I find it an exciting adventure to write a verse, because, working on a principle that an idea shapes itself, I never quite know how it will end.

George Whalley

George Whalley (25 July 1915–27 May 1983) was an eminent Canadian man of letters: scholar, poet, naval officer and secret intelligence agent during World War II, leading expert on the writings of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, CBC scriptwriter and broadcaster, musician, biographer, and translator. His published work reveals a mind of remarkable critical intelligence sensitively attuned to the tragic in art and life. Glimpses into his life are found in the rare autobiographical reflections in some of his essays and in the accounts written by his family, friends, acquaintances, and students. He wrote a great number of personal and professional letters, and a large quantity of them are extant. Seeing all of these sources together with his unpublished writings, military records, and other materials, one begins to grasp the rhythms of his life, current of his thoughts, and depth of his feelings.

He was a thoughtful and well-spoken man, yet for all his gifts of speech he was anything but loquacious. His eloquence was countered by his privacy and reticence. Whalley was, as Michael Ondaatje has said, “a half-stranger to most of those around him” (GWR 121). Despite having “become a legend in his own lifetime,” as he once wrote of John Hornby – another man known for his silences – Whalley will be a stranger to some who read this collection (LJH 5). To begin, a brief overview of his life is in order. Evidence of his exceptional achievements is found at every
stage of his life, from his boyhood to his university studies, his military service to his academic career. Here I have chosen to focus on events with an eye to the poems in this book.

Descended from a line of Anglican ministers – his father became the dean of Nova Scotia – Whalley was from the time he was a child deeply immersed in the King James Bible and the Book of Common Prayer. He admired and respected both books his whole life. From the age of seven, he attended St Alban’s School in Brockville, Ontario, where he excelled. By the time he was thirteen, he was the junior athletic champion, the librarian, and the editor of the school paper. A year later he wrote the junior matriculation exams for McGill University, including perfect papers in algebra and geometry. He was adventurous, swimming across the St Lawrence River when he was twelve and often sailing with his brothers. A fascination with ships and the sea remained with him to the end of his life. It strongly coloured his deep appreciation for books of exploration, the poems of ships by Gerard Manley Hopkins, John Masefield, and E.J. Pratt, and the early novels of the sea by Joseph Conrad. Beginning with his earliest published poems, written while he was an undergraduate, he repeatedly returns to this theme.

Having already begun “to learn Latin at about seven and Greek a couple of years later,” Whalley studied classics at Bishop’s University, and all of that “training provided a confident craftsmanship in handling language” that became a foundation for his lifetime of thought regarding language as an instrument of inquiry, both shaping and shaped by the individuals who use it. He was active in a number of extracurricular activities, displaying a boundless energy. While he played on the intermediate rugby team that won the Quebec intercollegiate championship, he was also the organist in the university chapel. After graduating in 1935, he taught for a year at Rothesay College School in New Brunswick, and left when he was awarded a Rhodes scholarship. This honour fulfilled a dream held by his father, who had nearly won the scholarship some years before.

For the next three years Whalley attended Oriel College, Oxford. Initially he studied “Greats” but switched to theology in the second year after he was seriously injured in a car crash. His athleticism once again proved itself, this time in rowing. Reflections on teammates, practices, and competitions pervade his diary from that period. He became Oriel College’s
captain of boats and rowed in Oriel’s record-breaking coxwainless IV in the Henley rowing regatta of 1938. A love of exploration and nature led him to pursue opportunities to join geographic and scientific expeditions. It is also worth noting, especially in light of his later decision to volunteer to go to war in 1940, that he made a walking tour of Germany in the fall of 1937 and witnessed a Hitler Youth meeting.

While in England, Whalley was often at St Nicholas House, 22 Tower Hill, London, in the company of the Reverend George Moore, a man who had worked closely with Lord Baden-Powell, the founder of the Boy Scout movement. With Moore and the Lord Mayor’s Own Scouts, 1st City of London, Whalley continued his work in the Scout movement that had begun many years before. When he returned to Canada, he went back to Rothesay College for a year and then enlisted in the Royal Canadian Navy Volunteer Reserve on 1 July 1940. He was almost immediately seconded to the Royal Navy.

Much of Whalley’s wartime experience remains clouded in secrecy. He was not permitted to keep diaries, though he did record a few events. Some details emerge from his military records. Others can be inferred from the many poems he wrote about the war. From the summer of 1940 until March 1941, he trained ashore at hms King Alfred and hms Dolphin and at sea aboard hms Cutty Sark. He was assigned with the rank of sub-lieutenant to hms Tartar and at the end of May 1941 participated in the pursuit and sinking of the German battleship Bismarck. That battle is represented in the magnificent seven-part poem “Battle Pattern” and a few smaller pieces. One day later, on 28 May 1941, the Tartar and its sister ship, the hms Mashona, were repeatedly attacked by German bombers. The Mashona was stricken. Whalley leaped into the water to save three seamen who had escaped from the sinking ship. He rescued one of the three, for one man was already dead and another died before Whalley could pull him back to the Tartar. For his bravery he was awarded a Royal Humane Society Bronze Medal. By July 1941 the commanding officer of the Tartar recognized Whalley’s superior abilities and had him transferred to the Admiralty in London. He was promoted to lieutenant.

After two months of selecting personnel for technical training, he was sent to the Naval Intelligence Division. From September 1941 to March 1943 he had several assignments, some of which are known. He planned
and implemented cross-channel intelligence operations to Norway, Holland, Belgium, and France using motor gunboats to land and retrieve agents. “Gunboat Sortie” tells of one such mission. Whalley tested existing surfboats and developed new boat designs for use in secret intelligence operations and wrote a book for the Admiralty reporting the findings. (He also saved two men from drowning in the surf during the tests.) He invented an acoustic beacon, code-named the FH830, which was deployed by submarines to mark landing points for Operation Husky – the Sicily landings – and minesweeper routes in Operation Overlord – the Normandy landings. Following this assignment, Whalley served until July 1943 in the Mediterranean on the staff of Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsey. “Commandos Embarking,” “Initial Assault – Sicily,” and a few other pieces are connected with this time. He trained personnel to use the FH830 and its receiver device. For the next nine months into the spring of 1944, he was assigned to the Admiralty DDO(D) – Deputy Director Operations Division (irregular) – and also worked part-time in the DMWD – Department of Miscellaneous Weapons Development. He travelled to Washington in 1943 and 1944 “to correlate surf-landing predictions with long-range weather-forecasting” and was engaged in “production work on wave-suppression gear” in preparation for the Allied invasion of Normandy. During the invasion he was off the coast of France aboard the HMS Ceres as the assistant to the executive officer, recording his impressions of unfolding events in the diary-like “Normandy Landing.” For much of the time from October 1944 to April 1945 he was involved in officer training courses.

