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Berkeley Daze

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BERKELEY DAZE

Profiles of Poets in Berkeley in the '60s

Edited by Richard Denner



Berkeley Daze

Profiles of Poets in Berkeley in the '60s

Edited & with a preface by Richard Denner

Foreword by J. Poet

Introduction by Gail Chiarello

Revised edition

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Ellensburg
2018



Homage to our Teachers

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PREFACE TO *BERKELEY DAZE*

Richard Denner

When I returned down the Ave the Grail was gone.
JOHN OLIVER SIMON

While reading Jack Foley's *Visions and Affiliations: a California Literary Timeline of Poets and Poetry 1940-2005*, I came across a quote from Donald Allen: "These poets have already created their own tradition, their own press, and their own public." This quote from the introduction to *The New American Poetry: 1945-1960* refers to post-WWII poets: to the Beats, to the Black Mountain poets, and to poets of the New York scene who were, then, the avant-garde of American literature. This quote can as well be applied to the poets who began their career in or about 1960 and who now have their own presses, their own tradition, and their own public, a presence which is increasingly becoming an *online* presence.

I arrived in Berkeley when I was two weeks old, in 1941. I had been born near the town of Santa Clara, at the county hospital, but my adoptive parents resided in Berkeley, and my dad had recently been appointed Assistant Director of Agents for State Farm Insurance. This was Berkeley, but it was not until 1959, when I was a freshman at Cal, did I come into contact with any poets.

Sure, I had memorized a little of Shakespeare at Bret Harte Junior High School in Oakland, and there was a *Modern Library Anthology of American Poetry* in the library at our home in the hills, but it came to me as a surprise, as I drank my coffee in the Piccolo, that everyone seemed to write poetry, that this was not an uncommon thing. This was an era before writing workshops were prevalent. A few poets held residencies at American colleges and universities, but mainly poets learned their craft outside of the academic curriculum. One might even learn poetry on the street.

Googling "Berkeley street poet" I see that Julia Vinograd is still on deck. She's the Ancient Mariner of Berkeley Street Poets. Simon says, "Julia Vinograd is THE Berkeley street poet. Doug Palmer was the first poet to write poetry for people on the street." In those days, Julia Vinograd was known as The Bubble Lady because she was often seen on Telegraph Avenue blowing bubbles, as she made her way along the street, selling her poems to the public. Doug Palmer was also the editor of *Poems Read in the Spirit of Peace and Gladness*, which was an anthology that published many of the poets who had attended the Berkeley Poetry Conference in 1965 and who read at the Wobbly Hall on Minna Street in San Francisco.

The idea for these "profiles" began with Michael Rothenberg asking me to

do a feature for Big Bridge on the Berkeley street poets, and I started writing on the ones I knew who climbed up on the window ledges of California Hall on UC campus to eavesdrop on the 1965 Berkeley Poetry Conference. Paul X and I climbed up at random and found ourselves outside Robert Creeley's workshop—there were a number of these workshops going on each day for two weeks, and it was warm and the windows were open, and Creeley was saying, "There is a war; there is not a war," and Duncan said, "Why don't you let those guys come in," and Creeley said, "Sure, why not?" and we hopped in, sat ourselves down and joined the I.W.W. of Poetry.

The Berkeley I recall and write about is based on my skewed recollections, which means many poets and poetry groups have been overlooked. Since the publication of *Berkeley Daze* online at Big Bridge, www.bigbridge.org, I have received many emails. Michael Rossman, an editor of *Occident*, has brought to my attention that there was "a vibrant, fecund poetry scene before the Free Speech Movement." Paula Friedman laments that there are not more women represented in my work and that there is no mention of *Open Cell*, the collectively-run literary magazine that had work by Bruce Boston, Mary Moss, Norman Davies, Elwin and many others. Stanley McNail? H.D. Moe? Josephine Miles? James Schevill? Thomas Parkinson? Mary Fabilli? David Giten? Larry Eigner?...As Jack Marshall recently said in *The Berkeley Daily Planet*, "The trouble with the whole 'gang' approach to literary history is that it leaves too many people out...Jack Marshall, for instance."

But what I've created is what I've created—I'm a Maoist when it comes to me dictating my desires—and the assemblage I've made with the work of my friends and acquaintances is a picture of what it was like in Berkeley before the onslaught of Haight-Ashbury hippies and before the media and the Revolution muddied the water—a continuation of the Berkeley Renaissance.

Berzerkely is, or was in the 50s and 60s, the Athens of the West—the Berkeley of Baroque music, the Berkeley of Nobel laureates and little old ladies in tennis shoes, of stylish boutiques like Nicole's—it had an art gallery where you could buy a Picasso or a Miró—the Berkeley of George Goode's haberdashery, where you could have a bespoke suit cut; of the Cinema Guild & Studio which was run by Pauline Kael and Ed Landberg—a street with tobacco shops and Mom and Pop grocery stores, like the Garden Spot, or the Coop, where Allen Ginsberg had a vision of Walt Whitman among the artichokes—a street that, in those days, supported many and various bookstores. I would bop down the street, get the time from the clock on the campanile by looking into the mirror in the doorway of See's candy store, peer into Creed's Bookstore and salute Big Daddy at his chessboard, check out the marquee on the movie house, buy a pack of Gualoise cigarettes at the Garden Spot, and then cut across the street to the Mediterranean Café for a shot of espresso.

—O, too surreal—of course, the street needed to be liberated—there is only

so much bourgeois charm one can stomach before the homeless puke on your shiny shoes, and the street vendors camp on your doorstep, and the unread copies of Marx's *Communist Manifesto* clog the drains—

These nuances may not mean much to people outside the area, but they are the geological fault lines of Bay Area literary history, and so I extended my street poet piece to include other elements of the decade, the Filthy Speech Movement, the Berkeley Poetry Conference, the Peace and Gladness poets, the Shakespeare & Company readings, the Summer of Love, and the COS-MEP (Committee of Small Magazine Editors and Printers) conference and readings, along with profiles of poets whom I term “old Berkeley,” poets who have lived in the town for decades, as well as poets I term “outriders,” poets who passed through and who touched or had a touch of the Berkeley madness.

In *Poetry Flash*, I read that there are 5,000 working poets in the Bay Area, and I wondered, “Do they all have jobs?” Crisscrossing the terrain, lately, I have encountered the names of at least 300—the Spartan 300, maybe—and I knew I couldn't profile them all. The poets I've chosen are friends and are an eclectic bunch, as is to be expected when you pick a group of poets to represent Berkeley. I've heard it said that if you remember anything about Berkeley in the 60s, you weren't there, and in interviewing these writers, I found that their memories are indeed sketchy. I figured that if nobody is going to write this stuff down now, it'll never get written.

These poets take us into the vortex of the Berkeley scene and give us the feeling of the street in the 60s, what it was like to drink coffee in the Med or listen to folk music at the Jabberwock, to sniff the dust of the used bookstores and to watch a deal on the street going down. There is ivory tower erudition along with the grizzly funk of the pavement. I'm not trying to put anyone in a pigeonhole or cage any nightingales; it's just that for me, the avenue was the grail, and I want you to taste the flavor of these luminous and pivotal moments.

