

Into the Blind World

Parts One

ℰ

Two



ℰ

Gone South

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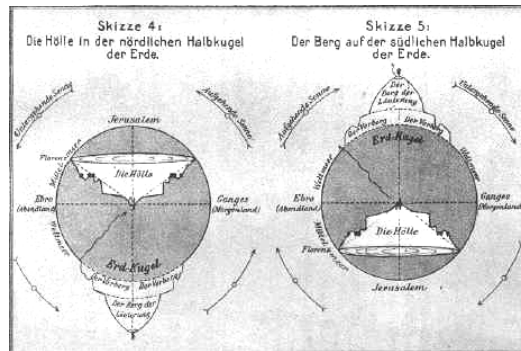
In Arizona
dog minutes
desert notebook
Slab City

.

Barry McKinnon

Into the Blind World

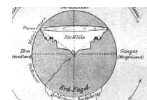
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Parts
One
&
Two

Part One



Into the blind world –

the *new life* – the essential tremor /refusal
of diminishment

I see in a double
space – conjunction & irony, that part blind I'm made
to see. it is not Dante's forest exactly. more-
so a sense

/a kind of open door
is beginning /closing – dark turning
- light I didn't expect.

old flesh renews, that the dim
eye makes almost nothing matter. *looks to*

what I find ahead.

I believe -

fear kept
me speaking, or all would cease to be. so I spoke & the forest flew by
& city lights distorted – the cold stars of love and dark – the beginning, a journey, a descent

the ghost of myself still
alive,
to address the infected world, to stall & cease advance, to the forest one fears
to enter

sad desire/ without a mask –
to journey solely at night dark to the armies
circling themselves – the forest of knives

invisible to those who never make it
or recognize

desire: one heart to pull
the other retract - that the gap maintains its depth & distance

to hell – the hidden road & the river one dares

§

now monstrous bonds to bear

no delight

distorted drunks, demons, the dismal -

drunk, & glad to be

- in the wrong room, singing

a tavern full of ...

no hope

the crack head whore – the one eyed man, bound &
thrown pleading to the ground.

shame

necessity

no music in the desert to cohere.

these synonyms when I write *these days*
are sisters: *incoherent, unrequited*
and incomplete

the empty holds their beating wings, quavered voice
these conditions we sense no journey could amend

the moon is bright, the stars cold, clear ends

delete return

– my mother's womb
the words & what I see – bones, & pulp

weeping -

recognize some other self as me
to guide where I was once before

is it onward on that dismal road,

when the traveler's journey to the end
becomes the end/the bottom of the universe?

no laughing matter

§

I'm still alive in the splash –
gray light. but my guide seems gone

a life

space curved to return

itself beginning as end (weightless/unmoved -

I listen for the horn ahead. well past the forest
whose sticks I gathered to make it shore to shore

was the horn my driver
or the invisible direction of the future riven to wait until
it comes to me? *this hole*, this ...

/hell is its *nothing*
to give
or bear.

time waiting

in the celestial vestige -
if I could see or write this speech

illuminate

the fox trotting on the road ahead

the sick & dying

the snowball's chance in hell

§

I was exhausted, lost – sensed the fear
would never end – these innocent punished while the sinners freed

add to this my doubled age, weightless memory in
the *present* weight /no pleasure but consequence.

who to convince, the sense of nothingness
in this descent. blind hands to know contours
- heat or cold?

regret as anything else I knew
erased by the present state, unable
to speak – demoted/exiled to the furthest reaches I
could not comprehend, or *did*, - made it all the worse.

the monsters
saved themselves by offering up the rest.

evil *now* taken as good.

