

STEALING THE TEXT

George Bowering's "Kerrisdale Elegies" and Dennis Cooley's "Bloody Jack"

Smaro Kamboureli

Transformer l'oeuvre en chose, muette donc et qui se tait en parlant parce qu'elle se passe de signature, cela ne se peut qu'à inscrire la signature *dans le texte*, ce qui revient à signer deux fois en ne signant plus.

The process of transforming a work into a thing — mute, therefore, and silent when speaking, because dispensing with the signature — can only be brought about by inscribing the signature *in the text*, which amounts to signing twice in the process of not signing any more.

JACQUES DERRIDA, *Signéponge = Signsponge*¹

BOTH GEORGE BOWERING'S *Kerrisdale Elegies* and Dennis Cooley's *Bloody Jack*,² like most contemporary long poems, resist generic definition. Bowering's long poem is not simply an elegy: it is an elegy imitating another elegy, specifically Rilke's *Duino Elegies*. To use Mikhail Bakhtin's term, it is a "double-voiced" poem,³ a poem which is generically located on the edge of quotation and discourse, thus blurring the difference between mimesis and originality. Similarly, *Bloody Jack* defines itself as a "book," but it is not a book of monologic discourse. It is a collage of genres such as the oral poem of the folk tradition, the ballad, the elegy, lyrics with their musical scores and the concrete poem, a collage which threatens to destroy the poem's frame as a book.

The long poem's resistance to definition has much to do with the dialogic interaction that informs its discourse. Inclusiveness is one of the generative principles that locates the long poem within a web of genres. The reader is invited to recognize a "new" genre of impure origins, a discursive formation which results from an ongoing dialogue of genres. The generic intertextuality of the long poem parodies the singularity of traditional genre definitions. The simultaneous presence of various genres and their heterogeneous interrelationships mark what Bakhtin would call the "polyphonic"⁴ nature of the long poem. As a polyphonic structure, the long poem "novelizes"⁵ our traditional concepts of genre as well as the specific genres deployed in it. Through their novelization these genres, according to Bakh-

tin, “become more free and flexible, their language renews itself by incorporating extraliterary heteroglossia and the ‘novelistic’ layers of literary language, they become dialogized, permeated with laughter, irony, humor, elements of self-parody and [. . .] a certain semantic openendedness, a living contact with unfinished, still-evolving contemporary reality.”⁶ Perhaps the ultimate carnivalesque element in the long poem is its double intent to be seen as a “new” genre, that is a hybrid of genres, and to resist any attempt toward precise definition.

George Bowering’s *Kerrisdale Elegies* and Dennis Cooley’s *Bloody Jack* exemplify some of the most significant concerns of the long poem as a “new” genre. In my discussion of them I will focus on the transgressive functions of authorial signature in relation to the genres these poems employ. I take signature to relate to the operations between proper names and common nouns, between words and things.⁷ The author’s proper name permeates her or his text as it participates in the process of signification that composes the text. The author is written into the text as s/he writes it. Signature is employed as a sign that plays with and against the arbitrariness of signifier and signified, a sign that oscillates between the author’s presence and absence in the text. Signing is also the enabling act that accounts for the author’s use of, and departure from, traditional genres. Bowering’s and Cooley’s writing is both an imitation of existing genres and texts and a transgression of their principles. This parallel writing act is accomplished by interrupting the continuity that validates genre, by apostrophizing what they imitate. I will show, then, how their authorial signatures locate referentiality within the field of textuality.

GIVEN THE LONG POEM’S RESISTANCE to definition, there is a certain appropriateness that the covers of both *Kerrisdale Elegies* and *Bloody Jack* are facial images creating illusions of proximity. In *Kerrisdale Elegies* the cover image is the face of the author wearing dark glasses. The ragged edges of its frame simulate the double texture of a torn photograph, the texture of glossy and rough paper (a manuscript page of writing?). The torn top of the photograph exceeds its margin threatening to erase Bowering’s name: the author’s visage is foregrounded; his name is held in disbelief. The reader is faced with the double bind of signature, the naming of an absent presence.