FOREWORD AND BEYOND

J. Poet

What can I say about Berkeley, San Francisco and the Bay Area in the 1960s? How to convey the giddy sense of infinite possibility that hung in the air? You didn't need pot, hash, or acid to get high. There was a feeling of weightlessness permeating the air. Every day was sunny, everybody smiled, students at UC Berkeley almost danced down the street on the way to class. The air was cleaner, purer, sweeter. The streets were litter free - this is actually true. People didn't lock their doors, strangers began talking on a street corner and became life long friends, poets and musicians were everywhere, soon to reinvent the way America produced art and made music. Hair was getting longer, morals were getting looser, women were getting stronger, men were getting gentler, non-violence was the word, even as the police beat down anti-war and Civil Rights protesters. In 1964, I had just come out from New York City and couldn't believe how friendly, laid back and open my peers were. Everything was possible, love was all around us, the world was changing fast and my new student and political and street friends (soon to be called hippies) were making those changes happen. The Free Speech Movement (FSM) had started at UC Berkeley to protest the administration's attempts to clamp down on anti-war and Civil Rights organizations, and we all believed that concentrated, non-violent resistance to authority would win the day. Despite the assassination of President Kennedy, it seemed that all doors would soon open and the walls of corruption would crumble. America would see the light; we are, after all, an optimistic nation. We'd stop the war and hold out a healing hand to blacks, browns and Asians and turn the military machine into some kind of giant Peace Corps, helping to undo some of the damage we'd been doing for centuries. This all sounds impossibly naïve now, but if you were there, you know it's true. We were immature and unrealistic perhaps, but we had a faith in ourselves and in our country that could not be repressed. We went to the South and registered voters, we went to Africa and built dams and irrigation systems, we went to Canada so we wouldn't have to kill our fellow human beings, and we went out into the streets protesting, singing and dancing, knowing that it would take time, but confident that a change for the better was coming, something so big and holy and blissful that we'd astound the world and ourselves when it happened.

Cynics will say nothing happened. No revolution ever took place, but the women's movement, Gay Liberation, Black nationalism, psychedelic rock, protest music, and the ecology movement set in motion back then are still sending shock waves throughout America and the world. The things we did and said and sung and wrote reverberate through the years. The right wing is still afraid of us, kids are still fascinated by hippies and beats and sex and drugs and rock and roll, and anybody who has a heart knows there's nothing funny about peace, love and understanding.

**THE INVISIBLE CIRCLE:
AN INTRODUCTION TO *BERKELEY DAZE*
Gail Chiarello**

*We are not ourselves.
Who are we then?
We are all one another.*

Richard Denner has asked me to write an introduction to *Berkeley Daze*. He asks me to step back to look at the group of writers whose work is collected here and to describe what I see.

Nineteen writers and two graphic artists appear in the *Daze*. Of this group, I personally know about half, but the others are friends of these friends. We met in Berkeley and the Bay Area in the 1960s, all of us then in our twenties. Our lives have continued to cross, re-cross, criss-cross, delicate filaments, threads which entwined, unraveled, and then stitched back up again. Our shifting and reforming connections form a group portrait, a tapestry of the underworld of our past, here revealed. Luis Garcia says we were “the invisible circle”—known to one another, and essential to each another as friends, lovers, extended family, readers, fans and critics—but invisible to those who had come before, and perhaps, were it not for this book, invisible to those who will come after.

As you read our stories, you will see various characters entering and exiting the stories. Luis Garcia—in some ways the “Grand Magister” of our little group—wanders through the stories of Belle Randall, Gene Fowler, Richard Denner, and myself. Doug Palmer, who as “Facino” spoke his poems on the street to and for whomever was in his face at that moment, appears in many reminiscences; and Doug in turn pays homage to the influence of Jim Thurber. Richard Denner slips in and out of these pages, in his incarnation as the “Berkeley Barb poet,” a hauntingly handsome outlaw poet, as the rough-and-ready Alaskan printer/fisherman/poet, as the D-Press impresario, and other seemingly contradictory personae—all of them Richard, or, as he is sometimes called, Rychard.

This group, this circle, presented here by Richard Denner, is a collection of poets who occupy a specific place in time and in geography. We knew one another as students at UC Berkeley or San Francisco State or the San Francisco Zen Center; or we met for the first time at the 1965 Berkeley Poetry Conference; or we met on “the Av,” Telegraph Avenue in Berkeley, or on Fell Street in San Francisco. We were changed by the Free Speech Movement. We walked in antiwar marches and read in antiwar poetry readings—often one and the same event. Some of us are hyper-educated, others have rambled and roamed; their learning has been on the fly, on the sly, in the hoosegow. And this highly uneven group, of all of us, this “motley crew” of

storytellers, is part of a literary tradition, going all the way back to the Canterbury Tales. We are an uneven lot, a motley crew, and each with a tale to tell.

Some writers have never given up—Richard Denner, Charlie Potts, Belle Randall, Gene Fowler, John Oliver Simon, David Bromige, Julia Vinograd—and face their seventies with a body of work written over a lifetime. The *I Ching* says of them, “The superior man stands firm, And does not change direction.” Others have come back to writing after a rupture, sometimes of decades. Luis Garcia is one, Richard Krech, Jim Thurber, and I are others. Events in our twenties, thirties, forties and beyond led to a wide detour around the city of poetry.

I tease Richard by referring to this collection as “Minor Berkeley Poets of the Mid-Sixties.” None of us has achieved the worldwide renown of a Ferlinghetti or a Ginsberg, although we have our Poet Laureates of Sonoma County, our Directors of California Poets-in-the-Schools, our Idaho State Distinguished Alumnae; even our James Joyce, since Charlie Potts’ *Valga Krusa* is known as the “Ulysses” of the Walla Walla School of North American Writers. We are not without recognition. But none of us are truly “major.”

Why did we do it then? With so much good and great poetry already written, why did we not simply read and reread Ferlinghetti, Ginsberg, Creeley, Dylan Thomas, Yeats, Walt Whitman, Shakespeare—masters of the language—and stop there? and call it good?

There is nothing new under the sun—and yet each generation has to reinvent its art. A unique awareness looks out from behind our eyes. We experience ourselves as immediate in a way we cannot experience anyone else. Each ego, psyche, soul, self--each kernel of immediacy—needs to explain “what is” to itself, make some sense of this one-time-only experience of being “me,” answer its own dark questions; sing out *its* song, put forth *its* design, its view of things. And yet the “me” is an illusion. And so, like a group of springtime peeper frogs, we are all singing at once, putting out *our* song, *our* design, *our* view of things.

The older art, the better art, the other art, the more accomplished art—which came before—can never speak in *this* voice which is *my* voice, and *ours*.

In the most immediate sense, this book is written by us, for one another.

So we do it for ourselves. To make sense of ourselves.

We are writing for one another—and for you.

This book expands our salons, the living room on San Antonio Road in Berkeley or the pad on Fulton Street in Berkeley, where many of us came

together in the sixties to begin telling one another our stories. Like Dante, we will journey through an underworld; and, following Robert Duncan's suggestion, let us take someone with us as our guide, as the master poet, Virgil, leads Dante through the circles of his underworld. I propose our guide tonight should be Luis Garcia, whose impeccable elegance and good manners will protect us from any dark spirits still agitating within these pages. Our invisible host tonight, the secret and unseen Master of Ceremonies, is Luis.

Now, please open the pages which lie ahead of you, and join our conversation, because as our host for the evening, Monsieur Luis Garcia, announces,

“The hour is getting late.”