I'm without a quality to name or bear

- forbearance/silence

to say what they prove again: *all* corrupt

- *I saw* hell, my self in flight so *nothing* could be seen:
the value of earth, delight – the moment of knowing

tree, sky, water, fire – *there* to be entered.

so what is new in this descent?

my impatience became a virtue so in blindness some *thing* be seen
by the quickest measure and *known* without its proof – the quick darts
of love/ sensed lost, to know it returns again

- *faith* the dare hell asks

I thought the dark would never end

– then constants of what we sense
appeared: I pushed off again. what was/was

also its defeat

§

happy in hell?
what other world?

the woman - a configuration, that she *wait, call, be?*

in all what *was*
I was?

detained, to wait, to see/
the bullies/demons who *could not* out wait me gave up?

release to give me release to an interval
that shows the beauty of what it might contain: gold leaves/September breeze – the outer
world - that I saw *all* first, and then *heard* its speech, & music
when I quaked?

that world. there *was* no other, as there is *not* now?

an earth to convince light versus dark?

my father *really* gone, his last breath, *where?*

§

oh where

in *any* where – range of ... I know *I was*

to the sight
of *what* it was when the quaking shook me to
my fractured prayer. *hell* no release, nor appeasement,
no way out.

these thoughts, a burden, yet contain me,
- accuracy or mistake, that I could not see beyond
/ to whatever world I could retain eludes me or gain?

this the sum of another matter, stupid thought of totality
when the grim prospect makes it final – *held*

a button pushed. I saw, what looked human to be
gloom. *worse* than gloom

§

I thought this in the outer world and still think it here
unsure on a string of faith, the driver will return

in the hope I have – this blind ascent to ...

what time and light ahead

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Afterword

Part One

§

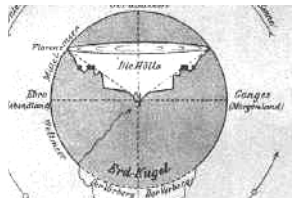
Part One of this poem/fragment is based on a selection of lines sent to me by Arianwen Goronwy Roberts, a young student, poet, and artist who I jokingly referred to as Virgil one night when she soberly drove me home after a drunken literary event in the fall of 2009. I got Arianwen curious to read Dante's *Divine Comedy* & at some other drunken literary event asked her to send me the Dante lines or sections that she liked *or* stood out for whatever reason. This she did from an on-line translation (<http://www.readprint.cm/work-7/inferno-dante-alighieri: The Divine Comedy: Hell> - no translator given). Within those stanzas, verses, and narrative fragments I could see certain words/phrasings and images that prompted my own "translation" and improvised responses.

I've made no dramatic attempt to describe sinners being dipped upside down in hot tar – or include any of the other dark & menacing monsters contained in Dante's hell - or developed the relationship between Dante and Virgil, his poet/guide through hell. Instead, I took only words, phrases or images from Arianwen's choices that I could then reconfigure *without*, I decided, any presumption to condense the narrative in *Book One*, or make any literal reference to snakes, lizards, and lions etc. (though somehow a lone fox trotted in).

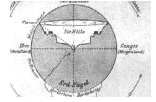
The "ending" does not wholly contain the sanguine possibility Dante recognized in Canto xxxiv – a "return to the bright world"- "to look once more upon the stars". More so, I believe it when the poet Robert Creeley writes - "the darkness surrounds us" - yet within it we must live and experience whatever range we are given or decide.

When the writing stalled, I also took lines/ideas from Arianwen's poem – the *forest of knives* image, Mateusz Patryka's poem for his line *the ghost of myself*, Cecil Giscombe's email - *these days* the sisters *incoherent, unrequited, incomplete* and Robert Creeley's line *happy in hell* – sources that kept me going for awhile longer on the hidden road.

Otherwise, all else is missing.



Part Two



The ascent beckons as the descent beckoned

the mountain/ now measured by measure of endurance equal to its challenge

who in hell do you think you are?

in what is ahead by truth or verisimilitude:

a road

we will *not*

come this way again. the shadow you cast is the past/passed by
heaps / memories rubble weightless – *a flash*

flesh *once* loved /*now* that lost -

to the promise you made in the weak sense of what desire it was to be
attained. the flesh again/ the *only* light

it's hope; driven to its source (*our* shadow cast to the shadowy
figures who beg to ask to think *we* know

our time. wasted steps? is all *now*

direction in what *seemed* directionless? – thus:

one foot/ the other

diminished hope yet hope still

when darker it gets – now determines how we go

§

the tyrannical

we met along the way: their time now spent as burden & weight /for the energy they
consumed

we travel as a secret to re enter the world/ a reverse to those

who judge – become what they protest

the cowards cowering for all to be correct/ self righteousness their present
defeat when our presence brings them forth

the mountain is still beyond. sun as ... what it reveals - contours of what
it is to be sad along the ridge shaken by a sense of a complex/ simplified

by what we can not say.