Cooley wanted a “stylized icon” of himself on the cover of his book,⁸ but his publishers did not go along with that. What we see is an indistinct face — the “pale spectacle” of historical Krafchenko taken from a newspaper photograph, a dissolved identity becoming an anonymous icon. It is a face that is more of an outline than a concrete image in which “we can read / inklings of” the author,⁹ the surface of a palimpsest where both character and poet blend into each other.

A face in a stage of collapsing, receding into the poem, “a book by Dennis Cooley.”

While both authors hold a pose, their long poems sign themselves on the covers as specific instances of different genres: that of the elegy and that of the book. Yet, as is the case in many long poems, the readily identifiable genres of the elegy and the book are not the sole parameters designating the generic character of *Kerrisdale Elegies* and *Bloody Jack*. The reader can take for granted only a number of elements when dealing with these poems. Two books (two faces): two long poems (“an encyclopedia of genres”¹⁰): one reader (the viewer). The reader of these two poems finds herself caught in the perennial triangle of the story of desire. Each face presents me with the “organ” I need in order to see it, to touch it; they give me the “eye” and the “ear” through which I can read them.¹¹ These facial images, the textual masks of the poets, initiate a series of paradoxes between themselves and their referentiality. Beginning with their parodic self-portraits on the covers, Bowering and Cooley imitate the tropes of the genres they employ but at the same time they practise a mimesis that unwrites the style of these tropes. The intertextuality of the generic interplay in the two poems points to an erotics of reading: the poets as faithful or adulterous readers — reading, misreading, plagiarizing.¹² What reconciles the heterogeneous activities within these long poems is the intertextuality of the authors’ signatures. If these authors’ fixed images fail to seduce me, the translation of the authorial image into signature does not.

The authorial signature in *Kerrisdale Elegies* and *Bloody Jack*, which begins to assert itself on the covers, supplements the dialogue of genres in these long poems. The signature does not only authorize the deployment of diverse genres; it thematizes genre while presenting signing as yet another form of writing. “*How can one cite a signature?*” Jacques Derrida asks. “*The signature spreads over everything, but is stripped off or makes itself take off [...]*.”¹³ Through the authorial signature writing becomes rewriting, autographing, a constant revising (reviewing) of the discursive field of the long poem. It allows digressions; it changes the direction of our study, as Gregory L. Ulmer says, between “the author-text relation” thus “allowing contamination between the inside and outside.”¹⁴ The authorial signature, in other words, disseminates in the text not only the author’s presence but his act of writing and what it entails.

This multiple signing enables Bowering and Cooley to play hide-and-seek with their readers. They make brief appearances: the poet as flesh, as desire incarnate, as the one who enters where I as a reader, to “misquote” Bowering, “have been but can never enter” (3.43). The reader is invited to share a slice of life, those fragments that become poetry. The authorial signature foregrounds the presence of the reader in the text while, at the same time, putting this presence under erasure. I’m there, in the text, but at the same time I’m constantly put on hold.

the other Italian locations he refers to; he is a baseball fan and has written about baseball before both in his poetry and in his fiction; there are allusions to some of his favourite poets such as Shelley, H.D., Robin Blaser, and Jack Spicer¹⁵ as well as references to his *A Short Sad Book*. The signature is no longer the author's proper name but has become a metonymy. As Derrida observes, "[t]he *rebus* signature, the metonymic or anagrammatic signature, these are the condition of possibility and impossibility. The *double bind* of a signature event. As if the thing (or the common name of the thing), ought to absorb the proper, to drink it and to retain it in order to keep it. But, in the same stroke, by keeping, drinking, and absorbing it, it is as if the thing (or its name) lost or soiled the proper name."¹⁶ The signature as common name writes the poet into his text while also marking his departure from it, becoming thus a countersignature. The writer's departure — his decomposition that erases the strictures of the dialectic presence/absence — is one of the markers of the elegiac tone of the poem.

