

Shamanic Transformation:  
Terry Wilson's *Perilous Passage* - an artifact of The Third Mind

An Introduction by Ian MacFadyen and Phil Wood

With excerpts from *Perilous Passage: the Nervous System and the Universe in Other Words* by Terry Wilson

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It was fifty years ago in Paris that Brion Gysin and William Burroughs, along with their collaborators Ian Sommerville and Antony Balch, developed the techniques known as "The Third Mind." Drawing upon esoteric and scientific sources, this "project for disastrous success" deconstructed sound and image and computer technology, sabotaging systems of ideological transmission and reproduction, dismantling and



Terry Wilson and Ian MacFadyen with the Dream Machine at October Gallery, Brion Gysin, Calligraffiti of Fire show, London 2009. Photo © by Jonathan Greet

erasing the human *image repertoire* in the process. Gysin and Burroughs asserted the absolute validity of their own psychic and mystical experiences, treating cybernetic information technologies as magical instruments for the shamanic invocation of spirits, challenging the "known laws" of space and time.

The Third Mind project was aimed at the radical opening of consciousness -- evisceration with real knives, scissors and razor blades. Not only cutting

up the Word, but pursuing the Tibetan practise of CHÖD – the extreme cutting up of self, identity and "true memory", and the immolation of "immutable" belief systems. Gysin appears to have invented the cut-up technique at the exact moment that reporters from *LIFE* magazine were visiting the Beat Hotel in Paris. In fact, he already knew that versions of the technique had been used in antiquity by Ausonius and Vergilius Maro, primarily for comic and entertaining effect. Gysin and Burroughs would go much

further, eviscerating the sacred texts and launching a blitzkrieg on the discourses of media.

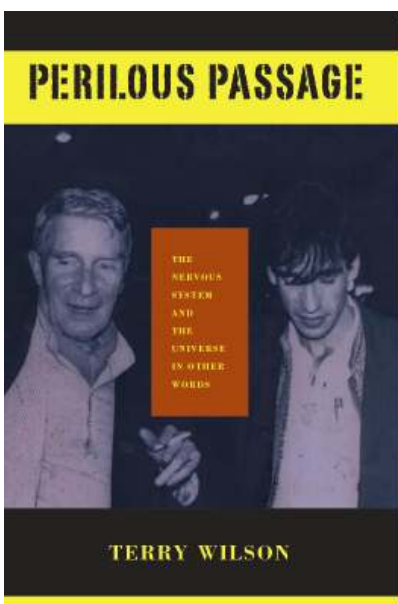
The Third Mind was not "art" or even "anti-art" – it was a sustained attack upon reactive conformity and political exploitation, and an exploration of psychic potential beyond the confines of all humanistic, materialist philosophies.

The essence of The Third Mind survives and its continuance and development are nowhere more in evidence than in Terry Wilson's writing. *Perilous Passage* develops its own versions of key Third Mind techniques:

- *Deep Meditation*
- *Scattering*
- *'Day-Dreaming' (or Tandra)*
- *Open Receptivity*
- *Remote Viewing*
- *Out of the Body Experiences*
- *Trance*
- *The Hallucinatory*
- *Picturing*
- *Transposition*
- *Divination*
- *Ayahuasca*
- *Alternative Memory*

These techniques are not described in the book, rather the effects of the exploration of the psyche are *embodied* through transcribed audio hallucinations, notes apparently made *in situ*, found texts, parodic quotations, the interview format, spoof and supposedly real footnotes, cut-ups, permutations, photographs, calligraphy, collaged material.

*Perilous Passage* is a vertiginous palimpsest; a memoir in the guise of fiction, and a fiction which exposes and explodes its own literary sources. It is a manual of Third Mind techniques in action, a psychic guide and a strategic polemical attack upon conventional, received wisdom. In this splenetic exposure of intelligence agencies and cultural entrepreneurs and the creators of viral disease, the world is shamanically stood on its head and its images are beautiful and loaded with menace, creating an intense, kaleidoscopic vision.



This is a book about the transmission of esoteric learning. It is the perilous *soul passage* of the initiate seeking transcendence. It is writing as the casting of spells, the conjuring of spirits, the exorcism of a painful past in order to recruit a “real” existence. And, finally, it is a moving meditation on mortality, loss and mourning.

Terry Wilson rescues *The Third Mind* from cultural and aesthetic recuperation, challenging what we believe we know, or *think we believe we know*, and what we *really* know we *believe we know* to be “TRUE.” Validating instead the dangers and delights of thinking and writing *otherwise*, Wilson invites us to consider *another way of being in the world*.

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Writer Ian MacFadyen, based in London, and visual artist Phil Wood, based in Amsterdam, are currently collaborating on a book on William Burroughs, Brion Gysin and The Third Mind.