November 1, 2007

Old Berkeley Hands

Luis Garcia

Belle Randall

Helen Breger

Ron Loewinsohn

Michael Rossman

Luis Garcia



LUIS GARCIA was born (in 1939) and raised in Berkeley, California. His first book of poems was published in Santiago, Chile in 1963 where he had been studying with the poet Nicanor Parra. He subsequently had volumes published by George Hitchcock's Kayak Press, Robert Hawley's Oyez Press, White Rabbit Press and other notable publishing houses, including an appearance in the *Poems Read in the Spirit of Peace and Gladness*, a 1966 anthology of poems collected by Doug Palmer in opposition to the war in Vietnam. Although he kept writing, in the 1980's, Luis stopped participating in the poetry scene or publishing books for a number of years, only to re-emerge in the late 1990's with several books and letterpress broadsides in collaboration with James Whelage. In recent years, Luis has been instrumental in organizing a series of readings at the Berkeley Art Center. He has also given readings at numerous locations in Berkeley and San Francisco as well as such places as Seattle, Washington and Kauai, Hawaii.

Books

- *The Handle* (dpress, 2006)
- *The Token* (Summit Road Press, 2006)
- *A Place of Morning* (dpress, 2003)
- *A Gift From The Darkness* (Summit Road Press, 2000)
- *Even Steven* (dpress, 1999)
- *More Than Naked* (dpress, 1998)
- *Poems For Dinner* (Summit Road Press, 1997)
- *Snowbird* (Blue Fin Press, 1984)
- *Two Pears* (House of Four Press, 1982)
- *Beans* (Oyez, 1976)
- *A Blue Book* (Cloud Marauder Press, 1976)
- *The Mechanic* (White Rabbit Press, 1970)
- *Mr. Menu* (Kayak, 1968)
- *The Calculated Lion* (Ediciones "Renovacion," 1963)



California Hall

AT THE HELM WITH LUIS GARCIA: A WALK IN BERKELEY
Richard Denner

Gone is The Black Sheep. Gone the Cinema Guild & Studio. Gone, Big Daddy's Bookstore. Gone, Farrel's. The Continental held out, but it's gone. Cody's Books on the Ave is gone. Among bookstores, Moe's and Shakespeare & Co. are the lone survivors on the Ave. The Mediterranean Café is a ghost of its old self, but regardless, Berkeley is still Berzerkeley. Lu and I drop down from the Rose Garden to the campus. We pass California Hall, where The Berkeley Poetry Conference was held in 1965, cut over to Faculty Glade, wander past The Pelican Building and out Sather Gate. Lu is talking.

Snyder was telling very directly and essentially his view, his perception of what his work was about and what the world was about at that point (in the early '60s), and the way I got it was that he thought there was a real potential for the world to change, and the reason why that struck me as really interesting is because, for one reason, it's because I didn't feel that way. I may have wanted it to change in that way, but I really didn't believe it could, and I still don't, but I think that in some ways I wanted it to be that way so bad that I kind of believed that. But I don't believe that. I believe that individuals can change themselves, if they do, for whatever reasons, if something happens, some kind of catastrophe, something demands that they somehow change, and they usually have to work years and years and years and years to do that, and then they do; they're transformed by that work into somebody who's generally very alienated; and they're out there with all kinds of thousands of millions of people who find no need at all to change. And that's the way it

is; and that's the way the world goes; and then the next transformation is being able to survive as an alien in the world.

So, that's kind of where I feel I'm at. I mean I see where a lot of intelligent people have gotten involved, but there's nothing that they receive that they call nourishment, whether it's success or money or whatever, from the world that would force them to change. They never encounter anything, usually, until it's far too late in their lives to change in any way that would transform the world, and so it doesn't happen.



Corner of Telegraph Avenue & Haste Street

So, Snyder was talking about it in this book *Mountains and Rivers Without End*, which he started forty years ago, and this new section came out, and I went to his reading at St. John's Presbyterian Church on College Ave., there, in the Sanctuary, beautiful setting, and this one section he read, that he read at the very end of his reading, really hit home, that the world as a whole had a potential to change. Absolutely beautiful. Strong.

I mean, when I was around Berkeley in the 60s I knew a lot of people involved in the Free Speech Movement and all that stuff, you know, Kate Coleman and Jonathan Cott and all those people, Joe La Penta, who were really involved, but I was always kind of an outsider, partly because I didn't go to Cal; I went to Junior College when I went to school; and I was always fouled up on drugs, and I didn't really believe things could change; not that I didn't want them to; I did; but I didn't think that you could change anything about greed and people and who they can't help being, and in that sense I wasn't on board, and they didn't really want me on board, but they let me just sort of hang out, and I was just bearing witness, just like I'm still doing.

You write a poem. You're feeling really strongly, OK, you're shouting, they're shouting, "Take off your clothes!" but these people aren't going to take off their clothes; they're not ever going to get naked, you know; they're never going to come clean unless something happens to them as an individual;



Sather Gate with Campanile in background

al; nothing in their whole way of life is going to be an incentive to make them ethical; they'll just go on being pathological liars and crooks because they have to be, because otherwise they would just be slobs like me and a lot of other people in terms of the kind of money they will have the potential to make. It doesn't pay them to think about change, basically. There's nothing in it for them.

So, unless the world completely crashes, which it nearly has anyway, being so polluted and fouled up as far as I can see...everybody's just in denial about it...I mean there are organizations that work to change the world, and all of this has to go on; it has a purpose unless we just want to throw up our hands.

Ok, I've come to this place where I've done a certain amount of that work, and frankly I'm pretty exhausted, and I'm just resting up for the next round on a very personal level, because it's fine to work for change, to try and change evil, or whatever it is, and that's fine as long as you don't let it kill you. I'm just saying it's hard to change things, and unless you have the skills, it's scary. I'm trying to write the story by looking at the stars and figuring out my bearings by the day to day living.

THE DECISION

If I can't
make it more than
that, then
I can't.

They talk of
"no subject." I
am a blank,
a total loss.

So now, so
what, only to
go on, I suppose,
to build my own.

The product
is of equal complexity
to the mind
it calls home.

Sacred dome,
I, too, call my home,
but can't begin
to deal with.

Sorry I am
for myself.
Sorry I am
for myself.

TAKE OFF

God is my copilot. We,
she and I,

I mean, we lose ourselves
in the cockpit.

Oh, the instruments
shining.

THE ARGUMENT

We who
hang around
together,
we un-

luckily
together
also screw, "Nuts
to you,"

he said
to me. Then
to him
I made

a dirty look.
Told him. My
eyes told him
to leave.

Love,
let him,
I thought,
let him leave.

THE FIRST

The first one,
ones to
come
will be smaller

than I
am, smaller
than stars are
big. Small is

just a way of
saying rain,
brilliant rain
over fields crossing

the whole damn
country, cage.
Once there
were Indians,

there were.
Cities are not
bad places,
not the way

you think,
but
another
way.

SAFETY ZONE

The sunlight
is a dog
that bites,
barks its song

in time, in
time to float
about the floors
and windows

of this room.
Down the page,
the words,
the words be-

gin to crawl,
to play. Re-
flected in
their eyes are

wild things,
noisy feelings,
possibilities
that lead us

to the dark
planets
of another
situation.

STAGES

The sky is overcast—
a gray spell cast over us.

We're the cast,
the characters.

Built by us,
they act according to plan.

We discuss them.
We speak to them.

They to us
speak from the trees.

Bees in the senses hum.

IF IT

If it ever is
as it was then,

it will be
as it has been.

Even so,
enough is too much,

is more
than before,

and/or
if it's not

and if it still will
and still can

do what dreams can do,
you can use it to

construct a mouth
inside your thinking.

After you have finished,
you'll call out with it.