God, there goes another breath,
and I go with it,
I was further from my grave
two stanzas back, I'm human.
Will the universe
notice my unattached molecules drifting thru?
Will the dead poets notice our lines appearing among them,
or are their ears filled with their own music? (2.26-27)

When the author-in-the-text asserts he is dead, when his friends' arms reach toward him to embrace only air, when his lines appear written over and in-between the lines of a dead poet, Rainer Maria Rilke, it is his signature that survives this death incurred in language, that posthumously, postwriterly, keeps him absorbed as a non-proper name in the text.

The translation of Bowering's signature into countersignature is the first marker that designates *Kerrisdale Elegies* as a counterfeit of Rilke's *Duino Elegies*. And it is not only the title of Bowering's poem that points to Rilke's *Duino Elegies*. A comparison of Bowering's text to any English translation of Rilke's *Elegies* will testify that Bowering's long poem is a palimpsest, his own text superimposed on Rilke's text. It doesn't really matter what specific translations Bowering used.¹⁷ What matters is the ways in which Rilke is re-cited, countersigned, in the site of Bowering's text. Here is an example from the fourth elegy:

Rilke
Even when fully intent on one thing,
we feel another's costly tug. Hostility
is second nature to us. Having promised
one another distance, hunting, and home,
don't lovers always cross each other's boundaries?¹⁸

than it is, giving in exchange. Parallaxis then signifies the range of forces that build up tradition, the dynamics that gravitate one text toward another and which determine the extent of influence, namely the interdependence of texts as well as the autonomy of individual texts. The parallaxic movement is accomplished through transference by alteration and variation, a transference based on sameness as well as difference. The semantics of parallaxis, as opposed to that of intertextuality, delineates, I believe, the dialogue between texts and genres with greater precision, while its particular semantic configurations evoke the diversity of the dialogic play at work. It indicates an exchange (expropriation), the otherness of text, the shifting of text in alternating contexts, a shift and change which often involve corruption of origins, deviation from an original/originary point.

Bowering's deviations from Rilke's text do not erase the original; they alter it while maintaining the "crossing spools" that affirm not only the sameness that binds the two poems but also Bowering's writing steps that make his own text differ from Rilke's. The parallaxis that informs Bowering's writing act produces a text of marginal differences, a text of difference. For if *Kerrisdale Elegies* is a "translation," it is an annotated "translation," the annotations being Bowering's appropriation of the marginal space and the space between the lines of *Duino Elegies*.

The infidelities that the reader notices in Bowering's "translation" of *Duino Elegies* operate exactly on the level of parallaxis: he remains faithful to the fundamental structure, imagery and ideas of *Duino Elegies* by stealing and appropriating them in his own text through re-writing. One could explain, of course, this appropriation by pointing out that Bowering relocates *Duino Elegies* in Vancouver; yet the changes incurred by this relocation do not account for *Kerrisdale Elegies* composition. For Bowering alters (adulterates) the form, the language and many of Rilke's allusions. Linos, for instance, to whom Rilke refers in the end of the first elegy, is translated in *Kerrisdale Elegies* as Marilyn Monroe. Bowering's parallaxis maintains the mythological allusion but translates it in contemporary terms. From the myth about a pagan figure we move to the stardom of Hollywood, to Marilyn who is, as Bowering says, "the stuff our words are made from" (1.20). Linos in Rilke's poem is a double signature: it signifies a mournful song; it is also the name of a young man whose life assumes three mythic configurations, two of them related to Apollo — Apollo as Linos' father avenging the death of his son, Apollo as the god of song punishing Linos for transgressing his human limits as singer.²² Both signatures of Linos identify the genre of the poem as elegy and raise questions regarding the nature of origins and transgression. Marilyn Monroe's life has similarly evolved into a myth that is still being re-written.

