

rob kovitz

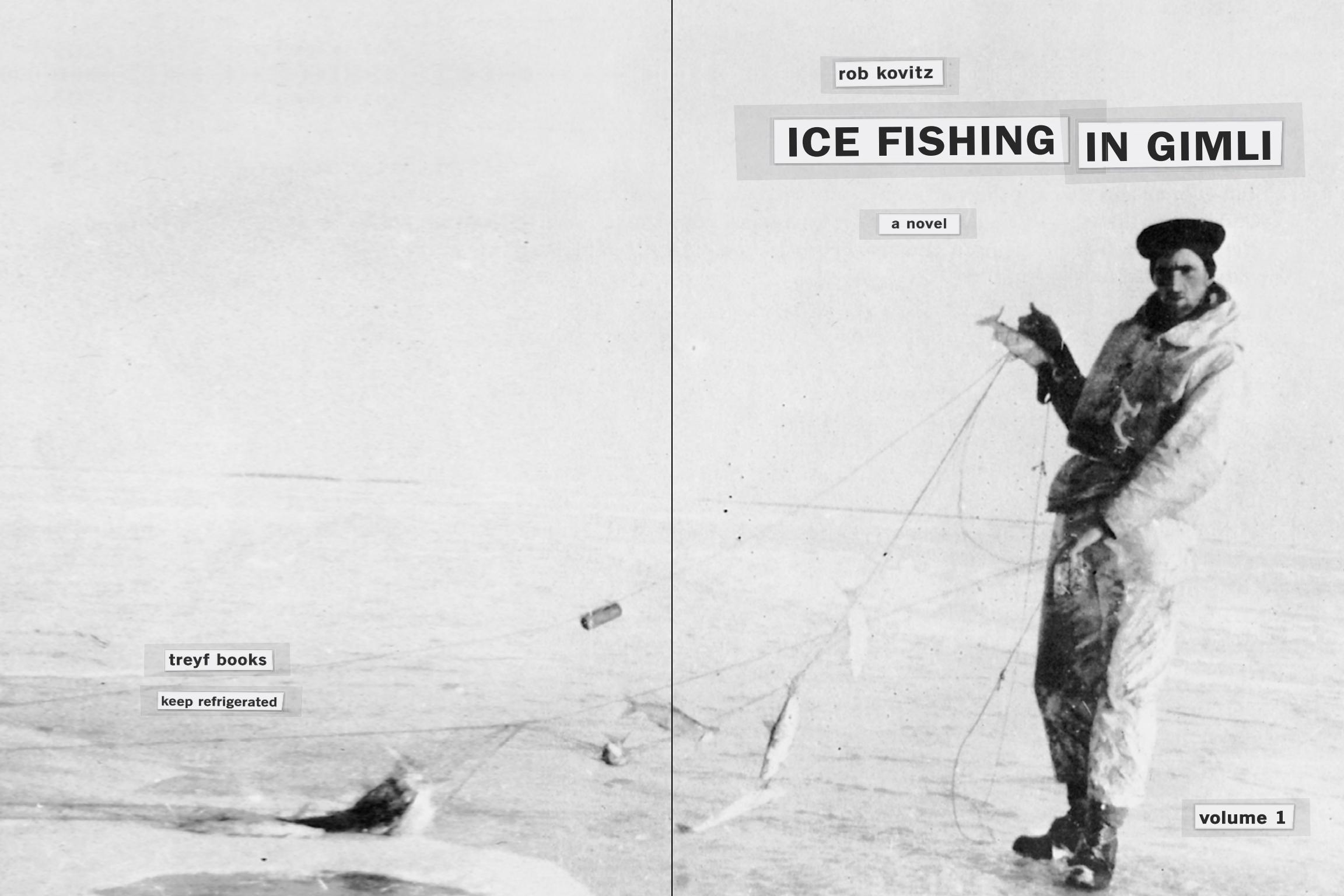
ICE FISHING IN GIMLI

a novel

treyf books

keep refrigerated

volume 1



ice fishing in gimli

volume 1



clues in the snow

I have imagined a man who might live as the coldest scholar on earth, who followed each clue in the snow, writing a book as he went.

John Haines, The Stars, the Snow, the Fire

A house has its physiognomy as well as a man, for him who can read it.

Frederick Philip Grove, Over Prairie Trails

*In der Mitte aller Ferne
steht dies Haus,
drum hab es gerne.*

(In the middle of all distance
stands this house,
therefore be fond of it.)

—Hermann Broch

Mark Z. Danielewski, House of Leaves



exposition of method

I was taught that you told people what was going on in the first paragraph.

Pierre Berton (John Allemang, The Original Canadian Idol)

These notes, which might well be the proper device for any amount of expansion, redefinition and linkage, must be just as brief as I can make them. It will probably be necessary to make unsupported statements, and to raise problems rather than to try to answer them. Of the unsupported statements, please know that I have considered their backgrounds as scrupulously as I am able; and of the problems, that I want to ‘answer’ or at least to consider them as fully as possible in the course of time.

James Agee and Walker Evans, Let Us Now Praise Famous Men

In these great times which I knew when they were this small; which will become small again, provided they have time left for it; and which, because in the realm of organic growth no such transformation is possible, we had better call fat times and, truly, hard times as well; in these times in which things are happening that could not be imagined and in which what can no longer be imagined must happen, for if one could imagine it, it would not happen; in these serious times which have died laughing at the thought that they might become serious; which, surprised by their own tragedy, are reaching for diversion and, catching themselves redhanded, are groping for words; in these loud times which boom with the horrible symphony of actions: in these times you should not expect any words of my own from me—none but these words which barely manage to prevent silence from being misinterpreted.

Karl Kraus, In These Great Times

His fantasy is to write a book entirely made up of quotations.

Ricardo Piglia, Artificial Respiration

FROM A DISTILLATION of the helpful, not to say invaluable, information gleaned from my readings, I have over the years and by means of untiring experiment developed the unique and, I make bold to claim, uniquely successful method that is set out in the following pages. I intend, however, in order to establish as close contact as possible with my reader, to preface the exposition of method by a brief chronological account of my discovery, followed by an even briefer warning.

Amanda Prantera, The Cabalist

When the novel started out in the 18th century, it was called novel because it mixed up stuff...

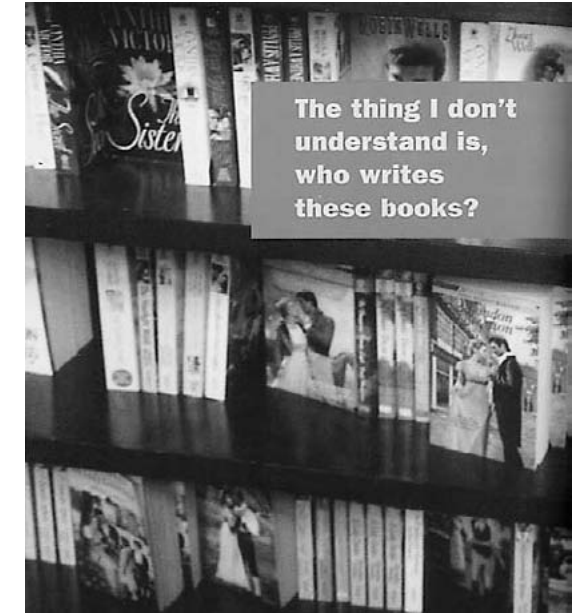
Jonathan Raban (Alexandra Gill, A Stranger in Seattle)

At the start this book had a plan, but the writer soon forgot it and is confident the reader will not discover it. Perhaps that does not matter.

Bruce Hutchison, The Unknown Country

Idle reader, you can believe without any oath of mine that I would wish this book, as the child of my brain, to be the most beautiful, the liveliest and the cleverest imaginable. But I have been unable to transgress the order of nature, by which like gives birth to like. And so, what could my sterile and ill-cultivated genius beget but the story of a lean, shrivelled, whimsical child, full of varied fancies that no one else has ever imagined—much like one engendered in prison, where every discomfort has its seat and every dismal sound its habitation? Calm, a quiet place, the pleasantness of the fields, the serenity of the skies, the murmuring of lakes and the tranquility of the spirit, play a great part in making the most barren muses bear fruit and offer to the world a progeny to fill it with wonder and delight. It may happen that a father has an ugly and ill-favoured child, and that his love for it so blinds his eyes that he cannot see its faults, but takes them rather for talents and beauties, and describes them to his friends as wit and elegance. But I, though in appearance Don Quixote's father, am really his step-father, and so will not drift with the current of custom, nor implore you, almost with tears in my eyes, as others do, dearest reader, to pardon or ignore the faults you see in this child of mine. For you are no relation or friend of his. Your soul is in your own body, and you have free will with the best of them, and are as much a lord in your own house as the King is over his taxes. For you know the old saying: under my cloak a fig for the king—all of which exempts and frees you from every respect and obligation; and so you can say anything you think fit about this story, without fear of being abused for a bad opinion, or rewarded for a good one.

Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, The Adventures of Don Quixote



Judith Henry, Overheard at the Bookstore

I would like to think of a text, whether book, paper, film, painting or photograph, as a kind of thief in the night. Furtive, clandestine and always complex, it steals ideas from all around, from its own milieu and history, and, better still, from its outside, and disseminates them elsewhere. A conduit not only for the circulation of ideas as knowledges or truths, but a passage or point of transition from one (social) stratum or space to another. A text is not the repository of knowledges or truths, the site for the storage of information (and thus in imminent danger of obsolescence from the revolution in storage and retrieval that information technology has provided as its provocation in the late 20th century) so much as a process of scattering thought, scrambling terms, concepts and practices, forging linkages, becoming a form of action.

Elizabeth Grosz, Architecture from the Outside

I would have wished to present it to you naked and unadorned, without the ornament of a prologue or the countless train of customary sonnets, epigrams and eulogies it is the fashion to place at the beginnings of books. For I can tell you that, much toil though it cost me to compose, I found none greater than the

making of this preface you are reading. Many times I took up my pen to write it, and many times I put it down, not knowing what to say. And once when I was in this quandary, with the paper before me, my pen in my ear, my elbow on the desk and my hand on my cheek, thinking what to write, a lively and very intelligent friend of mine came in unexpectedly and, seeing me so deep in thought, asked me the reason. I did not conceal it, but said that I was thinking about the prologue I had to make for the history of Don Quixote, and that it so troubled me that I was inclined not to write one, and even not to publish the exploits of that noble knight; 'For how could you expect me not to be worried,' I went on, 'at what that ancient lawgiver they call the public will say when it sees me now, after all these years I have been sleeping in the silence of oblivion, come out with all my years on my back, with a tale as dry as a rush, barren of invention, devoid of style, poor in wit and lacking in all learning and instruction, without quotations in the margins or notes at the end of the book; whereas I see other works, never mind how fabulous and profane, so full of sentences from Aristotle, Plato and the whole herd of philosophers, as to impress their readers and get their authors a reputation for wide reading, erudition and eloquence? And when they quote Holy Scripture! You will be bound to say that they are so many St. Thomases or other doctors of the church, observing such an ingenious solemnity in it all that in one line they will depict a distracted lover and in the next preach a little Christian homily, that is a treat and a pleasure to hear or read. My book will lack all this; for I have nothing to quote in the margin or to note at the end. Nor do I even know what authors I am following in it; and so I cannot set their names at the beginning in alphabetical order, as they all do, starting with Aristotle and ending with Xenophon—and Zoilus or Zeuxis, although one of them was a libeller and the other a painter. My book must go without introductory sonnets as well—or at least sonnets, by dukes, marquises, counts, bishops, great ladies or famous poets; although were I to ask two or three friends in the trade, I know that they would give me them; and such good ones as would be unequalled by the productions of the most highly renowned poets in this Spain of ours. In fact, my dear friend,' I continued, 'I have decided that Don Quixote shall stay buried in the archives of La Mancha till Heaven provides someone to adorn him with all the jewels he lacks; for I find myself incapable of supplying them because of my inadequacy and scanty learning, and because I am too spiritless and lazy by nature to go about looking for authors to say for me what I can say myself without them. That is the cause of the perplexity and abstraction you found me in, for there is reason enough for my mood in what I have just told you.'

When my friend had heard me to the end he slapped his forehead and broke into a loud laugh, saying: 'Good Lord, brother, you have just relieved my mind of

an error I have been in ever since I have known you, for I have always thought you were sensible and judicious in all your actions. But I see now that you are as far from being so as the sky is from the earth. How is it possible for matters of so little importance and so easily put right to have the power to perplex and preoccupy as ripe an intelligence as yours, so fitted to break down even greater difficulties and trample them underfoot?'

Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, The Adventures of Don Quixote

Oh dear, it was a difficult question. Probably the best way out of it was just to think that if Freud himself, for example, had wasted time describing his own motives for studying the human psyche instead of getting on with the job and studying it, he would never even have got started. That was it. No digressions. They were best left to commentators later on. He resumed at a brisker pace ...

Amanda Prantera, The Cabalist

'This does not spring from any lack of ability, I promise you, but from excess of laziness and poverty of resource. Would you like to be convinced that what I say is true? Then listen to me and you will see me confute all your difficulties in the twinkling of an eye, and set right all the defects which, you say, perplex and frighten you into giving up the publication of the history of your famous Don Quixote, light and mirror of all knight errantry.'

'Tell me,' I replied. 'By what means do you propose to fill the void of my fear and reduce the chaos of my confusion to clarity?'

'Your first stumbling block,' he replied, 'the sonnets, epigrams and eulogies which you lack for your introduction, and which should be by important and titled persons, can be got over by your taking a little trouble and writing them yourself.'

Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, The Adventures of Don Quixote

"Authorship"—in the sense we know it today, individual intellectual effort related to the book as an economic commodity—was practically unknown before the advent of print technology. Medieval scholars were indifferent to the precise identity of the "books" they studied. In turn, they rarely signed even what was clearly their own. They were a humble service organization. Procuring texts was often a very tedious and time-consuming task. Many small texts were transmitted into volumes of miscellaneous content, very much like "jottings" in a scrapbook, and, in this transmission, authorship was often lost.

Marshall McLuhan, The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects

‘Afterwards you can baptise them and give them any names you like, fathering them on Prester John of the Indies or the Emperor of Trebizond; who, I have heard it rumoured, were famous poets: and even if they were not, and some pedants and graduates turned up to snap and growl at you behind your back in the name of truth, you need not bother about them a bit; for even if they convict you of a falsehood, they cannot cut off the hand you wrote it with.’

Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *The Adventures of Don Quixote*

The invention of printing did away with anonymity, fostering ideas of literary fame and the habit of considering intellectual effort as private property. Mechanical multiples of the same text created a public—a reading public. The rising consumer-oriented culture became concerned with labels of authenticity and protection against theft and piracy. The idea of copyright—“the exclusive right to reproduce, publish, and sell the matter and form of a literary or artistic work”—was born.

Marshall McLuhan, *The Medium is the Message: An Inventory of Effects*

‘As to quoting in the margins the books and authors from whom you gathered the sentences and sayings you have put in your history, all you have to do is to work in some pat phrases or bits of Latin that you know by heart, or at least that cost you small pains to look out. For example ...’

Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *The Adventures of Don Quixote*

“All writing is in fact cut-ups. A collage of words read overheard.” These sentences of Burroughs’s sent a spiky thrill of recognition through his brain. The point of words is that they have to have already been used, they have not to be new, they have to be only re-arrangements, in order to have meaning. If you write “ragdon” or “persent” those are nothing, but write “dragon” and “serpent” and the thoughts and stories and fears and inventions and colours and stinks and softnesses and violence of human beings everywhere drag and float at the end of them like giant kites sailing from thin strings or monsters of the deep caught on fishermen’s lines.

A. S. Byatt, *Babel Tower*

‘With these little bits of Latin and such like, they may even take you for a scholar; and it is no small honour and profit to be one nowadays. As to putting notes at the end of the book, you may safely follow this method ...’

Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *The Adventures of Don Quixote*



Xerox Corporation, advertisement, 1980

It will be seen that this mere painstaking burrower and grubworm of a poor devil of a Sub-Sub Librarian appears to have gone through the long Vaticans and street-stalls of the earth, picking up whatever random allusions he could anyways find in any book whatsoever, sacred or profane. Therefore you must not, in every case at least, take the higgledy-piggledy statements, however authentic, in these extracts, for veritable gospel. Far from it. As touching the ancient authors generally, as well as the poets here appearing, these extracts are solely valuable or entertaining, as affording a glancing bird’s eye view of what has been promiscuously said, thought, fancied, and sung, by many nations and generations, including our own.

Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*

‘Let us come now to references to authors, which other books contain and yours lacks. The remedy for that is very simple; for you have nothing else to do but look for a book which quotes them all from A to Z, as you say. Then you put this same alphabet into yours.’

Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, The Adventures of Don Quixote

(See Appendix A for alphabetical list of authors. Those marked by an asterisk are the ones to whom I am most heavily indebted and make compulsory reading. An underlined name means that this author’s works contain scattered but valuable suggestions more detailed reference to these can be obtained from Appendix B. A name in round brackets indicates that the author can safely be ignored. Square brackets indicate authors whom it is actually wiser not to read for fear of running into confusion and contradiction. And I have used, following contemporary logicians, the swung dash or negation sign to signal those authors who must on no account be consulted for any purposes other than out-and-out refutation. Where no sign accompanies a name, the reader is left to his own devices, the omission implying that I have no feelings either one way or the other. It will be noted that these are very few.)

Amanda Pranter, The Cabalist

‘For, granted that the very small need you have to employ them will make your deception transparent, it does not matter a bit; and perhaps there will even be someone silly enough to believe that you have made use of them all in your simple and straightforward story. And if it serves for no other purpose, at least that long catalogue of authors will be useful to lend authority to your book at the outset. Besides, nobody will take the trouble to examine whether you follow your authorities or not, having nothing to gain by it.’

Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, The Adventures of Don Quixote

Xerography—every man’s brain-picker—heralds the times of instant publishing. Anybody can now become both author and publisher. Take any books on any subject and custom-make your own book by simply xeroxing a chapter from this one, a chapter from that one—instant steal!

Marshall McLuhan, The Medium is the Message: An Inventory of Effects

‘In what you are writing you have only to make use of imitation, and the more perfect the imitation the better your writing will be ...’

Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, The Adventures of Don Quixote

As new technologies come into play, people are less and less convinced of the importance of self-expression. Teamwork succeeds private effort.

Printing: a ditto device.

Marshall McLuhan, The Medium is the Message: An Inventory of Effects

‘You have only to see that your sentences shall come out plain, in expressive, sober and well-ordered language, harmonious and gay, expressing your purpose to the best of your ability, and setting out your ideas without intricacies and obscurities. Be careful too that the reading of your story makes the melancholy laugh and the merry laugh louder; that the simpleton is not confused; that the intelligent admire your invention, the serious do not despise it, nor the prudent withhold their praise ... For if you achieve that, you will have achieved no small thing.’

Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, The Adventures of Don Quixote

SO WE ARE FACED WITH A NEW SPACE for public culture somewhere between reality and simulation, between action and acting—and this holds not just for latent psychotics but for the rest of us as well.

Thomas de Zengotita, The Gunfire Dialogues: Notes on the Reality of Virtuality

I found my own growing inclination, which I discovered was not mine alone, to look upon all life as a cultural product taking the form of mythic clichés, and to prefer quotations to independent invention.

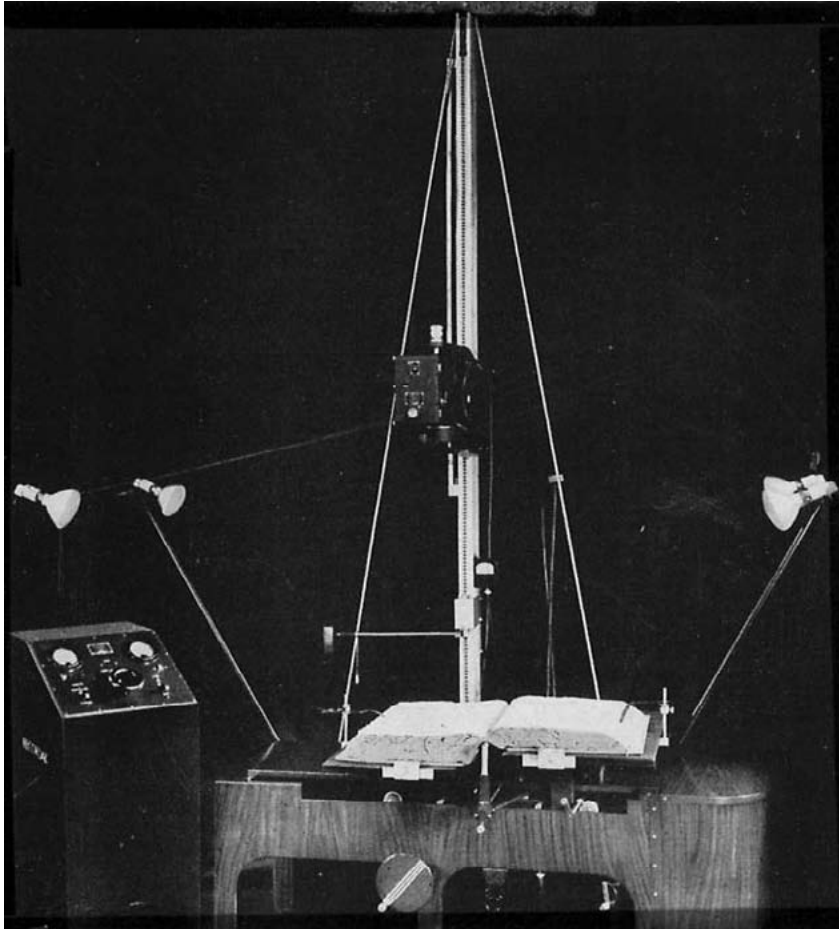
Thomas Mann, Die Entstehung des Dr. Faustus

“Now, these are useful books,” he said, looking around his cabin. “So far as I’m concerned, no book’s worth reading that doesn’t offer information of practical use to the reader. What kind of books do you like, Andy?”

Eric McCormack, First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women

I listened in complete silence to my friend’s words, and his arguments so impressed themselves on my mind that I accepted them as good without question, and out of them set about framing my prologue.

Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, The Adventures of Don Quixote



This photograph shows how a rare old book is microfilmed, page by page, to preserve the contents when the book has crumbled. The turning of the pages and the focusing of the camera are done automatically.

Book of Knowledge Children's Encyclopedia

Subject: oeuvre

Date: Monday, January 22, 2001 10:06 AM

From: Claire Racine <[REDACTED]>

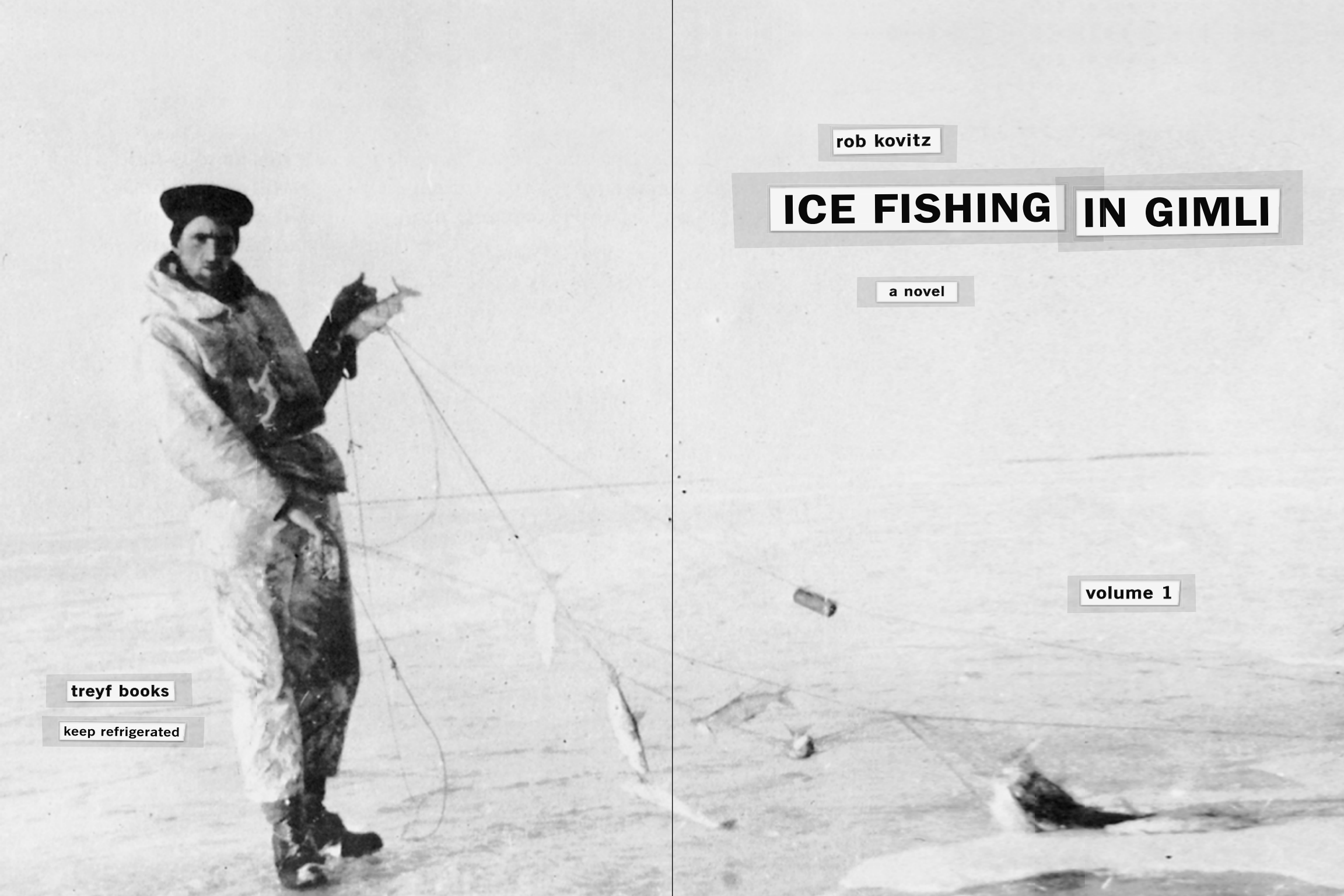
To: Rob Kovitz <[REDACTED]>

Rob,

I was reading an article on the weekend that made me think of you. Have you ever heard of Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project*? Please disregard the next paragraph if you have! Apparently it's based on shopping arcades in Paris and takes the form of quotes from other people's work that are organized under various themes. The idea is that quotes are juxtaposed to spark new links and meanings in the imagination of the reader. There are also parts where Benjamin himself writes about the quotes and his own ideas. The manuscript was thought to have been lost during Benjamin's bid to escape the Nazis over the Pyrenees into Spain. But they found a copy in the Bibliotheque National and published it in the '80s in French and German. The article I read was reviewing a recently published translation in English. You might look in the *New York Times Book Review*—this article (from the Guardian last Saturday) was a reworked version of another that appeared previously in that publication.

How's the snow in Gimli?

Claire



rob kovitz

ICE FISHING IN GIMLI

a novel

volume 1

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keep refrigerated

Cover and title page photo:
Ice fishing, no date (Manitoba Archives)
David Arnason and Michael Olito, *The Icelanders*

Ice Fishing in Gimli
1st edition (8 volumes)
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Portions of this work have previously been published in *BlackFlash Magazine*, *Broken Pencil*, *C Magazine*, *Fuse Magazine*, *Warehouse Journal*, *Cyclops Review*, the Living Prairie Museum's website *Landscape Change: Landscape Loss* and Plug In ICA's *Scratching the Surface: The Post-Prairie Landscape*.

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The Walter Benjamin Research Syndicate

fish-like

So it came to be on that winter's morning that was to prove fateful but at the time merely seemed freezing ...

Richard Flanagan, Gould's Book of Fish

... and beside a weather-beaten fishing helmet, I saw an old diary.

Richard Brautigan, Trout Fishing in America

It was a thin, tattered, dried-fish-like thing; printed with blurred ink upon mean, sleazy paper. It seemed the opening pages of some ruinous old pamphlet—a pamphlet containing a chapter or so of some very voluminous disquisition. The conclusion was gone. It must have been accidentally left there by some previous traveler, who perhaps in drawing out his handkerchief, had ignorantly extracted his waste paper.

Herman Melville, Pierre, Or, The Ambiguities

My wonder upon discovering the *Book of Fish* remains with me yet, luminous as the phosphorescent marbling that seized my eyes that strange morning; glittering as those eerie swirls that coloured my mind and enchanted my soul—which there and then began the process of unravelling my heart and, worse still, my life into the poor, scraggy skein that is this story you are about to read.

Richard Flanagan, Gould's Book of Fish

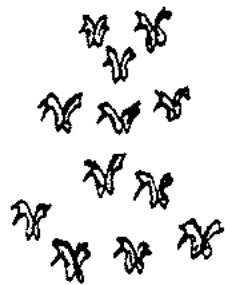
I opened the diary to the first page and it said:

The Trout Fishing Diary of Alonso Hagen

Richard Brautigan, Trout Fishing in America

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z

bpNichol, fish swimming out of alphabet, 1981



notice to reader

Notice to reader: this report has been prepared for the Town Council of Gimli using the resources available to the Town (the “Town”). Information contained in this report uses public source documents such as audited financial statements, tax rolls and provincial statistical reports. The audit firm, Deloitte Touche, is currently reviewing the financial projections used to estimate the tax impact on the property owners.

Toward a Community of Gimli

Pessi bók er sannkalladur fjandans pvoettingur hana á með réttu bóndinn Benedikt Jónsson á Síðu í Víðidal. Efni: Sagan af Sigurdi fót og Ásmundi Húnakóngi, Hermannssaga og Jallmanns, Konrádssaga keisarasonar, Gjafa Refssaga, Hrólfssaga Gutrekssonar, Fertramssaga og Plató, Úlfssaga Uggasonar, Dinusarsaga drambláta.

(This book is truly a damned rubbish, its true owner is the farmer Benidikt Jønsson of Síða in Vbíðidalur. Contents: ... various legendary sagas/romances.)

