FRONT

CONTENTS

GIANTESSES

page 8  Catriona Strang and Lisa Robertson

Special Summer Reading Issue
A Conversation

page 12  Renee Rodin

We are Cultivating Tolerance

page 14  Judy Copithorne

Four Poems

page 16  Rhoda Rosenfeld

Men's Overcoats — Inside Pockets

page 18  Jam. Ismail

cathexis

page 20  Trudi Rubenfeld

Still Painting

page 24  Maxine Giddd

Four Poems
A Conversation:
Sunday May 18, East Pender
with Maxine Gadd and Rhoda Rosenfeld
by Catriona Strang and Lisa Robertson

L: Vivienne Westwood says "The only possible effect one can have on the world is through unpopular ideas. They are the only subversion." [laughter]
M: But then you celebrate your marginality again and ta-da-da-da.
R: But if everyone’s marginal, then we can have a good time.
M: Well democratically we should be. There shouldn’t be a center, right? The center should not exist.
L: The whole idea of unpopularity: nobody actually knows your work, but they know of it.
M: Then you become some sort of monster.
L: And that can almost have more dimension, socially.
M: Aha, you’re getting the power, are you?
R: Well, I feel really lucky. I feel like —
M: Privileged.
R: I feel really lucky about my career. I don’t feel like —
C: So this issue of marginality hasn’t —
M: You can take it, but it’s still infuriating.
R: It’s been very direct and I’ve connected with lots of people because of it, and it’s been very satisfying — and beyond that — it’s kind of weird, really.
L: Well, you’ve managed to form your life so you can do it.
R: Well I had to.
M: It never piques you?
L: Wasn’t it a conscious thing?
R: What do you mean? I’m not sure.
L: Well, it seems to me, not really knowing anything about your life —
R: That’s a great way to ask a question. That really reveals you.
L: Well, not really knowing anything about your little life story, your biography, you know —
R: "Your little life story" for a great big giantess. [laughter]
M: That would make a great anthology: "Little Life Stories".
L: It seems to me that there’s been a great deal of conscious forming — that you’ve made it possible for yourself consistently to be producing work.
R: Well, I wanted to be an artist and that was all.
M: Yeah.
R: I knew it was going to be hard. I didn’t think it was going to be this hard. Once I was into it, it seemed to go on, the way it did since we were started — thinking — this was a thing to do because this is what you wanted so badly to do, and so many things happen in order for it to happen. I just wanted to be an artist; really bad.
L: What was your sense of what an artist was?
R: Nothing that it’s turned out to be [laughter]. All those delicious romantic things.
L: Was that when you were a kid, actually?
R: Yeah, it started there.
M: [Aside] A free life in Paris in summer, good looking people of all sorts...
R: A free life on Stanley Street, downtown Montreal in the early sixties.
M: ...standing around being nice to you and kind to you, taking you to bars, and nice cafes...
R: Romantic, very romantic.
C: It's actually a socially formulated thing, though...
M: ...big houses with lovely gardens and...
C: To formulate it even at an early age as...
M: ...your own room, a computer...
C: As freedom from something.
L: Well maybe the romantic mythology has a function then.
M: Well of course it does. Of course it does. Romanticism is what it's all about. There is nothing without romanticism. It's the big sloppy sea in which we all slurp.
R: Swim.
C: Sink.
R: But you know, there are lots of moments when it's true. This is one of them, I would say.
M: Bliss.
C: So in that sense, these issues of canonization and stuff that pique me and Lisa are utterly irrelevant?
R: No. Of course not. That's impossible. Don't tell me that any of us here doesn't want to be inside, a part of that in some way too. You have to be prepared to suffer you guys.
M: But don't take any gaff.

