal cosmologies, Druidic runic systems and other alphabets, the bardic tradition in ancient Britain, Chinese poetry, Japanese forms such as the haiku, renku and utanikki, European Dada, science fiction, contemporary writing in English and comic strips all inform The Martyrology.
One of the remarkable features of Nichol's thinking and writing is a reluctance to proceed along straight lines; this is reflected in the range of influences and interests listed above. But it is also intrinsically what attracts Nichol to them. He is drawn by converging and conversing voices. There are polyphonic possibilities in the shifting form of the utanikki, the doubly fertile narrative of the comic strip, the psychic logic behind the alphabet. As unrelated as Nichol's literary reservoirs may seem, many of them do share a polyphonic or communal nature. His own collaborative

works (with the Four Horsemen, with Barbara Caruso on the concrete alphabetic series, with Steve McCaffery on the Toronto Research Group reports in Open Letter, with Lola Lemire Tostevin in "to speak two" in Double Standards and, on another level, with the people at Therafields, to give but a few examples) attest to the importance he places on poetic and social communion. His interest in pre-print or non-print societies stems from their fundamental integration of language, voice and the cosmos, of the poet and society. As The Martyrology accumulates, its many voices interplay with each other more complexly, and its layering of cultural history becomes denser. It is an amazing collection of dispersals.

Charles Olson, in his long-armed sweeping way, said "man lost something just about 500 B.C. and only got it back just about 1905 A.D." (A Special View of History, 15). He, too, saw the necessity of breaking out of what he called the "Western Box" -- what he found Pound had crammed himself into. (This impulse was acted upon in the first decade of this century by those who lived in the box. European designers, painters, composers, writers had begun to poke holes in it, or, in the case of the Dadaists, to pee on it. They themselves were much less contained by it than their relatives overseas.) In North America, in the second half of the twentieth century, this gesture is made after thoughtfully considering one's place and time, and the essential nature of both: fragmentation and incompletion.

Olson's notion of 'istorin, of finding out for one's self, is grounded in the situation of being North American. Living on a continent whose population is composed of millions of communities which have splintered themselves from other linguistically or religiously cohesive cultures, one can either choose to garrison oneself inside one group, or to communicate by way of the shards of that shared fragmentation. The Martyrology records the process of Nichol's confronting the responsibility which faces anyone living on this continent and willing to acknowledge the fact: that is, composing one's own tradition.

I

Like most readers who have encountered them, Nichol first read comic strips printed in the daily newspaper, then those in comic books. As they became more and more a part of his imaginative life, he began to invent and draw his own. But he did not, in what is something of an obligatory rite of passage, relinquish them with childhood. In the Nichol Archive, amonst the thousands of pages of drafts (of poems, fictions, theory, proposals and scores for sound poems, "hand drawn pomes" and other kinds of visual concrete), are hundreds of comic strips -- some published, many discarded; some illegible doodles, others complicated theoretical propositions -- drawn by Nichol. Two specific elements of the comic strip became imaginative reservoirs for Nichol: the mythic figure of the evil-quelling super-hero, and the strip-of-frames form itself. Much of Nichol's mature work can be

traced as developing from either of these textual strategies, especially the latter. The Martyrology issues from both.

When he was a child, one of Nichol's favourite comic strips was Dick Tracy.

> I used to collect Dick Tracy, and I still have a Dick Tracy collection. I would take strips and tape them together, and make long movies that I would crank through movie boxes -- you know, shoe boxes -- and read them again that way. I used to go to friends' houses and scour through their newspaper bins. I'd try to get subscriptions to Dick Tracy comics off guys in drugstores in strange cities that I'd looked up in the Yellow Pages in libraries. I'd go down to the files in the library in Winnipeg when we'd moved back there and go through the back Tribune files reading back cases I'd missed, keeping at it so long that I puked because of the REM thing.[1]

His obsession with reading and his love of comic strips eventually led him, at around age fifteen, to create his own "comic strip adventures of Bob de Cat, his sidekick Yaboo, & the evil Dr. Nasty."[2] Not surprisingly, the villains had "grotesque faces & bodies . . . heavily influenced at that point by Chester Gould,"[3] Dick Tracy's creator. The Nichol Archive contains eleven pages of these strips, though undoubtedly many more were written, and discarded. They are three frames long, and most follow this schema: Bob de Cat, "man about town and celebrated beatnik"[4] (wearing a beret and shades), when questioned (usually by Yaboo, who speaks with a pseudo-French accent) about what he is doing or saying, delivers the punchline -- a groaner of a pun, or some literal word play on his hep slang. When Nichol was eighteen he began what he called a "historical novel," using Bob de Cat as a "mythologic base" for the hero, Colonel Bob de Cat.[5]

Nichol gave the novel the semblance of a book by folding eight and a half by eleven inch paper in half widthwise, and typing the text on facing pages.[6] The title on the front "cover" is Les Aventures Absolutement Fantastique de Bob de Cat <sic>; the subtitle is given on a separate page: "being the journal of one Bob de Cat, late of His Majesty's guard, describing his journey to sundry foreign lands, with appended parts by Victor Appletown III shrewdly placed so as to aid the reader in his understanding of this story." Appletown's notes, like the italicized scholarly quotations in The Martyrology, were meant to give the reader, in science fiction fashion, a factual sounding background that would reinforce, in this case, the account of a journey so strange it might otherwise be mistaken for fiction, instead of a true eventual story.

The text opens with a surrealistic dream sequence, explained in Appletown's first comment:

> (The above was written in the journal of Colonel Robert de Cat during a train trip in which he was suffering from some strange fever the nature of which no person is sure of and is undated. It is assumed that it was written on the train to Zedorskilov but this cannot be proven. It is included here because the publisher wishes to publish the complete, unexpurgated journal just as the Colonel wrote it. The majority of the journal is dated and the dates are included in the text but parts written during recurring phases of the fever are undated and are included here in the approximate correct chronological order. Much of the Colonel's journal was written on scraps of paper and then shoved loosely into a book and because of this the undated material has made it impossible to give a completely accurate rendering of the journal but we have strayed as little as possible from the text. -- Victor Appletown III)

Besides the entries from the Colonel's journal, the novel includes letters written by him, part of a B.B.C. radio

interview with Yaboo Yemen, his companion, and notes from Appletown. Given even this brief outline of this early work, the reader of The Martyrology will recognize familiar strategies: a journey into the unfamiliar (including a train trip); the science fiction method of verifying incredible events with quotations from factual-sounding fictional authorities; the dependence upon fragments of a lost text; the juxtaposition of different voices; the attention to the activity of the potential reader. The reader who has read Nichol's novel Andy may remember both Yaboo Yemen and Zedorskilov mentioned in that text. Some of Bob de Cat's journal was eventually published in Andy, with one significant alteration. In the MS, the entries are dated 1956; in Andy, the year is changed to 1944, so the last entry (September 10, 1944) would have been written twenty days before Nichol's birth.

Nichol's play with the comic strip was abandoned until the summer of 1965. Once he rediscovered comic books, and "lovingly fingered early epics of THE FANTASTIC FOUR," he felt again the "thrill of a literature of possibilites -- open-endedness into infinity."8 Comic strips offered generous formal potential adopted, one way or another, in The Martyrology: they "establish their own mythic base," present "probabilities based on real earth constructs now extrapolated into future" (eg., the science-fictional Chronicle of Knarn), promise "open-endedness into infinity," and provide a personally relevant and contemporary mythology.

> All <the> saints grew out of a comic strip milieu. And that is what the Martyrology is or means. The relevance of myth is only as you make it relevant to your time. Zeus goosing Leda as the subject of a poem is only interesting from the physical point of view (i.e. just how did he do it? a good poem on this is in order. Was Leda a fast-talker who liked Swans? a classic case of tribadism with an animal?) It is not that myth is irrelevant. It is simply that myth changes. So that Spicer's BILLY THE KID or Ondaatje's poem about the australian convict are much more interesting than say Ondaatje's 'PARIS' poems or any of a dozen poets' ORPHEUS gambits. OEDIPUS is interesting not because he's classical & (in a certain weird sense) respectable, but because we'd all like to get into our mothers. . . . Comics establish their own mythic party line, establish & expand on it. . . . If we are to work toward a true literature of possibility then the mythic possibility must be there as well as the others. But Myth as it is CLASSICALLY applied seems such a useless thing. perhaps because it too has closed down. The Martyrology was & is an attempt at an open structure (heroes to be killed off at will) & over & beyond what has so far been done lately i find myself attempting to tie them all together -- Bob de Cat, St. Reat, Captain Poetry, St. And, Bars Barfleet, St. Ranglehold, Yaboo & Blossom Tight.9

This renewed excitement with the comic strip immediately manifested itself in different ways in two very different works: The Captain Poetry Poems and Scraptures.

Captain Poetry, though perhaps yet another "simple extension of Bob de Cat, an amalgam of disparate intent,"[10] clearly borrowed his physique from muscular super-heroes (see fig. 2). The Captain Poetry Poems (written from 1965-68; published in 1971 by Blewointment Press) attempt to lampoon the sappy tone of bad traditional poetry, at the same time incorporating some word play and shifting forms. They are weak poems that did not open any exciting paths for The Martyrology, or other writings, to follow. Captain Poetry himself is the first hero to be knocked off at the poet's

will.[11]

Begun about the same time as The Captain Poetry Poems, Scraptures was also relegated to the tomes of the dead. In retrospect, however, Nichol has resurrected this text and is considering reprinting it as a part of The Martyrology.

Of all the works that precede The Martyrology, Scraptures is the one which informs it in formally inventive ways. Like its long-lived offspring, it varies in tone, texture, even in medium, from piece to piece.[12] Though perhaps not so obviously deriving from the comic strip as either Captain Poetry or some of the visual explorations of letters ("Allegories", et al.), some of the sequences present processual metamorphoses of words (some visually, some sonically) which could be seen as a sophisticated verbal parallel to splicing daily installments of Dick Tracy into a continuous long strip. The "developer" poems in Konfessions of an Elizabethan Fan Dancer[13] operate in a similar way; but they engage the typewriter's uniform spacing, transform in a vertical space, and are essentially visual objects rather than aurally active texts. The seventh sequence of Scraptures, especially, is intrinsically generated by sound, spinning a line horizontally from the first word.

> insect. incest. c'est in. infant. in fonts. onts. onts. ptonts. pontoons. la lune. la lun. la lun en juin est? c'est la lune from votre fenetre. vos. vous. vouloir. i wish. i wish. i may. i might. june night. and the lovers. loafers. low firs. old frrrrs. la lovers. la lrrrrs.
>
> *
>
> an infinite statement. a finite statement. a

> statement of infancy. a stem of stalagmite. a stem of stalactite. a statement of infamy. a fine line state line. a finger of stalement. a feeling a saint meant ointment.14

While working on Scraptures, his eyes and ears sensitized to minute movements in words, Nichol stumbled upon the saints.

> The title <Scraptures> was a sort of layered pun, obviously on 'scraps of things,' 'scriptures,' and 'raptures.' I started that little series with a concretization, a visual re-working of the opening line, 'In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God,' which James Reaney published in Alphabet magazine. . . . About the third or fourth of the series, David Aylward and I discovered these saints' names in 'st' words in the English language. We were looking for a title for a poem by David about killing an asp -- he was doing this series of 'Asp' poems. He had taken the word 'grasp' and had written it as 'asp arg,' so we had this image of someone choking a snake. This is the way it is in the heady world of avant-garde poetics! Anyway, we both had this image as we were both looking at the word 'stranglehold,' and we both simultaneously saw 'st. ranglehold,' and thought that it was a marvelous discovery.<15> That was about 1965 or 66, and that's sort of where it ended for David, but I began to see these 'st' words as saints. Then I found that I began to address them -- and I literally mean I found, I was not expecting this. I began to address these pretty rabid rhetorical pieces to the saints in Scraptures. I realized that these saints had, for me, taken on a meaning and a life; that is to say, they were more than merely puns.16

One of the less aurally playful and more "rabid" sequences is the eighth, which begins

> NOW THIS IS THE DEATH OF POETRY. i have sat up all night to write you this - the poem is dying is dying - no - i have already said the poem is dead - dead beyond hope beyond recall - dead dead dead 17

The "you" here is St Reat, who is addressed with an accusatory, almost imprecatory, tone. St Reat is breath, is poetry, yet in The Martyrology we find out that he loses his voice. One of

the reasons for this may lie in Reat's very roots. He first appeared in the second Scraptures sequence, but unlike St Ranglehold or St Orm, who surfaced as aural puns, St Reat

was primarily a visual discovery. Consequently, his breath hangs precariously on each line and, vicariously, so does that of his devotee Nichol. If poetry is dead, and Reat -- the guardian of the poem and the poet -- is dead, little wonder the writer sat up all night trying to get this off his chest:

> maybe i will know now that the poem is dead
>
> the poem imprisoned me (who he was) (i called him saint reat) imprisoned me till i could see no further into me beyond the poem that everything must be said in the poems <sic> form that the poem must say everything I HAVE NO TONGUE NO EYES i love with the poem SPEAK SPEAK and the language will not will you speak to me listen to me speak to me poem you will not would not you cannot hear me even you have become closed to me
>
> as all poems must i have said i have said before as i have said many things before before now before i said what i said (to who? to saint reat against the forest fence fence of saint agnes a friend called her the same who saw saint reat and called saint agnes to him to her to he who waits to she who is now and forever trapped beyond the poem where saint reat lies dead (how he was born there of the eye and not the tongue) dead as i said against a fence where saint agnes saw him and a friend said he is dead and i knew it to be true. (from Scraptures, 8th sequence)

Scraptures is the first work in which Nichol incorporates the activities found in visual and aural concrete poetry with the traditional poetic line, and as such is clearly one of the significant precursors of The Martyrology.

So the "literature of possibilities" as embodied in The Martyrology was slowly emerging: the saints from "a comic

strip milieu," the poem's compacted syntax from some of the technical syntheses discovered in Scriptures. But "the mythic possibility must be there" along with these textual openings. Nichol was broadening his sense of myth beyond the comic strip base, back to the cosmogonic Beginning. His impatience with what he saw as the needless oligarchic hold of the Greek mythos on the twentieth century North American imagination pushed him to explore the mythologies of other cultures. He had begun (circa 1965) reading books on Middle Eastern mythology, on Hopi and other non-Mediterranean and aboriginal mythologies, attending particularly to creation myths. His interest in the universal desire among humans to account for the origins of the universe, his impulse to speak about the saints' (themselves mythic linguistic creations) origins and home, his curiosity about his own familial history all met in one work: The Plunkett Papers. Cosmogony and history, however, had a geographical, as well as an imaginative, centre. In the middle of the Canadian prairies:

> Plunkett exists other than in the image nation. if you head south east from Saskatoon on highway 14 you'll hit a little sign that says PLUNKETT 1 MILE turn right and you're there. nothing too big. just a little ex-farming town now. once upon a time, as the story goes, my grandparents did some farming near there, eventually moved into town & started running the hotel. for me it has always been the eye of the needle and these poems take the threads both ways, go on despite me in directions i can't foresee. 19

Nichol's maternal grandparents established themselves in Plunkett; his parents met there. A place so central to one's personal mythology, a mythology laden with new possibilities, should somehow be accounted for in cosmic

terms:

> 'Most merciful God, pour down
> Your blessing upon these gifts,
> and confirm us in the faith which
> blessed Oliver, Your martyr &
> pontiff, asserted amidst cruel
> tortures.'
>
> prayer for the feast of
> BLESSED OLIVER PLUNKETT bishop and
> Martyr who died July 11, 1681
>
> named for a marytr
> or some railway czar
>
> maybe some officer
> who bivouaced near the spot
>
> or maybe not
>
> maybe just a question
> of what went where
>
> & cloud-hidden saying
> 'plunk it there'

The coincidence of Plunkett's possibly being named for a saint is uncanny; but the magic of this kind of synchronicity encourages imagining the town as the centre of the world. In one Plunkett poem the underworld seems to be directly beneath the hotel (unbeknownst to its proprietor, Walt Workman); in another, Cloud-town is out the door and on the other side of the tracks:

> Edward John Moreton Drax Plunkett
> 18th baron of an ancient line
> passed from the fields we know
> into that other land
>
> stepping thru the doors of
> the Plunkett hotel
> you crossed the railway line
> into a place your dreams had told of
>
> was this heaven?
>
> the bent form of the trolls
> curring <sic> to cloud-hidden & saint and

& the high road leading to the north to
Old-man-of-the-mountain's home

this other world
beside your own world
you did not know of
yet lived in all the time

Nichol researched his family's genealogy while writing these poems; many of his ancestors, both those who did and those who did not live in blessed Plunkett, are unexaggeratedly presented as mythic figures. Some of the best of these pieces were collected and printed as a chapbook entitled Familiar.[20] The bulk of The Plunkett Papers, however, remains unpublished; Nichol finds some of the self-mythologizing embarrassingly self-indulgent, and for this reason has classed them as another sheaf of failed poems.[21] Nevertheless, the cosmogony of Plunkett had firmly planted itself in the writer's imagination as his own genealogical omphalos, and as the ground where the saints walked. All the major saints, as well as Captain Poetry and Billy the Kid, visited Plunkett. (In one passage St And mourns the death of the latter.) There are many references to Cloud-hidden, Cloud-town, et al. throughout The Martyrology. But, since The Plunkett Papers is largely unavailable, these references, which should resound meaningfully, cloud the text instead. I have, therefore, summarized the essentials of this cosmogony, in the hopes that some of the fog might be lifted.

The Cosmogony behind The Martyrology

Cloud-hidden, the prime-mover in the cosmogony of The Plunkett Papers, resembles the Old Testament's Jehovah and Christianity's cloud-enthroned God the Father. He created the

world, suns and other planets by "<raising> his hand," making "a sleepy gesture over chaos" and watching "it all <take> form." He created the first man ("from an old riverbed") and woman ("to keep man strong"), and then

> he got to thinking
> maybe he should create some kind of saint
> bring him up to heaven build a town for him
> give him a woman for a mate
>
> & when the first people had a son
> cloud-hidden took him away
> called him Orm & set him in the clouds to guard them
> fashioned him a woman from the water
> named her Rain

This theogony seems to be influenced by the first generations in the Ennead of the Egyptian mythos. According to the Pyramid texts, in an early form of the creation myth Atum-Re fertilizes himself and produces Shu, an air god, and his mate Tefnut, a moisture goddess -- a triad similar to Cloud-hidden-Orm-Rain.[22]

Like Jehovah, Cloud-hidden is an angry and vengeful God who resents and even despairs of ever having made his human creatures (see Genesis 6: 5-7, 11-13). But his behavior is more akin to that of Taiowa, the head of the Hopi gods, who systematically created, destroyed and recreated three worlds before the present one, each time because people had abused their own powers and forgotten their origins.[23] Taiowa allowed the few honest people remaining in each world to survive, to rebuild the next. Cloud-hidden, too, became exhausted with his failing humans, and cleaned up the cosmos when they became unbearable:

> for millions of years

earth <tumbled> round its tiny sun
with other worlds tumbling round their bigger ones
except when the people ran astray or amuck
& cloud-hidden would say 'ah fuck!'
wipe them out in a day
create a new bunch

it went on that way thru four worlds
till finally he grew sick of it & thot
'i'll let them rot their own way'
& drew back into heaven to watch

Orm was instructed to save those people worth saving before the first world was blown up.

The second world was formed of the dust of the first, and was much like its predecessor. There were only two survivors of this second cosmic annihilation -- Aggers and Raits, brothers who were brought to Cloud-town by Orm. The third world was a self-devouring mutation:

a veil falls over everything
the third world is not clear
as tho some thing more horrible appeared
no mention's made of its construction

only a reference (vague at best)
to things that fed on one another
locked into (perhaps) some closed cycle of
consumption

a world where each man ate the other to survive
as tho cloud-hidden made a bad mistake
forgot a gene or chromosome
he shudders at its mention

The first two worlds were peopled by two races -- dwarfs and giants (St Orm was, of course, a giant); otherwise, they resembled our own. In an attempt to ameliorate the staying power of the next generation, Cloud-hidden went back to his drawing-board and completely reformed the population of the fourth world:

legend says they had wings
purple scales covering their bodies

& tails
long beautiful tails
supple as willows
swayed as they walked

Given their absence from the present, it is clear that this race was another mangled misconception -- although they did discover "flight & quickly populated the stars."

there is a void drifts where once that earth was
seeming that we did then live closer to galactic centre
cloud-hidden moved the whole thing further away
out towards the rim
set about creating the fifth world
while the scattered purple children lived on without him

The Chronicle of Knarn is the single surviving text of this fourth world; "obviously written by one of those who left earth it clearly illustrates how the old traditions were lost thru abuse & neglect."

It is to our present world, the fifth (and presumably last) that the saints descended. The question is: why?

this is difficult to answer. the first man & first woman of the fifth world had a son they called old-man-of-the-mountain. it was him who gave the warning. some sort of millenium as it had been forewarned him in a dream. not the end of the world. cloud-hidden was thru with that. perhaps the end of cloud-town. we don't know. cloud-hidden refused to say. boarded up his home & wouldn't talk. maybe this is all wrong. perhaps it was simply whim or fancy. saint and growing tired of being fenced in venturing down to earth. it seems that's how things began.

II

Unlike Scriptures and The Plunkett Papers, Monotones is not so much a subtext to The Martyrology as it is a parallel text. Both poems began in 1966-67; Nichol worked at both for about four years before they were published (Monotones by

Talonbooks in July, 1971; The Martyrology by Coach House Press in spring, 1972). Monotones, too, is influenced by Scraptures, as, for example, in this excerpt from number I:

> the paths
> windings bring you
> home & forever
> homely the
> homily
> simply
> to praise you

While these kinds of verbal transformations are more extensive in the separate Scraptures sequences, the essentially fragmentary nature of that work does not allow for the incorporation of the discrete sequences into a larger cohesive whole. Monotones is a more unified text into which these minute operations have been assimilated. The poem's title suggests sameness of sounds; the sepia photos and inking play with visual monotones. But "Mono" is also the name of the county where the Therafields farm was located, and where some of these poems were written. (See notes for I:13 and II:198 for information about Therafields.) Monotones is grounded in place, rather than in any kind of redundancy. In this text we sense the same impulse to mythologize a specific locus -- here, Mono Mills -- that we found in The Plunkett Papers.

Because it was written concurrently with the first sections of The Martyrology, it is not surprising to find references to figures that frequent the longer poem; the text even opens with a quotation from "The Writings of Saint And." "The Martyrology of St And," as the title might suggest, was the initial installment of The Martyrology. It was begun

sometime in 1967, and was soon followed by "Scenes from the Lives of the Saints"; the absence of dates in the drafts does not allow for settling on precise dating for either section. Both of these earliest pieces were wrestled through a process of perpetual revision -- up to the day they went to press. After they were "completed," and were collectively referred to as "The Martyrology," Nichol fiddled with working them in with Monotones. Nichol always felt that the works were intrinsically related, even as he was writing them; hence his repeated -- and failed -- attempts to fit the two together. This is his sense, twenty years later, of the problem he was confronting:

> Because I'd decided that <The Martyrology> would be processual, because I was working with these kinds of fictional biographical elements without foregrounding them, but talked about them as from a sure knowledge, as it were, there were a number of different impulses the work took.<24> In essence, Monotones is one of those impulses, and it didn't work when I put it with the other stuff at all. I couldn't get it to work in the work, though it always seemed to me that it worked itself. I couldn't get it to work in the kind of interleaving I was trying to do. It seemed to trivialize the thing. So I ended up separating the two pieces. In a way, then, Scriptures took two branches, but I didn't have the sophistication as a writer at that time to understand that -- that <The Martyrology Books> 1 and 2 were one branch, and Monotones was another branch. Right there you have the kind of chaining that's happened later <in Book 5>. Which is why in a certain way Monotones has to go back and have its place restored.
>
> I haven't yet issued Monotones as Book 0 <or -1>, though the idea is fairly solid in my mind. I'm sure that's what's going to happen. But done correctly. Talonbooks did a nice job. The only thing they did differently from what I'd intended was the way they handled the photographs. I wanted it to be a snapshot book -- that's why it's the size it is. If I do it again, my idea of it has changed. It would be the same size as The Martyrology, but it would have all the blank pages in it that it's supposed to

have. That was a lot to ask Talon to do at the time! (July, 1987)

Meanwhile, as the drafts of the early "Martyrology" show, sections of the sibling text, Monotones, appear in various combinations with the first two parts of Book 1. In fact, the proposed collection of poems called "The Martyrology" always comprised the same four sections:

> i "The Martyrology of Saint And"
> ii "MONO tones"
> iii "Scenes from the Lives of the Saints"
> iv "auguries" -- the contents and style of which have nothing to do with the section in Book 2 bearing the same title.

There are no significant deviations between the Monotones poems which appear both in the drafts and in the Talonbooks edition, except for many alterations in line breaks. It seems that "part ii" was to include the later numbers of Monotones (from XXVIII to C), while "part iv" contained the earlier (numbers I through XXVII). The other two sections which were, finally, to make up the rest of the first book, were not written until circa mid-1968 (at the earliest). The two halves of Book 1, then, were written in two quite separate compositional runs.

"The Martyrology's" contents (and it was only "The Martyrology" at that point, because it had not yet spawned a series, and therefore was not yet identifiably Book 1), even through many drafts and revisions, continued to consist of "St And," "Scenes," and the persistent Monotones. In this guise, the seemingly completed "Martyrology" began to be shuttled from one possible publication grouping to another, its companion volumes never settling into place comfortably

until Book 2 came into view. One early conception, called "the trilogy idea" in a draft, envisioned "The Martyrology" as the second book in a three volume set which would also include Scraptures (here subtitled "excerpts from 'The Book of Saints'") and For Jesus Lunatick, as the first and third parts respectively, and "a slim 'appendix'" which is nowhere evident in this draft. (It does not seem to refer to the "Notes" that appear in other drafts, since there are neither footnote numbers nor notes in this draft.) Nichol also refers to this project as "THREE FRAGMENTS."

The visual tactility of these three texts seems to have been the factor propelling them into possible co-publication. In the draft for this project, Nichol describes their "visual organization" thus:

> Scraptures: DENSE VISUALLY -- multiplicity of texture & colour -- overlays
>
> For Jesus Lunatick: visually dense blocks of prose with destroyed line structures -- separated by large white areas -- stark black on stark white
>
> MARTYROLOGY: DENSITY DOES NOT WORK -- flow of poem demands thin pointilist usage of words -- breaking them down into lower breath units & placing stress this way. THIN VISUALITY. dense line seems to detract from poem -- raises question of power of individual word in poetry & of the BLOCK in prose -- as a, perhaps, basic difference -- flow of prose depends on density -- of the poem on visual breathing space for each word or word grouping.

And in a note to Stan Bevington, included with this draft:

> I've called these fragments not because they are incomplete in the usual sense but because they come out of a larger background. even Scraptures (which in this version uses only part of the total number of sequences written so far) is complete as far as it goes. the submitted manuscript of SCRAPTURES is the only way i have of showing you what i intend. . . . THE MARTYROLOGY is fragmentary by

> design tho i won't go into all that here. similarly FOR JESUS LUNATICK in this considerably rewritten version. as far as JESUS goes i would like it to be printed . . . with huge spaces of virtually invisible type filling the areas i've left blank and the printed areas suddenly snapping out of that print background. this manuscript is much more present than JOURNEYING was, presenting pretty well the sum total of my feelings on a lot of things accurate to about two months ago (today june 20 something or other <1969> -- and just working towards completing the manuscript of JESUS). so this is it. sometimes when i read my stuff i feel there are huge gaps there, that is, gaps that i could fill in -- but can others? from time to time this obsesses me but then that was why i set these up the way i did because i came to see that those gaps could be used to advantage as i believe i have done.

Another attempt to organize a corpus of which "The Martyrology" was a projected member was something called the "triptych idea." It is vaguely sketched, but it seems that it was to be composed of "The Captain Poetry Poems," "The Martyrology," and some third text -- perhaps the early cosmogonic material from The Plunkett Papers, here (possibly) called "The Life & Times of the Life & Times."[25] This idea is rather hazy: the "triptych idea" file contains only a few pages, and these are introductions, title pages, etc. In fact, it does not really matter what was to happen here; the proposition is simply significant in that it was yet another attempt to realize some kind of extended form which was to include "The Martyrology," indicating once more that this text did not originate as the inclusive large form itself, but was envisioned to be a part of one. These proposed textual partnerships were basically motivated by Nichol's desire to publish the work, and thus to get it away from his revising fingers.[26]

Nichol sensed that the pieces he had written and acknowledged to be "The Martyrology" were the fragmentary initials of something larger and longer. In a discarded introduction to Book 1, he called them "beginnings with which <he'd> ended beginning," and felt that "it <was> time to move on to forming middles, bridges. . . ." There were also, he continues,

> beginnings prior to these beginnings; dave aylward's wourneys & my own scraptures sequences contain the first reachings but they will have to wait for some other time . . . . always there must be beginnings no matter we attempt to deny them & what we have here are works on the process of beginning. i put them behind me joyfully & move on. (from an introductory page in "the triptych idea" file, dated June 1969)

By 1969 "The Sorrows of Saint Orm" and "Saint Reat and the Four Winds of the World" were well underway -- that is, written, and in the long revision process -- and Book 1 had taken on its present shape. (See introductions to individual sections for compositional details.) Then, the first two

parts of Book 2 began emerging. Extensiveness was slowly, and grudgingly, becoming a fact of the poem. Nichol had always intended the work to take on a processual form, along the line of its progenitor Scraptures, but had never imagined the process would be so protracted. "Clouds" included enough teasers about the saints' lives to give a reader a sense of their history and the greater world they inhabited, and so seemed like a sensible place to close off this poem about saints. This is the first announcement, albeit made only to the writer himself, that The Martyrology

had indeed ended:

> finishing book 2 of the martyrology two days ago 5 years work coming into some kind of focus is it longer all those reachings in SCRAPTURES & the cap po poems moving towards that mythology which finally i did create an order that is to say did place the voices in side my head into some sort of external form but now i wonder which is to say the mind wanders at this stage it feels like only the edge of something much bigger whose ultimate form or formulation i cannot even predict . . . . book 1 seems so fragmented that i often do despair about it today reading saint reat & the four winds i felt better about it but nonetheless the fragmentation does exist this points toward one thing which has always been there namely fragmentation as an essential aspect somehow OF my vision my way of seeing things in jumps thus being true i do present the perceptual system and yet continually i have people telling me they cannot get into it this makes me somehow feel failed in it. . . . now i feel on the cusp book ii being out of the way and feeling moving within me a direction towards something else if i can only make the reaching toward it the holding somehow to get a hold of it and make the move towards its sense (typed on a page in a makeshift notebook, May 2, 1970)

At that date Book 2 consisted only of "The Book of Common Prayer" and "Clouds." The feeling of conclusion was, of course, brief, and the "cusp" Nichol felt he was riding turned quickly: the same sheaf of papers contains poems from "Sons and Divinations" and "Friends as Footnotes," dated from July through the fall of 1970. But The Martyrology's first important turning point is the middle section of Book 2, "Auguries" (probably written in June, 1970), which ushers in the first major stylistic change: talking longer than the page is long.

Given the later more severe ruptures in The Martyrology's physical appearance, this simple development may seem unremarkable.[28] But with it arose a problem with which Nichol

would wrestle for the years and lines to come: the obstacle the machinery of the book presents to the composing (and reading) of an open-ended, unpredictable, continuing text. Through his ventures in concrete and sound-poetry, Nichol learned to approach the page as a purely visual, non-verbal surface, or as surface intrinsically not part of a book, or to use it as a performance score. These confrontations with the materials of linguistic activity (paper, staples, ink; breath, tongues, spit) utterly inform the poem that is slowly accumulating in front of the writer. When individual poems cease to be restricted each to a single page, the work begins to become one long poem, instead of a series of conjoined -- but compositionally discrete -- units. The refusal for the size of the page to determine the end of a poem or stanza, or for the book format to dictate the narrative and length of a poem expands the possibilities of what that poem is. At this point, Nichol's attitude towards The Martyrology shifted significantly from wondering what kind of poems it would contain, to what kind of writing it was becoming.

