

THE COLLECTED WORKS OF BILLY THE KID

Scripting the Docudrama

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7. FABLE, EDMUND, JR. *The True Life of Billy the Kid*. Denver: Denver Publishing Co.

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— from J. C. Dykes, *Billy the Kid: The Bibliography of a Legend*

IN HER 1969 ARTICLE, “The Documentary Poem: A Canadian Genre,” Dorothy Livesay announced the existence of a class of Canadian poetry she called, alluding to a tradition of Canadian non-fiction film and radio, the “documentary.” This genre, Livesay argued, uses particularized historical and geographical data, is based on research, focuses on a theme or precept and a representative protagonist rather than an individualized hero, and is marked by dramatic and didactic presentation (280). “What interests me in these developments,” Livesay wrote, “is the evidence they present of a conscious attempt to create a dialectic between the objective facts and the subjective feelings of the poet” (267). A factual, historical situation, in other words, gives rise to the poet’s fictional, creative musings.

Fifteen years after the publication of Livesay’s article, Stephen Scobie’s survey of numerous examples of recent writing in the genre, “Amelia, or: Who Do You Think You Are? Documentary and Identity in Canadian Literature,” demonstrated the prophetic nature of Livesay’s observations.¹ Scobie extends Livesay’s discussion, and modifies it in light of developments in contemporary literary theory and Canadian writing. While he agrees with Livesay that “The documentary poem appeals to the authoritativeness of fact” (“Amelia,” 270), he notes that the very idea of “objective fact” or “historical reality” that provides the basis for Livesay’s subjective-objective distinction is now being rethought:

The whole notion of 'fact' may itself be no more than a fiction, a linguistic construct — and thus subject, like all linguistic constructs, to the deconstructive play of Derridean 'différance'. . . . So, while the attraction of the documentary may begin with an appeal to the authoritativeness of fact, consideration of the difficulties involved in ever satisfactorily *writing* fact leads quickly to that borderblur area between fact and fiction, in which the categories collapse into each other. ("Amelia," 272)

It is significant to this discussion that both Scobie and Livesay comment on the importance of the document, not just as a source for, but as an active component of the documentary. In the first paragraph of Livesay's essay she observes that "Today we find, linked with the use of documentary material as the basis for poetry, the employment of *the actual data itself*, rearranged for the eye and ear" (267; emphasis added). Her first — and, it might be argued, prototypical — examples of documentary poetry are John Robert Colombo's *The Mackenzie Poems* and F. R. Scott's *Trouvailles*, both instances of "found poetry," a genre whose central gesture is the (re)presentation of non-fiction documents in poetic form. Scobie notes that under his definition, "The idea of the 'document' remains within the poems, as a source of historical fact, as an element of intertextuality" ("Amelia," 269). The documentary poem, then, literally takes written "evidence" of the historical situation into (its) account.

I would argue for a class of documentary writing that takes this principle literally, not simply by sustaining the *idea* of the document, but by self-consciously transcribing "outside" non-fiction documents into a poetic context. This version of the documentary — we might provisionally call it the "documentary-collage" — would include such works as Lionel Kearns's *Convergences*, Robert Kroetsch's *The Ledger* and *Seed Catalogue*, Don Gutteridge's *A True History of Lambton County*, Birk Sproxtton's *Headframe*, Don McKay's *Lependu*, Fred Wah's *Pictograms from the Interior of B.C.* and Michael Ondaatje's *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*, all of which quote historical records of one sort or another.

In these works, Livesay's "dialectic between the objective facts and the subjective feelings of the poet" is recast as a dialectic between the status of the document as an authoritative univocal "representative" of some "outside" reality, and its status as text, which *constructs* a dialogic historical reality subject to interpretive instabilities and contradictions. This dialectic corresponds to Dominick LaCapra's distinction between the uncritically "documentary model" of history in which "the basis of research is 'hard' fact derived from the critical sifting of sources" and which "is limited to plausibly filling gaps in the record" (18), and the "rhetorical model," which emphasizes "the way 'documents' are themselves texts that 'process' or rework 'reality' and require a critical reading" (19-20). Linda Hutcheon corroborates LaCapra's historical argument in her consideration of the "head-on" meeting in contemporary Canadian fiction of "the documentary impulse of realism" and

“the problematizing of reference begun by self-reflexive modernism” (24). She writes that

If we only have access to the past today through its traces — documents, the testimony of witnesses, and other archival materials — then in a way we only have other representations of the past from which to construct our own narrative representations or explanations. Postmodernism nevertheless tries to understand present culture as the product of previous codings and representations. (23)

The documentary-collage enacts exactly the process Hutcheon describes. Rather than ignoring the textual nature of unquestioned “sources” as do LaCapra’s “documentary history” and Hutcheon’s “documentary realism,” the documentary-collage requires that we engage in a self-conscious re-reading of the documents of the past in a present context. Both (realistically or representationally) documentary and (self-reflexively) document-ary, it participates in the process by which, as Hutcheon puts it, “The representation of history becomes the history of representation too” (23).

