



TISH —
Another “Sense of Things”

AMONG THE NEIGHBORS

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The Poetry Collection of the University Libraries,
University at Buffalo, The State University of New York
Buffalo, New York 2017

AMONG THE NEIGHBORS a pamphlet series for the
study of Little Magazines The Poetry Collection of the
University Libraries, University at Buffalo

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This series is supported by
The Mildred Lockwood Lacey Fund for Poetry

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cover design by Patrick Riedy and Edric Mesmer

1

Accounts of little magazines, small presses and literary communities often rely on “oral histories,” faint recollections and oft-repeated legends. Barry McKinnon, in his 1983 recollection of the *Caledonia Writing Series* (1972–1980), referred to it as “a cupboard full of books, a bibliography, a stream of images [...] memory, and anecdote” (McKinnon “The

Caledonia Writing Series” 2). “Memory, and anecdote,” relied on for the history of small magazines and communities, lead to over-generalization and sweeping categorization:

[a]ny period of literary activity is always more complex than the eventual generalizations that might be made out it, yet the act of history inevitably leads to the large and convenient category: *this* group or *that* group [...] in *this* or that time and place (McKinnon “Introduction” 5; original emphasis).

Looking at *TISH*'s history in terms of hierarchical structures and genealogies privileges a single source, a single historical precedent instead of the organic growth inherent in community development. This approach allows for the amorphous gathering of like-minded individuals that eventually leads to the publication of *TISH* and the formation of poetic and political communities, “a formation that allows for diverse local and regional narratives of emergence and intervention” (Butling and Rudy 27). Historical exploration tends to be genealogical, though literary activity “defies a conventional chronological history” (McKinnon “The Caledonia Writing Series” 2).

Examinations of *TISH: A Poetry Newsletter*—a Vancouver based poetry magazine published between 1961 and 1969 primarily by students at the University of British Columbia—

are no exception to this casual attitude toward history. At a 1985 round-table discussion on *TISH*, Lionel Kearns observed that “what [he] like[s] about *TISH* is that its *legend* keeps on developing with the years” (Niechoda and Hunter 90; original emphasis). Despite three book-length studies of *TISH* magazine—Keith Richardson’s *Poetry and the Colonized Mind: TISH*, C.H. Gervais’ *The Writing Life: Historical and Critical Views of the TISH Movement*, and Douglas Barbour’s *Beyond TISH*, a special issue of *West Coast Line*—and Frank Davey’s full reprinting of *TISH* issues 1 through 19—there is still no written history of its relation to the accompanying fiction newsletter *MOTION*, or to *TISHbooks*. Neither is there reflection on the subsequent twenty-six issues of the magazine that appeared after the “heroic” period (issues 1 through 19) before its folding in 1969.

Moreover, the original nineteen issues of *TISH*, as edited by Frank Davey, Fred Wah, George Bowering, Jamie Reid, and David Dawson, have garnered the majority of academic and historical study to the detriment of the later six years of *TISH*’s publication. Ken Norris’ *The Little Magazine in Canada 1925-1980: Its Role in the Development of Modernism and Post-Modernism in Canadian Poetry* (1984), for example, dedicates thirty-one pages to *TISH* issues 1 through 19 and subsequent magazines founded by the original editors,¹ but only three pages to *TISH* 20 through E [45] and its relationship with other magazines:

[d]espite the fact that the magazine continued for six years after the first editorial period and served well various factions of the Vancouver literary scene, the important

¹ George Bowering’s *Imago* (1964–1974), Frank Davey’s *Open Letter* (1965–2013), and Fred Wah’s *Sum* (1964–1965).

work done by *TISH* is contained in the first nineteen numbers (Norris 122).

C.H. Gervais' *The Writing Life: Historical & Critical Views of the TISH Movement* (1976), published as a “companion volume” to Davey's *TISH No. 1–19* (1974), makes no mention of the post-1963 period of *TISH*'s publication. Literary history—like any history—is written by the powerful, and *TISH*'s history is no exception, “[i]t rewards and reinforces the patriarchal values of dominance, aggressiveness and competitiveness, qualities that were noticeably lacking” in the later editorial period of *TISH* (Butling “Hall of Fame Blocks Women” 65). Bowering, Davey, and Wah—the “heroes” of the original editorial period of *TISH*—all eventually gained positions of academic power guaranteeing that the original issues would continue to be discussed and studied. The bias of the original editors towards the first nineteen issues has been reflected both in criticism published to date on *TISH* and in George Bowering's statements:

I didnt like the idea of the magazine's continuing with a new set of editors after its run, although I wouldn't have minded seeing them do a magazine with a slightly different direction (Bowering “Interview with Barry McKinnon” 16).

The majority of criticism to date on *TISH* has focused on the first nineteen issues and has appeared through the efforts of the original editors with several articles appearing in Frank Davey's journal *Open Letter* as well as the special *Beyond TISH* issue of *West Coast Line* on which George Bowering appeared as a member of the editorial board.

Robert Hogg, an editor of *TISH*'s companion magazine *MOTION: A Prose Newsletter* and editor of *TISH* 25 and 26

notes “the orig. editors seem to have a vested interest in seeing *TISH* 1–19 as sacrosanct, the original thing” (Hogg, E-mail). The work of later editors, dismissed as having “no distinctive character” (Richardson 51) is marginalized as “lack[ing ...] argumentative energy”—a “comparatively staid” journal that had “ceased to engage its readership with material which purported to break ground poetically” (Richardson 55, 65). *TISH* 20 through E [45] did lack the “argumentative energy” of the original issues, but it was perhaps a creative space that no longer needed to be a literary proving ground.

