

A NOVEL

by

Juan Downey

PREFACE

Answers NO :

- b.
- c.
- d.
- f.
- g.
- h.
- i.
- j.
- k.
- l.
- m.
- n.
- p.
- q.
- r.
- s.
- t.
- v.
- w.
- x.
- y.
- z.

Answers YES :

- a.
- e.
- i.
- o.
- u.

CHAPTER I

ED MCGOWIN

Ed McGowin - First I'd like to know, do you plan more than three chapters?

Juan Downey - No.

E.M. - Is there to be only two chapters?

J.D. - No.

E.M. - One chapter?

J.D. - No.

E.M. - No chapters then.

J.D.- Np.

E.M. - Can I begin to find out what the novel is about by asking questions that you can answer "YES" or "NO" ?

J.D.- Yes.

E.M.- Is the novel about personalities?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- Is the novel about... Does it have anything to do with visual arts?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- Can the... Do the participants in the novel know each other ?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- Is Alice Denny in the novel?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- I saw her making a chapter, didn't I ?

J.D.- Yes.

E.M.- But now she's been excluded?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- Let's see... Will this novel be for general public consumption ?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- But it will be published in print.

J.D.- No.

E.M.- Will anyone el... Will anyone know... Will anyone know anything about the novel outside yourself ever ?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- Can we... Will I ever know anything about the novel ?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- If I would like to make a novel, would you record a chapter for me?

J.D.- Yes.

E.M.- How long can we work on this novel?

J.D.- I cannot answer that question.

E.M.- That's right.

- E.M.- I'd like to know, is this novel more or less... Will it take any of the most ordinary points of departure that I might be familiar with?
- J.D.- No.
- E.M.- Most of all I'd like to know, do you want to make this novel?
- J.D.- No.
- E.H.- And, if you don't want to make the novel, then why is this premise being set up to do what you don't want to do? Let me say that... To answer that you can say "YES" or "NO" to ah... to this perhaps, ah... ah... Do you want to mistreat the novel?
- J.D.- No.
- E.M.- Would you like to make a beautiful novel?
- J.D.- No.
- E.M.- Would you like to make a tragic novel?
- J.D.- No.
- E.M.- A sincere novel?
- J.D.- No.
- E.M.- Superstitious novel ?
- J.D.- No.
- E.M.- Excentric novel ?
- J.D.- No.
- E.M.- Exciting novel?
- J.D.- No.
- E.M.- Uneven novel?
- J.D.- No.
- E.M.- Is this to be creative?
- J.D.- Yes.
- E.H.- Is it to be...ah...uncreative ?
- J.D.- Yes.
- E.H.- Is it...ah... almost on an intuitive level ?
- J.D.- No.
- E.H.- Is it on a most rational level ?
- J.D.- No.
- E.M.- Is it on a cerebral level as opposed to an emotional level?
- J.D.- No.
- E.H.- Could you paint a picture about this?
- J.D.- No.
- E.M.- Could you sing a song about this?
- J.D.- No.
- E.H.- Is there any other way this could be managed ?
- J.D.- No.

E.M.- You couldn't make a movie out of this.
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Will it be plastic ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Will it be free?
 J.D.- Yes.
 E.M.- Will it cost a lot of money?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Can you... Can you give it away ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Can you produce it in enough quantity to give it away to everybody?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Do you think that you will be able to decide who you can give it to?
 J.D.- Yes.
 E.M.- Will you be able to give it to more than one hundred people?
 J.D.- Yes.
 E.M.- Will you be able to give to more than a thousand people?
 J.D.- Yes.
 E.M.- Will you be able to give it to more than a million people?
 J.D.- Yes.
 E.M.- Will you be able to give to more than ten million people?
 J.D.- Yes.
 E.M.- Will you be able to give it to more than a hundred million people?
 J.D.- Yes.
 E.M.- Will it be in one language?
 J.D.- Yes.
 E.M.- Will it be in English?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Will it be illustrated?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Will it be black and white?
 J.D.- Yes.
 E.M.- Could it be red and white?
 J.D.- Yes.
 E.M.- Would you like for it to be red and white?
 J.D.- Yes.
 E.M.- Would you like for it to be green and white?
 J.D.- Yes.
 E.M.- Does it matter what color it is?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Could it be green and red?
 J.D.- No.