MICHAEL ONDAATJE’S LONG POEM *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*, published in 1970, is a work of documentary-collage. It is a “collected works,” an assembled group of writings linked to the historical-legendary figure of Billy the Kid. Rather than functioning simply as “documentary evidence” of objective, verifiable events, these writings themselves compose a series of self-consciously textual events. *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* is, therefore, a kind of “docudrama,” a drama of documents, a play of texts that perversely fulfils Livesay’s requirement that the documentary poem be dramatic. The work’s central figure — or, perhaps more appropriately, *de*-centred figure — Billy the Kid, is, as Livesay also requires, a “representative hero.” He is a hero of representation, for these documents are his “collected works” not because he composed them, but because he is composed *of* them. The signifier “Billy the Kid” becomes the shifting locus of their intersection, the place where problems of documentation become unavoidable.

Ondaatje, of course, has the advantage of working with a figure of legend, one which is obviously already filtered through layers of story and whose “true character” is therefore problematic. The poem reveals, however, that history too is “legendary,” always already subject to such filterings. The root of the word legend, *legenda*, means “what is to be read”; Billy the Kid is a legendary figure in the rhetorical sense, constructed in readings and in writings. Because of the multiple, unstable and potentially contradictory nature of readings and writings (and readings *as* writings), however, Billy the Kid is subject to a kind of *de*-constructive

drama that the text also enacts: he is both encoded by it and refuses to stick to the script.

While LaCapra's totalizing "documentary history" is engaged in "plausibly filling gaps in the record," then, Ondaatje's poem asks its readers to seek them out. It approaches the problem of beginnings, for example, by addressing the reader directly: "Find the beginning, the slight silver key to unlock it, to dig it out. Here then is a maze to begin, be in" (20). Finding a beginning involves the reader in examining her own orientation in relation to the text, in finding a place for herself. This discursive positioning may be seen in grammatical terms. In the passage quoted above, for example, "here" is a spatial deictic, and "then" is a temporal deictic, as well as a conjunction. Both are examples of what Émile Benveniste calls "pronomial" forms that "do not refer to 'reality' or to 'objective' positions in space or time," but rather to a "reality of discourse" established by the "utterances that contain them" (218-19). "Billy the Kid" is, I would argue, the poem's central "pronomial" form, since his character is not a simple fixed entity that exists independently of its representations, but is, rather, continually placed and displaced by the reading of "his" collected works. In the invitation "Here then is a place to begin . . .," the shifting relationship between the reader's proximate position "here" and a temporally distant "then" becomes a function of the poem's present reading, which gives past writings a "new beginning" in our "finding" of them as "a maze to begin, be in."

"Be in" is "begin" with a gap, a letter left out. As readers we are looking less for keys than keyholes, entrance not into a teleological structure that terminates in a single exit, but through and into uncertainties. We might recall in this regard the poem's description of the entrance to the Boot Hill cemetery, literally a place one might enter to visit those who have passed/past away:

. . . There is an elaborate gate
but the path keeps to no main route for it tangles
like branches of a tree among the gravestones. (9)

The tangled path, which might be associated with "a maze to begin" leads, not directly to the dead themselves, but "among the gravestones," *signs* of the dead, markers of their absence, memorials to them. Later, the poem uses the path metaphor again, this time to mock the kind of literalist biographical "graverobbing" that would attempt to resurrect its subject, but in fact issues in a kind of dead end:

Imagine if you dug him up and brought him out. You'd see very little. There'd be the buck teeth. Perhaps Garret's bullet no longer in thick wet flesh would roll in the skull like a marble. From the head there'd be a *trail* of vertebrae like a row of pearl buttons. . . . (97; emphasis added)

Ondaatje's introduction to *The Long Poem Anthology* quotes a comment on documentary cinema by film-maker Jean-Luc Godard that sends us again to the figure

of the “tangled path.” Typical of Godard, the quotation reverses conventional wisdom on documentary film, but in a way which is quite appropriate to Ondaatje’s re-versing of prosaic documentary material and methods. Godard notes that the documentary is “a road leading to fiction, but it’s still not a road, it’s bushes and trees” (cited in “What is in the Pot,” 16).