Shout at the trees.
Whisper to their fallen leaves.

Sing to the bees.
Sing to the birds.

Seek new words.
And then,

speak of feelings
long forgotten.

THE SWING

Her we go,
low down,

woman,
low,

down under me,
now she,

now I,
up together,

to gather
each other up—

down, up,
down, up

THE TWIN
for Richard Denner

He finds himself beside himself—
beside a dog filled with lilies,
a horse filled with angels.

He is not beautiful,
but he is as the storm
is not what he thinks he is.

As the mountains occur
in the dream of his mother
he finds there is certainly
nothing moreover than that.

JUNE NIGHT

I am standing far out in space,
on a moonlit hill in Berkeley.

A train is leaving a station.
A station is leaving a train.

People are waving.
I am waving. Waving

we watch them
go by.

MISTER POETRY MAN
Richard Denner

I will say what I have said before. Luis Garcia has been my greatest mentor, always present with insights and humorous twists of perspective. Meeting Lu right after the Berkeley Poetry Conference, in 1965, we both felt we had just experienced two weeks of white light intensity, and we wanted to maintain the euphoria induced by the poetry of Charles Olson, Robert Creeley, Allen Ginsberg, Jack Spicer, Robert Duncan and others.

Lu's style of writing is unique. His playing with the sound of words and his discovery of words inside of words inspired me to re-evaluate my assumptions about what defines a poem and, then, how to write one. I remember him encouraging me to read Gertrude Stein and Federico Garcia Lorca. He helped me understand that it was important to discover my own voice, *to forge a blade*, as he put it. Here is "Worship":

Worship,
warship,
wordship —

one ship follows another;
one word follows another;
one war follows another;
one wave follows another —

one ship, one word,
one war, one wave
upon a rain-beaten sea,

my rusted knees,
my loose cannons
hidden among the screaming trees,

my invisible shadow,
my loose ends
wanting to be tied up
(again and again) —

this light, he said,
is more than light
dreaming as it does.

Lu taught me to dream with words, but his influence was also concrete. He gave me a used thesis binder with a spring spine and told me to get my shit together. I began to organize my poetry into books, and this has been a seminal part of my oeuvre for the past forty years. He instilled confidence in me,

and I began to write in earnest by improvisation, blowing with words, in Berkeley in the 60s, in an acid-induced psychosis. I began by imitating Lu because his poems sizzle. “They move so fast, if you aren’t ready, you miss them,” Richard Silberg said. And I liked that the poems were like that.

By imitating Lu’s use of jazz rhythms and breath notation, I began to read my poems aloud. At first, he and I were street poets, cornering innocent bystanders, and then later we were invited to read in bookstores and art galleries. I learned my craft much as Leadbelly learned his by putting his spine against the piano. In my case, I was hanging out with a true wordsmith.

Lu is loyal to his friends, considers friendship the greatest art. I may be jumping to conclusions, but I think Belle Randall and I are referred to in the following poem, “Pitch”:

Fly,
ball
in sunlight—

sunlight
across a plate.
Dinner is waiting.

Weights
are lifting
relief.

Bells, yes
bells are ringing
in bars.

Barbells
also seem
to be ringing.

Rusted wedding rings
are ringing too.
And a heap of hands
have just rung themselves.

As *they*
call down
to us

they realize
quite suddenly

all lines
are busy.

As this poem is in a book entitled *Poems for Dinner*, which is dedicated to me, I think I am correct in assuming this “Dinner” who is waiting is me, and that the “*they*” is Belle and myself, since I know Lu and Belle spend long hours on the phone, although it has been awhile since they spent much time in bars. In another book, *A Gift from the Darkness*, in a poem “Ready”:

Denner is ready.
Another friend of mine
is also ready
to go out
for breakfast.

Further in the poem, a “cup is breaking” and a “car is going fast,” and I can remember the exact events, just as I can remember being with Lu, walking up Telegraph Avenue, as he extemporaneously composed “Hot House” while eyeballing a lovely lady:

Swinging behind
her swinging behind

is swinging behind her
like a lantern
her swinging behind.

or being in the old U.C. Berkeley Art Gallery and looking at a collage that contained a map of the Near East, which then became an element in “Old Games”:

You must not forget to play
from time to time
old games with new things.

Have you used delta as a password,
peninsula, island, Arabia, Red Sea, Persian Gulf?
Now that your world map is started,
the game of guide may be changed a little
and may be called host.

Children and guests
who come to your room might like to know
why the earth seems flat.

Notice the lines,
all the lines are exactly the same length;
they form eventually a circle.

But since you see
only a small part of this circle,
the lines seem almost straight.

Do you see why,
why these gardens are along the river
and not in other places?

If the guide cannot answer
your question, one of you who knows
may take his place.

In 1965, I felt the challenge, and now, forty years later, this prophetic poem still brims with wisdom. It seems to me that Luis Garcia embodies a contradictory mode of childish-worldishness, which he at times expresses in a kindly, albeit aloof, manner and at other times with a black, surreal humor, which is a mix of sarcasm, paranoia and biting satire. It is this type of humor that unites Belle, Lu, and I. We receive gifts from the darkness. The three of us find that words are the only light which light our way.

Belle Randall



BELLE RANDALL grew up in the Bay Area. She played St. Joan in *The Lark* (University of San Francisco, 1958). As an undergraduate at Berkeley, she published her first poems in *Poetry* (1961) and won Third Prize in the anthology *The Best Poems of 1961*. After living in Greenwich Village, she returned to Berkeley and opened the Jabberwock, a cabaret. In 1969, she was awarded a Wallace Stegner fellowship to Stanford. Her first book of poems was *101 Different Ways of Playing Solitaire and Other Poems* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973). In 2005-7, she was awarded a National Endowment of the Arts grant in Poetry. She lives in Seattle with her husband, Joe Edwards.

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Journals

Her poems and essays have appeared *Poetry*, *The Threepenny Review*, *The Southern Review*, *TriQuarterly*, *PN Review* (England), and other journals. She has poems forthcoming in: *The Seattle Review*, *Common Knowledge* and *First Things* (Canada).

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Belle is the Poetry Editor of *Common Knowledge* (Duke University Press, 1990-present).

I WAS TOO BUSY RUNNING THE JABBERWOCK

I was too busy running the Jabberwock to be more than remotely aware of the Berkeley Poetry Festival, though it took place only a few blocks away. I remember customers bringing excited reports, but I had no sense of belonging to a poetry community in those days. In 1965 there was no "Poetry Flash." Readings were rare, apart from big names, "poetry festivals" unheard of—I, at least, had never heard of them. Robert Duncan and Denise Levertov would come to mean a lot to me. A few years later, both Luis Garcia—a poet of the streets—and Donald Davie, my advisor at Stanford, would urge Charles Olson enthusiastically upon me, but in 1965 I had yet to discover the Black Mountain poets, organic form and projective verse. Writing formal poems exclusively, I felt isolated among my contemporaries—and not without reason. I recall James Tate, conducting a workshop, initiating discussion of one of my poems, "Poor Belle—." I mention this to show how intense feelings ran. Choosing to write free verse or formal was a matter of taking sides, an assumption which now, thank heavens, has somewhat abated.

Yes, poor Belle. Three of my poems had appeared in *Poetry*, July 1961, when I was still a student in Thom Gunn's poetry writing class. I was anxious to replicate my success, but didn't know how. Now that I was no longer a schoolgirl writing to please my teacher, I couldn't seem to get a handle on poetry. Now that I was a divorcee, the victim of my own ambivalence, I wrote very little and revised over much. Revising was a form of self-punishment in those days. I never knew how much was enough. But somehow I did manage to write a couple of poems I'm still pleased with.