"Sons and Divinations" synthesizes this greater breadth of form with an equally expanded sense of vision. It is the point in The Martyrology at which the writing extends beyond the writer's self: instead of the pains endured by an individual psyche, the writing focuses on the decaying communal nature of language; the world -- as it is, as it was -- is implicated in each moment of writing. "Taking what <he's> found & turning it outward into the world" (II:213), the writer finally turns the inward-bound contemplative voice of the previous sections

into a centrifugal energy. The reader finds evidence of Nichol's readings of the natural world, the myths of other cultures, the texts of other writers, and his own (now substantial) text. His eye/i looks everywhere, but it is always grounded in the local and the immediate. This is, in fact, the first time in the poem that the present is marked by significant dates, by month, by seasonal changes. So careful is this charting of the time through which the writing proceeds that the reader, once she knows that Ellie's (Nichol's wife's) birthday is November 15, can easily calculate that Nichol picked up the pen to start "Friends as Footnotes" a couple of days after completing "Sons and Divinations."[29]

This last section of Book 2 spans a longer period of time than the previous section (it was finished in February 1971), but lacks its breadth. It was going to be a kind of take-off on Nichol's perennial urge to reference the work: several numbered poems, corresponding to numbers in the text, gave additional information about the footnoted name or phrase. This idea was dropped; but it returns in a revised and more sophisticated form in the chains of Book 5. It is, however, interesting to see this multiarmed textual gesture happening so early in the poem's history. As the title suggests, most of the notes were about friends. Only one of these poems, called "the poem," was included in the published text. It is the two page coda, which recapitulates the work it temporarily closes, while anticipating the words yet to come.

III

While the first three books (the present discussion will be limited to books 1 and 2) do not involve the elaborate punning and play of the later books, they are not lacking intertextuality. Nichol has always been alert to the materiality of texts (as evidenced by his concrete work; the collaborations with Barbara Caruso and with other visual artists; the striking visual impact of the design of books like Journeying & the returns, Two Novels, Journal) and to the history of the book (certainly amplified by his readings in McLuhan). Both of these concerns inform the design of Books 1 and 2. The visual impact of these books, which have a lush manuscript feel to them, comes from combining primary sources from two disparate eras: the twentieth century comic strip, and pre-Renaissance icon and manuscript. Some elements of the comic strip in fact provide a subtext for these early sections.

Nichol wanted The Martyrology to include illustrations (the only time he has specified this) that would merge comic strip and icon, and knew that Jerry Ofo, an illustrator of underground comics whose work he admired, was the man to do them.[30] The resulting illuminations interact wonderfully with the text, introducing pictorial quotation as commentary on the saints, and on the unfolding work itself. This cross-breeding is a Dadaist gesture that for some observers might seem as scandalous as Duchamp's displaying the urinal in the salon. In fact, if we forgo the icon's specific media

(wood, glue, tempera, etc.), its essential sacredness, its historical implications, and regard it simply as a pictorial narrative, the similarities between it and the comic strip become apparent. For one thing, both present narratives having a set of recurring characters. In one type of icon, called "scenes from the lives of the saints," the large central image of a saint is framed by a series of smaller pictures showing important events in his life. The eye is initially led to the centre, but it is not then drawn to a specific starting point amongst the many possible in the border illustrations, and will not necessarily read the scenes sequentially. It is the repeated figure of the saint, rather than any discernable chronology or plot, that demands attention. The images are given, but the narrative will vary between readers.

And reading was what the observer was expected to do with the icon. It was the obvious way to communicate the central stories of Christianity to illiterate congregations. Individual figures are quickly identifiable by their attributes, garments, physique, posture and facial characteristics: St John of Patmos is swarthy, long-haired and bearded, and wears a matted hair-coat. The same technique is used in comics: Superman always has blue-black hair and a red cape. Neither genre relies on realistic representation, since the main characters in both are super-human.[31] The possibility of being seduced by unreality was, of course, one reason why comic books were banned by or forfeited to parents who told their kids, even if they were active book

readers, "you won't read! You'll only look at the pictures! Comics are for children who can't read! And if you keep reading them, you'll forget how to read, too!"

> & of course if you were 'serious' you read 'serious' literature & put the kid-stuff aside -- thus do we grow into adulthood -- but we held in our hands one of the solutions to the problem of narrative in 20th century writing one of the first original art forms of the 20th century: the comic strip
>
> why people put them down -- from writers it seems most obvious -- we are robbed of description -- we are allowed (mostly) dialogue, plot & a few 'meanwhile's' (in one form or another) -- it is collaborative art (remember the Dadaists) in the age of the superstar -- the argument classically is 'which should dominate' -- graphic or storytelling -- a wedding of print & picture -- of print as picture -- sound effects (excerpt from a notebook, ca. 1970)[32]

Whether to be "robbed of description" is a dreaded fate to befall any writer is questionable. In this particular case, using the figures of saints to encapsulize specific emotional or mental states in fact frees the writer from indulging in sentimental description.[33]

Ofo's illuminations, dispersed strategically through the book, freeze images of process in single frames. But it is important to note that a larger frame encloses both the drawing and the text.[34] If "the frame constitutes the basic syntactic unit of a comic strip,"[35] one might propose that, in the first six sections of Books 1 and 2, The Martyrology's basic formal syntactic unit is a single poem framed on a page. The text's extending beyond this unit (as it does after "Clouds") naturally does not effect the same kind of verbal-visual interaction that results when the frame is disrupted in the

comic strip. But there is an unbinding that eventuates greater things. In Nichol's assessment of discrete and undiscrete grammar in the comic strip, the reader can see a reckoning of what gradually occurs in The Martyrology:

> placed in discrete sequence these frames form a grammatical block analogous to a conventional sentence (change the sequence of frames you change the meaning of the total strip). however, unlike words, frames can interact in more complex syntactical forms: superimposition, interlocking frames, transmuting frames (where speech bubbles become the frame and vice versa or where a group of frames form a window into a complete scene [36]

In this work-in-process, the sense of syntax simultaneously dilates and contracts: while the word is seen as "a sentence that says things about single letters,"[37] one eventually begins to regard the book, not the poem, as the individual component of the work.

The hand-drawn renderings of the icons inside hand-drawn frames, printed on parchment-like paper, all simulate medieval manuscript and, precisely because of this, draw attention to the mechanics of the book (especially since neither icon nor comics traditionally appears in a bound book, except in reproduction). The purple page itself is a duplication of a page of stock, (unavailable to, and so copied by, Coach House Press) which Nichol wanted to use because it reminded him of a paper he had seen in a prayer book; it is, then, a reproduction of a mass-produced original which itself imitated a handmade paper, which in turn copied the original sheepskin on which ancient manuscripts were illuminated.[38]

Thus, these early volumes -- with the collaborative input of Ofo, with the incorporation of design elements

borrowed from visual, pre-Gutenberg, and non-"literary" media, with the juxtaposition of culturally and historically diverse reading codes -- subvert the general notion of what comprises a book of poetry by a single author. That is, the layering of information occurs at the macrosyntactic, as opposed to the microsyntactic level. (The linguistic play becomes increasingly microsyntactic through Book 4; with Book 5 forward, the questioning of the mechanics of the book begins again, but this time informed by the discoveries made in the previous book.)

Jerry Ofo's illustrations are an immediately obvious departure from a verbal texture, but are only one of the ways Nichol incorporates multiple voices in The Martyrology. Quoting other verbal texts is the usual way of bringing in someone else's accent. Nichol paraphrases portions of some texts when he is after straight information (e.g., the astronomical references in the "fasting sequence" in "Sons"). More often, though, the pieces from other texts are, Nichol says,

> evoking a particular kind of voice; so it's not the words, necessarily, but a certain tone, a certain sensibility <being forwarded>. I'm not trying to draw in external wisdom to somehow back up the poem. I'm just trying to get that voice in there. I hear the voice; I'm writing down what I hear. So if it comes out as a quote, I quote it. But then I try to work with what's in front of me and what the materials are in the poem. I'm not always successful, but that's what I'm trying to do.
>
> The italic is really another form of quotation. I get a slightly different tension from using italic -- I find it integrates more with the text. It seems like it's all the same hand, though a different voice speaking -- as though it's speaking in the mind of the writer, as opposed to

> quotation, which seems more of a public utterance. I've used italics to make that kind of a distinction.39

Often, quotation marks enclose lines not textual in origin, but which are imagined quotations -- voices heard internally or externally.

> That notion of the imagined quote liberated my notion of quotation in general. Very often I use quotations simply to create another voice -- a different voice from the one which is speaking. It's not necessarily an authentic quotation; sometimes it is. My point is that it's almost irrelevant to a degree who is speaking; what they are saying in this case is what is relevant. That's why I'm bringing it in. Where it's worked out in terms of rhythm or tempo to include the person quoted I've done that; but I've often just thrown in quotes and not particularly mentioned where they came from because it was irrelevant to what was being talked about at the time.40

The most complicated use of quotation involves excerpts from imaginary texts by and on the saints. Throughout Books 1 and 2 we find, hovering at the tops of pages, excerpts from The Folk Tales of the Saints, a couple of songs from Saint Reat, and an excerpt from The Writings of Saint And. There are, however, in all but the final drafts, many more of these fragments, all completely documented, down to page numbers. My annotations will restore missing titles and authors cited in the earlier drafts in order to give some idea of the span of the scholarly machinations initially intended.[41]

Nichol adopted this particular quoting strategy from science fiction texts. Jack Vance, one of his favourite writers in this genre, uses very detailed footnotes in his stories of imagined worlds. But the italicized commentaries in The Martyrology have a tenor more akin to the extravagant

quotations in another Text-that-Wouldn't-Die, Frank Herbert's Dune. Nichol read this first volume in the Dune Chronicles in 1968-69. (A series of books soon extended the world conceived in the initial text -- Dune Messiah (1969), Children of Dune (1976), God Emperor of Dune (1981), Heretics of Dune (1984), Chapterhouse Dune (1985).)

"Dune" is the other name for the desert planet Arrakis, the setting for most of the action of Herbert's novel. The story relates the struggle of the native population (and worthy outsiders accepted by them) for freedom, for an end to the ecological exploitation of their planet, and incidentally for power over the universe. There are clearly delineated white heroes and black villains (the kind of opposition that drew Nichol to Dick Tracy's continual battle for good against evil), though a complex maze of subterfuge does render some characters morally grey. The text has three large sections: the first sets up the planet's political predicament from the standpoint of the treachery-infested ducal palace; the second focuses on Muad' Dib (the young hero and rightful duke), his displacement to the desert, his accomodation to this new environment and his own burgeoning mental and psychic powers; the third reveals the boy to be the messianic leader prophesied in legends and scripture who guides his forces (whose numbers and strength were fatally underestimated by the tyrants) to victory. Each of these sections is composed of many chapters which are not numbered or titled, but rather are all headed with an italicized excerpt from historical documents; memoirs; recorded conversations, collected wisdom,

songs and sayings of Muad' Dib; legends about him; etc.

Every one of the nineteen titles cited in this way is compiled by the same author, Princess Irulan -- a character who is first seen on page 457 (in a 489 page text), who is hardly allowed to speak (she utters a total of sixteen words in the course of the novel), and to whom this brief attention is drawn at all only because her marriage to the hero will create a political alliance which will foster a truce. Aside from her physical appearance and lineage, we know she has received the rigorous Bene Gesserit training -- a kind of yogic physical and mental hyperawareness. In the last paragraph of the novel we discover this information about Irulan, spoken by Muad' Dib's mother to his true beloved (now destined to become his concubine): "They say she has pretensions of a literary nature. Let us hope she finds solace in such things; she'll have little else." The reader has been reading pieces of the results of her work at the opening of each of the forty-seven chapters spanning the previous 488 pages, wondering who this Princess <u>is</u>, not having encountered her as an active personage anywhere in the text to which her own words (or, more often her documentation of other characters' words, most often those of her husband) provide glosses, and why a daughter of an emperor would take on the enormous project of researching and writing a comprehensive history of the strange planet and its stranger superhero. The reader can, if she has not already done so, read these epigraphs as their own discontinuous narrative,

rather than simply as precis or foreshadowings of the events proceeding in the novel; the revelation of Irulan's domestic circumstance could, perhaps, alter the tone the reader hears in these passages. More interesting, however, is the fact that a character in the novel, and one who is hardly mentioned, is the author of texts from which fragments are chosen to introduce chapters of the same novel. The quotations in The Martyrology are less self-reflexive: some of the hagiographers are fictional, but some are writer friends -- literally, friends as footnotes.

In addition to the selected texts edited by Irulan, Dune contains other kinds of documentation: four appendices (on the ecology and religion of Arrakis; on the genealogy of the major noble families pertinent to the text; "On Bene Gesserit Motives and Purposes," a piece extracted from a report written by the hero's mother); a twenty-one page glossary of specialized vocabulary; a map with cartographic notes. The quotations and appendixed data play with the model of substantial scholarly annotations and explanations -- a textual genre traditionally accepted or even revered as true -- which accumulates concretions of fact around the nucleus of the novel's imaginary world to validate that world textually and translate it to the reader who is encountering it for the first time. In the cosmological subtext of The Martyrology Nichol invents a creator and his creations, which include the saints. Eventually there are families of saints, immigrants to our planet, who have their own origins, histories and nostalgic legends around which have gathered

scholarly and theological writings which attempt to explain and summarize saintly subjects. Like the citations from Princess Irulan's work in Dune, these imaginary quotations lend a kind of external authoritarian verity to the world unfolding in the poetic text at the same time as they give historical context to the ensuing events. Even before her ear catches the change of voice, the reader's eye is quickly alerted to something else happening in these passages: they are isolated from the rest of the text by italic type and their position at the top of the page; proper nouns are (sometimes) capitalized; periods and commas are used in their usual way. They are little blocks of somewhat didactic prose whose tone, quite foreign to that of the poetic text, suggests a gloss which simplifies events for the laity.

Saints are known by three things: their acts, their words and the accounts of others who have witnessed those acts and words. At one remove are the speculators and expostulators of these and other religious texts -- the theologians. Curiously The Martyrology seems to have evolved out of a reversal of the usual reading and writing process -- that is, from 1) witnessing an act, to 2) narrating this event, to 3) reading and recording speculations and criticism on primary source narratives. First of all, the greater part of the explicative documentation in the drafts is deleted in the published text; the reader is entirely unaware of its existence. The trappings which made the epigraphs academic or ecclesiastic in tone were dropped when the writer became more

attentively a reader and began listening to the text as it happened. Abandoning some of the explanatory excerpts may have created lacunae, but these are gaps to which the reader can easily accomodate her reading. A martyrology necessarily relies on the written accounts of an onlooker, since a martyr is not a martyr until he is dead. Hence, martyrologies are composed with words-about-acts. The narrative in the first two books does sound like the record of one who has actually encountered the saints; the tone is that of an intercessor. When, however, the saints lose their larger than life personalities and become active figures in the world on the page, the linguistic life in the text changes fundamentally. This transition occurs in Book 3, most energetically in "CODA: Mid-Initial Sequence." That the kind of play occurring from Book 3 onward is not present in the earlier books is explained by the fact that Nichol was playing elsewhere, in the fields of sound and concrete, and so The Martyrology became the repository for more meditative work -- an ironic development, given the saints' accidental births in visual-verbal puns. When Nichol does integrate the liberating discoveries he made in concrete and sound poetry, and in the more synthetic work in Scriptures, with the process of The Martyrology, when ideation is invested with the transitory, then the reader can see the saints in action. Words no longer recall the doings of saints; they are themselves the acts.

Notes

1 From July, 1987 interview.

2 In a notebook entry titled "Comics as Myth: Notes on Method in The Martyrology" (dated April 4, 1969, and written in a plane flying between Vancouver and Toronto), Nichol discusses the comic strip impetus and history behind the poem. This text will be abbreviated as CaM in further references.

3 CaM.

4 Nichol Archive. See fig. 1 for reproduction of a "Bob de Cat" strip.

5 CaM.

6 Nichol Archive.

7 Both Yaboo and de Cat sometimes have their names spelled with a phantom "h" in this MS, i. e., Yahboo and de Chat.

8 CaM.

9 CaM. Bars Barfleet and Blossom Tight are Captain Poetry's sidekicks.

10 CaM.

11 CaM. Nichol was aware of the poems' limitations, and classed them among The Books of the Dead, which also included The Journey (1962-66; abandoned), Journeying & the returns (1963-66; published by CHPin 1967), The Undiscovered Country (begun in 1966, picked at and reworked until abandoned in 1971), and Scraptures (1965-69; seventeen sequences in total, printed in small editions by various small presses. This was Nichol's assessment of The Books of the Dead in 1979; see "some words on the martyrology march 12, 1979" in The Long Poem Anthology, ed. Ondaatje, 335). Almost twenty years after completing them, Nichol calls The Captain Poetry Poems failed poems. He did not have the technique to control the parodic voice he was trying for, and admits he sounds "like a sexist pig" in certain sections. The figure of Captain Poetry drifts into The Plunkett Papers, and makes an occasional appearance in The Martyrology (though in the first two books he is seen only once <II:204>, and then he is in the underworld).

12 Most of the sequences are mimeographed, stapled booklets. But, not surprisingly, the exploratory and reaching nature of this work necessitated its tendrilling beyond the bookish: the fifth and twelfth are visual texts which have

also been recorded in sound versions (on Borders, part of bp <Toronto: Coach House Press, 1967> and under the title "Silver Lake Six: two buried texts," part of The Motherlove Suite on Motherlove <Allied Records, 1968>, respectively); the tenth is letterpress printed on separate yellow cards; the eleventh is a comic book. Sequences 1-4, 7 and 16 are those which proceed, in varying degrees between the visual and the sonic, through verbal transformation.

13 Konfessions of An Elizabethan Fan Dancer, first published London: Writer's Forum, 1969; revised 2nd ed. Toronto: Weed/Flower P, 1973.

14 Scraptures, 7th sequence was published as part 1 of Nights on Prose Mountain, grOnk 3.6 (Toronto: Ganglia P, 1969).

15 The first sequence of Scraptures was published in Alphabet 12. See figs. 3 and 4 for title page of Aylward's "Asp" poems, and for the poem in which St Ranglehold first appears.

16 Line 6 (1985): 23.

17 The 8th sequence is part 2 of Nights on Prose Mountain. The opening, like much of this sequence, has the same dirge-like tone as the death knell for the saints which closes Book 2, although that part of The Martyrology would have been written at least two years after this piece.

18 See fig. 5 for reproduction of the page where St Reat is found.

19 All quotations are from drafts of The Plunkett Papers (file #39/3/10). This "author's note" is dated "Toronto, 1970," the year in which Nichol completed all but the last section of Book 2. In fact, in early May of that year, he had thought that The Martyrology had ended when he finished writing "Clouds." The reader can easily sympathize with his sense of being pulled, involuntarily, into unpredictable textual directions.

20 The chapbook was a gift for friends, Christmas, 1980.

21 Nichol did read from it when he was working on it in the late 1960s and early 1970s. He also reads from it extensively in Michael Ondaatje's film Sons of Captain Poetry (1970). At a showing of this film at S. F. U. in July 1983 (during a week he spent in Vancouver giving readings and lectures), after pacing at the back of the lecture hall, Nichol left the room. He later groaningly explained that he could not bear to hear himself reading some of these pieces. No one else seemed to mind.

22 One book which informed Nichol's mythologizing at

this time was S. H. Hooke's Middle Eastern Mythology. The Egyptian creation myth is very clearly presented in this text, and I draw from it here.

23 The references to the Hopi creation myth come from Frank Waters's Book of the Hopi. See annotation for Palongawhoya reference (I:13) for fuller details.

24 Nichol had at one time intended to footnote all his obscure references. He got as far as drafting three notes pertaining to "The Martyrology of St And," and one long note explaining the comic strip references on the last page of "Scenes from the Lives of the Saints" and the third page of "The Sorrows of St Orm." The "fictional biographical elements" to which he refers are the italicized quotations from imaginary scholarship on the saints, many of which were omitted in the published text. These quotations are discussed more fully below. (See note 41 for a bibliography listing these scholarly texts.)

25 The cosmology in The Plunkett Papers is gathered together in a draft with a title page labelling it "The Book of Origins." It seems that of all the material Nichol was trying to collect under the cover of "The Martyrology," these pieces would have been the most likely to have been titled thus.

26 Nichol's account of his over-revising Book 1 gives a sense of the frantic unsureness he felt about the text:

> Book 1 gave me such trouble. I felt I was in danger of working it to death. I said at the time to Victor Coleman, 'you know, Victor, I've got to publish this thing. I've got to get it off my back. I've got to get it OUT there!' The only way I could see to get it objectified was to publish it. And Victor liked the thing enough, and said O. K. I was revising that thing -- and this is something I'm death on, I don't like other people doing it -- I was revising it in galleys! I was in there -- I had access to the press <Coach House Press> -- I was trying to rip things out more or less the day they were trying to go to press. There were still things I revised when the second edition came out, because I hadn't been able to get them all done. It's very possible that I over-revised, because at that time I had no objectivity over the work. And you can see that in the whole pattern of it -- I really did not know what I had by the tail. I was working towards something, and because I had taken this processual model I did not have an a priori vision of what I was doing, which I think is what has allowed the work to have the fluidity it has had. That is what has made it work, but it's also what has made it very very difficult, especially in

the early years, to control. (July, 1987)

27 It seems that "The Book of Common Prayer" was at first not acknowledged to be the beginning of a second volume. A discarded title page identifies it as "prayers -- part v," suggesting that it would have come after the four sections tentatively drafted to be early "The Martyrology."

28 In Book 3, the format of individual sections is abandoned (though some sequences are numbered, and there are titled "interludes" and a "coda"). Throughout this book we watch the gradual fading of the page's purple tint and the dissolving frame around the text -- both completely gone by the first page of text in Book 4 (but resurgent on the title pages of Books 5 and 6). And there is the eventual, inevitable, push past book-induced sequential linearity with the chains in Book 5, and beyond the spine itself in Bo(o)ks 7.

29 Several parts of these last two sections were first composed by hand. The bulk of the first two books was, however, from the beginning, composed on the typewriter.

30 Ofo illustrated Snore comics.

31 I am thinking here specifically of comic strip heroes who pursue the battle against evil (Superman, Dick Tracy, Batman, et al.) rather than the benign or bumbling animals and humans (Donald Duck, Baby Huey, Pogo, etc.) who exaggerate human deficiencies.

32 Box #60/7.

33 See especially St Orm in "The Sorrows of St Orm"; and see the introduction to that section for Nichol's take on the figure of the saint. Although this method clearly derives from the comic strip rather than from any "high" literary model (Blake's mythology, for instance), it smacks of Bunyanesque allegory.

34 The frames encasing the text are grey, echoing the hand-drawn frames around the illuminations, only in the second edition. The straight-lined right-angled purple frames that are used in the first editions of 1 and 2, and in Book 3, do not work as well.

35 "TRG Report Number 2, Part 2: Tom Mot Jr. and the Syntaxicabs of Paginated Space," Open Letter 3rd ser. 2 (1975):50.

36 Ibid., 50-51.

37 Out-posts interview, 39.

38 Unknown to Nichol, many early church manuscripts were tinted purple. Constantine ordered that all royal manuscripts be dyed this colour; this dye was the most costly available, and was therefore the most appropriate for things imperial. (His own epithet was porphyrogenitus, "one born of the purple.") Soon other manuscripts took on the colour, to display the wealth of the patrons who commissioned them. Reflecting the hierarchically supreme position denoted by the colour (the emperor was, after all, on the level next to the saints and God), early Byzantine iconographers depicted both Christ and the Virgin as robed in purple, their place in the kingdom of heaven thus signified by the paraphernalia of earthly kings.

39 Interview, February 1987.

40 Ibid.

41 The fictional scholarship which has grown around the saints includes individual volumes by single authors, and a journal devoted exclusively to the saints -- CONJUNCTION. There are also translations of the works of Saints And and Reat -- the two saints who share the guardianship of language. The following is a bibliography of these hagiographical studies, most of which were abandoned in the published edition, compiled with material from the drafts.

Bibliography of Texts by and on the Saints

Translations:

An Introduction to the Writings of Saint And, ed. Kirshenbaum.

Saint Reat and the Four Winds of the World, trans. Frederick Pollard.

Saint Reat and the Four Winds of the World, trans. Jan Wenska.

The Songs of Saint Reat, collected by Arcidurus, trans. Schmidt.

The Writings of Saint And, author unknown <sic. Presumably translator and editor unknown>.

Folk Tales, Legends, History:

An Organized History of the Saints, A.B. Phillips.*

The Folk Tales of the Saints -- a bibliographical discrepancy here: a) published by Runcible Spoon,** 1968, with an introduction by Michael Ondaatje;
b) published by Black Ribbon Press, 1962, edited and annotated by Steve McCaffery.

CONJUNCTION:***

1 (1966): "And Apocrypha," Phillip Workman.

2 (1967): "Myth and Man," Robert Smith.

"Myth: Legend: Historical Fact," Robert Taylor.

"Saint Reat and the Cells of Change," Nelson Ball.

"Sea Seen Centrally," D.r. Wagner.

3 (1967): "Higher and Lower: a study of psychological opposites as a shaping influence in the philosophy of Saint And," David Aylward.

* The Phillips text is said to have been printed in 1878, though another reference dates an 1873 edition. A typographical error? Perhaps. But this faulty documentation could be the contributing factor to this text's being "largely ignored." ****

** Although this text is fictional, the publisher is not. Runcible Spoon was a small press publishing out of Sacramento in the late 1960s-early 1970s, under the energies of D. r. Wagner. His "press: today" (Niagara Falls, N. Y.) published the fourth sequence of Scraptures in 1966. Both presses issued ephemeral visual concrete poetry.

*** This seems to be the total number of issues published. The title pays tribute to St And, the first saint written about in The Martyrology.

**** A comment made by Nichol in a notes page accompanying a draft of "St And"; see annotation for I:27.

A Note on the Annotations

"Why the Greeks?"

Notably absent from the long list of The Martyrology's literary influences are the two areas never neglected in a standard literary education: Greek mythology and British poetry from Shakespeare to Tennyson. I have heard and read Nichol ask "Why the Greeks?" Why has that one way of looking at the world dominated western literature, and been allowed to do so, even in times in which the myths seem to have lost their significance? This question challenged him to investigate non-Mediterranean mythologies, in an attempt to discover any which might be more relevant to himself and, most importantly, spurred him to create his own. It is revealing that the references made to traditional British literature can all be traced to Nichol's college English literature anthology. Quotations from other "traditional" sources are few, and do not come from the academic canon Nichol would have encountered. For instance, William Blake's long poems, which are both referred to and muffledly echoed in The Martyrology, are rarely anthologized in textbooks; despite the historical period in which they were written, they essentially belong to this century. Another example of this kind of quotation from a deviant text occurs in Nichol's use of Venus (a figure also appearing in other Nichol poems), who is evoked more for her planetary powers, as explained in Velikovsky's alternative cosmology, than for her traditional attributes as a goddess.

The mythology in The Martyrology's early books was

intended to focus on the lives of the saints, and it does -- but only in the first two sections of Book 1. It grows with the poem, extending from an increasingly diverse assortment of sources -- including itself. One alternative body of myth belonging to the twentieth century, and one particularly important to Nichol, is the comic strip. It provided him with a contemporary mythology, filled with saviors and villains, from which he could quote and assume his reader to be familiar with his references. Unfortunately, as happens with any literature's references to contemporary history, the freshness of what is current droops into obscurity ten years later when one set of popular referents has been replaced by others. Thus, in the very act of introducing figures from 1960s pop culture, the writer obnubilates his poem. Confronted with Nura Nal, many readers whom I have encountered, myself included, guessing wildly and desperately at that figure's origin, have remained frustrated after having pored over dictionaries of Mesopotamian mythologies trying to find her out. This problem is of course not peculiar to Nichol's writing, nor is it a problem restricted to this century, though it certainly has been aggravated by the absence of a common shared experience and by cultural disintegration. The twentieth century North American long poem presents its reader with increasingly complex problems -- of form, certainly, but also of information. Volumes of annotations, and as important, biographies, have sprung up around some, but not enough, of

the major modernist texts and their writers. The reader can now embark on a Pound or Olson project with Edwards and Vasse or Butterick close by, and thus be spared hours of searching out the details of the myriad references in the texts. Annotations provide useful information, otherwise unavailable, obtained from the writer's archive or, in the case of Butterick's, from the writer himself.

The following annotations reflect the variable texture and wide-ranging tone of the text they reference. (They also, much to the annotator's mixed despair and delight, have inherited The Martyrology's unstoppability and incompleteness.) Some of them are short, supplying dates, names and other straight-forward information. Some refer to Nichol's other writings, if a useful parallel or a textual cross-reference can be made. Nichol's own changing sense of the evolving poem, written in notes made while he was writing it, or given in interviews years later, is provided wherever possible. The longest annotations are those which quote from a text to which Nichol may only briefly refer, but whose context illuminates the poem, or reveals itself as a shaping influence on Nichol's thinking. For instance, Palongawhoya, one of the dedicatees of The Martyrology (I:13) is referred to by name only once more (II:193). But his role in the Hopi cosmology, and his link to the Hopi belief that cosmic harmony depends upon the proper use of one's voice, clearly resound throughout the work. So, as much of the Hopi creation myth as is useful to the context of the poem is outlined in the annotation. The following cautionary note about

autobiographical references, made by Nichol himself, is heartily seconded by the annotator:

> the hardest thing about using autobiographical detail in the long poem is to get the reader to accept it as what it is: words in a book revealing exactly the amount of information necessary for that moment of the composition. autobiographical information seems to raise the desire for more such information, as if knowing it would somehow increase one's appreciation of the text when, in fact, the exact opposite happens; the additional information changes our reading of the text & thus distorts it. ("Things I Don't Really Understand About Myself," Open Letter 6th series, 2/3 <1985>: 73)

I have referenced as many names as possible only out of a sense of annotational duty. In conversations with Nichol, during which I gathered up the who's who in The Martyrology, we found ourselves asking why it would matter to any reader who Pat or Mark or anyone else was (though the clarification of who Terry was should lower any eyebrows raised over eyes reading about Mark and bp digging her grave <II:219>). A reading of the text certainly does not hinge on the reader's having this information. That the people with whom Nichol was associating or living are named in the text indicates his connexion to the situations surrounding or interrupting or intervening the writing process; significantly, the frequency of their appearances decreases as the poem's self-reflexivity increases.

* * *

This sourcebook uses the second, revised, edition of Books 1 and 2 (Toronto: Coach House P, 1977); revisions and other discrepancies between the two editions are noted. Books 1

and 2 consist of nine separately titled components which are herein referred to as sections. Titles longer than one word are shortened thus: "St And," "Scenes," "St Orm," "St Reat," "BCP," "Sons," and "Friends." The sections up to and including "Clouds" are composed of discrete, though sequentially connected, poems, printed one per page. In the last three sections of Book 2, because the individual poems are often longer than a page, a hand-drawn cloud is used to indicate breaks between them. In either case, these short units are referred to as poems.

The annotations are organized by the poem's sequence, not the alphabet's. A short introduction, which discusses the particular thrust of each section and details its chronology (where available), precedes each set of annotations. For readerly convenience, page numbers have been imposed upon this non-paginated poem; Book 1, page 1 (I:1) is the page bearing the opening quotation from Gertrude Stein. Volume and page numbers and the material being noted are all printed in boldface. When a reference applies to a single word, phrase or one line, only the scrutinized word is quoted. If an annotation contextualizes more than one line, the beginning of the passage under discussion is quoted, followed by an ellipsis.

Nichol utilizes the page as a field for spatial notation, so pauses and breaks in his text are indicated by spaces: the larger the space, the longer the pause. Conventional punctuation marks are therefore used sparingly.

