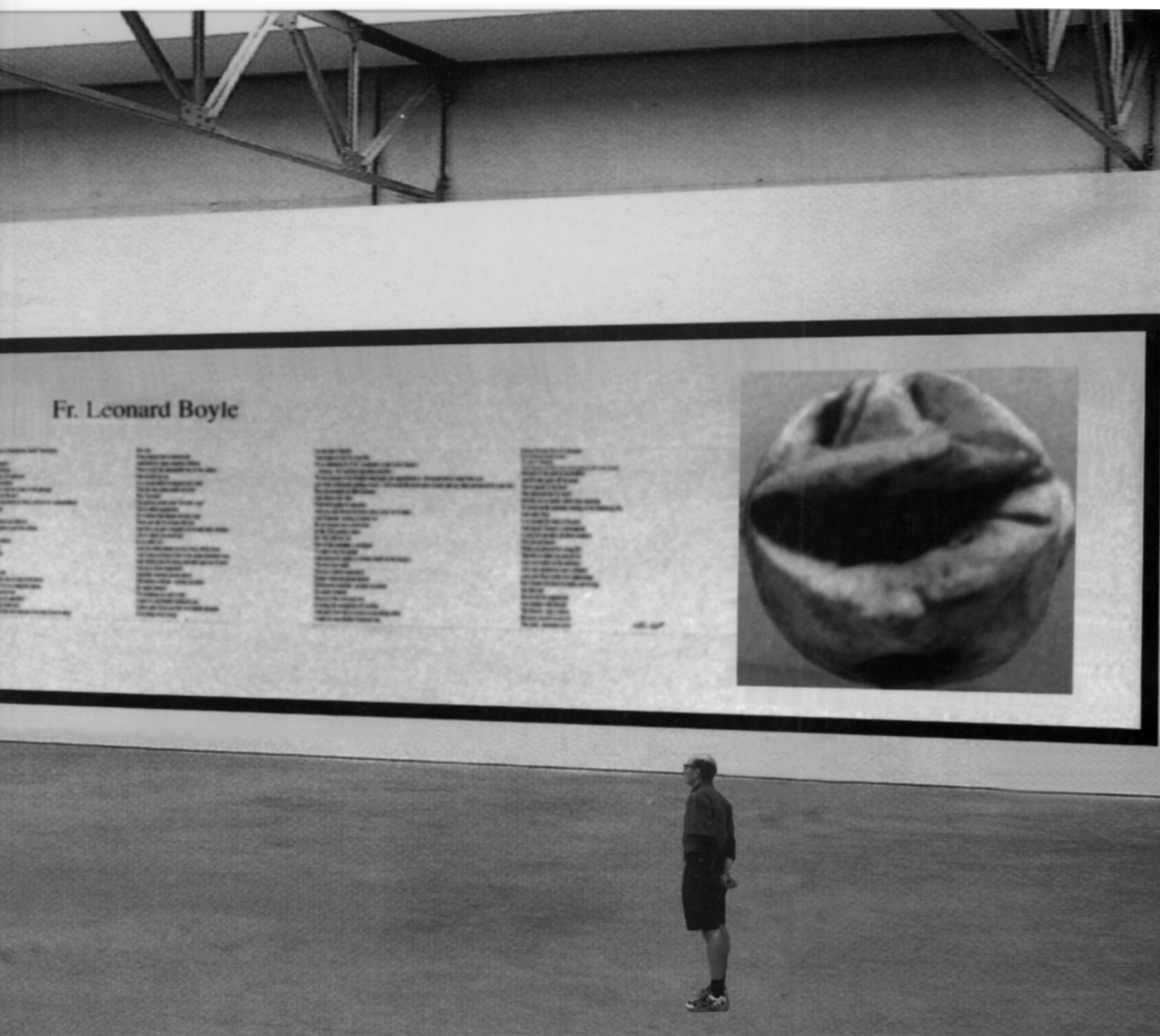


PUPPET POEMS



Allen Bell

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Allen Bell

Bayeux



Arts

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CANADIAN CATALOGUING IN PUBLICATION DATA

Bell, Allen
Puppet Poems

ISBN 1-896209-52-1

I. Title.

PS8553.E4555P86 2000 C811'.54 C00-910668-5
PR9199.3.B3772P86 2000

The publisher gratefully acknowledges the generous support of
The Canada Council for the Arts, The Alberta Foundation for the
Arts, and the Government of Canada through the Book Publishing
Industry Development Program.

Cover photo: SUBSCRIPTIO

Allen Bell ('Fr. Leonard Boyle' poem from PUPPET POEMS)
Lynda Gammon (Photographs from APPLES series)

Printed in Canada

Also by Allen Bell

Thy Harry's Company

Puppet Poems [1990 - 1997] -- London, Cambridge, York,
Aberdeen, Boulogne, Paris,
Seattle, Arcata, Westhaven,
Winnipeg, Calgary, Vancouver,
Victoria

Puppet Poems [1990 - 1997]