While living in London, Whalley met Elizabeth Watts, who was working in the Admiralty office responsible for designing and bestowing honours. Both had rooms in Chelsea’s historic Cheyne Walk, George at 94 and Elizabeth at 97. They married on 25 July 1944, Whalley’s twenty-ninth birthday. They would have three children over the next decade: Katharine (b. 1947) Christopher (b. 1949), and Emily (b. 1953).

After his promotion to lieutenant commander, Whalley returned to Canada and from April 1945 to August 1945 was the first lieutenant of the HMCS Chaudière and then of the HMCS Saskatchewan. In July he received an unexpected offer from Bishop’s University of a lecturer’s position in the English Department, though he did not have a degree in English. His
education in literature did not come from a university alone but was extended by his extensive reading during the war. His diaries and notebooks are full of passages he transcribed from Chaucer, Marlowe, Milton, Shakespeare, Blake, Emily Brontë, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Hardy, Conrad, Lawrence, and Yeats, among many others. At Bishop’s, Whalley earned a master’s degree in English by completing a thesis entitled “A Critique of Criticism: Prolegomena to the Study of Poetic Process” in 1948. Though appeals are made to Alfred North Whitehead and other philosophers throughout, the inspiration for Whalley’s argument may have come from reading T.S. Eliot’s essays, to which he often refers. Eliot declares that “literary criticism should be completed by criticism from a definite ethical and theological standpoint.” Taking the hint, Whalley substitutes metaphysics and proceeds to build from there.

Five years later he completed Poetic Process: An Essay in Poetics, a revised and expanded version of the thesis. Central to the book are some ideas Whalley continued to develop into his mature thought of the 1970s, such as “art is discovered and realizes itself in the making” (xviii); the “poet is transfigured by his art” (xxii); and “art claims to start from a peculiarly powerful kind of knowing; art claims to engage the whole person and to make the person whole” (10). He also first articulates his view of criticism as a getting-to-know, a heuristic process in which literature is an instrument of inquiry (xxi).

Arrangements were made for Whalley to pursue his doctorate on Coleridge at the University of Toronto, but Bishop’s University was unable to find a suitable candidate to step in during his leave. A year later he went to King’s College, London, and though he received assurances sufficient to expect he was welcome to return to Bishop’s, a change in the administration meant the loss of his position. Queen’s University reaped the benefits: after completing his dissertation in 1950, Whalley joined the faculty and was integral to the life of the institution and the Kingston community for the next thirty years. He was a member of the congregation at St George’s Cathedral and often played its pipe organ with joy, though he did not regularly attend in later years after he and Elizabeth moved to a house in Hartington north of Kingston. His critical and biographical study Coleridge and Sara Hutchinson and the Asra Poems was published in 1955, a year before he retired from the Royal Canadian Navy Volunteer Reserve with the rank of commander.
Whalley was a talented amateur pianist, having learned to play and sight-read music in childhood. He loved music. Throughout his letters and diaries one reads the names of the composers and the works he listened to and played. In 1939 he had met with Sir Hugh Allen about studying at the Royal College of Music in London and was to take lessons from Bernard Naylor. After World War II he made inquiries at University of Toronto about possibly pursuing a career as a concert pianist, but the disruptions of the war had stiffened his technique. He continued to play; students who visited his house in the 1970s recall him sight-reading Bach’s *Goldberg Variations* and other pieces. He was the president of the Kingston Symphony for seven years starting in 1963. He brought the celebrated Vaghy Quartet to Queen’s University in 1968.

From 1947 to 1971, Whalley often contributed to radio by giving talks on poetry, adapting books for broadcast, and narrating various pieces. One of his earliest works is “Death in the Barren Ground,” the first published expression of his interest in Edgar Christian – whose diary he read in 1938 soon after it was published in England with the title *Unflinching* – and in John Hornby. The success of the radio drama inspired him to write *The Legend of John Hornby* (1962). In the 1960s he worked closely with the CBC radio producer John Reeves. Among their many collaborations are at least two works that were groundbreaking in the period: *If This Is a Man* (1965), an adaptation of Primo Levi’s harrowing account of his experience in a concentration camp, and *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1966), an adaptation of the narrative and photographic account of the daily lives of sharecroppers in the American South by James Agee and Walker Evans.

At the end of the 1960s, Whalley’s time was taken up with editing Coleridge’s *Marginalia* for the *Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* under the general editorship of Kathleen Coburn. By June 1969 his translation of Aristotle’s *Poetics* was all but complete, and though he shared copies with his students, it was not published in his lifetime. His temporary separation from Elizabeth in the early 1970s was a difficult period, and his first fight against stomach cancer, from which he never fully recovered, slowed him down at the end of the decade. To concentrate on finishing the *Marginalia*, he relinquished the responsibility for editing Coleridge’s poetry to James Mays and postponed his plans to write a definitive intellectual biography of Coleridge. In 1980, as he retired from
the university, both the first volume of the *Marginalia* and *Death in the Barren Ground: The Diary of Edgar Christian* were published. But his illnesses and untimely death left his desire to write an autobiography unfulfilled. Collections of his essays and poems, like the translation of Aristotle, were completed by others who admired him. And yet in the 1970s, when he was in his late fifties and early sixties, Whalley wrote a series of public talks and essays, among them “Picking Up the Thread” and “Literature: An Instrument of Inquiry,” that belong to a tradition in the English essay reaching back to Samuel Johnson.

Whalley rediscovered – and in his own distinct style, made anew – a way of knowing language and literature that moved against the current of the times. At the time of writing the introduction to *Poetic Process*, he already knew “that in studying poetic activities system and technique must be renounced; the method, the line of approach, wants to be heuristic, an alert way of open-minded seeking which does not prejudge either the nature of the materials or the final issue; an attitude of discovering, a rigorous and delicate sense of relevance” (xxi). This conviction became in his later writings the firm foundation of his criticism of language, literature, education, and life. An unwavering sense of the integrity of the individual in persons and in works of literature (the latter encompassed in his use of the word *poetry*) informs his arguments that balance the life of the language with the lives of the people who realize their being in it. “Words have lives of their own,” and “yet behind every utterance there is a person. It is not simply the words that mean; it is a person who means” (*SLH* 82). Whalley thus answers the positions of his structuralist and poststructuralist contemporaries implicitly in articulating the place of poetry and the humanities in the modern world. Through his deft perceptions of the value of literature in relation to life, he enjoins others to learn respect for language as an instrument to inquire with; to enjoy things that they know have no ulterior use, to respect what they cannot hope to understand, to value those things that are strangely unlike themselves or remote from their (often unexamined) view of life. For it is salutary to find in works that we could not conceivably have made ourselves the substance of our own nature, and to find in such commanding presences and exhilarating liberation – if only momentary – from the oppressive circularity of our
own personal limitations, the squalor of our desires, the stifling self-preoccupation that we are often told is the necessary condition of modern man. Literature has this effect because by its very nature it is the opposite of an escape: imagination is a realising-process, making the world real, making us real. (SLH 199)

Whalley’s distinctive speech and eloquent prose are rich evidence of the maxim that “the style is the man himself.”