2

We were amazingly energetic and regular about getting the magazine out, 19 issues in a row that came out on the 14th of the month [...]. But with the books it was just the opposite. We wd let things lie in heaps forever.
— George Bowering (E-mail to the author. Fall 2002)

During 1962 and 1963 the editors of *TISH* struggled to print “2 published books, 1 partly finished book ([...]assembled without the knowledge of the publisher) one unfinished book, and 1 pamphlet” (Davey, E-mail)—Frank Davey’s *D-Day and After*, Lionel Kearns’ *Songs of Circumstance*, George Bowering’s *Sticks & Stones*, Robert F. Grady’s *On Walking*,² and Samuel Perry’s *Personal Locus: Maximus of Gloucester from Dogtown: Charles Olson*—respectively. As most of these publications were released in extremely limited editions or were never officially distributed, there is minimal critical work done on them; *TISH*books is not addressed, nor even mentioned, in Gervais,

² Robert F. Grady’s *On Walking* was not published, and is unavailable in manuscript form.

Richardson, or Barbour. If the legend of *TISH* “keeps on developing with the years,” as Lionel Kearns noted, *TISH*books have surpassed even that to enter the realm of myth—in some cases there is little evidence of the books’ very existence.

The *TISH*books were collectively authorized by the five eds, but were not edited by them. We decided which books there would be, but left it to the authors to determine the texts that would constitute them (Davey, E-mail).

Editorially, the publications of the *TISH*books imprint were not technically edited by the *TISH* editors, but rather they were primarily publications by the authors, a more permissive node for writing and development of the editor’s own writing:

[T]he policy was very flexible. If any member of the collective had decided to publish a *TISH*book of his own work, for example, or even perhaps a selection of other *TISH* and non-*TISH* poets, it would be discussed in an informal way among the members of the collective and their friends, and a kind of casual consensus decision would be taken. I refer to a “collective,” but it was never so formal as a full-fledged collective, rather, a loose association of people around the production of the magazine. The only time the core collective was fully operative was in deciding the content for particular issues of the magazine. If myself or Dave Cull for example, had proposed publishing his work as a *TISH*book, the only issue might be who would do the work, and who would pay for it. Usually it would be expected that the author would pay, but there was no body of policy which governed this. The author and whoever might be willing to help him would do the design and the typesetting, organize the cover design, etc., in very loose consultation with members of the collective, who were mostly prepared to provide whatever help might be

necessary. In practice, I would think, the consent of Frank Davey and George Bowering as the most influential members of the editorial board, would have been decisive in arriving at any decision of this kind. Their opposition might easily be overruled by a majority. Things were very loose—in the main, individual members of the collective could easily do what they wanted and obtain support from other members in projects of this kind, I would think. [...] I'm pretty strong in my belief though that if I myself had been ready to publish a small chapbook, the others would have simply said go ahead as long as you pay for it and do the work, and then they would have given me what help and advice they could in completing the project, including loans of money to cover temporary shortfalls, writing intros, etc. (Reid, E-mail).

Reid's conjecture that other manuscripts would have been published if brought forward is only that, conjecture, for as Davey notes, "[t]here were no other books considered" (Davey, E-mail).

The first book published by *TISH*books was Frank Davey's *D-Day and After*, published in an edition of 400 numbered copies retailing at 65¢ a copy and initially advertised in *TISH* 7 May 14, 1962. *D-Day and After* was professionally printed at *The Oliver Chronicle* in Bowering's hometown of Oliver, B.C. under the *Rattlesnake Press* imprint, the only *TISH*book to receive such a treatment. *D-Day and After* is novice work, reflecting as Warren Tallman notes in his introduction, a "poet who is still reaching out for the skills and assurances which can emerge" ("Introduction" n. pag.).

As George Bowering has become Canada's first Parliamentary Poet Laureate, a member of the Order of Canada, and has twice won the Governor-General's Award, the second *TISH*book is

probably the most famous, if not infamous, of the publications. Bowering's *Sticks & Stones* was announced as "available soon" in *TISH* 9 but never released for sale nor ever mentioned in *TISH*'s pages again.³ Featuring drawings by Gordon Payne and a preface by Robert Creeley, *Sticks & Stones* was marred from the beginning by poor design and printing:

Margins on some pages—e.g. Creeley intro—end somewhere in the page crease. Unreadable & bad publicity so pages will have to be re-done. But have run out of money both personally and corporationally & can't buy more paper or cover stock (Davey letter to Bowering, 1 June 1962 as quoted in Miki, *A Record of Writing* 4).

Between 30 and 50 copies of *Sticks & Stones* were distributed despite "a collective decision not to bind & distribute [...] because we were so embarrassed by the production quality and our inability to include the drawings" (Davey, E-mail).

Like *D-Day and After*, Bowering's *Sticks & Stones* is young work, also engaging the role of the poet within a community where "words [...] become a world." Announced as "available soon" in *TISH* 9, the third *TISH*book, Robert Grady's *On Walking*, was also eventually abandoned due to printing errors and lack of financial means:

We (Fred [Wah] was the pressman) also printed R. Francis Grady's *On Walking*, but it was also a printing disaster, of the same lousy faint smudged quality as *S & S*. Our

³ For a longer discussion of the problems surrounding the publication of the *TISH*books edition of *Sticks & Stones*, see Roy Miki's "Was It a Real Book or Was It Just Made Up?" in George Bowering's 1989 edition of *Sticks & Stones* and Miki's *A Record of Writing: An Annotated and Illustrated Bibliography of George Bowering*.

problem was that the *TISH* offset press needed an overhaul which we couldn't afford, and that we had wasted all the paper we had invested in to produce the two books and couldn't afford more paper (Davey, E-mail).