E.M.- Will it be lengthy?
 J.D.- Lengthy? No.
 E.M.- Ah... then it'll be a very brief novel.
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- It'll be a more or less modest middle range novel.
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Will there be a cat in it?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Will there be any sex in it?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Will there be any women in it?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Will there be any men in it?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Will it deal with voids?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- It will only deal with positive elements. Physical positive.
 J.D.- Yes.
 E.M.- Could we... Could I make one after you have made the novel?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Could I make an object like it?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Can the novel grow, could it perpetuate itself?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Could it become... Could it be smaller, could it reduce itself?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Could it be...

PAUSE

E.M.- Does it deal with voice?
 J.D.- Yes.
 E.M.- Does it deal with communication?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Will there be more than one voice involved?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Will you erase one of our voices?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Will it be... ah... That's right, it's to be, it's to be, it's to be written.
 J.D.- Yes. Ah, No.
 E.M.- It will not be written in the final analysis. It will be... on the final production, it will be on tape?
 J.D.- Yes.
 E.M.- And you said you might be able to give this away to as many as one hundred million people?
 J.D.- Yes.
 E.M.- On tape?
 J.D.- Yes.

E.M.- Do you have a lot of money?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Ah... Can I play it all day long ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Would I be tired of it all day long?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Can I play it like background music?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Do I have to concentrate on it ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Can I understand it without thinking about it?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Is it pertinent to contemporary art?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Is it pertinent to contemporary philosophy ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Is it pertinent to contemporary ah... ah... living?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Does it have any pertinence?
 J.D.- How do you spell pertinence?
 P-E-R-T-I-N-E-N-C-E ?
 E.M.- Yes.
 J.D.- It has pertinence.
 E.M.- Does it have pertinence spelled: P-E-R-T-I-N-C-E ?
 J.D.- Yes.
 E.M.- Does it have pertinence spelled: P-E-R-E-N-T-E-N-C-E ?
 J.D.- Yes.
 E.M.- Do you know how to spell pertinence?
 J.D.- Yes.
 E.M.- Do I know how to spell pertinence?
 J.D.- Yes.
 E.M.- Can pertinence be spelled in more than one way?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Ah... Can I fall in love with it ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Is it inanimate ?
 J.D.- Yes.
 E.M.- Is it ethereal ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Is it ah... urinationous ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Aringo?
 J.D.- Yes.
 E.M.- Is it very urencmeter ?
 J.D.- Vary WHAT ?
 E.M.- Erencmeter ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Is it an instrument for measuring small objects?
 J.D.- No.

E.M.- Is it... Does it equivocate ?
 J.D.- Yes.
 E.M.- Does it... To use an ambiguous language with an intent to deceive?
 J.D.- Yes.
 E.M.- It's equivocal.
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Ah... The ambiguous language with an intent to deceive is specific?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Is random?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Is it about butterflies?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Is it about anything I know about ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Is it completely... Should it be completely new to me?
 J.D.- Yes.
 E.M.- Ah... If I don't like foreign things in general do you suppose I would like this thing?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Ah... Would it make me very angry ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Would it make me passive ?
 J.D.- Yes.
 E.M.- Is it ah... ah... What is jink ?
 To impose upon, cheat, disappoint, to dodge, elude, frolics, pranks. Is it that ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Ah... Would you like some more wine ?
 J.D.- Yes..
 E.M.- Ah... Will it be funny ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Is this funny ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Is this sad ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Is this... ah.... Is this novel religious ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- And it doesn't have anything to do with anything I know about?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- And I can't identify it in any way ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Could I make one ?
 J.D.- Yes.
 E.M.- Would you teach me how ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Who... Can I find somebody that can teach me how?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Can I do it simply because I'd like to?
 J.D.- Yes.
 E.M.- Can I do it anyway I'd like to?
 J.D.- Yes.
 E.M.- Can I do more than one at once ?
 J.D.- Yes.

E.M.- Can I involve as much as I want to in my novel ?
 J.D.- ~~Yes~~ No.
 E.M.- Can my novel be big ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Ah... You're not going to San Juan ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Because you have to do something here ?
 J.D.- Yes.
 E.M.- You don't have the time to go.
 J.D.- Yes.
 E.M.- But, you prefer to stay here.
 J.D.- Yes.
 E.M.- Don't you like to go with Patsy and I to San Juan ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Don't you like to go with Calvin and Erid to San Juan ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Do you know my friends from Mississippi ?
 J.D.- ~~Yes~~ ~~Yes~~ Yes.
 E.M.- Do you know he'll be in San Juan ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- If he goes to San Juan, would you go to San Juan ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Will all this be a part of the novel ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Will you take it out ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Ah... Do you have a specific... ah... structure for answering questions for this novel ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Do you answer randomly ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Do you answer ah... according to a design ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Do you answer according to the question ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Do you answer according to anything?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- And it's not random.
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- But there is no system.
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Ah... Do you believe in systems ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Do you believe in education ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Ah... Will this novel educate ?
 J.D.- Yes.
 E.M.- Will this novel educate everyone that sees it, hears it or reads it?
 J.D.- No.