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Excerpts from *Perilous Passage: The Nervous System and the Universe in Other Words* by Terry Wilson (Synergetic Press)

### **The Man from Nowhere: THE STAR**

A distant time, young man typing.  
In his room he remembers the perilous passage.

*Two candles are lighting the room one creating a bridge to the other, many persons are crossing it their own way from the bed to the chair, the only chair of the room, a kind of seventies plastic chair . . . We were both waiting for it to be more strong we like that very much it's not too expensive for the price to pay even though you always pay it very much , honestly you could make it more precious if you like delicate spirit, wild as it can be . . .*

*Returning to the story we don't exactly remember what it was, knowing that it can be everything we decide to wait for it to be a little stronger — and a thing suddenly happened — the window breaks and the wind is creating a bridge to the other. There it was a bridge from the bed to the chair. A door open. We were waiting for the candles. We entered the room . . . A bare empty room with skylight, irradiated . . . a single star, hovering . . .*

*I love courage when you want to stay even though you always disappear trying to find what we have . . .*



He sits back from the typewriter.

In a corner of the room I am claiming "I am speechless . . . you better write my book for me. I can arrange a contract for you."  
I looked into the mirror. A misty scene.

A policeman typing our answers.  
"When did you see that star?"  
"At night."

“What time was it?”

“*Not yours.*”

“What did it look like?”

“*Like a world burning in the sky.*”

The world imagination, the torrent of worlds about him, the great gallery of power, a moral sting fluttering in the night . . .

Lost do we know when? Each time you are you feel it now. Fraternity. Personally it doesn't help the spiritual double . . . delicate spirits wild as they come, both waiting for it to be more strong. And many are crossing it the land of this perilous passage two candles are lighting the way. Knowing that it can be everything we decide to do what you want. I hate to wait for it to be stronger, a supermarket in my nerves returning to the story we don't remember exactly. Through the Land of the Dead that long long way we have known and known so well . . . pay for it very much . . .

Our lesson will be to arrive where we started this magic melts slowly in us again.

I am speechless. You better write. In the sky . . .

Are you sleeping? No. I am kind of floating . . .

Spin out my distant story, out to a distant star . . . There is no time . . .

## **THE NERVOUS SYSTEM: CHANGING THE CUT-OUTS**

### **(The Living Dead)**

Hugely-drunken theatrical-type lunatic lurches through the door profusely sweating braying Olivier-like: “*Beware my follower!*”

He reels over to the bar – “*Sweet burning enfer! – a drink!*” -and turns back to his dim audience. The last all drink.

“The Shadow tracks thy flight of fire – *night is coming!* – all smothered up in shade does sit Glamorous Granny, macabre proliferating species to creep forth again!”

Jesus, I mumbled, this just about is the limit, and got up to go.

He glares at me or who or whatever he is seeing, maniacally:

“For this, I'll never follow thy pallid fortunes more. Who seeks and will not take, when once 'tis offered, shall never find it *more!*”

“Smoked transcendence is accessible to all” I said, echoing Brion. Or so one might like to think.

So maybe I better stop trying to sell you another novel and finally tell you what the whole scene really is . . .

Well, I was leafing through some old press clippings just sent from Paris, and there he was, Bedaya, Massa Brahim in full flow: "Poor Brion" lamenting his lack of success, beyond disappointment! "I guess I'm just hopeless!" Hah! The last time I heard from him he said – I think for the second or who knows how many times, us donkeys are so dumb – that he could be heard but is too drunk to come out and be seen, at least as I can understand it. We can talk. And then a real old familiar shuddering as Massa Brahim John C.B.L. Gysin, von Liestal, in full flow, swept my body . . .  
*I am some old clippings from Paris and there I talk . . .*

And all I can think – it's catching – is what the sweet burning hell of a Massa Brahim von Liestal et cetera-etc situation have I got into and how, on earth, can I get out of it? as I remember from years back:

"You don't know what it is you are trying to get into."  
Who does? Into or out of, really? That's how Masters get around and stay around. Or so one might hope. I guess I'm just hopeless.

He laughed, as only he could, genuine, kind amusement, really himself.

("Yes . . . but the *scene*, really is . . . ?)  
Yes . . . *coming!* – *More!* Brion. *Access!* Stay around, shudder one night through the shadow tracks Massa Bedaya Brahim Gysin von-You-don't-know-who.  
"Night is hopeless" he said.  
Okay, so I guess I'm just a situation he seeks and will get out of *Smoked burning enfer!* – I understand it!

(Duck everyone, this could go anywhere.)

Call from AB 9.30 AM discarnate. Says he is speaking through a voice distorter and cannot say where he is. He seems to think my memoirs, which he is filming. "A deep-cover operation to infiltrate an ancient revolutionary movement." Advises me to alternate drinking hot and cold water. And "Stay away from the Kennedys."  
("He couldn't put the life on the right rivers . . . and he was through." BG )

And all, life and death, is all mysteriously left.