When Whalley began writing verse is yet unknown. He wrote at least 250 poems and published seventy-five. His earliest known publication was in April 1933, when he was a seventeen-year-old undergraduate student at Bishop’s. An unknown amount of his early work is lost because he burned it. On 20 January 1939 he wrote in his diary, “This evening a great weeding out and destruction of old verses – most of it incredibly bad. One or two of the later ones seem worth keeping and the old one from a point of interest” (Div 188). There is no indication that he ever repeated the conflagration. He completed many poems in the 1940s, though he published less than he wrote, and among them are some fine pieces about the Second World War. In the three decades that followed, he finished fewer poems, but the documentary record of his writing process, deliberate and exacting, is extensive. The last piece he published appeared in January 1967, during the final year of his first term as the chair of the Department of English at Queen’s University. He continued to write poems but not to publish; the latest extant manuscript is dated 9 March 1982, fifteen months before his death. He wrote verse for half a century, and though some of it is excellent, especially the pieces that “have a sincerity in their simplicity, the honesty of a man who has […] felt deeply and observed with quiet care,” his poetry is relatively unknown.

The two collections he published were completed while he was at Bishop’s just after the war. In 1946 eighteen poems were published in Poems 1939–1944, the 116th volume of the Ryerson chapbook series. In 1948 a larger collection, No Man an Island, containing forty-two poems (ten of which appeared in the previous book) was published by Clarke, Irwin, and Company. The title is taken from John Donne’s “Devotion
XVII.” The book is divided into three sections, each headed with an epigraph by Chaucer, T.S. Eliot, and André Gide, respectively. No other collection appeared in his lifetime. The verses he published in the 1950s and 1960s are scattered in periodicals, small books, and anthologies.

In the 1970s, George Johnston, Whalley’s friend for more than a decade, encouraged him to assemble a new collection. After a visit to Ottawa to receive an honourary degree from Carleton University, a celebration of Whalley’s many accomplishments that Johnston did much to arrange, Whalley tells Johnston that he has begun “to put together a little volume of uncollected poems.”

With the demands on his time arising from chairing the Department of English for a second term and bringing the volumes of Coleridge’s *Marginalia* to press, the work did not proceed quickly. It was certainly interrupted in early 1979 by Whalley’s first struggle with cancer and the long recovery from the surgery that prolonged his life. He did not abandon the idea. In a letter he tells his daughter Katharine that Gary Geddes, who had that year founded Quadrant Editions at Concordia University, “has asked me if I have a ms for him and I haven’t answered yet even though Michael Ondaatje phoned on his behalf to urge me to get a move on.” Two weeks later he asks Johnston whether to send a manuscript or look for a different publisher. The collection of poems remained unfinished when he lost his second struggle with cancer.

Shortly after Whalley’s death, Johnston began assembling his friend’s poems to honour the man he considered foremost a poet. *The Collected Poems of George Whalley*, published by Quarry Press in 1986, contains all of the pieces in Whalley’s two postwar books and some of those that appeared elsewhere. It also includes eighteen poems taken from Whalley’s private papers. The book was praised by a number of reviewers who recognized the value of Whalley’s work. David Lewis calls Whalley “one of Canada’s most distinguished poets” and sees in the “unassuming” character of his achievement a lesson for “contemporary poets” to “concentrate rather on the quality of what they publish than the quantity” (730, 731). John Baxter argues “the poems are an important contribution to Canadian literature that should be more widely known,” but since then the poems have not been reprinted and are not often included in anthologies.
Whalley was aware of and sensitive to the neglect of his poems. In the previously unpublished “How very odd to miss the bus,” he reflects on the place of his poems in Canadian literature. The single extant manuscript of that poem is undated. It was likely written when he was forty-three, after he saw that he was excluded from the 1958 edition of *The Penguin Book of Canadian Verse*, edited by Ralph Gustafson. The poem appears to have been composed in one sitting: there is but one correction in the whole. Irritation and self-deprecation are woven into what is both a critical self-assessment and a damning evaluation of the academic and cultural world of which he was a part and yet from which he stood apart. Whalley sees himself as

Bluntly excluded from collections
Of poets not more competent but younger
Whose poems comprise selections
From wit too recent for my hunger. (ll. 5–8)

He thinks his poems are different in kind for three reasons. First, he is “not schooled in the correct / Graduate school that makes a thing of / Making its poems from its poetry” (ll. 14–16). Unlike the work of those who did not go to war, his writing is inflected by his war experience, which makes it harder for him to force a way into the “pigeonhole” (l. 4) of contemporary Canadian poetry:

It’s better perhaps not to have seen
War or loved in war or after
Or ever to have pitied man’s obscene
Brutality deep as the sea and hollow as laughter. (ll. 17–20)

As a result of his experience, his poems “disclose unimaginable fields / Of thought and feeling a little outside the books” (ll. 23–4) – unimaginable, that is, to those whose sense of life is derived from books. His writing does not reproduce the expected conventions. “Being naïve” (l. 14), he has missed the bus, and as a result his “accent is not the dialogue of the tribe, / well-known for learned books not published yet” (ll. 25–6). He imagines one of his critics acknowledging, grudgingly, that he is “A poet – yes, of a sort, but of course / his poet’s sense is seen more clearly
/ Not in his verse but in his prose” (ll. 27–9), and then adds, as if in an aside, “But not the prose he prizes” (l. 30). He closes by raising questions about who he is and how he is known: “A poet? No. A scholar – too light-hearted. / A teacher? Too evasive by a mile” (ll. 39–40). That only leaves “a name” (l. 40), presumably the one at the centre of the then already growing legend of which he was certainly aware, that attributed to him various feats like racing in the Monaco Grand Prix, defying the orders of admirals and captains to save drowning German sailors, and being a source for the character of James Bond.