Bowering's parallaxis here becomes a form of parallelism, the setting side by side of two texts, thus further enunciating the degree of sameness and difference

between *Kerrisdale Elegies* and *Duino Elegies*. His writing act is an act of mimesis; mimesis, however, in Gérard Genette's sense of forgery: "la forgerie est l'imitation en régime sérieux, dont la fonction dominante est la poursuite ou l'extension d'un accomplissement littéraire préexistant."²³ During this mimetic act as "forgery," Bowering also imitates (writes into the text) the writing process he is engaged in. The poet as trespasser is, again, the common name as signature, but this time it is a signature that thematizes the question of genre in this long poem. But if plagiarizing Rilke's text is an aesthetic si(g)n that stigmatizes *Kerrisdale Elegies* with the double signatures of Rilke and Bowering, it is a si(g)n that Bowering is far from ignoring. "[B]ut love / makes intruders," he says, "I am not I here, / but the burglar / of your past." Bowering's apostrophe is to the figure of the lover, but, given the erotics of intertextuality in his poem, his apostrophe may also be directed toward Rilke. Love effaces the writing poet as origin, as the single maker of the text; it presents the poet as the parallax of his own self, as a "burglar" who cannot extract himself from the tradition. He is "playing house with" (1.12) the textuality of writing. "[T]hrowing" his proper "name away" (1.18), writing himself over (making love to) Rilke's text, the poet as lover and thief emerges from within the text of another poet in the carnivalesque paradise of his own text: "Upstairs with my toys — a pen, some lined paper, / my books open around me" (4.58). Bowering's signature and countersignature present his long poem as the hiatus of text as source and text as the parallactic other of that source.

The same principle of mimesis as forgery operates in Dennis Cooley's poem.

you have my word

periodically

they think
 they have me
 where they want me
 that theyve got me
 typed [. . .]
 lines laid out
 [. . .]

but i dont
 pause dont even
 hesitate where they
 make the signs
 [. . .]
 [. . .] i live in the gaps beneath that
 believe in the invisible gasps under print
 i learn to hold my breath
 hold by breath

in envelopes of air
 refuse to be taken in
 i am guerrilla of brackets
 you cant see me on the page
 whited out in your eyes

[. . .]

if you dont keep watch
 i will surface under your faces

[. . .]

from the edges where you
 would gloss me over
 write me out of existence
 i will shout
 to you hard
 of hearing

[. . .]

that is why
 to find me
 you must read be
 tween the lines (16-8)

“You have my word,” the poet says, hiding behind his words, talking himself out of the text, inside the text, bracketing his presence, making the reader an accomplice of this war between presence and absence. You have my word, the poet says, and he breaks his promise, he breaks away from the reader’s hold, as he translates his words into plural meaning, warding off definition. And he surfaces under my face: he translates his act of writing into the reading act, reading under his own face, under my nose, delaying the performance of my own reading act by stealing my privilege as reader, by inscribing my reading in his text.

Dennis Cooley’s transgression of his writing role breaks the laws that control aesthetic decorum. He’s “*laying down the law*” (52) that there are no limits for the writing and reading acts alike. It is a law signed by him in script, “yes truly Dennis Cooley” (146), countersigned by his main character, the Ukrainian outlaw Krafchenko, signed repeatedly by the poet’s own inventions of himself. “For the law as it stands neither you nor I have any responsibility” (49). This lawless law informs the design of the whole book. *Bloody Jack* could be described as a documentary poem about a Ukrainian bandit, persecuted by the Winnipeg police force and loved by the Winnipeg community in the 1910’s. Cooley gives his primary sources in the beginning of the poem. Yet he supersedes the documents at hand and meanders through a web of genres, and of authentic and forged documents. One of his epigraphs is by Julia Kristeva talking about Menippean

satire which she defines as an “all-inclusive genre.”²⁴ This sums up the documentary nature of *Bloody Jack*. Far from being a document about a specific criminal — whom the public nevertheless saw as a Robin Hood figure thus parodying the law — *Bloody Jack* becomes a document of the generic interplay that characterizes the long poem. One might argue that *Bloody Jack* is about the poet’s dream of living in the margins: the lover and poet as outlaw.