Photographic and cinematic patterns in *The Collected Works* have been thoroughly and usefully traced by other critics.² The poem’s near obsession with poetic images of photographic images suggests the layering of documentary evidence, as well as a concern with writing as a problematic method of documenting Billy’s career, of showing it by telling it. Godard’s comment on documentary cinema implicates fiction in the process of investigation and interpretation involved in “scripting” the documentary. In this light, we might consider *The Collected Works* as a kind of documentary “screen-play.” It begins, after all, with an empty frame, a blank screen (5), and ends with a list of “CREDITS” which identify the poem’s documentary sources (110). The quotation that appears below the open frame is taken from one such source, the credits tell us, L. A. Huffman’s book *Huffman, Frontier Photographer*:

I send you a picture of Billy made with the Perry shutter as quick as it can be worked — Pyro and soda developer. I am making daily experiments now and find I am able to take passing horses at a lively trot square across the line of fire. . . . I will send you proofs sometime. I shall show you what can be done from the saddle without ground glass or tripod — please notice when you get the specimens that they were made with the lense wide open and many of the best exposed when my horse was in motion. (5)

The very act of quotation, notes Victor Li, “disperses meaning, first, by transgressing the protective limits of the ‘univocal’ or ‘autonomous’ text,” and then, by citing it in a different context, destroying its apparent univocality, “multiplying and scattering its single voice” (297). This is exactly the case for the Huffman quotation. Its ostensibly simple, referentially documentary quality is first and most clearly ruptured by the absence of the photograph in question, signalled by an open frame. As the title of Judith Owens’s paper on the poem, “‘I Send You a Picture’: Ondaatje’s Portrait of Billy the Kid,” implies, the document’s “new” context shifts it from the apparently historical and factual reference of the photograph to an obviously fictional, poetic referent (the poem as a whole), a shift which also changes the pronomial reference of “I” to Ondaatje’s as the text’s “compiler” or “editor,” if not, strictly speaking, its author. The quotation’s reference is further multiplied if we decide *not* to treat the poem as a whole, but as a collection of documents — themselves neither “univocal” nor “autonomous” — successively “projected” like the frames of a film, onto the blank space from which Billy as photograph and referent is absent.

The diction of the passage “speaks to” several other contexts relevant to our

consideration of the poem. Its language is not just that of photography, for example, but of photography as scientific experimentation: "I am making daily *experiments* . . . I will send you *proofs* sometime . . . when you get the *specimens*" (5; emphasis added). Frank Davey writes that "much of the impulse in the twentieth-century documentary long poem begins . . . in the modernist envy of the scientist's access to self evident testimony and precise measurement" (34). It is no coincidence that a lexicon similar to Huffman's (and Davey's) relates to two other related "truth-seeking" activities: the detective's investigation of a crime, and the process of legally trying a criminal, where, as E. L. Doctorow puts it, "society arranges with all its investigative apparatus to apprehend factual reality" (227). The aim of such a process, after all, is to reach a *verdict*, both a conclusive finding and, literally, a "true saying."

IT IS PRECISELY THESE THREE AREAS — scientific experimentation, criminal investigation and legal trial — that Parker Tyler brings together in his discussion of documentary film. He, for example, calls the detective story "a method paralleling the experimental method of science itself; a tentative, and not always successful search for the relevant, conclusive facts" (261). He later notes that in the detective story,

if the crimes treated are, literally or symbolically, already on the books, the verisimilitude tends to compass the fiction itself. For this simple reason: the murderer as individual is technically a fiction until legally convicted; even a suspect . . . is a legal-fiction criminal only, as anxious as a certain group is to consider him a real one. This theoretically imbeds fiction in the chosen theme of fact. Crime detection is therefore allied to the method of scientific knowledge already mentioned as a category of documentary. The whole process of apprehension and trial is an experiment conducted to make a present hypothesis secure in a past fact by connecting, beyond any reasonable doubt, the doer with the deed. (263-64)

The realist documentary must present the evidence necessary to prove its case, to demonstrate that it is the one true story — history. Success, to continue the legal trope, is based on the strength of its conviction. Ondaatje, however, objects to what he calls the "CBC kind of documentary" because in it the element of fiction or uncertainty is not sustained, or indeed was never entertained in the first place. According to Ondaatje, this is the kind of documentary that "knows what it is going to say before the actual filming begins" (Solecki interview, 15). The "documentary method" of *The Collected Works*, on the other hand, ensures that Billy the Kid remains a "legal-fiction criminal only" by, in effect, trying the evidence without settling on a verdict. Like the documentary described by Godard, textual evidence becomes a kind of road to fiction; the document, like the found poem, is a "finding," but not a conclusive finding.

