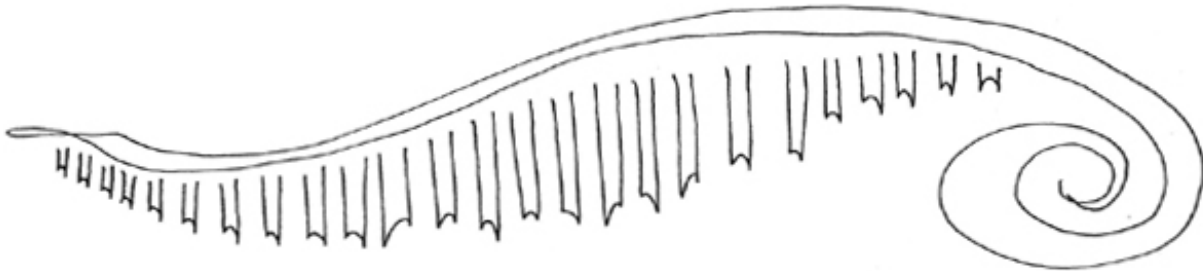


ENGRAVINGS OF SNAKES

poetry by Michael McClure

illustrated by Nancy Victoria Davis

ENGRAVINGS OF SNAKES was written in 1984 during ten days travelling from San Francisco to Iceland to Amsterdam through former Yugoslavia and through Germany and back to San Francisco. The poem beginning with *IT'S ALL A TRIP* is for Benn Possett and the poem beginning with *THE OCEAN SCHURRS AND SLUSHES* is for Vojo Sindolic.



ENGRAVINGS OF SNAKES

**that pour from the mind
freeing the music that's
seldom confined.**

**HUGE
RAW
FACE**

in

a

tinted

MIRROR

**seen from the corner
of the eye.**

MY

CRY

bursts me!

That's liberation.



LET THERE BE NO SILENCE

BUT THE GLANCE

of Love

from time

to time.

**A line is all the words
that sense can bear!**

S

H

A

M

ROCKS

and panties

(pink) in the dawn

like assholes

in a blot

of light.

**You see
what I am shown!**

2:18 & 34 sec a.m. Reikjavic, Iceland 3/19/84



**A SPLENDOR
AMONG SHADOWS
A CROW IN FLIGHT
across the arctic night,
the roar of gold
in Switzerland
are things
that gods
and foxes
understand
but the softness
of a new plum blossom
confutes the hand.**

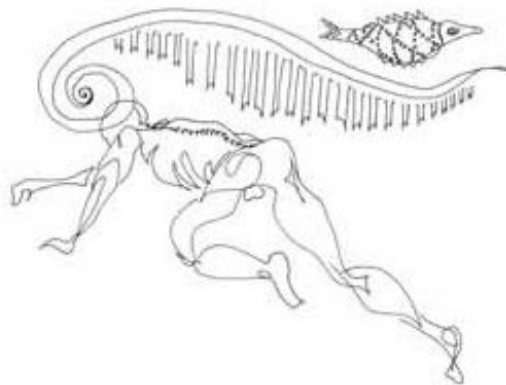
2:33 a.m. Reikjavik



ROSES...GOLD... HUNGRY

sables claw their cages
Cocks
in rages
turn the muscles
to automatons.
The
special light
of gloaming
stays the same
whether we are home
or roaming
with a sword
that slashes up the sheathe.
Let's breathe
untampered air!

2:42 a.m. Reikjavik



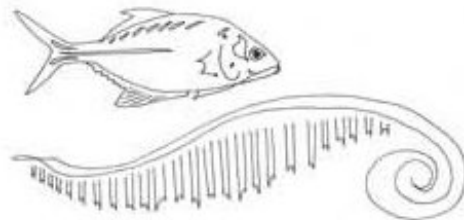
ISOLATION IS MY RATION

like the dumbs
of tweedledee.
out
there
the wind is howling.
Whistling
through my window

nurses me. I'm a feather
on the scales waiting
for a soul
to come to be.