oh well, a sigh to the spring still left ... our steps

closer to what is sought - the image of impossibility to
become a shape – the female form that waits
in this *same* anticipation

§

yet this want to erase what we thrive upon, this unrequited sense that drives
me on. consummations of self, to reverse the nether world made to unfold what

the mountain is

the self -
the shadow of its weight inside
/out to form its tangible light - to form & divine -

the divisive self?

- as when this dark defines its light /escapes from those it shields. we *saw*
them in *all* their forms: the mountains of self/ the consequence of ego &
what rids us of it:

fear

sorrow amends pride to humility:

the beaten

as in the dream – I hurled myself to snow. martyred, petulant –
her refusal condemned me. I trudged thru snow

snow/ to a darker globe /beneath pins of stars

§

blind/beggars propped in a unison of disbelief – a kind of horror to recognize
their condition: *terminal cases* / envious. we pass them by. if I cared
I cared / was spared / *was* them
to bear / & refuse my temptation for delight

§

I was defined

by those I describe: *the brutes*

- their domain remains/defined by those they exile. those exiled /no place to go
blackballed to a powerless misery. then all gets beaten. the beater, the beaten

the godforsaken industrial ditch I vow I never lived in.

§

stare ahead: the distance up & down / me / healed by pain I thot
defeated me. *did it make me?* or in this defeat I saw more – a perplexity of all *thot* known
thrown out the window. I wanted some outside to reach me/ to reverse
the repel of the magnet force of what closest seen - seem
farthest

in the opaque light I'm guideless

in the blinding smoke

the blind world again

– this path/
our crooked gait - to trace what's
left behind/ahead

distance e³ ascent in mist & veil

what is our source and aim?

§

who's forgiveness will erase ...

all I rued

- could *not* see or find or vent, relieve my sense of diminished time

my impatience – these thin cracks
of light

... this fog, the mountains, the hummocks

thinned and blue – literal/ wordless

must *see* myself
or be a fool as the illusionists
who cast us out

love / now crippled – *wrecked* (by proportion to its
need

the world
to disappear – /leave us from the
dark *or* blinding light?

§

mist / *veil* stone
I become separate by the sadness that makes me
this gloomy face hoping

in this weight to *pierce*
illusion - & when it real to know

o' then be lifted from this gloomy spot:

unhappiness

my stingy heart went out

was *their* stinginess revealed

§

a hole opens space for love's return?

this dark sky ripped to another dawn –

light and dark disengage

so we see the weary self again?

§

our shadows *over*
shadows / hear voices from the starved
in wonder of what their grief is worth – *worthless*
their wasted days – the flat/meaningless world without an object
of desire. *this* is what *I* grieve - & fear: I *must* become
the guide - in the unreciprocal world, yet be *worthy* of its grief.

my hope /
lachrymose – a deluge

the loss – what one had, *never* had?

me no longer me?

§

the cliff
above/below -

I'm barely tethered
by dimming light - my measure of time
- a road with out impediment to some final light to confirm
its end

beyond

§

the seduction seemed
meaningless/remembered for its exhaustion
- that threw me
further into what I cld not redeem

I learned opposites. *refusal* as action
silence its speech.