Written a few years later, the poem “My heart is not here in the pages” may be read as a counterpart to “How very odd to miss the bus” – lacking the latter’s anger, instead raising questions about the relationship between a man and his writings. It is a warning to “youthful sages” (l. 3) that echoes, albeit with a gentleness lacking in “The Tables Turned,” Wordsworth’s idea that “Our meddling intellect / Mis-shapes the beautiful forms of things; / – We murder to dissect” (ll. 26–8). Saying that there is for him “work that is not set out / for youth to mark with red / pencil” (ll. 14–16), Whalley dissociates himself from the analytical methodologies prevalent in modern intellectual movements:

Do not ask me to go
with tweezers, scalpel and knife;
to find in the vision the thing
that men call beauty for want
of expressing their wonder; to strive
with the mind and the hand
till the essence will breathe and live
in a philosophical phrase
which no critic can assail,
in a universal formula
good till the world’s end. (ll. 34–44)

These poems deserve some attention because Whalley very rarely reflects in this way on his relationship with the academic and literary establishment. He usually refrained from commenting on the various schools of thought coming into being in his time in the university, though in the introduction to “The Old Crane of Gort: Selected Essays 1947–1972,” a
collection of his essays he proposed to publish in the 1970s, he did write, “It may be that certain material forces and some imperial longings have since the thirties nudged literary criticism towards being aggressive, combative, schematic, scientific, authoritarian; perhaps the apotheosis of ‘scientific’ method and the cult of ‘research’ in universities has tended quietly to canonize whatever in criticism looked like ‘definitive findings’ or ‘conclusions’ or instruments of power or manipulative keys to the mysteries. If that is so, I do not wish to change much with the times” (ocg 2–3).

Whalley’s poetry has not been given a place in Canadian literature alongside the works of his contemporaries. He was sceptical of the experimentation in verse and also distrusted the emerging Canadian nationalism of mid-century. That he did not participate in these developments partly explains the lack of attention his poetry has received. Tellingly, at a poetry reading during which he spoke after his former student D.G. Jones, Whalley differentiated their styles by suggesting the audience was about to hear the “Beethoven after the Bartok or the Sweelink after the Stravinsky […] medieval sonorities after the sharp ironies of youth.”

He did not object to modern experimentation tout court – he greatly admired Bartok’s piano concertos and string quartets – but he knew his poems harmonized with the earlier English modernism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries instead of the later modernism of his Canadian contemporaries.

In the opening of the introduction to The Collected Poems of George Whalley, Johnston declares “for many of us [Whalley] was first and last a poet” (1). In his review of the book, Baxter says “it is easy to sympathize with this remark” and, noting that Whalley “used the term ‘poet’, as well as ‘poem’ and ‘poetry’, in a generously inclusive sense,” he recognizes “there may be an ultimate justice in claiming him as a poet, first and last” (496). Though Baxter acknowledges at the end of the review that Whalley did not “regard prose as the antithesis of poetry” and that his poetry “is in many ways prose-like” (510), he allows “it is useful to distinguish the poet from the critic, and the publication of The Collected Poems makes it easier to draw the distinction” (496). Reading a collection of Whalley’s poems makes it more rather than less difficult to draw distinctions. Contrary to the suggestion of one reviewer, the verses are not “adjunctive” to his life.

Familiar elements of Whalley’s prose style are
present in his verse, and ideas he grappled with appear in his verse before and alongside his published essays.

To imagine there is a Whalley the poet and a Whalley the scholar is misleading. Instead, one can take up the thread found in Christopher Whalley’s remembrance of his father: “The qualities of acuity and discipline which exemplified his work ran through everything he did. He was integrated to the extent that he operated from a single worthy core, and all his efforts contributed to evolving that core. […] His long attention to thought and language had produced a remarkable proficiency which was very central, and the quality of expression which it maintained was consistent” (gwr 187–8). For Whalley, speaking and writing are in harmony. The best passages in his verse are akin to the best passages in his prose, and common threads run through both. The simplicity and clarity in language and thought – the lack of sophistication, over-elaboration, and ornamentation – is consistent. The extant recordings of Whalley and the testimonies of those who knew him substantiate his son’s claims regarding the lack of difference in Whalley’s speaking and writing. This characteristic is reminiscent of Samuel Johnson, a man whose integrity and singleness his contemporaries noted.

When Whalley returned to Canada and began his brief repeat sojourn at Bishop’s, he entered into an intense period of composition – drafting new and refining recently written poems in preparation for Poems 1939–1944 (1946) and No Man an Island (1948); publishing his first works of literary criticism for periodicals, “The Poet and his Reader” (1947), “The Mariner and the Albatross” (1947), and “The Metaphysical Revival” (1948); and writing a master’s thesis, “A Critique of Criticism” (1948), which was transformed into Poetic Process: An Essay in Poetics (1953). The artistic and critical works are intertwined chronologically: one can easily imagine Whalley typing a final draft of “Battle Pattern” in the morning and turning to “The Mariner and the Albatross” in the afternoon. And yet the writing in the verse is arguably more akin to his mature style than is his prose of this period. “The Poet and his Reader” and “The Metaphysical Revival” revisit and rework ideas he found in T.S. Eliot’s essays, and his prose is generally Eliotic (the latter takes its start from Eliot’s 1921 essay “The Metaphysical Revival”). In this period Whalley, much like F.R. Leavis up to and including the 1940s, was under the
sway of Eliot. He used a passage from Eliot’s “The Dry Salvages,” the third part of *Four Quartets*, as an epigraph to the second part of *No Man an Island*. (It is a poem of water and the sea, but Whalley does not call Eliot a great poet of the sea like Coleridge, Hopkins, and Pratt.) Though Coleridge and Whitehead are the foundations of “A Critique of Criticism” and *Poetic Process*—which is not to dismiss the importance in those two works of Henri Bergson, Dorothy Emmet, Carl Jung, Søren Kierkegaard, Gabriel Marcel, Jacques Maritain, Herbert Read, Ranier Marie Rilke, and Paul Valéry—Whalley makes repeated appeals to Eliot in the former and rehearses his doctrines of catalysis and the objective correlative in the latter. His move away from Eliot in later years is understandable; in making a start, it is common that an author “writes in the style of others looking for his own.”