Capitalization, too, is minimal, and is here explained when its function is other than traditional. Typographical errors are distinguished from Nichol's own spelling quirks; "concious," "recurr," "thru," "thot" and "lead" (for "led") have by now become standard Nichol spellings. "Cloud-town" and "Cloud-hidden" have been standardized in the concordance, though the capitalization and hyphenization of these words vary within the poem.

The frequently quoted unpublished interviews with Nichol are parenthetically noted by month and year in the text; full documentation is given in the bibliography.

Annotations for Book 1

I:1 "Let me recite . . ."

-- the last line of "If I Told Him: A Completed Portrait of Picasso" (1923), in Gertrude Stein's Portraits and Prayers.

I:2 of those saints . . .

In the first edition the saints' family tree is included on a fold-in insert; in the second it precedes the title page. The following is a summary of saints and saints' abilities. Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations are taken from "A Working Chronology of the Saints," an outline in the drafts that sketches the attributes of the major saints.

The Genealogy of the Saints

St Orm, the "elder god of the seas, truly guides ships & people thru stormy times as opposed to Ranglehold who is randomly cruel." Orm is the first saint, and will be discussed in detail in the introduction to his book. St Rain, though absent in The Martyrology, is one of the elder saints who appears in The Plunkett Papers; she is the first and only saint hand-made by Cloud-hidden. St Iff appears briefly in this text, though his presence is certainly felt in "Clouds," where we are informed that he "died within the sound of water" when he finally fell to earth. We do see him, obliquely, earlier in Cloud-town with his son ("St Reat," I:93). St Rive is not mentioned in The Martyrology. St Reat, first discovered by Nichol in Scriptures, 4th sequence, appears more often than any other saint, and is characterized in this way:

> enigmatic. his area of concern overlaps saint and's. a wandering minstrel or god of speech. later celebrated in folk legend for his romance with saint agnes. went

> thru early period of trial upon the loss of speech capabilities. regained them after arduous quest described in SAINT REAT & THE FOUR WINDS OF THE WORLD during which period he met and fell in love with Saint Agnes (see also part 3 of THE LIVES OF THE SAINTS).1 after quest became teller of tales continuing the tradition begun on his quest. composer of THE SONGS OF SAINTS REAT fragments of which were collected in the 5th century b.c. by Arcidurus from rare Babylonian texts. the songs refer to the collective life traditions of the saints.

St Reat was the second saint to descend from Cloud-town. A quotation from "The Great Migration" (in The Folk Tales of the Saints; see "Clouds," II:139), tells us that he was a child when he came to earth; but a fragment from "How Saint Reat & Saint And Parted Ways" (from same volume, but not included in the published editions) quotes Reat as telling And: "I must seek my destiny among the people here. I will find a family who'll adopt me and grow up with them." He then "changed his body to that of a small child and wandered off towards a distant town." A variation of the same story gives us this:

> saint reat, who had within his power the ability to change bodies, assumed the body of a small child. turning to saint and he said 'i will seek some sort of answer here' & wandered away towards a distant town. saint and, saddened, sat on the ground thinking & did not get up till late the next morning.

Here we see And responding in typical fashion. But what are we to make of Reat's metamorphic capabilities? Have the legends conflated his characteristics of enigmatic wandering-poet/ "simpleton"[2] into this power of self-transformation? Or are there simply two related versions accounting for Reat's manifestation on earth? A stranger in a strange land, he might have appeared to be child-like in his ignorance of the new

world. All the other saints from Cloud-town, however, seem to have arrived in adult form. In either case, Reat's adoption by a terrestrial family draws on the myth of Superboy. After surviving the fall from his home planet of Krypton, the infant Superboy was discovered, in a rocket lying by the side of a road near Smallville, by Jonathan and Martha Kent, who eventually adopted him and name him Clark. Because of their kindly parenting, after their death, "Clark decided he must turn his titanic strength into channels that would benefit mankind. And so was created -- Superman champion of the oppressed, the physical marvel who had sworn to devote his existence to helping those in need" (Superman, 24).[3] Superman eventually learned of his origins; Reat, though, quickly forgot his native home.

Perhaps this loss of roots is connected to his loss of voice which latter eventuated his quest for the origins of all breath.[4] In Hopi mythology, the forgetting of origins, caused by misuse and abuse of voice, precipitates spiritual decay;[5] Reat, despite the warning from St Aggers that "sins were / denials of our sounds" ("St Reat," I:89), suffered this predicament. The journey took him through the desert, where he was tried by the climate, vicious beasts, loneliness, and St Agnes -- whose nurturing love became his oasis. Agnes is not connected with stagnation, as her name might suggest; like Reat's, her name is not a pure "st" word pun. According to notes in the drafts, she was found by Rob Hindley-Smith (though it is unclear exactly when and where), is "generally associated with fertility & life affirmative

forces." She was pregnant and abandoned by Reat, who was apparently unaware that he had a child in the works when he resumed his quest. Their son, whom Reat did not meet until eleven years or so after deserting Agnes, is, naturally, St Rand, who spends his life desperately searching for his father (see "Sons"). Reat's quest deprives him of place; but through his wanderings, with St Agnes's help, he comes to an understanding of silence and beginnings. He must have been absolved of his sins, because his voice returns, after many years. Reat marked the retrieval of his speech by becoming the troubadour of the saints.

St Ave, though the daughter (and presumably female, though in one draft she is referred to with a male pronoun) of the first family of saints, does not come into The Martyrology. Raits, along with his brother Aggers, is one of the elder saints, "a saint of occurences & futility." Raits has a walk-on part in this text ("St Reat," I:93). St Ranglehold bears some resemblance to his mentor-grandfather Orm, but his storminess is "rebellious," and he lends "random cruelty or arbitrariness to most of his actions"; he is a lesser, though more malevolent, saint of troubled waters. He was the first saint to be discovered, by Nichol and Aylward together, while Aylward was working on The War of the Asps.

Saints III, Ove and Ain do not figure in The Martyrology. And, however, appears extensively. He was discovered by Nichol on the inside back cover of Aylward's Typescapes (see fig. 6). The Martyrology's genealogy gives And parents; but in The

Plunkett Papers he is created by Cloud-hidden, with whom he bickers from the beginning, calling him "fool for creating him, and earth, too." He is a rather Prufrockian figure, living in the past and measuring the moon by the spoonful. The outline in the "Working Chronology of the Saints" describes him thus:

> involved with troupe of traveling players. performed in masks & face paint. from there went into period of isolation & contemplation in the country. roughly the saint of languages. linked in mythical structure with Venus in terms of Velikovsky's alternate history of the world. in these terms seen as the binding force which must be ripped asunder & reformed. own process of self despair revealed in part 1 <i.e., "The Martyrology of Saint And">. later elevated in folk mythology to hierarchy of god-heads (see PLUNKETT PAPERS) after his creation by cloud-hidden. oversaw the birth of the poem.

Saint Rike is the only saint remaining in Cloud-town about whom we are given any information. (See "Clouds," II:156, 160, 162; "Auguries," II:182-187.) Rike is far less adventurous than his brother And who, though cautious to the point of mild stagnation, is the first saint to descend to earth. In "Auguries" we find And returned to his original home, roaming around the sky with Rike.

Blind Saint Aggers is called a "saint of the intellect" who was "influential in saint reat beginning the road to sainthood." In The Plunkett Papers he is said to be a shepherd; he and his younger brother Raits, the only survivors of the failed second world, are salvaged by Orm. Aggers is seen once in The Martyrology, instructing Reat in his quest ("St Reat," I:89). Though Aggers's wife is nowhere named, we are told that Ump and Rap are "mothered by the town fool" ("St Reat," I:88). These brothers are mentioned only in conjunction with

Reat ("St Reat," I:88, 95); in fact, they are "raised to sainthood thru popular sympathy" having died accidentally, in a fire inadvertently set by Reat, while trying to break in to a city meeting hall. This event obliges Reat to start his quest.

Along with "The Genealogy of the Saints," a second purple-tinged sheet is included in the first edition -- a hilarious "Afterword to The Martyrology" written by David Aylward, or "David St Alwart," as he is named in the pamphlet, "noted theologian" (theology being "the study of the word 'the' in life and letters," and "theism, a doctrine which teaches that the definite article is the genuine article"), excerpted below:

> There are certain of the saints we always associate in our minds: St. Orm and St. Ress, the art patrons; and that jolly pair, St. Alec Tight and St. Oleg Might, who grew closer together as the years went by; St. Ars and St. Ripes, the patriotic duo. Holiness may even run in the family, as with St. Ring, St. Rong and St. Rung, who were triplets (although St. Rong was illegitimate). And who has not heard the story of St. Ale and his wife, St. Alemate, who together with St. Rum, could often be found in the wine celler <sic>, singing hymns. . . .
>
> I have deliberately avoided mention of St. Ranglehold, St. Reat, St. And or others of their ilk, as these have been quite adequately dealt with by my -- I was about to write colleague, but this is perhaps premature. I must admit, however, that his earlier poems are most rewarding to read. He seems to know exactly where to end a St. Anza and to place a St. Ress.
>
> To the poet, every word in the language is a saint who continually intervenes between him and the world of sense, making it senseless with their hallowed p's and whining q's, their doting i's and literary t's. He must lie awake nights, listening for the howl of St. Orm and wrestling with the enigma of St. Igma. Some of these, he would prefer to avoid, yet he waits fearlessly for a visit from the blind St. Aggers and the dire St. Raits. However elusive they may be, he tracks them relentlessly down one by one, strips them of their cowls, washes their feet and marches them

before his cameras. Shutters click, and their mug shots are left hanging on his walls like ikons. There they gaze across into each other's eyes unable to turn away. But bpNichol turned away. Blessings on him.

Notes

1 The reference is to "Scenes from the Lives of the Saints," which was part III of Book I in earliest conceptions.

2 This term appears in a draft for "Scenes" (I:39).

3 Who Reat "was in real-life remains unknown"; similarly, Superman's identity was concealed by his persona, Clark Kent. There is no information extant on Reat's adoptive parents.

4 One other contributing factor was Reat's accidental killings of Ump and Rap; the quest, thus, takes on a penitential obligation.

5 See note to dedications page (I:13).

I:3 a future music . . .

Nichol:

> This line always gets me when I read back through the book. It was just there as a line. But then out of that whole thing -- that's the first point, I think, where I bring in individual letters, which really are just a deconstruction of a Little Lulu comic I was looking at at the time. That's where those letters come from. (July, 1983)

I:5 the martyrology

Nichol's account for the origin of the title of this work is as follows:

> A friend, Julia Keeler, who used to be a nun, was doing her Ph.D. thesis . . . on minor religious poets of the 1590s, and the minor religious poets were truly minor in the 1590s! One marvelous poem she and I both churtled over was called 'The Martyrology of the Female Saints,' which had some of the worst lines ever written in English language poetry, including the truly epic: 'They cut off both her paps and thus ended her mishaps.' <laughter> It was a pretty heavy understatement given the circumstances! Anyway, through Julia I was introduced to that concept of a martyrology, simply the notion that it was a book in which you wrote out a history of the saints. And since, in a curious way, the saints were language, or were my encounter with language, the possibility of the journal

> journal form or the utanniki form also opened up -- I was writing my history of the saints, my history of my encounter with language, and so on. At times I thought it was a little too downbeat, as a title, so you get tempted to change it, but it still seems accurate. (Line 6, 24)

* * *

> I think when I started the poem I thought of it as "The Martyrology." I stopped working in the <University of Toronto> library in '66, so I would have to have known that title before then. The title precedes the work. There might be some gap between your having knowledge of the title and when you apply it to the work. I'm pretty sure that when I started the piece it very quickly was apparent to me it was about the saints. (July, 1987)

Nichol gives an account of discovering the saints in the same Line interview; see introduction, above.

I:6

The first series of illuminations is probably based upon an icon of a monk-saint. The first frame presents the upper body, the severe hooded face, the hands held stiffly in prayer. But we soon discover that the portrait is not so static. In the second frame, the face seems to have moved forward, as if approaching the reader. In this context, the medallion-frame suddenly seems to change from an object drawn or set upon a surface as a pictorial container, to a hole in the surface through which we look. (This circular motif reappears on the title page of Book 1, and later as the halos of the saints which appear in "Clouds," and "Sons.") The circle cannot of course be a transparent window; it is only circle-shaped ink printed on paper. In fact, all the pictorial sources on which Ofo based his drawings -- mosaics, icons, manuscript illuminations -- make no attempt to mimic three dimensional space. In pre-Renaissance works, uninvolved

as they are with the representational efforts of perspectival paintings, the media do not hide behind their messages.

But what are we observing in this series of framed faces? The figure does indeed seem to be moving progressively nearer to the observer. This kinematic effect is not, however, accomplished by the illustrator. Each of the views of the same face is static in itself; when the three are placed in this particular order, they create a sequence. Actually, the figure is only brought forward in this way by the reader's turning the page, by her activating the mechanics of the book, by her participating in the events delivered from latency when the book is picked up to be read.

And who is the figure? Literally, a saint. But there is also a sense that it may be a semblance of the writer, accompanying the reader, staring out almost accusingly, but leaving her, after she turns the title page, to the text.

I:7 The Chronicle of Knarn

"The Chronicle of Knarn" was the only text to survive the fourth world (see "Cosmogony behind The Martyrology"). The inhabitants of this generation invented flight and travelled to other worlds. This fragment has the nostalgic tone of one of those whose displacement from his (her?) native planet allowed him to survive its destruction, though the identity of the speaker is unknown. The inter-galactic setting is a combination of that found in science-fiction comic strip and Cloud-town. The connexion between superheroes and saints is thus made at the outset, and becomes more

obvious in the first two sections of book one. In a draft, this quotation heads the page:

> 'the most curious part is the brief allusion to ships that moved in the sky. did they in fact have some means of flying mechanically? one cannot help but be reminded of the hopi legend of one of the destroyed ages of the earth when men had boats that flew, or the eskimo tradition that they were transported from a paradise in the south by men in metal birds.'
> R. Taylor 'Myth: Legend: Historical Fact'
> CONJUNCTION 2 1967

And this song of St Reat:

> 'sky-ship
> far-home
>
> lady of sad eyes
> night of screams'
>
> from 'the songs of saint reat' collected by Arcidurus translated by Schmidt 1903 edition p 21

The excerpts from The Chronicles of Knarn were originally titled "SONS OF CAPTAIN POETRY," and then were renamed "The Lost Millenium." The opening poem has been omitted in the published version. Another significant change occurs in the parenthetical section of the second poem (I:8): in the earlier drafts "the figure of captain poetry" appears in lieu of "the figures of the saints."

In the first edition, the larger spaces between lines are space and a half; in the second edition they are enlarged to double spacing.

I:9 the language i write is no longer spoken

Nichol:

> This comes out of that whole argument I made at the time at which I got into sound poetry (which was why -- even though I had a tremendous argument with the rhetoric of TISH at the time -- finally, there was a lot of similarity between what TISH was after, and what

> I was after): it seemed to me, finally, that <poetry> was a spoken art, and the tradition was an oral one. 'And so here I am writing in this language which is English, and it's not spoken with any care,' would be the shorthand way of saying it. But in the literal truth of it, the language I write is no longer spoken. That is, people reading the printed text don't voice it. So that this language you are reading at this moment that I am writing is not a language generally speaking that will get spoken. I also, though, double up on it by putting it into a science fiction framework in this piece. (July, 1983)

I:11 BOOKS 1 & 2

In their first editions, the first two books were numbered with Roman numerals. The second edition and all subsequent books to date use Arabic numerals.

I:12 To the man . . .

In drafts, this quotation is annotated thus: THE WRITINGS OF SAINT AND ed. Kirshenbaum (1896 edition) p 232

In the first edition, this quotation from St And's writings precedes the title page, rather than follows it.

I:13 for lea . . .

Lea Hindley-Smith, one of the founders of Therafields, was Nichol's therapist when he first arrived in Toronto in 1963. She helped Nichol to douse his suicidal tendencies, and became a close friend as Nichol became more involved with the Therafields organization -- eventually working as a therapist himself. Books 1 through 5 are dedicated to her.

This description of Therafields was co-written by Hindley-Smith, Nichol and others:

> Therafields is an experiment of about 600 people in Toronto. Each of us begins with individual therapy that is psychoanalytically based. After a time one enters as well one of the weekly meeting groups of which there are currently seven. About half of those in therapy have proceeded to a more intensive live-in form of

therapy in what we call house groups. The first one was formed in 1962 and the expansion has been very rapid to the present 28 houses. Some of the houses are clustered to form three milieux.

In Therafields the preferred writers, besides Freud himself, have been the innovative and less orthodox analysts -- Reich, Lindner, R. D. Laing, Ian Suttie, Bergler, Lowen, Rosen. . . . . It is a movement of lay therapists independent of the medical profession, such as Freud envisaged in his 'The Question of Lay Analysis'. We pursue the classical one-to-one form of therapy but the heart of the work is group therapy and especially the use of the house-group as therapeutic instrument. Psychodrama forms an integral part of the group work and for the last few years we have been experimenting with the complementary use of a physical program of massage, yoga, and bioenergetics. . . .

. . . With us, just as the group work is the heart of a person's therapy, so the heart of the therapist's training is not merely a one-to-one training analysis, but his own experience in house-groups and learning groups. The active therapists continue to work as a team and to participate in a group where primacy is given to honest communication about their own life struggle.

. . . In Therafields too we have had continually to confront each other on fidelity to a processive imagination. In the process of buying and renovating the Orangeville farm together in 1967 we were challenged to a new consciousness. We intended it as a functional help for weekend group sessions, but the process revealed to us that we wanted to build our lives together. There have been many other examples: the move from individual group-houses to larger groupings (milieux), the growth of the whole dimension of body work, . . . the festival of the arts. In each case the initial imagination was transcended in the process. The struggle can never end because, even after exercising courage about one creative move, it remains easier to repeat the old, fearful attachment to the familiar by inwardly claiming that now we have done enough, now we have arrived. An openness to the unconscious requires in the end a recognition that there is no human possibility of arrival. If you are not planning the new you are on the side of death. And if you are not aware that the fact will transcend your plan, you are in danger of betraying life the next time around.

This is as important for a larger political movement of man as for a hopeful expansion of one's inner personal life.

It is often difficult to talk about Therafields as a psychoanalytically oriented community since to most people there is a separation between psyche and action; 'psychoanalytic' has come to connote interest in the

> former alone. What we are concerned with is the emotional life in a context of action, which is to say, not isolating emotional life in order to study it in a contextless situation, but placing it in an observable life context. Thus the group-house -- 15 to 20 people living together communally, committed to opening up their daily emotional problems to examination and understanding. (Hindley-Smith et al., "Therafields," The Canadian Forum January 1973: 12, 14, 15, 17)

& for palongawhoya . . .

Nichol's reading in the mid-60s included a wide range of creation myths. The Book of the Hopi by Frank Waters was an influence on the cosmology developed in The Plunkett Papers. The figure of Palongawhoya is of particular interest, since he is a dedicatee of The Martyrology.

In the Hopi cosmology Taiowa, the creator, was the only being to have existed before the first world, Tokpela (Endless Space). His first conception was the finite; his first creation -- Sotuknang, his nephew -- was sent forth to make the nine universes: one for his uncle, one for himself, and seven for the life to come. After performing the requisite divisions of solids, waters and air, Sotuknang made "life and its movement to complete the four parts, Tuwaqachi, of <Taiowa's> universal plan" (4).

In Tokpela Sotuknang created Kokyangwuti -- Spider Woman. She in turn created life on this new earth, for, as Sotuknang pointed out, "It has shape and substance, direction and time, a beginning and an end. But there is no life upon it. We see no joyful movement. We hear no joyful sound. What is life without sound and movement?" For every one of her creatures she used the same recipe: earth mixed with saliva, molded into the desired form, then covered with "a cape made of white

substance which was the creative wisdom itself," over which she sang the Creation Song. The creature was then uncovered, fully alive, awake and alert. Her first creations were twins, Poqanghoya and Palongawhoya, whose duty it was "to help keep this world in order when life is put upon it." The first twin's job was to solidify the earth. Palongawhoya was bidden by Sotuknang to "go about all the world and send out sound so that it may be heard throughout all the land. When this is heard you will also be known as 'Echo,' for all sound echoes the Creator." When Palongawhoya sounded, "all the vibratory centers along the earth's axis from pole to pole resounded his call; the whole earth trembled; the universe quivered in tune. Thus he made the whole world an instrument of sound, and sound an instrument for carrying messages, resounding praise to the Creator of all" (4-5). The twins resided at the poles of the earth's axis -- Poqanghoya at the north, Palongawhoya at the south -- and were dually responsible for its successful rotation. Poqanghoya kept his hand on the earth's stability; Palongawhoya "was given the power to keep the air in gentle ordered movement, and instructed to send out his call for good or for warning throughout the vibratory centers of the earth" (5).

Further, in Hopi mysticism the human microcosm was believed to have its own central axis in the spinal cord, along which were "several vibratory centers which echoed the primordial sound of life throughout the universe or sounded a warning if anything went wrong" (9). These five

physiological and psychic centres -- the top of the head, the brain, the throat, the heart and the solar plexus -- linked the body to the Creator. The throat's power is of special interest, given Nichol's take on Palongawhoya, and his work in sound poetry:

> The third center lay in the throat. It tied together those openings in <man's> nose and mouth through which he received the breath of life and the vibratory organs that enabled him to give back his breath in sound. This primordial sound, as that coming from the vibratory centers of the body of earth, was attuned to the universal vibration of all Creation. New and diverse sounds were given forth by these vocal organs in the forms of speech and song, their secondary function for man on this earth. But as he came to understand its primary function, he used this center to speak and sing praises to the Creator. (10)

Nichol gives his own summary of the Palongawhoya story in an interview in The Capilano Review:

> Palongawhoya's job was to open his mouth and to sing the praises of the creator. . . . If he did that, then the vibratory axis of his body vibrated in tune with the vibratory axis of the cosmos and everything was in harmony, see? . . . <But people> got tricked by Raven and they began to use speech as a way of talking inside their teepees to each other. And this was a false use of it. Eventually he who creates everything comes down and bumps them all off for misuse of voice. And that's happened about four times according to the legend. (325)

In a discarded dedication the two dedicatees are linked: "for Palongawhoya / 'he made the whole world an instrument of sound' // & for Lea / who returned me to that world" -- suggesting that a world lost can be (re)found.

I:15

This illumination is based on the figure of Christ the Pantocrator, a figure common in Byzantine art, in which Christ is presented less as the Son, and more like a stern

God the Father. (The exact source has not yet been found.) As in the previous illuminations, we are tempted to question the framing: are the two encircled faces -- angels? -- peering from behind the rectangular surface? Or are they drawn upon medallions? They even resemble volume and tuning knobs on a radio, while Christ sits in the speaker's place.

In the first edition, this illumination is used on the cover of David St. Alwart's (a.k.a. David Aylward) "Afterword to The Martyrology," an insert not duplicated in the second edition. (See note to I:2.)

I:19 "The Martyrology of Saint And"

The illumination of St And is based on a mosaic -- a medium appropriately corresponding to this saint, consisting as it does of numberless conjoined fragments. Although the precise source has not yet been found, the style of drapery and facial features strongly suggest that the figure is from one of the massive mosaics in Ravenna. The first drawing is the one closest to the original, though the square halo is probably Ofo's addition.

St And's face gradually takes on that of a clown -- his beard turning up into a painted smile, and his already starry eyes becoming diamond-shaped mime-eyes. As the clown mask breaks up, the eye make-up, melting, looks more like tears than sparkles; the fragmented outlines become scattered; even the halo seems to render into beads of nervous perspiration. The final frame shows the saint recomposed, at least outwardly. His eyes, however, betray a certain spaced-out disbelief, and the disjointed outline now suggests

perforations more than assembled tesserae. If the pages are thumbed quickly enough, this series of illuminations becomes as animated as the flip-pictures in the corners of Big-Little Books (one of the many kinds of books Nichol collects).

This first section has always been considered to be the first, even before the work it initiated was acknowledged to be The Martyrology. Perhaps because of its prolonged beginningness -- it began something . . . but what? -- it endured more revisions than any other section in Books 1 and 2. Although what is said does not alter significantly from draft to draft, the notation changes frequently: lines are broken, dropped down on the page, slid over to the right or left; conventional punctuation marks are used more often than usual in a Nichol text. In some drafts pages 32 and 33 are reversed; the "final" poem (I:35) often appears earlier in the sequence, between pages 26 and 27. (In fact, pages 27-34 seem to embody a second run of poems.) Two italicized quotations deleted in the published text appear in most of the drafts (on pages 27 and 31). "St And" is the only section to have had footnotes included at the bottom of the page, introducing yet another kind of texture and voice.

Both Monotones and The Martyrology have quotations from "The Writings of Saint And" in their opening pages; numerous further citations from And which do not appear in the published text, but which illuminate it, will be annotated.

It seems appropriate, from the standpoint of the reader reading Book 6, and beyond, twenty years after this

first part was written, that The Martyrology began with the story of St And -- the saint who saw the birth of poetry (in The Plunkett Papers), the saint who tried to conjoin, but who is also "the binding force which must be ripped asunder & reformed" (see note on St And, I:2). The curious reader might open up Pound's long poem and find out the audacious first word in its first canto.

I:21 As to what . . .

-- annotated variantly in the drafts:

> author unknown AN INTRODUCTION TO THE WRITINGS OF SAINT AND (1944) p.9
>
> An Introduction to the Writings of Saint And -- author unknown, BLACK RIBBON, Vancouver, 1962, ii
>
> december 67 // the undated poem . . .

The date refers to the time this piece was being written. The "undated poem," which Nichol did not remember having written when he accidentally found it in a drawer is The Undiscovered Country, a long poem itself, begun in 1966, and which Nichol continued to work at until 1971 or 72, when he abandoned it. The title is a phrase from Hamlet's "To be or not to be" soliloquy ("death, / The undiscovered country from whose bourn / No traveller returns . . ." <III:i>), a speech whose mood permeates the entire Nichol work. The poem writhes in the aftermath of a broken relationship. (Memories of the same relationship occur throughout "Clouds.")

I:22 oceans . . .

Okeanos, offspring of Uranus and Gaia (see eg. Hesiod's Theogony), was a river encircling the earth (called ὠκεανὸς ποταμός, i.e. "ocean-river," by Homer; see eg. Iliad,

Book 21:195, ff. <Lattimore trans.>) and as such resembles and is sometimes depicted as a snake eternally pursuing its own tail. From the Mediterranean standpoint, it was the vast unknown outerness, as opposed to the more domestic inland waters and seas, and was the source of all those lesser waters.

As to how the italics operate, Nichol explains:

> This is one of my earliest attempts at getting at, if you like, 'the chain idea.' <'Chains' are the non-linear structuring principle used in Book Five.> Suddenly another voice cuts in; the poem goes in another direction. For instance, you could go: 'motion / . . . is eternal your eyes?' These are things addressed to St And, but also addressed to that notion of the divine. But then this voice which is more didactic comes in, literally. It's another way the poem could have gone. In this case I just put it back in and manage to find a way to bridge it. But it's also at the same time one of my early attempts at really starting to build that business of having multiple voices talking at once in the poem.
>
> By the way, I have an up to the date revision of the last stanza; I've been revising it a number of times. It's never quite worked for me. It should read
>
> the feel of colour in
> the fingers' tips
>
> hands questions
> words cannot
> understand (February, 1987)

In the first edition there is a double space between "blackness" and the next line.

I:23 joy casts a tent in your midst

This line, footnoted number one, is annotated in this way on the Notes page:

> 'There were at that time a number of such nomadic organizations. How it came about that he joined them has never been made clear. What we do know comes from the writings of people who first encountered him in

this setting.' author unknown AN INTRODUCTION TO THE WRITINGS OF SAINT AND pp 30-31

It also appears, slightly altered, in "green lady grocer early morning song" in The Other Side of the Room:

you
cast your tent in
my midst
just
too much flesh for
the skin to
bear . . .

Nichol has suggested that this image echoes the pitching of tents that occurs frequently in Genesis. In a discarded introduction (dated Toronto, 1970) Nichol explains the anachronistic association of St And and the modern circus:

> obviously words like 'circus' (a non-existent form of entertainment during the historical time of the saints) and the associations i group it have little relevance in terms of the travelling troupe or carnival saint and moved with -- yet i have interchanged the two.

impossible hills

An early (perhaps the earliest) draft, which includes pages 21, 23, 25 and 35, is titled "'The Impossible Hills' -- for Wayne and Juli" Clifford.

I:24 saint and / enshrined in organdy / flows out the chimney

Nichol has said that he was strongly influenced by Patchen's Love Poems; this image of organdy moving in rooms, curtains, reminded him of these Patchen poems (June, 1984).

I:25 a tree with false branches

Although the textual source for this image has not yet been found, Nichol recalled that it comes from a south seas myth, in which this figure represents death.

when death / was just / a man

This is the second footnoted passage in "St And," annotated thus:

> '" Of the apocryphal literature relating to Saint And THE ENCOUNTERS display the greatest imagination. Ranging widely thru myth it attempts to show the place of Saint And in relation to the mythic cosmos."'
> Phillip Workman 'And Apocrypha' CONJUNCTION 1 1966"

slim lady lady of light lady who is not

"My lady" reappears in "St Orm." See I:55 and note.

I:26 the black letters . . .

Literally, the particles of text being written at the moment. As of September 1981, when giving readings of this section, Nichol has removed the "the" at the beginning of this line, because "it got more in the way the more <he> read it. 'The black letters' made for a more pragmatic connexion between <this and the preceding> line. Whereas now, with 'black letters' and 'the panes,' you get a funny kind of equation happening with the removal of "the" that I quite like" (Nichol, February 1987). Presumably this change will be made in any future editions of the poem.

I:27 tents cast on the sand

Although the corresponding number does not surface anywhere in the drafts of this text, there is this third footnote:

> Here Aylward makes the mistake many classicists make by ignoring the very rich folk tradition with regard to the saints. For a larger picture consult A.B. Phillips's early (but largely ignored) AN ORGANIZED HISTORY OF THE SAINTS (1873) or, the more recent, FOLK TALES OF THE SAINTS edited and annotated by S. McCaffery & published by the Black Ribbon Press (1962).

-- which seems to comment upon the following critical source that appears at the top of this page in several drafts, but

is now deleted:

> What was his private life like? The glimpses we have of it come to us only thru his writings. Beyond that much that has been written must be regarded as sheer speculation.
>
> David Aylward, 'Higher & Lower: a study of psychological opposition as shaping influence in the philosophy of Saint And,' CONJUNCTION 3: 1967

I:28 the sea . . .

-- see I:22 and note. Nichol's sea of despair has its literary forerunner in John Bunyan's "Slough of Despond."

I:30 SAINT REAT / SAINT RANGLEHOLD / SAINT AND

As regards the capitalization here, Nichol comments:

> I certainly say these with increased emphasis and even sometimes with a certain stentorian tone, but the real idea there is set up by the following line: 'the hierarchy's a difficult place to stand.' This is hierarchical, therefore it's all caps. So it's a certain notion of what capitalization is about. (February, 1987)

This substantial quotation is present in all but the final drafts:

> In the vast panorama that makes up the lives of the Saints, Saint And seemingly plays a minor role being relegated to the same position as Saint Ump or Saint Rap. Yet we must realize that this was a later development. In earlier texts he is intimately linked with the comings and going of Venus & And seems to have been devalued at the same time as the myths around Venus & her various counterparts became more embroidered and confused. Certainly he is as important as Saint Ranglehold or Saint Reat who, after all, are merely expansions of tiny facets of Saint And's personality. This process of devaluation could be seen as indicative of a generalized psychic rationalizing mechanism that was dominant in the culture at that time.
>
> author unknown AN INTRODUCTION TO THE WRITINGS OF SAINT AND (1944) pp 13-14

I:31 close the door . . . I TOLD HIM DIFFERENT

As the italics indicate, a different voice comes in with this line. The capitalized line further down the page is a kind of

spin-off from the caps on I:30. It too brings in another tone; Nichol calls it "almost a disguised quotation." It sets up an ambiguity with the italicized voice, as well.