lost to be found again? *held* that time would let me go
in what knowing we'd be

if we knew time ahead exists as we hope it now:

a brighter path / the crooked world

§

loathing what I had to enter

my restraint not equal to what it needed -
my fear sent me further -

what *was* it
you saw sent you –
into the world

packing

nowhere to nowhere

to what you thot *not* meant
meant

- the fire, buzzards, beasts & this blind ascent to breaking light ahead

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Afterword

Part Two

§

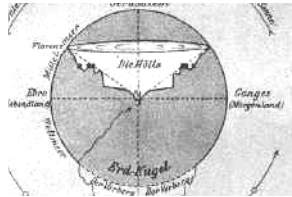
Part Two is jagged meditation prompted by various lines from Dante's *The Divine Comedy: Purgatory*, translated by Dorothy L. Sayers. As in Part One, I've left out literal details or reference to the various characters being punished for their various sins, *or* the specific imagery of Dante's ascent into purgatorio's mountain landscape; instead, I wanted to get to some measure of my own thought and experience via fragments/statements, or as Robin Blaser said - a "reopening of words" - to let them go their own way - & to be ahead of any thinking that might hold them back. The task & pleasure was not to immediately *understand* what was written, but to sense what I hoped, a kind of frayed truth about my own emotional life and experience. I wanted the abstracted language/ loops to contain and reveal contradictions, ironies, cruelties, & various forms of human folly anyone with eyes open will perceive daily in the present world. Another task with the writing: to avoid the presumption that one is exempt from the various conditions described: "the world is blind /And thou are of it"(Canto xvi). The *presumption* was to enter the beauty of Dante's knowledge and truth as the basis for whatever inspiration I was given in an attempt to speak within the themes of exile and desire.

Dante in the last *Purgatorio* Canto xxxiii is renewed, and again, as in *Hell* Canto xxxiii he is "Pure and prepared to leap up to the stars". In both Part One (and Two here) I make no reference to "stars" but I do repeat the phrase "light ahead" to indicate the onward journey.

the ascent beckons/ as the descent beckoned is a variation of the first line in William Carlos William's poem "The Descent."

"what *was* it/you saw sent you - /into the world/packing" is a slight variation of lines written in a notebook by poet Katia Grubisic during a conversation in the Arc Lounge in Ottawa (March 2012).

My conversations with artist/poet/teacher Graham Pearce prompted other thoughts/lines/considerations.



Gone South

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in Arizona

•

dog minutes

•

desert notebook

•

Slab City



•

Gone South

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gone south: This expression is generally thought to allude to compasses and two-dimensional maps where north is up and south is down. However, among some Native Americans, the term was a euphemism for dying, and possibly this sense led to the present usage.

(also **head south, take a turn south, go south**) **1 v phr** *by 1940s* To disappear; fail by or as if by vanishing [examples omitted] **2 v phr** *by 1925* To abscond with money loot, etc. [examples omitted] **3 v phr** *underworld by 1950* To cheat, esp to cheat at cards [examples omitted] **4 v phr** *by 1980s* To lessen; diminish [examples omitted] Probably from the notion of disappearing south of the border, to Texas or to the Mexican border, to escape legal pursuit and responsibility; probably reinforced by the widespread Native American belief that the soul after death travels to the south, attested in American Colonial writing fr the middle 1700s; *GTT*, "Gone to Texas, absconded," is found by 1839.

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in Arizona

in Arizona
the desert – weather within

weather, no discernible season, sense of its ancient

growth – the Sequoia? tree, names I don't know – the desert sans name / or taxonomy/ but for this little burst, minute, pink to cactus red buds to take as measure. (what was or is it in a temporality /does not need us nor, without a mind, need itself. thus, ... it's worse than the puzzle it appears.

the desert

/no matter the temperature / cold sun stings. this/no meaning as is with any sensation being only itself in the same condition.

the desert

looking at an interior, *not* yrself exactly, - but a vast expanse that if you entered wld you be you? this was its fear, yr fear, all fear in whatever risk one or it takes.

.

going north in Arizona

/get back to the literal - as communication:

was in a line-up in *Basha's* with a young man ahead – as my dad once sd – whose head fell into a tackle box: nose rings, ear rings, tattoos, skate board pants, runners with special meanings and a toddler – not the toddler, but he was packing a gun exposed (AZ law). my sense, to put the grocs. down, and leave the provocation of threat and trouble. pat kid's head. Blam! *have nice day!* Blam! whatever one cld say /taken the wrong way.

no caring in this separation

otherwise, the bartender at the *Sultanas* in Williams Arizona stiffed me for 15 bucks.

