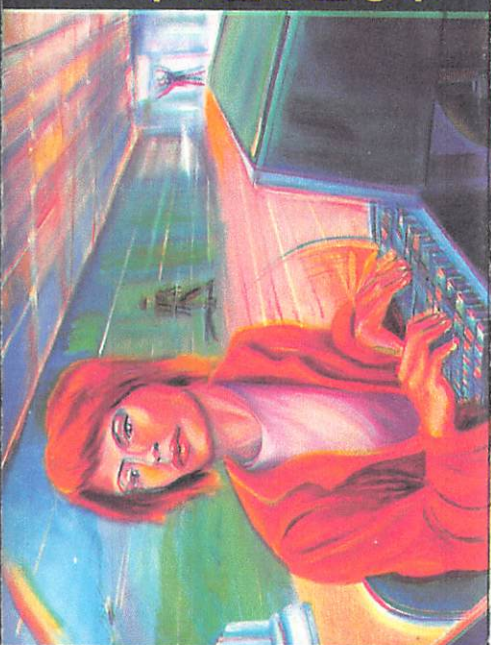


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VEHEMENCE BILL MOHR

Act 1: The Rival • Panchito's Tacos • Earthquake • Naked Chef • Your Skin • Many Years Ago • Magnon Rival • Sunset Blvd • Tough To Please

Act 2: Vehemence • The Drop • Canvas • Doubleheader • Com-plexities • Odd Duck • Obscenely Bath • Navy Brat • Flooding the Engine • Tattoo • Vehemence • Answer • Broadcasting • Otrison

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Act 3: Heart of the World • Trampolists • Kites • Apt. No. 6 • Fire Shadow • Scorpio • The Other • Landscape • Nameless Dread • Contestant • Candles/Wishes • Soul 13 • Monk • Radio Solitude • Heart of World • Good Weight • Growing Poems, Grown

NARC 095 • CRO2



VEHEMENCE Bill Mohr

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26. *Fire Shadow* (:49) The period between Patti Smith's *Horses* and the Clash's *London Calling* was extraordinary, in many ways far more interesting than the so-called golden age of '64-'69. The album I associate with this poem is John Hiatt's "Stug Lins."

27. *Scorpio in the Summer* (:50) I was helping out Walter Hadler and other playwrights (Murray Mednick, Irene Fornes) at the Padua Hills Theater Festival in the summer of 1979. Miles Frieden and I were roommates. The last I heard he was living in Japan.

28. *The Other* (1:32) You'll have noticed by now that I don't talk much about the symbolism of any particular image. I would like to drop one hint about this poem, though. If you don't know what it feels like to touch the trunk of a silk floss tree, you won't comprehend the full meaning of the poem.

29. *Landscape with Cows* (:34) This poem also has a companion poem, "Proportions," which is based on a painting by Jim McVicker. It hung on my workroom wall for months before I reluctantly admitted I'd never save enough money to buy it. Someday I hope that Jim will do a cover for a book of my poems and I'll hang that on my wall.

30. *Nameless Dread* (1:01) for Judith Morris. I wrote most of this poem on a lunch bag one afternoon.

31. *The Contestant: Medusa's 10am Game Show* (1:08) This appears to be the first in a sequence of poems using "classical" characters. I recently wrote a poem about Oedipus joining a circus as an elephant trainer.

32. *Candies/Wishes* (3:24) The argument that many readers have with Whitman is that the work seems more like prose than poetry. In fact, that's just what it is — prose poetry and I don't understand what the problem is in acknowledging it as such. Ginsberg's "Howl" is prose poetry too, as is Ron Silliman's "Tjantling". It's not long-lined poetry. "Verse" is an interesting concept — it's something that measures itself like a boat gauging a

continental shelf. Poetry is more concerned about the spot where the shelf breaks off and the descent to the abyss begins.

33. *Setel 13* (1:10) I was driving east on Olympic Blvd. late one afternoon a few days before Easter, 1997, when I realized my car really could use washing.