The lawlessness that Cooley advocates is primarily realized by the encompassing genre of *Bloody Jack*, that of the book. And *Bloody Jack* is a book whose main intent is to foreground the material it is made of, that of language. “*Jack’s dictionary of cunning linguistics*” gives a clear sense of how Cooley uses language:

[. . .]
 radical: in a hot bed of activity
 [. . .]
 marginal: involved in split decisions
 [. . .]
 thorough: doesn’t want to leave anything out
 [. . .]
 optimistic: believes s/he is making head way
 [. . .]
 reformed: gets a weight off his shoulders
 [. . .]
 divine: she brings down the world on his head
 [. . .]
 promiscuous: has a loose tongue
 [. . .]
 traditional: is above that sort of thing
 [. . .] (118-19)

The body of language as the mat(t)er of the book is in constant dialogue with the author who fathers the book. The semantic distortions of the words, while affirming Cooley’s playfulness and the erotics of his writing, deconstruct the concept of definition itself. *Bloody Jack* is presented as a book both in an empirical and a generic sense, but it is a book that defines its bookness through parallax. If the book, as Maurice Blanchot says, is a “vehicle of knowledge [. . . that] receives and gathers a given determinate form of knowledge,”²⁵ then *Bloody Jack* as a book — dedicated “to Penny,” a fictional character and a muse/writing figure — becomes its parallaxic other, what Blanchot calls “the absence of the book.” “*The absence of the book* revokes all continuity of presence, just as it evades the questioning conveyed by the book. It is not the interiority of the book, nor its continuously evaded Meaning. Rather it is outside the book, though it is enclosed in it, not so much its exterior as a reference to an outside that does not concern the book.”²⁶ *Bloody Jack* foregrounds itself as an empirical book, complete with an “appendix.” This is its last paragraph:

Perhaps, dear reader, you would like to remove this appendix. Go ahead, just cut it out. You always wanted to be a doctor, here's your chance. Be careful to cut neatly so the body will not be mutilated and the scar will not be conspicuous enough to affect the resale value of the book or to ruin your practice. Perhaps, if you are lucky, you will nick Cooley's conscience, his mind there on the margins, in the gutter. Go ahead, take it out on him. (237)

The book as an empirical artifice seeks to undo its own physicality, talks about itself as if it were an "other," seeks to meet with its "absence." It is the author, however, or more precisely his signature that is implicated in the book's deathwish.

Bloody Jack in order to be sustained as a book needs its author's name. But the name of the author loses its authority as it becomes a deictic signifier on the book's cover designating the title: "a book by Dennis Cooley: *Bloody Jack*." The author does not present himself here: he is presented instead by the (his) writing act; he is positioned in the third person. Emile Benveniste says that "the 'third person' is not a 'person'; it is really the verbal form whose function is to express the *non-person*. [. . .] Indeed, it is always used when the person is not designated and especially in the expression called impersonal."²⁷ In this respect, the author remains absent as a person — his presence being further neutralized by the passive context of the third person, "a book *by* Dennis Cooley" — while his book appropriates his signature. The book and the author become each other's metonymies, two figures existing only through parallax. Parallax here evokes the *paralagon*, the going beyond logos, beyond homogeneity. The book reaches out beyond its margins and its physical body toward its absent other, whereas the author disappears as a person in order to reappear as a character with the same name, a character who both reflects and deflects the author. The destabilization of the author's presence is primarily signified by the single occurrence of his actual signature in the context of which the conventional "yours truly [. . .]" is inscribed in longhand in such a way that it can also be read as "yes truly [. . .]" (146). Signing as writing, while destabilizing language and its signification by virtue of the individual configurations of handwriting, becomes an affirmation of the I's positioning, "yes truly Dennis Cooley," a "yes," however, which deconstructs the logocentric positions of language and the self as well as the logocentricism of interpretation.

In "*high drama*," for example, a playwright with the name Dennis Cooley has a hard time making his characters/actors follow his script:

COOLEY (*to you, dear reader*) Why don't they make love?
 (*to them*) Hay! What are you doing? (*they look up,
 discovered*) I want you to make love. I'm pretty
 disappointed in you characters, especially you
 Krafchenko. [. . .]