Unlike Bowering's *Sticks & Stones*, Grady's book remained unreleased in any form, and ultimately the unbound *On Walking* pages "were to be thrown in the trash along with the *S & S* pages" (Davey, E-mail).

Lionel Kearns' *Songs of Circumstance* was the second book successfully seen through the *TISH*books imprint, despite facing some of the same technical difficulties that the previous two books had faced:

In retrospect, I can see that we perhaps should have had all the books printed by 'real' printers as mine was, although Kearns' stacked verse could have only been set on handtyped and drawn offset masters and printed on an offset press [...] Lionel and George 'typeset' their own books by typing them onto paper or metal offset press masters (we used both) using an IBM electric typewriter that we rented—and Fred tried to do the printing, on our rapidly deteriorating Multilith Model 80 offset press (Davey, Email).

Songs of Circumstance documents Kearns' experimentation with stacked verse; a page-based notational system of "special form to the poem's stress and juncture patterning [...] present[ing] the eye with a visual design which directly corresponds to the poem's formal rhythm" (Kearns "Stacked-Verse" n. pag).

The final *TISH*books publication was Samuel Perry's pamphlet *Personal Locus: Maximus of Gloucester from Dogtown: Charles Olson*,

reprinted from *TISH* 10.⁴ *Personal Locus* was announced for sale at 25¢ in an edition of at least 50 copies in *TISH* 19.⁵ Marked by “printing disaster[s],” a “rapidly deteriorating” press and a lack of money, *TISHbooks* was never really able to become more than an extended experiment in small press publishing, but it did typify the expanding interests of the editors of *TISH* from the newsletter proper into other nodes of discourse and dissemination.

3

Appearing in the same issue as the original publication of Samuel Perry’s essay *Personal Locus: Maximus of Gloucester from Dogtown*: Charles Olson was an announcement for *MOTION: A Prose Newsletter*, the first issue of which was free to subscribers of *TISH*:

* * NOTICE—The first issue of *MOTION* was sent to persons already subscribing to *TISH*, with the belief that those interested in the West Coast poetry movement would also like to know what’s going on out here in prose. This does not mean that *MOTION* will automatically be sent to *TISH* subscribers. On the contrary, *MOTION* will be sent only to those who respond by writing. (*TISH* 10 in *TISH* No.1-19 220)

⁴ It was also later reprinted, after Perry’s death, in a memorial section of *Open Letter* 6 (1967) as guest-edited by Ted Whittaker.

⁵ *TISH* 19’s announcement says that “*TISHbooks* has fifty copies of Samuel Perry’s pamphlet” and Davey in correspondence with the author mentioned that it was “a successful printing, and numerous copies were distributed.”

MOTION: A Prose Newsletter was published for six issues from May through December 1962 as edited by David Cull and Robert Hogg “with great hopes of becoming a burgeoning and integral little mag, alongside *TISH*” (Hogg, E-mail). It was published in the same format as *TISH*, and “originate[d] with the conviction that something must be done—Now—And with the West Coast scene—something is already happening prosewise” (Hogg “Editorial” *MOTION* 1 n. pag.). *MOTION* is very much *TISH*’s companion with a shared location (“published in affiliation with *TISH*books”) and format, overlapping editors, and several of the same contributors, including some members of the *TISH* editorial group. Rarely mentioned in studies of *TISH* or its editors, *MOTION* was “seen as a poor 2nd cousin to *TISH*” (Marlatt, E-mail). Any study of *TISH* must include *MOTION*. It has easily been ignored in the past, because it “failed to really get much excitement beyond [its] immediate circle” (Hogg, E-mail). But as Daphne Marlatt states:

those of us who were interested in writing prose & fiction were delighted when Bob [Hogg] started *MOTION*. it never received the attention that *TISH* did but it was just as important to me as an outlet for work, as news of what was happening in prose, as a way of connecting with other prose/fiction writers—a major connection with Gladys [Hindmarch] for instance. i think *MOTION* was seen as a poor 2nd cousin to *TISH* because the focus was on poetry as THE vehicle for thought & investigation [...] though why it should have been so exclusively poetry i don't know. [...] George [Bowering] was writing fiction all along of course, as were some of the rest of us. but somehow *MOTION* never figured as an innovative landmark, even though the prose being published in it was, or attempted to be (Marlatt, E-mail; original emphasis).

The editorial of the first issue which exhibits a tremendous energy and excitement about new forms of prose, is worth quoting in full:

MOTION originates with the conviction that something must be done—Now—And with the West Coast scene—something is already happening prosewise We want you to know. Which is why *MOTION* is a newsletter / a correspondence, not a mag. And which answers in part what *MOTION* is. The newsletter itself must answer the rest. Much the same for the direction. it will be determined by the fact, the what comes out of editing with a bias for the new, the experimental, the way out. The writers to begin the action / the writing, to begin the motion that follows. The motion will be in the word the final act will imply / show / be the direction as it moves—Ultimately this becomes an individual thing and *MOTION* believes that whereas 2 writers may angle in the same direction they will do so on not only separate, but different paths. Getting there is not a matter of following in footpaths but of exploring new territory / blazing a trail. But to get out of the woods *MOTION* wants to swing outward to experiment with the new. And progress in the prose field is unlimited / is necessary / must be. It must go on. Old bounds must be broken—not so that new restrictions may be imposed, but so that we may realize the freedom we have. We see *MOTION* as a 2 way movement—Interaction is essential to the action. And response (yours) will keep us believing in you sending us more. The fact is this costs money—which *MOTION* does not have. SUPPORT us, and WRITE us, we are writing to you! (Hogg “Editorial” *MOTION* 1 n. pag.; original emphasis).