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FR. LEONARD BOYLE

You drink too much
And smoke too much
And at The Book In The Middle Ages conference
At the University of Victoria
Seemed distinctly unhappy
And insofar as one could delineate the curvatures of your very red face
Looked as though you wished you were in the Vatican library
And had never ventured forth from Rome
And encountered the Canadian city Victoria
And you did not seem at ease with esoteric academics
And their worldly preoccupations
Some of which obtruded on your conception of scholarship
And you found personal interaction very trying
And would take off your glasses and rub your left eye
And when you talked stood very rigid
And did not look at the person to whom you were speaking
And would often put on your coat
And go outside the building
And stand alone
And smoke
But during your formal presentation
Having been introduced as the world's foremost authority on Latin manuscripts
You became animated
And waved your hands
And sometimes shouted
And I was worried you would mention you had been a poor Irish priest
Who by dint of monumental erudition
Now occupied a pre-eminent niche
In the Vatican Library

AMETHYSTE

Deep deep in Canada's waters waters
Floats a French designed
Canadian Amethyste
The right option
For Canada
The guarantor
Of defense-security
In Canada's Atlantic Pacific Arctic
Waters waters

A French designed Canadian Amethyste
Is powerful manoeuvrable extremely silent
A French designed Canadian Amethyste
Is technologically impeccable
Its integrated nuclear system is inherently safe
A French designed Canadian Amethyste
Does not even use weapons grade fuel
And is extremely safe

France will transfer
To Canada
100% technology
Without third country consent

And the economic/technological benefit
To Canada
Is 70% Canadian input
And 75000 person-year jobs
Over 25 years

So take a deep deep objective look
At these facts

And you will want to buy
An ultra-modern state-of-the-art French Amethyste
For Canada

SNA
SNA Canada Inc

THE SAME SENTIENT BEING

Your long young legs
Immortally erotic
Your statuesque body
Soft marble
During that one afternoon
When after long conversation
Mostly about Sam
You deigned to condescend
And though only a vicarious substitute
Your wit soothed me
And I was randy and kinky as in the old days
And my polymorphous bravado was such
That you quoted Sunny
And said no one ever fucked me like that
And I still remember
Your unique and plagiarized cliché
And Sam said there was no student like you
And in all the years I had never seen him as troubled
And was jealous
Because my sundry surgeries
And nerve grafts
And neurofibromas
And general bodily desuetude
Would fall far short of eliciting
A comparable response
And he said your Ph.D. was the best in the history of the Department
And you were already teaching in the Department
And you would certainly have been offered a full-time appointment
And he said he missed you so much he couldn't go to the hospital
And I knew he couldn't see you in the context of what you had been
Because multiple sclerosis
A cruel variant thereof

Has eroded your limbs
And lesioned your mind
And you smile occasionally
And as long as you breathe
You will stay
In a bed
At a hospital
But I remember your final philosophical conversation
When my other friend in that Department
The other full-time professor Dick Sikora
Spoke to you and your husband
Warren Bourgeois
About future generations
And about his paper thereon
And for some reason I was in the vicinity
Albeit in my invariable supine spectator capacity
And Dick said there are no exact temporal divisions
Suppose you are conscious continuously
And can feel acute pain
But gradually lose all your attributes
And can't talk anymore
And can't think worth a damn
And have the mental level
Of an infant
And lose all the rudiments
Of rationality
Then there is no reasonable basis for saying
That creature is so different from you (me)
It wouldn't in any meaningful sense be you (me)
Nor can you reasonably say
That isn't me anymore
That's just an infant

But Dick said I've been groping for
But haven't been able to come up with
The useful term
Or expression
For that sort of thing
And for some reason I proffered a non sequitur
And said it's so hard now to be young
Kids are impressionable and intuitive
And they know America is out of control
And archetypally askew
But all the institutions are against them
And the small elite
Will not relinquish
Their status quo
And then I mentioned the decaying global environment
And the ensuing repercussions re present and future generations
And Dick said that's not what I'm talking about
And you smiled and said
Even if I wasn't the same person
I would still be the same sentient being

GEORGE BUSH, AMERICAN

The broken vase is not the only way
For that which is can only say
For blight has cast its light
And shadows burn the oil fields far away
And day or night is always darkest bright

GOOKS

We won't give money to gooks
We want to destabilize gooks
They want us to help build the country we broke
But they are not contras
They're not Pinochets
They're not our sons of bitches
So we won't give money to gooks
We won't give money
To gooks
We can't do business
With gooks

HAMBURGER HILL

There have been other movies
About Vietnam
But not like this
Because this
Is true
They had names like: Languilli Motown Murphy
They came from places like: Albuquerque Atlanta New York
Young kids
Hard-nosed veterans
Had never been away from home before
Had lived through the unimaginable
An American movie
About Vietnam
War at its worst
Men at their best

THE GENERAL PRINCIPLE

In New York
At Madison Square Garden
Art the Hammer Jones
Knocked out
Billy Striped Pants Robinson
In the first few seconds
Of the first round
The two black fighters gave their all
But whereas the Hammer was still a temporary sensation
And received the crowd's noise
And white accolades
From media marionettes
And had upcoming value
Striped pants simply receded
Into more red urine
As well as Parkinson's impending manifestations
And upcoming oblivion
And though hardly Vietnam or Nicaragua etc
Or Chile El Salvador Guatemala etc
Or even Grenada or Panama
And though neither is affiliated with the Fed Reserve
Nor attuned to the Dow Jones Industrial Average
Art the Hammer Jones and Billy Striped Pants Robinson
Are, to some extent, expanding American symbols
And microcosmically appropriate
Because each fresh dose of violence
Each circumstantial punch
Each exploitative jab and vitiating overhand right
Exemplifies the general principle