Vidar Hreinsson, Icelandic Canadian Literature

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3120	the sayings of hár
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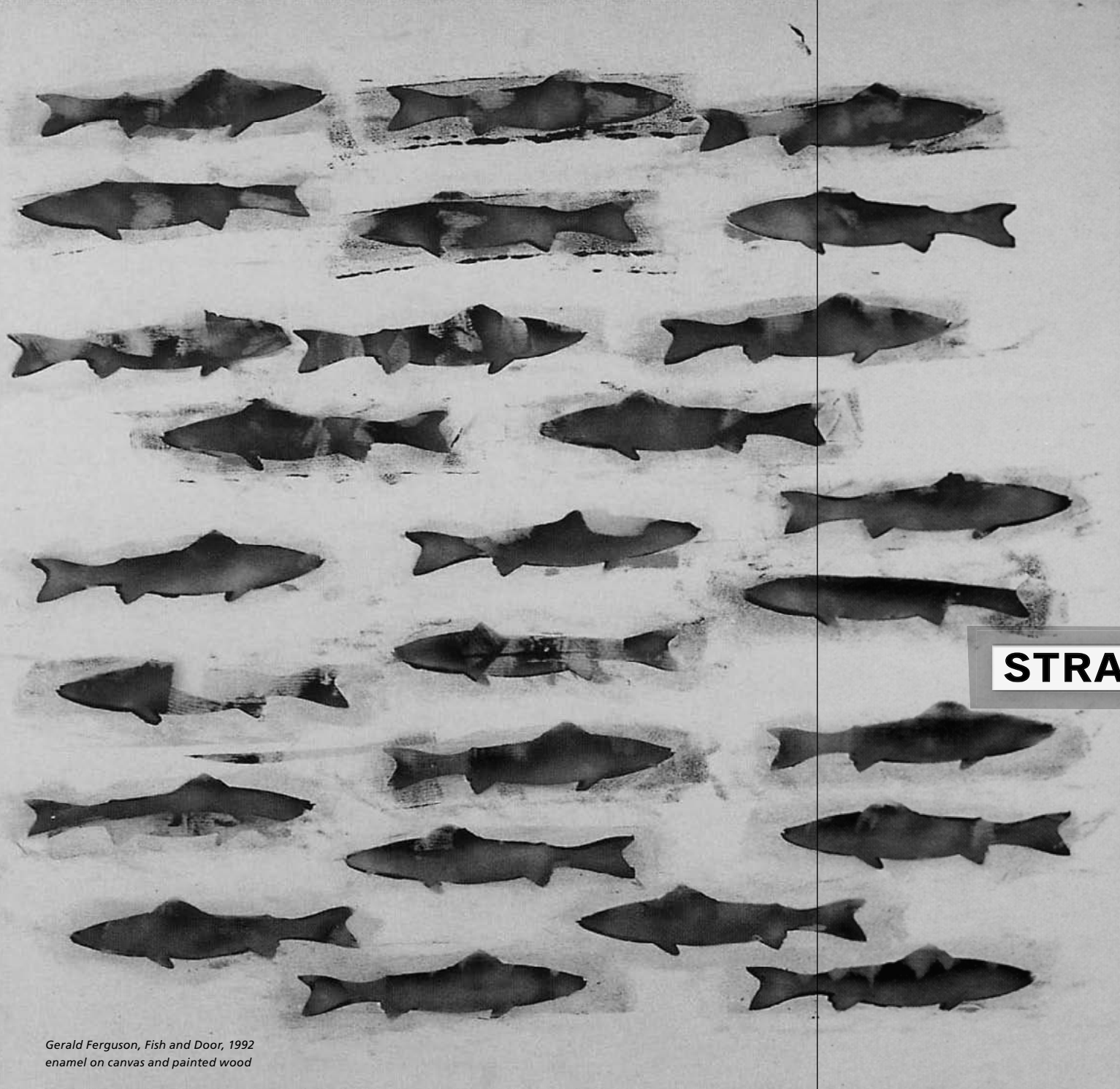
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book one

house of squid



STRANGE THRESHOLD

Gerald Ferguson, *Fish and Door*, 1992
enamel on canvas and painted wood



Ice-fishing shanty made from cast-off storm doors
 Steven A. Griffin, *Ice Fishing: Methods and Magic*

first things first

It's the beginning, I've got a wonderful beginning, I love beginnings so much ...

Monique Proulx, Invisible Man at the Window

Hi there and welcome to my House Of Squid. This is an eclectic little site devoted to things I enjoy, and/or find amusing or interesting.

First things first, why did I pick the name Gimli, and why is this a House Of Squid?

The answer: Gimli was one of my favorite character's in J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord Of The Rings* and squid amuse me.

Other Things That Amuse Me:

- That there's a town in Manitoba named Gimli.
- The WCW.
- People named Bob.

Gimli's House of Squid

We should begin with the house, or the story of the house. Or the facts that make up part of the story of the house.

Mary Gordon, Rosecliff

I am interested in the architecture of desire—in the multitudinous ways in which human beings, given the opportunity, always build their dreams, and in the extent to which every building is a little utopia ...

Dave Hickey, Dialectical Utopias: On Sante Fe and Las Vegas

the sayings of hár

The man who stands at a strange threshold,
Should be cautious before he cross it,
Glance this way and that:
Who knows beforehand what foes may sit
Awaiting him in the hall?

*Hávamál (The Sayings of Hár),
From The Elder Edda*



The entrance to the hut at Framheim during the winter; a photograph taken by moonlight. A black and white film without colour correction, together with some retouching, gives an unfamiliar effect.

Roland Huntford, The Amundsen Photographs

peculiar specifications

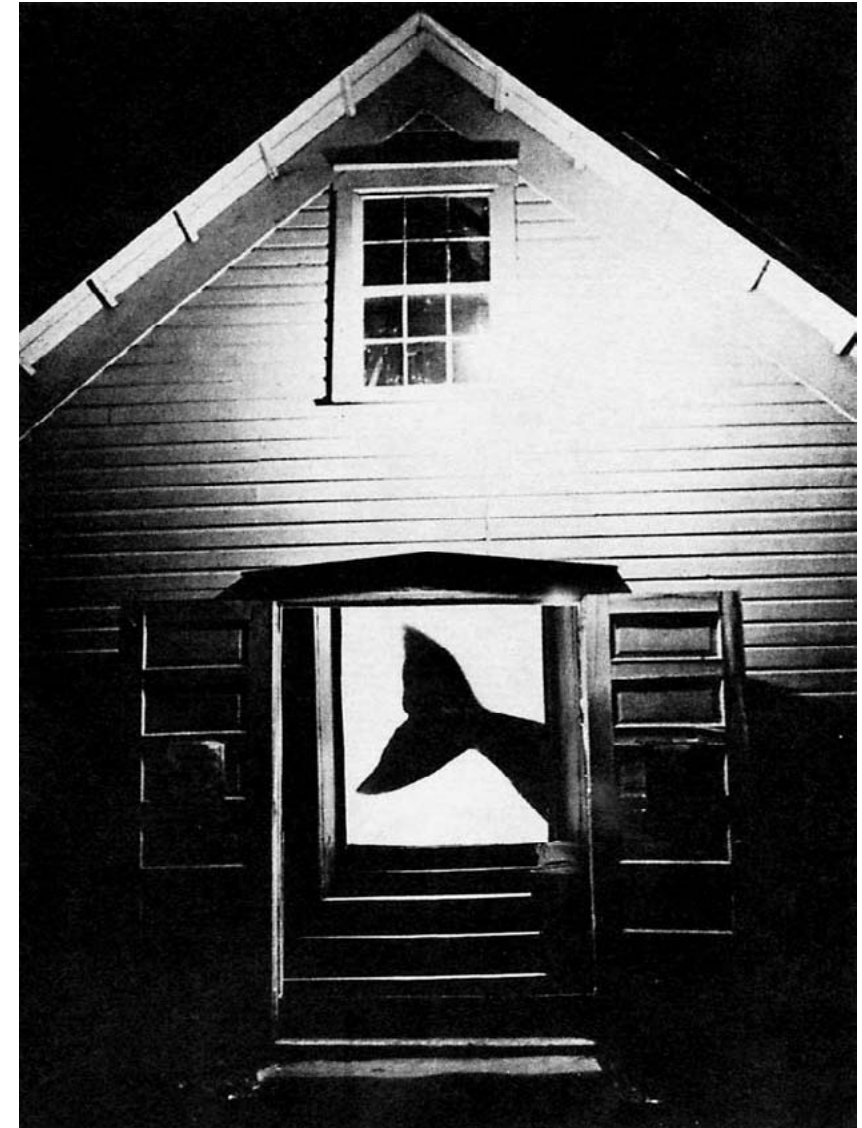
The story opens with an apparently incidental description of the building of a house; on the surface, indeed, as the narrator notes, this is no more than an illustration of one of “the craziest schemes” of this Councillor, himself “one of the most eccentric men” (K 80). The house ... was built at the bottom of the Councillor’s garden according to his own somewhat peculiar specifications. Having bought and assembled all the building materials, stacked and cut the stones, mixed the lime, and sifted the sand, the Councillor had proceeded to amaze the neighbors by refusing all architectural help, directly employing a master mason, journeymen, and apprentices on the work. What was more extraordinary, he had neither commissioned nor drawn up a plan for the house, but had simply excavated a perfectly square foundation for the four walls. These, following his instructions, were built up by the masons, without windows or doors, just as high as the Councillor indicated. Despite the evident madness of this procedure, the builders seemed happy enough, plentifully supplied with food and drink. One day Krespel shouted “Stop!” and the walls were complete (K 80-81).

Then the Councillor began a most strange activity, pacing up and down the garden, moving toward the house in every direction, until, by means of this complex triangulation, he “found” the right place for the door and ordered it cut in the stone; similarly, walking into the house, he performed the same method to determine each window and partition, deciding, seemingly spontaneously, their position and size. The house was then finished. To celebrate his new home, Krespel invited the builders and their families, but no friends, to a feast at which he played the violin. The result of his maneuvers was a home “presenting a most unusual appearance from the outside—no two windows being alike and so on—but whose interior arrangements aroused a very special feeling of ease” (K 82).

In the light of the tale that follows ... the description of Krespel’s crazy house might seem to be one more nonsensical trait of its owner, or at best a literary conceit. The crazy house would then be merely a picturesque fragment, a lively introduction to the tale...

Another level, however ... might lead us to read Hoffmann’s preface as in itself carrying a moral.

Anthony Vidler, The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely



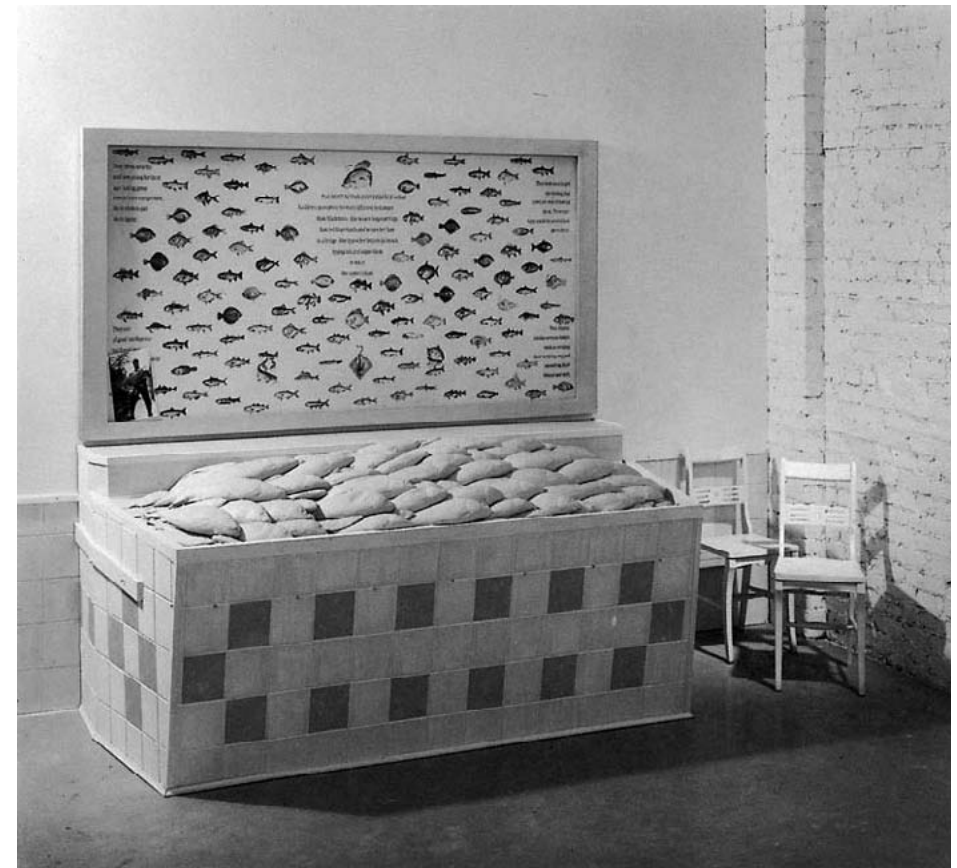
Robin Skelton, *House of Dreams*

Robin Skelton, “Melville’s House.” The allusion is, of course, to Moby Dick. The house is Melville’s and not Captain Ahab’s because it is strangely radiant, as if the obsession the house holds were a source of spiritual illumination rather than of despair. I suspect, too, that the collage relates in some oblique fashion to a poem of mine called “The Friday Fish,” but I cannot be certain of this.

schools of fish

God turn every dream to good for us! For to my Wit it is Wondrous, by the rood, what causes dreams by night or by morrow; and why some be fulfilled and some never, why that is a vision and this a revelation, why this is one kind of dream, and that another, and not to every man alike; why this one is an illusion and that an oracle. I know not, but whosoever knows the causes of these prodigies better than I, let him divine; for I certainly wot naught thereof, and never think to trouble my Wit too arduously to learn their kinds of significance, or the length of time to their fulfilment, or why this is cause of dreams rather than that; as whether folks' temperaments make them dream of what they have been thinking on; or else, as others say, over-enfeeblement of brains from sickness or abstinence, imprisonment, frequenting of stews, or great distress; or else disorder of Nature's customs, as when a man is too zealous in study, or melancholy or so full of inward fear that no man may offer him relief; or else whether the devoutness and meditation of some often cause such dreams; or be it that the cruel, hard life which these lovers lead, who hope or fear overmuch, so that their mere fancies cause visions; or whether spirits have the power to make folk dream o nights; or if the soul from its proper nature be so perfect, as men judge, that it foreknows what is to be, and warns one and all of each of their haps to come, by means of visions or figurings, but our flesh cannot understand these aright, because the warnings are too dark;—I know not what the cause is. Good luck in this to great clerks, who treat of this matter and others.

Geoffrey Chaucer, The House of Fame



"On the counter is a heap of fish, behind this a 'Fish of the world' poster, and in the corner a fisherman hoists aloft his steelhead trophy. Around these images, in a found text, two sisters, Kathleen and Madelaine, synchronize and separate. Kathleen, though not yet 'hoist aloft,' has put herself in jeopardy. Alerted by the modest signs of her difference an observer comments that she is 'more affected in manner than Madelaine,' outlining in absurd detail the evidence of her vanity ... Harsh treatment for a little aesthetic pleasure ... I picture her at her writing desk ... Schools of fish are the images in her mind."

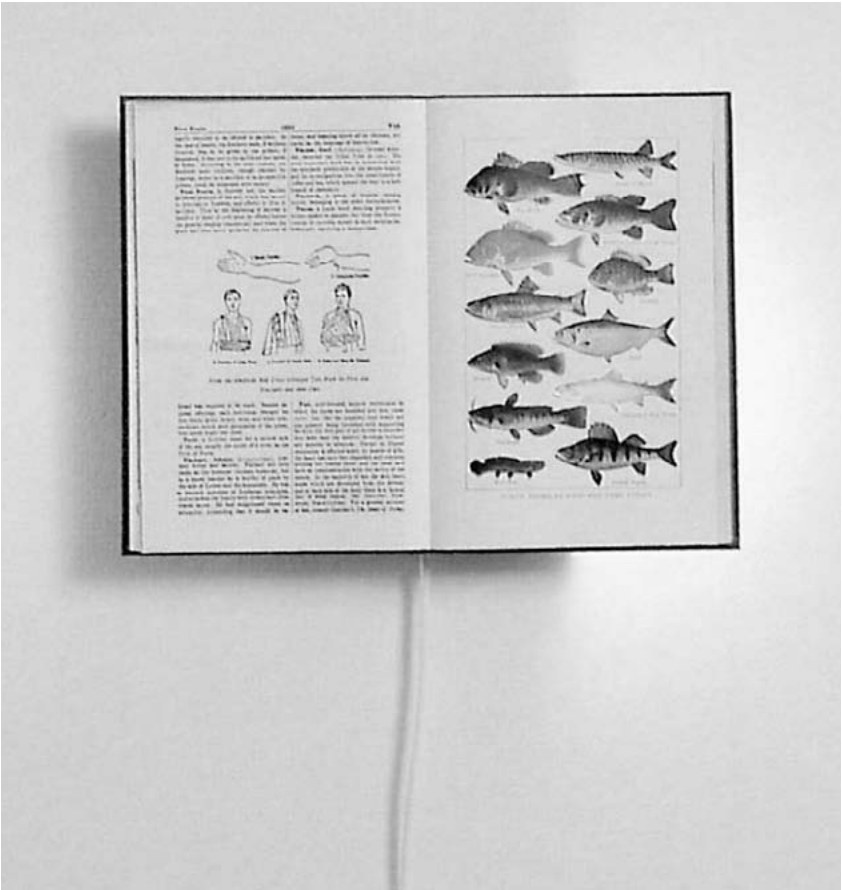
Liz Magor (b. 1948, Winnipeg, Manitoba), The Most Notable Difference, 1984
Silicone, rubber, photographs, wood
210.0 x 350.0 x 124.0 cm

Joan Murray, *The Best of Contemporary Canadian Art*

duties of the reeves

- Paragraph 1. Calling meetings. Reeves shall summon the residents of their districts to the meetings designated in Chapter II and in Chapter IV, para. 1, and shall preside over them. They shall, in addition, summon the general public to extraordinary meetings when the committeemen see the necessity for them.
- Paragraph 2. Committee meetings. They shall summon the members of their committees to meetings whenever necessary, and shall preside over such meetings.
- Paragraph 3. Minute book. They shall ensure that the secretary records the minutes of all meetings in a book to be designated Book No. 1.
- Paragraph 4. Recording of census figures and statistics. They shall annually record all census and statistical figures in a Book to be designated Book No. 2.
- Paragraph 5. Record of road maintenance. They shall annually record all accounts of road construction and improvements in a book to be designated Book No. 3.
- Paragraph 6. Record of deaths, births and marriages. They shall enter a record of all deaths, births and marriages which take place in their respective districts in a book designated Book No. 4.
- Paragraph 7. Record of inventories of estates etc. They shall enter records of inventories, appraisals, auctions, transfers and ownership of property in a book, designated Book No. 5.