**THE ACCEPT
ANCE OF BOURG
EOIS VAL
ues makes him
a
man
like me
((wrinkles o'er his eyes))
but
I
am
wild
and shakey
dreaming here.
No different.
Pleasure and suspicion.**



**NOT MYSELF OUTSPOKEN
BUT**

all others inspoken.
Anarchy is the mother
of order
and
I
am
dis-
ordered. Ordure
is not
my element
Clock reflected in cyl-
inder of brass.
White clouds of snow.
Long sleek legs of a ballerina
trapped on a screen of lighted
flick ers / flick

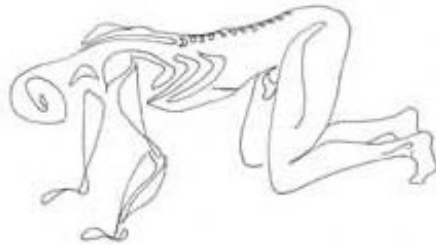


IMAGE IN NATION
bursts
from marble in winged
faces
while plays take place
within
a surface
of black
velvet!
Soft flesh
of the halibut
laced
with red caviar.
D
R
E
A
R
winds
in the lonely ear.

Reikjavik Dinner with CIA agent?



plane to Amsterdam

**IT'S ALL A TRIP
in which we lie on beds
and write our faces.**

**The traces
of what we leave
behind
stand before us.**

**The night is morning
and horns blow
while the engine races.**

**SMILES
move toward
me through
the falling snow
while hailstones melt
into a bank of sleet.
The whine becomes a hum
of self-assurance**

**"M
E
R
S
I
O
N**

**of missy,"
says our dead hero!
His soft features embedde
in nirvana.**

USE IT UP! BURN IT DOWN! EAT IT!

The pale brown halibut
baked with red caviar,
the potato
dancing
in the movements
of the icy earth,
the youth that's trembling
in the birth
of the last goodbye
that tightens
like a sphincter
when we cry
and shout or laugh
against it.
Elfin trees in windowsills.

LANDING, FALLING, RISING,
PUTTING THE WHEELS TO THE EARTH,
birthing ourselves out
of ourselves -- the pers-
onal cliches gaining
new girth
as
the
old
thoughts
(not bon mots)
drop
from the head
of wood (but like elves)
looking for mirth
THEY STARE AT THE CITY
all their little pink pricks
in the air
&
BIG
BROWN
EYES !

Amsterdam

HERE I AM A FREE MAN
seducing the shadows
of children. On
the blue wall
which
is a picture they
shoot guns -- which
crack -- and they
roll
around.
The ground
that I stand on
is love (and lust
itself).
CHEWING
soft rw herring

with my teeth.
Sciamachy in
REAL LIFE !

Hotel room Amsterdam

"SLOW DOWN, SLOW DOWN, SLOW DOWN,"
sing the voices
like Goethe's spirits
and I sit at the window
astonished at the ancient red brick
building and the fog rising
in the cool morning
amidst more of same.

Next
I will move
like the ghost of Jean Seberg
and step into the wait-
ing taxi and slide
through the fresh down
to a silver bird.
This is lovely as the memory
of raw herring with chopped
onion and a slice of pickle
on a paper plate.

AND THERE'S THE MOON
-- a silver lozenge --
in the pale blue sky
&
autos
starting.

Morning after big Amsterdam poetry reading

Zagreb airport

WE MUST DESTROY THIS ORDER,
said the Dadaists,
whether in Iowa
or in Zagreb.
WALL.
HAMMER.
BANG.
SNOUT.
PEARL.
It did not work.
The glory failed
and muscled spirit grew
to flatten out
the world!