"A Wind Among the Singing Trees" is very sixties. With Thom's recommendation, it was published in 1963 in *Organ*, an (otherwise) outrageous and sometimes raunchy underground Haight Ashbury newspaper.

A Wind Among The Singing Trees

My father was a Cherokee,
Among his people called Shoo-shon,
A warrior name which means: You Fool,
Any name you Call Me By Is Wrong.

My mother, Laughing In Their Faces, was
So beautiful she never needed mirrors,
But even in her fever had a beauty
Such as white men hope to put in words

And sometimes find in music. Look,
She cried, these beds with stainless rungs
Gleam and jangle like old bones. Tonight
When Rubber Gloves removes one of my lungs,

I told him I would like more space to die in.
Instead, he brings more magazines—
But Death and I, though very old,
Will thrive among new-fangled things.

Next morning Laughing In Their Faces died.
Among five fingers there is one
Which stands apart and is alone: to us,
A grieving man is like a thumb.

My father turned and walked through everyone.
Oh father, when I walk down corridors
Of public buildings late at night, or peek
Inside the new museum's doors

To where, in rooms as white as wards,
Statues file in endless rows
Like amputees from long forgotten wars,
Sometimes I glimpse the way it snows

Across the prairies of The Holding Breath
Where every man is named Shoo-shon
And laughing in their faces sings
Any name you call me by is wrong.

The widely publicized rumor of Paul McCartney's disappearance provided
the initial inspiration for the following poem:

The Confirmation of Our Inscrutable Friend

Into the chambers of the Buddha's ear
He speaks, who when the phone rings does not answer.
All morning long his door is locked, whose gaze
Is fixed on Buddha Nature.

The open *I Ching* by his sunlit plate
At tea portends arrival's imminent.
Though friends, inviting us to wait, did not
Divine which way he went,

A stick of musk still glowing in its jar
At dusk suggests he's stepped outside and strolls
The twilight boulevards below, behind
Dark glasses and a rose.

Escorted past his rooms as darkness falls,
We glimpse his monogram on velvet towels,
And pausing in the moonlit drive observe
His silent, waiting Rolls.

And so it goes—the ticket for a train
That leaves, distinguished by a vacant seat;
The wife, producing signatures, who hasn't
Seen him for a week;

The dragon-headed walking stick; the ornate
Letterhead; the gold initialed ring;
The rooms in which we find his character
Engraved on everything;

The thousand certain clues which lead us to
A garden where an ancient Bo tree grows,
And leave us feeling for the body in
A heap of empty clothes.

THE DAY BOB DYLAN CAME TO CALL

Introduction

“This song is dedicated to my class at Palo Alto High and to all the people who might have been my friends,” said Joan Baez in concert when she was not yet twenty. In a life of few regrets, one of mine is having failed to reciprocate Bob Dylan’s friendship—friendship which he offered generously and inclusively to those of us who gathered around him listening to him sing and play in Greenwich Village the summer of 1961. Not yet twenty-one, without even a jacket warm enough to see him through the winter, with only a guitar and a harmonica (its holder made out of a twisted coat hanger), with nothing one would have recognized at the time as an exceptional musical talent, with nothing really but words—shapes made out of air—poetry is truly something made out of nothing—Bob Zimmerman arrived in New York City and convinced us almost at once of his genius.

Dylan was very accessible in those days. In order to find him you had only to stroll up Bleeker or MacDougal streets looking for a small figure in a corduroy cap, hunched forward, carrying a guitar case that seemed almost as big as he did. You’d look in Cafe Figaro, or Cafe Rienzi, or in Izzy Young’s Folklore Center, or you’d drop by the Gaslight just before closing time and stick around after hours, when musicians from all over town showed up to play.

I’d only been in New York a couple of weeks myself, having left Berkeley in June, at the end of my sophomore year, to run off with John Stauber, a professional guitarist. We’d gone out together only once, on the last night of his last previous engagement in San Francisco, but we corresponded in the year that followed. I had fallen in love by mail partly in order to get out of the ordeal of having to do it in person. In person I was often nervous. Years later I would learn that this was partly the result of a medical condition, but the excess thyroid in my system only exacerbated a tendency of character. At the time, poetry was for me what sign language is for the mute. I mention this—my inability to communicate in person, my preference for the written word—at the outset because it will figure again in the events that follow.

I.

The Gaslight was a basement room, low and dark like a cave—so much like a cave that I remember the booths as if they were hewn out of tree trunks. There was a cash register and counter at one end, a kitchen at the other, and a wood platform that served as a stage, facing the booths on the opposite wall. The heavy wood planks that served as tables were deeply gouged with graffiti and initials, each equipped with a candle and a sugar bowl. The candle was necessary in order to read the large, greasy menu. On the back, a

thumbnail history informed you that the poet Dylan Thomas had read from this stage.

The headliner and MC at the Gaslight during the first weeks of that summer was Noel Stookey. During the day he was rehearsing with a new trio—still unnamed—whose other two members would show up at the Gaslight after hours to try out the material they were rehearsing. Sandy Bull, Bill Cosby, Carolyn Hester, Bruce Langhorn, Tom Paxton, Hugh Romney, Dave Ray, and Dave Van Ronk are among the other performers I recall seeing there.

Into this smoke filled room came Bob Zimmerman. In accent, dress and manner, a pint-sized, imitation Woody Guthrie; in appearance, extremely youthful. Bob Milos, the manager, told us that Zimmerman had lied about his age in order to obtain the card necessary to work as a musician in New York. Was this true? He didn't *look* twenty-one. His cheeks were rosy, his hair, masses of untidy blond curls. He had a cherubic, choirboy look (still evident on the cover of his first album, for all his effort to contrive a Robert Mitchum sneer). His stature was slight. It was easy to believe he was still in his teens.

He was friendly with striking impartiality. I've wondered since if he had decided on this as a policy. I can remember him inviting six or seven of us who had gathered around him in the back of Izzy Young's one afternoon up to his place for spaghetti. John and I weren't able to go; whatever errand took precedence I've long since forgotten.

Often drunk, or pretending to be, always in favor of intoxication, if not total self annihilation, Zimmerman would mount the stage holding aloft a gallon of mountain red, enjoining us all to get loaded. Did he smoke dope, people wondered. Milos vowed to take him upstairs to the "dressing room" and turn him on at the first opportunity. But even before that, Zimmerman gave the impression of living on the edge, of being farther-out, less cautious than the rest of us. He seemed to have three or four human souls crammed into one body, he was so vivid—on stage, a match flame, buckling and righting itself in the wind; on the street, a fledgling sparrow, chirping and full of good news of himself. Where had he come from? He was elusive about his past, disowning his middle class background. We were inclined to believe that he had sprung full blown from a boxcar. I remember the night he changed his name. He sang, "This name is my name, this name ain't your name," to the tune of Woody Guthrie's "This Land is Your Land," provoking applause and foot-stomping laughter from the crowd, eager to prove itself in the know: Noel Stookey had just changed his name to Paul in order to provide his trio with the seemingly accidental grace of "Peter, Paul and Mary." (How uninspired, I thought when I heard it. I felt I had a vested interest in the choice, having myself mulled over the question for a while. Was this worth

Noel's having changed his name for?) Amid the laughter, I couldn't catch Zimmerman's new name. Bob Dillon? That sounded too bland, like Alan Ladd or something. Dylan spelled with a "y". Had he named himself after Dylan Thomas?