Billy the Kid's crimes are, quite literally, on the books, as the bibliographical credits and J. C. Dykes's *Bibliography of a Legend* indicate: they are part of the historical record. They are also in the book *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*: it contains an itemized list of "the killed / (by me)" (6). When, in that book, we return to the *scenes* of the crimes, then, we should not be surprised to find that they are also scenes of writing. For example, a passage midway through the poem asks about "A motive? some reasoning we can give to explain all this violence. Was there a source for all this? yup—" (54). Stephen Scobie suggests that "simplistic psychological 'explanations' of the source of Billy's violence" are being mocked here ("Two Authors," 194). It should be added that the above-quoted passage is followed by an italicized account describing the savage murder of Tunstall. The documentary "source" of all *this* violence is Walter Noble Burns's book *The Saga of Billy the Kid* which the passage quotes verbatim (see Burns, 48). We are turned away, then, from psychologically rooted clues that require a present psyche to interpret, to intertextual ones, which send us "elsewhere." Jean Weisgarber points out of quotation in general that it both invokes questions of significance and sends us "elsewhere" to investigate them: "It is rather like a question mark, a marginal note, a signpost directing us to some unexplored ground and arousing our curiosity" (143). The question posed by *The Collected Works* is not, therefore, What made Billy the Kid so mean? but rather, What makes him *mean*? That is, How does his figure acquire significance?

Paulita Maxwell's testimony allots her the role of "character" witness in the fictional trial. She explains the absence of another photograph in judicial terms: "I never liked the picture. I don't think it does Billy justice" (19). Her account describes the way the excluded photograph "constructs" Billy: "The picture *makes him* rough and uncouth" (19; emphasis added). Her own version of Billy is quite different, and, as an "eyewitness account," seems at first to supersede the photograph: "his face *was really* boyish and pleasant" (19; emphasis added). That testimony is itself, however, equivocal, subject to its own interpretive agenda. The phrasing of the complete quotation draws attention to the fact that it is not the objective, unmediated expression *on* Billy's face that was boyish and pleasant, but "The expression *of* his face," Paulita's expression of it in her own description (19; emphasis added). In fact, Ondaatje's use of the quotation (taken from Burns, 194-95) stresses that this is not really even "Paulita's" testimony, since it is appropriated first by Burns and then re-cited by *The Collected Works*, which rends it into lines and renders it "poetic." As Victor Li comments, "Quotation makes intertextuality visible" (297). The quotation's meaning is not simply transplanted from one citation to another, but is determined by successive contextualizations.

Another of the alternative stories *The Collected Works* presents is the comic book tale "Billy the Kid and the Princess." In the comic book story the Princess (a "real princess" — a real comic book princess) tells Billy, "I must not go

on being formal with you" (102). In a sense she states Ondaatje's mandate, too: he must avoid the marks of formal closure that denote the completion of story. The comic book tale, for example, while it is formally set off by a page border (page 20, we might note, tells us how Billy and Charlie Bowdre "criss-cross" borders), defies that frame by ending with an ellipsis and a conjunction: "Before Billy the Kid can defend himself, La Princesa Marguerita has taken him in her arms and. . . ." (102). In a film, of course, the two would fade off into the sunset, indicating that the story continues beyond the confines of its present telling.

In a related passage — and relationships among stories are another way of violating closure — Paulita Maxwell sets out to put an end to the proliferating stories about her relationship with Billy, stories which she, ironically, perpetuates by *relating* them, laying the groundwork for the comic book legend, not to mention Burns's and Ondaatje's tellings:

An old story that identifies me as Billy the Kid's sweetheart has been going the rounds for many years. . . . But I was not Billy the Kid's sweetheart. . . . There was a story that Billy and I had laid our plans to elope to old Mexico. . . . There was another tale that we proposed to elope riding double on one horse. Neither story was true. . . . (96)

One place that promises to give us a first-hand, and therefore genuinely *true*, story is the "Exclusive Interview" with *The Texas Star* in which, we are told in a bold headline, "THE KID TELLS ALL" (81). The interview, however (invented by Ondaatje), is more a justification of the failure of the experimental/legal trial than a verdict in itself. When the interviewer asks Billy "Did you have any reason for going on living, or were you just experimenting?" Billy replies that "in the end that is all that's important — that you keep testing yourself, as you say — experimenting on how good you are, and you can't do that when you want to lose" (83). The experiment, in other words, is not directed toward completion, but is an ongoing activity in which Billy the Kid's character is only ever offered on a "trial" basis.