\*

R: What is the forbidden narrative?
M: Narrative is forbidden. It is forbidden.
R: This is an old concept, it sounds like.
M: Yeah. Hard to resist, right?
R: You mean you're not supposed to tell stories? I knew you weren't supposed to make images —
M: No more stories Rhoda. That's where it's at.
R: What's left? You'd have to be, like —
C: I've had this argument before. I maintain that as soon as you write down one word you've got narrative.
R: Maybe they're just talking about the linear narrative.
C: Ya. That's a differentiation. That's not useful is it?
R: They want to tell the whole story.
M: We could try it sometime.
R: How would you do this — where four voices are overlapping?
C: I'd tape it.
R: Right! Let's forget writing and get into audio technology. Like this.
L: Like voice-overs in trashy movies. You can't really do it in writing.
M: Sometimes you have to.
L: How do you do it?
R: How do you realize that overlapping?
C: [to R] Don't you do that in a chorus? You know that...
piece of yours we published in Barscheit? [Play, on a para-
graph from Guy Davenport written after Julie Belmas
pleaded guilty] You have a chorus. In terms of how you
read it, you get to the chorus after, but I always think of the
chorus as happening at the same time as the poem has been
happening. To me that makes it just like a voice-over.
R: Really — that makes the audio quite strong then.
L: Just that labelling — Chorus, colon.
C: Right.
M: Getting it all ready for the media.
R: Straight play stuff, straight dramatic form.
M: You build your arena than you get your actors together,
producer, director, patron. [Laughter]
C: That’s what’s missing — the patron.

R: [To M] Your father taught you to read and write.
M: My mother gave me language. And so did the radio.
[laughs] Really. I grew up with radio. In the second world
war in London that was the one thing that we had. We had
no food — but we had the radio. We could listen to music.
C: War functions as some kind of huge morphological
thing. It’s really present in my family.
M: It eliminates large parts of the population. It forces
people to organize on very altruistic, clan like, at least
local, levels.
C: My parents still behave according to the patterns that
got set up during the war. My dad still won’t have butter
on his bread if he’s having jam.
L: I remember my grandmother telling me she used to sew
my mother little dresses out of the tails of my grandfather’s
worn out shirts.
M: Great. That’s terrific. They were probably beautifully
made too.
L: She’s an exquisite seamstress.
M: Hey Granny, sew me up some of those, we’ll have an
exhibition!
L: Little dresses out of the tails of worn out shirts. And that
went along with saving piles and piles of those papery but-
ter wrappers.
M: Everything was useful.
C: I still do that.
M: That’s sensible.
C: It’s sensible but at the same time, incredibly torqued.
M: You’d have to put them in the freezer or they’d go ran-
cid.
L: Every time they did it, it was mentioned in the context
of the war.
R: That’s what Heesok Chang was talking about you know,
that sort of etching onto the skin — he was talking about
Derrida, and that whole — when something is that intense,
it becomes engraved on you.
M: Like Kafka.
R: Exactly. It goes through generations.
M: Oppression. Maybe we need a new way of talking
about oppression, too.
R: It's sculpture to me.
M: What do you throw out? How much?
M: Do you keep boxes, brown cardboard boxes?
C: How do you decide?
R: Well, the strongest stuff that I can pick out of it. I come out of visual art, so that has a lot to do with how I put stuff together and how I deal with everything.
C: What do you mean — in terms of composition?
R: I think so.
M: Deconstructing.
R: And reconstructing and deconstructing.
C: Within one piece.
R: Ya, all the time.
L: So do you find that often something comes out to be utterly different than you had initially projected?
R: I never initially projected.
C: You don't? You have no notion?
R: I don't do it that way and I don't do it visually either, in my painting. I just start painting. I don't say I'm going to do a painting of such and such a thing. I just start painting and I find out later.
L: So you don't have any prior sense. How do you feel as you're doing it?
M: That's the problem isn't it?
R: Strongly emotional and psychic. Erotic, in that sense.
L: Okay—what motivates you to begin the writing process?
R: I have a sort of a journal and I write things down — and every once in a while I say it's time to see what has accrued — and I look back over that, and I take things out of it, and I take another step, and I type it out. In that initial typing, that's where something gets formed. I see some kind of form. So I see that it's going to look this way or look that way, that it's going to be very tiny, or it's going to be longer.
C: But you've already made choices, just in terms of what's going to go into your notebook.
R: Absolutely. I could have been reading a lot and writing stuff down, or the other part of it is just what's happening in my life — what I've been thinking about, what's been pressuring me, what's been pushing at me, what I've been remembering, what I've been dreaming — everyday life.

