

the lid  
like a gigantic  
roman-candle  
from the heady brew  
and all will spill  
oh world  
and all will spill

November 27, 1965

-- Christopher Perret

Deya, Mallorca

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... With this note you'll find a copy of Christopher's poem G E R A N I U M... As you can see from the date of composition, it is one of the last things CP wrote and very probably his last long poem... Chris had for sometime been experimenting with short line forms (so had I and we discussed it off and on) that would follow the breaks and pauses of the declaiming voice. And he had been feeling his way towards a deeper larger human statement (which unfortunately turned out to be a final utterance!). I feel that this integration of new form and new voice takes place in G E R A N I U M. He would no doubt have done some revising (he always did), if only that natural period of waiting that confirms that there's nothing to change -- but we'll never know now what changes he might have made... Life like death is no respecter of persons!

Tom Lipps (of the dedication), who was very close to Chris the last weeks of his life and was the first person to whom the poem was shown and read, made copies of it, shortly after Christopher's death, in Mati's house on that Deya cliff on Christopher's own typewriter. My last contact with Tom was about a year ago. He has since completely disappeared -- a very Lipps thing to do! He had given me a copy and I showed it to the Poésie Vivante people when I saw them in Paris. They were very enthusiastic and wanted to include it in the



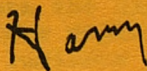
Memorial, but there wasn't enough space left and it was too late to redesign the book....

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... It would be so very appropriate that the poem come out in Wormwood, as CP so often appeared there and was exceptionally fond of Wormwood.... Your readers are well acquainted with him. And to know that G E R A N I U M would thus be permanently preserved in all major libraries in the English speaking countries is a most satisfying thought....

Regarding an introduction to the poem. If it is possible to contact Tom Lipps, he might have something valuable to contribute.... He was perhaps the only person Chris read the poem aloud to and the person he spoke to the most about the poem and its sources. Tom gave me a few brief indications. It seems Christopher wrote the entire poem at one sitting, probably through one long night of inspiration. He read it to Tom early the next morning. The beginning is autobiographical, every detail referring to the exact events and impressions of a certain moment and place. The opening lines invoke a folk (and blues?) singer Buffy Sainte-Marie (unknown to me). The police "bash" in the head of a drunken war veteran in front of a greyhound bus station. This brutal act is witnessed by the 14 year old CP who is in transit (returning home?). This must have happened in 1944.... He discussed many other details with Tom, explaining personal allusions and movements of thought and image deriving from particular incidents in his life. But -- how to find Tom Lipps?! I will try through Anne Hedley and David Allen -- except for these two contacts, I've no idea where to look....

All the best!



Harry Bell

Copenhagen, Denmark