The Kid explains that "I could only be arrested if they had proof, definite proof, not just stories" (81). The Huffman quote that "opens" the volume tells us "I will send you [photographic] proofs sometime" (5). The arrival of conclusive "proofs," however, is infinitely deferred by the poem since, as Billy says in the interview, "there is no legal proof to all this later stuff. The evidence used was unconstitutional" (83). That is, it fails to constitute him conclusively. When Judge Houston offers Billy amnesty, he refuses: "All Houston was offering me was protection from the law, and at that time the law had no quarrels with me, so it seemed rather silly" (81). The judge proposes to give Billy the Kid what he already has; Houston offers him *parole*. In French, of course, *parole* means "word," or, more particularly as defined by structuralist linguistics, it means *individual* utterances as opposed to *langue*, the language system as a whole (Culler, 8). As we have seen,

it is in the contentious, provisional utterances or “works” on/of Billy the Kid that he is both described and de-scripted.

These works do violence to the principle of identity that is central to the project of “connecting the doer with the deed.” When a description in the poem is given from two perspectives, both apparently Billy’s, Dennis Cooley asks “how can Billy know what he doesn’t know, be privileged with two visions?” (225). One answer is that Billy is not “at one with himself”; his eye-witness/I-witness account is dubious indeed, and the lyric I itself comes under suspicion. In order to avoid the law, Billy says, “All I had to do was ride off in the opposite direction” (81). And that is exactly what “he” (the pronoun itself clearly becomes equivocal) does, since the documents in *The Collected Works* both conflict with each other and gesture outward to other intertextual “sources.” Françoise Gaillard comments that opposed to the logic of identity is a “logic of juxtaposition,” which fosters conflicting meanings:

Here there is no ‘right place’ of meaning, simply an infinite number of positions no sooner occupied than abandoned. Every act of judgement takes on a shifting, fluctuating, unstable form. This general indecision entails the destruction of the monadic subject. (145)

Patrick Garrett, we might note in this regard, tells us that Billy “could never remain in one position more than five minutes” (44). In film, if all the images projected on the screen are identical, the effect is stasis, a “freeze frame.” The differential, juxtapositional logic of *The Collected Works* ensures that such recuperation to stasis or “arrested” movement is not possible.

Indeed, in several places “I,” the pronoun that would at least theoretically identify Billy as a self-conscious, self-present speaker, is, like the photographs, omitted altogether, as if in recognition that “he” escapes the integration it seems to signify. The “pronomial form,” literally flickers between presence and absence. One instance of this “disappearing I” occurs after an introduction that draws attention to Billy as a character on the move whose “performance” in reading is likely to be self-revealing — but self-revealing less in a confessional sense than in the sense that it causes his *audience* to “expose” themselves in their roles as producers rather than passive consumers of Billy’s character and story:

Up with the curtain
down with your pants
William Bonney
is going to dance. (63)

Billy’s address to the audience significantly “avoids the subject”: “Hlo folks — ’d liketa sing my song about the lady Miss A D . . .” (64). Further, when Billy’s lover Angie attempts an unusual sexual position at the Chisum home, this “indecisive” dialogue occurs: “Come on Angie I’m drunk ’m not a trapeze artist. Yes you are.

No" (68). As the exchange implies, Billy's identity swings between contradictions; it violates identity itself. Finally, the absent pronoun is equated with a dartboard, literally a field of play which once again invokes audience/participants: "Am the dartboard / for your midnight blood" (85). In the same poem an attempted representation elliptically disintegrates before our eyes: "a pencil, harnessing my face / goes stumbling into dots" (85).