M: Performance. It's the democratic argument. It comes from the sixties. See, Nancy Shaw's talk about Intermedia brought out that point which I'd kind of forgotten and that was there was a real democratic impulse, that everyone was going to be a poet, everyone was, could be heard, be an artist and a musician, right, and everything, you know that's what we'd be, we'd be free complete human beings.
R: And we tried.
M: And the contradictions there, we didn't realize what contradictions were in that concept and as they became apparent, you know, people would just, you could watch them crumbling in front of you like rusty cookie jars. That was pretty frightening sometimes.
R: Pluralism is a similar idea though, you know as part of postmodernism, this thing that you don't have to stick with one thing and that all these different points of view have equal value.
C: That's another thing, though, than saying that anyone can do all these different things.
R: Yeah it is, it's saying that all these different things have equal values but not necessarily within one person.

L: Ultimately you don't really know if your work is something that is going to exist for years.
R: Right. We don't know if canonization is going to go on in the way that it did.
L: I've got very little sense of future for what I write.
M: Isn't that freeing though?
L: But I would like there to be a community assumption that it did have future.
M: [aside] I mean look at these fucking guys dragging this canon along...
R: There's a community assumption that it has presence. And we're lucky that we have each other to do this kind of thing with.
M: It's easy to take over history . . . History's being taken over by giantesses.
C: Not fast enough.
R: Let's talk about wanting to be in part of the canon, let's admit to —
L: It's not like wanting to be in the canon —
C: I just want the benefits of being in the canon without actually being in it.
M: I want the glory, too, trumpets blowing.

Catriona Strang's most recent publication is Liner Notes for Francois Houle's CD Hacienda (Songlines). She edits Barscht with Christine Stewart and Lisa Robertson, whose Portrait of Vivienne Westwood is forthcoming from Bertely Horse.
Renee Rodin

WE ARE CULTIVATING TOLERANCE

last summer my neighbours turned me in
Mr. A., a city inspector appeared at my door
and told me I was "violating the neatness ordinance"
that because I didn’t cut the grass
I wasn’t "in keeping with the neighbourhood look"

to Mrs. S., who came from Europe forty years ago
as "the foreigner"
Mrs. S., who goes to church every Sunday
has often been heard "goddamning" my grass

last summer to hopefully waylay their harangue
to the city
I put up a sign that said
WE ARE CULTIVATING TOLERANCE
it got torn down
next I made a PLEASE KEEP UP THE GRASS sign
that also got wrecked
then someone I knew wrote something about censorship
even I didn’t understand it, but it too was destroyed
so I gave up on the declarations
a while later Mr. A. arrived

he listened very patiently
and with what seemed a sympathetic twinkle in his eye
as I explained we need more green
I was saving water because cut grass
has to be watered regularly
or else it burns and looks awful
the whine of electric lawnmowers
going incessantly for months at a time
(Mrs. U. and S. start cutting
as soon as the grass starts growing)
was unbearable noise pollution
that we, as well as several of the neighbours
liked the look of the lawn and appreciated
the different things growing in it
when I finished he barked "get a scythe
you have a week"

the block has varying degrees of neatness
but I’m flanked by intensely manicured lawns
my lawn (not that anyone owns anything living)
 isn’t actually a lawn
but a few feet of tall, lush grass,
plants, which some may call weeds
(but who’s to say what a weed is)
wonderful wildflowers and other surprises that spring up
everyone in the house enjoys watching
the natural changes that happen all season long

the fight with the city’s been going on for years
but usually I’d only get letters from them
threatening that if I didn’t cut the grass
they’d do it for me and charge exorbitant rates
for their "services"
I’d respond by topping it off, just enough to satisfy them
when it grew back again, they’d send me another letter
and so on

it’s always the same two neighbours who report me
Mrs. U., on the one side and Mrs. S. on the other
both spend most of their elderly but strong energy
keeping their places so pristine
passersby gawk when they see their homes and gardens
Mrs. U., who came from Europe sixty years ago refers