At first Dylan did mainly Guthrie songs and traditional blues. The first song written by Dylan that I remember hearing is "Old Man on the Street." I felt responsible to go over to him after the set and tell him how fine it was, although I felt foolish and tongue-tied. What tears I've shed for being least comfortable conversing with those I most admire.

No wonder I admired him. I had come to poetry by way of folk ballads and Bertold Brecht. I would have been content to sit listening for hours at every possible opportunity (and wish now that I had), but on this particular night John had some place to be. "*She* is the real fan," I can remember him telling Dylan as we hurried out the door .

This was before the guitar had become an international fad. None of us had heard of the Beatles. Dylan had not yet invented "folk rock." Guitarists were not as numerous as roaches in a Lower East Side kitchen.

A self-taught classical guitarist who wore the uniform of a working musician, a black suit, and carried his "axe" with him everywhere, at twenty-five John Stauber had more or less steady work accompanying Leon Bibb, a supper club and concert performer with a repertoire of show tunes and folk songs. And wherever we were—in the Playboy Club in Miami, or a pawn shop in Denver—it seemed to me that when John opened the case, took out his guitar and began to play, a group of admirers would gather, young people mostly whose enthusiasm for the instrument was just beginning to grow. That summer, John and Leon were working at The Blue Angel, a supper club uptown. After their last set, John liked to stop by the Gaslight, "after hours," and play a set or two.

For myself, three of my poems had been published in *Poetry* that very month (my first national publication, my first anywhere, really). I was too young to know how few and far between such successes would be and was undoubtedly rather puffed up about it. Ironically, albeit only for a month or two, John was working and I was publishing when Bob Dylan and Peter, Paul and Mary were unemployed and uncertain of their futures.

One night at the Gaslight, after John had performed a Bach fugue, Dylan slid into the booth beside us claiming to have counted "112 entrances." I must have looked bewildered. "He 'keeps repeatin' the same little phrases over and over. There were 112 repeats," Dylan explained (or words to that effect).

That he was a dust bowl Oakie was plainly hooley. He was a couple of decades too late for one thing. The influences expressed in his songs were too literate, for another. But I never held Dylan's Oakie persona against him. Without it, there could have been no "Bob Dylan." Through his identification with Guthrie, he achieved his style. His sympathy was genuine. Woody Guthrie lay dying in Brooklyn State Hospital and Bob Dylan paid him visits.

John and I attended Dylan's first New York City concert, held in a small recital chamber in Carnegie Hall. The concert was supposed to begin at 8:00. At twenty after, Dylan still hadn't shown. I remember looking from the door to the clock, wringing my head scarf into a garrote, afraid he was going to bungle his Big Chance. Finally he appeared, apparently drunk and exuberant. The concert was terrific.

When John and Leon went on the road that fall, I went with them. When we got back to the Village, Dylan was performing nightly at Gerte's. I ran into him on Bleeker Street one afternoon. He showed me tattered clippings of his rave reviews, which he carried in his pocket. His unabashed delight in his own success was infectious. He had a new jacket too—genuine sheepskin which he had afforded with the money he was making now. And just in time. It was winter in New York. Snow had begun to fall.

I wrote home that I had met a wonderful singer, song-writer, poet. But I doubted he would ever make it big (I hastened to add) because he was drunk or stoned all the time.

II.

The next time I ran into Dylan, the reviews had won him a Columbia recording contract and he was planning to wear the sheepskin jacket to pose for the cover of his first album. What about his own songs, the ones he had written? Were they good enough to put on a record? He wanted to know. My answer was a wholehearted yes. (Thank heavens I do not have to report having been such an ass as to have qualified it.) In the end, he included only one—"Talking New York"—evidence of reticence in this regard.

I'd left Berkeley with an "incomplete" on my record. I found myself writing the required term paper on Wordsworth while sitting on a bar stool in Freddie's in Minneapolis. Sometimes the comic Dick Gregory would sit on the stool beside me and ask what I was doing. Sometimes the comic Jack E. Leonard would sit on the other side and ask me to write him a poem. Outside a blizzard raged. The snow was so heavy, it was hard not to get lost in the three blocks between the club and the hotel. Sometimes we'd all go out for breakfast after the last set. One morning John and I decided to stay up until the stores were open and do some shopping. It took all day, and we didn't get back to the hotel until about 6:00 the following evening. I fell face first

onto the bedspread. Pages of an early draft of my Wordsworth paper crackled in amongst the sheets beneath me but I was too tired to remove them.

The phone rang.

It was Bob Dylan. He was passing through Minneapolis on his way home to Hibbing for a visit. He was free for a few hours. Did we want to get together? No, we did not. We were too tired, and that was the truth.

III.

In order to tell what happened next, I have to tell about the Jabberwock. Tired of life on the road (so we said), we dreamed of opening our own place, a cabaret in Berkeley, where the musicians we knew could perform. John would be the house musician. I had lots of experience working in coffee houses, and I liked to bake; I would handle that end of things. Our dream could never have been realized without the help of my mother, an Oakland public school teacher, who loaned us most of the money we needed and argued our case with the Zoning Commission, who were reluctant to grant an entertainment permit and a beer and wine license in a college town. I still meet people who remember the Jabberwock with affection (see website). I do too, I guess. The high-backed booths, the tables and louvered shutters we stained and varnished ourselves, the menus I made out of checkerboards, the lighted stage—it *was* a pretty room, but in many ways, the Jabberwock was doomed from the start.

My mother was in an auto accident the day before we opened and lay flat on her back in bed for nine months. Bad enough having to deal with the difficulties of restaurant management, we had also to provide for her care: dumping bedpans, helping her bathe, preparing her meals. In order to accomplish this with a minimum of expense and outside help, John and I moved into her apartment. The responsibilities involved, none of which we performed well, were overwhelming. I have no doubt that the Jabberwock was losing money with every piece of homemade pie we sold. Calculating food costs, learning to cook in quantity, responding to the complaints of neighbors, preparing taxes, soothing the egos of performers, shooing pot smoking musicians (John Fahey and Perry Lederman) out of the dressing room, substituting for employees who didn't show--no matter how hard we worked, how many hours we put in, it wasn't enough. I remember the awful feeling with which I used to wake in the morning (*late* in the morning, for the Jabberwock didn't close until 1:00) almost nauseous with the knowledge of what was expected of me in the next twenty-four hours. I'm sure John felt the same. Our partnership disintegrated in the course of our first year in business. Eventually John went back to New York, leaving me to and my mom to dispose of the Jab. At closing time, I used to lock up, count the cash, prepare the deposit, stack the chairs, sweep, and then sit in the dark empty room listening to Bob Dylan sing "Corina, Corina" on the stereo. But

I am getting ahead of myself— At the time of these events, although John was still in town, I saw him infrequently.

Posters appeared on the Avenue announcing a Dylan concert at the Berkeley Community Theatre (he was not yet so popular as to require a stadium). I decided to go, even though I would not have John's entree, and even if it meant closing the Jabberwock for the night—a drastic measure, which, as it turned out, was not necessary. Unheard of for us, we received a call for dinner reservations for seventy. It was a wedding party, the ceremony was scheduled for two in the afternoon and they planned to attend the Dylan concert in the evening; they wanted to have dinner at the Jabberwock in between. I said yes, though seventy people was the maximum of our seating capacity, reasoning that I could serve this party only, lock up as soon as they left and attend the concert myself. I arranged to go with Steve Hawkes, a boyfriend in the days before my marriage, now demoted in status to friend. He was going to pick me up at 7:30. Was I going to go back stage afterwards? It depended on how I felt. I wasn't sure Dylan would even remember me.