> It could be the speaker speaking; but since the "I" is different <this is the only intentional upper case first person pronoun in the first two books>, who is speaking? It could be the self talking to the self; it could be the self talking to the divine; it could be the divine talking to the self. And that's not indecision on my part. It's an attempt to evoke the complexity of that relationship. It seems to me that, certainly in my experience of this whole business, one of the questions you end up asking yourself is 'is this happening or am I making this up?' That question of whether one wishes to appear a 'better' person than one is so one ascribes one's self certain qualities and so on. That kind of self-aggrandizement of one's own spirituality I find kind of repugnant and so there's always this questioning that goes on in an attempt, I suppose, to transcribe the experience in a more authentic way. Now of course this is absolutely subjective. Finally, I don't know how successful that attempt will be in any kind of broad way but I like to think that it points toward accuracy. (February, 1987)

I:33 king fool

"King fool" is a term for that god who is more concerned with delivering final judgements than with the well-being of people themselves. He is first developed in Monotones (see number LII, and especially LXXVIII), where King Fool's single-eyed madness becomes identified with a writer's wilfullness. There is also in these lines the hint of the "fool" songs, largely country western and bluesy rock, that were around in the 50s and 60s.

I:34 the major notes are lost in minor movements

One such minor movement occurs in Monotones number LI. The "dark woman of the wood" who appears in that poem is one of the original cosmogonic giants, a major note, in The

Plunkett Papers. She is the mother of the sun and moon, courtesy Cloud-hidden; a sort of dryadic Nūt. "Dark lady" shows up from time to time in The Martyrology, but she does not carry the mythological significance that she does in The Plunkett Papers.

I:35 the bear

"'The Bear Went Over the Mountain' dictates the work. As I go along I don't have to invent. It's all there already" (Nichol, June 1984). The lyrics to the song -- "The bear went over the mountain / To see what he could see" -- are sung to the same melody, and with the same repetitions, as "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow."

I:37 "Scenes from the Lives of the Saints"

This section was written in close succession to, or perhaps even concurrent with, "St And," and accompanied that first section in Nichol's numerous attempts to compose some kind of cohesive collection with the disparate and fragmentary pieces that addressed the saints. The writing in "Scenes" comes directly out of work in Scraptures, especially the prose pieces (in Nights on Prose Mountain) wherein "the saints began to develop characters. It was a logical outgrowth just to start to talk about them," and so The Martyrology emerged (July, 1987).

The title is one that also applies to a common type of icon, in which the central large figure of a single saint is framed by a series of smaller scenes depicting significant events in his exemplary life (performing miracles, founding a new order, healing, writing, being tortured for his faith, etc.). This section is the only one without illuminations interspersing the text. The title page figures are probably taken from a church calendar icon, or some other composition in which crowds of saints or the apostles are depicted in such unemotional stances.

I:39 Saint Reat is encountered . . .

The bibliographical material for this source is "Rob Smith, 'Myth & Man,' Conjunction 2: 1967." This additional speculation as to Reat's nature appears in a draft: "who he was in real-life, wandering poet or simpleton, remains unknown."

these halls are slippery

-- the halls of institutions: "of power, or of the Church, or the Temple, bureaucracy -- a religious Kafkaesque image" (July, 1987).

du monde de la tigre

The French translates as "of the world of the tiger." When asked if this tiger had any connexion to Blake's, Nichol replied that he had not consciously intended any resemblance at the time of writing, but could see the suggestion of Blake possibly hovering there. ("The Tiger" is one of the more heavily marked poems in Nichol's first year U.B.C. English text.) "'Du monde de la tigre,'" Nichol explained, "simply came out, sounded right, and stands as is" (June, 1984).

I:40 cries of the sailors caught in the heaving line the tongue can't speak

This long line parallels the first line in Monotones LXXVIII, a poem also concerned with constrictions:

> sometimes you just want to get off one long sentence
> before you die
>
> sometimes you die
> & the sentence hangs there
>
> the sentence is served
> obsequious king fool

St Ranglehold, though trained by St Orm, surely inherited his crueller aspects from the Great Asphyxiator Himself, Cloud-hidden (King Fool).

I:42 or starving

In the first edition this line occurs one space after the previous one, but is dropped down two lines.

I:43 Superimpose the sea . . .

This excerpt is from D.r. Wagner's "Sea Seen Centrally" in Conjunction 2, 1967. In some drafts, this sentence follows the second one: "More than any other saint the path of his life crosses and recrosses a thousand mythic cultures leaving a trail of destruction in his wake."

a ship in perilous storm / the lover doth compare his state to

-- see Thomas Wyatt's "The Lover Compareth His State to a Ship in Perilous Storm Tossed on the Sea," also included in Nichol's college English text.

emma peel

-- the long-legged half of the secret agent team on The Avengers. This TV series was produced in England, played on North American stations intermittently from 1966 to 1969, and has reappeared in reruns frequently since then. Patrick Macnee played Steed, the dapper male detective, throughout the series. Emma Peel, played by Diana Rigg, was one of the three female agents who worked with him, and by far the most super-heroic of them all. In "notes" to this section, Nichol calls her "the second and grooviest Avengeress." The avengeress who preceded Emma Peel went by the St Ormy name of Cathy Gale (played by Honor Blackman).

flacid

-- a typographical error; the "c" should be doubled.

I:44 followed immediately / by another pitch variation

The earliest draft reads:

this is an immediate perception
to be followed immediately
by another

pitch
variation

This seems to be echoing Charles Olson's discussion of "composition by field" in "Projective Verse," an essay with which Nichol would have been well acquainted by this time.

> . . . the process of the thing, how the principle can be made so to shape the energies that the form is accomplished. And I think it can be boiled down to one statement . . .: ONE PERCEPTION MUST IMMEDIATELY AND DIRECTLY LEAD TO A FURTHER PERCEPTION. It means exactly what it says, is a matter of, at all points (even, I should say, of our management of daily reality as of the daily work) get on with it, keep moving, keep in, speed, the nerves, their speed, the perceptions, theirs, the acts, the split second acts, the whole business, keep it moving as fast as you can, citizen. And if you also set up as a poet, USE USE USE the process at all points, in any given poem always, always one perception must must must MOVE, INSTANTER, ON ANOTHER! (Human Universe, 52-53)

close it / vast

There is here, first of all, a play on "vast" and "fast." These lines also pick up on the opening of the entire poem (I:21) where the forgotten poem is discovered in a drawer.

Nichol:

> It was also a way of opening up the poem at the end. I'm not talking about close the poem, but close the drawer. Suddenly everything opens up. For me it echoes that line of bissett's: 'to let fly high/let / that bird go, see how yur hand / takes up the space so itself / without the bird crampd in it.' Which to me is about the giving up of desire, or the giving up of clinging to the thing -- and suddenly, something opens up for you. You push it away. 'Things got out of hand' -- it picks up that image, too.
>
> I think the main thing here is the vast/fast pun. But there is an echo of the bissett, because I really love it. That was one of my most quoted little bits in this period of time. I finally used it in Book 6. <See prefatory quotation to "AFTER BIRD (improvising)." (July, 1987)

I:45 dick tracy or sam

Chester Gould's super-cop comic strip Dick Tracy began its

newspaper strip life on October 12, 1931. Tracy was the iron-jawed gangster chaser whose numerous enemies were blatantly ugly and evil, and whose friends and associates were loyal and few. Sam Catchem was one of Tracy's partners.

(venus long hair . . .

These lines capsulize the cosmogonic Venus of The Plunkett Papers, whose character is largely drawn from Velikovsky's account of the planet's violent transformation from a comet, and the catastrophic events which occur on the earth as a consequence.

> Possessing a tail and moving on a not yet circular orbit, Venus was more of a comet than a planet, and was called a 'smoking star' or a comet by the Mexicans. They also called it by the name of Tzontemoque, or 'the mane.' The Arabs called Ishtar (Venus) by the name Zebbaj or 'one with hair,' as did the Babylonians.
>
> 'Sometimes there are hairs attached to the planets,' wrote Pliny; an old description of Venus must have served as a basis for his assertion. But hair or coma is a characteristic of comets, and in fact 'comet' is derived from the Greek word for 'hair.' The Peruvian name 'Chaska' (wavy-haired) is still the name for Venus, though at present the Morning Star is definitely a planet and has no tail attached to it. (Worlds in Collision, 165)

In The Plunkett Papers Venus is, at first, "a casual visitor to this system with her long flowing hair." At that time, Old-Man-of-the-Mountain was still young and in love with her ("he'd sit in his cave nights & watch her naked & wonderful in the night skies"); they made love once, and Venus bore twins (boy and girl) who set up housekeeping in the Rockies ("the first home any man had ever made on earth"). Her meeting with earth, however, resulted in a cataclysmic orgasm that changed both of them:

. . . venus covered her breasts with clouds. stepped

> out of the sea and sent earth spinning. venus fucked earth good. he came in tidal waves & volcanic upheavals of sperm . . .

After this, "god how venus changed!"

> Old man heaved & shuddered & the rivers of his tears changed their course with such force venus appeared to be stepping from a sea. but ever after she ran in circles, miles beyond his reach, & he'd watch her each night & cry.

Along with Venus the long-haired comet there is a glimpse here of Botticelli's more tactile Venus, partially clothed by her own long hair, balancing on the lip of a shell, emerging from the sperm-whitened sea. This figure is also suggested in Monotones LX:

> moon
> & ocean
>
> the farm drifts into the sea
>
> stepping out
> into the waves rising
>
> she cups her hands
> over her breasts
>
> and smiles

I:46 sam & dick & emma peel

-- see I:43, 45 and notes.

I:47 The romance between . . .

In the first edition the word "otherwise" occurs at the end of the fifth line in this quotation from Rob Smith's "Myth & Man," Conjunction 2, 1967.

I:49 what's a / poem like you . . .

This is a persistent question that harasses the writer especially in the early years of the poem: what's Scriptures doing here? Or Monotones? Or Captain Poetry? Or The Plunkett Papers? . . . Or more of The Martyrology? In one draft these

lines actually do appear to be closer to the old pick-up line: "what's a / nice girl like you doing in a / poem like this?"

I:50 Shanghalla

-- an airless satellite; the Elysian Fields for D.C. comics superheroes. The name is an amalgam of Shangrila and Valhalla. (See, e. g., Adventure Comics 353 Feb. 1967, or 357 June 1967.)

i'm tired of fingering these old poems . . .

The etymology of "bead" is ultimately connected to words denoting prayer (ME bede, a prayer, hence a prayer bead; OE bed (or gebed), a prayer, lit. an asking from God; akin to OE biddan, to ask; hence bid. Cf. Partridge). One bids or tells or says or counts one's beads. A rosary, the implied image in these lines, is simply a tactile mnemonic device for the accounting of prayers: Pater Noster, ten Ave Marias, Gloria, and on again. But when the metaphor is applied to the poem at hand, it suggests entrapment in a doggedly repeatable cycle -- perhaps the circle of saints and heroes whose powers are weakening, but who still have a hold on the poem. Certainly "these old poems," in the first two sections of The Martyrology, had been revised, reordered and restrung so many times that they must have begun to feel like monotonous prayers. This image returns, altered, in an equally changed poem (see II:231).

Nura Nal . . . Naltor

Nura Nal is the real name of Dream Girl, who comes from the

planet Naltor. She is one of the Legion of Superheroes, and has the limited ability to see as far as one year in the future. (See, e. g., Adventure Comics 374 Nov. 1968.)

dick tracy's chasing / some murderer on the moon

During the fall of 1967, Dick Tracy's crime-fighting took him to the moon and back. "Scenes" includes several references to saints that were manifesting themselves in various media in the culture immediately contemporary with the writing of these pieces. Nichol's own gloss on this last page of "Scenes," composed at the same time as the passage itself, was included as the fourth footnote on the notes page which accompanied "St And," "Scenes" and "St Orm" when they, and parts of Monotones, were all there was of The Martyrology.

> These particular sections relating to Emma Peel, Dick Tracy, Sam Catchem & Nura Nal (dream girl) come from a period when the mythology of the saints & its relationship to my own life was very unclear. In point of fact I reverted to the mythical figures of my youth &/or those more current to the culture I was surrounded with. . . . Nura Nal whose home planet was Naltor & whose prophetic dreams enabling her to see for a limited distance into the future were what won her membership in D.C. comics LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES, I identified with her from the first time I encountered her. She was also incredibly good looking (the only comic book character i was ever tempted to have jerk-off fantasies about). Emma Peel is, of course, the late lamented Avengeress played by Diana Rigg one of the few t.v. shows I got hooked to watching every week & who was retired from the show around the time this poem was written. Shanghalla figures prominently as the graveyard planet where super heroes from around the universe are buried as part of D.C.'s incredibly complex mythology.

green // blue // grey

These are the banner colours of The Martyrology, all three being mentioned frequently, and each symbolizing an entire psychic realm (a pastoral earthly peacefulness, heaven, and

the cloud of unknowing, respectively, and very generally).

Nichol:

> Every time I use 'blue' -- and this is really a technique I took over from concrete poetry into the poem -- I let it stand. Even if I'm not sure why I'm letting it stand. As you move on, like in Book 4, the thing around 'blue' takes on connotation, as I begin to go into some of the etymology and use it in some ways. I'm trying to distinguish between what I see in it now, and what I saw then. It was really going on instinct at the time <of writing>. These were the colours that had evolved through the work, and this is sort of letting <the saints> be wrapped in the colours of the work. (July, 1987)

Removed from this page is this heading quotation which is included in drafts:

> Here we have the final mystery in which saint and, his role increasingly minor, seems finally to disappear. If we read more closely, however, we discover that he has in fact been destroyed by his own disenchanted followers. Those who had granted him saint-hood take it away.
>
> author unknown AN INTRODUCTION TO THE WRITINGS OF SAINT AND (1944) p 68

This variant appears only in "the trilogy idea" draft:

> . . . and like a huge explosion throws us back again across the,whole galaxy of myth. this is the final mystery of the saints in which saint and, who seems to practically disappear, is in fact swallowed by the cosmic act of the disenchanted followers.
> <source as above>

The notable aspect of these italicized glosses is their cadential tone, the ring of "final" and "disappear" announcing a premature death knell for the saints. The Ubermensch -- saint, hero, writer -- deteriorates as the text accumulates, but the saints are far from dead. Their roles as characters the writer identifies with, as intercessors he prays through, however, are waning. St And was, after all, canonized by Nichol who, though among the disenchanted, chants on.

I:53 "The Sorrows of Saint Orm"

There is a stretch of time between the writing of "Scenes" and "St Orm," though neither archival material nor Nichol's memory helps to determine the exact duration. It certainly was not long, but it seems to have allowed some of the puzzlement surrounding The Martyrology's composition to dissolve or resolve itself. During this break, Nichol finally acknowledged that Monotones simply did not fit in The Martyrology, that it was a separate work. But there was still more to say about the saints. "St Orm" is finally where Monotone-like material is integrated with the saints -- a development Nichol saw as one of his "first little technical breakthroughs."[1] Whereas "St And" tells the perils of one saint, and "Scenes" sketches cameos (using a technique resembling some of the work in Scriptures) of numerous heroes whose powers dwindle in the Gotterdammerungish ending, "The Sorrows of Saint Orm" addresses personal psychic plight by way of the metaphor of one saint.

St Orm is, obviously, the saint of disturbances -- atmospheric and otherwise. In this section his figure literally embodies the Sturm und Drang of Nichol's past and present and gives him a way of addressing these emotional upheavals without, as he says, "getting too metaphorical, and this is a really dicey metaphor anyway. By the fact that it's Saint Orm, though, I can take what is on the edge of cliche, and use it in a slightly fresh way. I'm now, many years later, not completely sure of the success of that". Readers of Book 1, and of this section in particular, may find

themselves weighing the balance between the cliche and the fresh; poems which seem to brim with maudlin sentimentality or emotional self-indulgence for one (or at one reading; the response almost depends on the colour of the sky) may strike another as straight forward emotional writing. Much of the positive feedback Nichol has received about the first two books centres on the ability of the poems to address "fairly loaded emotional material in a direct way." The evocation of the saint's powers creates the prayerful tone that operates in the greater context of this work. As the characteristics or attributes of deities and heroes in any epic are listed or epithetized (Agnus Dei, Man of Steel, Stella Maris, etc.), so Orm's manifold aspects are given. He is a guardian (55-57); a source of knowledge, story, the ability to talk* (58) a guide (59); both storm and calm (60, 62); a pilot (63); fate or destiny (69).* He also, being the eldest saint, has an air of the Ancient of Days -- a charateristic picked up in Ofo's illuminations.

Although the title suggests that this section might introduce Orm's own trials and martyrdom, we find instead that the sorrows are endured by individuals for whom Orm is an intercessor. The piece can be seen to divide into three sections: a contemplation of the present sorrows of "my lady" (i.e., Ellie); the writer's memories of a particularly depressing period in his recent past; and a kind of synthesis: the return to the present, the beloved, and a tentative release from the nagging depression which finally

took Nichol to therapy and Toronto. These movements are definite enough in the text as they stand, but Nichol's own summary of his last year in Vancouver gives a sense of the turmoil he needed to extricate himself from.

> It was a heavy time. I had gotten into teaching through sheer whim, there was no real desire. There was just a teacher standing in front of the room, so I ticked off the role "teacher" -- there was no real thinking at all. I wanted to be an archaeologist, but couldn't figure out how to do it from the university calendars. It never occurred to me that you could get counselling. I got a scholarship to go to King Edward College that paid my costs. At that time in B.C. you could get grade thirteen as an option. So for 500 bucks that paid for that year I lived at home. But I couldn't really go on very long not making money, and I figured I had to get a job somehow. But I was very torn between the young poet's life in Vancouver, and having this job which I was supposed to be doing, which I didn't want to be doing.
>
> I was just 18 when I started teaching, just a babe -- and a crazy one at that! I was teaching grade four, 39 of them, the 'slow learners' class. And I was terrible, probably more disturbed than them. And most of them <u>were</u> disturbed, it wasn't that they were slow. There was one kid who was on medication, and his mom would forget and would give him all the medication at once -- 10 phenobarbs -- so the kid was either speeding or absolutely knocked out flat. Things like that. It was a pretty tough situation. I had no semse of discipline, so I'd be grabbing kids by their hair, and then I'd start feeling total guilt and mortification about it. I'd sworn I'd never have a kid strapped -- I was death on strapping. Mind you, I'm pulling their hair! In fact, when I finally did have a kid strapped, that's when I finally quit.
>
> I had no real program. Sure, I'd taken the course and classes, but they teach you fuck all. It's still the same thing now when you're learning how to teach: you end up in the best class in the school, and the teacher knows <u>exactly</u> what the teacher's doing, and the teacher stands at the back while you teach the class. You don't have any responsibility for discipline. When you go to work, though, they throw you in the worst class in the school, and it's always a discipline problem. You're made or broken in that first year. Now, if you have a strong sense of your calling or purpose, you'll probably do pretty good. But if you don't, that ain't the year to discover the joys of teaching!
>
> My main reason for leaving Vancouver was that I had to deal with my psychological state. I had to get <u>out</u>, and I had to do something about my head or I was going to die. I thought I was going to kill myself on whim -- once

again, with the same kind of impulse with which I'd become a teacher, out of the same kind of deep conviction. I thought I'd just say one day 'well, that looks like a good idea,' and then BOOM -- I'd be gone. So I figured I should do something about it. Dave <Phillips> and Jim <Alexander> and Barb <Shore> -- we were all big friends together -- wanted me to stay, so we'd all go out together in the fall. I had this kind of feeling that if I didn't go, I'd never get out, and when the fall came they wouldn't necessarily go. And I felt I had to, basically because of the therapy. I'd been in therapy in the summer of 63, and I felt I still really needed to sort my head out.

Notes

1 All comments by Nichol quoted (or starred) in this section were made at the July, 1987 interview.

The illuminations of St Orm are based on an icon of St Antipas, a bishop pf Pergamos who was martyred early in the first century. He was singled out by the voice of God himself as being his "faithful martyr" in a city brimming with idolators (see Revelation 2:13). The illumination on I:63 (the fifth one after the title page) is the "original" rendering, the faces preceding it being solider and rounder and more St Nicholas-like, and those following becoming progressively liquid -- resembling accumulating melting candle wax, or a comic strip face picked up on Silly Putty and stretched to oblivion. The ur-icon of this extraordinarily expressive face was probably made for a chapel dedicated to St Antipas in the basilica of St Catherine's in Sinai and was probably painted by a Venetian in the second half of the thirteenth century (Weitzmann, 117; see fig. 7).

I:55 ----------

Nichol explains that his intentions behind the dividing lines, which only appear in "St Orm" and "St Reat," came from

a "misreading" of the lines in Jack Spicer's The Heads of the Town Up to the Ether, which he read shortly after it was published (1962). In this text, a horizontal line, and hefty spaces on either side of it, divide each page in half, separating the poem at the top of the page from the prose commentary, in a lighter ink, at the bottom. Even at this early date he was reading the page as a score, and so read down each page rather than following either the upper or lower text linearly, thus taking the spaces, the change in inking and the lines as notational devices reinforcing the change in voice so obviously happening in the language itself. (This way of reading also gives a sense of Nichol's wanting to always-read-at-least-two-things-at-once; to read a text as a stratification, not as a linear extension; to hear it as the momentary meeting of lines in a polyphonic chord, in which each single tone signifies its own weight simultaneous to its being an integral part of a larger sound.) Around this time, too, Nichol read Michael McClure's A New Book/A Book of Torture, in which lines are used to separate sections of the text. Nichol's lines, though they can not help but impart some sense of separation, operate in a manner closer to his interpretation of those used in the Spicer text. He was "trying for a radical breaking in voice."

> It's a problem I'm in fact still working on in Book 8 <of The Martyrology>, which is: how do you notate stanza break? You can notate line break, and you can notate a short break, but no matter how much white space you put in, the reader tends to squeeze it up, and make it shorter than it is. Putting in a large space, a line, and another space was one early way I had of notating a radical break between two stanzas. The line indicates almost a stop -- and then a

> continuing of the same poem, after the shift in voice. It brings everything to a stop much more abruptly than a period would. In this first instance of it <I:55> I point to what it is; it's 'the line between realities.' That's in a way what I mean by the kind of shift I was trying to create -- almost a shift between states of mind. (February, 1987)

I:56 that dirty room on / comox avenue

Nichol's first apartment was at 1335 Comox Street in Vancouver's West End (see Journeying & the returns for a poem with a similar address). He lived there only a few months from the fall of 1963 to the spring of 1964, when he left Vancouver for Toronto. (In discussing the first line on the second page of"Auguries," however, Nichol suggests that he may have lived there only one month.)

I:57 THE DARK WALKER

Note 4 from the "Notes" accompanying a bundle of parts of these early sections addresses this personage purely as a comic strip character:

> As I write this note what suddenly strikes me is that THE DARK WALKER was in every sense Dick Tracy who i used to imagine walking the streets of Port Arthur with me when i was a kid. It is difficult to chart the effect that Chester Gould's stark characterizations had on my conciousness. There was an immediate impression: cold, distance & underlying violence imprinting itself in my mind. Tracy, Catchem & Pat Patton were so much a part of my life that it became difficult at times to separate myself from them. Nura Nal & Emma Peel are different cases.

Tracy is the guardian of Nichol's boyhood; Orm the guardian saint of his twenties, who haunts The Martyrology's gray covers: The Dark Walker is a composite of these two superhero protectors. This is Nichol's take on the figure twenty years later:

> This is a mythic figure. For what it's worth, what I

have here is the notion of a figure barely remembered who stands beside someone and who is in a certain sense death. You know -- that ambiguity of protection and containment. On a deep source level it's actually Dick Tracy, and it grows out of a kind of garbled notion, really, if I look back on it. Once again, this is deep source; I think in the text it works as "the dark walker." It applies to St Orm, saint of storms, so obviously "you" is primarily St Orm. In another manifestation, that's the way I handled Dick Tracy. He was great because everything was absolutely black and white. He went in there against overwhelming odds and against evil foes and rescued folks who were in trouble. And a lot of his stories focus around kids; that's an ongoing motif that he's always dealing with. I used to really identify with him. In fact, I still remember the first strip of his I ever saw, which had to do with a kid who was lost in the sewers, among the pipes, with a dog. I actually found it. It was a 1949, I think, comic strip. So there's an echo of that, I think, on a purely subjective level -- there's no way a reader should get that. It's much more that notion of the large figure who's ambiguously protective, and at the same time has that portative death to it, and guardianship. (February, 1987)

except the heaven i dreamt of . . .

Nichol explains the theo-geo-cosmological perspective of his position in relation to that of the saints in this excerpt from an interview in The Capilano Review:

> . . . the saints essentially came out of that whole perception when I was a kid and thought that the real people lived up in the clouds. . . . I looked up between the clouds. I always thought it was like the edges of a lake and that we were living at the bottom of the ocean and the real folks were up there. That's where we were going to go someday. Heaven. I always thought heaven was the clouds, that was the thing. Because that's the drawings you get; in the United Church you get a little Sunday school paper and everybody's walking around on clouds. (8/9 (1975/76): 328-329)

I:58 REVELATIONS

Nichol describes the upper case here as "the classical capital -- The Holy Word, The Voice of God, The Divine Prophecy" (February, 1987). In Revelation, earthly nations were destroyed because their populace had become too spiritually

corrupt, especially by way of their contact with the whore of Babylon (i.e., Rome), who "made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication" (14:8), and who, it seems, was attended by more worshippers than St John's God. In the biblical text beasts are men, viz. the beast with ten horns and seven heads (13:1) who represents the Roman Empire.

As a writer of dictated text, St John was not concerned with the how of his narration. While marvelling at it, he just told his story. In fact, he had no choice but to tell it, being commanded to begin (1:19) and to continue (14:13; 21:5; etc.).

I:59 there is no beauty in madness

Nichol rejected "that whole Ginsbergian influence of that holy holy holy madman-artist" in both his poetics and his life (June, 1984). John Cannyside, a character who appears in numerous unpublished pieces, muses: "i was so sure i was mad walkin the streets as i did then in love with the idea of my own madness holy it did seem to me to be then that most divine of all things mad." (From an unpublished prose piece on the saints written in the fall of 1971.)

no sinlessness / in tossing the first stone

-- an echo of St John 8:7 -- in which Jesus, reprimanding the holier than thouists who are itching to condemn the adulteress, is recorded as having said: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."

I:60 moon lover dog star . . .

In this nostalgic song (from the Arcidurus collection, translated by Schmidt, 1903 edition, p.36) St Reat reminisces

about the lost world of Knarn, the whereabouts of its star-bound inhabitants, and about his own long-abandoned Cloud-town. As these are both celestial worlds, the moon, polaris ("dog star"), the Pleiades and the milky way ("great river") are all in their vicinity.

The lost seventh Pleiade forsook her heavenly home for the love of a mortal -- a sacrifice with which Reat would certainly sympathize. Reat encountered the beast that screams in the desert while on his quest. (The story related in a discarded quotation from the Pollard translation of "Saint Reat and the Four Winds of the World" <1958 edition, p.7> tells of Reat's being left legless after this meeting. An early abandoned opening to "St Reat" also refers to Reat's mutilation; there is, however, no mention of this episode in the published text.) Alternatively, The Folk Tales of the Saints suggests that Reat stumbled upon a great snake in the desert.

I:61 that time on comox . . .

Coal Harbour and Burrard Inlet are north of Comox Street. Barb Shore was a high school friend who lived across the street from Nichol, and was David Phillips' girlfriend at the time. Phillips also went to Churchill High School with Nichol, where they became each other's earliest audiences for their own writing.

I:62 you told me not to mention it & dave did

What the unmentionable "it" was, neither Nichol nor Phillips remembers.

I:63 dezso huba's place

Nichol met Dezso Huba around 1963 at U.B.C. He lived in a suite in Kitsilano (2144 Yew Street, 5 blocks from where bill bissett lived at the time) with his mother, Sibyl. His father was a sculptor, and the suite was crammed with his works. He died from a pulmonary infection contracted from the stone he was working with. One piece that was not housed in the Kits apartment is the massive coat of arms that is mounted outside Vancouver's main post office. Sibyl, a writer herself, encouraged Nichol's writing. The Nichol archive contains an "edition" of Journeying & the returns put together especially for the Hubas.

I:65 the room a fire exit . . .

-- Nichol's Comox Street apartment:

> On the door of my room was a sign that said IN CASE OF FIRE BREAK GLASS. And what you did was you punched in the glass, opened my door, raced through my room, threw the ladder out my window and climbed down it. My room was the fire exit. If you take this as literal truth, that's all it is. But it's so bizarre, no one would believe it. (July, 1987)

seaparated

-- a fortuitous typographical error.

I:66 no movement in the sky . . .

-- from The Songs of Saint Reat, collected by Arcidurus, translated by Schmidt, 1903 edition, p.20. Crossed out in one draft are two additional lines -- "i never knew the path of dreams / led into stranger worlds" -- cited as being from p.5 in the same source.

I:67 notes in my journals . . .

Nichol found in his early notes, even rereading them at this

time, "a real self-consciousness. I'm really conscious that I'm writing and therefore it's so far from reality. But those notes also become primary sources" (July, 1987).

I:68 always thot would happen . . .

> There's a movement here out of the past, so I'm saying yes that's all the way it was. But at that time what I wanted to do was somehow bring <my friends> with me into something better. You know, you really hope the friendships you have when you're young will last forever. Dave and I remain friends, though the nature of the friendship has obviously changed. (July, 1987)

I:69 i never did settle down

Nichol first met Ellie Hiebert in 1965-66 when she came to Therafields for therapy. They have been a steady couple since 1968, and were married in 1980. Whether "settled" is a characteristic applicable to Nichol in any other way is questionable.

funny the way / the thots break

Spaces set off these lines and reflect their sense. In Nichol's work this kind of visual pause always signals a verbal pause, and eventually becomes a frequently used notational device. The change of voice that accompanies such a break is similar to that created by the dividing lines which are used in this section.

single vibratory wave . . .

-- see note on Palongawhoya, I:13.

I:71 "Saint Reat and the Four Winds of the World"

"St Reat" was written soon after "St Orm," in 1968-69, though it can not be dated more precisely. Rather than continuing the tracing of personal emotional history begun in the previous section, this one is "more of an attempt to write the classical long poem" (July, 1987). But "classical" in Nichol's hands means borrowing from and juxtaposing several disparate traditions, and in this case we find elements ranging from epic quest to road movies.

The opening quotation from The Folk Tales of the Saints evokes fairy tale ("Once upon a time . . ."), oral legend (". . . so the story goes . . .") and epic quest, each of which has its own distinct set of conventions, none of which is retained here to any discernable degree. The quest, and specifically the spiritual quest, is a common, if not mandatory, feature in the traditional epic. In this section, a saint of language searches for the origins of breath, for his own self, and thus essentially for spirit. The Epic of Gilgamesh (the text cited as the earliest epic -- origin, then), was important for Nichol, though he does not recall whether he had yet read it at this time. (It is not referred to until Book 2.) The penitential nature underlying Reat's quest (see note, I:2), however, may remind the reader of Christian in The Pilgrim's Progress, trekking through perilous terrain and encountering one moral trial after another. Reat too suffers his penance and, like so many saints, heroes, hermits and biblical prophets, attains wisdom in the place which in the Christian tradition is most

conducive to spiritual enlightenment -- the desert. Nichol would have read Dune around this time, when it was first released in paperback, so was influenced to some extent by Frank Herbert's desert planet; and whatever the species of creature Reat battles, its largeness, habitat and violence recall Dune's sandworms. Other sources Nichol acknowledges as colouring his desert imagery include "the deadly desert" in the Oz books (a source more influential here than Dune); the Crosby and Hope road movies, "in which they endlessly ride camels across the trackless wastes"; and the deserts in the Bugs Bunny cartoons (July, 1987).

The illumination on this page concludes the variations on St Orm, here on the verge of dripping right out of his frame.

I:73 Once upon a time . . .