34. *Maak* (1:06) I myself am not especially interested in meditation. For one thing, my legs, when crossed, fall asleep very quickly. The poem is a retelling of a story about Daruma, the first patriarch of Zen, who crossed the Yangtze River on a loaf. The last four words of the poem are Daruma's answer to a question from the Emperor.

35. *Radio Solitude* (2:13) I get into a car, start it up and the radio churns out its music. It's always amazed me how the volume is much louder when I'm driving by myself. In fact, I don't like to listen to the radio in the car if I'm with someone else.

36. *Heart of the World* (1:00) Like the Orbison poem, the composition started with a science image. I would like to write more poems like this, to move towards a more abstract comprehension of consciousness.

37. *Good Weight* (2:02) This poem is another examination of a theme raised in my first book, "Where does the light in our dreams come from?"

38. *Growing Bones, Growing/The "OM" Poem* (1:50) I've never made any particular habit out of chanting, but one evening I walked down to the beach and this poem arrived as a unit. It owes far more to Kit Robinson's "ladder/spine" poems and to Michael McClure's "Personal Universe Deck" than to any influence of meditation.

Tough To Please (Mohr-Agata 3:53)

Rich Agata — vocals; Simeon Guyot — guitars;
Taras Prodanluk — bass; Marcy Szarazna — keyboards;
Ed Marx — drums; Produced and engineered by
Bob Szarazna at the West 1st Street Shop

Friends I want to thank: Cathay Gleason, Bob & Judy Chnelio, Brooks & Lea Ann Rodden, Bob & Lois Warden, Brent Madcock & Patsy Wright, Harley Lond, Jack & Lori Grapes, Michael Andrews, Lynn McGee, Alicia Ostriker, Harry Harthup, Holly Prado, Suzanne Lumms, Craig Bolotin, Peter Levitt, Phoebe MacAdams, Paul Trachtenberg & Bob Peters, Sandra Mendelsohn Rubin, Carl Sedon, Michael McClure, Joe Seftie, Peter Schneider, Jim Moore, Michael Kincaid, Al Greenstein, Dennis Cooper, Mark Salemo, John & Susan Groves, Deborah & Wayne Clayton, Kit Robinson, Jim McVicker & Terry Oats, Jim Conn, Steve Wolf, Charles Macaulay, Michael Hannon & Nancy Dahl, John Thomas & Philomena Long, Joan Rosenfeld, Steve Davis, George Smith, Jocelyn Gibbs, Jack Skelley, Lyn Hejliman, my buddies at Century Cable, Ron Silliman, Michael Lally, Doren Robbins & Linda Grand, Al Berry (who's kept my cars running the past ten years), Dinah Berland & Richard Garcia, Jimm Cushing, John Doe, Karl Rlemer, Sara Mautsby, Dick Barnes, Ivan Spiegel, John Brander, Jordan Jones, Max Benevidex, Exche Cervonka, Kathy Andes, Michael C. Ford, Charles Webb, Martin Epstein, Dianna Seay, Marta Chaffee, Judith Morris, Dave Alvin, Bob Flanagan, Sherri Rose, Leo Rossi, Wanda Coleman, Austin Straus, Dennis Eilman, my fellow worktime toilers in R&R's production department (Rich, Kent, Lucie, Don, Tim, Terry, Gary, Richard, Roger and Marilyn, with an extra nod of appreciation to Bob and Dick), Penny Dezen & Carolyn Ries & all our students at Phoenix High School and, especially, James Krusoe.



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Many of the poems were previously published in the following books and/or magazines: *hidden proofs* (Bombshelter Press), *Santa Monica Review*, *Sonora Review*, *Tsunami*, *Bakunin*, and *Stand-Up Poetry*.

This recording is dedicated to my father, Frederick, and my mother, Sylvia, who were married in Los Angeles on January 10, 1945.

VEHEMENCE — Bill Mohr

SIDE A

Act One: *The Rival*

1. *In Line at Pancho's Tacos* (1:08) His girlfriend at the time was Tim Buckley's sister. After writing this poem, I learned he also borrowed a car from another L.A. poet, Brooks Roddan, and left it wrapped around a telephone pole on Vermont Ave.