LOOK AT THOSE FUCKING PLANTS
in the windows
(bananas and *philodendron*
monstera deliciosa)
The people here

are zombies waiting
for breakfast -- hung over,
dreary, erect, eyes half-
closed making
the best
of it.
Outside the air
is chill and full
of the stench
of coal smoke.
Probably
last night there was slivovitz
and passionate declamation.

Beograd after

THE OCEAN SCHURRS AND SLUSHES

and slurs like Jack said
and I hear it
here in the city of Dubrovnik
meaning
"little
grove"
&
I'm
always
putting too much into
a poem --
like a fleck of ashes
on this beige, orange, furred
plastic cverlet
as
I
lie
in
bed
waking up from my dreaming
wondering
what the ocean said
and thinking of chic women
with sly eyes and the gulls
nestled half awake
in Adriatic sand.

Tell me what truth is;
let me smell the breath of Picasso
and Pollock.

I've always wanted
to be only one
and I'm
ten thousand!

I LOVE MY CRIMES! FUCK GUILT!

Let me not be caught

B

U

T

triumph

in my sneaky

secrecy

-- and long endure

like an olive or a red

wood tree! For

joy is all

That I can grab

when I

can get it.

Forget all righteous

solidarity

-- we're locked

in games

together!

Love and hate are forms of whether.



Beograd to Frankfort

SURE, THEY'LL BE PLAYING GREENSLEEVES

(on airlines)

in eternity

&

you'll

be on your knees

and sucking me.

Little bells and whirring

buzzes. Scuzzy
thoughts of morning
in
the
thought
of man and Lion

THIS
dear friend
and enemy,
is nature.

TREE FULL OF BLACK AND WHITE MAGPIES

at the edge of the airstrip
-- then a kestrel making
a sleek turn
and a reddish brown hawk
hunched on a brach.

His
crop
is
full
as mine is.

Little rivers in ox bows, snake
across the plain --
meltings from the mountains
above Dubrovnik.

((remembering Dubrovnik airport))

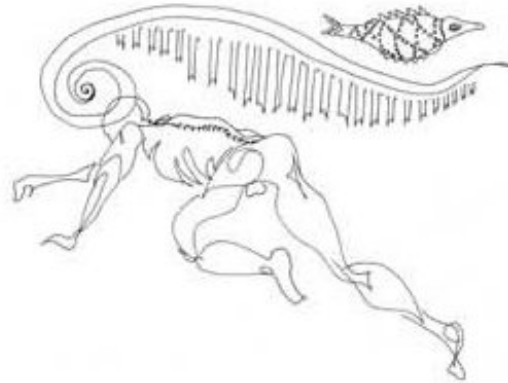


Beograd to Frankfort

**PUT THE LITTLE SKINS
back on the minks
their mothers loved them
and they growled**

and played with
their brothers and sisters.
They should be out there
killing birds and rabbits
with sharp
white teeth
at the side
of a stream.

**THE
AIR
HERE**
is vivid
with ozone
and not pleasant.



Beograd to Frankfort

**NEVER
HAVE
I
HAD**
such a sense of self.
**I am my pelt and my pelf
alone and whirring
-- purring
inside and mindless
as a patch of moss
on a log
on a mountaintop
in
California
when the rain
is pouring
and pinetrees
stand like Leonardo's
fortresses of shapes in the fog.**