MOTIF & COUNTERPOINT

Look: they pray to their flag
Listen: they chant the word freedom
We'll all be converted some day
The world will go away

I got hold of some pulchritude
We lay down in the street
I said you are a darling
She said you are so sweet

Blake spoke about palace walls
The blood that from them falls
The house that is white is red
The man still alive is dead

Give me a piece of butter
Give me a piece of bread
I'll butter your arse
I'll feed your pudendum

The blood from that house of white
Will fall on the streets of spite
Will fall on us all some day
The world will go away

I got hold of some pulchritude
We lay down in the store
I said you are a femme fatale
She said you are a whore

I'M SURPRISED THEY STILL HAVEN'T KILLED ME

Doing what they could
They did not break you
Their media
Their police
Their courts
Their lobotomized populace
The depraved and corrupt times in which they flourish
Could not transcend your joie de vivre
Nor vitiate that casual nobility
Because, as Shakespeare pointed out,
'Tis the plague of great ones
Prerogativ'd are they less than the base
'Tis destiny, unshunnable, like death
Hence the spotless room
The clothed body
Under washed sheets
The immaculately made bed
The autopsy that found no trace of drugs
Or foul play
Or suspicious circumstances
Then the other autopsy
That found 150 phenobarbital
And alcohol
And suicide
The same doctor
Not naming
And mentioning only en passant
Two other drugs
Nor attributing significance
To the barely noticeable blood
From the left nostril's
Almost invisible puncture

Then the snow job in People magazine
Worthy of Genoroso Pope Jr.
And the media bandwagon
Re suicide
And the ultimate cop-out and sell-out
One J. Rubin
And your friends
All of whom would prefer to not commit suicide
Collectively surprised
But afraid
And prudential
And your books
Begrudgingly published
But not extant
And your credible adversaries
And things standing thus unknown
The wounded name you left behind you

CEAUSESCU

The billions of dollars
America gave Ceausescu
To build his palace
And fund his secret police
And open Swiss bank accounts
And enslave the populace
Was part of a pattern
Of state sponsored terrorism
Because one finds favour with the Superpower
And receives ample largesse from same
Only insofar as one approximates Hitler
And many countries discover
How exceedingly dangerous
Is any deviation
From that norm
But in Romania
The populace hopes that all will be well
I.e., freedom and democracy
And there is a general hope
That the country can eventually emulate
And be like
The country that gave billions of dollars
To Ceausescu

‘Hitler has only got one ball
Goering has two but both are small
Himmler is somewhat similar
But Goebbels has no balls at all’

George Bush has only got one ball
Dan Quayle has two but both are small
Baker is just a faker
But that US has our balls et al

'My eye has seen the orgy of the launching of the sword
He is searching out the hoardings where the strangers' wealth is stored
He hath loosed his fateful lightnings and with death and woe has scored
His lust is marching on'

The billions of dollars
America gave Ceausescu
To build his palace
And fund his secret police
And open Swiss bank accounts
And enslave the populace
Is part of a pattern
Of state sponsored terrorism
Because one finds favour with the Superpower
And receives ample largesse from same
Only insofar as one approximates Hitler
And many countries discover
How exceedingly dangerous
Is any deviation
From that norm
But in Romania
But in Romania
But in Romania
And Bulgaria
And East Germany
And Hungary
And Czechoslovakia
And Poland
The populace hopes that all will be well
I.e., freedom and democracy
And there is a general hope
That the countries can eventually emulate
And be like

The country that gave billions of dollars
To Ceausescu

THE TEXAS/OKLAHOMA CASH PRICE

Live cattle
Moved smartly ahead
But there is still more
Look for December cattle
To trade at least two hundred points above
The Texas/Oklahoma cash price

Resistance for December corn
At 295
Was every bit as potent
As we thought
July came right on cue
And punctured the previous uptrend
Without hesitation

Nearby wheat
Is reluctant
To trade for very long
Below \$3.00
We should be looking for reasons
To buy
Because December wheat is deeply oversold
And is entering
A third week
Of decline
But as of the end
Of July
There are no reasons

November beans
Followed the script
Moving above 630

And then very quickly double topping
At 680
With a subsequent full retracement
Of that advance

During July
September Swiss Francs
Strategically maneuvered
Through minefields
Of technical problems
The overbought nature
Of this market
Foreshadows significant topping action
And assuming follow through performance
The logical target
Is 70

For September Deutschemarks
Performance and attitude
Are similar
Negative divergence on weekly charts
As well as a drop
In average volume
Now signals a spike top
In the making

September Japanese Yen
Were very responsive
In the context of a friendly monthly cycle
A distinct uptrend
Is definitely
In the driver's seat

September British Pound
Easily overcame long standing resistance
At 170
Thereby opening the way
At 190.45
Weekly and monthly charts
Look quite bullish
In their overall pattern
So any near term correction
Will simply precede
The next leg up

The Canadian Dollar
Continues
To vacillate
Numerous excursions
To prices
Below 86
In an effort to generate
A new downtrend
Have met the same fate
As the CD bobs up very quickly
Very easily