MOTION was a permissive node for a community of writers, a place to “begin the action / the writing, to begin the motion that follows” (Hogg, “Editorial” *MOTION* 1 n. pag.). As with

TISH, *MOTION* was designed as a newsletter, a community-oriented node where “[i]nteraction is essential to the action” (Hogg “Editorial” *MOTION* 1 n. pag.).

Despite the efforts of its editors, *MOTION* suffered the same financial and technological problems as *TISH* and *TISH*books. *MOTION* changed its publication schedule to bi-monthly with its fifth issue and, despite promises that “[t]he magazine will continue to appear every second month from now on,” it was cancelled completely with its sixth issue, December 25, 1962 (*MOTION* 5 n. pag.). *MOTION* did primarily consist of the work of its two editors David Cull and Robert Hogg; but even that does not necessarily explain its end, as the initial issues of *TISH* also largely published its own editors’ writing:

egotistical as it may seem, [this] is the one justification *MOTION* has for coming out alongside other magazines it cannot hope to compete with. Rather than variety, it depends on consistency, a sense of continuity of style [...] the only fair way to judge the newsletter’s consistency is to look at each new issue as it appears (Hogg “Editorial” *MOTION* 6 n. pag.).

Hogg argues that *MOTION* ceased publication because “there were better looking venues to send prose to, some of wch cd pay! That was probably the chief reason for its demise” (Email). This suggests that *MOTION* was in direct competition with

Prism in Vancouver, *Evidence*, *Tamarack* and *The Fiddlehead* in the East, not to mention all the little mags and large editions in the U.S. publishing prose of all kinds, circulating to wide audiences, and presenting their material in handsome formats (Hogg “Editorial” *MOTION* 6 n. pag.).

This is simply not the case. *MOTION* was no more in competition for contributors or readers with *The Fiddlehead* than it was with *TISH*. *MOTION*'s mandate was never to “circulat[e] to wide audiences” in “handsome formats;” it did not perceive itself as “competition for any of the ‘name brand’ magazines” (Cull “Editorial” 1). *MOTION*'s demise was due to a combination of factors—finances, technology, time, and cultural emphasis. The “rapidly deteriorating Multilith Model 80 offset press” used by *TISH*, *TISH*books, and *MOTION* was an increasing burden on the editors in terms of time and quality of printing, and also financially—it could simply no longer operate sufficiently under the strain of regular monthly publication of two magazines and the occasional book publication. The labour involved in typing masters for each issue of *MOTION* was also prohibitive “insofar as the prose filled the page, whereas the poetry in *TISH* filled only a portion” (Hogg, E-mail).

Despite the support of a small group of readers like Marlatt and Hindmarch, energy levels could not be maintained to support *TISH*, *TISH*books, and *MOTION*. By May 1963 *TISH*books had announced the release of what would prove its final publication; *MOTION: A Prose Newsletter* had ceased publication, and original editors Fredric Wah, Frank Davey, George Bowering, and James Reid were all leaving *TISH*. *TISH* 18 announced the University of British Columbia Summer School Poetry Course (English 410) running from July 24 through August 16, 1963. Organized by Warren Tallman and Robert Creeley, this three-week course featured lectures, panels and discussions by Margaret Avison, Robert Creeley, Robert Duncan, Allen Ginsberg, Denise Levertov, Charles Olson, and Phillip Whalen and would later be known as The Vancouver Poetry Conference. It marked a turning point for *TISH: A*

Poetry Newsletter and its role in the greater Vancouver writing community.

4

The only publications which directly address the 1963 Vancouver Poetry Conference are Carol Bergé's *The Vancouver Report* and *TISH* 21. Bergé's book was described by future *TISH* editor Stan Persky as an "absolutely horrible piece of writing" displaying "how stupid a description of anything can be" (Persky *Oral History* 4). As one of the few published pieces of writing on the conference, however, it should be at least considered. *The Vancouver Report* foreshadows Richardson's *Poetry and the Colonized Mind: TISH* by complaining that "[p]erhaps the Black Mountain Spotted Virus is stoppable; if so, it will be despite the Canadian newspaper *TISH*, otherwise known as Virus Mary," (1) and refers to Vancouver and *TISH* poets in order of their "susceptibility" to Black Mountain's influence. Bergé—like Richardson—talks of the American speakers at the conference in militaristic tones similar to those dismissed by Frank Davey as "superficial jingoism" ("Editorial" *TISH* No. 1–19 155): "The U.S. has sent [...] some of the just-back-from-Mexico brigade; & the I'll-be-living-in-N.Y.-after-this-brigade" (Bergé 1). Bergé's vitriol is not limited to the conference in general and is specifically leveled at Fred Wah and Pauline Butling who Bergé refers to as "asskissing," opportunist "lion-hunters," revealing more about Bergé's own biases than the actual events surrounding the conference (2, 3).