2. *Earthquake* (:44) The epicenter was in Santa Monica Bay. Several months later, I was visiting John Thomas and Philomene Long in their apartment in Venice. He showed me a poem he'd written about this same earthquake, which ended with a smoking pipe commentary, "puff puff puff".

3. *Naked Chef* (:55) When I was editing my second anthology of Los Angeles poets, "Poetry Loves Poetry," I was quite aware of how few love poems ever appear in contemporary poetry anthologies. Oddly enough not a single review picked up on this difference between PLP and other anthologies.

4. *Your Skin* (:39) Long before AIDS began to take on its plague-like dimensions, eroticism also vanished from contemporary verse. Read the anthology entitled "Naked Poetry" — there is some great poetry in it, but very little celebration of affection and sensual delight.

5. *After Many Years of Love* (:27) This poem started with an overheard conversation in a bar in Bismarck, North Dakota. I wasn't on a motorcycle on this particular trip. I have very ambivalent feelings about the internal combustion machine. Its dependency on gasoline has destroyed the environment, and yet there's nothing quite like driving on a two-lane road by yourself or with a good friend. One of the happiest days of my life was a drive from Medora, North Dakota to the Peace Gardens at the Canada-U.S. border.

6. *Cro-Magnon* (1:42) This is the second half of a pair of poems. The other one, naturally, is about the Neanderthals. There's been a great deal of talk lately about how much human beings have altered this planet the past forty years. If we as a form of life sustain our presence, I'm not sure we're going to be related so directly to Cro-Magnon. A thousand years from now, I wouldn't say at a party, "I'm Dutch-Irish-German, even though I look a bit Lebanese."

7. *The Rival* (1:07) A poem based on a dream which took about five years to get to this version. I once told Lee Hickman that the question focusing my art is, "Who are other people?" and not the contemporary obsession, "Who am I?" He liked that question enough to put it in his poem, *Great Slave Lake Suite*. I still don't have an answer.

8. *Sunset Blvd.* (1:14) I'm not TV generation. I didn't even see a television set until I was seven years old. When I was twelve years old, I realized that if I ever wanted to escape the intellectual poverty of small-town existence, I had to study and have watched very little television since then. If TV had never been invented, my life would not be any different. On the other hand, music has been almost as important to me as painting. The written word is how I choreograph my imagination, but it's been a lonely dance. Music was a continual solace when I was growing up, but hadn't yet found poetry.

9. *Tough To Please* (3:43) The hook came to me one night while I was keyboarding radio station call letters for a record advertisement. I showed the opening lines to Rich Agata, who went home and worked up a melody. I played it over and over and wrote several batches of lyrics, edited down with Rich's help. My very first attempts at writing were rock and roll lyrics inspired by Jagger-Richards and Lennon-McCartney, and later, Hendrix. I couldn't sing or play a guitar though, and once I read Hart Crane, Emily Dickinson and W.C. Williams, not to mention Stevens and Rimbaud at the age of 20, I was more interested in the penetrating depth of poetry than the fashion show of popular music. Still, it's fun to touch base/bass with my lyric roots.

Act Two: *Vehemence*

10. *The Drop* (4:41) The Patty Hearst kidnapping still fascinates me for the moral questions that the whole story raised. Feed the poor, the SLA said, and the poor were not too ashamed to say, "We're hungry." They lined up for the food — and this was before twelve years of Reaganbush malnutrition. This monologue was also inspired by novels by Michael Dibdin and Dick Francis on the same subject.

11. *Preparation of the Canvas* (:32) Many of my friends are painters. Painting and poetry both share an emphasis on limits, whether it is the limit of the size of the canvas or the limit of the line, as in the question: how far can these sounds go before their thought needs to pause — not a syntactical pause, but an ambiguous hesitation which accentuates the mystery of any given meditation. Anyone listening to this album will have a difficult time hearing where one line ends and another begins, but this is just as true of any poet whose text you've haven't studied. You don't hear the lines as such — you experience the vowels and consonants testing each other strengths and weaknesses. Poetry is not necessarily in the strength of a consonant.