After many months
Of 'cat and mouse'
The dollar index
Has finally declined
Below long standing support
At 90
At this point
No favourable weekly or monthly cycles

Are in the offing
So we should let this index seek its level
And respond accordingly
As we go

December gold
Is sneaking up
A third week of recovery
Without radical movement
Has taken gold
Above the ten week moving average

The long term pattern
In silver
Continues to look delectable
Hence the continuing frustration
As pent up energies
For higher prices
Are not released
Where are the bullish divergence buying signals
On underlying monthly stochastics
And moreover
Why are the customary seasonal tendencies
For higher prices
Not on cue

September T-Bonds
Are marking time
Looking for new input
The price action would suggest
A quick jab up
To 96

But the market is already overbought
And 96 cannot objectively be held
If touched

A puzzling, befuddling fly in the ointment
Is Muni-Bonds
Because the close
Above the ten month moving average
And the rally top
Prior to the final low
All beg for higher prices

T-Notes
On the other hand
Are wrestling
With the ten month average
So the entire complex
Is suspect
And needs a little room
I.e., take action
On unmistakable bonafide sell signals

Crude oil
Has surged
Beyond all price barriers
Of consequence
And implications are bullish
Not only re the near term
But also the big picture

Heating oil
Has also come to life

With a vengeance
And now there is incentive
To try the long side
In anticipation
Of even higher prices

Negative divergence sell signals abound
As the Dow falls away
From 3000
And nearby S&P futures
Have no support
Below 350
If September S&P futures
Close August 3
Below the ten week moving average
And confirm an intermediate degree downtrend
Then an already ominous pattern
Encompasses the final days
Of July
And accentuates the image
Of a market
About to tumble

October sugar
Is passé
The support offered
At 12
And the recovery
From same
Was sub par
And did not even approach
The 14 resistance area

Subsequent new lows
Revalidate
The general bearish attitude
Beyond short term horizons
Sugar will not again be receptive to
A sustained investment long position

Pork bellies
Jabbed below the main halfway support
At 4800
As well as the last important reaction low
At 4700
While this is not good news
There is a positive side
To the observation
I.e., they could not stay there
Hence the market's undervalued pronouncement

Lack of significant price movement
During July
Affected live December hogs
But though live hogs
In August
Face a mostly down situation
On the monthly degree
Seasonal pressures are essentially favourable
And in any event
Nearby hogs are still above the ten month moving average

Live man
Almost succumbed
This past September

As a tremendously negative outside month reversal
Penetrated
The thousand year old moving average
Selling pressure is now intense
And there can be little doubt
That another full blown attack
On the extreme lows
Is underway

Live cattle
Moved smartly ahead
But there is still more
Look for December cattle
To trade at least two hundred points above
The Texas/Oklahoma cash price

I HAVE A TUMOUR IN MY BRAIN

I have a tumour in my brain
In my brain
A tiny minute tumour in my brain
In my brain
Sometimes there is a smidgin of a pain
From the tumour in my brain

I have a tumour in my brain
In my brain
A tiny minute tumour in my brain
In my brain
I thought you were a silly rumour
But you really are a tumour
In my brain

The world is a tumour
In the rain
And life is just a rumour
In the small minute tumour
In my brain

When tumours are just rumours
In my brain
And only fall like droplets
On my pain
Then life is just the pain in my brain
The world is only water that will wane

And when that water flows out of my life
And takes that painful smidgin from my brain
Then what was once a tumour
Will only be a rumour
Re a world that falls like droplets on my pain
And is really only water that will wane

*

Goodbye Jordan
How are you
Goodbye Duck and Pig Doll too
It is all goodbye for me
For a few years you will be

Goodbye Lorraine
How are you
Goodbye Dorothy
Connie too
Goodbye Bonnie in your bed
You and I are almost dead

Goodbye Reagan
How are you
Goodbye Nixon
Carter too
Goodbye Bush and Ford and Quayle
Goodbye all that U.S.A.
Goodbye money
Goodbye money
Goodbye Fed Reserve
Goodbye ruling elite
It is all goodbye for me
For a few years you will be

Goodbye earth
Goodbye world
I hope that U.S. lets you be
But it's all goodbye for me

Goodbye tumour in my brain
Goodbye all that funny pain
Goodbye sunshine, also rain
Goodbye tears and jokes and fame
Goodbye friendship
How are you
Goodbye Lorraine
I love you
Goodbye tumour
How are you
Goodbye tumour-rumour
In my brain

SALLY

My mother said he went up one side of her and down the other
But his wife knew he philandered
And always got him back

Well, why would she want him back
If I went up one side of you
And down the other
Then even if my wife knew
She wouldn't get me back

My mother said he was a very elaborate womanizer
His sine qua non was the old goat

Well, *pace* his personal pyrotechnics
Or philoprogenitive prowess
He's not a significant artist
Though he had an academic sinecure
And fed from the Canada Council trough
And was liked by the Canadian Literary Establishment
Possibly because he's not much of a poet
And, also, he was so mean to Lowry
They had adjacent cottages at Galiano
Proximity to the drunk artist
Put his talent in perspective
And externalized the bullying anger
Especially when Malcom Lowry
Was incapacitated
Which is his own situation now
Now that he's 85
And living at a nursing home in a partial coma

It's strange to think that he's lying there
Hoping someone will visit him

I remember them sitting together in the little red sports car
He used to have
My sister and I were jammed in the back seat
They were always tooling around
(Going places)
And he seemed to be always tooting the horn
My mother said he was so intense and emotional
When he read poetry
He would walk around the room
And sometimes stand on a chair
And shout

THE GUY BY THE DOOR

The guy by the door looked, well, seedy. I thought he had wandered in off the street and wasn't quite sure where he was. He was kind of half inside the long, white room, looking disdainfully at the crowd milling around the bar. But a few minutes later, he was behind the podium, reading excerpts of his poetry from long folded sheets pulled out from under his jacket. His name was Alan Bell.

