

Selvedge

A provisional warning: do not mistake Licton's fragments for something capable of inciting a renewal of the movement. The propositions are not in any way dangerous. Their meager accomplishment — the woman in the bathtub — has had no imitators. It is barely a year since then, and already the propositions of the Suicidists have solely historical value.

Where the Suicidists lived and what they saw — these are as important as my work with the tapes and the notes. The somber progress of the distant container ships, the way they suffer the tugboats' hectoring proximity, the immense river-mouth that appears to climb straight up the horizon rather than to spread out flat, all these combine to induce a yearning that might easily collapse into despondency. A certain hopelessness, too, is inherent in the depth of the channel and the superceded shallows of the port: the town was built for ships long ago but cannot harbor them

now. The formation of the Suicidists' particular sensibilities was probably coeval with the emergent history of container-shipping on that river; no one has investigated this yet. In my contributions to the *Total Annual*, such connections will be, must be, examined.

I could talk to Licton, who is currently serving a sentence for his part in the Suicidist movement, such as it was. Before I finish my critical-historical edition of the propositions, I will talk to him. For now, I have the tapes, the notes, the container ships, the horizon. Absent a thorough study of these materials, the idea of conversation with Licton seems tricky, premature, sorrow-inducing.

1. Not only under ground are the brains of men eaten by maggots.

Did all three of them collaborate in writing this or any proposition? That a brother and sister were among the three signatories to the suicide pact probably contributes to the persistence of this romantic notion. In any case, authorship of any particular proposition cannot be proved or disproved. Licton told the arresting officers of a pact, consisting of propositions, but said pact was never found. We have only this late, approximate version, drawn up by Licton in his prison cell, annotated by me for inclusion in the *Total Annual*.

[Crossed out: "1. From afar, the ocean, the river and the hills form landscapes. Up close, nothing but clear-cuts, muddy runnels, tailings, bilge." And "1. Under the hat, nothing."]

The aforementioned hat, if not purely metaphorical, may have once belonged to the "Drexler" mentioned in the tapes. Where propositions have been crossed out, or where they are ambiguous, the investigating therapist's tapes have been invaluable:

IT: How many were there in your suicide pact?
 Licton: Two.
 IT: Including yourself?
 Licton: We were the founding members. Not counting Drexler.
 IT: [inaudible]?
 Licton: [inaudible].

Attempts to track down this Drexler, whom I believe still to be living in the same town, the town of Monroe, have so far proven unsuccessful.

IT: You expelled Drexler?
 Licton: In a sense. In the end.
 IT: How long after that did [inaudible] die?
 Licton: [inaudible] river too long to say.

Why should the tapes be suddenly hard to hear, in such brief and, it seems to me, crucial moments? Did man and therapist abruptly grow bashful, mumbling by turns into their shirt-collars? That is hardly likely. The catalog entry — *Licton's therapist's tapes. Quality: v. good* — does not mention these fuzzed-out, staticky stretches. Somebody would have lis-