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Work Poetry / Poésie de Travail

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Work Poetry/ Poésie de Travail

"Why write: as soon ask, why rivet? Because a number of personal accidents drift us toward the occupation of riveter, which pre-exists, and most importantly, the riveting-gun exists, and we love it"

John Updike

In this city where some of us write about work

the owner of a construction firm near bankruptcy last year

killed his lover and himself with a riveting-gun

Why write?

"Work is a kind of prayer" Dannie Abse

If work is a kind of prayer it is a prayer to things handled

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as the things handled pray back to us

When we handle things and then write words we speak of that interchange of prayers

But when we handle only pens

we begin to pray to our pens for words

that are solid excuses for having let go

In July 86 I gave notice at my proofreading job in Toronto, because I had been invited to *Split Shift*, the first work writing conference, August 21 - 24, in Vancouver.

When the clear plastic overlay of this two-colour coupon is lifted

the bullets prices and logos that will come out red when printed

seem to hover above the base blue copy -

effortless clouds above the prairies are hovering also all this morning

their shadows unconnected below of those hard-won patch-works of ground

Proofread these coupons 5 more weeks then settle back in a window seat

and look down / as now as always: for flaws

7.18.86 Toronto

Come Daylight

Shriek of stellar jay how long has black been blue-black?

The self-pitying nasal chant of a saw starting up -

has the cleared slope's image bristling in the raised lake

White bone-wood fuzzed with frost warms down to wet grey along the demarkation lines of shadows -

pushed through the teeth of that whining chain: furious light by the board-foot

Near Gold River, B.C.



"Working Up-Island" is what we (me, Calvin Wharton, Tom Wayman, & Glen Downie) called out mini-tour of northern Vancouver Island in the spring of 1985 during National Book Festival, or "National Bug Festival" as one woman who was hard of hearing called it.

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The Chore/ography Of Getting

From the peak of lateness I see I love even the woman who stops abruptly in front of me on the escalator excuse me excuse me

Phantom Hosiery

pinks yellows hobbling or balled-up fist-sized in drawers

Fierce grey drag of worth - he throws his long butt at the wheel pushes onto the bus behind me blows smoke into my hair

Resigned oozing stumped dreams bumper to bumper

The driver despite my silent entreaties that he stop for nothing must stop beside the Beckers store and waddle in for a coffee to go

Penguins broken open stories grafted forgotten plots of sleep

From the peak of lateness I see 1 love and despise the chore/ography of getting each morning to my drafting table: papered incline / root-cellar door...

Advertise with Val-Pak of Metro 222-4300

Sunday

I dream fact:

Windsor/Detroit The slash is the river in winter pre-Seaway pre-tunnel

Houdini cannot find the hole he went through The current is too strong

He scrapes his nose raw on the ice He glares at ice inches thick

Air bubbles get him down-stream alive to open water near Zug Island steel plants

I wake to fact:

Another actual Monday has thickened against us during the night

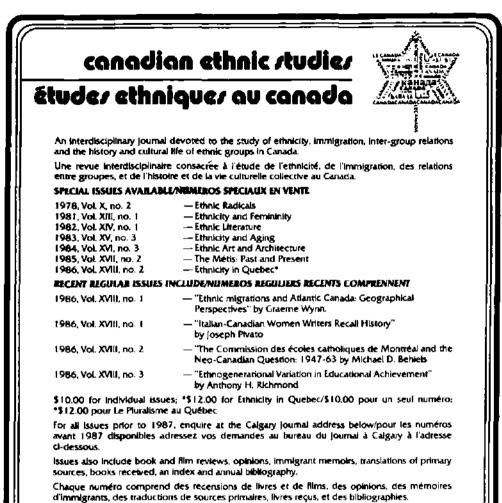
Heart of Saturday Night

we pushed to the limit like always

I go back down to dream more fact:

There are no holes

Phil Hall



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