*

I am compelled to reply to your editorial in the March 9-15 issue of *Monday* in which your first two paragraphs are a description of Allen Bell. Why "seedy"? Was he unkempt? unshaven? unwashed? wearing dirty clothes? Speaking as a person who lives with him, I can assure you that the answer to those questions is no.

So what caused you to think him seedy? Perhaps it was the occluder he wears on his glasses to cover the now-surgically-closed right eye, and the fact that the right side of his face is paralyzed. Or the scar on his neck, the result of a recent nerve graft. Or the longer scar along the back of his head and neck, caused by the original 11 1/2-hour surgery to remove a brain tumour. Perhaps you spoke to him and he didn't hear you properly because he is now completely deaf in his right ear.

The true miracle, appreciated by some of those present, was that Allen Bell was able to be there at all. To be able, for the first time since his hospitalization, to read his poems again was a personal triumph.

And then, after doing him such an injustice in your description, not one word about his wonderful poems. Amazing.

P. S. You might at least have spelled his name correctly.

*

He said I was the guy by the door
He said I looked seedy
And had wandered in off the street
And wasn't quite sure where I was
But the journalist knew where I was
He said 'kind of' inside the long white room
Looking disdainfully
But a few minutes later
Behind the podium
Reading poetry
From long folded sheets
From under my jacket
He said my name was Alan Bell

He said the guy by the door
He said seedy
I wandered in
I wasn't quite sure
But he knew
He said the long room
He said looking disdainfully
But later
Long folded sheets
He said Alan Bell

He said the guy
Looked, well, seedy
And wandered in
And wasn't sure
Inside the long and white room
But behind

Reading
From folded sheets
Poetry
My name was Alan Bell

Guy
Wandered
Room
Poetry
Alan

JORDAN

Dad would you like to do a baseball game

No

Only one game Dad

Only one

Only one game

Dad would you like to play one baseball game just for a minute

Okay

* * *

I want to get something soft

I want to get Ernie or Duck

And then you can get me

* * *

“Jordan here’s a Loony for you.”

No thank you Grandpa

Maybe some other day

“Some other day?”

I’m going to have to teach you about money.

You’ll have to learn.

Because money is in your blood.”

ARTHUR BELL (1907 – 1993)

All the years are over
They are gone

BUM

Lorraine says I still have the bum of a young man
She says it's not droopy and saggy and awful
And I vigorously acknowledge the compliment
Though her affectionately intimate corporeal allusion
Induces penial trepidation
Stains my mortality
And accentuates all that droopiness sagginess awfulness
The forthcoming
Regardless of still

THE QUEEN

What do you think the queen does
What do you think the queen does when she gets up for breakfast
Well she makes grapefruit
She does so many things
I have this vision
Well I'm going over to Thriftys to get that coffee while it's still on sale
Then I have to watch my Coronation Street
Was that a nice treat
I won't have anything sweet now for a long long time
So it served its purpose

QUERY

Why did Aaronshen go back to England?

It wouldn't have mattered.

They would have got him in France, you think?

Oh sure. Anywhere.

If he talked at the conference he could have persuaded.

Oh no. It wouldn't have mattered.

Maybe a cosmetic difference.

Oh no. But nothing was left to chance.

Certainly not a life. Not even that life.

Especially not that life.

So they murdered Aaronshen and went in the direction of Ben Gurion

Meir Rabin Perez Sharon etc.

Oh sure.

FR. LEONARD BOYLE

You drink too much
And smoke too much
And at The Book In The Middle Ages conference
At the University of Victoria
Seemed distinctly unhappy
And insofar as one could delineate the curvatures of your very red face
Looked as though you wished you were in the Vatican library
And had never ventured forth from Rome
And encountered the Canadian city Victoria
And you did not seem at ease with esoteric academics
And their worldly preoccupations
Some of which obtruded on your conception of scholarship
And you found personal interaction very trying
And would take off your glasses and rub your left eye
And when you talked stood very rigid
And did not look at the person to whom you were speaking
And would often put on your coat
And go outside the building
And stand alone
And smoke
But during your formal presentation
Having been introduced as the world's foremost authority on Latin manuscripts
You became animated
And waved your hands
And sometimes shouted
And I was worried you would mention you had been a poor Irish priest
Who by dint of monumental erudition
Now occupied a pre-eminent niche
In the Vatican Library
And you said Maas and West
Don't understand what a text is
And academics per se