12 FRONT
I found out that legally all I really had to do
was make sure
no growth overlapped onto the sidewalk
(which is city property)
I got an edger labelled "True Temper"
and set to seperating the grass from the cement
with such a clanging vengeance
it awoke the people who'd been sleeping in their
gigantic r.v. named "American Star"
(a gas guzzler if there ever was one)
which had been parked outside my house
totally obliterating the front light for days
the campers tumbled out and into the homes
of one of the neighbours who hounds me

when Mr. A. called back a week later
I told him about the neatly edged lawn
and asked him if
the "in keeping with the neighbourhood look" by-law
meant that if I lived on a block
where everyone had long grass
would I have to grow my grass long too?
he said that was an interesting question
and he'd get back to me on it
but he didn't and when fall came I thought I was free

then this winter Mr. A. returned
"what now?" I wondered
since there was no grass growing
"it's about the bushes and brambles in the backyard"
he informed me
the backyard is similar to the front, only wilder
laced with lots of blackberry bushes
I told Mr. A. that I was tired of crackpot neighbours
infringing on my aesthetic freedom
"aesthetic" he shrieked
"you call the safeway cart "aesthetic"?"
(there's also an old grocery cart covered in
morning glories, sort of a large, lovely planter)
"yes" I shouted back
"I like the cart so much I took pictures of it"
"well so have I", he snarled, "for your court case"

since then nothing has happened
but I'm trying to remember some of the many people
who've given me support
for the little patches of urban wilderness
one neighbour told me my place reminded him of
how Vancouver was when he was a kid
and that the sterility of the street depresses him
another (with outstretched arms) said
"these are the lungs of the neighbourhood"
the man a few doors down
visits each week with his children
to point out the various wildflowers
he urges me to keep a photographic record
of what he's sure are rare species
the woman across the road has thanked me
for the quiet and energy-efficient way
in which I deal with the grass

my son suggests the reason the city hassles me so much
may be because of what he saw on a program
"Northwest Crackdown"
they said a good indication a house may be inhabited
by drug dealers is if the lawn isn't taken care of
that there's such a positive co-relation between
unkept grass and dealing.
they've seized billions of dollars worth of drugs
and related paraphernalia
from the addresses people have phoned in
but when the SWAT team cordoned off our block
a couple of months ago and made a mammoth drug bust
it was at the home of one of
the "nicest" lawns in the area

this summer Mrs. U. asked me, for the first time
if I'd consider cutting the grass
she would arrange to have it done
I said I'd think about it  

FRONT 13
Sleight of Mind

Dear Insubordinate Friends,

Thinking incoherent thoughts. It was not just another female road movie. Merchandising genius. A need to destroy or escape—see scape a gape a narrow scrape. Even ing. Think rough thoughts. A sharp retort: repository of frustration. For she was imbued with a diverse extrude. Freely faked. The purple dye of Tyre. In the sub sub text. Here is the night of unsubstantiated. The ever hopeful cat in search of foolish birds. With dithering we can get the appearance of grey scale at the cost of resolution, chased, aliasing rules slide, pre tension interstanding. The self consists of thought and extension. Snow wet brakes trouble and muddle tired again an obeyed aubede short hand/fat of the land the melodrama of synesthesia. No one understood as they were being polite. It was all quite clear it just didn’t make sense.
The soft membranes are susceptible to shock
I am by myself I am beside myself
indulge in deluge desolve, revolve nodding sagely I want
strength Is allusion all a lure?