E.M.- Do you have to be susceptible to this novel to be educated?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- Would you like this art, this novel to educate people?

J.D.- Yes.

E.M.- Do you like for this novel to be widely understood?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- Would you like for this novel to be well received?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- Would you like for this novel to be important?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- Would this novel have any historical relevance?

J.D.- Yes.

E.M.- Ah... Would this novel be important to you as an individual?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- Would what I say in relation to this novel make any difference at all?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- Does what anyone says about the novel or to the novel, or involved with the novel have any relation to the novel at all?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- Will Doug Davis allow his first chapter to be involved with the novel?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- Is Doug Davis afraid of the novel?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- Is Doug Davis ignorant about the novel?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- Does Doug Davis understand the novel?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- Ah... Would Doug Davis like to make a novel?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- Could Doug Davis make a novel?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- Even if he liked to make one he couldn't?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- Ah... Could anyone else make a novel?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- Could I make a novel?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- Ah... Is this a timeless novel?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- Will the novel be understood only in the next decade?

J.D.- Yes.

E.M.- Will it be understood only in the next five years?

J.D.- ~~Yes~~ No.

E.M.- Is there any motive for making the novel ?
J.D.- No.
E.M.- Is there any, ah... Is there anything about the novel
that I would like to know about now?
J.D.- No.
E.M.- Is there anything about the novel that I would like to
know in the process of making it ?
J.D.- No.
E.M.- Ah...ah... Will there be other people involved ?
J.D.- No.
E.M.- Do we have much time to make the novel ?
J.D.- No.
E.M.- Is the novel to be presented to a group of people?
J.D.- Yes.
E.M.- Right away?
J.D.- No.
E.M.- In the distant future ?
J.D.- Yes.
E.M.- Will those be astute people ?
J.D.- Yes.
E.M.- They'll be knowledgeable about novels ?
J.D.- No.
E.M.- Are you afraid to expose this novel ?
J.D.- No.
E.M.- Is the novel surreal ?
J.D.- No.
E.M.- Ah... Is it exciting ?
J.D.- No.
E.M.- Is it exciting to you ?
J.D.- Yes.
E.M.- Ah... Would you like to select the people to expose the
novel to first ?
J.D.- No.
E.M.- Do you have any preference of who would be exposed to
the novel ?
J.D.- No.
E.M.- Would there be anyone whom you would like not to expose
the novel to ?
J.D.- Yes.
E.M.- Ah... Is there, is there good in this novel ?
J.D.- No.
E.M.- Is the novel bad ?
J.D.- No.
E.M.- Would you like to make a good novel ?
J.D.- No.
E.M.- Do you believe in good novels ?
J.D.- No.
E.M.- Can good novels be educational and informant to you ?
J.D.- Yes.
E.M.- Did you decide to make the novel ?
J.D.- No.

E.M.- Did someone else decide to make the novel ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Is the novel being made for no reason ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Is the novel being made for bad reasons ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Is it being made for good reasons ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Is the novel being made for therapeutic reasons ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Is the novel being made for libidinous reasons ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Is the novel being made for hygienic reasons ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Is the novel being made for utilitarian reasons ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Can this novel walk and talk ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Does it matter how long I pause between questions ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Is there anything you'd rather do than make a novel ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Would you make a novel now?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Would you make another novel ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.D.- Would the novel... Would the novel be adaptable
 to short stories ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Could it be made in fragments ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- It has to be a continue from beginning to end ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Can it be made, ah...ah... by any other device than the tape?
 J.D.- Yes.
 E.M.- Ah... Could we make it on the telephone ?
 J.D.- Yes.
 E.M.- Would it be more fun to make it on the telephone ?
 J.D.- Yes.
 E.M.- Could the novel... be read backwards ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Can it be heard backwards ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Can it be heard upsidedown ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Can it be heard in bed ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Ah... Does the novel have children in it ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Does it have ... any people at all in it ?
 J.D.- ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ No.
 E.M.- Does it have animals in it?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Does the novel have cows ?
 J.D.- No.