Don't understand what a text is
The system compels one to publish
And rush into print
And keep one's job
And get perks
So modern academics lose their sense of personal proportion
Because they are just scribe-scholars
And are no more than that
And if they think otherwise
And are eager to rewrite
And tamper
Then modern scribe-scholars fall into traps more horrendous
Than those for which they temerarily crucify
Medieval scribe-scholars
And you took off your glasses
And there was a miniscule pause
The codices carry the text you said
The codices are the tradition of the text
One has to start with the codices
And respect the codices
But the modern scribe-scholar wants to be an editor
And establish an authoritative text
And experience the heady, rapturous moments
Of coniecti
And scripsi
And again you took off your glasses
And rubbed your eye
These, indeed, are moments to be savoured
But one reaches them from so many miles away
From bindings and flyleaves and pastedowns
And foliations and gatherings
And marginal or interlinear notes

And rubrics and decorations and gibbets and doodles
The second or third folio incipits
The size of the frame of writing
The presence of such details as fillers
The make-up of quires and the layout of pages
Then transcribing one of the codices
Faithfully completely slavishly
Every cancellation annotation gap erasure correction inversion misspelling homoioteleuton
So that one has a first witness
A scrupulously transcribed
But utterly unedited text
Of the chosen first witness
And this is a Recension text
Because the codices can now be opened up
And laid on the Recensio sheets
And all the myriad variations
Whether textual or physical
From codex to codex
Can be examined
Every smudge can be touched and handled
I am not talking about what is right or what is wrong
I am talking about the simple physical fact
That two or more codices may have some feature or features in common
That others do not have
And what is shared by all the witnesses
From pressmark to doodle
To change of ink to change of hand to word separation
To glosses to alternative readings
Can be a variation
So codicology is not ueberlieferungsgeschichte
Which Housman called a longer and nobler name than fudge
Call codicology Handschriftenkunde

Or L'Archeologie du livre
Or what you will --
The text established from the codices
Is the text common to all the codices
And with the help of common variations
The likely vulgar text
And now
Only now
After so laborious a prolegomenon
Can we even begin to contemplate textual criticism
And now there is such intense loneliness
You are alone as no one in the world has ever been alone
With your own unique codicological text
That you have carried
And conceived
And must now nourish
And bring to fruition
And so one painstakingly encounters the authoritative text
Which is simply the text carried by the codices
And reported faithfully
By the modern scribe-scholar
But you said modern scribe-scholars are seldom faithful
But are often promiscuous
And the audience laughed
And you waved your hands
And shouted
If you are a medieval scribe-scholar then what you do is dubbed 'contamination' you said
But the modern scribe-scholar's modus operandi is termed 'scholarship'
But if 'contamination' is the unwarranted influence
Of one textual tradition
On another
Then the most pernicious form of 'contamination' is the printed text

A case in point is an autobiographical passage in Rashdall's edition of Bacon
Fratris Rogerii Bacon Compendium Studii Theologiae
Which is in print
And therefore sacrosanct
Ergo accepted by scholars
But which is a source of confusion
Because of the punctuation
Which is at variance with the syntax of the passage
And is the editor's not Bacon's
Hence the modern equivalent of what is decried as 'contamination'
In a medieval setting
Another editor
An apostle of computerized editions
Dismisses as inadequate a previous edition
But in a twinkle
Informs us that *his* edition
Will be a recording
Of the earlier edition
On magnetic tape
So as to facilitate
The cleansing of errors
My friends this is the cart in front of the horse
Do not presume we live in a magical century
Where there is no moral time
And everything is nicely parcelled
And we have a ready-made text
We have to deal with texts that are in no way fixed or static
But vary
From manuscript to manuscript
And however many umpteen editions
There is still the inescapable fact of the codices
One should not say

As a recent editor so ungraciously said
 That the one extant codex of a text
 Was “slovenly”
 The precise words were “slovenly copy”
 This is rather ungracious
 For without that unique slovenly copy
 There can only be textual oblivion
 And then you gave examples of mistake after mistake
 (All of which you rectified)
 In text after text
 And you talked about Lucilius being off his food
 And Seneca writing to him in his usual moralistic way
 And chiding him for being miserable and out of sorts
 Vesicae te dolor inquietavit
 Epistulae venerunt parum dulces
 Detrimenta continua – propius accedam
 De capite timuisti
 The meaning you said is this:
 A pain in your bladder bothered you
 Letters came from you that were hardly pleasant
 Everything went wrong
 Let me put it bluntly
 You began to fear for your life
 Or as translated by R.M. Grummere in the Loeb Classics
 -- Seneca. Ad Lucilium Epistulae morales --
 “It was disease of the bladder that made you apprehensive;
 downcast letters came from you;
 you were continually getting worse;
 I will touch the truth more closely and say that you feared for your life.”
 But you pointed out that Erasmus
 And others after him
 Preferred epulae to epistulae