The Constitution of New Iceland, ratified at Gimli and Sandy Bar, January 11, 1878



Ian Carr-Harris, Books of Knowledge Series: Books for a Public Library, 1995-96

“Where is the book set?”
“In the book.”
“What are you?”
“I am the keeper of the house.”
“Where do you come from?”
“I have wandered ...”

Edmond Jabès, The Book of Questions

An offer you can't refuse...

PROTASIS (FISH STORY)

**Drink
specials
every
night!**



Charles Laughton (director), *Night of the Hunter*

prelude

“Who lives in that house, Gilbert?”

“I don’t know. It doesn’t look—exactly—as if the occupants would be kindred spirits, Anne, does it?” ...

“It doesn’t seem probable that anyone with that taste in paint could be very kindred,” acknowledged Anne ...

Lucy Maud Montgomery, Anne’s House of Dreams

The author, apparently a Puritan, relates how, straying one day into a deserted neighborhood, he came upon a strange and lonely dwelling. The inhabitant invited him in and in the course of conversation revealed himself to be a dignified and cosmopolitan human being, who had retired from the world in the recognition of his own paltriness. The name to which he answers suggests him to be not so much a man as a whole genealogy of men: Gad Ben Arod Ben Balaam Ben Alimoth Ben Baal Ben Gog Ben Magog. His profession is that of soothsayer.

Edgar Rosenberg, From Shylock to Svengali: Jewish Stereotypes in English Fiction

It was his mysterious custom upon a first encounter with a stranger ever to present his back, possibly because that was his better side, since it revealed the least.

Herman Melville, The Encantadas (Enchanted Isles)

Half man, half fish, half bird, half ghost ...

Edmond Jabès, The Book of Questions

The owner of this abode is an old man of middle height, thickset, but crumpled and misshapen. His face, red as a brick, is hideous. A deep scar runs across the left cheek from ear to chin, giving a twist to his mouth and lending it an expression of painful scorn. The dark eyes are ravaged by trachoma; they are without lashes and have red scars instead of lids; the hair on the head has fallen out in tufts and there are two bald patches on the bumpy skull, a small one on the crown, and another which has laid bare the left ear. In spite of all this the old man is spry and nimble as a polecat; his naked, disfigured eyes have a kindly look; when he laughs, the blemishes of his face almost vanish in the soft abundance of his wrinkles. He wears a good shirt of unbleached linen, blue calico trousers and slippers made of cord. His legs are wrapped in fishskins instead of leggings.

Maxim Gorky, The Hermit

He is a recluse. He doesn't drive. Never has. He arranged for an acquaintance of his to pick me up at the station. Levine sat in the back, talking periodically, but mostly listening: to size up his interviewer.

Sarah Hampson, Norman Levine: Canada Made Him and Then Forgot Him

Although introverted and sensitive, his sense of humor and gentle nature made him liked by all. Nevertheless, many of the people in the village ... thought him just a bit odd and he was the butt of many a village joke.

Duncan C. Blanchard, The Snowflake Man

Levine unlocks the door to his apartment; pushes it forward and gestures for me to enter first. The smell of time rises up from a soiled, mauve carpet, a sagging floral-print sofa. Along one wall, there is a counter, cupboards, a sink, fridge, green plates drying in a rack, and a half-empty bottle of fluorescent-orange dishwashing liquid.

Sarah Hampson, Norman Levine: Canada Made Him and Then Forgot Him

... old jars of cold fish stew and grease-streaked brown bags of fried pork ...

Mark Richard, Fishboy

Bentley never married though it appears he came close to it once or twice. After the death of his mother he lived alone in his side of the house. His bachelor's quarters were a sort of organized confusion. A kitchen stove, a huge wood box, a couple tables, a piano covered with piles of sheet music, movie magazines, books, manuscripts, odds and ends of experiments, photographic equipment, correspondence, and photographs of ice crystals all blurred together in one large room.

Duncan C. Blanchard, The Snowflake Man

I came to him on a bright May day and we made friends at once. He had me stay the night, and on my second visit told me the story of his life.

"I was a sawyer," he said, lying under an elder-bush, having pulled off his shirt to warm his chest, muscular as a youngster's, in the sun. "For seventeen years I sawed logs; see the mess a saw made of my face! That's what they called me, Savel the Sawyer. Sawing is no light job, my friend ..."

Maxim Gorky, The Hermit



preface

Give me a story not so long as to be tiring, not so short as to be unrewarding, not so learned as to be stodgy and not so simple as to be bland.

Then you will have given me the delights of reading without its inconveniences, the satisfactions of discovery without its sacrifices, and the joys of living without its disappointments.

*Richard S. Bowles, Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba,
Preface to Tales of Early Manitoba, by Edith Paterson*

I have a story that I'd like to tell you,
It's littered with settings and second takes.
I have a feeling that hums with the street lights
And hides under ice in always frozen lakes.

The Weakerthans, Diagnosis

Simon Peter said, I go a-fishing; and they said, We also will go with thee.

*Izaak Walton, The Compleat Angler, or the Contemplative Man's Recreation: Being a Discourse of
Fish and Fishing, not unworthy the perusal of most Anglers*

prot-a-sis (n)

1. the part of a conditional sentence that contains the condition, for example, "if he asks" in "if he asks, I'll tell him"
2. the opening section of a narrative poem or play, especially a classical drama

Encarta World English Dictionary

prolegomenon

All this happened, more or less. I've changed all the names.

Kurt Vonnegut Jr., Slaughterhouse-Five

Everything's true in this book, except the stuff that's made up.

Chris Gudgeon, Consider the Fish

"There are some stories into which the reader should be led gently, and I think this may be one of them."

I quote Hugh MacLennan's opening line, with thanks, because it says exactly what needs saying here. This story is another one of those that demands a gentle leading into. Factually, so that everyone is quite clear about some things, at the very beginning. Anyway.

To begin with, every individual who will appear in this story is an historic person. Not one name has been invented. Every person (and a fair number of the animals) who has a part was once, literally, a living being and there is documentary historic evidence available for each, if you care to look for it. Of course, the evidence varies widely ...

Rudy Wiebe, On The Trail of Big Bear

*If you believe everything you hear, of course,
you're a fool. What's important is to discriminate.*

Evan S. Connell Jr., Points for a Compass Rose

Every work of so-called imaginative literature, good or bad, is necessarily at once both fact and fiction; and not only in the sense that fiction is mingled with fact. In every single part fact and fiction are inextricably interwoven.

Imaginative literature is not primarily concerned with facts; it is concerned with truth. It sees fact only within the web of life, coloured and made vital by what preceded it, coloured and made significant by what followed. In its highest flights, imaginative literature, which is one and indivisible, places within a single

fact the history of the universe from its inception as well as the history of its future to the moment of its final extinction.

The reason for this is that, in imaginative literature, no fact enters as mere fact; a fact as such can be perceived; but, to form subject-matter for art, it must contain its own interpretation; and a fact interpreted, and therefore made capable of being understood, becomes fiction.

Frederick Philip Grove, A Search for America

I pass, like night, from land to land;
I have strange power of speech;
That moment that his face I see,
I know the man that must hear me:
To him my tale I teach.

*Samuel Taylor Coleridge,
The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

See, the irony is it makes no difference that the documentary at the heart of this book is fiction. Zampanò knew from the get go that what's real or isn't real doesn't matter here. The consequences are the same.

Mark Z. Danielewski, House of Leaves

The first sentence in *The Books of Bokonon* is this:

"All of the true things I am about to tell you are shameless lies."

My Bokonist warning is this:

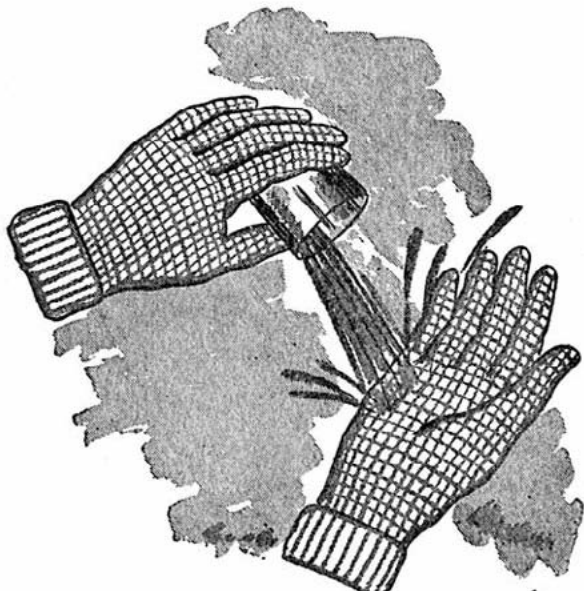
Anyone unable to understand how a useful religion can be founded on lies will not understand this book either.

So be it.

Kurt Vonnegut Jr., Cat's Cradle

"The fish serves as the perfect metaphor for this relationship"

fish story

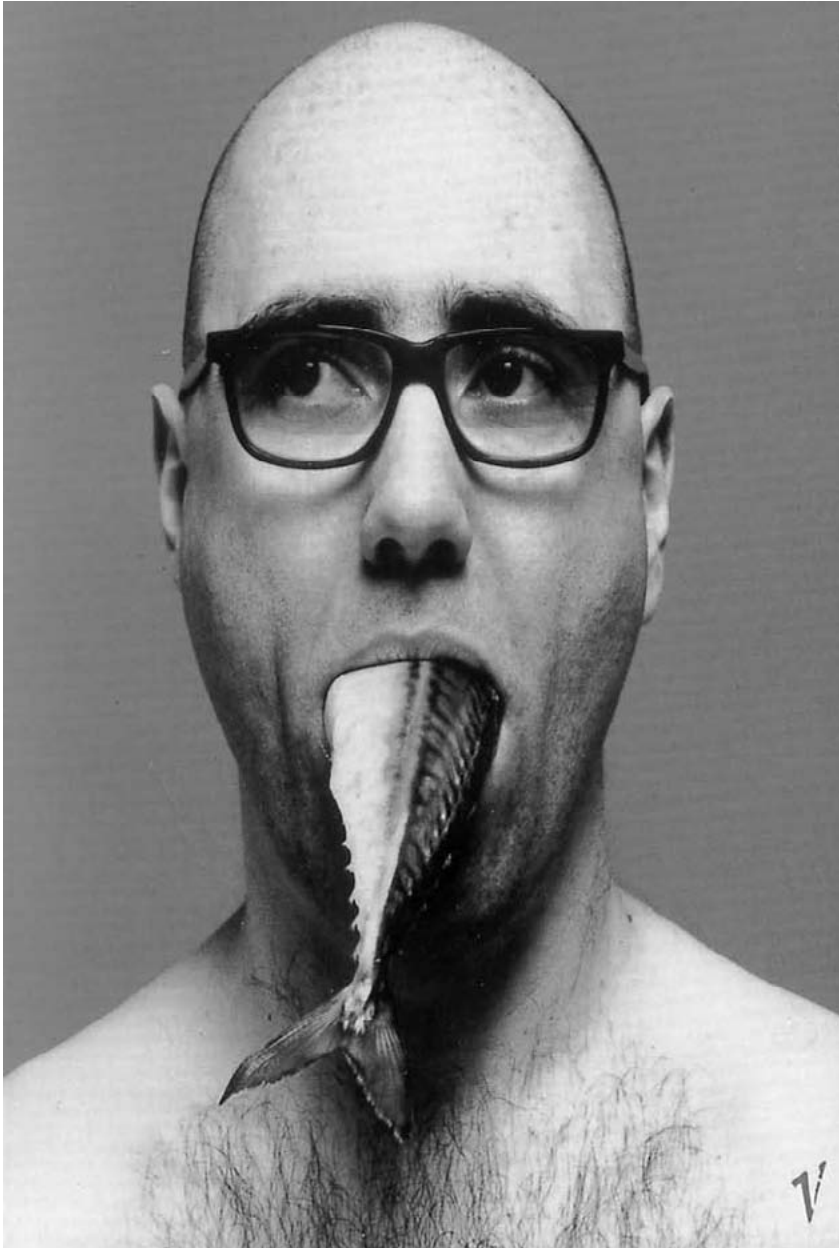


Diane Fine, postcard

prolepsis

These words are quoted here to mislead those who will be misled by them. They mean, not what the reader may care to think they mean, but what they say. In view of the average reader's tendency to label, and of topical dangers to which any man, whether honest, or intelligent, or subtle, is at present liable, it may be well to make the explicit statement that neither these words nor the author is the property of any political party, faith, or faction.

James Agee and Walker Evans, Let Us Now Praise Famous Men



Trevor Ray Hart, cover photo for *Sad Bastard*, by Hugo Hamilton

preamble

I will here write down my thoughts without order, and not perhaps in unintentional confusion; that is true order, which will always indicate my object by its very disorder.

Blaise Pascal, Pensées

Tis rare that a great work is begun with wisdom and foresight; nay, such things grow out of blind courage and confusion. But that is just it, confusion breeds more confusion, and better use a big stick than have everything come to nought.

Siefan Heym, The Wandering Jew

It is bound to be a failure, every book is a failure, but I know with some clarity what kind of book I want to write.

George Orwell, Why I Write

... it may seem desirable to explain a little here as we go. We shall do so, but always including, the preamble.

Herman Melville, *Pierre; or, The Ambiguities*

The first, and possibly main, thing to be said is that it is a surpassingly strange novel. The book fits on none of the usual grids. It cannot be assimilated to the categories of psychological novel, or social, or historical, or philosophical, or, quite, spiritual ... Neither is it an old style Bildungsroman, though in its presentation of a life in fairly distinct "stages," it owes some debt to that form. It does not create a strong dramatic arc, avoiding most strategies whereby tensions are gathered toward resolution ... Nor does it have as its core preoccupation the exploration of human relationships. And though it features as its protagonist an individual with a strong visionary aptitude, it does not ascend, except in isolated—wonderful—bursts, into the realms of higher seeing; it remains quite closely tethered to the inhospitable ground surface of its Icelandic setting. *World Light*, more than almost any novel I can think of, declares itself sui generis ...

Sven Birkerts, *Introduction to World Light*, by Halldór Laxness

A totally disorganized book; *Sovrana* cares nothing for organization. Looks like loose collection of titled essays and random sayings ...