..... After Brion's death some eyebrows were raised when, invited to contribute to Gladys Fabre's catalogue which would accompany a retrospective at the Galerie de France in Paris, I quoted Brion as saying that "People are shit" and asserted that despite all his relentless protestations to the contrary, Brion was neither neglected nor unsuccessful. "He simply had extremely powerful enemies."

He had made his mark, passed on his "*strong black*" to Burroughs – (he had said that he could see that Burroughs was possessed by such a corrosive spirit that only such a

radical method could possibly accommodate it) – and whipped up a cosmic storm. With meagre financial recompense, naturally. *They* stood back, finally, let him become a Chevalier of arts and letters, get photographed with successful showbiz personalities and generally be befriended by assholes of the universe. As he said, they are shit.

He of course never achieved either the recognition or wealth accumulated by a Warhol, if that was what he wanted, needed, desired and I suppose it was. Presumably he died richer than Rimbaud, if that makes up for it.

.....

When I would ask Brion about the “actual techniques taught or used there” (Alamut) or broached other suchlike slippery area, he would clam up. He didn’t know. He was just a sorcerer’s apprentice. Now, I feel much the same. In Dublin, at the Here To Go show, 1992, there was a public session called “Remembering Brion” where some of the usual suspects were assembled to drag out the usual stuff – (“*Brion*, who invented the Dreamachine, *Brion*, who turned to me in the bus after the light flickering between the trees had spaced him out and said: ‘*Wow!* Man, like you’re the Prophet of the Beat! I swear to Allah that if this thing gets off the ground I’ll cut you in for half the bucks!’ but being a man of integrity I –” *CUT!*) –

I for my part answered that, for me, this was extremely difficult because – (where is everybody?) – I simply did not *remember* Brion in the usual sense. To do so – to *really* remember him – requires an enormous effort of recapitulation because what he taught was not accessible to ordinary consciousness. The only way to reach him is to follow him there. What on earth really happened to me? What techniques? Where is everybody? Don’t know.

*“Worn-out pals of dust, I ride with you, though I walk through the mess, into the grave softly carefully for his name’s sake . . .”*

Whelme was an experienced agent, known as Lazare as required in the trade –

*“We offer Space and one of the hundred sellers, even though seen before, comes strolling in, old on the principle myself. Attributable to one or two things, the pickup not so fast as it would be with the kind of person you think is correct . . .” – an enormous effort.*

As far as KJ was concerned, he came in *late*, and with a vengeance. And we followed him there into a dangerous, hilarious, coked-up vulgarian existence reeling from one nonsensically scandalous scam after another, forever on the road – This is Lazare from here, there, nowhere, essentially –

One man’s mania. That was in several other countries and the deal is dead.

Gone, with the missing library and the Space Account. Once thought no longer –

*Today, all the roaring camps are gone, the thought waves towns, highways, countryside, mountain and desert . . . A few hours later, cities, lonely under the sky . . .*

Lowered asbestos suspenders looked over our shoulders and there, finished, faded, never stop . . . *Appointment.*

### **THE UNIVERSE IN OTHER WORDS (Ayahuasca)**

...

“There is a beginning — There is a not yet fixed and definable — enigmatic cascades a guided beginning to be a beginning. There is being — There is a not yet beginning to be what I have already said has really said something or tour of a power station described as realities into which it can be made. Cosmic helix permutation power . . .”

“ . . . in a universe where the ‘being here’ is exposed to the risk of not being here, one may, in actual fact, *not* be here [ . . . ] When a particular tangible horizon enters a critical stage, the danger lies in the possibility that every limit will disappear; everything may become anything, or a state of nothingness looms ahead . . .” (Ernest de Martino)  
“But to *be* non being . . . (Brion Gysin’s request) . . . There is no basis in ‘solid reality’ for our experience when it comes to nonbeing, which is really compulsive walking away — (*illegible*) — and the *only* Way — surprising, seizing the actual *Process* of reality formation-organization — (‘How to make a shaman’) — the key in the process itself, not its fleeting product. How to *be the Process* —

“There is non being. There is a not yet beginning — Suddenly there is nonbeing —”  
(*There are no further notes.*)

But I *don’t know*. I pant for a living confidant I have sought twisted language not yet beginning to be a beginning alone and deserted and holding out a brief flash of Oriental being which is nonbeing. Now I have seen infinity flashing “*donde termina el mundo*” in molecular imagery as the spirits of the jungle night light up spectrally where stands magic Loyda and Estefania, Fernando, Don Alfredo, and Don Roberto, stupendously awesome, prowls forward, hydraulic movement always at the same speed and we are flying through the clouds, spirits of the world, shipwrecked and alone —  
Trees, ornaments, pyramids, an egg — a bird, bears him away —

The Great Itself, the Only No One Forever travelling through its own emanations: the live universe (in other words).

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