There are several different tries at the opening quotation to this section, all of which provide a useful context to the events which befall Reat:

> 'beyond the mountains lay the treacherous desert where the great snake dwelled. he passed thru it by night with ease & came to the town where, he'd been told, the secret of the four winds dwelled.' ibid <i.e., The Folk Tales of the Saints> p. 13

> 'the desert beyond the swamp was treacherous for a great snake dwelt there. but he passed over it with ease & came to the land where he'd been told the secret of the four winds dwelled.' ibid p.13

> 'on the fourth day of his wanderings he was attacked by the great beast that dwells in the mountains beyond the swamps of death.' SAINT REAT & THE FOUR WINDS OF THE WORLD translated by Frederick Pollard (1858 edition)

> 'and on the fourth day of his wanderings he was attacked by the screaming beast that dwells in the

great mountains beyond the swamp escaping only by
hiding in a small cave. but the beast had ripped off
his legs & he did not know if he could go on.'
SAINT REAT & THE FOUR WINDS OF THE WORLD translated by
Frederick Pollard (1858 edition) p.7

stirred the leaves are . . . visited the world

In Hopi cosmology the world has been destroyed three times, in each instance because people have corrupted themselves -- forgetting their creator, their origins, the proper uses of their voices and bodies. (See note to I:13.)

the rest (written in a book) destroyed my childhood . . .

Nichol has said that when he was a child, reading was for him more real than people, that the imaginary often superceded "real life." Years later, while writing The Plunkett Papers, he found himself creating a mythology stemming from his family's roots in Plunkett, and entwining with his own emotional and cognitive history.

families move
from dakota
minnesota
into saskatchewan

somehow
somewhere
poetry is lost

hides in the hills
half a century
to re-emerge
in the 1940s

you could make a myth out of this
make it big as the sky
& lose it among the stars

instead you drive fast cars across a country
& write the history of your head
(from The Plunkett Papers)

Nichol's "femme leigh tree" does appear importantly again in later books (see especially Book 6, from which the phrase

above is taken); but rather than continuing along that particular branch of mythology, The Martyrology takes on the process of recording the writer's perceptions into a mental history. The "drifting focusless twist of speech" Nichol and St Reat both pursue does eventually find its path.

II:74 from that country where no man goes that lives

-- an echo of Hamlet III:i, the "To be or not" soliloquy: "death / The undiscovered country from whose bourn / No traveller returns . . ."; and see note to I:21.

I:75 "loon"

-- a reference to Cloud-hidden (see I:87, and note); and see also Monotones XCV, which begins

> out of your head the sky is taken
> pieces of the moon
>
> ride your horse too close to the earth
> end up in the zoo
> mind

and ends with

> pores open skin's delight
> coming into focus thru the room's constraint
> define your motion
>
> shrinking
>
> crazy
> 'like a loon' are

The play on crazy-loon/are-lunar-lunatic here suggests King Fool; see I:33 and note.

This illumination appears on the last page of this section (I:98) in the first edition. It is a stylized version of the same face we see four pages later, and is probably based on the figure of one of the evangelists in an illuminated gospel.

The ox which appears in the second frame would suggest St Luke, a winged ox being his tetramorph. Although the ox is a sacrificial animal, and in the gospels it is often depicted as floating above the saint at work at his writing desk, it is not usually depicted in the process of being sacrificed when it emblematizes this saint. This addition or alteration was perhaps made to create a visual correspondence with St Reat's bloody encounter with the great beast, or with the sacrificial nature of his penitential quest.

I:76 wind home . . .

-- another lament from St Reat. But a good question.

I:77 raised up his finger or / his arm

The figure referred to is St Raits, who is mentioned by name when the same meeting is recalled again (I:93). Here, Raits's gesture is a benediction; in the second telling of the event, he seems simply to show Reat his palm.

I:78 given a sign . . . saint agnes stood

-- echoes the beginning of the first Canto of Dante's Inferno (trans. Sinclair):

> In the middle of the journey of our life I came to myself within a dark wood where the straight way was lost.

I:79 can you say it is true you died? . . .

The play on "die" hearkens to the Renaissance use of the word as a euphemism for sexual intercourse. Nichol vaguely recalled "died" and "phoenix" punning and imaging in a specific poem. Leafing through his trusty college English text, he found well marked margins around Donne's "The Canonization." The third stanza in that poem holds the images

Nichol reinvokes:

> Call us what you will, we are made such by love;
> Call her one, me another fly,
> We're tapers too, and at our own cost die,
> And we in us find the Eagle and the Dove.
> The Phoenix riddle hath more wit
> By us; we two being one, are it.
> So, to one neutral thing both sexes fit.
> We die and rise the same, and prove
> Mysterious by this love.
>
> should've been a a part of him

The doubled "a" is a typographical error.

I:81 i speak lip tongue . . .

This is precisely St Reat's problem: losing touch with the origins of breath, speech, history, poetry.

I:83

A single line -- "urgings & biddings" -- intervening the first two stanzas on this page is deleted in the second edition.

The following poem, which appears in the first edition (between "the man who lived in that town . . ." and "stood on the wall . . ."), is omitted in the second:

> the mayor took you to the great hall
> secrets there filled up the air you breathed
> light broken thru the prisms seeking the spire's end
> histories & journeys intertwining
> shifting planes within the flow of things

Because of this deletion, the illuminations in the second edition are on the right hand page (with one exception), as they are in the first, but they accompany different poems.

I:85

This illumination, which looks as if it is based on the cover of a sci-fi novel, is a faithful revision of a fifteenth century Russian icon residing in Novgorod (see fig. 8). The

subject is St Nicholas (the figure to the left) appearing to the mariners (huddled in front of their boat's sail) in distress; the image mirrors St Orm's guardianship. The black englobing the vessel is the storm-tossed sea, and the serpentine creatures encroaching the whole composition are in fact accurate line contours of the strange craggy landscape surrounding the sea.

took him with the spine's motion

In Hopi mysticism, the spinal cord is regarded as the body's axis through which vibrations join a person to the voice of Palongawhoya and the vibratory axis of the world. (See note to I:13.)

I:86

This page, which begins a second sequence of poems, is headed by this quotation in the drafts:

> This is the most garbled section of the manuscript. many translators ignore it but what i have done is sketched in the most probable account based on the fragments present. -- editor's note SAINT REAT & THE FOUR WINDS OF THE WORLD translated by Jan Wenska (1906 edition) p.73

I:87 cloud-hidden

-- the Creator in the cosmogony of The Plunkett Papers. Cloud-hidden dwells in the west, the direction universally associated with death, indicating, perhaps, that his position as omnipotent All-Father has been demoted. The figure is remarkably close to Blake's Nobodaddy:

> Why art thou silent & invisible
> Father of Jealousy
> Why dost thou hide thyself in clouds
> From every searching eye
>
> Why darkness & obscurity
> In all thy words & laws . . .

("To Nobodaddy")

A kind of cowboy hero/guardian figure is also evoked in these lines.

I:88 before the great war nearly destroyed the planet

St Aggers, the father of St Ump and St Rap, along with his brother St Raits survived Cloud-hidden's destruction of the second world (see I:2, and discussion of cosmogony behind The Martyrology). Neither the drafts of this poem nor those of The Plunkett Papers call this cosmic annihilation a "war."

I:89

-- see note explaining dividing lines on I:55, the first page of "St Orm."

I:90 isn't it plain why saint and called you fool?

> when cloud-hidden made Earth He made And. And called Him Fool for having made him. Cloud-hidden fooled And & made him a saint, said 'any who come to pray I will listen to. If they ask one I will grant. If they ask two I will give them you.' & Saint And called cloud-hidden King Fool for having made Earth too.
> (from The Plunkett Papers)

I:91

This crucifixion is from the Saint Gall Gospels, illuminated in Ireland in the mid-eighth century, and now in the holdings of the Cathedral of St Gall in Switzerland (see fig. 9). The Christ in this crucifixion seems intricately, and strangely, enwrapped, as if he were shrouded before being taken down from the cross. This kind of interlacing is in fact a common feature in Irish art (of all kinds). Ofo plays with the bondage image in the second of the three frames, adding arrows which point out, perhaps, the directions in which the

sheets were bound, that they may be undone. Or perhaps they indicate the probable end points at which to begin unwinding. Those ringing round the head suggest a befuddled halo, as well as a wild mental spinning of wheels. The bandage finally does begin to unravel in the third frame.

I:92

This third run of poems is headed by this quotation in the drafts:

> allegory? no! it is simply the truth -- if you stray too far from your body's cells, if you wilfully change them, that's your ticket to hell.
>
> Nelson Ball 'Saint Reat & the Cells of Change' CONJUNCTION 2 1967

-- which contextualizes and perhaps clarifies the poem on this page.

That the second frame in this series of illuminations is shifted to the left page in the second edition, in order that it stay with the same poem with which it appeared in the first, suggests that there is a not accidental connexion between the poem and the drawing. They both, along with the deleted Nelson Ball quotation, warn of the dangers inherent in wilfully changing a natural processual order -- forcing constraints on the body (unnatural to the live; unnecessary to the dead), or imposing strictures upon the poem -- as they point towards the freeing of forms.

I:93 showed you the line from / his wrist to his thumb
In palmistry, this is the life line.

Annotations for Book 2

II:101 Book 2

The title page for Book 2, like that in Book 1, is illuminated with a Pantocrator, here holding the open book rather than the rolled scroll. (Or, this could simply be a saint with a volume of his own writings; the iconographic source has not yet been located.) In the first edition, this illumination faces the title page of Book 2.

II:103 speech . . .

These four words compactly trace the speech act -- that is, although "eech" may exist happily as a phonological event when uttered in the word "speech," when it hits the page as a morphological event, it must take on the restrictions and limitations delineated by print and orthography. Nichol characteristically ignores or subverts the conventions of punctuation and capitalization, as well as spelling. He is not, of course, alone in this rebellion: numerous contemporary writers have tampered with the expectations of print.

This little poem, with its echo of a line near the end of Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" ("I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each. // I do not think that they will sing to me.") simultaneously hearkens back to the character of St And, the first saint of Book 1, while its linguistic implications look forward to the dedicatee of the first section of this book -- bill bissett.

II:105 "Book of Common Prayer"

Here, the figure from the previous title page has fallen flat on its back, looking less like a majestic lord, more like a punched out paper doll. This is an emblematic concretization

of the falls of the saints -- first, from Cloud-town, then from revered heroism. But their falling simultaneously provides a multidirectional opening for this searching text. The entanglement of optically illusive planes can be seen in some of Nichol's visual concrete, such as the "Allegories" in love: a book of remembrances. Ofo incorporates this play of visual surfaces with the demise of the literary play of the saints. This figure's collapse onto an unsuspected background leads the observer to suspect the solidity of that second surface, as well: though it is still a drawing on a page, it is given an air of three dimensionality. Where will it lead him? Nichol asks himself the same question of his own work.

Book 2 is filled both with images of the landscapes which the writer walks in every day, and with references to others more mythical or spiritually ideal. The pastoral landscape seen through the saint-shaped gap resembles that possible "land which is the mind" ("Clouds," II:128) -- the imagination. Its sudden discovery elicits from the observer the kind of wondering double-take given to the technicolor land of Oz revealed upon opening the black and white door in the black and white house. The illuminations in "BCP" do not trace the evolution of a single image through a series of frames, but instead insist upon the complexities of surface. Each of the images arrests the eye by confusing its expectations. In them Ofo foreshadows a release which actually comes much later in the text itself.

The Book of Common Prayer is the book of ritual of the Church of England. It contains "the daily offices of Morning and Evening Prayer, the forms of administration of the Sacraments and other public and private rites, the Psalter, and (since 1552, revised 1662) the Ordinal. The book was compiled originally through the desire . . . to simplify and condense the Latin services of the medieval church and to produce in English a single, convenient, and comprehensive volume as an authoritative guide for priest and people" (Cross and Livingstone, 320).

A note written on a title page of "'The Books of the Dead' 1964 - " (which seems to have been meant to apply to Book 1 and the first two sections of 2) gives us Nichol's notion of prayer at the time:

> prayer needs no apologia & yet i feel obliged to point out its function -- gathering the forces inside yourself for another assault.

A sentence from a discarded introduction (dated June 1969) suggests that "mostly what was done <in Scraptures> was prayer & too many prayers fail to fit here" (i.e., in The Martyrology to date).

This section was, on one drafted title page, called simply "prayers -- part v," which suggests that perhaps "The Book of Common Prayer" was, when first completed, considered to be a continuation of Book 1, rather than the opening of Book 2.

II:107 for Bill Bissett . . .

Oddly, especially given the words on II:105, or perhaps playing with their implications, bissett's name is here capitalized -- something usually done by writers unfamiliar with his name

and work, or by mainstream writers and presses. The lines quoted are the last in bissett's "now they found th wagon cat in human body," from we sleep inside each other all. The poem is "for bp," who saw the book, bissett's first, through the press. Nichol's spelling here deviates even from bissett's -- "similur" for "similar," "creaturs" for "creatures," "othur" for "othr." In his statement in The Long Poem Anthology Nichol says that this quotation (which reappears transformed as the initiating line of Book 4) "reverberated . . . with the similarities & differences between Bill's work & my own" (336). While the writings of these two poets may appear to resemble one another's more than any other writers', to conclude that they have sprung from like minds is too simplistic a judgement, and one promulgated by equating the material manifestations of the writers' mutual interests -- in performing poetry, in confounding the limitations of the page with their work in concrete poetry, in pushing towards publishing what is new in ephemeral editions -- with an identical poetic thrust. They do in fact differ fundamentally, and Nichol's comment points to this balancing between the similur and difference. bissett has adopted the role of shaman-poet, and his poetry and painting approach the visionary, whereas Nichol's writing is concerned with recording perceptual processes, with witnessing the daily activities of the sacred and the mundane. Perhaps their strongest bond is a shared desire to confound authority. Nichol has called bissett a "brother-

teacher." Questioned on this statement by Jack David, Nichol said that

> . . . it was one of those great early inarticulate statements. I had learned a lot through the exchange with him. So in that sense it was like learning from a peer. And when I put the qualifier on it, it suddenly struck me that there was a sense in which one's peers were one's teachers, but I was also quite concerned with the whole issue of the elder. That always struck me as one of the great distresses of the society we live in. The fact that there are very few elders that you can actually respect. And that historically, when you have no elders, you have a period of absolute chaos. This happens in terms of usually a falling away of religious focuses, and so on. Bill was a teacher on a peer level, but he was not an elder. (Out-posts, 17-18)

II:108 stiff-shouldered in the chair . . .

A caricature clipped from a magazine (The New Yorker by the looks of it) and taped into a notebook shows a terror-stricken man sitting behind a typewriter, and behind him a laurel-crowned woman -- a lyre in one hand and a revolver pointed at the man's back in the other. Nichol's opinion about muses changes considerably as his writing accumulates. (See his comment on the muse in note to II:112.)

USELESS SAINTS . . .

The upper case here indicates increased volume.

II:110 friandise / / dolci

-- the words for "candy" in French and Italian, respectively. At a meeting at his home (in June, 1984), Nichol got up to bring in some tea after we finished reading the previous page. He returned with the teapot in one hand and a large ceramic tumbler containing toothbrushes in the other. The tumbler was white and covered with black print in various typefaces -- "candy," "chocolate," "sweets," and the like.

Its previous function was to sit on Nichol's desk holding pencils. He looked up from the page he was writing, saw friandise and dolci looking back at him, and recorded them. Yet another line on the graph of the moving mind. (See note to II:184.)

WHERE ARE YOU?

This capitalized line is a kind of reverse of the one two pages back. Nichol comments: "there's the divine yelling, and there's the speaking in the voice of the divine; so I'm speaking to the divine: 'Where <u>are</u> you?' In this case that very thing is a trigger off speaking <u>back</u> to god. As I seem to do in my poems. <Chuckle> Don't ask me why. I don't usually walk around in the streets in a fit of holiness or anything. But it does happen in the act of writing. We accept what comes into the moment, eh?" (February, 1987)

II:111

This third frame presents a minimal landscape -- barren hills, represented in the stylized shorthand used in icons to indicate earth formations -- with a cloud-marked sky . . . and two suns? But the folds of a ribbon-like drapery strangely suspended upon the scene traces the outline of a head, the shapes of a face -- the orbs become eyes. In another subversion of visual assumptions, the eye meets up with a palimpsest of two images on two apparently superimposed surfaces.

II:112 wait between breaths for the muse to strike

I'd always had this kind of sloppy notion of the muse, as I think of it. <Writing> really has nothing to do

> with the muse: I realized <in about 1978> it was just a state of mind. What I had to do was set up the circumstances in which I could contact the state of mind. It had nothing to do with sitting around passively in a chair waiting for the muse to strike. . . . Rather, it's a matter of setting up the possibility. It can sound artificial when you explain it to people, but once you get into it, it's in fact a way of actively pursuing the occasion of writing. It still leaves room for inspiration, obviously, for moments when you're just seized -- which is what people call the muse. (July, 1983)

II:115

This illumination is based on a mosaic in Sant' Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna (see fig. 10). When Justinian came to power in 527, the Ostrogoths were one unruly problem he had to confront; and though they were not finally quelled until almost twenty years later, they were symbolically erased earlier in this church: during Theodoric's reign, the spaces between the columns of arches upholding a mosaic representation of a palatium had been occupied by full figure portraits of Arian nobles. (Arianism <founded by, Arius (256-336), a priest in Alexandria> was a fourth century Christian heresy which in essence denied the existence of the Trinity, believing that the Son, being a man, was subordinate to the Father, who was a unitary God.) Justinian had them replaced by images of curtains suspended from rods. (The peculiarity of this mosaic is emphasized by the context of the church's architecture: the Romanesque arches in the mosaic echo the row of windows above, and the supporting arches below, behind which is yet another series of windows.) The mosaic's curtains also present an odd rhythm in juxtaposition to the robes worn by the long line of martyrs

to the left. And, they recall other concealing draperies in the Christian tradition: the veil concealing the holy of holies which was "rent in twain" at the moment of the Crucifixion (Matthew XXVII:51); the cloths used during Holy Week (and Lent) to cover crucifixes and other images; veils worn by nuns; in Eastern Orthodoxy, the iconostasis which, with the added concealers of an interior curtain and veil, separates the altar from the rest of the church. But the Ravenna curtains are mysterious in themselves, as they hang not shut in front of a ritual place or object, but open into blackness (except for the largest central doorway, which reveals gold tiles). Adding to the bizarre feeling of absences is the occasional orant hand which overlaps a column, the only relics of the lost figures.

The first curtain in this section picks up the pattern of folds in the mosaic. But instead of statically cloaking, this one has just been drawn aside, revealing a strangely forboding landscape. And it is not suspended from a rod, but from the top line of the frame itself!

indulgences

The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church defines the religious sense of indulgence as "the remission by the Church of the temporal penalty due to forgiven sin, in virtue of the merits of Christ and the saints. In the Roman Catholic Church the granting of indulgences is now ordinarily confined to the Pope" (Cross and Livingstone, 700). The granting of indulgences by corrupt pardoners was one of the practices Luther railed against in

his break with the Roman Church.

II:117 SCREAMING

This capitalization helps enact a scream.

II:119

The curtain on this page, more like a proscenium curtain than the one in the previous illumination, opens onto a landscape that is much more open and promising than the last. The lightning bolt has transformed into a hand -- a more benign image, and the only permissible representation of God in Eastern iconography; the jagged fault in the ground which mirrored, almost seemed a negative of, the previously stormy sky, too, is gone. The cliffs are replaced with the vegetation we saw on the title page for this section. But what are the circles in the sky -- globes? planets? balloons? Or is this yet another trick surface? Are the thicker lines on the right sides of the circles meant to suggest depth? Or spherical space? Is the sunny face (which is somewhat like those on the illumination on I:15) <u>on</u> the roundel, or <u>behind</u> it, looking out through one of the gaps on a holey surface? The activity in this illumination seems to hint at the observation about the simultaneous revealing/concealing aspect of language, about the visual-aural play that is the nature of the pun (see last stanza on this page). The early books are not entirely devoid of puns, but those that do pop up do not elicit the loud groans and guffaws from the reader that some of the later, truly virtuosic word plays can. In fact, the pun becomes an integral textual energizer from Book

4 onwards. This statement about the potency of the language occurs in Book 4: "(the strength of english, its ambiguity turned against it, / corrupted, the masked language of law & politics, so distorted we / empower experts to interpret it)."

II:120 expliations

-- a typographical error. The word should be "explications."

II:125 "Clouds"

Many saints appear in this section, and several incidents, unmentioned elsewhere in the text, surface here. Nichol said that there were so many saint stories beginning to take shape in the back of his mind that hinting at their background in the "Folk Tale" excerpts was a way of imparting some of this larger sphere of thought to the reader, if only obliquely, without straying into full-throated sagas of every saint. While the poems in this section generally ruminate on the nature of Cloud-town, many of them allude to or expand upon the particular saintly adventure outlined in the "Folk Tales" quotations.

Floating amongst these contemplations on the saints are memories of a relationship (with Dace Puce) that had broken up in 1966. It took Nichol about four years to sever what he called his "compulsive attachment" to it, and the depression he wades through at this time is palpable in the writing. "Clouds," with the past's disturbing the present and obsessively settling in, is in this respect similar to "St Orm." Notes written on the same page as a very early draft (perhaps the first) of the first two pages in "Clouds" give some sense of the psychic state out of which these poems were written.

> what do you say that is truthful or what do you say that is believable who do you address these writings to i never made the figures of the saints allegorical because they weren't in fact allegorical they were real figures ripped from the mind of my own voices that ear i do address myself to finally then it is myself that i address everything to endlessness that desperateness which seems a heritage is simply a ticket to my own destruction some wilfull removal of

> objectivity so that i am left always at some point over and over again in my life in these states of quandary. . . .
>
> yesterday i wrote these notes today they seem unclear always there is this dual rhythm of opposites since it is true some things are over dead and gone these past four years why is it now i find myself returning again to her face as in the image of a poem that is not forgotten tho it should be there are no ready answers to these questions no ready questions i can ask to find them is it simply fascination now what was then obsession or the reoccurence of some old image i have yet to understand (probably written c. April, 1970)

Nichol's notes to himself written immediately upon completing "Clouds" reveal a kind of relief at having finally written through this material. The following was written on May 2, 1970, two days after completing "Clouds," which at that time seemed to mean finishing Book 2.

> the writing of book ii makes clearer to my own mind <than Book 1> because of being a more total vision that which it is i am abstracting towards or undertaking for it begins as a poem almost purely about the saints but gradually the narrator takes over more & more to the point where it is a completely personal poem about my own attempt to make some sense out of this recent flood of sensory returns around the relationship to Dace even now or as i am writing this that word narrator that sense of distance seeming forced or artificial and yet the early i of the poem is much less personal than the later i that is the i does not deal with his own struggles but only those of saint and

Although he was unclear about how to remedy them at the time, he was bothered by the problems, even the dead ends, certain textual hitches were creating. Some of these troubles were ameliorated after Nichol gave himself a chance to step back from the poem for a month or so. (The italicized quotations and the poem-to-a-page format, for instance, are both used for the last time in this section.) Here, then, Nichol finally ends Book 1.

The portrait of St George is taken from a 14th century Greek icon in the church of the Virgin of Trypiti at Aighion (see fig. 11). Ofo neatly weaves the slow demise of the saints into this series of illuminations. The geometry that radiates from the central cross on the breastplate becomes the clouds of dusk which come down with the setting sun; in the original, the centre of the design is covered by a horizontal band. The saint's right hand, here clutching nothing, in the icon holds a javelin (an image Ofo metamorphoses, in the thirteenth variation, into a sad, limp little flower -- an offering which, understandably, causes the saint to turn his head away). And the nimbus, which stands securely behind the saint's head, here gradually moves down the face until the burden consumes the figure entirely.

II:127 BLUE

In this text, blue is associated with the unreachable celestial realms of saints -- heaven and Cloud-town. The emphatic print concretizes the noun "blue" in a way which approaches the kind of "elimination of adjectival support" evidenced in comic strips. That is, "one consequence of <the comic strip's> word-image synthesis is a relative directness and immediacy of content. a dark street can be depicted without the need to say (the street was dark). a level of representation is removed and replaced by the actual thing" ("T.R.G. Report 2/2," 45). Also see note to the last three words in "Scenes" (I:50) for a similar move.

cloud town

This is the first time Cloud-town is named in The Martyrology, although it is described on I:57. Nichol usually hyphenates the word, but does not capitalize it.

II:129 the lost planet of their birth

-- a reference to Cloud-town.

II:130 One night saint and fell asleep . . .

"The Folk Tales of the Saints" is noted as having been published by Runcible Spoon in 1968.

II:131 god they are so cloud hidden

Here "cloud hidden" serves as an ambiguous adjective.

II:132 that cloudy hole . . .

To earth walkers, the eternal blue of Cloud-town is hidden behind the clouds. This perspective, then, is from one dwelling in the clouds and looking down, and to whom the earth would seem a cloud-shrouded sea. (See note to I:57 for Nichol's notion of the relationship of earth to Cloud-town.) The reversed point of view is something like that of the lapsed Eternals in Blake's mythology, to whom Eternity, their home, becomes consuming fire when they fall from perfection. (See, e.g., Urizen's fall, Chapter II in The Book of Urizen, 5:1 ff.)

II:136 in that brownness which is the mind

This line is preceded by "peace," a line by itself, and a double space in the first edition.

II:139 When saint reat . . .

These slight variants occur in the drafts:

saint reat said to saint and 'i must seek my destiny

among the people here. i will find a family who'll adopt me and grow up with them.' & he changed his body to that of a small child and wandered off towards a distant town. saint and sat on the ground thinking and did not get up till late the next morning.

saint reat, who had within his power the ability to change bodies, assumed the body of a small child. turning to saint and he said 'i will seek some sort of answer here' & wandered away towards a distant town. saint and, saddened, sat on the ground thinking & did not get up till late the next morning.

library daze

Nichol describes his days working in the University of Toronto Library:

> It impressed me with the narcissism of much literature. It took away from me the illusion that I was simply, by writing books, going to change the world. In fact, writing a book was not necessarily the vehicle to use to change the world. There were probably much better vehicles for it; when you spend day after day under the stacks of the well-meant words of millions of people, it changes your view of literature and what the point of it is. I ceased, at that point, to have a view of myself as reaching out and 'changing the masses.' In fact, I became very suspicious of the term, 'the masses.' Because it seemed to me a convenient coverall for all sorts of megalomaniacal fantasies. It also made me unable to read for a period of time. I had a surfeit of print. It was also the feeder of much of my reaction against a lot of traditional books. I just felt, well, most of it had been done, in a way. (Out-posts, 18-19)

II:140 this / / & this & / / this

-- an echo of the second poem in "Suite I" of Phyllis Webb's Naked Poems, a long poem Nichol knew and loved well:

> AND
> here
> and here and
> here
> and over and
> over your mouth

II:143 his life line

-- see I:93 for retelling of this incident.

II:145 . . . saint orm who, with his pupil . . .

-- the comma after "who" is added in the second edition.

"looking for a town called rain hat"

-- a quotation from a manuscript of David Aylward's early translations from Bashō. He began to study Japanese in 1968, lived and taught in Japan in 1971-74, and has since published several translations of Japanese writing.

II:147 "to be true"

In the first edition, this line is neither indented nor enclosed in quotation marks. Nichol:

> This is a familiar phrase. If you grew up in the 50s, of course, all the songs you heard were about being true: I promise to be true; being true to the one you love; being true to your school; being true to your country. We were all supposed to be true. So it's really just that evocation. And it struck me as an absolute, obviously: 'beginning everything with absolutes / the final resolution / "to be true"' -- which is also a beginning. It's the thing you say after you've gone through a whole bunch of things -- you say 'O.K., we all promise to be true' -- but then that's also the beginning of something. It's that whole paradoxical thing. (February, 1987)

II:149 leaning back upon the ferry deck . . .

The geography in "Clouds" shifts from Ontario to Vancouver, and back to Ontario. The floating referent in this passage is the Vancouver to Victoria ferry.

II:150 go from there to here

For readers of Canadian writing and literary criticism of the 1960s and early 70s, this line will recall the title of Frank Davey's survey of this period, From There to Here (Erin: Press Porcepic, 1974). The Martyrology, however, predates this publication and is even briefly mentioned by Davey. For those whose reading goes on beyond the serious, the line will

bring to mind the refrain in Dr. Seuss's One fish two fish red fish blue fish:

> From there to here,
> from here to there,
> funny things
> are everywhere. (n. pag.)

II:153 holding your body in the narrow bed

The images of the interiors of rooms are also found in earlier Nichol poems -- the other side of the room and Journeying & the returns, especially. Nichol has commented that some of the poems in this section are almost a rewriting of those earlier texts.

"now that spring . . ."

This is an instance of Nichol's pulling in a voice for its own distinct tonal quality -- a tone he could not have achieved in his own. The lines are excerpted from an unpublished poem by Dace Puce, with whom he was involved 1964-66, and the female figure who haunts this section. Nichol:

> Thinking about her informs a lot of what's happening in 'Clouds,' though in fact it's a meditation on the saints. But she was in my thoughts a lot at that time, and therefore comes in out of the meditation. I happened to have those poems <the one quoted here, and see also quotation on II:162> in a file folder, being the rabid collector that I am. (February, 1987)

There is an echo of the closing lines of Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" here, but Nichol was not consciously pursuing this in this quotation. He was, as he said, after a different voice.

II:156 oceans to become a sea

-- an echo of "St And," I:28.

II:157 hung by the heel from a tree

The image is that of the Hanged Man in the Tarot deck (number 12 of the major arcana). He is suspended upside down from a Tau-cross-shaped tree, with both hands behind his back and the untied leg crossed behind the tied. He is not dead, as the leaves sprouting from the tree's branches might suggest, nor in pain; he has a halo radiating from his head. The card generally denotes change, especially as concerns spiritual growth. A figure hanging in this inverted position, seeing "clear to the ground," is the reverse of one standing upright and contemplating cloudwards.

One would expect the rising swords to come from the Tarot as well, but this image is not so precise as the Hanged Man. The one card showing a sword rising "into the air where / the face should be" is the Ace, on which a hand holds forth a single vertical sword whose tip is crowned. Ace cards always mean a beginning of some kind.

II:159 those roads as i have walked before . . .

The landscape here is on the Therafields property in Mono County, about an hour's drive north of Toronto. At this time, when Nichol first became involved with the organization, Therafields owned farms in this area, totalling about 300-400 acres. (See more on Therafields in notes for I:13 and II:198.) Nichol describes the specific view he was thinking of in this poem:

> To call it a valley is a bit extreme . . . when you walked up over a hill there was this -- it wasn't wide enough to call it a valley. Let's call it a depression! It felt like a valley because there were trees and you

> looked across it. There were a lot of times when I would go there and write poems, because it was a nice place to sit and write -- a little area between two slopes of land with a pond, and a little hill. 'Those roads' are more or less the roads out the window. But it's also almost a longing for a past moment when everything was clearer. And then -- it's as though I had walked them. I do a sudden tense switch in the second stanza. It's as if I'm _there_, I'm under the trees. (July, 1987)

"Those other poems" are probably _Monotones_. The photographs in that text were taken at the Therafields farm.

Nichol comments on the last line on this page:

> There, the whole sense of need -- it's as if I'm writing to clarify something. I think that usage of poetry I've passed beyond. I no longer use it that way. I think I've passed beyond a _need_ of poetry. Now I _write_. I was wrestling with that a lot at that time -- the idea that you use the occasion of poetry to serve some function which has nothing to do, finally, with the writing. (July, 1987)

This particular use of poetry is not identical to writing-as-therapy (see note to II:171), but the two are related in their emotional clinging.

II:161 your other sons

-- that is, saints.

II:162 "all things loved . . ."

-- see note to quotation on II:153.

II:163 _within one millenium_ . . .

This fragment appears in the drafts with this addition:

> . . . so it is written that 'shrines were raised in their memory' at which shrines pilgrims paused to offer prayer.

and is said to come from M. Ondaatje's Introduction to _The Folk Tales of the Saints_. We recall a figure "standing awkwardly at the entrance to their shrine" in the piece from _The Chronicle of Knarn_ (I:8).

II:164 began this poem in sureness . . .