Robert Grudin, *Book*

This book is an exercise in historical actuality, but it has only as much to do with history as the heat and spectrum of the light that makes it visible, or the retina and optical nerve of your eye. It is as much an exercise of history as it is an experiment of alchemy. Its primary intention is to make you experience the pages now before you as a flexible mirror that if turned one way can reflect the odor of the air that surrounded me as I wrote this; if turned another, can project your anticipations of next Monday; if turned again, can transmit the sound of breathing in the deep winter air of a room eighty years ago, and if turned once again, this time backward on itself, can fuse all three images, and so can focus who I once was, what you might yet be, and what may have happened, all upon a single point of your imagination, and transform them like light focused by a lens of paper, from a lower form of energy to a higher.

Michael Lesy, *Wisconsin Death Trip*



Michael Snow, *Cover to Cover*, 1975

The immediate instruments are two: the motionless camera, and the printed word. The governing instrument—which is also one of the centers of the subject—is individual, anti-authoritative human consciousness.

Ultimately, it is intended that this record and analysis be exhaustive, with no detail, however trivial it may seem, left untouched, no relevancy avoided, which lies within the power of remembrance to maintain, of the intelligence to perceive, and of the spirit to persist in.

Of this ultimate intention the present volume is merely portent and fragment, experiment, dissonant prologue. Since it is intended, among other things, as a swindle, an insult, and a corrective, the reader will be wise to bear the nominal subject, and his expectation of its proper treatment, steadily in mind. For that is the subject with which the author is dealing throughout. If complications arise, that is because he is trying to deal with it not as a journalist, sociologist, politician, entertainer, humanitarian, priest, or artist, but seriously.

James Agee and Walker Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*

A person of irregular tendencies, he practiced the art of circling among random facts to swoop down on the essentials.

Saul Bellow, Herzog

Levine's mind, always jumping to some connection he alone perceives, stops and starts without warning.

Sarah Hampson, Norman Levine: Canada Made Him and Then Forgot Him

If I could do it, I'd do no writing at all here. It would be photographs; the rest would be fragments of cloth, bits of cotton, lumps of earth, records of speech, pieces of wood and iron, phials of odors, plates of food and of excrement. Booksellers would consider it quite a novelty; critics would murmur, yes, but is it art?

James Agee and Walker Evans, Let Us Now Praise Famous Men

Among the various conflicting modes of writing history, there would seem to be two grand practical distinctions, under which all the rest must subordinately range. By the one mode, all contemporaneous circumstances, facts, and events must be set down contemporaneously; by the other, they are only to be set down as the general stream of the narrative shall dictate; for matters which are kindred in time, may be very irrelative in themselves. I elect neither of these; I am careless of either; both are well enough in their way; I write precisely as I please.

Herman Melville, Pierre; or, The Ambiguities

“What is this?”

“My life's work. My memoirs. My confession.”

“What have you done?”

“I've been bad. Repeatedly. But why brag? The details of my exploits are only a pretext for a far more expansive consideration of general truths. What is this? It's a philosophy. A poetics. A politics, if you will. A literature of protest. A novel of ideas. A pornographic magazine of truly comic-book proportions. It is in the end whatever the hell I want it to be, and when I'm through with it it's going to blow a hole this wide (holds up his hands, indicating how wide) straight through the world's own idea of itself.”

“They're throwing bottles at your house.”

Hal Hartley, Henry Fool



Shozo Shimamoto, *Throwing Bottles of Paint*
Performance at the second Gutai exhibition, Ohara-Kaikan, Tokyo, October 1956

Ralph Rugoff, *Scene of the Crime*

“Is this for your book?”

“Everything is for my book.”

Brian Hall, The Impossible Country

What's more, Klaus by no means limited himself to such semi-authentic sources. Everything served him, even pure fiction, as long as poetic fantasy suited the facts. With a man of his voracious reading one can never be sure, of course, if what appears to be plagiarism might not be unconscious regurgitation. Where one suspects the author of having copied word for word, with someone else's book open in front of him, a fleeting memory of the same words might have guided his hand unawares. Who anyway, after spending most of his time reading books, can be sure of ever writing a truly original sentence? Even Shakespeare borrowed freely from others, though in most cases we shall never know whether he did so consciously, unconsciously, or perhaps both.

Ekbert Faas, *Woyzeck's Head*

The Literary Market



Grandville (Jean-Ignace-Isadore Gerard), *Un autre monde* (Paris: Fournier, 1844)

Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*

W. H. Auden once remarked that an important book is one that reads us, not the reverse.

William Barrett, *The Illusion of Technique*

“People—they think—you know? Because—”

“I see.”

Hal Hartley, *Henry Fool*

The question ‘What is your book about?’ has always puzzled me. It is about itself and if I could condense it into other words I should not have taken such care to choose the words I did.

Jeanette Winterson, *Art Objects*

If an artist chose to join a human head
To a horse's neck and to cover with many-hued feathers
Limbs assembled in one from all over the place,
So that what was on top a lovely woman, below
Ended ugly and black in the shape of a fish,
Could you, my friends, refrain from bursting out laughing,
If you were allowed a private view of the thing?
Take my word, you Pisos, a picture like that
Would be perfectly matched by a book whose meaningless fancies
Were shaped like a sick man's dreams, so that nowhere within it
Could foot or head be assigned to a single shape.

...

Perhaps, too, you know how to paint a cypress—
That's no good if they've paid you to do a sailor.

...

That was a wine-jar you started to fashion just now;
Why, as the wheel spins round, does it turn out a pitcher?

Horace, *The Art of Poetry*

It's a bit like a visit to the Delphic Oracle, this exchange with Levine. “Ask questions,” he instructs. “I want to give you what you need.” Then, he gives epigrammatic, obtuse responses.

Sarah Hampson, *Norman Levine: Canada Made Him and Then Forgot Him*

“What’s it like having so many things to say, and not being able to say them?”

He smiled. “You’re the only person who ever cared to ask that question. Now you know why I do the pastor’s job. These interpretations. They’re my way of speaking. Thanks to them, I can live in a foreign language.”

“A lot of people have your problem, even people born here. The secret is to stay away from the big words, and not try to say too much.”

“Yes. Of course. I considered that. But sometimes you can’t help it.”

David Homel, Get On Top

what are the great themes but those we cannot name properly

bpNichol, You Too, Nicky

We have no definite political program to offer. All we have is the strength of our convictions. You might say that our plan is something like the view that you get through an unfocused telescope.

Franz Schulze, Philip Johnson: Life and Work

The photographs are not illustrative. They, and the text, are coequal, mutually independent, and fully collaborative.

James Agee and Walker Evans, Let Us Now Praise Famous Men

And note also, that in this Discourse I do not undertake to say all that is known, or may be said of it, but I undertake to acquaint the Reader with many things that are not usually known to every Angler; and I shall leave gleanings and observations enough to be made out of the experience of all that love and practise this recreation, to which I shall encourage them. For Angling may be said to be so much like the Mathematicks, that it can ne’r be fully learnt; at least not so fully, but that there will still be more new experiments left for the tryal of other men that succeed us.

But I think all that love this game may here learn something that may be worth their money.

Izaak Walton, The Compleat Angler, or the Contemplative Man’s Recreation: Being a Discourse of Fish and Fishing, not unworthy the perusal of most Anglers

The Jews, Librarians, and witnesses of the Redemption ...

Charles Baudelaire, My Heart Laid Bare

Nevertheless, as a method of interpretation, allegorical exegesis is simply a trick—a trick not untypical of the ingenuity of the Greeks who invented it—to make an authoritative text mean what you want it to mean, despite the fact that the actual words mean something quite different.

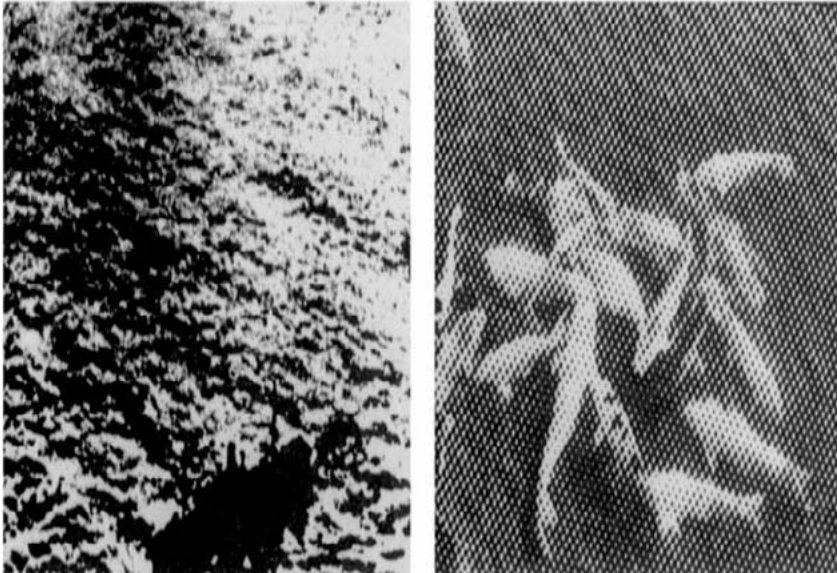
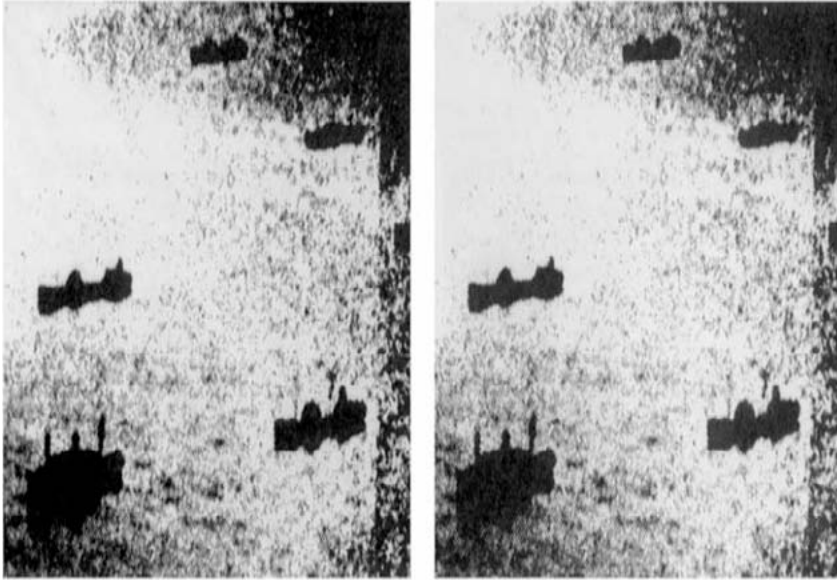
E. W. Heaton, A Short Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets



Dudley Reed, London Library

Therefore it is in some fear that I approach those matters at all, and in much confusion. And if there are questions in my mind how to undertake this communication, and there are many, I must let the least of them be, whether I am boring you, or whether I am taking too long getting started, and too clumsily. If I bore you, that is that. If I am clumsy, that may indicate partly the difficulty of my subject, and the seriousness with which I am trying to take what hold I can of it; more certainly, it will indicate my youth, my lack of mastery of my so-called art or craft, my lack perhaps of talent. Those matters, too, must reveal themselves as they may.

James Agee and Walker Evans, Let Us Now Praise Famous Men



Alan Dunning, *Billy Budd's Stammer: The Structure of the New Defence* (detail view)

prologue

Yes, said Lukas, there was something strange about remembering. When he lay on the sofa and thought back, it all became blurred as if he was out in a fog.

W. G. Sebald, Vertigo

Imagine being outside time. That the past and future are revolving around you, and you cannot place yourself properly. That your body, your receptacle, has been numbed free of history. Because I feel this way, I can see clearly when and where the evil started ...

Richard Zimmer, The Last Kabbalist of Lisbon

This book is the account of a personal experience—so personal that for four years I could not bring myself to write it. It is different from anything else I have ever written. My other books have been factual, impersonal narratives. This book, on the other hand, is the story of an experience which was in considerable part subjective. And, since my sufferings bulked so large in it and since a man's instinct is to keep such things to himself, I did not see how I could write about it and still escape making an unseemly show of my feelings. Also, I was a long time recovering from the effects of my experience, and the whole business was so intimate in memory that I doubted that I could approach it with the proper detachment.

As the writing progressed, my earlier misgivings were confirmed. Indeed, there were times when I was on the verge of giving up the book entirely, and would have done so had there been any honorable way out. For there were aspects of this situation which I would rather not mention at all, since they involve that queer business called self-respect. Nevertheless, I finished what I started out to do, and this book represents the simple truth about myself and my affairs during that time.

The original intention was to use my diary, which was very detailed and voluminous, as the prime ingredient in the book; but I soon discovered that it was almost impossible to maintain an intelligible sequence and proportion by relying on the diary alone, since it was inescapably full of repetitious matter, cryptic references to things meaningful only to myself, and random jottings; besides, there were many very personal things ... which I did not wish to include. In consequence, though I have used considerable sections and many excerpts, I have used them only where I felt they were illuminating. No particular effort has been made in the text to indicate whether the entry for a particular day is complete or only an excerpt lifted bodily; I did not want to clutter up the book with bibliographical apparatus.

Richard E. Byrd, Alone

Or it might begin with the beginning of the book that was to cause so much trouble, but was then only scribbled heaps of notes, and a swarm of scenes, imagined and re-imagined.

A. S. Byatt, Babel Tower

I was bored. That was how it started. Anything I ever did that amounted to anything—or not—has always been the result of being sick of doing something else. Imagination by default.

Douglas Brooker, L.A. Women

“Time,” he said. “There’s so much reading you can do. So many exercises. You have to find ways to make it go past. To fill it. You know what I mean? Time which is so valuable. But I’m writing a book. I’m making notes for it now.

E. L. Doctorow, The Book of Daniel

I remember that time went much faster two years ago, incomparably faster than now; the summer was gone before I realized it. It was two years ago, in 1855—I want to write about it to amuse myself—that something happened to me: or else I dreamt it. By now I have forgotten many things that happened then, for I have scarcely given them a thought since. But I remember that the nights were very light. Many things struck me as odd: the year still had its twelve months, but night turned into day and there was never a star to be seen in the sky. And the people I met were strange, and of a different nature from the people I had known before.

Knut Hamsun, Pan



Fish flies were thick that summer. (Manitoba Archives)

The pictures you're about to see are of people who were once actually alive. The excerpts you're about to read recount events these people, or people like them, once experienced. None of the accounts are fictitious. Neither the pictures nor the events were, when they were made or experienced, considered to be unique, extraordinary, or sensational ...

But something happened. Something changed. Somehow, sometime, somewhere in the middle of the time gap ... everything became different ... What dark thing had changed the ordinary doings of ordinary citizens into messages received by radio telescope from a nebula judged to have exploded a million years ago? How did it happen? Why did it happen?

Michael Lesy, Wisconsin Death Trip

In this book I am venturing into uncharted seas whose hazards are as great as their promise. Much of what I am saying is tentative, incomplete, often subject to qualification and open to question. But if we are to make any progress in this vital subject, someone must risk the voyage.

Tibor Scitovsky, The Joyless Economy

Over the years, this story has been presented in many different guises—tragedy, disaster, black comedy, mystery, morality tale. Here, I propose to enter into a far stranger, far darker realm, a country hitherto unexplored. In writing this book, I began with one simple purpose—to seek answers to questions that have proven unanswerable for a century-and-a-half. To do this, I made myself a promise at the outset. I promised myself that no solution, no matter how bizarre, would be rejected, so long as it fit the known facts. As we shall see, at times this was a difficult promise to keep. When those facts led me into a maze of deception and conspiracy, I hesitated. Like some Arctic explorer suddenly faced with dangerously thin ice, I nearly turned back. But, remembering my promise, I trudged grimly on, determined to follow the trail of clues, no matter where it might lead. Then, as the terrain grew steadily darker, the landscape alien and unexpected, as it became clear that the conspiracy was only the beginning, was positively mundane compared to what came after—I nearly faltered again. But still I kept on, step by step, detail by detail, until the terrifying end ...