Judging by the style of “A Critique of Criticism” and *Poetic Process*, Whalley was tempted to develop a philosophical prose during this time. In chapter 5 of the latter, after examining Eliot’s metaphor of catalysis from “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” Whalley outdoes Eliot by constructing a metaphor for poetry drawn from recent discoveries in quantum physics (pp 89–92). This passage is characteristic of the way he sometimes sees poetry in *Poetic Process*:

I suggested that a poem springs from a paradeigmatic event, that a poem is in some sense the resolution of an event of reality. A germ, a catalyst, a quantum of “poetic energy” intrudes into consciousness; the associative function of memory which we call imagination is stimulated, and orients itself in a particular manner. The activity that proceeds between the paradeigmatic event and the finished poem I have called *symbolic extrication*. And by this term I mean to imply, not simply the critical activity by which a poem is guided finally to completion, but also the activity which makes a poem necessary at all. Symbolic extrication is the activity by which the poet extricates himself from an intolerable reality (the paradeigmatic event) by transferring his feeling for that reality to a system of symbols. The poem is not merely a by-product of that withdrawing movement by the necessary condition of it. (pp 104–5)
In later years Whalley for the most part moves away from these ideas. That he does not develop this style of thought is an implicit criticism of it. *Poetic Process* contains many of his characteristic ideas. He repeatedly articulates his view of criticism as a getting-to-know. He already thinks of art as a process of making, which anticipates his translation of Aristotle’s *Poetics*. He understands the limits of science and sees literature as embodying a form of knowing that is irreplaceable. His incisive review of Northrop Frye’s influential *Anatomy of Criticism*, which articulates a criticism of Frye’s style and methods before the book achieved its full fame, shows he has already learned much to make him a fine critic.

But he realized, consciously or unconsciously, that the predominant style of the book wasn’t his own. After *Poetic Process* he neither appeals to Whitehead nor reveals an intention to pursue metaphysics. There is no question that in the superb essays of the 1970s he knew what he had of his own to say.

Reading the critical prose and the poems of the period together, one registers a significant difference in the rhythms and styles. (Whalley’s epistolary prose consistently remains close to the rhythms of speech in this period and throughout his life.) But if the poems are read alongside his later prose, one sees there are many ways in which the quality of the verse has affinities with the essay style he developed in the 1960s and 1970s. In making the early poems, Whalley discovered something important regarding rhythms in writing and speaking. That insight led to the development of his mature prose style.

In the mid-to-late 1940s, through his earliest work on Coleridge and the adventure of writing his poetry, Whalley came to see that the familiar dichotomy between poetry and prose distorted the true relation between the two. A faint shadow of Nietzsche may be detected when Whalley writes, “The distinctions between romantic and classical, between realist and idealist […] can be valuable distinctions if carefully handled within their defined reference. But from certain points of view those distinctions merge and disappear” (cc 24). In 1946 he already knew that “the distinction between poems and not-poems cuts across the technical distinction between poetry and prose” (cc 193), and he carried the thought into *Poetic Process*: “Coleridge justly
observed that the antithesis of poetry is science. By this I take him to mean that the scientific mind is the antithesis of the poetic mind. The antithesis to a poem, however, is not prose simply, but technical or scientific prose. The complete range of prose includes every conceivable shade of intension and feeling: at one extreme that ‘other harmony’ which (without being ‘purple’) legitimately claims the status of poetry; at the other extreme the prose of scientific exposition and description” (119). This way of thinking informs Whalley’s later ideas regarding the poetry found in the prose of a novel and the sentence structures found in verse. “Although ‘syntax’ is usually taken to mean simple ‘sentence-structure’ we need to extend it because our concern is with ‘sentence-structure in poems,’” and this leads to the recognition, as he suggests, that “syntax in good poetry […] is dramatic, gestures forth what it is saying in the way it is meant by the poet and ‘seen’ by him. Often a poet is unraveling what is not known at the outset; syntax is often a vivid dramatization of the process of discovery.”36 Focusing on the dramatic gesturing forth embedded in syntax is one step towards dissolving the prose and verse antithesis.

In making a case for Jane Austen as a poet, one who “is supremely a writer of prose,” Whalley calls attention to “her craftsmanship in language” (SLH 146, 147). “The word ‘poetry’ refers basically to a state of language” – for Whalley, “a condition qualitatively discernible but not analytically definable […] a state of language that is noticeably lucid, vivid, nervous, inventive, economical, often translucent, capable of swift movement” (SLH 148). Perhaps above all, poetry “is informed – or declares itself – by the inventive rhythms of a mind unfolding what cannot be known except in the uttering of it” (SLH 148). With this understanding, one sees why he thinks of Yeats and Austen as kindred writers, the former with his “unmatched sense of the integrity of language – significant words rhythmically disposed, passionate hieratic utterance keyed to the inventive rhythms of the speaking voice” and the latter with her “incorruptible sense of the integrity of prose, the translucent rhythms of the speaking voice in the other harmony, the peculiar signature of breath and intelligence that identifies a personal speaking and the state of mind that from moment to moment informs the voice” (SLH 147).

A passage from the section “D plus 70 off Arromanches” in “Normandy Landing,” represented here as prose, reproduces the sound of a
speaking voice: “Yes. We were in danger sometimes and then we were afraid. But those things don’t last long. And even on that first morning, though we were relieved to be unhurt, surprised it should be so easy, we were disappointed, once the tension relaxed, and a little resentful as though someone had had a joke at our expense” (ll. 90–6). There are passages in *The Legend of John Hornby* and “Birthright to the Sea: Some poems of E.J. Pratt” (1976) that Whalley might have refashioned into verse if it suited the development of the ideas. Of the site of the cabin where Hornby, Christian, and Adlard starved to death, Whalley knows “for a time the patterns would remain, but by an indistinguishable slowness changing: the cabin, abandoned by the winter, then by the spring, then by the last of the frost, slowly and by infinitesimal processes falling apart with no living creature concerned to hold it together; the two shrunken forms outside in their neat but tattered rags, of no interest even to scavenging animals; the two loaded rifles leaning outside against the door frame; the canoe hauled up on the bank, well above high water, a quarter of a mile below the cabin in the meadow grass” (*LH* 316). His intimacy with the sea makes him a sensitive reader of Pratt’s verse, and several passages in the essay are highly charged: “And, like a groundswell lifting unseen in the dark, there was in any village one probability to be lived with: that one night, one dawn, it would be known for certain that some man – husband, son, brother – would never come again to lift the latch of the door; and perhaps, by grace, those who loved him would never see what indignity the sea can work upon the body of a drowned man” (*SLH* 178). The rhythms of speech are driving the style. Whalley knew the importance of this element in his writing. In the introduction to “The Old Crane of Gort,” he comments, “More than half the essays collected here were written to be spoken; the others were written to be printed,” and then, with a hint of making a playful challenge, “I am not sure that a reader would in all cases be able to say which was which” (*OCG* 3). This is to suggest, contrary to Johnston’s claim that “what he did not do after the War years was write poetry, except irregularly” (*CPGW* 3), Whalley did not stop writing poetry, not as he understood it. He wrote less in the form of verse, but inscribed the poetry in his prose in developing a mature style to fully realize his criticism. In the same introduction he “affirm[s] that a critic (as David Jones says of a poet) can work only with what he knows best and loves most; for the possi-
bility of criticism turns upon a poise and restraint not much less delicate than what makes the good writing of a poem possible” (OG 3).