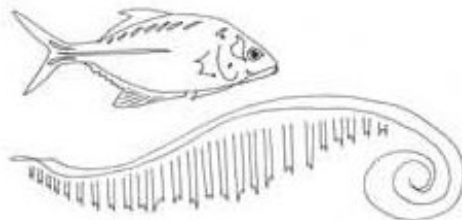
NO MORE OF THE SAME OLD SHIT

**FALSE CANDOR, POMPOSITTY
and cancer of the forest**

**Haig
spouting
self-praise
like a geyser,
racism, cleany and dirty
streets, and sheets.**

**Now
everything
is once
again
be
ginning**

Love and false imposture

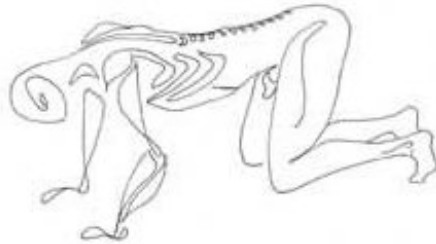


THE TROUBLE WITH REVOLUTION

is that

it eats
itself

unlike
the Alps which
hang
there in grey besnowed
escarpements.
Dekooning going slickly
on and on -- Max Beckmann
ever
screaming
in his pain.
Each
realm
knows
it is and isn't all
the same.



YOU ARE THE SAME ONE
BUT
you're blonde now
and
before you had green
eyeliner and entered my life
as
a
steamship
in the twenties entered a harbor
with the screech of gulls and creak
of hawsers

Tyrolean hatted men
lead
Russian wolfhounds on the Marienplatz.



A WHIRL OF BEGINNINGS
is
necessary
for a new confusion
-- as is a storm of confusions to a new
start.
A
series
of confessions
that break the heart
is
raw
majesty
and myriadness of spirit.
Each thing we devour
is a radiant star.
GLITTER OF TINTED GREY GLASS!





Michael McClure, a founding member of the Beat Generation, is noted for his popularity of his dynamic poetry readings. At the age of twenty-two he gave his first poetry reading at the Six Gallery, in the event that began the Beat Generation and the San Francisco poetry scene. Michael McClure is more active than ever, performing his poetry in venues as diverse as the The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, N.Y.U., The Bottom Line, and the Iron Horse Coffee house.

"The Los Angeles Times characterized McClure as "The role model for Jim Morrison." McClure's music sources range from Miles Davis and Thelonius Monk, to the rock with which his poetry performances frequently share a bill. McClure's own songs include Mercedes Benz, popularized by Janis Joplin.

For years McClure has been working with his friend The Doors keyboardist Ray Manzarek. They play clubs, colleges and festivals like the Jack Kerouac Festival, and TV appearances on the shows of David Sanborn and Dennis Miller. *The Poetry Flash* described one of the poet's readings: "McClure-dressed in black---stood and uttered his words with a sort of sultry precision. His gestures punctuated his words, entralling, enlisting a dynamic tension between audience and performer that didn't let up till the words stopped."

McClure is featured in several films, among the *Scorcese's Last Waltz*, and *Beyond The Law* by Norman Mailer. McClure is the author of the prize-winning and scandal-provoking play *The Beard* which was arrested by the police fourteen nights in a row in Los Angeles. He is an accomplished novelist hailed by the *New York Times*. McClure has written the autobiography of his Hell's Angel friend, *Freewheelin Frank Secretary of the Angels* and the afterword to Jim Morrison's biography, as well as the text for Dennis Hopper's book of photographs.

McClure has published three new books of poetry in the last year: *Touching the Edge*, *Huge Dreams*, and *Rain Mirror*.



Nancy Victoria Davis is a painter, illustrator, book designer, installation artist and co-founder of Big Bridge Press. Born in New York and raised in Ada, Alabama, she took the big bridge to California in 1975, and since then has surrounded herself with art and nature. In addition to operating a tropical plant nursery, she has been inspired by poetry and illustrated the works of Jim Harrison, Allen Ginsberg, Philip Whalen, Michael McClure, Andrei Codrescu, and Joanne Kyger. She has been awarded The Rounce and Coffin Award for her design and illustration of "What The Fish Saw," and her broadside "Elegy For The Dusky Seaside Sparrow" was chosen as Best Broadside of The Year by *Fine Print Magazine*. Her work has been exhibited at the New York Public Library, the San Francisco Public Library, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art Rental Gallery. Her illustrations have appeared in *Exquisite Corpse*, *Nerve Bundle Review*, *Mike & Dale's Younger Poets* and [Cafe Review](#).