The day of the concert dawned bright and clear. At about 11:00 in the morning, while I was in the kitchen boning seventy chicken breasts, the phone rang. I wiped my greasy hands on my apron and answered. It was my mom, very breathless. Guess what? Bob Dylan had called the house. Did we all want to get together for dinner before the concert? "All" included John, of course, if we could find him. Dylan was *very* friendly, she wanted me to know—she was invited too.

How could I have dinner with Bob Dylan? I was supposed to prepare and serve dinner for seventy. I didn't know anyone who would be willing or able to pinch-hit for me at the last minute. My mom couldn't help--she was just barely able to hobble around on crutches. I could prepare an extra chicken breast for him if he wanted. A few minutes later my mom called again. Shouldn't we invite Barbara Dane? A fine blues singer, Barbara had recently expressed an interest in buying the Jabberwock. It would be only considerate to ask her; she would be hurt if she were left out. And what about Don Crawford? He was an ardent fan—and so forth. Leaving it to my mom and Dylan to work out these details, I returned to the kitchen and submerged myself in *coq au vin*. After a while, the phone rang again. My mom. Dylan had called again. Plans for dinner had gotten "too complicated." He would drop by sometime that afternoon to say hello.

My marriage in ruin, my apron splattered with chicken blood, my main response was to wonder if I would have a chance to get home and shower before the day reached its crisis. As it turned out, there *was* time—time to run home, to shower, and to try on and discard every item of clothing I owned, in a state of increasingly high anxiety. At four I returned to the

Jaberwock. My mom showed up on crutches about 4:30, having gotten a ride with the waitress who was going to help me serve. The wedding party arrived half an hour later. They were on their salad course when Bob Dylan entered. None of them recognized him. I almost didn't myself. He'd changed a lot in a couple of years. He was about twenty pounds thinner and looked ghostly, gaunt and ashen. He was wearing dark glasses. A friend was with him, also ghostly and wearing dark glasses. They'd just gotten back from Mexico. Did we have any booze? We directed them to the liquor store around the corner. The friend disappeared on this errand and Dylan sat in the back booth chatting with my mom while Louise and I cleared the seventy salad plates. My mom is the kind of person who feels comfortable talking to anyone. I remember peeking out at them from behind the espresso machine, marvelling at her social skills. For myself, my hands were shaking so I could hardly serve the cup of coffee he requested. My mom was showing him one of my recent poems. He liked it a lot, he said. I ought to play the guitar and sing it (a compliment he gave often, I'm sure). I curtsied (at least that's what I feel I must have done) and disappeared back into the kitchen on some other errand. My duties were real, yet they were pretexts too. I was relieved to have an excuse to take me away from the ordeal of making conversation. When I returned to the table, Dylan was leaving. Oh well, this wasn't a good time to get together. I was busy, he could see. We'd all get together after the concert instead. There was going to be a party. He gave me the address.

I don't really remember the concert except that Joan Baez made a surprise appearance and I applauded until my palms stung. Afterwards, Steve and I stopped for a bottle of wine and drove to the address Dylan had given—a modest stucco bungalow in the flatlands of Berkeley, the home of Mary Ann Polar, who had arranged the concert. We were among the first to arrive. Joan Baez was already there, sitting in a wing chair, looking even more beautiful than I had expected (which is saying a lot), and more petite, her black hair shining like a raven's wing across her brow. A woman introduced as "Joan's mother" hovered just behind her (I think it funny how all our mothers got into the act). At the other end of the room, beyond the double doors into the dining room, holding aloft a gallon of mountain red, enjoining us all to get loaded, was Bob Dylan. I gave him a book which contained the poem he had admired. "This is great! Have you seen this?" he said, tossing it across the room to Joan.

Other guests began to arrive, but the atmosphere was strained. Everyone was too impressed by the guests of honor to know what to say. Talking to anyone else, no matter who, was like talking to someone who is looking at himself in a mirror just over your shoulder. We were all watching *them*.

"Let's dance," said Bob, inclusively, to the room in general, and to me in particular, who was standing next to him at the buffet table. We danced—rock and roll dancing, at a good distance, me trying to rid myself of the self-consciousness that clung to every gesture like Saran Wrap, making it

impossible to have an ordinary good time. I remember his saying something about it being a shame we couldn't get together more often. "We could always write letters," I answered. "What did you say?" he shouted over the music.

"We could always write letters."

This produced a loud guffaw. Apparently he hadn't much time for that.

When there was a pause in the music, my friend Steve, who was crouching in a corner scowling, announced, "I've had about enough of this, I'm going to split." Raised in the fifties and guided by the ironclad rule that says you are supposed to leave with the guy you came with, I got my coat. Steve drove me home—less than a mile away. We said good night, and I went into the dark house where my mother was already asleep. It was only about 11:00. The streets of Berkeley were balmy and familiar to me. I could easily have returned to the party. It was probably just getting underway. Indeed, it occurred to me that Steve may have brought me home so that I could go back and vamp Dylan unimpeded. But I had started out the day preparing dinner for seventy, and I was tired. Besides, maybe I wasn't so wrong-headed after all. I remember thinking, kicking off my shoes, that to go back now seemed *grasping*. I wouldn't be going back out of genuine friendship. I would only be going back now because—before I could finish the thought, I fell asleep.

Postscript

Over the years I have learned that the value of meeting a famous person "in person" is over rated. One is probably closer to a beloved poet when reading his poetry than when standing next to him at a cocktail party. What can be gained from such a meeting other than the anecdotal? From Thom Gunn's meetings with T.S. Eliot and Sylvia Plath, for instance, I have learned that Eliot had a large head, and that Sylvia made good sandwiches. Looking back to the day of Dylan's visit, I see that again and again I chose to retreat, rather than to go forth in friendship. I could have returned his phone message instead of letting my mother do it. I could have joined them in the Jabberwock booth. I could have let Steve leave the party without me and danced the night away. But I was not free. I was not free in my marriage, and I was not free in my mind. What I couldn't imagine was that the occasion was no big deal. That was the impossible dream! If I had been able to imagine that, I might at least have stayed around to chat with Joan Baez, whose recordings had given me hours of pleasure.

Joan! Bob! You meant so much to me, your very meaning repelled my gaze like the sun.

THE FRIENDS OF LUIS GARCIA

Please leave the room,
if you think
you are going to be frightened
when my words become mirrors
or exploding flowers

(from "Monday" by Luis Garcia)

Richard Denner has often acknowledged the influence of Luis Garcia on his poetry, and I want to do the same. Although our friendships with Lu are uniquely our own, the fact of his influence is not. Considering that Luis' work is relatively unknown, the sphere of his influence is surprising. I met Robert Creeley only once, and, knowing we had a mutual friend, mentioned Luis's name—quite unprepared for the glad recognition it elicited—with Creeley, who had been seated, springing to his feet to pump my hand, and insisting, even as I launched into a declaration of his influence upon Lu, that, between he and Luis, influence was a two way street. Clemens Starck is another poet with whom I have swapped tales of Luis's importance as a soul mate, and I know that the painters Ciel Bergman, Larry Melnick and Erik d'Azevedo would join their voices in the chorus. If Luis' work were better known, one might assume his influence spread via the printed word, but since it is not, one is forced to recognize that the breadth of his influence is a testament largely to the vibrancy of individual friendships.