I hesitate to say “America” in quotes when and all in all sense the largesse unless I be taken/fooled by a more subtle commerce-training that leads to belief of *total* sincerity.

too drunk anyway and missed Petie the dog (as *the* reason, *not* the Grand Canyon) to see him again -100 pounds on the poolroom

table/& floor

and the quotidian 35 bucks motel, & owner Elton – and the line I use: “I like you” as a way to disarm the possibilities of its opposite.

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at the south end of /

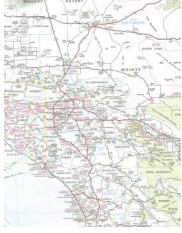
the Grand Canyon, the drop /one mile down. fear starts.

I cldn't look/went

into the forest stumbling / told me nothing more than it did.

in Arizona.

•



dog minutes

“young old man” –

bent/*wrinkles*. my human dog age 10. then think

“life is like a river” (a complex flow of .../ mindless

flood /over Cottonwood Island while sun’s co-optive measure/melts

a long sentence that precedes its meaning/leading to a bridge

that draws girders to let steamboats pass 100 years ago. old Fraser bridge – preamble

to the future – opening to what I was going to say

in dog years

to sense a way - release tensions of fight and flight *without* fight or flight – a condition wielded
then welded to *all* that angered me *not forgiven! be without them!*

in the dog minutes ahead.

tinkered w/ a “poem” - & that call it all “draft” to assume you’ll never
get it, sensing then *no need to*. think: how does taking care of the *88 Buick* fit in – or sense
of love lost (when it never left? these double tangential thots without recourse to one’s
good sense and single meaning. *what everyone dreads*

is an end

resolve? dissolve? forcing oneself to happiness - a spectre out of
the weight (of weightless thot

thinking beauty of river tree and wind in no sentimental way – a kind of clarity without knowing but its moment.

.

dead ends. senseless to go on to arrive at what? and then reminded/remembered my old anxieties *not* so strong – but a preoccupation of what you always knew *as you* - to find enough room between the ditch and bank to turn. *more* washouts! – holes and steeper edges - some road left.

.

the accumulation of *all* that was – *all* that did not change. the mind when it did not *know* its future stretched /a field/ to darker clouds – when you're wordless perplexity *was* the mind as body of the world's impending exit to what's already gone

- the human embrace to leave who need it most

.

the old farm gone. roads re graded. foolish act to go back – to what *was* there *there*. how to say “emptiness” in memory – in an insistence to imagine you *were* there. fear and what makes it less. *terror of all else.* in the Carsland bar where I used to wait. *the past* where I now await ... we're all related ... leaving ...

obsessive clouds to the east curved down to fields –

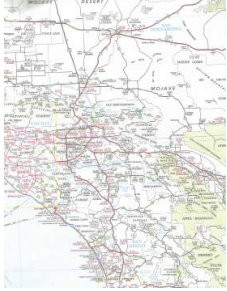
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the place where memory began / *replaced* – useless to name or describe - the past neutralized & what's ahead *the dread of what remains*

heartbreak / – its infinite distance /hope to nothing/ yet to believe

in harsh oppositions gain truer self & being /

•



desert notebook

to see

this desert / ringed by what we sense
removes it all. yet the coagulations of its force alive as context for

its various light & range of temperatures/temperaments / -

solitude sans meaning become dust

.

(I am in a desert – more a field – *it's dirt* - a valley harrowed/ browned /parched – circled
/mountains, distant /browned, blurred – boulders cupped / back
drop sky/intensity/ blue/

– footprints / trail / ...

beauty cannot make it anything else

.

Hemet to Surprise – into high

desert –

- mindless

/ the mind “undescribed” by elements that form / elements and meaning/ sun &
literal ...

(*no cloud*). bush “measures” wind. dust way off to a horizon south to Mexico, funnels.

trails “go” where ...

the desert

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what failing reveals/*makes closer* - the sun, the blanched air to shadow/textures / ---- & desert vectors -

these mountains folding in mute desert light?