In a letter to his friend Arnold Banfill, an early reader of his poems who encouraged him to write, Whalley gives a clue to his process of writing. Of Yeats he says, “When I read his life I found that his methods of working were not greatly different to mine. Nothing arrived complete. He worked and polished and chipped away, often starting from a prose draft, until every inessential had refined away” (1 May 1945). Years later Whalley’s eldest daughter Katharine was writing her master’s thesis on Yeats’s poetry, and Whalley read a draft of it. A paragraph in the letter he wrote in response offers another rare insight into Whalley’s poetic process:

More often than not, when I am writing something I have a germinal idea that I can scarcely formulate. The first draft (and more often than not, two or three later drafts) fishes out the germ and places it among the materials that will nourish it into the light. The purpose (I think) is not to arrive at a formulation of the “germ” but to let the germ come to life and grow – to declare itself through the life it makes for itself. What the germ declares is not itself, but the life implicit in it, in the way that an acorn is no substitute for an oak tree; and the end of the process is not so much something seen as an activity of seeing, dominated no doubt by the germinal idea, in which all the materials, the large structure, the texture, and the tune are essential rather than ancillary. 

This account leaves out the early prose drafts he made when he was younger and likely reflects his later writing process. For a number of poems written in the 1950s and 1960s, there is ample evidence of Whalley’s habits of writing and revising in the extant manuscripts and typescripts. But in these, the process of writing begins and ends in verse. More rarely did Whalley leave evidence of the ways in which he began writing prose before shaping it into verse. The account of the Bismarck action he composed in a letter of 11 June 1941 that he copied and circulated to friends and family was written very close in time to the earliest date he records for drafting some parts of “Battle Pattern.” This early draft is lost. The earliest extant draft of the poem is 26 May 1945, almost exactly
four years to the day after the event. The length of time does not dimin-
ish the importance of Whalley first writing about the event in prose. 
There are other examples. The poem “W.K.E.” began with a diary entry 
and a letter written to his mother on 12 January 1941, was revisited in 
prose and reworked into verse in another diary entry dated 23 Septem-
ber 1943, and then was refined on and around 3 November 1943.39 
These observations are reinforced by a recollection of Whalley’s 
daughter Emily that “he said written words should sound as if they were 
spoken. A piece of writing should be like someone talking to you. Now, 
whenever I read his writing, I can clearly hear the ring of my father’s 
voice” (gwr 176). Listening to Whalley read his poems in recordings is 
iluminating. One learns the rhythms of his voice in relation to the style 
of his writing. And then hearing the “Autobiographical Fragment” and 
Whalley’s interview with Elizabeth Hay reinforces the truth regarding 
the continuities in his thinking, speaking, and writing.40 

A significant new element in Poetic Process, which does not appear in 
“A Critique of Criticism,” is an argument made for the importance of 
feeling against ways of thinking that devalue it as subordinate to and 
properly conquered by reason. This position is intertwined with the 
notion that poetic process is a knowing of reality at least as valuable as 
the knowing that results from the scientific method. Though no one will 
mistake Whalley for D.H. Lawrence, the ideas are comparable to 
Lawrence’s revaluations of thinking and feeling in his essays of the mid-
to-late 1920s. When Whalley says, “I am puzzled by the self-gratulatory 
onanism exhibited in some of the literature of this century, and, behind 
the unquestionable originality and brilliance of some of its achievements, 
by the inconsequence and emptiness of the world it reveals” (pp xxxv), 
he echoes Lawrence’s identification of “a vicious circle of analysis and 
impotent criticism, or else a vicious circle of false and easy sympathy, sen-
timentalities. The sentimentalism and the nigling analysis, often self-
analysis, of most of our modern literature, is a sign of self-abuse. It is the 
manifestation of masturbation”41 (“Pornography” 260). Whalley’s ideas 
of individual integrity, wholeness, and the imagination are primarily 
descended from Coleridge, but one hears echoes of Lawrence’s argu-
ments about the “whole imagination,” “real imaginative awareness,” and
any creative act occupies the whole consciousness” in the late essay “Introduction to These Paintings.”42 A fundamental distrust of ideas, central to the works of Conrad and Eliot, is a key aspect of Whalley’s view of poetry as knowledge. One recalls Eliot’s admiration of Henry James, whose “critical genius comes out most tellingly in his mastery over, his baffling escape from, Ideas; a mastery and an escape which are perhaps the last test of a superior intelligence. He had a mind so fine that no idea could violate it.”43 The scepticism toward ideas in Conrad’s novels is memorably captured by Marlow’s outburst in *Lord Jim*: “Hang ideas! They are tramps, vagabonds, knocking at the backdoor of your mind, each taking a little of your substance, each carrying away some crumb of that belief in a few simple notions you must cling to if you want to live decently and would like to die easy!”44

After receiving some criticism from the editor R.W.W. Robertson on the typescript he sent to Clark, Irwin, Whalley addresses the relationship between feeling and restraint in his verses: “That you should speak of control and constraint (?restraint) is encouraging: at least it suggests that there is something to control and restrain. I feel that the omission of such poems as I suggest would raise the level of intensity of the collection and prevent the restrained emotion from being missed as emotion […] Poetry is so much an indirect language […] that (it seems to me) understatement and restraint are capable of producing more powerful effect than a photographic, journalistic, superlative style.” Later in the letter he adds, “I am not sure that the degree of restraint is a reliable test. ‘Intensity’ or ‘Incandescence’ is the criterion I have tried to apply in judging my own work. I feel that, given powerful emotion as the starting point of a poem, the intensity will be heightened as the restraint is increased, provided the restraint does not hide or destroy the emotion.”45 Though in *Poetic Process* Whalley rejects “emotion” as an inadequate and misleading word not synonymous with feeling, the passage accurately captures the importance of restraint in his best writing, regardless of whether it is in verse or prose.

Sometime before 1 July 1945, Whalley asked Pratt, the poet whose work he admired, to read “Bismarck.”46 Two weeks later Whalley mailed “a typescript of Battle Pattern (the Bismarck action poem).”47 Towards the end of the month Pratt wrote praising the poem and also made a list of eleven suggestions.48 Most are minor, but the last one focused on the Sub Lieu-
tenant: Pratt says his presence ought to be expanded throughout the poem. After thanking Pratt for his “critical remarks,” Whalley responds specifically to “the matter of the Sub Lieutenant, and whether he should be ‘expanded’ to give greater psychological unity to the whole. You suggest that ‘possibly he wasn’t part of the whole sequence in your own mind.’ There can, I presume, be no doubt as to the identity of the Sub Lieutenant. That is what makes him such an awkward person to handle. I don’t know whether I can explain in cold blood the underlying feeling that, in an experience such as I am trying to describe, the individual not only loses his individuality in the ship but is also unimportant except so far as he reflects or can interpret the thought and suffering of the whole ship. It was for this reason that I treated the Sub so briefly. I did not want his personality to emerge: I wanted it to be a mirror.”

