

Fall 1977

## Two Poems

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### Recommended Citation

Trifilio, Jim (1977) "Two Poems," *CutBank*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 9 , Article 20.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank/vol1/iss9/20>

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## **THE WISDOM OF YOGA ON THE PLAINS OF ABRAHAM**

I was bringing trouble again.  
Without feeling any small pain,  
I calculated this grim look  
and that unfinished sentence and left  
the door open,  
pulled back in my hole like a wounded badger  
and headed for the field where Montcalm fought Wolfe,  
intent on a giant loss of perspective.

These people, rolling in hot pursuit  
and snuggling in trees;  
“Alive! Men died here. In fifteen  
minutes of battle  
two men became street names.  
The ground you’re on breathes;  
it breathes. You might  
see things move.  
If these canons could still deliver  
I’d march you off the cliffs.”

No lotus today.  
This great tension steals my stretch,  
leaves me on my back.

I hate my hands for what they feel.  
On cold nights I’ve stayed awake  
imagining stiff legs with paws growing  
from my shoulders and hips and running  
until I never got tired.  
Or I’d settle for roots.  
Or scales.  
Feathers.

This river bends with me,

my blood flowing like its fish  
through arms and legs,  
a delta of dredged-up bitterness:  
about to give in  
when the day draws the poison off  
like good salt water.

## THE PREPARATION OF THE OUTER MAN

is a serious affair.

Before anything else, wash your hands.

You are leaving a world behind

and your stride must be gauged between logs & rapids

and the dens of old beavers.

Think of the head.

Cover it, and cover it again on cold nights

for heat rises faster here

than graylings to fat grubs, but does not return.

And remember the small in the wilderness,

screening them to a distance, keeping the vital tubes & sockets,

the great rush of air,

believing in each other.

Wear your parka like a little house,

for if all else fails you must live there

until rescue, shelter, redemption or resurrection arrives and

convinces you that a burning log heats better

than the burrowing of mice under your ear

or the cough of a wolverine moist on your neck.

What you wear on your feet should not touch the ground

and if ever invited

to go barefoot by moss or pine needles

do so immediately,

abandoning boots to high limbs and dancing

until you melt.

Now, in heat for the forest and Barren Grounds,

consider the maps. Draw on them;

circles of intended confusion, lines showing true north,

good spots for cabins or battalions of wolves.

Turn then with your eyes into bogs, hummocks or

mountains ragged with youth;

and this must be done in all good faith,

never doubting the eyesight of explorers  
or the drift of their logic, just as you recognize the  
sun & moon and can name each in order, day after night.  
But if you find plains where swamps should be  
or boreal forests rising from lake-beds and  
can no longer believe in topography, geography or even  
the stars, give in  
to all mad impulses, run wildly through scrub pine,  
drop all that you carry and hope  
for the slow sleep of a deep canyon.