

## The Weight

by George Bowering

bpNichol worked in the basement of the U. of T. library, the weight of all those volumes above him, with Margaret Avison beside him.

She carried all those books happily inside her spirit, a poet from the word go, a vision by Barrie's ear.

She was famous in Boston and Tokyo and unknown in her icy home town by the lake.

She took on Nichol, took on Jesus, took on Simma Holt, don't bother looking that up.

A brash not so young Canadian writer called her the country's best poet, living or elsewhere.

In 1963, at University of British Columbia, she sat with all the hip U.S. poets who'd read her in *Origin*,

Look *that* up; she had to leave early, her father dying, the U.S. poets later wrote her out of history.

Catch me if you can, she said to Jesus, and he could and he did, but she wrote better poems.

In Windsor she sat on the stage with Irving Layton and me; Irving thought she was light and amusing and a plain woman.

Imagine, if she'd been of a different mind, she could have scimitared his neck with a poem.

I would have fallen to my peaceful knees and offered up a prayer for her Blakean soul high there above the tower of books.