In conclusion, confusion
but let it definitely be said
I appreciate your attention and continued invention.
Remember the gold moon, warm and round
and remember the new moon last night, facing upward like a little boat.
Hexagram 73

She does not permit herself
to be honored with revenue
She does not consort with
the broken wheel
Her carriage will take her
to the wild duck’s nest
She goes to the west
and the east and
forgets to sit down

Her lines are all open
her names are forgotten
her days are outspoken
her nights are besoughten

Islands
(For Fats Domino)

Too much blue
so the pink rag
picks up
the back of the house

So blue
we forget
years
yet it’s
the same

On Blueberry Hill
it’s still dawn
we’ve waited so long
July 21/85

cats paw bleed step back stairs Wednesday one day

all day

ingenious somehow materials and somehow

Betrayal of the Body, Alexander Lawson

C.R. Dodds. The Greeks and the Exorcist. What Plato meant by telestic or ritual madness. Athens during

1. Prophetic madness whose patron god is Apollo
2. Telestic or ritual madness whose patron is Dionysus
3. Poetic madness, inspired by the Muses.
4. Erotic madness, inspired by Aphrodite and Eros.

The python and her trainer utterances

and finally she seated herself on the tripod, thus creating a further contact with the god by occupying his ritual seat.

H. D's

ores - dream figure

Epidaurus Record

this traditional culture pattern
the paradigm

Greek dreamsbooks

It is in sleep, says St. Augustine, that the soul (prope) best
sees its divine nature: it is in sleep that it enjoys a clearer insight
into the future: and this is especially because it is free from sleep.
Then he goes on to argue that in dreams we may expect the psyche to
be even freer.

The kheina from Siberia southward to Greece.

Aug 21 85 John Donne 4 this World Derek Parke

Contemporary poets had been among the relatively small number of men
who had sought out Donne's poems in manuscript long before the first edition
was printed in 1633. They were influenced by the poems' intense, specialized
nature, which led Mr. Johnson to see the genre as a physical part of
literature, those who take it roughly the same path.

If their creation were for sale,
they were given with the authors', he points out.

John Donne's Poetry Selected and Edited by A. L. Cumberbatch

Samuel Taylor Coleridge Notes on Donne.

To read Dryden, Pope, etc., you need only count syllables,
but to read Donne you must read, line and discover time
of each word by the sense of passion.

Now, Donne's rhythm was as inexpressible to the mind
as blank verse.
from *diction air*

* suffix, e.g., *-sibling* (A.S.), *gene'sis* (Gk.). 19 *sensibling* o, a sis. 18 *responsibyl*  
* tran'sis'tor. 9 *invisibling* the sibling who isn’t seen; also, solip'sis. 16 *possibling*  
* takes courage, or heartage, sometimes by way of neme'sis.*

*reproof* we delivered the poem typescript.  
* they wanted it in writing.  
* we signed ................  
* felt like a check.*

*look* bone-&-bamboo bug  
* dug stiletto in my thigh raising welt*  

* a berber to suitor said,*  
* do you offer better*  
* than what freedom i had*  

from *scared texts*

b.4. *hah?* bosan crossing georgia street said, to the driver who’d muttered something.  
* the light turned amber.*  
* he stuck his head out the window, yelled: hey ricie! grinned, & zoomed off.*  
* bosan cracked up: ricie! it’s pretty-funay!*  
* sum wan said: hey, you just got insulted.*  
* ginger smiled: we’ve always had to tell bosan how oppressed she is.*

c.1. *ratio quality* young ban ycn had been thought italian in kathmandu,  
* filipina in hong kong, eurasian in kyoto, japanese in*  
* anchorage, dismal is london england, hindu in edmonton, generic oriental in*  
* calgary, western canadian in ottawa, anglophone in montreal, métis in jasper, *  
* eskimo at hudson’s bay department store, vietnamese in chinatown, tibetan in*  
* vancouver, commie at the u.s. border.*  
* on the whole very asian.*

f.4. they’d been talking about feroze, whose heart had failed just when the emphysema  
* seemed to ease up.*  
* there’s no learning how to die,* bee mused.  
* people don’t come back & pass*  
* along the knowhow.*  
* pollen laughed: then there’s no envy either.*
from greeting cards

Endless deflect how are you
Content mapping losses
Bow is bent
Do arrow leave eye
Doubles crossing