12. *Doubleheader* (:45) I know that athletes could care less about poetry, so why should a poet admire athletes? I think it's the inherent democracy of talent in the tasting of physical grace. In the world of art, it's not enough to have imagination. You better be able to figure out, and quickly, who can help you up the ladder of critical recognition or you're going to end up in the secretarial pool.

13. *Complexities* (:30) I wrote the final draft of this poem in Richard Bruland's and Rene Engel's Bo-Bop Records & Fine Art store just before giving a reading there.

14. *Odd Duck* (:16) Dianna Seay helped me with this poem, urging me to hone it when I was ready to say, "it's good enough." It's my comment on the issue of being "politically correct."

15. *Obscenity Oath* (:38) Originally, this poem was a much longer satiric rant about the NEA's restrictions on its grants. Many artists were upset about the so-called "Obscenity Oath," since they felt that it was censorship. Most artists miss the real point: the true censorship is done every day in a society which demands that we work far many more hours than need to be worked to sustain our bodily existence, and which uses the threat of unemployment and impending homelessness to keep us in line. Working as much as many people do leaves little time to read, write, paint, dance and celebrate our moments of consciousness. This is the obscene oath which we pledge our allegiance to every day that we set our alarm clocks.

16. *Navy Brat* (:59) My father was an enlisted man for twenty years: from Norfolk, Virginia (where I was born 10/25/47) to Oahu, Hawaii to San Diego, California, to Norfolk and back again to San Diego. We didn't live in the city of San Diego as such. We lived in Imperial Beach, which had the distinction of having the largest helicopter base in the world during the years of the Vietnam War.

17. *Flooding the Engine* (2:04) How much of this story am I making up? I toss into these notes this Brechtian "alienation device" of questioning the illusion of autobiography which using the first person in narrative creates.

18. *The Man Who Got a Tattoo The Day His Mother Was Barbed* (1:48) Many of the men who were drafted and sent to Vietnam (and let us not forget the nightmare of Korea) were not killed on the battlefield. They died in boarding houses with not a penny to their name.

19. *Vehemence* (1:40) My first job out of high school was picking tomatoes in a field five miles north of the Mexico-U.S. border. Fortunately, the jobs got easier, though not much better paying, before June turned into July: motel desk clerk, fast food stands, and then two years as a blueprint machine operator. For the past seven years I've worked in an air-conditioned office as a typesetter for Radio & Records, the music industry's newsweekly.

20. *An Answer* (1:41) for Leland Hickman (1934-1991) Lee taught me — and many other poets — about how to push language to extremes of compressed insight. Lee is perhaps unique for a poet whose work concentrates on homosexuality in that almost all the avid supporters of his writing were heterosexual, as were most of the poets he published in *Bachy*, *Boxcar*, and *Tombler*. Lee also made living as a typesetter. He was the best I ever met.

21. *Broadcasting* (:54) "Like all tooth whales, dolphins use echolocation to find objects."

22. *For Roy Orbison* (:41) I wrote this poem after hearing a posthumous tribute to him on an NPR news program. "Count no man as fortunate until he's died." An earlier published version of this poem begins with an image from a high school physics class.

Act Three: *Heart of the World*

23. *The Trampolists* (1:44) The theatricality of this poem's story is very much at the heart of this poem. One of the most important books I ever read as a young poet was not Rilke's "Letters" but Peter Brook's "The Empty Space."

24. *The Kites* (1:15) A couple of years ago, the Brand Library Art Gallery mounted an exhibit of "Thrillstore Paintings." This poem was inspired by a painting bought at a garage sale by songwriter Pat Zeitlin.

25. *Apt. No. 6* (1:46) Of all these poems, this is, metrically, perhaps my favorite. I'm not a formalist, but only a fool doesn't acknowledge that Elizabethan blank verse is the Mississippi Delta blues of English/American poetry. Influence on my work is present even when I was writing long poem, "Barely Holding Distant Things Apart." In trip form:

dinosaur
paths
overgrown