In retrospect, it might more accurately be said that this poem began in beginning again and again, in a kind of perpetual motion. The numerous false endings were announced with more certainty than the beginnings, most of which were not recognized as such until some time after they had been written.

II:165 (these streets i walk down . . .

This passage includes another resurging memory of Dace Puce, and gives a clear summation of the period Nichol finds himself writing his way out of. Like St Reat, Nichol has in the past found himself "stumbling over penances," though these would not have had the typical medieval extensiveness of the saint's. In the early Church, penances were devised in order to fulfill the belief that "sins must be atoned for in part by the punishment of the sinner, on the ground that it was better to endure the punishment in this world than in the next."

> . . . the Penance is often called a 'heavenly medicine', which heals the wounds inflicted by sin. . . . <It> consisted generally of fasts (of greater or less severity), continence, pilgrimages, floggings and imprisonment. Owing to the grave inconvenience and interruption to ordinary life occasioned by long and arduous Penances, the system of commutation grew up. A Penance of years or a lengthy pilgrimage could be compressed into a single day by the payment of money or its place taken by the repeated repetition of the Psalter in a position of physical discomfort. From this idea of commutation probably developed the later practice of indulgences. (Cross and Livingstone, 1059-60)

II:166 for my friends love's life's known least

This passage is revised in the second edition. This is how it stands in the first:

> for all my friends love's a desperate venture

that life they know the least of having sought all
their lives fold in so slowly
hold who they can weeping or with joy

Nichol noted that this passage (particularly the version in the first edition) is an echoing of the first of Duncan's "Berkeley Poems" in The Years As Catches.

Among my friends love is a great sorrow.
It has become a daily burden, a feast,
a gluttony for fools, a heart's famine.
We visit one another asking, telling one another.
We do not burn hotly, we question the fire.
We do not fall forward with our alive
eager faces looking thru into the fire. . . .

i am i because i fear the we . . .

"i am i" has Steinian reverberations; see for instance this passage from "What are Masterpieces":

The thing one gradually comes to find out is that one has no identity that is when one is in the act of doing anything. Identity is recognition, you know who you are because you and others remember anything about yourself but essentially you are not that when you are doing anything. I am I because my little dog knows me but, creatively speaking the little dog knowing that you are you and your recognising that he knows, that is what destroys creation. That is what makes school. Picasso once remarked I do not care who it is that has or does influence me as long as it is not myself. (What are Masterpieces?, 84-85)

This is Nichol's 1976 sense of i and we in The Martyrology:

. . . the central themes of The Martyrology which are themes around what is the place of the i in the collective we -- 'cause my basic belief is that the i, in a certain sense, is useless -- the we is everything. It's the collective activity that makes the difference in the long run. It's the whole discussion of the immortality game as it applies to writers. There's no point in it. It's really what happens to the race that's most important. Balanced against that realization that that recognition of the we cannot mean an erasal of the i -- 'cause if you erase the i you have no we. So how do you make that balance? How do you make that movement forward in time so the individual is strong and the collective identity is strong? So that I come back to the self, the written, I come back to me, I come back to the role of the writer, I come back to all

> those things. And those are all themes that keep moving forward. So as I grow I change. The Martyrology grows and changes. (Out-posts, 39-40)

II:167 all poetry a function of history

This excerpt from notes written May 1, 1970 gives some sense of Nichol's thinking on history at the time:

> what is seldom if ever seen is simply how history as it truly concerns us as i have come to see it in poems & prose is that weight we carry with us in the form of memory into the ongoing present 'all poetry a function of history' (martyrology book II) is true because poetry & in fact all writing serves the higher purpose of all art of preserving for the human tribe data about its own past so i have chosen to preserve perceptual systems to preserve the present in terms of the ongoing present the eruption of history & myth into it as a living force thus to mean or say history IS the present 'loving history between her thighs' as always i have seen myself indeed most recently these memories erupting around dace leading me to know how we wear the linear aspect as horses blinders books are stored potential have the possibility of erupting into the present each time you reach for them DO each time you think of and reach for them

This final poem has a cadential resonance similar to the last page of "Scenes," betraying the fact that both had their turn at acting as stand-in endings.

II:169 "Auguries"

The writing in "Auguries" moves rapidly; Nichol confirmed that this is a reflexion of the speed of composition. The drafts also indicate that the writing was taking shape more fluently than before: they are clean, with comparatively minor revisions. The sound and rhythm here is more prosaic than in the earlier sections, and one can sense the kind of writing that intuitively presages the utanikki, a form Nichol consciously adapts in Book 4. These developments suggest that the poem was beginning to be freed from numerous constraints: the trammelling edge at the bottom of the page, the conceit of the saints and the architecture upholding them, the writer's own conception of just what The Martyrology was to encompass.

The immediately obvious difference the eye notices is that the page is no longer a space for a single poem; rather, text begins to spill over the pages, erasing the blocks of silence that had filled the top two-thirds or so of most of the previous pages. This change necessitated a notational device that would distinguish the end of a poem. Hence the clouds, which Nichol explains as "simply the equivalent of numbering poems in a sequence, or separating them by some typographical device. The hand-drawn cloud had a kind of indeterminacy; it brought in a kind of naive pictorial voice as a different voice on the page" (February, 1987; see further discussion of this in Line 6, 33). The clouds, however, reverberate beyond their "simple" notational function: they recall the title of the previous section; they suggest the thought-balloons used

in comic strips; they condense the distant thereness of Cloud-town on to the page -- pictorial remnants, like the icons of disintegrating saints, of a lost world. They are notational figurations integrally reflective of the text they punctuate.

Although the title "Auguries" was used in the very early incarnations of Book 1 (see discussion in general introduction), it is most appropriate at this point in the poem. The expanded size of the individual poems, and Nichol's recognition that there was much more of Book 2, at least, to be written are highly significant developments which were even more portentous than they seemed to be at the time. The rest of Book 2, and Book 3, were written -- wrote themselves -- very quickly.

The title page image is taken from a mosaic (Russian, mid-eleventh century) of the communion of the apostles in the apse of Sta Sofia in Kiev (see fig. 12).

II:171 venus

-- see I:45, and note.

these are those other mysteries . . .

Nichol found sentimentalization and bad romanticism to be muddying some of his early lyrics and other poems (including sections of The Undiscovered Country and The Plunkett Papers), and includes these qualities among the "false mysteries,"

> that is, things like interpersonal difficulties I might have with Ellie or my mother, or whatever. More was made of those things than needed to be. They are, finally, a human activity, and something we all have to go through, and they're not, necessarily, part of the eternal verities.

The use therapy had for me -- this is thinking about it now from a poetic angle as opposed to a personal angle -- was that I could go beyond getting hung up on the level of false mystery -- sentimentalization. I read those poems and I think, I'm not confronting the material here. I'm just saying 'wow! Is this pain I feel ever mysterious! Does it ever come from a mysterious source!' Well, it didn't spring from a mysterious source. It's because we moved a whole bunch when I was a kid, and I felt alienated from my ma, and my ma was depressed all the time because we were moving, etc. etc. etc. It was a no-win situation. But then to take that and say 'well hey -- I'm in touch with the Eternal Mystery of the Universe, and we all experience pain' . . . !

Through therapy I could get beyond those false mysteries and start to deal with the real mysteries of the world. And on that level that's where, as I thought of it, the question of A God, the question of the place religion was going to have in my life, and therefore since I was always using <the 'I'> as a metaphor in The Martyrology, I was always making the case that if I could track the 'I' in its many manifestations, hopefully I could make something that speaks to a broader base. So I was using self as a metaphor, or self as an example. (July, 1983)

But he does not regard The Martyrology as a therapeutic text, that is, as a text used to work through his therapy,

because in fact I was doing my therapy over here -- in, my therapy. Another problem I had with those poems <i.e., the early lyrics> is that to a degree I'm doing that. I'm using them. In a way I'm taking material to those I should be taking to my session, to use the language we would use in therapy. I'm not dealing with it over here. Instead I'm shoving it in <the poems> as a place to not deal with it. Literally for me 'dealing with something' meant sitting still long enough to actually look at the thing, see how I felt about it, understand what the source of that feeling was, in a very immediate way. Was it legitimate? Was it in some kind of distortion? Was it actually going on? And I'm talking that primitively. Was this really happening or was it my imagination? Once I began to get in touch with that process, I could distinguish. If the material came into a poem, it was coming in as part of the world of fact. 'This was an emotion I had.' It wasn't something to be treasured, raised above, something that made me a better person because I had this emotion, or superior because I wrote a poem and look how sensitive I am. In those early poems I was kind of making a case over here and saying 'look how I'm suffering and look how I'm sensitive.' That's what

> I mean by the sentimentalization. And I find it repugnant. I find it in a lot of contemporary poetry, and it really bothers me. (July, 1983)

II:172 one month in a room

Nichol's primary sense of this line is that it is akin to "once upon a time . . .": "there was a month in a room. . . ." The Comox Street apartment comes to mind, and Nichol recalled that he lived in that room for only about a month. (If he lived there longer, as he has also remembered, the month he refers to here would still have been the last he spent in the apartment, and in Vancouver.) This stanza refers to his last night in Vancouver, and the last time he actually did open that door for a visitor. Haunting the other recollections of 1964 Vancouver which drift through this section is the face of St Orm, which begins to go through a reversal of the disintegration it underwent in "St Orm," but then finally vanishes, leaving an empty frame.

"love is carried . . ."

All the quoted passages on this page are from David (the "dave" mentioned in the previous stanza, and who reappears several times in this section) Phillips's "Letter to Saint Orm" (Vigilante 1, 1970), a poem written in response to his first hearing Nichol read from the early Martyrology.

II:173 imagine myself there . . .

"There," as the next line implies, is Vancouver. See I:61 and note for Barb, Dave and the environment of 1964; I:56 for Comox -- which here is uncharacteristically capitalized.

II:174 

-- see introduction to "Auguries."

self indulgence . . .

-- see note on indulgences, II:115.

II:175 the town / in ruins . . .

-- Cloud-town.

II:176 cloud-eyes

-- see II:130 for first mention of Cloud Woman.

"I think you will enjoy my babblings . . ."

The quotations on this page are all from letters Nichol received at the time he was writing this section; the corresponding correspondents are on the facing page. Suzette, writer of the first two excerpts, was a young (14-15 years old) member of Therafields, as was Magdalen. David (Phillips) acquired his "big city jangles" in Vancouver, his stop between an eight month writing binge in a cabin in Kaministiqua (near Thunder Bay) and Kelowna. ("Kalowna" appears to be Nichol's spelling.)

II:178 drift then as dreams . . .

The cloud and the first four lines of this poem appear at the bottom of the previous page in the first edition.

dave & denny's party barb came to . . .

Denny is Denise, Phillips's first wife. This incident, though it is referred to twice in Book 2 (see also II:228), seems now to be forgotten by both Nichol (who remembers then that he remembers nothing) and Phillips.

II:179 saint orm died finally . . .

This line, the one following it, and the cloud above them all appear on the bottom of the previous page in the first

edition.

we need you now . . .

In the first edition the line is "saint rike we need you now." The poem in the second edition is a pruned down version of two separated by a cloud in the first edition. The following comes between the stanza ending "i need you" and "simply as i would i would speak to you":

saint and falls formless thru the blue
dark to darker
skies

i drift into the black & blessed night

father i am one am many
as ever the need to be obsesses

i am one am many . . .

-- see II:166, and note.

II:181

The empty frame mirrors St Orm's death.

In the first edition, "i learn by learning" is flush with the left margin; and "how's dave fine" is written on one line.

II:182 henry john

Memories of the pre-Toronto life continue to surface: Henry John was a friend in grade thirteen at King Edward College.

she is a ghost who walks among my feelings . . .

-- another memory of Dace Puce; see "Clouds" for earlier appearances.

II:183 third letter from suzette this month

-- see II:172, and note.

II:184 in actual fact . . .

These lines recall Phillip Whalen's "Statement on Poetics" in The New American Poetry: "This poetry is a picture or graph of a mind moving, which is a world body being here and now which is history . . . and you" (420).

saint rike /discovered

-- slash does not appear in first edition. Also, this poem is placed higher on the page in that edition; for balance, an extra cloud appears at the bottom of the page.

II:185 the loop crosses over folds into itself . . .

The loop perhaps refers to the Mobius strip, a tricky surface that brings to mind the surface plays in the illuminations in "BCP," or to the symbol of infinity -- an 8 on its side. Nichol played with the latter in a concrete poem called "The End of the Affair" (Konfessions of an Elizabethan Fan Dancer, n. pag.). Nichol describes the writing of the poem thus:

> this day was a bummer. i was right out of it as i recall with affection the spaced out eyeballs & heavy breathing as i whacked out 'the end of the affair' on my trusty royal portable. my royal portable was breathing hard too with all those g's & 8's & infinitely chanted ORGAN ORGAN ORGAN ORGAN ORGAN ORGAN ORGAN ORGAN. infinite was the key word. i must've done a dozen drafts of this poem before it turned out. g go goi goin going. & the bummer was gone. (from writer's note in How Do I Love Thee, ed. Colombo, 160-61)

As The Martyrology extends, it too begins to loop self-reflexively, especially in Book 5, and might well adopt "infinite" as a key word.

The Tarot does not inform Nichol's work, save for the one

or two images on II:157, but there is an interesting coincidence of its images and the poem on this page. The magician (card 1 of the major arcana), gesturing magically, has the cosmic lemniscate (∞) above his head, and an ouroboros encircling his waist -- symbols of the eternal gracing a figure of invention, imagination and wisdom.

II:186 *it was said before*

The italics here, as elsewhere, evoke another voice which enters the moment of the writing.

II:187 i live on the edge of a great wood

-- the Therafields land in Mono County; see II:159, and note.

II:189 "Sons & Divinations"

Sons promise continuity through familial bonds or apprenticeship; divinations reveal the connexions of the mundane with the divine. As the title suggests, this section explores the linking of the personal with the public, the familiar with the unknown, the present and future, with the past. Until this point, The Martyrology is essentially a record of private recollections and personal mythology. This section inaugurates the poem's movement outward, the linking of the self to the world. After several years of delving into psychic history and personal memory, especially through therapy,[1] Nichol might have easily found himself stranded in the realm of confessional self-romanticization. Instead, discovering and coming to terms with the complexities of the "i," delivering it from its isolation, he gained a sense of the larger "we." The years of introspective digging gave him a method for speaking about and to the world, for addressing the history of the tribe. In particular, by making references to languages lost, abandoned, or corrupted by neglect and abuse, by commenting on linguistic deterioration, he directs attention to the consequent loss of cultural connectives between the present and the past.

As in other sections, a saint is the central character in the narrative. In this case, we are presented with the story of St Rand's Orphic quest for his father St Reat, whom he hardly knew. They first met upon Reat's return from his own journey (see I:2, and introduction to "St Reat" for background), by which time Rand was ten years old. When Reat

disappeared a second time, to death, Rand, though embittered, sought his father, following him into the afterlife. The son, like the father, was a questor, but the results of their searches differ. Even though his quest may have been impelled by his own loss of voice, Reat sought the origin of all breath, the source of language. When he found it, he returned it to his world, becoming the singer and scribe of the saints. Rand, however, pursued his own origin and, when he finally did find it, dwelled with it out of this world. Although there are two references to the poet's own father, it would be simplistic and inaccurate to identify Rand with Nichol autobiographically. St Orm, in "The Sorrows of Saint Orm," certainly embodied the poet's own emotional life, and that of his friends. But in this section, the turn worldward amplifies the implications of St Rand's search; he figures not so much as one individual looking for his father, but as the twentieth century language-lover trying to find and resuscitate a language apparently nearing its last breath. Little boy lost is in search of father tongue; but here both father and offspring have gone to hell.

The twentieth century's estrangement from language, and the social alienation this inevitably promotes, are the overriding concerns in this section. The figures chained, caged and otherwise ensnared in the underworld have their terrestrial counterparts who have become inextricably bound to hells of their own making.[2] They are trapped by words, when language has been allowed to "run our lives / wrongly" (202);

by signs and advertising; by history. They have masked themselves with "false veils of loneliness" (200); swaddled themselves with silence; divorced themselves from their own communities. The fundamental ability of both language and the human family (in the largest sense) to bind individuals together has been sorely misinterpreted -- "the social organism becomes a cancer" (202). These bonds, like the chain, an image that appears so often in this section, can function both positively and negatively: they will cripple when used to constrict or contain, but they can also strengthen and connect. Nichol's point is that we have too often opted for the former characteristic and ignored the latter:

> those bodies wrapped in chains
> as language was the chain they did not see
> how can they continue knowing as you must know
> we must return again to human voice & listen
> rip off the mask of words to free the sounds
> we wear the chains as muscles rigidly (204)

* * *

While "mourning for the worlds we lost" (192), Nichol does not do so passively; in the act of naming some of them, he lets their past erupt into our present. He evokes the Hopi creation myth, the image of the pre- and non-Christian serpent, astronomical mythology, Chinese and ancient British geomancy, and the unearthing of Dilmun. All are fragments of cultures in which the everyday and the divine were integrated -- and in which divination was one of the common activities which confirmed this.

> By divination we mean the attempt to elicit from some higher power or supernatural being the

> answers to questions beyond the range of ordinary human understanding. Questions about future events, about past disasters whose causes cannot be explained, about things hidden from sight or removed in space, about right conduct in a critical situation, about the time and mode of religious worship and the choice of persons for a particular task -- all these have from ancient times and in all parts of the world been the subject of divinatory enquiry. (Michael Loewe and Carmen Blacker, "Foreword," Oracles and Divinations, 1)

Divination, then, depends upon inquiry and interpretation. There are guidelines for translating the signs as they signify for specific occasions, but each reading will be particular to the signs which have presented themselves. From this standpoint, appropriate human behavior is not prescribed by laws engraved in stone. Rather, the divine manifests itself in the mutable. A society which, in its endeavours to expand "the range of human understanding," tries to eradicate the wilderness over the fence, inevitably severs itself from the roots of its own language.

Desacralized North American society feels the need for social prognostications, but now shamans, hierophants and oracles have been replaced by psychiatrists (for private readings), statisticians and pollsters (for public) -- figures whose wisdom has been institutionally sanctioned, and whose soothsayings are acceptably sophisticated, while the methods and findings of traditional divination are dismissed as irrational and superstitious. Scraptures, the "leftovers" sequence (part 5 of Nights on Prose Mountain), points to this same issue:

> magic replaced by religion
> in the 20th century a return to magic in the guise of science.

> the truth falls away or is pushed. the hands are forced further apart by the feelings. the face is too often a mask for the emotions (certain possible dangers). the hands do not do their bidding. the body is lost in possibilities of being. of being so many possible things. those things only that are possible. possible because of being becomeable. able to be made stable and real.
>
> feneris. early views saw vision as rays emanating <u>from</u> the eyes (as in our own comic strips). EVIL EYES. Isis who revealed herself to many under many different names
> IS the sky the sea the
> heart the eye the
> TRANSFORMATIONS chomsky: "nothing irretrievable is lost"
> as the man says "SPEECH!"

Whereas Nichol's interest in the power of runes and alphabets informed his concrete poems which explore the characteristics of single letters or the possibilities of new alphabets,[3] in "Sons and Divinations" it led him to probe the larger social implications of language, and the way in which its welfare depends upon the care of those who speak and write it. There were (and in isolated groupings still are) peoples for whom language and divinity <u>were</u> inseparable: to speak or inscribe a word was to allude to or call up the name and power of god(s). The Hopi attitude towards voice, which Nichol shares -- that it is "the gift of tongues" (199) given to us by the creator, that it is properly used when singing his praises -- is brought to mind with the opening poem's invocation to Palongawhoya and his primal family, and is meant to reverberate for the reader throughout the text to come.

Notes

1 It should be remembered that he was only 25-26 when he was

writing this section, and that he had become involved with therapy seven years earlier.

2 The afterworld, though minimally sketched, suggests elements from familiar underworlds in the western literary tradition: the Greek Tartarus, Dante's Inferno, and Milton's Hell.

3 See Aleph Unit, Unit of Four, Alphabet Ilphabet, et al.

The orant saint (possibly St Demetrius) on the title page of "Sons" is the basis of the series of illuminations in the last two sections. In this sequence, the saint executes some impressive legerdemain. First, his hands conceal themselves under his cloak (191); then they return to their original outstretched gesture of prayer, but are encircled by halos (193) which remain in place even after the hands are withdrawn a second time (195). When the hands open out again, however, they thrust themselves through those circles treating them like rings in a juggling act (197). There is certainly strange work afoot. While the hands are cloaked yet again, another pair appears to levitate, protruding from the circles (sleeves? 199). To whom do all these extra appendages belong? We wonder now not what the saint has up his sleeve, what miracles he might perform, but who is standing behind him. Is the saint, finally, only a front man? Or "<one> who would achieve false sainthood"? The last frame in "Sons" shows him with hands hidden again, and feet (sinking?) in two low halo- shaped depressions (203).

II:191 the blue dragon . . .

John Michell's The View Over Atlantis, which discusses geomancy and other kinds of earth-energy, was a book Nichol read around the time he was writing Book 2. Michell's

description of the geomantic principles of China indicates that it is in this country that geomancy had become a science manifesting in an aesthetically harmonious and spiritually charged landscape. It was called "feng-shui, 'wind and water,' . . . that which can not be seen and can not be grasped."

> The practice of feng-shui gave the landscape a quality of beauty and order totally beyond the achievement of any modern western planner. This was because it was based not on merely secular considerations, but on a sublime metaphysical system in which scientific and poetic truth harmoniously united. The modern town and country planning expert, Professor Abercrombie, credited feng-shui with producing 'one of the most elaborate landscapes which has ever existed, a landscape which had to preserve certain spiritual values and also to fulfill the practical purpose of supporting a dense population.'
>
> Geomancers, exponents of feng-shui, were consulted over the erection and siting of any building or tomb anywhere in China, and over the placing of any tree, post or stone which might affect the appearance and nature of the countryside. It was recognized that certain powerful currents, lines of magnetism, run invisible over the whole surface of the earth. The task of the geomancer was to detect these currents and interpret their influence on the land over which they passed. The magnetic force, known in China as the dragon current, is of two kinds, yin and yang, negative and positive,, represented by the white tiger and the blue dragon. The lines of this force follow, for the most part, mountainous ridges and ranges of hills. The yang or male current takes the higher routes over steep mountains, and the yin or female flows mainly along chains of low hills. The most favourable position is where the two streams meet. The surrounding country should display both yin and yang features, ideally in the proportion of 3 yang to 2 yin. Gentle undulating country is yin, and sharp rocks and peaks are yang. The best country is that in which the character of each part is clearly defined, but both yin and yang lines should display certain characteristics of their opposites in the country they cross. (59-60)

Geomancy, then, is a reading event, the landscape a language requesting an active reader. It is in this section, too, that we see the writing writer reading the lay of the

land (both in his present location in Mono County, and in places more distant and ancient), the skies, his family history, numerous books on lost and generally unremembered knowledge, and his own poem.

II:192 there is a music in the moment . . .

Nichol, writing on Stein's notion of repetition, shortly after he finished "Clouds":

> . . . that fascination being my own which is with stein is being how stein did get hold of that element of repetition & use it truthfully did use it to present her own perceptual system here as in joyce tho i find stein more stimulating as in joyce she did but get hold of one part of the mind's working as did as have most of the critics of this century but get hold of this one small section which is in that sense the archetype or the complex that sense of the past stein got hold of the present tracing the mind as it does work in its obsessive repetition to avoid in fact being set up to avoid the past what i would wanting like to do somehow create a syntax which holds the whole mind within its structure which is in its writing a moving of the person into such a structure as in FOR JESUS LUNATICK i ran the vision together as the mind works did work when i occupied just such a space or in ANDY . saying 'style to be left behind in consideration of reproduction of actual states of mind' which is the key clue the actual mind to somehow be presented that is the whole & total point of what i do (May 2, 1970)

Stein, in "Portraits and Repetition":

> Think about all the detective stories everybody reads. The kind of crime is the same, and the idea of the story is very often the same . . . the kind of invention that is necessary to make a general scheme is very limited in everybody's experience, every time one of the hundreds of times a newspaper man makes fun of my writing and of my repetition he always has the same theme, always having the same theme, that is, if you like, repetition, that is if you like the repeating that is the same thing, but once started expressing this thing, expressing any thing there can be no repetition because the essence of that expression is insistence, and if you insist you must each time use emphasis and if you use emphasis it is not possible while anybody is alive that they should use exactly the same emphasis. And so let us think seriously of

> the difference between repetition and insistence. (Lectures in America, 166-167)

Nichol's notion that content is always there, and that form -- the insistence, the telling -- is what interests the writer, is akin to Stein's sense of the difference between repetition and insistence. That is, in the detective story, the crime is usually committed before the narrative opens; the story is the same, but the tellings are not.

> . . . from a writer's point of view that question of form(s) is paramount if one is to be open to the moment when the writing comes, if one is to have at one's finger tips the possibility of moving fluidly within the options that any impulse to write can open. Not to allow the material to move where it wants to because of one's own formal limitations is to beg off the whole issue of craft in writing. Thus the whole point of discussing form for writers . . . is to expand the possibilities for the release of new contents. Content i have always taken as a given. One writes about what one writes about. Hopefully that expands, gains new depths of insight & feeling, as one's own life expands. Indeed the best place to work on content is on a day to day level in your dealings with other human beings. Then the gap between the content (insights & feelings in your writings) & how you live (your day to day life with other human beings & the society at large) will narrow &, hopefully disappear. Thus my response to another writer's work must deal not only with a response to the content of his or her words but a response to their gestures as i see them writ large on the page within the form the pieces take. ("a contributed editorial," Open Letter 3rd ser. 9 (1978): 5-6)

> **entendre je ne compris / my world is split**

The ungrammatical French phrase (Nichol's French is not masterly) may be roughly translated as "to intend I don't understand." The conjugation of "comprendre" does not correspond with the first person pronoun -- perhaps a literal demonstration the confusion of the poem's intentions, or of the split world of the writerly I?

blake saw the chance to be here in canada . . .

Canada is mentioned three times by Blake (Jerusalem 72:41; America 1:17; 2:12), but is, of course, always hovering at the top of the Americas. S. Foster Damon notes that America is "the birthplace of Orc (Revolution), and represents Liberty, especially the liberty of the Body" (A Blake Dictionary, 19). Orc is generated by the separation of Los and Enitharmon, and transforms from a worm, to a serpent, through "Many forms of fish bird & beast" before he takes on "an Infant form" (see The Book of Urizen, plate 19). He is bound to a rock with the chains of Jealousy by Los. In the Preludium to America: a Prophecy, Orc embraces "the shadowy daughter of Urthona" in the form of a serpent, "on the Canadian wilds."

Nichol reinvokes this same Blake material in "matins" in the other side of the room (46).

no man holds the dragon . . .

In this passage the dragon amalgamates the various serpents which have appeared thus far in the text. The series of stated and implied connexions generating in the first three pages of this section moves from the blue dragon of feng-shui, to internal serpent power/kundalini ("energy coil within the mind"), to actual buried snakes, their symbolic immortality, to the Hopi sacredness of voice and the body's centres (including the solar plexus) which connect it to the world's axis.

The transition -- from feeding one's sacred energy, to nurturing one's body with "the holy act of food," to the

"profanation then the chemicals or wilfull choices of impurity" -- traces the disintegration of pure act and ritual as it declines into confused necessity. Every one of the bodies of divinatory wisdom referred to or implied in these first pages has been corrupted, lost, or ignored by modern societies. (See I:13, and note.)

II:193 as they did in Dilmun bury snakes in baskets . . . Dilmun is, in traditionally accepted mythology, the Sumerian/Babylonian earthly paradise. Utnapishtim, the Noah-like flood-hero in the Babylonian mythos, and his wife were allowed to spend their reward of eternal life in Dilmun -- the only mortals to be granted this gift.

During a long series of digs which began in the 1950s and extended through the 1960s, Dilmun was visited again. In Looking for Dilmun, archaeologist Geoffrey Bibby presents a fascinating account of his pursuit for and eventual uncovering of the land of Dilmun, an undertaking comparable to Schliemann's search for Troy. Bibby and his team were initially spurred to look for Dilmun by mentions of it in trade and commercial records found at Ur, evidence which suggested that Dilmun was more than an Elysium at the edge of the world; that is, the expeditions began precisely because the teams were determined to seek out the directions to which those few initial "traces of knowledge" would lead. (The mythical place was eventually located as Bahrain.) They needed, however, more substantial textual citations than the scattered and infrequent appearances of "Dilmun" in the Ur

texts. The Epic of Gilgamesh provided direction, clarification and clues to the team's findings. One such case was that of the snake burials. Pottery vessels (rather than baskets) were discovered to contain coiled snake skeletons and small beads, usually of turquoise, amongst the sand. In the epic, Utnapishtim, in response to Gilgamesh's request for help in his search for immortality, tells "a secret thing," "a mystery of the gods."

> 'There is a plant that grows under the water, it has a prickle like a thorn, like a rose; it will wound your hands, but if you succeed in taking it, then your hands will hold that which <upon consumption> restores his lost youth on a man.' When Gilgamesh heard this he opened the sluices so that a sweet-water current might carry him out to the deepest channel; he tied heavy stones to his feet, and the sea carried him and threw him onto the shore. (Sanders, trans., 116)

Bibby notes that "this is all very interesting, for the pearl-divers of Bahrain still attach stones to their feet in order to descend to the seabed, and there can be little doubt that the Flower of Immortality is the pearl" (144). Some time after finding the snake burials, the archaeologists recalled that it was in Dilmun "that the snake had eaten the pearl and achieved immortality," and that snakes and pearl together would be taken

> as the symbol of that freedom from sickness, old age, and death for which Dilmun itself was famed. In that case to bury a snake beneath the floor of your house would be potent insurance against sickness and death for which Dilmun itself was famed. And the bead was explained, in a fashion. We should have preferred a pearl, but we are told that the pearl, being calcium carbonate with a trace of organic matter, disintegrates easily in the earth. We have since found a pearl in a later snake-burial, and it is possible that the bowls where no bead was found originally contained a pearl; it is anyway certain that pearls were no less valuable then than now, so that the turquoise may well have been

a 'poor man's immortality.' (152)

o palongwahoya

-- a variant spelling; see I:13 and note.

II:194 the rythmic structure

Nichol usually omits the first "h" in "rhythmic."

In the first edition, the slash indicating that "again" is part of the seventh line is not used.

great uncle john

Nichol's great uncle John Workman was one of his maternal grandfather's (Walt Workman's) four brothers. He, like many of Nichol's forefathers, is also mentioned in The Plunkett Papers:

> Jacob Workman
> died in the mines at Hibbing
> 1921
>
> losing his voice
> in the gathering dust
>
> like his brother John
> gone west to Washington to cut down trees
> & died of pneumonia
>
> coughing to death
> in the cold
>
> in the dark heat

II:194 "poor john's dead & gone . . ."

-- a song Nichol knew from an album of blues from the Mississippi Delta, sung by Mississippi John Hurt. The red dress mentioned in the lyrics brings to mind the red dress worn by the mother figure in Journal (published by Coach House Press in 1978, but begun in the early 1970s).

II:196 alleleujah

-- Nichol's usual spelling of this word. The slash used in the parenthetical line is not used in the first edition.

II:197 my own images recurr

-- Nichol's usual spelling of recur.

the empty quarter Dilmun reached into

The Empty Quarter of Arabia, the Rub' al-Khali, is the almost inaccessible central desert that grows by millimetres annually (Bibby, 116).

as I saw in a flash

This seems to be an unintentional use of the capital "I"; the only other time it appears is on I:31.

II:198 form then is what the present takes . . .

-- see II:226 for note on Stein's continuous present.

mid-summer solstice over the heel stone . . .