E.M.- Insects ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Fishes ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Dust ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Is it scary ?
 J.D.- No. It's not scary.
 E.M.- Is it ah... entertaining ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Is it ah... Is it a masterpiece ?
 J.D.- Yes .
 E.M.- Ah... Is it one of a kind ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Has it been preceded by any novel of its kind?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Ah... Is it
 Is it good for me?
 J.D.- Yeah.
 E.M.- Does it make me better ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Does it make me look better ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Feel better ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Smell better ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Taste better ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Will I eat better ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Is it good for me in some way ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Is it ah... ah... Is it going to be terrific ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Is it going to be super ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Is it going to be quiet ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Will it be ...ah... very self contained without any outside influences to help it ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Is it to be with ah....ah... decoration ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Is it to be with a grandiose presentation ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Is it to be ah... Will it be about me?
 J.D.- Yes.
 E.M.- Will it be about other people like me ?
 J.D.- Yes.
 E.M.- Will it be ~~about~~ about anyother people like me ?
 J.D.- Yes.

E.M.- Will it be about women ?
 J.D.- ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ No.
 E.M.- Will it be about men?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Will it be about ah... celestial objects ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Will it be about Jesus ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Will God be mad at me?
 J.D.- Yes.
 E.M.- Will He strike me dead ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Will my mother like this chapter ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Ah... Will my father like it ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Will anyone like it ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Will you make another novel ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Could I go away and finish the novel later ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Is there a temporal thing involved with the novel ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Is there ah... Is there a structure to the novel beyond what we use right now ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Ah... Is there a point in the most obvious sense about the novel ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Is there a point in the most extraordinary sense about the novel ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Can this novel go on infinitely ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Can the novel be in production for ten years ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- For ten days ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Ah... For ten minutes ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- For one minute ?
 J.D.- Yes.
 E.M.- Can the novel be in production for ah... Can the novel be... Is the novel for other than human beings ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Is the novel in production for all human beings ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Ah... Can we make this novel in the closet ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Do we have to make the novel in the living-room ?
 J.D.- No.
 E.M.- Can we make the novel in an automobile ?
 J.D.- Yes.

E.M.- Can we make the novel on top of the washing machine ?

J.D.- Yes.

E.M.- Can we make the novel by just breathing ?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- Do we have to make the novel by conversation ?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- Can we make the novel by scratching ?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- Is the novel... Is the novel... ah... Is the novel going to be fun to everybody?

J.D.- No. (Sneezes) .

E.M.- Can we make the novel by sneezing ?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- Are you sure this microphone is picking up your response ?

J.D.- Yes.

E.M.- Is that airplane to be part of the novel ?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- Ah... The...Ah... The novel, will it be presented as an art form ?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- Beyond an art form, as a novel itself ?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- Will the novel be ever presented ?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- Is ah... Is there more to the novel than what I understand ?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- Can I read into the novel things I don't understand ?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- Could we make... the same novel tomorrow ?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- Can we make a novel very much like this novel tomorrow?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- Do we have to make some more novel ?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- Can we stop making the novel ?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- Do you like my pyramids ?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- Do you think aluminum stripping on the edge would make them better ?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- Do you think the color in the pyramids... is ... Do you think that's pretty ?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- Ah... Didn't you buy a new Volkswagen ?

J.D.- No.

E.M.- Don't you have a new convertible ?

J.D.- Yes .

E.M.- A yellow ?

J.D.- No.

JUAN DOWNEY
ELECTRONIC SCULPTURE
JANUARY 4 through FEBRUARY 2, 1969
THE CORCORAN GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON, D.C.

PREFACE

This novel by Juan Downey, which accompanies his exhibition of technological art, illustrates in another medium the artist's concept of audience participation. It consists of several dialogues, each of which Downey, as one of the participants, keeps alive by a pre-conceived pattern of yes-no answers. The sparse nature of these replies places the whole burden of communication on the other participant. In like fashion in the exhibition, it is some person or external thing which activates the sculpture and enables it to communicate its message.

We wish to thank the participants in the dialogue: Ed McGowin, Nanette Semha, Alice Denney, Bob Ashley, Bernard Delvaile, and Doug Michels.

We also wish to acknowledge the technical contribution of Mr. Fred Pitts who collaborated with Mr. Downey in the creation of the sculpture.

James Harithas
Director of the Gallery