And you said downcast letters does seem out of place
And Erasmus' reading is borne out
By an erasure and a correction
In the 12th century codex
Ms. Pal. 869 fol. 44
Part of epistulae is smudged
To make way for epulae
And moreover epulae is written clearly in the margin
The text now reads:
Vesicae te dolor inquietavit
Epulae venerunt parum dulces
Detrimenta continua – propius accedam
De capite timuisti
Seneca in the corrected text
Is listing the complaints of Lucilius
And goes from bad to worse in ascending order:
A pain in your bladder bothered you
Eating became less of a pleasure
Everything went wrong –
To put it bluntly
You began to feel you were going off your head
Because of the pain in his bladder
Lucilius has gone off his head
Not to speak of his food
This physical fact by itself
Inclines me to epulae rather than epistulae
To insist on the epistulae reading in the Bamberg Ms.
And other Mss.
Is to disrupt the train of disaster
And ignore Seneca's continuation:
A long life includes all these troubles
Did you not know

When you prayed for a long life
That this is what you prayed for
And you looked at the audience
And your stentorian voice softened
And your final words were pianissimo
But I know you have to make your living
Just like me
But do not be ungracious
And despise and discard
The flawed, ugly codices
Because you are in awe of
The stark, imperative text

A TEENY TINY BALL

Mom I've been thinking about something that is amazing and really incredible Mom
What if everything there was
All the planets and space
Everything
Was rolled up into a teeny tiny ball
Then the teeny tiny ball would still have to be somewhere
But where would it be
It couldn't be in space
Because space was rolled up into a teeny tiny ball
So where would everything be
Isn't that amazing Mom
I've been thinking about it
And it's really hard to think about it
And Mom there's one more thing I've been thinking about
Space goes on forever
That is amazing
Because how can it go on forever
Mom there has to be a word for it
What is the word for it when space goes on forever
Infinite.
Infinite
Yes.
Does that mean when it has no end and no walls and no edges
Yes.
So space is a long line that goes on forever
So it is an infinite line
The thing is Mom our house has walls and I can see where the walls end
And the city has an end too because there aren't any houses
And planets have an end because they are only as big as they are
We can't see all of it because it is too big for us to see
So planets have an end
Planets are not infinite

But space is infinite and that's amazing Mom
But space isn't alive
But we are Mom

THE NATIONAL ENQUIRER

The National Enquirer
Is just a joke
That everyone reads
But no one takes seriously

The National Enquirer
Is just a tabloid
That appears in all supermarkets
And grocery stores

The publisher
Generoso Pope Jr.
Is just a legendary CIA expert
Re psychological warfare

And everyone is so amused at the antics of the National Enquirer
That no one asks who owns the National Enquirer
And who funds the National Enquirer
More precisely, why does the National Enquirer have an unlimited bankroll
I.e., so much money

And throughout North America
And beyond North America
The National Enquirer's money
Buys news

And Lynne Amont was paid money for photographs
And a politician
Who may have been a presidential shoo-in
Was got
And several newspapers said he was six inches away from the White House
Then People magazine paid her an additional one hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars

And finished the job
And the National Enquirer packs a lot of devastating political clout
Because everyone can be got
But this is not talked about
Because the National Enquirer is just a tabloid
Committed to gossip
I.e., not a serious newspaper
And all the other tabloids and magazines combined
Do not have the National Enquirer's budget
For 'seed money'

And when a celebrated Hollywood actress
And subsequent princess
Was killed in Monaco
The National Enquirer chartered a Concorde
So that employees
Could fly
To Monaco
Because the National Enquirer
And to a less elaborate extent other newspapers and magazines
Fly employees
To sites

And one employee
Donald McLachlan
Now associate editor of a so-called competitor
Said he had been a man of the media for twenty-five years
And had foreign corresponded for the London Daily Mail
From Europe
And the Middle East
And the USA
And had survived combat zones

Including Lebanon

And Donald McLachlan said the ten years he was employed by the National Enquirer were the most satisfying

And Donald McLachlan said his favourite war stories are not from Beirut

But from Hollywood

And his biggest scoop involved a television celebrity

Suzanne Somers

One of whose pre-fame boyfriends knew something that had to be good for a few dollars

And Donald McLachlan wrote the National Enquirer's story

And in every crevice of every bedroom and bathroom

And in every cupboard of every kitchen

The voice of the National Enquirer

Is audible

And the National Enquirer self-promotes copiously

And the National Enquirer pays for lavish television advertisements

And many people in North America who watch television

Know about the National Enquirer

And the other tabloids

Position themselves in the National Enquirer's gargantuan slipstream

And think they're competitors

And the National Enquirer foots the bill

And the National Enquirer's pioneering move into supermarkets

Forever changed the game

And exposed the Weltanschauung of the National Enquirer

To a continent of shoppers

And Generoso Pope Jr. showed the other publications

How to redesign

So as to appeal to food corporations

And their female customers

And even the so-called competitors speak well of him

And one owner of several tabloids
That are not in the same ball park with the National Enquirer
“In terms of sales”
Says his papers earn revenue in excess of \$100 million per year
And reach 12 million people per week
“Which is a fairly large percentage of the American population”

And Generoso Pope Jr. said
We want to maximize sales
And Generoso Pope Jr. said
The amount sold
Doesn't necessarily reflect on one's profit
And whether other tabloids or newspapers or magazines are more profitable
Is ultimately immaterial
So long as the National Enquirer
Is bigger
And better known
And the emulated model
And Generoso Pope Jr.'s employer
Wants to sell substantial numbers of copies
And Generoso Pope Jr. said
That's been the main thrust
In our organization

And the National Enquirer
Adorns the propaganda system
And profit or loss
Is n'importe