KRAFCHENKO (*recovered*) Butt out buddy. It's none of
 your business. (*Kraf & Penny begin to kiss. Defiant,
 then lost in it. Cooley looks angry & impatient.*)

COOLEY [. . .] According to the script, Kraf, you get yr
 ass outa here. Then Penny is supposed to make a play for
 me. I wrote it that way. A clear case of textual authority.
 Of my authority. My authorization. [. . .] (222)

By dramatizing the relationship between signing and writing (penning), Cooley as a writer playing with language both affirms and deconstructs his authority. In another instance, in “*the obligatory long-awaited poem in which the hero / speaks from the grave thots thick with gumbo,*” it is Krafchenko himself who talks about the writer’s authority and who foregrounds the self-conscious use of genre:

yes yes well i spose cooley
 was a grave robber all along
 wasnt he

this comes from
 knowing Foucault
 I told him so myself

& I spose I wulnt even get a peep in here if cooley
 wasnt interested in some kind of parody. [. . .] (231)

These references to Dennis Cooley as *playwright* and as poet still maintain the proper name of the author as person but they are not to be considered as autobiography. This illustrates what Ulmer calls autography, a form of writing which “transforms the proper name into a thing, into a rebus.”²⁸ Autography in *Bloody Jack* constitutes the author’s parallax, more specifically both the deconstruction and the dissemination of the authorial self. The author’s signature is the centre of the book’s puzzle, but it is a centre lying off-centre, refusing to be given a single configuration, a monologic interpretation. The signature in the text imitates the subject of the proper name, inscribing the author within his own inscription.

It is this same function of the signature, together with the multiple genres that Cooley uses and his excessive use of punning, that brings *Bloody Jack* as a book closer to its absent other. *Bloody Jack* falls apart, disorders itself, and pre(post)-scribes into its body the responses it anticipates to generate as a published book: “Dear Editor, I for one am not in the least amused by Dennis Cooley’s writings. And I know from talking to others that they have had it up to here with all this filthy language,” says a Mrs. Agnes Klassen (89). The book outdistances itself; it denounces its bookness by taking over its own margins. As Blanchot says, “[t]he book alone is important, as it is, far from genres, outside rubrics — prose, poetry, the novel, the first-person account — under which it refuses to be arranged and to which it denies the power to fix its place and to determine its form. A book no longer belongs to a genre.”²⁹ *Bloody Jack* as a book explodes its frame by displaying its anatomy. “Have you no sense of anatomy?” the “cunning linguist” asks (84). But the genreless genre of *Bloody Jack*, its deconstructed anatomy, offers

only intimations of its absent other. Blanchot remarks: "How long will it last — this lack that is sustained by the book and that expels the book from itself as book? Produce the book, then, so that it will detach itself, disengage itself as it scatters: this will not mean that you have produced *the absence of the book*."³⁰ Dennis Cooley does not produce "the absence of the book," but internalizes in his discourse the absence that he cannot write in. His signature as proper name and as the name behind his exaggerating use of puns countersigns this absence. *Bloody Jack* is its own parallax. Its content is, ultimately, what it cannot contain.

Both in Bowering's *Kerrisdale Elegies* and Cooley's *Bloody Jack*, the authorial signature validates the act of stealing, the appropriation of other texts and genres. Stealing in the open from another text or within the author's own text is to be seen as an act of denying originality, of merging the beginning of a poem with the beginning of poetry, of dissolving the frame of a book. It is the poet as thief, as criminal, who can immerse himself totally in writing, who can marginalize his own book. The admixture of diverse genres in the long poem is a double signal: it challenges the classic law of genre theory that argues for the purity of genre, and it recommends what Jacques Derrida calls "the limitless field of general textuality."³¹ If this "general textuality" creates the impression of generic or formal chaos, it is the chaos of carnival. And it is the presence of the authorial signature, the proper name as frame of property and agent of interruptions, that validates these long poems as rites both affirming and questioning the tradition.