More indicative of the 1963 Vancouver Poetry Conference's effects on the Vancouver community—and the direction of *TISH* after the conference—is *TISH* 21 (September 1963), an

assembled collage published to present

flashes of insight. moments of anger, frustration [...] in some mad order—to give (perhaps more accurately than in any other way) the texture of the conference: a document of response (Dawson “Editorial” *TISH* 21 1).

TISH 21 was the second issue published under the new editorial collective of Peter Auxier, Daphne Buckle [Marlatt], Dave Cull, David Dawson, Gladys [Maria] Hindmarch, and Dan McLeod. As *TISH* re-emerged under a new editorial collective, its role as a *site* for new writing and community shifted to one that both created and reflected a new poetic and political engagement with community.

5

Keith Richardson, in his *Poetry and the Colonized Mind: TISH*, groups *TISH* into four editorial periods roughly corresponding to the involvement of editors; issues 1 through 19, 20 through 24, 25 through 40 and finally issues 41 through E (45). Other than the division between *TISH* 1 through 19 and the later issues (due to the departure of most of the editors after issue 19), I do not believe that this is an overly useful distinction as it foregrounds individual efforts over the collective direction of the magazine and its involvement within the larger community. The post-1963 Vancouver Poetry Conference issues of *TISH* are quite similar in tone to those published before the conference, although the publication schedule—six issues in 1963, five issues each in 1964 and 1965, six issues in 1966, two issues per year in 1967 and 1968, and three issues in 1969, *TISH*'s final year—obviously does not have the sustained focus and energy as did the original nineteen issues. The magazine continued to locate its efforts within Vancouver

geographically, but also continued to signal to its readers what was happening outside of its geographical borders. Keith Richardson, not surprisingly, categorizes *TISH*'s non-geographically limited definitions of community in jingoistic terms. He states that “as *TISH* reduced Canadian cultural ties, it increased west coast U.S. ties” and that the magazine was “concerned to inform readers of the activities of the U.S. poets” that “defined the growing Vancouver—Berkeley cultural axis” (Richardson 58, 59).

Poetry continued to be the main concern of *TISH*. But the number of prose forms—announcements, reviews, letters and essays—increased in later issues. Announcements included information on new releases by *Island*, *The Northwest Review*, *Floating Bear*, *OYEZ*, *Weed*, *Ganglia* as well as past *TISH*-editors' efforts such as *The Open Letter*, *The Niagara Frontier Review*, and *Imago* magazines. Also included were announcements for musical events like “The ‘New Wave’ Jazz” (*TISH* 32), The Jefferson Airplane (*TISH* 33), and Country Joe and the Fish (*TISH* 40), and for “underground” events like those at The Sound Gallery (*TISH* 37) and The Banana Smoke-In (*TISH* 40).

Review space was dedicated to new work by Vancouver writers—bill bissett (reviewed in *TISH* 22), Maxine Gadd (*TISH* 26 and 35) and Roy Kiyōoka (*TISH* 25)—past *TISH* editors—Davey in *TISH* 26, Bowering in *TISH* 29, Fred Wah's *Sum* Magazine in *TISH* 23—alongside more established writers such as Jack Kerouac (*TISH* 22), Robin Blaser (*TISH* 30), and Jerome Rothenberg (*TISH* 37). Letters from readers and contributors included those by Bowering (*TISH* 27), Gary Snyder and Red Lane (both *TISH* 29), Stan Persky and Charles Olson (both *TISH* 38). The later issues of *TISH* also included

several notable essays, including those by Dan Kasowitz (*TISH* 37) and Warren Tallman (*TISH* 33 and 43). Prose obviously continued to have a role with the *TISH* editors—even after the demise of *MOTION: A Prose Newsletter* in 1962—both as a critical and discursive form and as a political and narrative form.

6

In the audience for Jack Spicer's Berkeley lecture in July of 1965 was San Francisco poet Stan Persky. Persky was aware of the Vancouver writing community through Spicer, and from a few encounters with *TISH*, most notably through an exchange with George Bowering about his review of Spicer's *The Heads of the Town Up to The Aether* (*TISH* 14). When Warren Tallman and Ralph Maud offered Persky's partner Robin Blaser a position at Simon Fraser University the two moved to Vancouver in July 1966. Persky first appeared in *TISH* 38 (November 1966) but freely admitted to Brad Robinson in *Oral History of Vancouver: Stan Persky's Section* that his "secret plot was to capture control of *TISH*" (Persky *Oral History* 12).

Persky's original plan was to publish an issue of *TISH* with the cooperation of Jack Spicer and independent of the actual editors:

I almost published an issue of *TISH* while I was in San Francisco in 1965. Spicer, who was up here at the time, was supposed to send down some poems from young poets that he found, & his own poems for *TISH*. He did three poems for *TISH* which never got published at that time in *TISH*. They later did. He was going to send this down & I was going to mimeograph off an issue of *TISH* & zoom it back up to Spicer. It's that demand for the imaginative that

characterizes the politics of poetry that I knew that immediately attracted my attention (Persky *Oral History* 14).

Given Spicer's comments about *TISH* at his Vancouver lectures, it's surprising to hear that he would be interested in effectively guest-editing an issue of *TISH*, although it could have been a way for Spicer and Persky to foreground the kind of experimentalism that they found lacking in *TISH*'s pages. The Spicer/Persky issue was never realized but it does illuminate an issue that Persky struggled with throughout his period with *TISH*, and as a member of the Vancouver community, that of "cultural nationalism" (Persky *Oral History* 12).