And the National Enquirer ran a six page spread
Re Colonel Oliver North

And when America invaded and decimated the Southeast Asian country
Vietnam
And committed 500,000 soldiers
Oliver North was there
And during the Superpower's invasion and conquest of the little Caribbean island
Grenada
Oliver North was there
And Oliver North did yeoman work
Re the Central American country
Nicaragua
And orchestrated logistical support
I.e., money and weapons
For Somoza's National Guard
Who are now called contras
I.e., freedom fighters and revolutionaries
So as to enable them to murder torture sabotage et cetera
I.e., destabilize that country
And Oliver North was complimented by the Secretary of State
George Schultz
And the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency
William Casey
And the National-Security Advisor
John Poindexter
And the President of the United States of America
Ronald Reagan
And the National Enquirer told Americans
That all America loved Colonel Oliver North
Because he exemplified guts, grit, and patriotism
And was a genuine American cowboy and hero
And Oliver North said if the President of the United States tells this soldier to go
into a corner and stand on his head
Then this soldier will unhesitatingly endeavour to do so

And the corporate elite
In papers throughout North America
From Wall Street Journal
To Washington Post
Praised their American hero
And presidents of powerful companies
Said they would be proud to make Oliver North an executive
And Oliver North said whatever the President of the United States tells this soldier to do he will do
And in every grocery store
And supermarket
The values of the National Enquirer
Are inculcated

And Generoso Pope Jr. said
The National Enquirer is not the New York Times
And Generoso Pope Jr. said
The National Enquirer is more massively read than the New York Times
Because we are a more common denominator publication
And Generoso Pope Jr. said
Each publication targets a different area of the population

And Generoso Pope Jr. is a hands-on publisher
And rewrites headlines
And directs investigative projects
And inserts exclamation marks
And like all servants of the propaganda system who profit from same
Generoso Pope Jr. thinks he is a legendary et cetera
But in actuality
He is the same as a cub reporter
Or the editor
Of the New York Times

And there in the supermarket
Surrounded by groceries
And near magazines such as Newsweek and Time
And the clones and the copycats
Who think they're competitors
And a variant thereof
The magazine People
The National Enquirer
From its rack by the cash register
Is picked up by customers
Who will devour at leisure

But who owns the National Enquirer
Or what is the *raison d'être* of the National Enquirer
I.e., who does it serve
Not my fellow North Americans
Most emphatically not
You and I

But who is submissive
Or who does it help keep submissive
I.e., who does it service
You and I my fellow North Americans
You and I

CONVERSATION

Is it true that you will die, Sir
Is it really not a lie, Sir
Is it true that you will die, Sir
It must surely be a lie, Sir
What a world you are imbibing
What a life you are conniving

All the money
All the power
All the honey
All the flour

Is it really not a lie, Sir
That the world you will survive, Sir
It must surely be a lie, Sir
That this world will one day die, Sir

I deplore what you do mean, Sir
Is it true that you are green, Sir
Do you think that I will die, Sir
Do you know I will survive, Sir

All the money
All the power
All the honey
All the flour

It is calumny compounded
It is anthromorphic libel
That the rabble gabble babble
So unseemly per survival
That the world is O so hounded
By duress so much too sounded

Does your iterance now pall, Sir
Have you lost that mode of thought, Sir
Are the words no longer there, Sir
Do the sentences not bear, Sir

All the money
All the power
All the honey
All the flour

Does the grammar not control, Sir
Does the syntax not suffice, Sir
Anacoluthon will not die, Sir
And this world you will survive, Sir

I deplore what you do mean, Sir
Do you think I swim in beer, Sir
And am not worth Chaucer's bene, Sir
I have only three young girls, Sir
And seldom pee in porridge
And am not averse to marriage
And always do my utmost
To worship every compost
And with good help and gods braces
I will never win the races

And the money
And the power
And the honey
And the flour

I will gamble far asunder
So that left is nothing there, Sir
And the world will I survive, Sir
And never ever die, Sir

PUPPET POEM

i

My puppet
flowing yellow
hangs in
the window
and laughs
and dances
when he sees
my strings.

My puppet
flowing yellow
hangs in
the window
and laughs
when he sees
my strings.

Dancing yellow
puppet hangs
from red
strings.

Dignified he
waits among
plants & pictures
for someone
to give him
life.

Pretty puppet
knows you
intimately.

Puppet wants my strings
He tries to bribe
Your blood is red
It makes you dead
It keeps you cold
Give me red strings
And breathe
Here is my flowing yellow
Your blood will ebb
Here are sticks and bones
Give me red strings
Puppet my strings my strings
Puppet would dangle
Bleed without blood
Sing without song
Move without motion
Feet wave
Move
Dangle
Puppet breathe
Yellow flowing warm
In the window

iii

Puppet plays
With knives
Sometimes he stabs
He thinks
My blood
Is real

Puppet gave me tea
He bruised
My lips
He thought
My flesh
Was red

Puppet knows me
Intimately
Puppet saw sartorial snowflakes
Puppet saw frenetic armoured suits
Puppet saw my suit of armoured truck
Under earth
Pastel lights
Blinking
Puppet saw my intimate missiles
Thrust
They malfunctioned I said
It will he said
You do he said
You are he said
Intimately
He knows me
Intimately