Billy describes himself as "locked inside my sensitive skin," but even that boundary breaks down. Just as Billy cannot be located linguistically as a unified entity, and is formally disintegrated through the fragmentation of his collected works, so he is physically "opened up." Even the human frame does not contain him. Pat Garrett's bullet enters Billy in a poem:

leaving skin in a puff
behind and the slow
as if fire pours out
red grey brain the hair slow
startled by it all pour (73)

The effect of such a brutal violation is not what one might think. The game is not up: this is not the end either of Billy the Kid or *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*. When Billy is asked what happens after you die he replies, "I guess they'll just put you in a box and you will stay there forever" (83). If that guess is right, a coffin becomes the ultimate frame-up, the final case against him, but *The Collected Works* is resistant to such simplistic conclusions. To quote Robert Kroetsch, it "resists endings, violently" (57).

IT IS NO WONDER THEN, in light of all this inconclusive evidence, that deputy John W. Poe has last-minute doubts about the man Garrett shot. *The Collected Works* quotes his version of an exchange that takes place after the shooting: "'It was the Kid who came in there on to me,' Garrett told Poe, 'and I think I got him.' 'Pat,' replied Poe, 'I believe you have killed the wrong man'" (103). *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* depends on the apprehended Billy *always* being the "wrong man." In T. D. McLulich's article, "Ondaatje's Mechanical Boy: Portrait of the Artist as Photographer," he states that "Billy is simply *there*, his existence a fact to be neutrally recorded by the author" (116). The opposite case might also be maintained: that Billy is *never* simply *there*, that his recording in both past and present documents is never neutral, based as it is on both acknowledged and unacknowledged pre-texts.

Terry Gilliam's recent "science-fiction" film *Brazil* provides a suggestive analogy for the docudramatic process of *The Collected Works*. The film's hero, Buttle, is a renegade heating engineer who subverts the department system by "freelancing."

In one of *Brazil's* closing sequences, Buttle finally escapes the government representatives who pursue him. As he walks calmly down a city street, the wind stirs stray pieces of paper around his feet. Gradually, as the number of papers increases, the wind picks up and blows them against his body. He can't remove them. As more and more papers stick he is completely covered; he becomes a paper mummy. Finally, Buttle falls struggling to the ground. A friend rushes to help him, but as he begins to pull the papers off he discovers only more papers. Nothing lies beneath them. The papers disperse. There is, one might say, no Buttle, only re-Buttle. Like Buttle, Billy the Kid is seen as a body of texts; he becomes documentary material. Ondaatje's "documentary history," to its credit, leaves something to be desired: Billy the Kid remains . . . WANTED.

NOTES

- ¹ In a recent issue of *Event*, Susan Glickman objects to the fact that "there has been so much blather about the use of documentary sources in Canadian poetry as something new and in some way especially 'Canadian' . . . What I am dubious about is the claim that this tradition is in any significant way *new*" (107). Glickman's latter point, if taken to its logical end, is certainly a valid one. Indeed, Susan Rudy Dorscht observes of Eli Mandel's "The Long Poem: Journal and Origin" that the poem/essay demonstrates "that there are no poems that are not documentary: that the poems that we write are constructed out of what Livesay called the 'actual data itself.'" What distinguishes much of contemporary documentary poetry, and particularly the documentary-collage, is its self-conscious violation of the inside-text/outside-text distinction and its interrogation of those texts that "prescribe" it.
- ² Perry Nodelman and T. D. MacLulich, for example, both see the volume as a kind of photograph album which assembles a series of still images (Nodelman, 68; MacLulich, 108), and the latter reads it as "a warning against the dehumanizing consequences of photographic voyeurism" (109). Lorraine York similarly sees the image of the photo as a metaphor both for Billy's destructive attempt to control and fix his own world, and for Ondaatje's attempt to fix Billy's character (104, 106), while Dennis Cooley conducts an engaging analysis of the contrast between still photography and cinematic reference in the poem as representative of controlled modern and archaic postmodern perspectives, respectively. Stephen Tatum, finally, sees a parallel between the poem's "violent manipulations of time and ideas" and rapid editing techniques in cinema and television, commenting that this style "usefully parallel[s] the violence in the outlaw's life (and death)" (152).

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GLOSSOLALIA

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I

Tongue: blunt-tipped,
slippery organ
of muscle and tastebuds;
homo sapiens use it
for declarations
of lingual sounds — in English,
the 'l' of love, or the 't'
of hate.

It is often kept hidden
behind a row of teeth.

II

In most supermarkets, you can buy a tongue.

Look for a nice fresh one.
If it is discoloured
or bruised, the animal
to whom it belonged
may have been butchered
incorrectly.

Do not listen to old wives' tales.
You need not cover your ears
when you cook a tongue. The tongue
cannot say anything;