Persky's interaction with *TISH* was quite aggressive—challenging *TISH*'s role in Vancouver, and trying to trouble both the editorial position and the position it held in relation to other magazines and communities. He "had some notion of publishing another *TISH*" wanting to "keep the title & publish another magazine called *TISH Local*" (Persky *Oral History* 13). The idea of challenging *TISH* with another magazine called *TISH Local* would have fractured the direction of the magazine at the time (already suffering under a tenuous publication schedule). What Persky did instead was join the editorial collective of *TISH*, change its format completely for the final four issues, run an increasing amount of prose and other nonpoetry forms, develop a relationship with the burgeoning underground newspaper *The Georgia Straight*, and eventually end *TISH*'s production completely.

Persky's first issue of *TISH*, No. 41 (February 1968), brought a completely new look. Gone were the 11" x 14" mimeographed pages, stapled at the corner, and folded twice for mailing. *TISH* was now 8½" x 11" with silk-screened

covers looking like a typical “little magazine.” More importantly, reflecting its occasional publication schedule, *TISH* was no longer subtitled “a poetry newsletter,” it was just *TISH*. This format continued until Persky “came to the conclusion that it shouldn’t exist, that it was false for it to exist” and it ceased publication April 1969 (Persky *Oral History* 14).

The final issues of *TISH* are categorized not just by the new format, but also with an emphasis on anti-academia, social politics, and an increased relationship with *The Georgia Straight* which began publishing in May 1967. For editors Peter Auxier and Dan McLeod *TISH* was increasingly stifling, and not corresponding to the broad range of issues that they wanted to address:

It’s hard to describe where we were at that particular time. We were not, for the most part, a bunch of graduate students with a single vision, or poetic vision apart from the mainstream, as it was before. [...W]e started to look beyond a magazine that communicated to 300 people on a mailing list, and to something bigger than that (Niechoda and Hunter 94).

McLeod and Auxier both left *TISH* just before Persky joined the collective, although McLeod in particular was still a very real presence in *TISH*’s pages. McLeod had been the only editor involved with *TISH* continuously from issue 20 through issue 40 and was vital to the emergence of *The Georgia Straight*. Warren Tallman categorized McLeod’s work as expanding *TISH*’s horizon’s beyond the strictly literary:

most of the major *TISH* movers expanded activity beyond what *TISH* had been. I think that Dan did that in a particular way, when he moved from those numbers in *TISH* where he was the main editor actually, into the early

Georgia Straight, which was a much more public forum [...] It was keeping up an expanded literary activity (Niechoda and Hunter 95).

This sense of “expanded literary activity” is most obvious in *TISH* D [44]. As a move designed to “send bibliographers, librarians, rare butterfly collectors, litter-rare-y experts, etc., climbing up the ivy covered walls,” the magazine—starting with issue 44—was lettered instead of numbered, so that the last two issues were *TISH* D and E respectively. Persky’s move to re-number the issues and send academics “climbing up the ivy covered walls” echoes Spicer’s earlier comments in 1965 that

most of the poets from, say, nineteen to twenty-seven that I know, who are good in San Francisco, are really against education because they know that education is essentially going to fuck them up because they know they can’t resist [...] not to arrange themselves them themselves instead of letting them be arranged by whatever is the source of the poem (Gizzi 9).

Spicer’s work continued to appear in *TISH* through the efforts of Persky even after Spicer’s death in 1965. In another move orchestrated to frustrate the academy and scholarly research, the poem “Five Variations on the Earth” appeared in *TISH* D[44] attributed to Spicer and ostensibly dictated to the editors of *TISH* on Spicer’s “44th birthday (Jan. 30, 1969)” as a means of “warn[ing] off those seeking to bring out definitive editions of his early poems” (Persky “Bibliographic” n. pag.). Like Persky’s efforts to frustrate bibliographers of *TISH*, the “Five Variations on the Earth” were written and published so that “even the most faithful students of [Spicer’s] work will be hard put to decide what is and what is not Jack Spicer” (Persky

“Bibliographic” n. pag.).

This anti-establishment position was increasingly apparent in *TISH*, and especially in *TISH D*'s editorial which aligns itself with communal activity and an outsider mindset:

D (as in, guess what that you smoke, drop or shoot up) is a *TISH*-takes-a-trip issue, held together by the fact that all the writers are involved in communes, free schools, experimental programs, hippie-rural-reconstruction and the like. (Reading it again, more seriously, it's an issue of folkwriting) (Persky “Bibliographic” n. pag.).

TISH D [44], as “folk-writing,” acts as a container for some of the energy and writing that was occurring in Vancouver. *TISH D* [44], in addition to large amount of poetry, opens with Dylan Cramer's “To All of the Dear ‘Night People,’” a plea for responsibility to community, and also includes two prose pieces: Dan McLeod's “The Underground Newspaper Editor” and Stan Persky's “October 26, 1968.”

“The Underground Newspaper Editor” is a prose telling of a single day's work by Dan McLeod as editor of *The Georgia Straight* and how that role intersects with his personal life. The interaction between the personal and the social—the private and the public—becomes blurred in McLeod's essay where “the tension of this day, along with the futility of trials, endless official harassment, and on top of that not being able to eat over the sadness of lost love” (McLeod n. pag.). Having just been at court facing libel and obscenity charges for his work at *The Georgia Straight*, McLeod wanders to UBC to find solace and relaxation. What he found instead was that UBC “seemed like a prison” and the library “seemed like a cage” (McLeod n. pag.). Considering *TISH*'s history, it is quite telling to have UBC

described as a “prison” by one of *TISH*’s editors. McLeod’s essay illustrates how *TISH* had moved beyond its own original intention and confines and become a social magazine. Frank Davey’s editorial in *TISH* 1 states that *TISH* “is the result and proof of a movement, which we, the editors, feel is shared by other people as well as ourselves” (“Editorial” *TISH* No.1–19 13). In the context of *TISH* 1 that “movement” was a poetic one formed by students in relation to its “siring movement,” Black Mountain College and the work of Creeley, Duncan, and Olson. Davey’s comments could have just as easily been written in *TISH*D, but the “movement” had shifted away from the politics of poetry (poetics) to the politics of the social—the community—and the role of the poet within that community.