Jeffrey Blair Latta, The Franklin Conspiracy

I could go on suggesting other variations—I'm sure you can see them yourself, James. Isn't it strange how in these Carrick mysteries one possibility melts into another. Like one of those medieval manuscripts where you rub away one text and find another underneath. And maybe even another, and another. Here's what I'm getting at and I'd like you to consider it:

Eric McCormack, The Mysterium

Though the events which compose my journals may have little in themselves to strike the imagination of those who love to be astonished, or to gratify the curiosity of such as are enamoured of romantic adventures; nevertheless, when it is considered that I explored those waters which had never before borne any other vessel than the canoe of the savage; and traversed those deserts where an European had never before presented himself to the eye of its swarthy natives; when to these considerations are added the important objects which were pursued, with the dangers that were encountered, and the difficulties that were surmounted to attain them, this work will, I flatter myself, be found to excite an interest, and conciliate regard, in the minds of those who peruse it.

Before I conclude, I must beg leave to inform my readers, that they are not to expect the charms of embellished narrative, or animated description; the approbation due to simplicity and to truth is all I presume to claim; and I am not without the hope that this claim will be allowed me. I have described whatever I saw with the impressions of the moment which presented it to me. The successive circumstances of my progress are related without exaggeration or display. I have seldom allowed myself to wander into conjecture; and wherever conjecture has been indulged, it will be found, I trust, to be accompanied with the temper of a man who is not disposed to think too highly of himself: and if at any time I have delivered myself with confidence, it will appear, I hope, to be on those subjects which, from the habits and experience of my life, will justify an unreserved communication of my opinions. I am not a candidate for literary fame; at the same time, I cannot but indulge the hope that this volume, with all its imperfections, will not be thought unworthy the attention of the scientific geographer; and that, by unfolding countries hitherto unexplored, and which, I presume, may now be considered as a part of the British dominions, it will be received as a faithful tribute to the prosperity of my country.

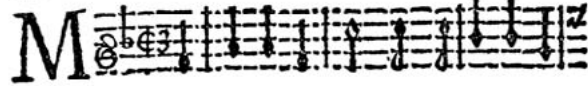
Alexander Mackenzie, Journal of His Voyage to the Pacific Coast of Canada in 1793

The ANGLERS Song.

CANTUS.

♩ 2. ♪ 6.

Set by Mr. Henry Lewis



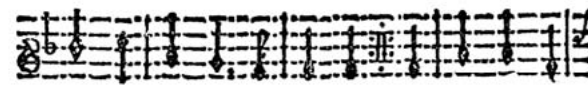
My heart is contemplatin'; A big fish



that's a-waitin'; Waitin' at the end of my line;



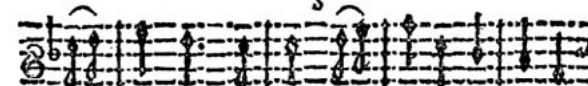
Don't try to understand 'em; Juft set the hook



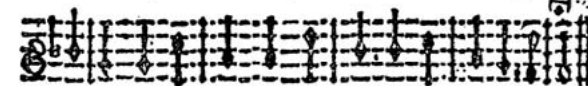
and land 'em; Soon we'll be listenin' to 'em fry;



Bait 'em up, cast 'em out; Cast 'em out,



bait 'em up; Bait 'em up, cast 'em out, Walleye.



Trollin', trollin' trollin'; Trollin', trollin' trollin' ...

exordium

ESTRAGON: Sing something.

VLADIMIR: No no! (He reflects.) We could start all over again perhaps.

ESTRAGON: That should be easy.

VLADIMIR: It's the start that's difficult.

ESTRAGON: You can start from anything.

VLADIMIR: Yes, but you have to decide.

ESTRAGON: True.

Samuel Beckett, Waiting for Godot

At best a picture, a book are only open doors inviting you into an empty house,
& once inside you just have to make the rest up as well as you can. All I can show
you with any conviction is a little of what happened to me here ...

Richard Flanagan, Gould's Book of Fish



The Way We Live in Manitoba, photo by Phil Hossack

introduction

A thief is a man; and a man's life is like those geographical fragments children learn "the contiguous countries" by. The pieces are a puzzle; but put them together carefully, and lo! they are a map.

Charles Reade, Introductory to The Autobiography of a Thief

Never trust biographies. Too many events in a man's life are invisible. Unknown to others as our dreams. And nothing releases the dreamer; not death in the dream, not waking.

Anne Michaels, Fugitive Pieces

We all live in the same world's sea. We cannot tell a story that leaves us outside, and when I say we, I include you. But in order to include you, I feel that I cannot spend these pages saying *I* to a second person. Therefore let us say *he*, and stand together looking at them.

George Bowering, Burning Water

His face was whiskerless; his eyes gray; his cheek-bones a little higher than the average; his hair auburn; his nose not Grecian—or Roman—but still impressive: his air one of quiet dignity, mingled with youthful joyance and mirthfulness. Try—O reader!—to bring before you such a figure. Well—that's me.

Such was my exterior; what was my character? A few words will suffice to explain:—bold, yet cautious; brave, yet tender; constant, yet highly impressible; tenacious of affection, yet quick to kindle into admiration at every new form of beauty; many times smitten, yet surviving the wound; vanquished, yet rescued by that very impressibility of temper—such was the man over whose singular adventures you will shortly be called to smile or to weep.

James De Mille, The Lady of the Ice



Matt Holm (director), The Lost Bundefjord Expedition

The story of Hans Castorp, which we would here set forth, not on his own account, for in him the reader will make acquaintance with a simple-minded though pleasing young man, but for the sake of the story itself, which seems to us highly worth telling—though it must needs be borne in mind, in Hans Castorp's behalf, that it is his story, and not every story happens to everybody—this story, we say, belongs to the long ago; is already, so to speak, covered with historic mould, and unquestionably to be presented in the tense best suited to a narrative out of the depth of the past.

That should be no drawback to a story, but rather the reverse. Since histories must be in the past, then the more past the better, it would seem, for them in their character as histories, and for him, the teller of them, rounding wizard of times gone by. With this story, moreover, it stands as it does to-day with human beings, not least among them writers of tales: it is far older than its years; its age may not be measured by length of days, nor the weight of time on its head reckoned by the rising or setting of suns. In a word, the degree of its antiquity has noways to do with the passage of time—in which statement the author intentionally touches upon the strange and questionable double nature of that riddling element.

But we would not willfully obscure a plain matter. The exaggerated pastness of our narrative is due to its taking place before the epoch when a certain crisis shattered its way through life and consciousness and left a deep chasm behind. It takes place—or, rather, deliberately to avoid the present tense, it took place, and had taken place—in the long ago, in the old days, in the beginning of which so much began that has scarcely yet left off beginning. Yes, it took place before that; yet not so long before. Is not the pastness of the past the profounder, the completer, the more legendary, the more immediately before the present it falls? More than that, our story has, of its own nature, something of the legend about it now and again.

We shall tell it at length, thoroughly, in detail—for when did a narrative seem too long or too short by reason of the actual time or space it took up? We do not fear being called meticulous, inclining as we do to the view that only the exhaustive can truly be interesting.

Thomas Mann, The Magic Mountain

‘Do you find his works well written?’

‘Certainly, very interesting.’

Gustave Flaubert, Bouvard and Pécuchet

Easily that whole bit from “—” down to “—” could have been cut. You wouldn’t of noticed the absence. I probably wouldn’t of either. But that doesn’t change the fact that I can’t do it. Get rid of it, I mean. What’s gained in economy doesn’t really seem to make up for what you lose of Zampanò, the old man himself, coming a little more into focus, especially where these digressions are concerned.

Mark Z. Danielewski, House of Leaves

But he interrupts before I can finish. “No! I’m not interested in just getting a sense of a person,” he says, in apparent contradiction of his previous comment. “I’m not even interested in the story element. Or plot devices. I want to trap something.” His hands reach into the air ...

There is silence between us for a moment or so. I leave it to hang in the air. Levine is impatient with the imprecision of talk. “It’s not normal, this,” he says at one point, waving his hand to indicate us, this interview between strangers. “I write better than I talk.” But he feels compelled to continue.

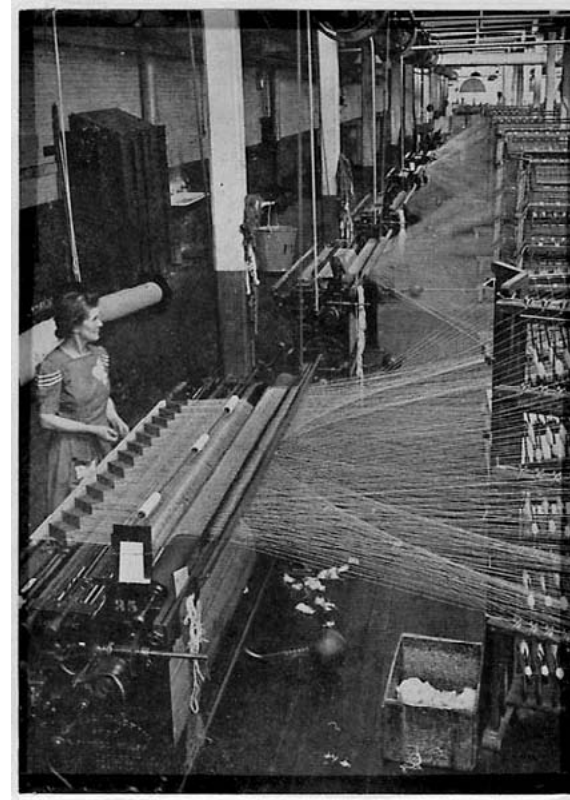
Sarah Hampson, Norman Levine: Canada Made Him and Then Forgot Him

... his is a horizontal discourse: no transcendence, no deliverance, no novel (though a great deal of the fictive).

Roland Barthes, A Lover’s Discourse: Fragments

The novel—if in fact it qualifies for that title—contains little in the way of external action ... Oberman is essentially a soliloquizer; by the end of the book he has acquired a residence ... He has also achieved a single active resolution, to write a truthful book, which may or may not be the volume to hand. There is a meager suggestion of romantic interest ... In many of its parts the book is veiled and excerpted autobiography, rearranged and idealized ...

Robert Martin Adams, Nil



The warping process next follows. Every piece of cloth has two sets of threads, one running lengthwise, called the warp, and the other crossing those, the weft. The warp threads are here being wound on a drum which will feed the loom. Warp threads for a number of pieces are generally wound at one time.

The Book of Knowledge Children’s Encyclopedia

The book which follows is essentially retrospective; which means that it is teleological; what was the present when it was written had already become its telos. Events that had followed were already casting their shadows backward. By writing the book, in that long-ago past, I was freeing myself of the mental and emotional burden implied in the fact that I had once lived it and had left it behind. But the present pervaded the past in every fibre.

One more point. Why, so I have been asked, did I choose a pseudonym for my hero? Well, while a pseudonym ostensibly dissociates the author from his creation, it gives him at the same time an opportunity to be even more personal than, in the conditions of our present-day civilization, it would be either safe or comfortable to be were he speaking the first person, unmasked.

Frederick Philip Grove, A Search for America

Remembrances take on a luminosity from their repetition in your mind year after year, and in their combinations ... and as you work them out and understand them to a greater and greater degree ... so that what you remember as having happened and what truly did happen are no less and no more than ... visions.

E. L. Doctorow, The Waterworks

The way I figure it, if there's something you find irksome—go ahead and skip it. I couldn't care less how you read any of this. His wandering passages are staying, along with all his oddly canted phrases and even some warped bits in the plot. There's just too much at stake. It may be the wrong decision, but fuck it, it's mine.

Zampanò himself probably would of insisted on corrections and edits, he was his own harshest critic, but I've come to believe errors, especially written errors, are often the only markers left by a solitary life: to sacrifice them is to lose the angles of personality, the riddle of a soul.

Mark Z. Danielewski, House of Leaves



Gerald Slota, "Untitled
(Boy with Pin in Forehead)," 1997

... I learned that Gimli is the axis of the world, if not earth ... The progress of my awareness may have begun decades earlier ...

John Moss, Waves Break Stone

Ultimately, as was said so well by that friend of yours held hostage by the madman with the knife, ultimately nothing extraordinary can happen to us, nothing worth recounting. It is in fact true that nothing ever happens to us. All the experiences we can speak of are no more than fantasies. And anyway what can one have in one's life but two or three experiences? Two or three experiences, no more (and sometimes not even that). Nobody has experiences any more (did they have them in the nineteenth century?); there are only fantasies. All of us invent a variety of stories (ultimately versions of the same story) so as to imagine that something has happened to us in the course of our lives: a story or series of stories that ultimately are all that we really have lived, stories we tell ourselves so as to imagine that we have had experiences or that something meaningful has happened to us. But who can guarantee that the order of the story is that of life? We are made of those illusions, dear master, as you know better than I.

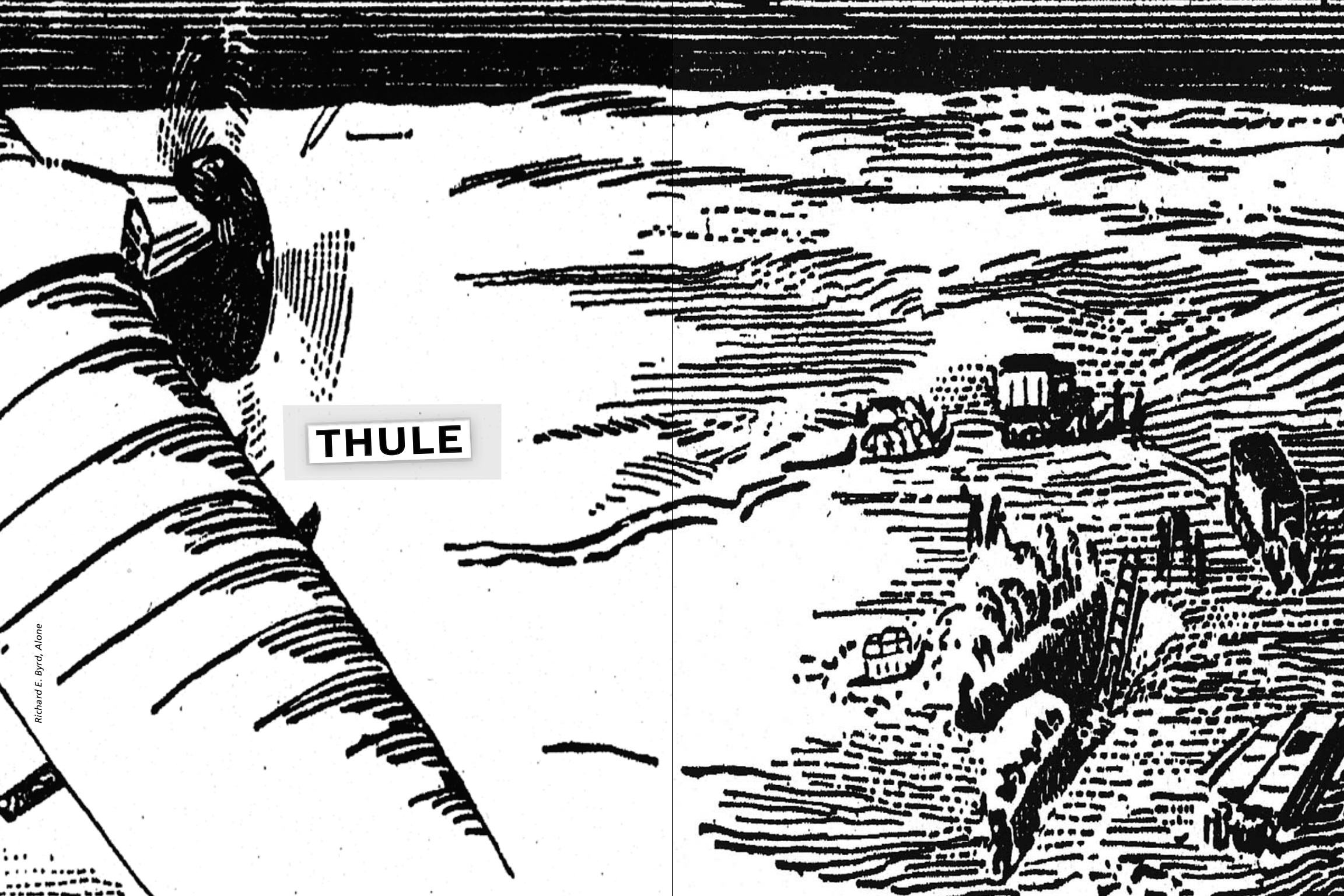
Ricardo Piglia, Artificial Respiration

"O shrieve me, shrieve me, holy man!"
The Hermit cross'd his brow.
"Say quick," quoth he, "I bid thee say—
What manner of man art thou?"
Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched
With a woeful agony,
Which forced me to begin my tale;
And then it left me free.
Since then, at an uncertain hour,
That agony returns:
And till my ghastly tale is told,
This heart within me burns.