At Stonehenge, in the avenue by which one enters the round earthwork, is the massive Heel stone. The stone circle "was so sited that at dawn of the summer solstice the sun rose exactly at the end of the avenue in dead line with the altar and the Heel stone . . ." (Graves, The White Goddess 291). Graves indicates that Stonehenge's lay-out is meticulously plotted to correspond not only with the seasonal positions of the sun, and thus to the solar deity (or deities), but also to a complicated alphabet. Language was so profoundly interconnected with the sacredness of the annual solar, lunar, stellar and natural cycles that this alphabet, in its involved system of coding and concealing, was fundamentally linked to all these cycles. Thus, the calendar year was not based exclusively on solar activity, but also on lunar phases;

each month was signified by a tree, bird, and consonant (the vowels overlapped this cycle) particular to the time of year. Every phase of human activity was informed by these interweaving connexions, and "tied to the seasons."

Nichol envisions the possibility of this kind of integrated geomantic reading in his own immediate environment, in the ground of Dufferin County. Instead, he is abruptly confronted by the language of advertising, "the letters meaningless words" -- or, as in this case, a single word: OKTOBERFEST. The first Oktoberfest was held in Munich in 1810, to mark the wedding anniversary of King Ludwig I and Queen Theresa (D. Spicer, 72). It was a celebration marked by excess (especially in the consumption of new Munchiner bier and seasonal produce) in reflexion of the royal occasion, but also because it coincided with the harvest -- a "festival to meet the season." While Nichol and his friends are actually bringing in the harvest, the Oktoberfesters seem to be as disassociated from themselves as they are from the nature of the fest; here, the participants must be directed to go through the motions of what should be spontaneous gestures.

The Therafields farm was a project which sought reintegration on two levels -- of man with the land, and with himself:

> Man has learned to manipulate nature to his convenience, but his convenience and his peace of mind do not always coincide. He has learned to organize his social, civilized life into highly complex patterns of give and take, of service rendered and service received, but this ordered complexity, marvellous in itself, seems

> often to lack the vitality, the freedom for passion, for expansion, for novelty and invention that he somewhere senses is the only thing that can make his life a challenge rather than a burden. If anything, the very processes which make him more and more successful as man-the-manipulator seem to take him further from man as man. In short, man as we know him is alienated, rootless, schizophrenic. . . .
>
> In the summer of 1967 the people now associated with Therafields purchased a farm outside Toronto and named it Therafields. It was a good choice of name, for all the major developments within the group since that time have been in some way connected with the 'fields' of Therafields. The farm has become the patrimony of all who have since become associated with the group. For some, it is a haven from the chaos of technologized life and technologized feelings. For others, at another stage of self-discovery, it has certain foreboding: its vastness and earthiness conjure images from the primitive unconscious, image which leave man-the-manipulator feeling small, full of awe, and sometimes full of terror. For yet others it is a place to learn the times and seasons of living things, and thus rhythms and harmonies beneath their own dividedness. And for still others, it is a place to build a new city of man, in which the truest and deepest needs and aspirations of man-becoming find hearing and expression. (Hindley-Smith, et al., 12, 13.)

It should be noted that this is the first time a season contemporary to the writing of the poem is noted <u>in</u> the poem. From now on, every so often a specific date, or month, or event is mentioned, grounding the poem in its process in the world, giving form to the present.

There are three minor changes in this poem in the second edition. In the first edition, the word "now" makes up the third line, while "late september dufferin county" is dropped down and indented. The slash before "its roots" is not used there.

andy

-- Andy Phillips, older brother of David Phillips (see I:61, and note), who also has known Nichol since high school. His

letters to bp, written on his first trip to Europe in 1964-65, incorporate one of the several narratives in Nichol's novel Andy. He eventually moved to Toronto, and was also a member of Therafields at this time.

II:199 poets are such asocial beings . . .

In a typical Nichol move, the reader is led outwards from an image of the personally local, the everyday, from the uprooted Toronto-bound beets, to the larger issue of the twentieth century poet's culturally fostered isolation. As language has fallen into neglect and abuse (most clearly exemplified by advertising), so the poet has lost his originally esteemed place in society. This excerpt, from Brian Branston's The Lost Gods of England, a book Nichol read at while he was working on Book 2, gives some sense of the long-standing cultural importance of making poetry:

> It is not easy for us after some years of compulsory 'education,' free libraries, cheap newspapers and -- latterly -- cinema, radio and television to imagine people whose memories were muscular, supple, in training and therefore quick to learn, capacious and extraordinarily retentive. At the turn of the sixth century in England it was the mark of the magician to be able to write, for writing meant the cutting or scratching of runes on stone, bone or metal, and the purpose of rune-risting was more often than not to do with soothsaying or sorcery. But our illiterate ancestors did have codes of law, they did have histories, sagas and myths which (like their mile-long family trees) were passed from ear to tongue, from one generation to another, often in rhythmical form to give the memory at least a little support. A curse of modern society is that it has a high mortality rate in poets: they get mashed up in the machinery. The Old English, on the other hand, held poets in high esteem with priests and kings. Great respect was paid to the art of 'finding sayings rightly bound,' that is, in alliterative verse, and it was a matter at least for private shame to have to leave the feast (as Caedmon at first was wont to do) before the 'glee-wood,' the harp

> passing from hand to hand, reached you because you were unable to sing. Kings as well as commoners sang: we are told in Beowulf that Hrothgar, lord of the Danes
>
> > the glee-wood touched
> > the harp's sweet note awoke; and now a song intoned,
> > both sooth and sad; now the great-hearted king
> > told well a wondrous tale.
>
> The aristocracy, kings and thanes, maintained 'shapers' or 'makers' of verse . . . at their courts, while the gleoman, or gleeman, wandered far and wide among men with his harp. In fact, one of our earliest poems is called Widsith, 'the Far Traveller,' from its maker who tells how he visited all the North West European and other people of the Continent, not to mention the Medes, Persians and Jews. (50-51)

This actively communal nature of language and art is completely absent from a gathering like the Oktoberfest mentioned on the previous page.

"The gift of tongues" also suggests glossolalia, the mysterious speech uttered by the apostles when imbued with the Holy Spirit, in the form of tongues of flame, on Pentecost (see Acts:2), and practised in some evangelical congregations today.

II:200 single voice of joy for the creation

-- see I:13 and note.

birthday

September 30, 1970 was Nichol's twenty-sixth birthday.

now that i have friends

> In Therafields over the last few years we have struggled especially in the learning groups with this issue as it applies to ourselves. Among us the paradigm language has not been so much that of art or politics but that of the family and from time to time we have faced the possible collapse of our experiment, unless we resolved the old dependency feelings towards three of <sic> four people at the core of things.
>
> The therapeutic relationship calls out people's very early feelings of dependency and need, whereas our ordinary social relationships are so hedged by reserve,

> superficiality and role playing that these repressed, unresolved feelings are kept firmly under wraps. Their presence is, however, pervasively felt in distorted form at every turn in families, work and institutions, wherever we feel mistrust, divisiveness, dispersal of energy, frenzy, or quiet, undermining despair. (Hindley-Smith, et al., 16)

II:202 that night rob told me . . .

-- Rob Hindley-Smith, the son of Lea Hindley-Smith (see I:13 and note). Nichol knew him through Therafields, and was his roommate there for a time.

II:203 the journey bunyan saw

The title page of John Bunyan's allegory states: "The pilgrim's progress, from this world to that which is to come delivered under the similitude of a dream wherein is discovered the manner of his setting out, his dangerous journey, and safe arrival at the desired country." To Bunyan's Protestant imagination, "the dangerous journey" was life; and the sole purpose and joy of those who worthily endured it was to escape sin by devoting themselves to their heaven-dwelling cloud-hidden God, in order that they might live with him in the New Jerusalem when this dreadful living on earth was finally over. In his journey, the pilgrim (named Christian) is beset by figures representing every kind of venial and mortal sin, by temptations of various kinds and by his own, temporary, spiritual failings. But -- after much suffering, persevering, and girding of loins -- he does slough his mortal coil and, with his friend Hopeful, enters the heavenly city.

In the draft, the first two stanzas on this page have second lines which were deleted in publication:

what trapped bodies did you find there
what gods bound in chains . . .

surely this was not the journey bunyan saw
bound as he was a protestant . . .

Besides reinforcing the images of chaining and binding, these deleted lines reveal the fuller intentions behind certain suggestions in the poem. For instance, nowhere else is it stated that gods are amongst those suffering in the underworld; but Prometheus clearly comes to mind with the images we see on II:204. Similarly, the pun on being "bound . . . a protestant," while taking a jab at the puritanical and repressive proclivities of the protestant mind-set, points to the very root, both etymological and actual, of the nature of religion -- its ability to bind the human to those forces which are mysterious, powerful and beyond the rational. Nichol, from Protestant stock himself, is, however, completely free from the tunnel vision exhibited by Bunyan's hero: he gives us glimpses into his own (occasionally wallowed in) suffering; but suffering does not constitute his only earthly pleasure.

so it was the snake was misinterpreted

The peculiar characteristics of the snake -- its legless ness, its strange movements and powerful poisons, and especially its ability to slough its skin and rejuvenate itself -- have made it an enduring symbol of fertility, spiritual energy, rebirth and eternity. The serpent was venerated and feared wherever it was found throughout the world; for while it represented resurrection, its lethal

venom and strangling ability also promised death. Gilgamesh's encounter with the snake has been mentioned above, but every Middle Eastern culture held it in particularly high esteem. (Any book on mythology or symbolism will spend a considerable number of pages discussing the profound cultural significance of this creature.) In Genesis (3:1) the serpent is said to be "more subtle than any other wild creature that the Lord God had made." This is the reason Milton gives for Satan's assuming the serpent's body in Eden (Paradise Lost 9:83-97). The worship of nehushtan, the brazen serpent, is evident amongst the Israelites when Moses sets it on a pole in order to save them from the plague of venomous snakes (Numbers 21:8). This is in fact one Old Testament type of Christ; Alan Watts notes that "the identification of Christ with the nehushtan-serpent is based on John 3:14, 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up'" (Myth and Ritual in Christianity, 79, n.).

The Christian mythos is alone in its attempt to identify the snake with absolute evil. Equating the snake with Satan was one way the early proselytizing Christians could subdue the widespread and persistent snake worship amongst the pagans; they employed the same technique when they depicted Satan as Pan. But they could not obliterate the powerful associations aroused by this image. Even Milton, while he tries to portray the serpent as entirely despicable once Satan slips into its form, is seduced by its subtle energy.

II:204 we must return again to human voice . . .

On being questioned on these lines (by Daphne Marlatt),

Nichol responded with this:

> . . . the actual line comes out of the feeling that i had at that time which was that the importance of sound poetry was . . . to free the emotional content of speech from ideation or from words, necessarily, and to just be able to let out the voice. And that once the voice had been let out, then the words would follow. (The Capilano Review interview, 325)

the sacred plants of regeneration

-- see II:193 and note. In the first edition the last word of this poem ("sleeping.....") is placed over to the right at the end of the line, rather than at the left margin.

the river okeanos . . .

This scene is roughly based on the Greek belief that the ghosts of the dead, having entered Tartarus ("the main entrance to which lies in a grove of black poplars beside the Ocean stream" <Robert Graves, The Greek Myths, vol. 1, 120> -- that is Okeanos), were ferried across the river Styx by Charon the boatman. Underworlds are, understandably, tumultuous places filled with groaning, wailing, screaming -- sounds emitted by souls enduring horrible punishments, but also, especially in non-Christian afterlifes, by those who would simply rather be alive. When Odysseus visits the world of the dead, he is beset by the "inhuman clamor" (Odyssey 11:43, Richmond Lattimore trans.) of restless souls; "a clamor of the dead as of birds scattering / scared in every direction" surrounds the image of Heracles when it steps forward to speak (Odyssey 11:605-606). Dante's Inferno is much noisier.

Reat's "trailing the chain the sorrow round his breast"

brings to mind certain other chained mythological figures. Prometheus was chained at the top of a mountain in the Caucasus, where he endured a vulture devouring his liver by day, and freezing temperatures at night, while his liver replenished itself, so the vulture had something to return for in the morning, and so on in perpetuity. Blake's mythos, certainly using Prometheus as a basis (and in what S. Foster Damon calls "a remarkable anticipation of Freud's Oedipus theory" (76), has first Los and then his son, Orc, bound with the Chain of Jealousy they each feel towards the other for the attentions of the mother, Enitharmon (see Urizen, chapter VII). Why Reat is chained is unclear. Perhaps it is punishment for having neglected his family, or for losing his voice, or both. All of these figures promised some kind of liberation for humanity: Prometheus introduced many useful crafts, and gave man fire (the latter gift was what finally spurred Zeus to punish him as he did); Los embodied the creative imagination; Orc, revolution; Reat was always associated with preserving breath, and thus language.

II:205 the legendary earth-two

-- the afterworld, in the D.C. Comics mythology.

"oh let me sing . . .

Nichol:

> This is in the voice of St Rand. In this whole section the guy's depressed out of his gourd, wandering around looking for his father -- basically doing the Orphic journey. I was always kind of interested in the way a lot of the San Francisco poets were really into that Orphic thing, which I finally don't reject, BUT . . . . . This is kind of my version of it, in the story of St Rand and his father. (February, 1987)

During a period when Nichol was not performing with the Four Horsemen, the other members of the group (see II:213 and note) adapted St Rand's song, and performed it as a piece for three voices.

II:206 fasting sequence

Fasting was one of the activities in which the members of Therafields intermittently participated. This one took place in the fall (early October) of 1970.

This short sequence interrupts the story of St Rand's search for his dead father. The reader's eye is suddenly directed away from the underworld, first to the immediate autumn landscape, then to the stars -- miles upwards, and millenia outwards. The histories and charts of constellations consulted by Nichol did not "make sense till <he> looked up / raised <his> head above the earth to study heaven." While St Rand seeks Reat in hell, Nichol, standing on the ground, ("the surface is where the depth is," Book 4), encounters him walking amongst the trees, and seated among the stars.

> . . . it is not enough to die
>
> our energy lives on
> mingles with the stones & trees
> we create mysteries each time we breathe

As he has said himself (see note to II:205), Nichol is not interested in writing the Orphic poem. This sequence, perhaps, demonstrates why.

II:206(-210) last night we found auriga . . .

Nichol's source book for all the astronomical phenomena in the fasting sequence is Richard Hinkley-Allen's Star Names: their Lore and Meaning (republished by Dover in 1963; first

edition by G.E. Stechert, 1899, was titled Star-Names and their Meanings). Hinkley-Allen describes the constellations in the usual astronomical terms, but with an eye turned earthwards: he provides the names used in the Arabic, Chinese and Hindu astronomical systems, in addition to those derived from the more familiar Greek mythos; he discusses significant variations -- and remarkable similarities -- in the legends behind the reading of the night skies from numerous historical and geographical situations; he notes literary references to the stars; he depicts the ways in which each constellation is traditionally graphed in its objectified -- anthropomorphic, zoomorphic, monstrous, etc. -- form. Besides the ancient mythological explanations for the patterns found in the stars, Hinkley-Allen cites various folkloric views. This text, then, looks to the cultural significance the stars have had, and continue to have, to groups of people all over the globe -- and not exclusively to those with big telescopes.

Nichol seems to have been verifying or altering his daily book reading with nightly sky reading, his two texts providing an amplitude of oppositions: day vs. night; black on white vs. white on black; traditions thousands of years old made thousands of miles away about stars that seem to be the same ones hanging overhead tonight (this last further complicated by the fact that the stars are unimaginably distant, both spatially and temporally, many of them long dead; their light, "eternal" compared to any of us, still

and just hitting our retinas now); illustrations in books vs. an active tracing of those images in the present sky; the changing fasting body vs. the seemingly immutable universe; and so on. Nichol is as awed as anyone by the ungraspable enormity of astronomical space. It is important to notice, however, that he does not settle on wondering about its longevity, but rather speculates and calculates, with Hinkley-Allen's help, on the changes which do occur up there. (It should be remembered that Cloud-town, abode of the apparently eternal, is a continually shifting city.) He notes revolutions that happen not overnight, like the mutable moon's, but over millenia: specifically, the shifting of that most reliable guide, the pole star. His reading of the stars, of the sky, requires the same kind of attention (now turned upwards) as geomancy. In fact, in part 2 of the "fasting sequence," the writer begins to see constellar shapes, thinking they might be carved glyphs, in stones.

At times Nichol quotes Hinkley-Allen obliquely, at times more directly. Except for some of the speculations in the first poem, none of the material is altered from Hinkley-Allen's telling. I have quoted extensively from the pertinent entries from this text to give some idea of what Nichol was reading and how he incorporated his findings with the present moment of the writing. The names of the constellations he mentions, all easily found in the fall sky, are in boldface to facilitate spotting them in these rather lengthy annotations which, rather than singling out page or poem

numbers, correspond to the stars' order of appearance in this section.

Auriga, the charioteer or wagoner, "is a large constellation stretching northward across the Milky Way . . . and is shown as a young man with a whip in the right hand, but without a chariot, the Goat being supported against the left shoulder and the kids on the wrist. This, with some variations <including Nichol's: he reverses the location of goat and kids>, has been <how the constellation has been illustrated> from the earliest days, when, as now, it was important, chiefly from the beauty of **Capella** and its attendant stars so prominent in the northwest in the spring twilight, and in the northwest in early autumn" (83).

Capella, ("Little She-goat") is Auriga's brightest star, though nowhere in the Allen text is it said to be a binary system, or to have gone nova. Neither it nor Auriga is connected to the Pleiades. It was "always an important star in the temple worship of the great Egyptian god Ptah, the Opener, <and> it is supposed to have borne the name of that divinity and probably was observed at its setting 1700 B.C. from his temple . . . at Karnak. . . . Another . . . sanctuary of Ptah at Memphis also was oriented to it about 5200 B.C." (87).

the place the roads meet

This phrase echoes the fateful "place where three roads meet," where Oedipus met with and, unwittingly, murdered his father ("Oedipus the King," Grene trans., line 716).

Nichol's guess, at the end of the first poem, at the identity of the figure holding the knife is correctly revised in the opening of the second section. It is indeed **Perseus** who wields the sickle, given to him by Hermes, in his right hand, the head of Medusa in his left (329). Interestingly Medusa, the mortal Gorgon, was the only one of the three sisters to be immortalized stellarly. The missing star of the Pleiades, on the other hand, is said to have disappeared because she loved a mortal.

The shape of **Camelopardalis** (camel + leopard = giraffe) "is long, faint, and straggling like its namesake. It stretches from the pole-star to Perseus, Auriga and the Lynx, the hind quarters within the Milky Way" (106).

Polaris, the present pole star, is the brightest star of Ursa Minor.

Cepheus and **Cassiopeia** were king and queen of Ethiopia. Cassiopeia caused some disastrous repercussions for herself and her entire dominion after she bragged that she and her daughter, Andromeda, were more beautiful than the Nereids. Poseidon revenged this insult to immortals by flooding Philistia, and setting loose a hungry sea-monster in the harbour. The only way to stop the monster from devouring the populace of the kingdom was to sacrifice Andromeda; so she was taken and chained to a rock on the shore. But Perseus, who happened to be flying overhead, spotted Andromeda, then quickly fell in love with her, swept down and slew the monster (who became an island; Medusa's head still had the power to turn animate things to stone), saved the

princess, killed and petrified hundreds of unruly wedding guests -- including his in-laws, whom Poseidon immortalized as stars. (Perseus, Andromeda and Medusa, too, are constellations.) **Cassiopeia**, as further and perpetual punishment for her vanity and cruelty, is bound to her throne ridiculously: for periods of the year she hangs upside down, as both her and Cepheus's constellations are circumpolar. Hinkley-Allen calls Cassiopeia "one of the oldest and popularly best known of our constellations, and her throne, 'the shinie Casseiopeia's chair' of Spenser's Faerie Queen <I:iii, 16>, is a familiar object of the most youthful observer. It is also known as the Celestial W when below the pole, and the Celestial M when above it," a turn that Nichol does not take advantage of here, but which he probably would not have resisted in a later book. The M/W ME/WE inversion does occur in Book 3, but without this astronomical dimension. The other quotations referring to this queen are also cited in Hinkley-Allen: "That starr'd Ethiope Queen . . ." is from Milton's "Il Penseroso" (lines 19-21); "she head foremost like a tumbler sits" is from Aratos, no source given. In The Martyrology, this last quotation refers to the figure of St Reat, whom Nichol sees amongst the constellations.

"Draco's stars were circumpolar about 5000 B.C., and, like all those similarly situated...were much observed in early Egypt, although differently figured than as with us. . . ." Yu Choo (the-Right-hand Pivot) was, in about 2750 B.C. "less than 10' from the exact pole, although now more than 26°; and

as it lies nearly at the centre of the figure, the whole constellation then visibly swung around it, as on a pivot, like the hands of a clock, but in reverse direction.

> The star could be seen, both by day and night, from the bottom of the central passage of the Great Pyramid of Cheops (Knum Khufu) at Ghizeh, in 30° of north latitude, as also from similar structures. . . .
>
> As a Chaldean figure <Draco> probably bore the horns and claws of the early typical dragon, and the wings that Thales utilized to form the Lesser Bear; hence these are never shown on our maps. But with that people it was a much longer constellation than with us, winding downwards and in front of Ursa Major, and, even into later times, clasped both the Bears in its folds; this is shown in manuscripts and books as late as the seventeenth century with the combined title Arctoe et Draco. It still encloses Ursa Minor <on three sides>. The usual figuring is a combination of bird and reptile . . . Vergil had Maximus Anguis, which
>
> > after the manner of a river, glides away with tortuous windings,
> > around and through and between the Bears;--
>
> a simile that may have given rise to another figure and title, found in the Argonauticae, -- Ladon, from the prominent river of Arcadia, or, more probably, the estuary bounding the Garden of the Hesperides, which, in the ordinary version of the story, Draco guarded, 'the emblem of eternal vigilance in that it never set.' Here he was . . . the Watcher over the Golden Fruit; this fruit and the tree bearing it being themselves stellar emblems, for Sir William Drummond wrote:
>
> > a fruit tree was certainly a symbol of the starry heavens, and the fruit typified the constellations. . . . (204-207; 453)

Whereas Hinkley-Allen's connexion between Draco and the fruit of the Hespérides is speculative and convoluted, Nichol finds both in his own back yard.

Cepheus "'is like one who stretches forth both hands' <according to Brown's Aratos>. <He> is shown in royal robes, with one foot on the pole, the other on the solistial colure. . . . The later Hindus knew Cepheus as Capuja,

adopted from Greece; but Hewitt claims that with their prehistoric ancestors it represented Kapi, the Ape-God, when its stars <alpha> and <gamma> were the respective pole-stars of 21,000 and 19,000 B.C. . . . In China, somewhere within this constellation's boundaries, was the Inner Throne of the Five Emperors." **Shaou Wei, the Minor Guard,** is one of the seven asterisms found within the boundaries of Camelopardalis. It is the <gamma star>, which "now marks the left knee of the King <Cepheus>, and will be the pole-star of 2600 years hence." (106, 155, 156, 158)

II:209 what were those last days like

The immediate referent to whom this line may refer is St Reat, and his last days in Cloud-town.

the book of days

Nichol calls this repeated line a non-reference to the Book of Days.

II:211 the bay of fundy

-- located between New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, and known for its tremendous tides -- the highest in the world.

steve rafe paul & i

Steve McCaffery, Rafael Barreto-Rivera, Paul Dutton and Nichol together formed Canada's first poetry-performing ensemble, the Four Horsemen, in 1970.

"isn't this where the sun comes from?"...

Nichol:

> This is one of those imagined quotes. It's the logical thing to say. I think the very tone of the phrase is evoking that kind of childhood sensibility -- that desire to wander, or to travel out. You look out and you see: that is the east, that's where the sun rises,

> and you want to travel towards the sunrise. In the context, this line drops in as though it's a statement in the conversation. And it's contrasted against 'i see your shadow fall from the west saint rand / just before you disappear.'

The son sinks into the west, the direction universally associated with death. The world's light disappears there at the end of every day, leaving darkness in its wake. For this reason, afterworlds were often located in that direction. (Tartarus, for instance, means "far west.") Nichol continues:

> There's even that European perception that if you travelled west you fell off the edge of the world. In Tolkien, the Great Reaches are actually to the west, where the great ships go carrying the dead. So if you come from the west, you're already in that sense Orphic. Hey -- we could have a whole argument here for west coast poetry! But that contrasts sharply with what I said earlier about the Orphic. <See St Rand's song, II:205, and note.> I'm quoting a <u>kind</u> of voice at that point.
>
> Later on on this page, 'saint rand stranded in that strange place,' which is the afterlife, death, because he was off looking for his father. So 'how would you call it / "a problem of resolution"?' is a quoted imagined statement that St Rand would say. 'As tho the "i" the writer of these poems / controlled your destiny.' I'm saying how would you <u>term</u> that? Are you trapped in there? Is he the death? Have I put him there? Is he there himself? It's that whole fact-fiction line, and that question of the relationship between the mundane and the divine. Here's a saint who I have found in language. On the other hand, maybe I've created this saint -- maybe this is just a writerly trick, putting that saint there. Is it a problem of resolution for the writer, i.e., I have to get my character out of the dilemma I've put him into? Is it St Rand's problem? Who is it that controls destiny? That's the kind of dilemma you're working with. (February, 1987)

> fran & tom & charles & barb

-- friends from Therafields.

> this poem becomes a diary of a journey . . .

In Book 4, Nichol consciously adopts the utanikki, a form used by Basho and others, which is the diary of a journey in which

passages of prose and poetry alternate, interrupting and moving contrapuntally with each other. He is not yet aware of this form at this point in his writing, but the work is clearly beginning to take on this kind of rhythm. Nichol's notion of the evolution, in Books 1 and 2, from an impersonal to an increasingly personal "i" may be found in the introduction to "Clouds."

sackville

-- a city in southeast New Brunswick, near the border with Nova Scotia, at the tip of the Bay of Fundy.

II:212 quebec city / the troops...

Nichol's reading tour took him to Quebec at the time of the October crisis, during which period the War Measures Act was instated (hence, "the troops").

i know only your story comes to me in sections . . .

This comment, and the one further down the page -- "i tried to free you prematurely" -- are both addressed to "you," ostensibly to St Rand; but they also apply to the poem itself. Nichol tried to free <u>The Martyrology</u> -- or to free himself from it -- numerous times, as we have seen. It seems that he was less anxious, in these last two sections, to declare it finished. The "flow" he speaks of was, perhaps, being recognized as the poem's integrating principle, and one which was beyond the writer's control. This, the turning outward (mentioned on the next page), the opening doors, all suggest revelation of new directions, and release, both for St Rand, from his bitter obsession with his disappearing

father, and for the poet, from the desire, faint as it might have been, to settle for closure.

II:213 the plunkett hotel

The Plunkett Hotel, in Plunkett, Saskatchewan, was operated by Nichol's maternal grandparents, Walt Workman and Agnes Leigh Workman, from <?> until they sold it in 1941. Plunkett is the "arbitrary centre" from which all roots and routes run (see "In the Plunkett Hotel," Book V of The Martyrology Book 6 Books) and thus the omphalos of his own personal mythos (see discussion of The Plunkett Papers, above, for further details). It was the place where his parents met, and his wife, Ellie, grew up in a town nearby:

> the workman & the nichol line
> passing thru ontario
> half a century
> before they finally met
>
> in a hotel
> on a corner
> in plunkett)
> (from a small collection of pieces from The Plunkett Papers, called "Familiar," published as a chapbook in 1980)

was it the mahayana's said . . .

Nichol revealed an interest in Mahayana Buddhism as early as 1965.'

> . . . a further note about my preference of the Mahayana school in Buddhist thinking. the original goal is to liberate the self. now having reached the state of nirvana it is of course easier to stay there than to throw oneself back into life; but it is precisely there that one reaches a higher state than that reached by merely going into the nirvana state. <those who do turn back to life> reach the creator state or God state, if you will, for do not forget that the final realization is that God and self is one & the same, and that indeed it was only that by

creating that God reached his greatness as it was true of Buddha & of Christ. (from a letter to Neild <?>, March 5, 1965)

this morning talking with grant . . .

Grant, like Rob (Hindley-Smith; see note for II:202), was one of Nichol's Therafields roommates.

II:214 dufferin county

-- see II:198, and note.

II:217 "Friends as Footnotes"

The last section of Book 2 was written from mid-November 1970 to February 1971. The source of the title is the opening line of a discarded poem: "footnotes become your friends in poems." Nichol had originally intended to incorporate a series of footnote-poems into the sequence of the main text, a project springing from his intermittent desire to provide some sort of referential backing to the work. The impulse to expand upon lines in the text with a string of referential poems is certainly a striking indication of the unwieldy shape the work was taking. The names of friends, and lines commenting on the process of writing, were numbered; the corresponding poems were either to be situated after the poems they referenced, as footnotes, or grouped together as endnotes. (The drafts indicate that both possible formats were contemplated.) All but one of the footnote-poems were omitted from the published text. Significantly, the one which was retained is addressed not to a person, but to the poem itself. This may seem a surprising choice, given that many poems in Books 1 and 2 voice the writer's concern for his friends. But the footnote-poems, even the personal portraits, reveal Nichol's growing awareness of the poem's unstoppable momentum. Nichol has spoken of the writing act as being another state of mind, another way of being, a distancing from himself (June, 1984). By the stopping point of Book 2 (it cannot accurately be called the "end"), the poem had clearly become for Nichol a creature from that other space, "dictated to <him> by another will / a kind of being writing

is / opposite <him>self . . ." (II:235).

The illuminated figure resumes his position of prayer, but now his head, hands and feet have been covered, the drapery tied into place, perhaps to still their tricky moves. The arms, however, seem about to resume their antics after the string around the neck has been undone. But when the left arm reappears, it is handless. The hand does return, accompanied by a host of others (five pairs, if they are pairs) -- so many that some are crowded out of the frame. The halos around the head and right hand are replaced; the ten extra hands are ringed, or sleeved -- the left hand alone is unadorned. The saint's feet suggest that he is ascending, to what place we don't know. This is, perhaps, St And (who is addressed often in this section), being assumed back to Cloud-town. The illumination may be responding to the poem on this page: "wishing for your presence here beside me saint and / . . . the same hand moves inside our skins / each other's puppets we cling unknowingly." ("Hand" is composed of both Nichol's favourite letter, and The Martyrology's first saint.)

II:219 we buried terry . . .

Terry was a dog; Mark was a Therafields friend.

the night before ellie's 29th birthday

-- the night of November 14, 1970. Ellie's name is the first to be footnoted with a poem, the opening line of which gives this section its title.

footnotes become your friends in poems

i already said that
yes i did i did say that
once before (earlier today)
i said that that very thing
discarded version (earlier) of this poem

friends are the whole of my life saint and i've tried
to deny
as this poem is part shall we call it part of a larger
thing

(you run in circles from your feelings
as saint and did try to get away
unable to say you love her
stumble over words you are not clever with)

prose says things simply . . .

II:220 visvaldis

Visvaldis Upenieks was an architect, and a member of Therafields. He died in the early 1980s. The second footnote-poem is addressed to him:

learn directness from the source
root or core experience
who is the best teacher teach me
help me understand

this man
this friend
helps me again
thus discussions lead somewhere
create & do not dissipate
energy . . .

you saints these poems are prayers

The end of this line is noted number three. In the drafts it is called "the poem." It appears in both editions of the published text, as the last two pages of text in Book 2 (II:235-6).

"in the midst of life . . .

A line from a burial ceremony. Draco appeared earlier, on II:208.

the 401

The highway runs west from Toronto down to Windsor.

II:221 always you are conscious . . .

In the first edition, "concious" appears in its usual Nicholesque spelling. For some reason (probably because an eye was alerted to it while it was checking the revision in the next line), for this one instance only, it is replaced with the conventional spelling in the second edition. The pre-revised second line is: "only the words you trust to take you thru to what place you don't know."

II:222 you can't hear

This line, which begins with an ampersand in the first edition, appears there as the third line of the second stanza.

II:223 "older than adam's" . . .