“October 26, 1968” is also political prose. Persky takes issue with the intentions of the organizers of a political rally “coordinated by a bunch of uptight assholes, inveigling the walkers to chant slogans in unison at the dark homogenous mass of onlookers” (Persky “October” n. pag.) as not respecting open communication and allowing political power to remain with the people, instead of with organizers. In a breathless, driving passage Persky argues that:

if there’s going to be some talking, it could not be the haranguing style that is used to persuade those who don’t agree but which actually only frightens them more, but some serious talk about what’s happened since we last met, an effort to understand where it’s going, without the need to condemn, since we’re all more or less convinced anyway, and then something about what we’re doing in the city, in the community, with each other” (Persky “October” n. pag.).

TISH had become both a place to document and to explore what the editors and the larger community were “doing in the city, in the community, with each other” (Persky “October” n. pag.).

For nine years *TISH* was a permissive node of activity within community in Vancouver. As the role of *The Georgia Straight* as “Vancouver’s free press” increased to become a voice for both underground and literary activity, the need for *TISH* decreased. *TISH*’s social mandate had grown to include extra-literary and cross-artistic concerns, concerns that could no longer be met in the restricted form of a “poetry newsletter” with a distribution of 300 copies, distributed primarily by mailing list and through a few select bookstores. The community had outgrown the restraints of *TISH*, and needed a voice which reached beyond “a poetry newsletter.” As Stan Persky said in *Oral History of Vancouver: Stan Persky’s Section*, *TISH* helped enable “the beginning of poetry in this particular place [Vancouver]. Suddenly the city has an imagination. It didn’t have one before, a collectivity” (21).

TISH: A Poetry Newsletter Issues 20 through E [45]

*Note: This index uses the same format and structure as that in TISH
No. 1–19 by Frank Davey (1974).*

1. Index to Authors and Poets

- Auxier, Peter. 20:8, 10–11; 21:14; 22:7; 23:13–14; 26:13–14;
27:10; 34:10–12.
- and Dan McLeod. 28:12.
- Bergé, Carol. 22:6; 34:3–4.
- bissett, bill. 32:11; 33:11; 34:6–10; E:16.
- Blaser, Robin. 42:2–8; 43:8–10.
- Bowering, George. 20:2; 22:9; 23:6; 26:10–11; 28:7–8; 30:12–13;
32:7–8; 33:12; 35:12.
- Boyle, Jim. 29:4.
- Bromige, David. 22:10; 25:8–9; 35:9–11.
- Bruce, Geron. 43:2–3; E:10–14.
- Buckle, Daphne [Marlatt, Daphne]. 20:7–8, 12; 21:11–13; 22:3–
4; 23:8–9; 24:6–7; 26:7–8; 27:5; 28:5–7; 30:2; 31:7; 32:6;
36:11; 39:2–3.
- Cacchioni, Mark. D:15.
- Candelaria, Frederick. D:23.
- Caplan, Ronald. 25:3–4.
- Coleman, Victor. 25:3; 41:12.
- Copithorne, Judith. 30:10; 37:5–6.
- Cull, David. 20:3–4; 21:3–4; 9–10; 22:10–11; 23:4–5; 24:8; 25:12;
26:6; 28:2; 29:5–8; 30:11; 32:2–4; 43:20–22.
- Davey, Frank. 24:2–3; 30:8.
- Dawson, David. 20:5; 22:13–14; 24:10; 25:10; 27:4; 29:11; 30:9;
31:5–6; 34:4–5.
- di Prima, Diane. 40:5.
- Doheny, Pip. D:3–5.
- Douglas, Fred. 39:9–11.

Eigner, Larry. 24:3; 26:5; 27:8–9; 30:3.
Ellingham, Louis. E:17.
Eshleman, Clayton. 40:7–12.
Fawcett, Brian. 43:4–5.
Felson, Larry. E:9.
Fletcher, Terence J. 31:6.
Gadd, Maxine. 26:2; 31:8–10; 39:4–6.
Gilbert, Gerry. 38:7–9.
Ginsberg, Allen. E:2–4.
Grady, Robert F. 30:3–5; 32:9.
Hawkins, Bill. 30:6–7.
Heyman, George. E:18–20.
Hindmarch, Gladys [Maria]. 26:12; 27:6–7
Hogg, Bob. 20:13; 25:4–6; 26:11–12; 31:10–12.
Hollo, Anslem. 23:9.
Hoover, Neap. 40:3–4.
Johnson, Karen. 21:4–5.
Kearns, Lionel. 24:11–12; 25:6–7; 28:3–5; 30:14; 38:3–6.
Keys, John. 23:10; 30:15.
Lattey, Steve. 41:4–5.
Lawrence, Scott. 30:10; D:6–7.
Marlatt, Daphne. see *Buckle, Daphne*.
Matthews, Mike. 23:6; 25:7.
McFadden, David. 31:2; 37:9–12; 38:10–11.
McKinnon, Barry. 37:7; 41:7–8.
McLeod, Dan. 20:6; 22:1–2; 24:5; 26:7; 31:12; 32:10; 39:12; 40:2;
42:18.
Melanga, Gerard. 28:10–11; 31:3–4; 32:5–6; 35:12; 36:7–10.
Neil, Al. 35:6–9; 39:7–8.
Newlove, John. 32:10–11; 34:2.
Olson, Charles. 24:4–5.
Perchik, Simon. 22:8, 41:11.
Persky, Stan. 42:16–17; 43:16–19.