*Samuel Taylor Coleridge,
The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

When I think about it today, the whole year's adventure which, in actual fact, lengthened out into a year and a half, seems to be telescoped together into twenty-four hours, during which I wrote that whole book which, in its first version, was to comprise half a million words. What I see when I close my eyes is as follows ...

Frederick Philip Grove, In Search of Myself



THULE

niflheim

At first there was nothing but darkness ...

Frederick Philip Grove, Settlers of the Marsh

To think of origin, is that not first of all to test the origin?
Desire for a beginning.

Edmond Jabès, Desire for a Beginning/Dread of One Single End

It always begins the same way.

No matter who tells the tale, no matter the reason for the telling, it always begins the same.

Jeffrey Blair Latta, The Franklin Conspiracy

For blank space, like blank paper, can be scribbled over with the wishes of the onlooker.

Francis Spufford, I May Be Some Time: Ice and the English Imagination

Six hundred million years ago life existed only in the oceans of the earth. The land itself was barren, lifeless rock. The atmosphere contained little oxygen and large amounts of carbon dioxide, methane and ammonium. Lethal ultraviolet rays were just beginning to interact with oxygen to form a protective layer of ozone in the upper atmosphere. The area that was to be Canada's prairie region straddled the equator, and lingered there for over 100 million years. During this time the land was repeatedly inundated by warm shallow seas, and sediments slowly accumulated at the bottom of these seas.

Wayne Lynch, Married to the Wind

Non-being then existed not, nor being.
There was no air, nor sky that is beyond it.
What was concealed? Wherein? In whose protection?
And was there deep unfathomable water?

...

Without distinctive marks, this all was water.

Hymns from the Rigveda

According to the Egyptologist J. M. Plumley, this primeval abyss "was unlike any sea which has a surface, for here there was neither up nor down, no distinction of side, only a limitless deep—endless, dark and infinite." Another Egyptian papyrus expressed it as "the infinite, the nothingness, the nowhere, and the dark."

Lawrence M. Krauss, The Fifth Essence

Here begins the sea that ends not till the world's end.

William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience

Willard Bascom, *Waves and Beaches: The Dynamics of the Ocean Surface*



Lake Agassiz

Largest of the ice-marginal lakes that once covered what are now parts of Manitoba, Ontario, and Saskatchewan in Canada, and North Dakota and Minnesota in the United States. It was present in the Pleistocene Epoch (a geological period that lasted from 1,600,000 to 10,000 years ago) during the last two phases of the Wisconsin Glacial Age, when the Laurentide Ice Sheet blocked the drainage of the northern Great Plains into what is today Hudson Bay. As a result, the waters of the Saskatchewan and other rivers backed up, forming the 700-mi.- (1,100-km-) long by 200-mi.-wide Lake Agassiz ...

Facts About Lake Agassiz

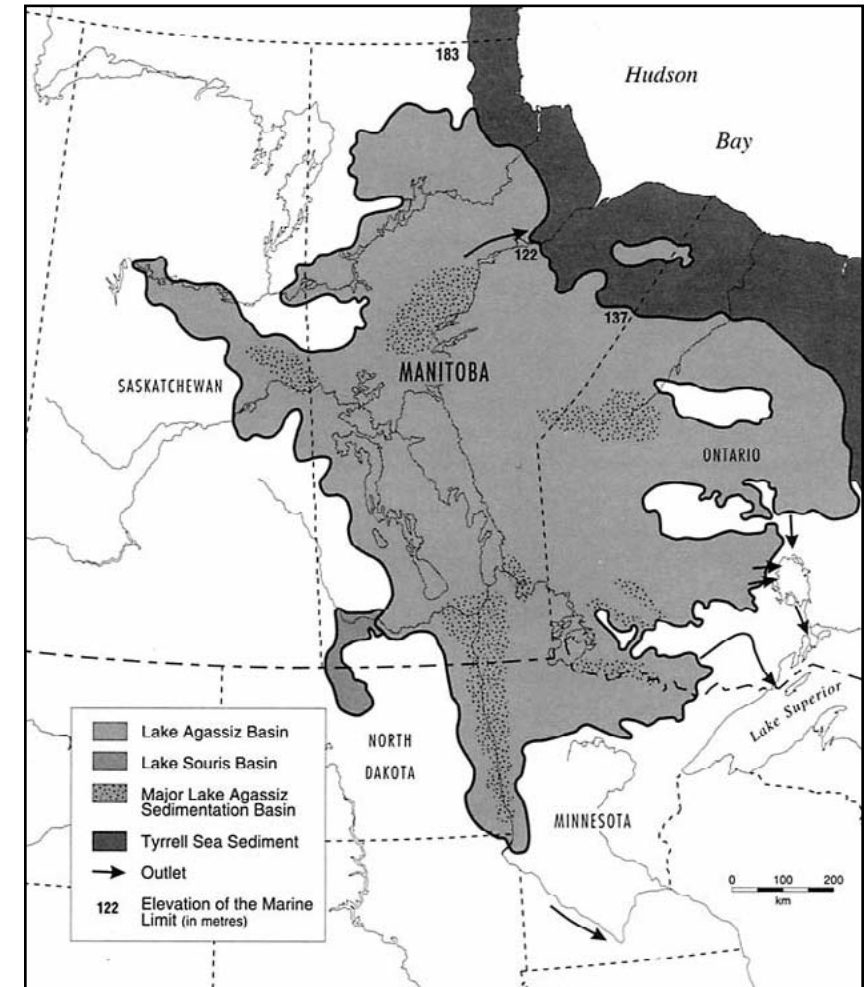
www.cs.umn.edu/Research/Agassiz/agassiz_facts.html

As Jack McDevitt explains in a note at the end of *Ancient Shores*, Lake Agassiz really existed. It once covered 110,000 square miles in what is now Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Ontario, North Dakota and Minnesota. By comparison, Lake Superior, now the largest lake in North America, has an area of only 32,700 square miles ...

McDevitt includes a map at the beginning of the book showing the extent of Lake Agassiz.

Lake Agassiz

www.scifi.com/sfw/issue20/lake.html



The Extent of Glacial Lake Agassiz, the largest fresh-water lake that has ever existed.

John Welsted, John Everitt, et al., *The Geography of Manitoba: Its Land and Its People*

Before us and into the horizon of mists is spread a vast and placid sea, the now still repository of dark rains and warm effluvia alive with the dull glow of myriad fermentations. It is here that the fluids have come to rest, the lightness of oxygen long having departed these waters, thick with the residue of their journey.

Dan Hoffman, Reports of Explorations and Surveys of the Fifty-First Parallel

This is what absence is: deep reflecting water like this, a black mirror.

Robert Drewe, The Drowner

... and there
Darkness is cold and strange and bare;
And the secret deeps are whisperless;
And rhythm is all deliciousness ...

Rupert Brooke, The Fish



C.P. Idyll, Abyss: The Deep Sea and the Creatures That Live In It
Photo by Paul A. Zuhl, National Geographic Society



Lake Winnipeg, winter 1996-97

i um dreaming now of th place that will
soon have me, find me

moving into th dark, it
is like going into a soft jewel. and being ther what at
first yu cud see nothing totally dark, only
th feel of yr feet on th ground guides yu,

being ther, light apears here and ther, flashing ...

bill bissett, dont worry yr hair

Now the land sinks beneath the sea.
The sun goes black.
Heaven is stripped of its bright stars.
The fires of the world ash rage,
Throw steam and flames to heaven itself.

I read the future, the twilight of the doomed gods.

*Völuspá (The Song of the Sybil)
from The Elder Edda*

And now there came both mist and snow,
And it grew wondrous cold:
And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
As green as emerald

And through the drifts the snowy clifts
Did send a dismal sheen:
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken—
The ice was all between.

The ice was here, the ice was there,
The ice was all around:
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
Like noises in a swound!

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

Niflheim—Norse name given to the howling wasteland of unending darkness and ice hung over with the stench of death.

Robert Edric, The Broken Lands

Lake Winnipeg, winter 1996-97

Over all descended the silence of death. The rays of the sun, shining down on a frozen world, were met only by the shriek of the wind, and the groaning of crevasses as they yawned open across the surface of this vast ocean of ice.

Louis Agassiz (1807-73), Swiss glaciologist

This was the polar night, the morbid countenance of the Ice Age. Nothing moved; nothing was visible. This was the soul of inertness. One could almost hear a distant creaking as if a great weight were settling.

Richard E. Byrd, Alone

I listen and the voice is of a world collapsing endlessly, a frozen world, under a faint untroubled sky, enough to see by, yes, and frozen too. And I hear it murmur that all wilts and yields as if loaded down, but here there are no loads, and the ground too, unfit for loads, and the light too, down toward an end it seems can never come. For what possible end to these wastes where true light never was, nor any upright thing, nor any true foundation, but only these leaning things, forever lapsing and crumbling away, beneath a sky without memory or morning or hope of night.

Samuel Beckett, Molloy

Lake Winnipeg, winter 1996-97

He hears, that's all about it, he who is alone and mute, lost in the smoke, it is not real smoke, there is no fire, no matter, strange hell that has no heating, no denizens, perhaps it's paradise, perhaps it's the light of paradise, and the solitude, and this voice the voice of the blest interceding invisible, for the living, for the dead, all is possible.

Samuel Beckett, The Unnamable

Dear God, Stutfield said. To think people live here through the winter.

Thomas Wharton, Icefields

Viking Hotel
AHEAD

Lake Winnipeg, winter 1996-97

Poor attendance
 taken as good
 sign by organizers

Interlake Spectator newspaper, 20 January 1997

unknown country

No one knows my country, neither the stranger nor its own sons.

Bruce Hutchison, The Unknown Country

This is the place where you come to forget where you are.

Lindor Reynolds, A Place Of Terrible Beauty: Thule A Bleak Outpost

Before discussing the voyage to Thule, we might talk about the origin and meaning of the word. There are several interpretations; every one of them has been questioned.

First is the claim that, irrespective of meaning and derivation, the name Thule did not originate with Pytheas, but was already old with the Greeks of his time. Benediktsson would trace it at least as far back as Ctesias of Cnidus (fifth century B.C.) whose now lost work containing the reference is quoted by the grammarian Servius of the fourth century after Christ. Well before Pytheas, then, Thule was a name for a place remote and fabulous to the Greeks.

Burton, in his discussion of the etymology of Thule and its sundry variations—Thula, Thyle, Thile, Thila, Tyle, Tila—quotes Sibbald: “Some derive the name Thule from the Arabic word Tule . . . which signified ‘afar off,’ and, as it were with allusion to this, the poets usually call it ‘Ultima Thule’; but I rather prefer the reason of the name given by the learned Bochartus, who makes it to be Phoenician, and affirms that it signifies ‘darkness’ in that language. Thule . . . in the Tyrian tongue was ‘a shadow,’ whence it is commonly used to signify ‘darkness,’ and the island Thule is as much as to say, an ‘island of darkness’ . . .” Others, according to Burton, have traced Thule to the Carthaginian word for “obscurity,” which resembles closely words having the same meaning in Hebrew and Arabic.

Vilhjalmur Stefansson, Ultima Thule: Further Mysteries of the Arctic

It has been called many names: the Empty Quarter, the Margins, the Yonlands, the Lands Nobody Wanted . . . People have referred to it as godforsaken, as in “Who would want to live in that godforsaken . . .?” Others call it a forgotten region, but in truth it has never been well known and you can’t forget something you never knew.

Dayton Duncan, Miles From Nowhere

gone fishing

A few times each season I walk onto a lake on which I can see no other human beings. That can be an unsettling feeling, something like walking into an empty department store or parking in an empty lot.

Where is everybody? Is the fishing absolutely dead or, worse, does everyone but you know that the lake is unsafe? Has the Department of Natural Resources closed the lake to fishing or has the season ended?

Steven A. Griffin, Ice Fishing: Methods and Magic

(I am absent because I am the teller. Only the tale is real.)

I have traveled around the world of absence.

I have spoken to my absent-minded fellow men in their language (which is their prey, and of which they are prey) ...

Edmond Jabès, The Book of Questions

To get started, you will need some basic equipment. To drill a hole through the ice, use a power auger or chip one by hand with an inexpensive chisel. Tie the chisel to a line attached to your wrist so that if you lose your grip, the chisel will not end up at the bottom of the lake. Once the hole is finished, you will need a skimmer—which looks like a big soup ladle with a perforated cup—to keep it free of ice. Rods and reels designed for cold weather use are available, as well as ultra-light fishing line and lures specially made for the dark, under-ice world of ice fishing. A useful item is the tip-up—a frame that supports a reel and signals with a flag when a fish pulls the line. Icehouses and other temporary shelters can protect you from extreme weather.

Yvette La Pierre, Gone Fishing



Lake Winnipeg, winter 1996-97

Thor's grandfather hooked up the caboose. Then they loaded it. As they worked, Thor saw that there were still stars in the sky. When everything—the empty boxes, the boxes of nets, the stones they would use for anchors, the ropes, wood for the tin stove, ice chisels—was packed, Thor climbed into the Bombardier and knelt on the seat to look out.

The streets were deserted. Under the dark sky the high piles of snow were blue. Most of the houses were dark, but here and there other fishermen were preparing to leave, and the windows of their houses looked warm and inviting.

When they came to the beach, they stopped beside another Bombardier.

"Where's Ben?" one of the fishermen asked.

Grandfather explained that Ben was sick.

"No use taking that boy," the man said. "He'll blow away and you'll never find him."

"That's what I told his grandmother," Grandfather said. "But she said he'll do fine."

They drove onto the lake. Ahead of them was a long ice ridge as high as a house. It ran in the same direction as the shore.

"That's a pressure ridge," Grandfather said. "The ice expands and gets too big for the lake and pushes up. Just like the time you put your soft drink in the freezer and forgot it and it froze. It broke the bottle."

They couldn't go over or through the ice ridge. Instead, they drove beside it until they finally came to its end. When they went around it, the lake was flat and white as far as Thor could see.

"What if we fall through the ice?" he asked.