Solution to Yesterday’s
CRYPTIC

Envelop sentence of missing words

```
  oooo eee
  eee ii aa uuss
  ss mmm tt’tttt
  hh y rr
```

BFN DJC

h’i.q.
said of sap,
‘she is not here ,
‘she is risen’

why take the keys ...
someone’s at home ...
... soaking in tub...
petal alert ...
old house looks smart ...

bus hand
Still Painting (for my friends who have wanted me to write) Mirada Fuerte
Maxine Gadd

Boatload to Atlantis

mon. feb/91

the language of the old storm, the buoys carve
yrself a canoe
alexander’s rag time street drillers
screwing a hole in my heart
that only lasts

pelican’s oversized whatever, a natural capitalist
will not change by being wiped out

pear in a sea-tree, two of ’em
reading boats
receding

reseed some now. perfection. pace.

callisthenics in the oldworld row. exit in red. thanks to the artist

how city hall makes war on peasants. working on the infra structure

his waterworks not working so well now yu know she sez
peckin’ the hell out of he she waz
and i sez

nei⁵ ying¹ go³ da² din⁶ wa⁶ bei² nei⁵ ga pang⁴ yau⁵
(yu should phone yr friend)

bo¹ din⁶ wa⁶ juk¹
(boiling telephone soup)

gossip yr old sausage chewed by all the neighbours, the deepest ultramarine yu can come up with. the forms of the snail and the cove, a glassy past, a future in stock and bondage. fortune favors the brave. the brave die young. do we all die shaking?
echo of hell in Kore land. will i parrot this assault forever?
cast out the carrot and the parachute) so nice they packed yu
a lunch.

it’s only saddam is mad. oh, max, they say, thinking yu know what they mean
this time. go meek as a lamb bred to roast on a sunday. the next thing yu know
they’ve got yr liver on a hook
flying it in the breeze to snag

steel blue pterodactyls

(ugo⁵ pa³ chut⁴ hui³ maan⁵ hak¹)
black bear on mcgonical, buzzy turn into sloe eyed harpies with or against me, i'm not grieving get the best of the telephone dregs can't live without puncutation

imagistic satisfaction a track in; the ancestors' hovel/crass, bad life-affirming personables, the plot drops off a rottong tree highway crash, no i don't want to know, let's choose the valley full of cherry pits, organize chap. cackle yu drab

a limit to the terrible rush of two thousand pound herds/comets concupiscent of becoming planets, quarks/the occurrence of laughter a shy up or down cormless takes

some character on the desert

it could not be Lisa or any of her playmates because they incorporated last week and now are called Shannon/even the boys like to be a river/cash on hand clear eyesight

captive in a newly emerged central eur-open nation, all deep friends of brian mulroney/it looks like piano bar with a drainage problem o, what a bed
carwheels by st. peter, fire eating by st. claire/say something funny/i think i just had an earthquake

button up, clara. have yu some sort of presentation for Eternity

not even a wolf song
clerical curiosity
Paean

in perfect medication pour pain delicately a partial need in the dark hole / screw neatly lousy hellcat / patent the friends of terpsichore when a new country considers its lakeside gestation

hi dud! is what's what what? transition the navel of magic.
the table dreaming of troubled borealis, planets honking in drifts caked frenzy the singer's last suggestion, titillating stalemates

no sex magic in the next hexagon \ the deviation an out of outages carrying the lone ranger back to trigger / oops \ wrong song \ there's a way out, way out without massacre

what! not looking at water? whenever he's involved with ticks and tacks the damn rats come tripping back, paddle you with their kindly four foot ears, sure, that's the way it drips as it's ending.

but racing towards Neptune, the horse we are the mane of, sputter pop flash drag hassle's middle name cracking magenta to gasfire blue / meadow mode now, stone throat lowing

End

the merciful end of it all; hags that we are screaming away to the moon

no one knows quite how to float happily; sweet little bottles of germs
what if yu land on a rattled planet? mongols remembering

cn I just go now?
I can't remember
what happened
in the snow

jan25/92