Perry, Sam. 28:9–10.
 Plymell, Charles. 36:12.
 Reid, Jamie. 21:12; 24:9; 28:2; 30:16–18.
 Riley, Jim. 43:25.
 Robinson, Brad. 41:6, 9–10; 42:12–15, 19–21; 43:23; E:5–8.
 Robinson, Lally. 43:24 Spicer,
 Jack. 42:9–11; D:10–14.
 Stanley, George. 43:6–7; E:21.
 Stuart, Colin. 31:3; 41:2–3.
 Suys, Henk. 40:6.
 Tallman, Karen. 43:15; D:19–20.
 taylor, nancy. D:16–17.
 Vallejo, César. 36:2–6.
 Wade, John Stevens. 37:8.
 Wah, Fred. 20:9.
 Wakowski, Diane. 30:4.
 Wilson, Keith. 36:12.
 Wisnicki, Michael. 27:7–8.
 Wood, Wilbur. E:15.

2. Index to Articles, Reviews and Correspondence.

anon. Review of *SUM* #1. 23:11–12.
 —. “The E at Delphi” E:22–24.
 Blaser, Robin. “excerpt from *Particles*” 41:13.
 Boggs, W. Arthur. Letter. 24:2.
 Bowering, George. “The most remarkable things about *TISH*”
 20:2.
 —. “Kerouac’s Brother,” review of Jack Kerouac’s *Vision of
 Gerard*. 22:5.
 —. Letter. 27:2–3.
 —. “Blaser and Levertov” Review of Robin Blaser’s *The Moth
 Poems* and Denise Levertov’s *O Taste and See*. 30:5–6.

- Byrne, Rick. Letter. 42:22–23.
- LA CASA DEL HOMBRE. Letter. 21:11. Cramer, Dylan, “To all the dear ‘Night People’.” D:2.
- Cull, David. “a review ‘I come back to the geography of it’—olson (some notes on source).” 23:7.
- Davey, Frank. Letter. 20:9
- Dawson, David. “Editorial.” 20:4
- . “A Reaction” Review of Robert Peterson’s *Home for the Night*. 25:11.
- . “One reaction to” Review of Frank Davey’s *City of Gulls and Sea*. 26:9–10.
- . “NOTES:” [Review of George Bowering’s *Points on the Grid*]. 29:9–10.
- Financial Collection Agencies Ltd.* Letter. 27:3
- Gadd, Maxine. Letter. 26:3–5.
- Hindmarch, Gladys [Maria]. Review of *Blew Ointment* #1. 22:12–13.
- Hogg, Bob. Review of Roy Kiyōoka’s *Kyoto Airs*. 25:2.
- Kasowitz, Dan. “A Description of ‘Apprehensions’: The Tantomounce” 37:3–4.
- Lane, Red. Letter. 29:2–4.
- Loewinsohn, Ron. “Weels, Pumps, Springs, Fountains: Notes Springing from a poem by Maxine Gadd; with voices of spirits.” 35:2–6.
- McLeod, Dan. “Editorial: a note.” 30:2.
- . Review of Jerome Rothenberg’s *The Gorkey Poems*. 37:2.
- . “The Underground Newspaper Editor.” D:8–9.
- Olson, Charles. Letter. 38:2. Persky, Stan. Letter. 38:2.
- . “October 26, 1968.” D:18.
- . “Bibliographic Soap Opera.” D:21.
- Reid, Jamie. Review of Robert Kelly’s *Her Body Against Time*. 23:2–3.

—. Letter. 29:2.

Snyder, Gary. Letter. 29:4.

Tallman, Warren. "Robert Creeley's Rimethot." 33:2–10.

—. "Williams' Perception in the Accident." 43:11–14.

MOTION: A Prose Newsletter Issues 1 through 6

1. Index to Authors and Artists.

bissett,

bill. 5:Cover Cahil,

Philip. 3:3–5

Coull, Barry. 6:2–5

Cull, David. 1:8–9; 2:2–3; 3:7–9; 4:4–5; 5:6–8; 6:10–11

Davey, Frank. 1:7–8; 2:4–5

Eigner, Larry. 3:9–10

Grady, Robert F. 2:5–6

Hindmarch, Gladys [Maria]. 4:5–8; 6:12

Hogg, Robert. 1:3; 2:6–8; 5:2–6; 6:6–10

Jasper, Lori. 1:2–3; 3:2–3; 4:2–4

Johnson, Carol. 3:5–7

Morgan, Phil. 6:Cover

Paul, Jim. 2:Cover

Reid, Jamie. 1:4–7

Young, Ted. 1:Cover

2. Index to Articles, Reviews and
Correspondence.

Cull, David. "Editorial." 3:2

—. "Editorial." 4:2

—. "Editorial." 5:2

Hogg, Robert. "Editorial." 1:2

—. "Editorial." 2:2

—. “Editorial.” 6:2

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19–20.

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