The “second time” is a reference to the last section of “Battle Pattern” in the typescript Whalley mailed to Pratt. The “Finale” published in No Man an Island is completely different from this earlier ending of the poem. It opens with “A young Sub Lieutenant is sitting in his cabin” with the “June sunlight” outside and hearing the sound of music from across the harbor. And then,

He rises and closes the cabin door
and puts a record on the gramophone.
Instantly a Bach chorale
Ich ruf’ zu dir
played by full orchestra
floods through the cabin, drowning
all but the sunlight.
Between the two dazzling shafts of the sun
he sits on the bunk, hunched forward,
elbows on knees,
watching with blind eyes
the slow fall and rise
of the sun-motes;
listening,
listening until
there is only music
and sunlight
and peace.
Slowly his head drops forward into his hands and his shoulders shake with sobbing.\textsuperscript{50}

The replacement of the section is an example of Whalley’s judgment that runs parallel to the comment, “understatement and restraint are capable of producing more powerful effect than a photographic, journalistic, superlative style,” that he made in the letter to Robertson written months after his exchange with Pratt. A remark he made years later – “sentimental writing calls up emotion that is not controlled by the writing itself” (\textit{SLH} 91) – indicates that the lessons he learned in making judgments about his own poems made him perpetually wary of undisciplined thinking and feeling.

A passage in Whalley’s diary written in June 1943 records a moment in Libya when he noticed in the mess hall “all talk of drinks, shelling, bombing – to avoid effort of thought” (\textit{dvii} 12). Deliberately or not, the men make distractions to avoid the reality of their situation because thinking of it will be too hard, too painful. As Whalley remarks in his later essays, techniques and methodologies taught to facilitate the reading of poems produce many distractions to avoid real encounters with the words. The heuristic activity of knowing that he describes is somewhat analogous to the work of a detective who must discover not only what he is looking for but also how to go about finding it: “the business of searching out something that is at once familiar and unknown, according to rules of search that are determined largely by the quarry, not by the hunter; and, as the quarry is uncatchable (though knowable), the process will establish an intimate bond between the hunter and the hunted until it is not certain which is the quarry and which the hunter” (\textit{SLH} 224). In Whalley’s view, our encounters with poetry comprise a similar rhythm of familiarity and uncertainty, an understanding that is inscribed in the poems themselves. In the life of his poems, the tendency is for people to come together

searching for something familiar,
something half-remembered
and see there only a question,
a stranger’s half question. (“The Way Back,” ll. 7–10)
Often in Whalley’s poetry there is an implicit expectation of responses that are a mixture of familiarities, memories, strangenesses, and questions, responses that may be predominantly comprised of halves rather than wholes.

In one of his later works, “Autumn Was Never So Late,” Whalley asks, “Is this remembering or forgetting?” (l. 33). The verses in this collection, early and late, turn repeatedly to the tensions between knowing and not knowing, telling and not telling, revealing and concealing. They circle around aloneness, loneliness, and solitude. As early as 1936, Whalley is sounding the familiar note, “our loneliness was less in that we shared it each with each” (“Desertion,” l. 1). The idea that “there is no way to silence / the poignant voices of memory” (“Das Lebewohl, die Abwesenheit, das Wiedersehen,” ll. 16–17) can be joined with what appears to be a desire seeking its fulfillment: “all will be forgotten / because we never can bring ourselves to say / exactly what passed there” (“World’s End,” ll. 96–8). Passages such as these echo familiar ones from Coleridge’s “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” and Conrad’s novels: the act of telling that does not lead to relief, but only another attempt to tell again the same; the movement towards forgetting that only reinforces the intractability of the memory; the avoidance of knowing that causes knowledge to haunt the mind and to pursue it to the brink of madness and beyond. In “We Who Are Left,” Whalley recalls Lord Jim’s phrase “nothing can touch me” (130) – one that prefigures the simultaneous consummation of his dreams and his death at the end of Conrad’s novel:

Perhaps it is well now
with the men the war has killed;
now that they are free
and nothing can touch them. (ll. 1–4)

A characteristic rhythm is the ebb and flow of the tide that conceals and reveals the broken tanks along the shore in “Dieppe.” The derelicts will be covered only for a time, just as the telling the story to the wedding guest will relieve the Mariner of his burden for an uncertain period, and the recounting of Jim’s story to his audience is but one of Marlow’s many attempts to make sense of an inscrutable life.
At least for a period in the 1940s, Whalley believed in “the poet’s integral solitude” (dix 29). In Poetic Process, likely drawing on his own experience (though he does not acknowledge it), he sees the existence of artists as one of “infinite loneliness” (xxx) and “more hazardous, more solitary, more desolating” (xxxiv). The epigraph to the second chapter, “Artists on Art,” taken from Kierkegaard, opens with “What is a poet? A poet is an unhappy being whose heart is torn by secret sufferings” (p 11). The antithetical phrases “innocence of intent” (slh 217) and “destructive desire” (ocg 2) signify important ideas in a dialogue implicit throughout Whalley’s criticism that resonates in relation to these views. It is passion that makes “the theme of integration and reconciliation” important to him (p 21). Both the criticism and the art are preoccupied with “the problem of reconciling the secret and unique inner self with the world in which it is placed” and “the problem of reconciling the longing and impulse towards joy with the acute suffering which lies at the heart of the artist’s making” (p 21). These notions inform Whalley’s arguments regarding Joyce and Yeats in Poetic Process, and of writers generally in his later writings, that “Art for them was not an escape from life and reality, but a discovery and clarification of both” (p 24).