-- a line from a poem by Julia Keeler, whom Nichol first met in the University of Toronto library. At that time, she was a nun, and was working on her PhD thesis on the minor poets of the 1590s (see note to I:5). Nichol serviced her study carrell in the library, but eventually got to know her through Therafields. In a sense, Nichol is here quoting his source, or at least the source of the title of The Martyrology. But the primary reason for this quotation's appearing here is that it was the one that came up, and wanted to be written. In the original poem, "Adam" is a double reference to the biblical Adam, and to Adam Crabtree, a mutual friend of Keeler and Nichol, who works on bibliographies on spirituality and mesmerism. (February, 1987)

II:224 today the words flow

This line is footnoted 4. The referential poem's title is "sound":

> learn to turn words outward
> having done as i've done for years
> words become a silence meant for you saint and
> you <sic> eyes alone my hands will form them for you
> for you only and
> your words become my eyes again
> no clear statement but confusion
> loving the sound the sound of you
> i do say your name again
> my hands turned outward
> make the words the writ thing
> inscribed in stone
> as i will this year i know
> carve this song in rock
> the sound set free
> to lose itself in air
> separately

By now, the poem is quickly "piling up" -- literally, in stacks of drafts, and textually, in its own accumulating density. (Even this footnote pulls in previous material: the first line echoes the outward turning spoken of on II:213, and the last three lines recall the passage at the top of II:204, as well as the illumination full of out-turned hands on II:223, though Ofo would probably not have seen this poem.) And if it is a "conversation," it is a complexly polyphonic one.

a feeling's lived with . . .

-- revised, from this line to the end of stanza. The first edition reads:

> a feeling that's lived with
> tingling in the cock
> scratch with my pen
> try writing

II:225 the taxi-driver in edmonton . . .

Many of the poems in the last pages of this section were written while Nichol was on a western reading tour that took him to Edmonton, Calgary, Vancouver and Victoria in early 1971.

there is another world i've lived in . . .

-- see last stanza of opening poem in "St Reat" (I:73), and note.

II:226 as stein saw it . . .

For Stein's sense of identity and entity, see note to II:166. The last line in this stanza refers to the distinction she draws between repetition and insistence:

> When I first began writing although I felt very strongly that something that made that some one be some one was something that I must use as being them, I naturally began to describe them as they were doing anything. In short I wrote a story as a story, that is the way I began, and slowly I realized this confusion, a real confusion, that in writing a story one had to be remembering, and that novels are soothing because so many people one may say everybody can remember almost anything. It is this element of remembering that makes novels so soothing. But and that was the thing that I was gradually finding out listening and talking at the same time that is realizing the existence of living being actually existing did not have in it any element of remembering and so the time of existing was not the same as in the novels that were soothing. As I say all novels are soothing because they make anything happen as they can happen that is by remembering anything. But and I kept wondering as I talked and listened all at once, I wondered is there any way of making what I know come out as I know it, come out not as remembering. I found this very exciting. And I began to make portraits. ("Portraits and Repetition," Lectures in America, 181)

One of the efforts behind The Martyrology which is clearly Steinian, which is, in fact, the poem's primary intention, is "to prêserve perceptual systems to present, in terms of the ongoing present, the eruption of history & myth into it as a living force" (from a notebook entry; see note to last page of "Clouds" <II:167> for larger excerpt; punctuation added). That is,

to let it be a text in which the writer makes what he knows come out as he knows it. The portrayals of friends in the footnote-poems may also have had their roots in Stein -- in her notion of portrait.

barrie joy maureen . . .

Nichol was introduced to Barry McKinnon by David Phillips around 1970. They seem to have a pact to misspell each other's first names. Joy is McKinnon's wife; Maureen and Mavis are unplaceable.

the i is always clear

Nichol:

> The 'i' is me and isn't me. The 'i' is a construct of autobiographical elements; imagined moments which have taken on realities as well. There's certainly autobiographical detail in The Martyrology, but it's not there so much to track autobiography as to elucidate the moment of the writing. (July, 1983)

And see II:166 and note.

. . . making the present continuous . . .

In "Composition as Explanation," Stein writes of the continuous present she presented in some of her writings:

> I wrote a negro story called Melanctha. In that there was a constant recurring and beginning there was a marked direction in the direction of being in the present although naturally I had been accustomed to past present and future, and why, because the composition forming around me was a prolonged present. A composition of a prolonged present is a natural composition in the world as it has been these thirty years it was more and more a prolonged present. I created then a prolonged present naturally I knew nothing of a continuous present but it came naturally to me to make one, it was simple it was clear to me and nobody knew why it was done like that. I did not myself although naturally to me it was natural.
>
> After that I did a book called The Making of Americans it is a long book about a thousand pages.
>
> Here again it was all so natural to me and more and

more complicatedly a continuous present. A continuous present is a continuous present. I made almost a thousand pages of a continuous present. (Selected Writings, 517-18)

Of all the Stein texts which informed Nichol's own work, The Making of Americans stands out as the one to which he responded the most ambitiously:

> When I was much younger than I am now, chronologically speaking, but about the same age mentally, tho without the experience I've accumulated since then, I started writing a book on Gertrude Stein's theories of personality as revealed in her early opus The Making of Americans. The general scheme was to go thru & extract the many & very clear things she'd said about personality types & demonstrate both the consistency & accuracy of her particular classification system. This is easy to do; it would just take a gross amount of time -- say two years or so if you were working at it full tilt. I finished two chapters of the work, sketched out an additional four, even published the initial two, & then abandoned the project. It took me awhile to see why I'd abandoned it, but the why is very important. . . . <The> borderline between the real life of the I & the I's existence in narrative time, any narrative's time, that was one of Stein's central concerns. She was exploring the continuous present & she wanted writing to occupy a continuous present. She very specifically asked us all in her Geographical History of America (p. 157): 'Oblige me by not beginning. Also by not ending.' I.e. -- continue. Continue continuing. Give the text the reality of its existence as an object & let that object be continuously present to you -- timeless in that sense. So how could I continue extracting? I was violating Stein's text when I did that, the very spirit of her text, & I was, of course, proving the validity of Heisenberg's Principle of Uncertainty as it applied to literature. By extracting I was bringing the text to a dead halt & we were no longer observing it as it was & therefore our observations ceased to have any validity. (Line 1, 47-48)

II:227 i want to explain / as composition does

-- see note on Stein for II:226.

the rhythm determined . . .

Nichol's own writing often proceeds by what he terms the "hinging" of lines. That is, the sound -- rhythm and rhyme

both -- of the words in one line will birth those in the next. From Book 3's "coda" on, the poem is equally activated by the visual rhythms in words.

II:228 late january north vancouver

David Phillips's home was in North Vancouver. Earlier references to "Letter to Saint Orm," Kaministiqua and Denny appear in "Auguries"; Barb appears in "St Orm."

i did mention it . . .

See II:178 for previous mention of this incident.

II:229 (standing on the ferry's deck . . .

The island is Vancouver Island.

we are all linked

-- footnote 5. In partial demonstration of the linking qualities of language, and of the connexions fostered between those who care for it, Nichol included three poems in this note, dedicated to three friends who influenced his sense of language and writing: Rob Hindley-Smith, Victor Coleman and Michael Ondaatje. We read of Nichol's angry response to Hindley-Smith's suggestion that "words need not exist" (II:202). The last two stanzas of the "rob" footnote show an indebtedness to the challenge presented by this kind of statement:

> the purpose or method of the poem's unclear
> thus i confess my ignorance to you
> continues when i die
> this hour's words become eternity
>
> oh god i do surrender this poem to your hands
> descriptions of the friends i've loved
> having taught me the pointlessness of words
> teach me to use them well
> to talk of my love for

this man

Victor Coleman lived in Toronto in the late 1960s, where Nichol met him through his associations with Coach House Press. He was one of the editors who accepted The Martyrology for publication (and may have even seen it through to press).

your face in this anthology that geddes did
your poems
the thin bones of your arms
the architecture of your body
contracting as it does
each line
the disconnected muscles
held together by a tension perception is &
living inside it
i am reminded
memory
a function of
observation
the poetry
we are 'the people' we address
seated in the half lotus
expression of our own lack of buddhahood

Nichol also met Michael Ondaatje through the group of Toronto writers and editors who, like Coleman, worked at and published with Coach House Press. The movie referred to in the first stanza is Sons of Captain Poetry, the film about Nichol which Ondaatje made in 1970 ("with technical assistance from the Queen's University film department and with the collaboration of Robert <'bob'> Fresco" (Mundwiler, 14). Of all these sketches, this one of Ondaatje seems to be the closest to a portrait of the poet's mental landscape:

rode my mind back west
into the eye
interior vision
camera focus
there was the day that guy
do you remember
we were shooting the movie
you & bob tracking me with lenses
this other eye taking you in

the poem is like that
or life is

maybe nothing really resembles something else

only the absurd moment writing is
seated at a desk or
late at night
you should be fucking
you do this other thing instead

talking with phyllis . . .

Nichol's visit with Phyllis Webb coincided with the period during which she was working on The Kropotkin Poems, a project so large in scope and intention that it eventually became unmanageable -- like many of Nichol's own overplanned proposals. These poems, Webb tells us, began in 1967, and

> became a small literary legend. The Kropotkin Poems were never completed. Too grand and too designed (the 'body politic' and 'love's body' as interchangable polymorphous analogues in an ideal world), they were perhaps too big and too weak for me. The infantile ego could not solicit that beautiful anarchist dream poem. Violence, density, indifference did not presume to speak. Neither the Muse of History nor the Muse of Poetry nor the 'towering dead' could move me through that work. But there are remnants of its beginning in a study of power contained in this collection <Wilson's Bowl> among the Portraits and the Crimes and the Poems of Failure. (Webb, 9)

"Portrait" refers to Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. The slash before "portrait" is not used in the first edition.

II:230 "people people where do you go . . .

-- from "Life is a Carnival," a song by The Band.

sleepless night nothing takes shape . . .

The following poem, which intervenes between "sleepless night . . ." and the previous poem ("early morning victoria's

streets . . .") in the first edition, is deleted in the second. (The fourth line below is noted with the sixth and final footnote-poem, called "family.")

worthlessness
the feeling grips me
having seen friends
old ones the family
again
  sit down to prayer
you are all dead

no one to talk to this moment
someone walks thru the door
will i tell them

there is finally or soon
only the breath breathed word spoken
no distinction of class or worth
why do i feel so hopeless
as if i had nothing to give

take it take it away
the sky gone blue or grey
the snow falls beyond the city
my window can't see

you're dead

i can't see your face register the disbelief or sorrow
  my face shows
knowing nothing not even enough to say
i know this thing & say it

II:231 the sullen art

-- that is, poetry. See Dylan Thomas's poem "In My Craft and Sullen Art."

the agony / living now as energy . . .

-- a kind of reprise of the rosary image which appeared on the despairing last page of "Scenes" (I:50). But here the fingers do not fiddle with trying to snap the poem into action; by now it is acknowledged that the poem processually leads the pen. "No chain of words to bind you to me" suggests liberation more than loss.

oh god you are dead . . .

Nichol, at the time he was finishing these last pages of Book 2, actually did dream that all the saints did die (June, 1984). The additional poem in the first edition pushes this threnody for the saints forward, so there it appears on a page by itself, facing the final illumination in the text. "1970-71," printed beneath the drawing (but omitted in the second edition), indicates the dates of completion of the drafts of Book 2. But in the context of this dirge-like poem and the grief-stricken figures in Ofo's illumination, the dates take on the significance of the numbers engraved on a headstone. The reader soon discovers, however, that neither the present text, nor the poem which it initiates, is over.

The non-closure offered by these closing pages is even hinted at in the illumination. It is probably based on an icon depicting either the crucifixion or the entombment of Christ, as suggested by the six figures to the right, gesturing their lamentation (very clearly pronounced in Ofo's sparse and simple lines). The figure standing to the left, however, looks out at the reader, passionlessly. He stands in front of a doorway. (Or is his head haloed with a right-angled nimbus similar to that of St And?) He is not the Pantocrator, holding his book of life, whom we have seen on the introductory pages to both Books 1 and 2 (see I:15 and II:101). Rather, he has the bearing of a saint, as he stands still and apart from the mourning crowd, seeming not to be part of the picture, holding a book of his own writings.

II:235 i misplace it three times

Nichol did actually misplace or lose track of the poem's manuscripts:

> Once I'd left it in the top of a closet in a box in a place I'd moved out of six months before, and someone who moved in found the stuff and brought it over. I literally kept misplacing it. And it would not finish itself. I was all for finishing it off! I did not start it as an open-ended long work. I'm trying to put the bullet through it constantly. Now <1987> I am quite consciously resisting a glib coherence. But at that time I wanted it to cohere! Desperately! So the work was telling me that I couldn't tie it off. And I kept wondering why not? What a puzzle! Is it because it's failed? (July, 1987)

After the poem on these last two pages was abandoned with the rest of the footnoting effort, and Nichol had begun working on other poems that were clearly the start of a new book, he temporarily regarded this poem as the beginning of Book 3.

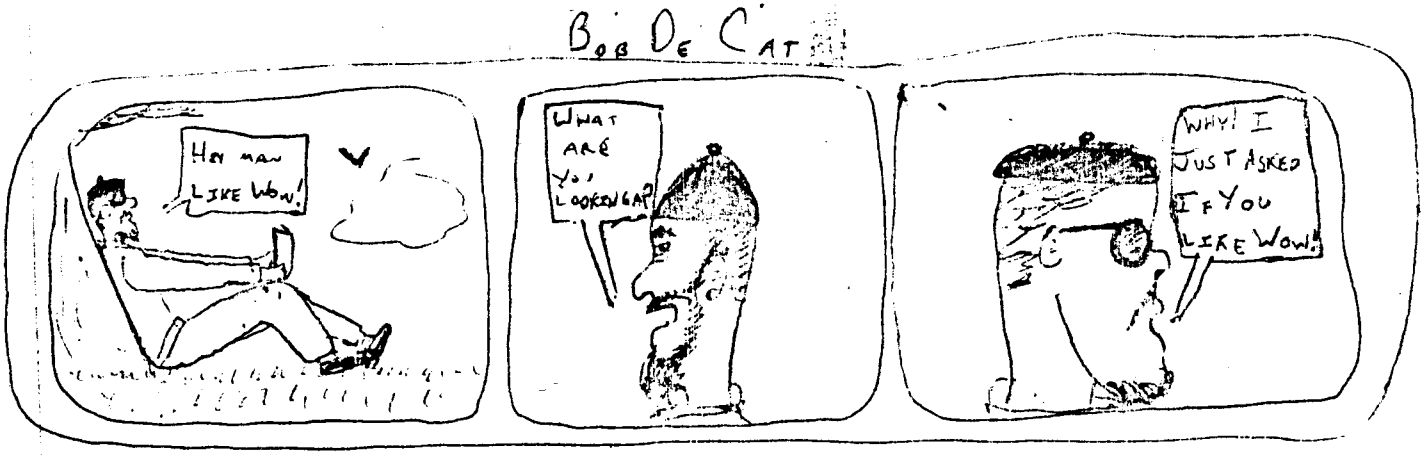


Fig. 1. "Bob de Cat," file no. 39/6/17, Nichol Archive.

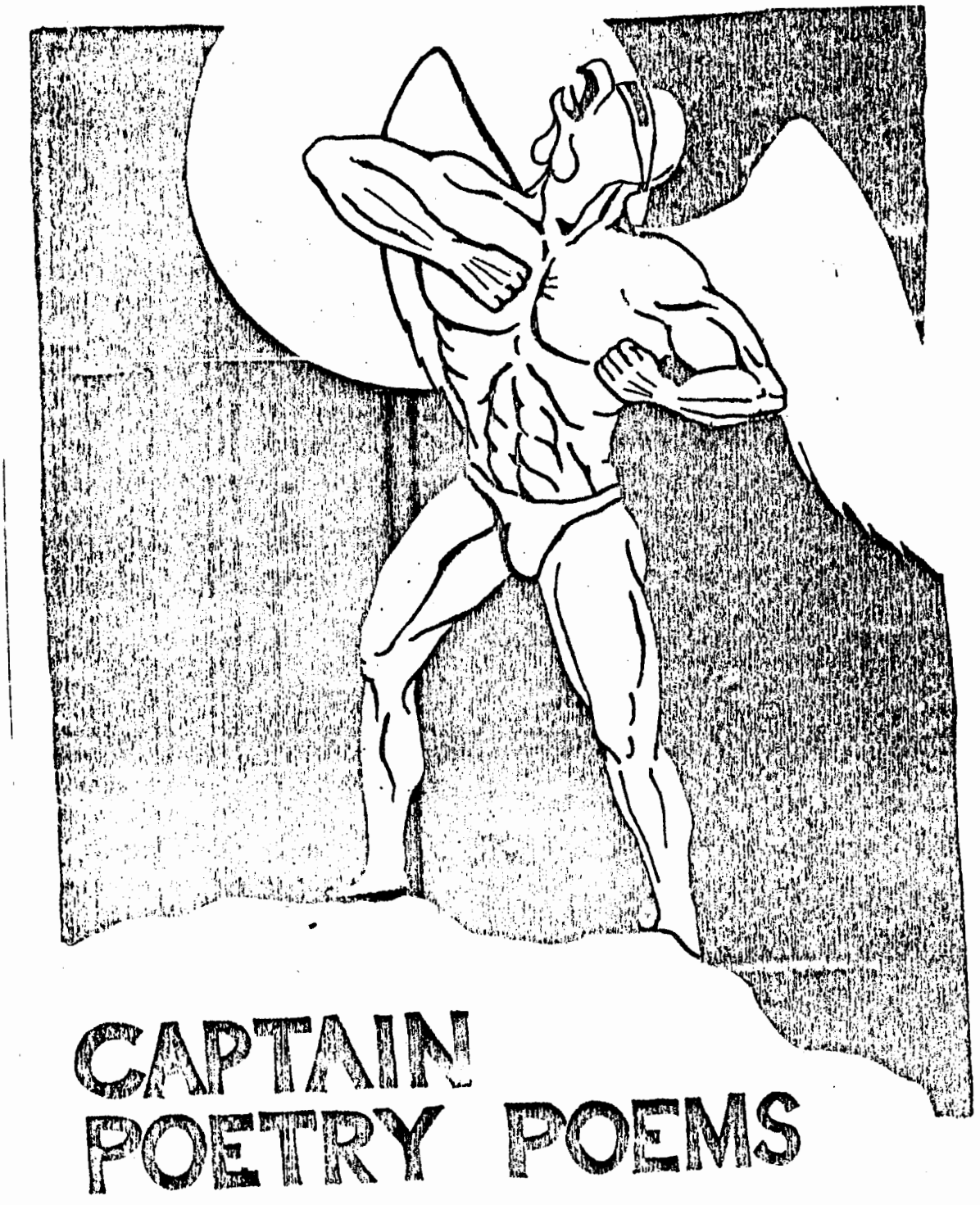
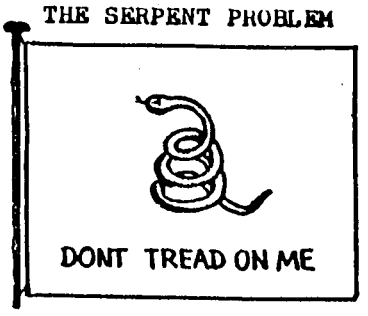


Fig. 2. Captain Poetry, from the title page of The Captain Poetry Poems.

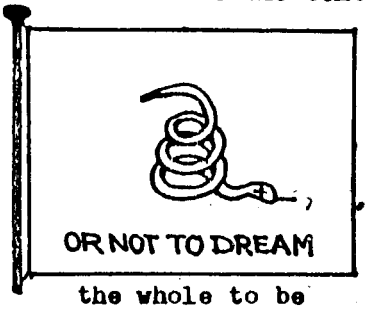
THE WAR AGAINST THE ASPS
or
THE SERPENT PROBLEM



being
AN AUTHENTICK ACCOUNT
of the
RECENT DISTURBANCES
around and within the borders of
THIS FAIR KINGDOM

shewing how
A GRAVE MENACE
was put to rout
alike by the witty sallies of
OUR BRAVE TROUPES
and by the presence of a mind in
THE KING

copiously annotated by
THE MOST EMINENT AUTHORITY
on the subject
Mr DAVID AYLWARD
who also wrote the text



the whole to be
A REPROOF
to those who would have
our noble language instruct
rather than derange
THE MIND OF THE READER

MCM LX VIII

Fig. 3. Title page of Aylward's The War Against the Asps.

ASP !
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*ST. RANGLEHOLD IN IRE LAND

Fig. 4. "St. Ranglehold in Ire Land," from The War Against the Asps.

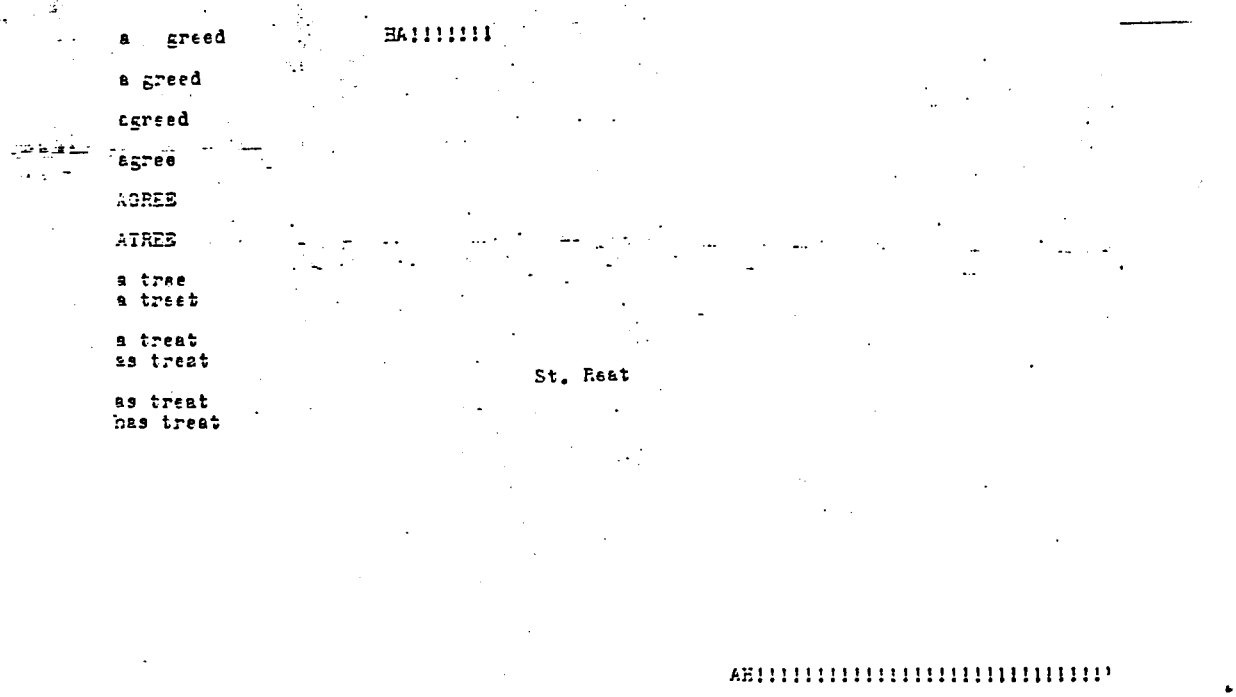

Fig. 5. Discovery of St Reat in Scriptures, 4th sequence.

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Fig. 6. Discovery of St And in Nichol's "Afterword" on the back cover of Aylward's Typescapes.

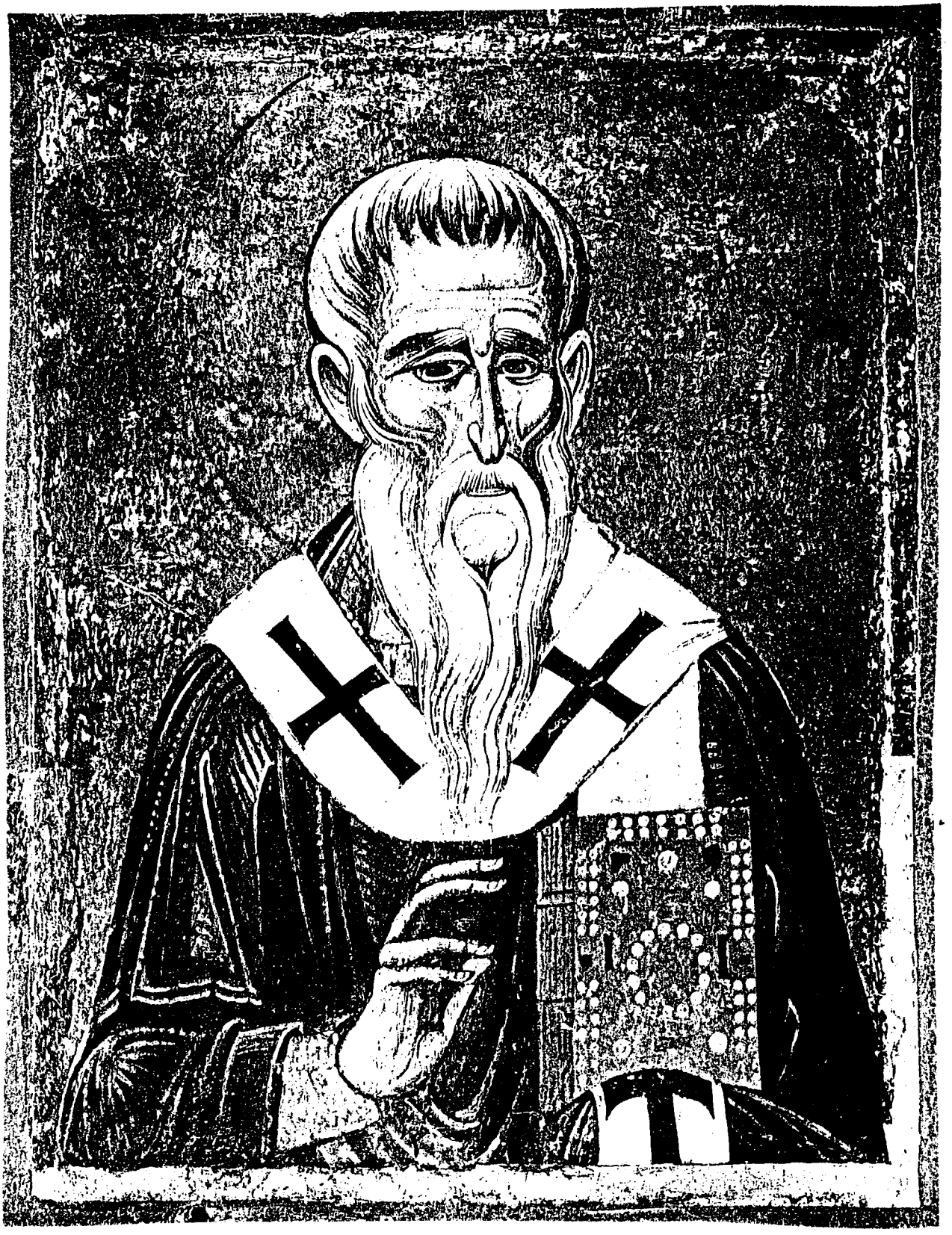

Fig. 7. Source for illumination of St Orm: icon in St Catherine's Monestary, Sinai; reproduced in Weitzmann (The Icon: Holy Images -- Sixth to Fourteenth Century), 116.

Fig. 8. Source for illumination in "St Reat": scene from the life of St Nicholas, in Novgorod; reproduced in Gerhard, plate XXIV.

Fig. 12. Detail from source for illumination on title page for "Auguries": mosaic in Sta Sophia, Kiev; reproduced in Larousse Encyclopedia of Byzantine and Medieval Art, 156.

Fig. 9. Source for illumination in "St Reat": page in the St Gall Gospels, held in the Library of the Cathedral of St Gall, Switzerland; reproduced in Larousse Encyclopedia of Byzantine and Medieval Art, 75.

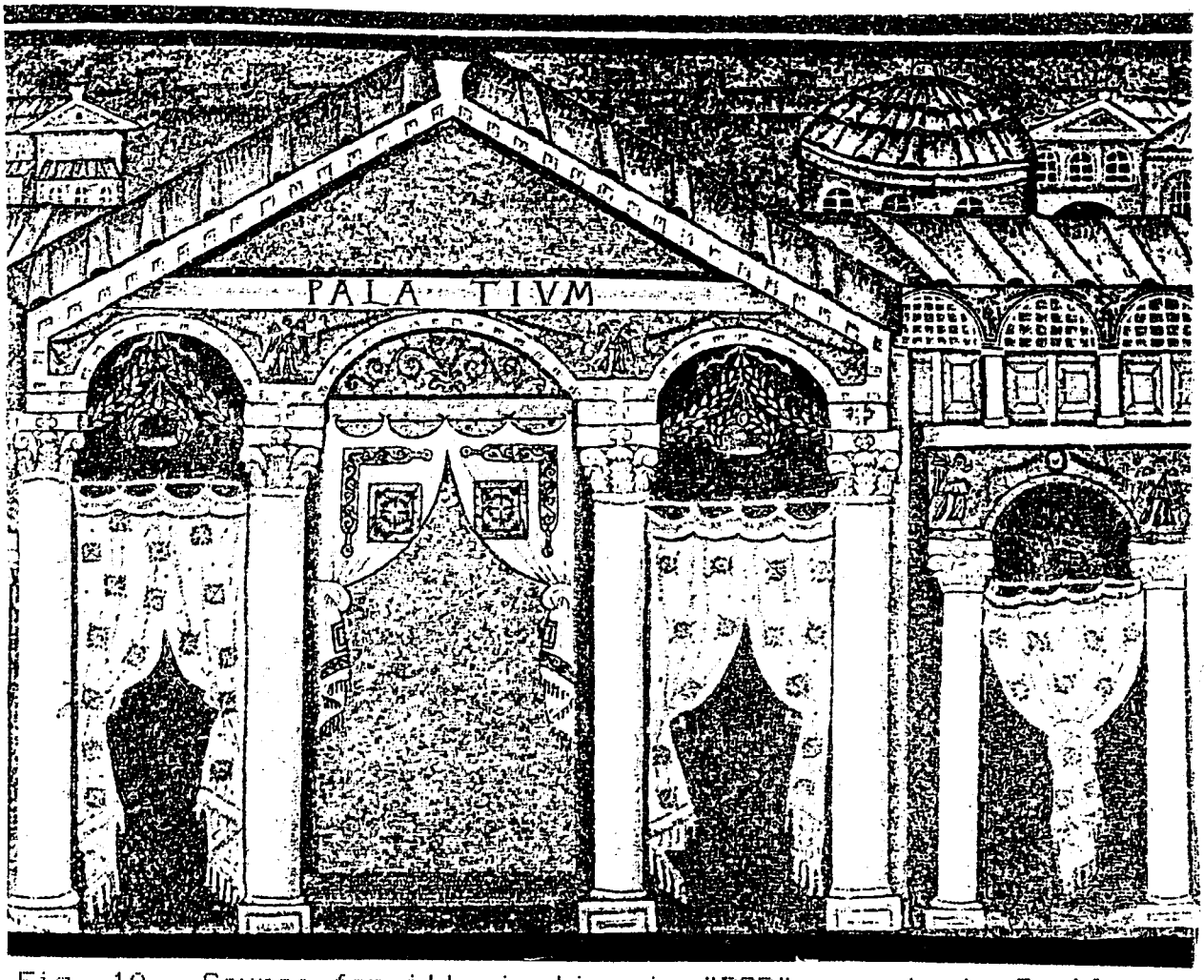

Fig. 10. Source for illumination in "BCP": mosaic in Sant' Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna; reproduced in Busignani, fig. 26.

Fig. 11. Source for illumination in "Clouds": icon of St George, Church of the Virgin, Aighion, Greece; reproduced in Weitzmann (A Treasury of Icons: Sixth to Seventeenth Centuries), fig. 76.

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* The Nichol Archive has been an invaluable resource, and much more of it has informed this work than is here cited. For the sake of brevity, however, only those materials which are discussed or quoted directly are listed here.

** In addition to these more substantial, and easily

available, texts, countless pages of Nichol ephemera have provided a background to this study. In many cases, the documentation would be longer than the texts themselves, so has been omitted.