NOTES

This essay was originally delivered at "Assessing the Eighties," Discussion Group of Canadian Literature in English, MLA, Chicago, December 1985. My thanks to Professor Arnold E. Davidson for inviting my contribution. My thanks also to Professors Dennis Cooley and J. Hillis Miller for their attentive readings.

¹ *Signéponge* = *Signsponge*, translated by Richard Rand (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1984), 36, 37.

² *Kerrisdale Elegies* (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1984); *Bloody Jack* (Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 1984). Page references will appear immediately after the texts; the page references to Bowering's text will be preceded by the elegy number.

³ *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, edited and translated by Caryl Emerson, with an introduction by Wayne C. Booth (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1984), 185.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 8. For studies of the Canadian long poem see *Open Letter*, Sixth Series, 2-3 (Summer-Fall, 1985), which gathers together the papers presented at "Long-liners," a conference on the Canadian long poem, York Univ., May 1984.

⁵ "Novelization" is Bakhtin's neologism put forward in "Epic and Novel," *The Dialogic Imagination*, edited by Michael Holquist, translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1981), 5, 6.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁷ My debts here are to Derrida's "Signature Event Context," in *Margins of Philosophy*, translated, with Additional Notes, by Alan Bass (Chicago: Univ. of

- Chicago Press, 1982), 307-30; his *Signéponge* = *Signsponge*; and the elaborations on his work by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Glas-Piece: A Compte Rendu," *Diacritics*, 7, 3 (Fall 1977), 22-43, and Gregory L. Ulmer, "Beyond Deconstruction: Derrida," *Applied Grammatology: Post(e)-Pedagogy from Jacques Derrida to Joseph Beuys* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1985), 3-153.
- ⁸ Personal communication with Cooley, Winnipeg, 1985. My thanks for his permission to quote him.
- ⁹ The section "*this is me: a retort*," from which these references are taken, deals with the cover of the book. The ambiguity of the cover image is further accentuated in this poem by the referential subjects of the "I" and "you" which constantly shift from Cooley to Krafchenko.
- ¹⁰ *The Dialogic Imagination*, 65.
- ¹¹ I am quoting from Maurice Blanchot's essay "Reading," in *The Gaze of Orpheus and Other Literary Essays*, translated by Lydia Davis, edited, with an afterword, by P. Adams Sitney, with a preface by Geoffrey Hartman (Barrytown, New York: Station Hill Press, 1981), 92.
- ¹² See Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (New York and London: Methuen, 1985); Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes: la littérature au second degré* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1982).
- ¹³ *Signéponge* = *Signsponge*, 150.
- ¹⁴ *Applied Grammatology*, 21, 63.
- ¹⁵ Spicer is particularly important because he "translated" Rilke's *Elegies* between 1950 and 1955; see his "Imaginary Elegies I-VI," in *The Collected Books of Jack Spicer*, edited and with a commentary by Robin Blaser (Los Angeles: Black Sparrow Press, 1975), 333-39. Bowering, who has shown his indebtedness to Spicer in his earlier long poem, *Allophanes* (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1976), said that Spicer facilitated his "intrusion into the field of Rilke that had been staked out by many Rilke-loving friends, and to which I didn't feel real rights, being hesitant about Rilke . . . and not German" (letter to the author, January 1986). My thanks to Bowering for permission to quote him.
- ¹⁶ *Signéponge* = *Signsponge*, 64.
- ¹⁷ Bowering said that he "used basically 2 translations, and a bit of a third . . . Not David Young. Not Exner" (letter to the author), but he couldn't recall which ones. The translations I used are J. B. Leishman's and Stephen Spender's, *Rainer Maria Rilke: Prose and Poetry*, edited by Egon Schwarz, with a foreword by Howard Nemerov (New York: Continuum, 1984); Stephen Mitchell's *The Selected Poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke*, edited by Stephen Mitchell, with an introduction by Robert Hass (New York: Vintage Books, a division of Random House, 1984); and A. Poulin's, Jr., *Duino Elegies and The Sonnets to Orpheus* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977).
- ¹⁸ Translated by Poulin, 27.
- ¹⁹ In response to this statement, Bowering said that "I wasn't interested in erasing Rilke so much as rewriting him. I have a funny relationship with him; although he is probably the most popular source for my poet companions in Vancouver, I have never been quite ready to trust him, his feyness, his rhapsody; I realize that he is right, he is onto something, and that he is a pre-Spicerian demonstration of the poet inspired or inspirated; but I have always been uneasy. I had to respond to that doubled feeling somehow" (letter to the author). Bowering's uneasiness about Rilke is manifested in the poem in more than one way, but a discussion of