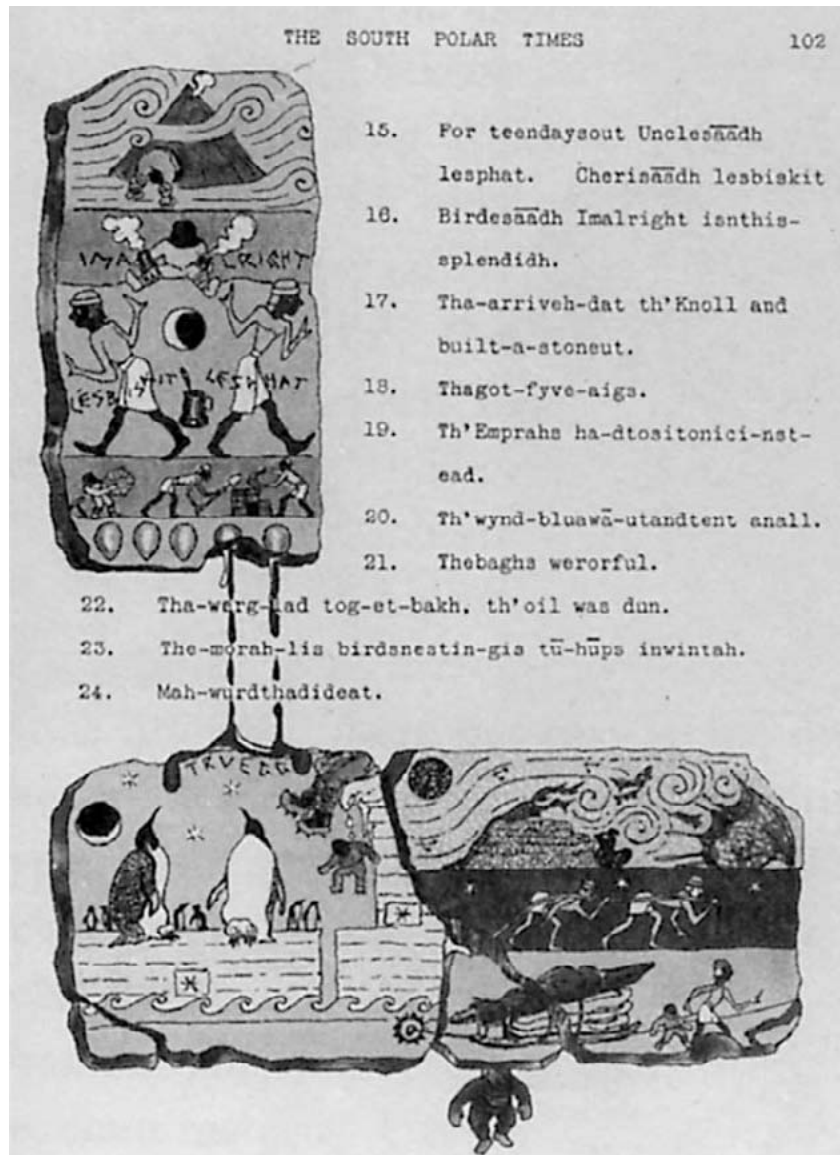
W. D. Valgardson, Thor

The country beneath
 the earth has a green sun
 and the rivers flow backwards;
 the trees and rocks are the same
 as they are here, but shifted.
 Those who live there are always hungry:
 from them you can learn
 wisdom and great power,
 if you can descend and return safely.
 You must look for tunnels, animal
 burrows or the cave in the sea
 guarded by the stone man;
 when you are down you will find
 those who were once your friends
 but they will be changed and dangerous.
 Resist them, be careful
 never to eat their food.
 Afterwards, if you live, you will be able
 to see them when they prowl as winds,
 as thin sounds in our village. You will
 tell us their names, what they want, who
 has made them angry by forgetting them.
 For this gift, as for all gifts, you must
 suffer: those from the underland
 will be always with you, whispering their
 complaints, beckoning you
 back down; while among us here
 you will walk wrapped in an invisible
 cloak. Few will seek your help
 with love, none without fear.

Margaret Atwood,
Procedures For Underground

Lake Winnipeg, winter 1996-97





"Antarctic Archives" in the South Polar Times: a mock-ancient record of the Winter Journey to Cape Crozier, with pictures by Wilson showing the party playing at being Egyptians rather than Inuit, while their makeshift igloo blows away.

alethes

Facile credo, plures esse Naturas invisibiles quam visibiles in rerum universitate. Sed horum [sic] omnium familiam quis nobis enarrabit? Et gradus et cognationes et discrimina et singulorum munera? Quid agunt? Quae loca habitant?

(I readily believe that there are more invisible than visible Natures in the universe. But who will explain for us the family of all these beings, and the ranks and relations and distinguishing features and functions of each? What do they do? What places do they inhabit?)

Thomas Burnet, *Archaeologiae philosophicae* (1692)

Quoted by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

The Greek word we translate as "true" is *alethes* (literally, "unhidden"). This word does not speak of the correspondence between a statement and a fact, between a mental judgment and a thing, between an ideal content and the matter of perception. It speaks only of something that has emerged from the hidden into the open.

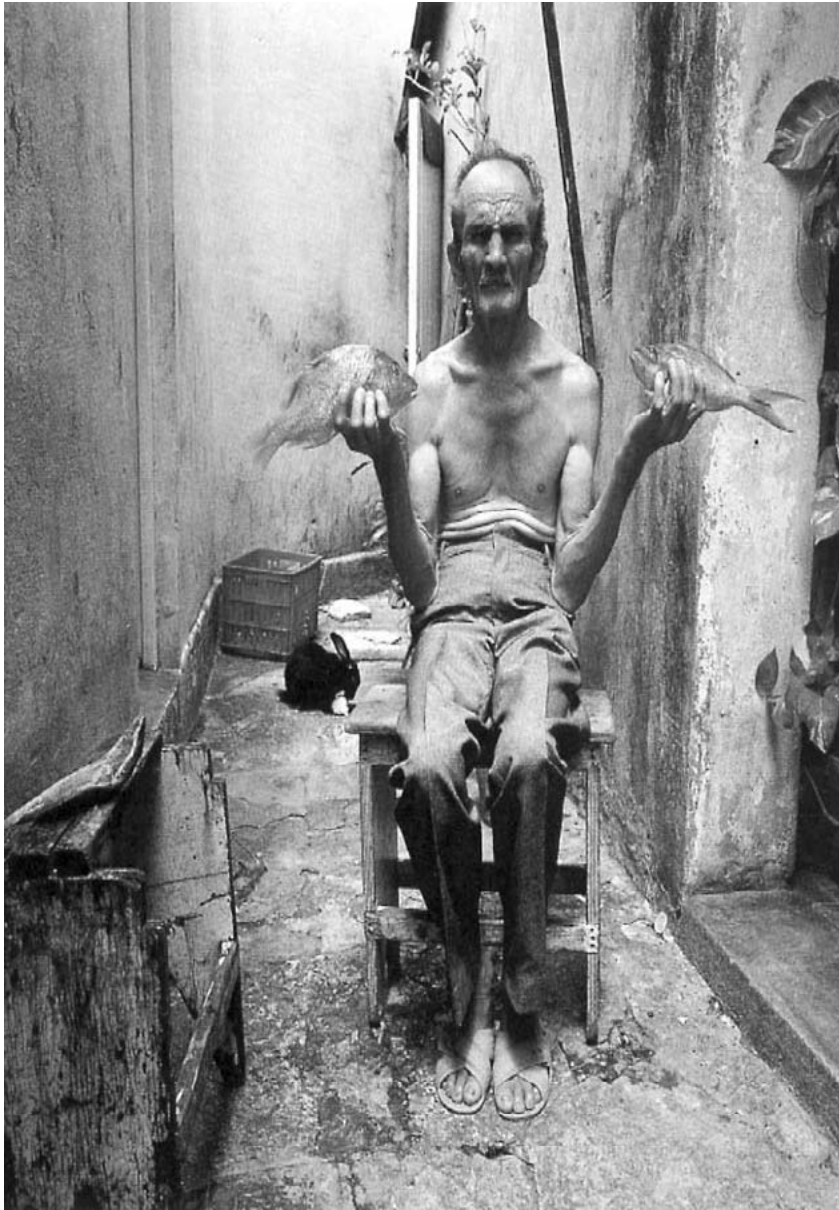
William Barrett, *The Illusion of Technique*

... places I can whisper to you now with the ease of escaping steam, dark continent-calling places, places misplaced, name places like nothing in this language you and I share, places edging the round cratered lake where something large struck a long time ago ...

Mark Richard, *Fishboy*

For Thule, of all the countries that are named, is set farthest north. But that the things Pytheas has told about Thule, as well as the other places in that part of the world, have indeed been fabricated by him, we have clear evidence from the districts that are known to us, for in most cases he has falsified them ... And yet, if judged by the science of the celestial phenomena and by mathematical theory, he might possibly seem to have made adequate use of the facts as regards the people who live close to the frozen zone ...

Strabo, *Geographica* (8 BCE-19 CE)



Harper's Magazine, July 1999

Ismael, Pescador, photo by Patrick Glaize

Call me Jonah. My parents did, or nearly did. They called me John.

Jonah—John—if I had been a Sam, I would have been a Jonah still—not because I have been unlucky for others, but because somebody or something has compelled me to be certain places at certain times, without fail. Conveyances and motives, both conventional and bizarre, have been provided. And, according to plan, this Jonah was there.

Listen:

When I was a younger man—two wives ago, 250,000 cigarettes ago, 3,000 quarts of booze ago ...

When I was a much younger man, I began to collect material for a book to be called *The Day the World Ended*.

The book was to be factual.

The Book was to be an account of

It was to be a Christian book. I was a Christian then.

I am a Bokonist now.

I would have been a Bokonist then, if there had been anyone to teach me the bittersweet lies of Bokonon. But Bokononism was unknown beyond the beaches that ring this little island in the sea ...

Kurt Vonnegut Jr., Cat's Cradle

A strange place it was, that place where the world began. A place of incredible happenings, splendours and revelations, despairs like multitudinous pits of isolated hells. A place of shadow-spookiness, inhabited by the unknowable dead. A place of jubilation and of mourning, horrible and beautiful.

Margaret Laurence, Where The World Began

under the ice

What manner of men and women are these? What may be the true character of the visions, the celestial ecstasies, the supernatural events, reported by them?

George Godwin, The Great Mystics

... he was from a fishing village in the north of the Island. Kirk then said he too had spent time in a fishing village ... “As a matter of fact, Sentinel, I attended a kind of festival there,” he said.

Eric McCormack, The Mysterium

From the highway, Gimli doesn’t look that different from other Prairie towns: 5,000 friendly people, a curling rink, shady streets of bungalows and a few treeless blocks of low-slung shops. It’s an hour’s drive north of Winnipeg, on the western shore of Lake Winnipeg.

The lake, too wide to be able to see to the other side and long enough to reach halfway to Hudson Bay, made Gimli a commercial fishing port.

Charles Long, Iceland on the Prairies

An exposed ice surface often displays a dull, undifferentiated facade. The intricate crystalline structure can be revealed, however, by pouring a warm liquid over the ice. Urine is the most readily available reagent for this purpose. It will seep into the spaces between the crystals and disassociate them briefly, long enough for the pattern of formation to be examined.

Thomas Wharton, Icefields

For in the immediate world, everything is to be discerned, for him who can discern it.

James Agee and Walker Evans, Let Us Now Praise Famous Men

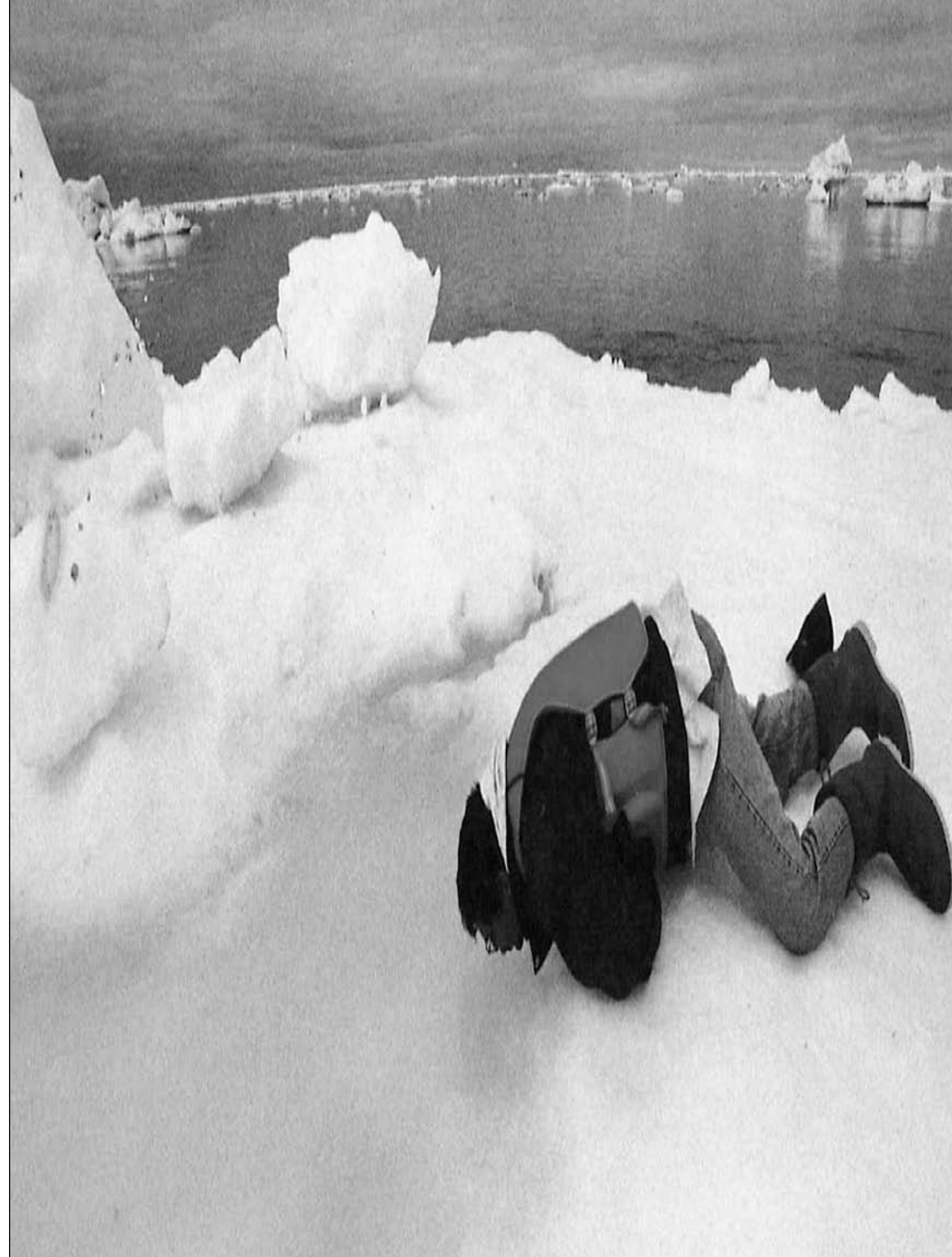
For I tell you, fishing is an Art, or, at least, it is an Art to catch fish.

Izaak Walton, The Compleat Angler

Do you see nothing
Watching you from under the water?

Margaret Atwood, At The Tourist Center in Boston

The Way We Live in Manitoba, photo by Joe Bryksa



And yet I had no object in going,—no motive which could be put into words; for, although I carried a gun, there was nothing to shoot.

W. H. Hudson, Idle Days in Patagonia

With consummate skill the spectacle organizes ignorance of what is about to happen and, immediately afterwards, the forgetting of whatever has nonetheless been understood.

The more important something is, the more it is hidden.

Guy Debord, Society of the Spectacle

Ice is not a liquid, nor is it a solid. It flows like lava, like melting wax, like honey. Supple glass. Fluid stone.

To watch it flow, one must be patient.

Thomas Wharton, Icefields

(The good thing about Iceland is that under the ice, there is still even more ice.)

Sam Sloan's Home Page

I shall never cease to find it strange that the time seems to go so slowly in a new place. I mean—of course it isn't a question of my being bored; on the contrary, I might say that I am royally entertained. But when I look back—in retrospect, that is, you understand—it seems to me I've been up here goodness only knows how long; it seems an eternity back to the time when I arrived, and did not quite understand that I was there.

Thomas Mann, The Magic Mountain

Harvesting ice at Gimli (Manitoba Archives)