The idea of the poet’s solitude informs the poem “There was no way of telling,” where the movement is from isolation to love and back to desolation. At first,

I found my whole being
Wounded and entangled
With a cruel perplexity
Of thorny elements,
Beyond my ingenuity
To break or simplify. (ll. 14–19)

Then love intervenes, but “Having seen myself / I move like a ghost / In utter desolation” (ll. 30–2). The figure here suffers from a solitude analogous to that endured by Lazarus in the poems “Wheat” and “Lazarus.” It is a kind of “forlorn disorder,” as Whalley says elsewhere, that forces a person “to readjust himself to civilisation after prolonged loneliness, privation, solitude, hardship,” which is made worse because “there [is]
nobody to penetrate the desolation of his solitary existence” (*LJH* 249). The questions in “Calligrapher,” a poem reflecting on the act of writing, are never far from Whalley’s thoughts:

Shall I say this? declaring
That we grow old in the wind and rain; that home is a place we
return to and always have to leave;
That we suffer alone always, and come upon death alone
And delight often,
And tread down sorrow as best we can alone
So that the heart may flower and all desire in the end be chastened?
(ll. 53–8)

When Whalley makes use of the famous phrase from Julian of Norwich, he places “the most passionate silences” in the middle:

And all shall be well and all
Manner of thing – in the cool meadows of repose
And in the most passionate silences of the heart –
Shall be well. (“All Shall Be Well,” ll. 12–15)

Readers must become attuned to the elusiveness that grows out of Whalley’s restraint and reticence, even when he appears to be unguarded and disclosing thoughts and feelings that were unspoken in his daily interactions with others. Whatever they reveal, in their dramatic gesturing forth of Whalley’s “discovery and clarification” of life and reality, these poems are not life and do not fill up the silences for which he has been remembered (*PP* 24). To the end of his life, Whalley “still exercised his own restraint, eluded inquiry, disclosed only a little of himself, withdrawing finally with a gesture of silence” (*LJH* 3).
Notes

1 George Whalley, letter to Arnold Banfill, ms, 1 May 1945, loc #5043, box 3, file 1, Qua.
2 An extensive bibliography, a timeline of Whalley’s life, and a small selection of writings, audio recordings, and photographs are available at http://georgewhalley.ca.
4 Susan Dick comments that Whalley had “a reticence in personal matters that seemed partly the result of shyness and, even more, of a deep sense of the integrity of the other person. He wished not to intrude on the space he felt people had around him. This could make him a difficult person to get to know; it also made him an extraordinary friend once those ‘enclosures of reticence’ (to borrow a phrase from Joyce) could be removed” (gwr 134).
5 Collin Cuttel writes of Whalley’s adventurousness and mentions the swim (gwr 43).
7 A photo of Whalley with George Moore is available at http://georgewhalley.ca/gwp/node/29.
8 He told his brother Peter, “I wasn’t able to keep a diary, and had to write very cagily in letters” during the war (letter to Peter Whalley, 23 November 1980, loc #2350.3, box 1, file 6, Qua.
9 Department of Veteran Affairs, “Biography Form: George Whalley,” 4 July 1953, WEPS. The details in this paragraph are drawn and paraphrased from page 4 of the form, completed when Whalley was the commander of the HMCS Cataraqui in Kingston.
10 Nigel Warington Smyth reveals some details about this secret work and how Whalley saved him and Commander Ted Davies from drowning (gwr 89–92).
11 A wedding day photo is available at http://georgewhalley.ca/gwp/node/45. Several other photos taken during the war are in the website gallery.
13 Emily Whalley writes of her father’s passion for music (gwr 173–4, 177–8).
14 Michael Ondaatje recalls, “Among my favourites was his inspired adaptation
of [James] Agee’s Let Us Now Praise Famous Men and his program on Primo Levi – I sat down for ten minutes and found myself three hours later not having moved” (GWR 121).


16 Unless otherwise noted, all italics are in the original texts.


18 David Lewis argues that Whalley’s “war poems display a mature range and scope that is unrivalled by any of the other second-world-war poets with whom he clearly deserves equal mention. A judicious selection of the best work of Keith Douglas, Randall Jarrell, and George Whalley could provide a lively antidote to the common critical cliché that in contrast to WWI the second world war produced no important poetry” (review of The Collected Poems of George Whalley, Queen’s Quarterly 94 (1987): 732.

19 Earle Birney, review of Poems 1939–1944 by George Whalley, Canadian Poetry Magazine 10, no. 1 (1946). Ellipses not found in the original texts are enclosed in square brackets […].

20 George Whalley, letter to George Johnston, 24 August 1977, George Johnston fonds, MG 31 D95, Correspondence Series, vol. 14, file 9, LAC.

21 George Whalley, letter to Katharine Whalley, 3 January 1981, KWCP.

22 George Whalley, letter to George Johnston, 18 January 1981, George Johnston fonds, MG 31 D95, Correspondence Series, vol. 14, file 9, LAC.


24 In the second line of the poem, Whalley initially writes his age as “43,” before inscribing the word “one” over the 3.

1958). Gustafson, a Canadian poet and academic who graduated from Bishop’s and Oxford a few years ahead of Whalley, was a professor at Bishop’s from 1963 to 1979. Whalley and Gustafson knew one another and met as recently as the Canadian Writers’ Conference held at Queen’s, 28–31 July 1955.

Gustafson included selections from Louis Dudek, Raymond Souster, Eli Mandel, Phyllis Webb, D.G. Jones, Jay Macpherson, and Leonard Cohen, all of them younger than Whalley.


George Whalley, “George Whalley and D. Jones (poetry reading), sound recording, loc #5043, SR 788a, qu.a. The reading was held at Queen’s University in the Agnes Etherington Art Centre on 10 March 1966.


Rick Johnson (gwr 149) and Fred Colwell (gwr 127) are among those who write of his characteristic speech.


George Whalley, letter to Katharine Whalley, ts, 21 July 1971, kwcp.

George Whalley, letter to Katharine Whalley, ts, 28 July 1970, kwcp. This passage from the letter recalls the fifth chapter of *Poetic Process* and its discussion of origins in the process of making poetry and echoes its appeal to Henry James’s idea of germs for writing. Whalley quotes James’s account from the preface to *The Spoils of Poynton* at length on page 86.


Letter to Dorothy Whalley, ms, 12 January 1941, loc #5043, box 2, file 41, qu.a;
diary entry for 12 January 1941, div, 61; diary entry for 26 September 1943, dvii, 29–30; ms dated 3 November 1943, weps.


D.H. Lawrence, “Introduction to These Paintings,” Selected Criticism, 275, 276, 293.


George Whalley, letter to R.W.W. Robertson, ts, 6 May 1946, Clark, Irwin & Company Fonds, First Accrual, box 44, file 18, Whalley, George, 1918–, No Man an Island, #44. McMaster University Archives, Hamilton, on.

E.J. Pratt, letter to George Whalley, 1 July 1945, ms, weps. The date is on the letter Pratt wrote in response to the one he received from Whalley, which was delayed in delivery because Pratt was in Halifax rather than Toronto.

George Whalley, letter to E.J. Pratt, ms, 14 July 1945, weps.

E.J. Pratt, letter to George Whalley, 27 July 1945, ms, weps.

George Whalley, letter to E.J. Pratt, ts, 6 August 1945, weps.