it falls outside the scope of this essay. But whereas Bowering lets Rilke's signature stand, he does not provide any clues for the poets' identity with regard to the French quotations in *Kerrisdale Elegies*. It is their language and tone that locate them within the context of French poetry. As Bowering said about them, "Re the French quotations: well, they seem to me to do something — make connections? make correction, comment? on the surrounding text. They operate, it feels to me, the way quotations operate re the rest of the text in *Allophanes*. It is not exactly collage, because it reads on like poetic text, along the alonging poetic text that is there. They make sure that the writer is not running away with the poem . . ." (letter to the author). The quotations are from: Baudelaire's "La Prière d'un pain" (1.17); François Villon, "Le Testament," *Oeuvres complètes* CXIX (2.30); Anne Hébert, "Le tombeau des rois" (4.61) (my thanks to Professor Stan Dragland for this reference); Apollinaire's "L'ermite" from *Alcools* (5.72); Michel Beaulieu, "rémission du corps enamouré," in *Visages* (6.83; my thanks to Bowering for this source); Mallarmé's "Petit air I" (7.99); Nerval's "Vers Dorés" (8.111); Laforgue's "Complainte de l'oubli des morts" (9.123); I have failed to trace the source of the last quotation (10.131). Since the completion of this essay Professor Dragland published the first study on *Kerrisdale Elegies*, "The Bees of the Invisible," *Brick*, 28 (Fall 1986), pp. 14-25.

²⁰ Hutcheon, 36.

²¹ See Julia Kristeva, *Semeiotiké: Recherches pour une sémanalyse* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), *Le texte du roman: Approche sémiologique d'une structure discursive transformationnelle* (Paris, The Hague: Mouton, 1970), and *La révolution du langage poétique* (Paris: Seuil, 1974), translated as *Revolution of Poetic Language* by Margaret Waller, with an introduction by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1984); see also Michael Riffaterre, *Production du texte* (Paris: Seuil, 1979), translated as *Text Production* by Terese Lyons (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1983). For the history and development of the term intertextuality see Marc Angenot, "L' 'intertextualité': enquête sur l'émergence et la diffusion d'un champ notionnel," *Revue des Sciences Humaine*, LX, 189 (janvier, mars 1983), 121-35; and the special issue "L'inter textualité: intertexte, autotexte, intratexte" of *Texte*, 2 (1983), which includes Don Bruce's "Bibliographie annotée: écrits sur l'inter textualité," 217-58.

²² See "Linus," *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949); rpt. 1968).

²³ *Palimpsestes*, 92.

²⁴ The epigraph is from Kristeva's *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, edited by Leon S. Roudiez, translated by Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1980), 83.

²⁵ Blanchot, 146.

²⁶ Blanchot, 147.

²⁷ *Problems in General Linguistics*, translated by Mary Elizabeth Meek (Coral Gables, Florida: Univ. of Miami Press, 1971), 198, 199.

²⁸ Ulmer, 132.

²⁹ From Blanchot's *Le livre à venir* (Paris: 1959), quoted in Tzvetan Todorov, "The Origins of Genres," translated by Richard M. Berrong, *New Literary History*, 8 (1977), 159.

³⁰ Blanchot, 149.

³¹ "La Loi du genre / The Law of Genre," translated by Avita Ronell, *Glyph 7* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1980), 210.