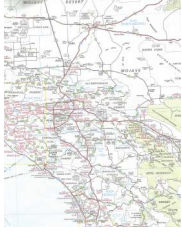
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the characteristic - (*suffering* humans
in relation to this basin/valley – heat bowl / persistent as
a force that rejects them -

the desert lives like water.

.
nothing becomes another thing

body in mind in context indistinguishable from what defines it – *gone south*

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Slab City

“freedom” (unquote – is tolerance? or so I thot
– in Slab City (in the range of

outliers, hobos, patriots, artists, tourists, military guys
in camo, snowbirds, the neo whats? thus the guns, blasts at night into
the dark, hot, air.

no sense we're *not* there or welcome /to a measure of who
we are – drawn to some sense of the end of the earth & its ragged (rigged?community
a language / human typos

Papa Jimmi de Silva /to survive greets all with “god bless – I love you man” then “gotta
beer?”

poverty – the hell of any desert / a place, a space marked
out (tires, hubcaps, forms of grabage/garbage as set limits, vs. trespass, wch asks
“ America” unquote: free sans expectations *w* the “free?” – money useless. a price, more so
none the less

all is gone I thot, thus necessary
to inhabit it as TIME *only* /a kind of oblivion. *it's all so blue* Tyler sd. emerging from the hole

Paul: *it's all blue man sky and sea yes! yes!* – colours/the primary desert
in the desert morning heat,

detritus / (us) in/ *the* infra structure when none else appears

Shiny, kid from Minneapolis – *of the tree, the grass, the sand* he asked *to be here*

notes: b. fast in Niland (*no man is an Niland unto himself*, I joke. everything 25\$ -

get to Brawley. take shit
in Walmart then head east to oasis hot
pool – canals /water – *the drought*. Eddy with a stiffy “caretaker”
the pool/leering. who not to see such female human flesh? Tess/Aimee

follow us back to Slab – sense of safe with us - being aligned with what *seems* to be. sense of *don't fucking mess with me* – the ethos sheriffs drive on thru

what is reality? only the figment of the imagination as it seeks itself? the Slab: simpler? or more complex than what sociology I can muster. degrees of heat/*the diminishment/measure*.

no coffee in proximity. Dennis then brings pot and cups. oranges, beer – all at hand – kid from hole (Tyler), shoeless then a pair appears!

Range music, some the shits (salvaged by sincerity – *energy* – oh the boldness of those who don't care. what a good dogs' life, beneath the decibels, the noise of guns & traffic – the great rooster Fog/Dog horn who wakes us/ then barking dogs, then gas engines, then human clanking. the sun is up!

do people die here? *I've heard ambulances at night.*

or in the opposite I ask *is sex necessary?* & no one seems to get the joke. apparently *not* – therefore the explained end of the world. etc.

here or not here? a question in what guise and sense of one's being? premature the dirt that covers us – heavy in its portent until something happens, as it does here, in Slab City. clear elements/ that no mistake makes less to curse.

at the Slab, no escape of ... exit is also entrance? “reality” ahead. it was/is a sense simultaneous that no one connects thus *becomes* connection – thus the attempt all the more/ to sense the blue, dark, wordless desert, the disparate selves gathered here.

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Into the Blind World

Aknowledgements:



Sections of *Part One* previously published in *The Capilano Review: George Stanley Issue*, 2011

Part One published as a chapbook by rob mcLennan, *above/ground press*: Ottawa, 2012

Sections of *Part Two* previously appeared in *The Peter F Yacht Club #*, edited by rob mcLennan
February 2012; *VERSeFest Ottawa special*

*e*³ in *What Desire It Was*, a small anthology (29 copies) signed and numbered:
Barry McKinnon, Ciara Shuttleworth, Luke Shuttleworth, Red Shuttleworth
Bunchgrass Press, Columbia Basin, Washington, May, 2012

Part Two online:

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Photo of Barry McKinnon by Jesse McKinnon
Nahatlach, 2011

Gone South

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& *Parts One and Two* privately printed as a Gorse Press Chapbook, 2013

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Photos of the road to Yucca, Jimmi's yard, Barry McKinnon and Fog/Doghorn
by Jesse McKinnon
Slab City, Southern California, 2015