The hours I spent with Luis still seem to me as valuable as they did back then, circa 1969, in the days when I made a conscious decision to put much of my life on hold in order to make myself available to his friendship, including his beguiling lectures on Olson, Creeley and Levertov, Robert Duncan, Sir Francis Bacon, and class mobility, delivered mainly while he drove, usually on some errand or another for himself or his mother. He had been a delivery boy in a previous incarnation ("Mr. Menu"), and talking while driving suited him. When not behind the wheel of a car, in those days Lu had so much excess energy that he would pace from room to room, sometimes pacing the length of my small house and back again, while we talked. He was too nervous to sit down for a meal. Driving absorbed this excess energy and helped him relax. He was graceful at the wheel, dancing in and out of traffic, all the while, his hand in its fingerless leather glove restlessly tuning the radio, searching for jazz, settling for rock 'n roll.

Sometimes he drove past places I had lived in childhood, seeming to know my past life—no, this was fantasy of mine, sitting in the carriage, "having put away/my labor and my leisure too, /for his Civility." Careful to distinguish what was real from what was not, I was ready to believe he could read my

mind. It was Luis who taught me that friendship and poetry could have this kind of power. Although perhaps it was I who endowed him with charisma, it was he who unveiled to me the magical properties of language. In his instruction, the word “water” accumulated meanings as various as the color white in *Moby Dick*. Names revealed an unaccountable rightness. The name *Levertov* yielded “lever/ ever/ love”. Denise herself responded that this was the method of ancient rabbinical scholars. When not with Lu, I spent my time dismantling words. The word “belief” unpacked a series of Edenic echoes and allusions (be, *Eli*, lie, elle, Eve, life, *lief*, leave, on leave, leaf, leaves), not because of etymology, but by pure chance. Poetry, in the context of Luis’ friendship, was a revelation.

Luis talks about “the words inside the words” in the poem “No Kidding”:

I bent toward the grass
listening for the voices
someone had hidden there.

I laughed when I discovered
the words inside the words
I had already discovered—

—one of my favorite poems, all the way to its non sequitur end:

I guess I too must borrow
the theme—how else
can I report the sadness
when there was none?

For me in those years, puns—words inside of words—offered a running commentary, winking and latent in the content of almost any printed matter. The voice of the collective—for language *is* a collective creation—was surprisingly familiar: the voice of Groucho Marx delivering a series of wise cracks *pseudo vox*. If you said “embarrass,” it said “bare ass,” if you said “therapist,” it echoed, “the rapist.” True, such puns make us groan, yet if the words on the page had turned into fairy dust and blown away, it would not have seemed more improbable than the existence of this continuous, gratuitous commentary. Remembering that bad puns are the province of fatherhood, I wondered if poetry is the working out of something in our DNA.

Rhyme too yielded inexplicable congruities: “death/breath” with “earth/birth” and “womb/tomb”—the run of coincidental pairings is all but inescapable to

any poet who rhymes. But if I succumbed to exactly the kind of magical thinking poet and translator Dick Davis dismisses as “unreflective”:

Like the use of puns, rhyme too is a device that depends on accidents of sound: that “breath” and “death” rhyme in English can seem somehow cosmically right to the unreflective English poet, but of course words for the concepts they express don’t rhyme in other languages.

(“On Not Translating Hafez”)

Luis should not be held accountable. Luis’s touch is lighter than mine; he does not insist on bringing closure to the “discoveries” of which he writes. Besides, even granting that the word “magical” is too insistent, I think perhaps Dick Davis misses the point. To find accidental rightnesses in one language is not to claim that these same rightnesses exist in all languages. In other languages, surely, are other “accidents of sound,” equally rich. The puns and chimings a person hears are as much his own projection, as they are inherent in the language. Yet such “accidents of sound,” potential in all languages, are “magical” because they are gifts, full of poetic possibility.

Luis’ “Ribbons,” a later poem, echoes “No Kidding,” but here the discoveries do not arise from language:

Coarse grass bent
toward the old man’s imagination,
wind opened his eyes
with what he called nature—

grass, wind, sunlight,
and the thoughts of an old man
hoisting themselves into the air.

In this more mature poem, the poet has abandoned the pronoun “I” in favor of “the old man,” a figure less assertive than the former speaker, and more receptive. He no longer takes credit for the discovery nor attempts to pin it down (“I laughed when I discovered/ the words inside the words/I had already discovered”), instead, the discovery and discoverer have both become part of “what he called nature.”

In those days Luis wore a hat with a feather in the band like Holden Caulfield. He *was* Mr. Poetry Man (how corny, I never liked the song, but it was apt). In his company, I felt a great sense of imminence, as if something wonderful was about to be revealed. At Berkeley High School, where we

were in the same class ('57) but not the same classes, Luis had been a skinny, hyperactive kid. Now, in his early 30's, he had been physically transformed by weight lifting and running—activities much less popular than now—indeed, Luis was the first person I heard express the idea that physical exercise was good for one's psychic health. Throughout all these years, his appearance was charmed for me, and so expressive that it took on a million aspects; one moment I would be seeing him as a dowager empress, the next as a Hindu beggar, the next as Zapata. Nowadays this effect can be reproduced digitally on film, with one face morphing from moment to moment into faces of every age, race, and gender. If they ever make a movie about Luis they should use this effect, rather than any specific actor, to portray his character, so that the story unfolds with a kind of Everyman walking through its center.

THE BIRD

Charlie Parker,
The Bird,
park your bird,
Charlie,

in the yard,
bird's eye view
of inside out
side ways.

We know
we don't
how high
you flew.

The Bird
got wise,
was wise,
bird wise,

beak, beak,
kee, wee,
beak, beak,
kee, wee.

For Luis, in those days, the poet was a jazz musician, the poem an improvisation. One began with a handful of words (of sounds, of syllables), flung out like a melody. These words could come from the heart or from a passing billboard—they could be almost anything—impassioned, amusing,

arbitrary—the poet played with those words, finding in them music, puns, delight, surprise, resolution. A modest riff. A harbinger of “language” poetry way back in the sixties, Luis was playing with words as words, not with the things they represent, pulling meaning out from under you like a rug (“This much I know: There’s a rat in the pack, and a ship in the deck”). So much for certain knowledge. The result of Lu’s word play was a transformation of the random thing, whatever it was, into art. Early on he wrote many poems that stand for me with my favorites of all time. As soon as I started looking, I found 80. Reading him now I have the feeling that I have underestimated him, even while praising him, his poems are still so alive, so fresh and strange.

THE TWIN

He finds himself beside himself,
beside a dog filled with lilies,
a horse with angels.

He is not beautiful
but he is as the storm is not
what he thinks he is.

As the mountains occur
in the dream of his mother, he finds
there is certainly nothing

moreover than that.

* * *

Luis and I grew up in Berkeley. We were children of the 60’s. Psychedelic drugs opened up realms of experience beyond anything we had previously deemed possible. I lived in a continuous state of expectation. Now that the language had started talking, who knew what it would say? Serious about writing, conscientious in teaching, I never crossed the border into certifiable insanity, but I lived on the brink of some nameless, hopeful transformation, some apogee of poetry. Meanwhile, family and friends attempted intervention, making it clear that I looked like a dunce, following Luis around, hanging on his every word—many of which were inane and nonsensical. For a brief time, Luis and I actually *did* talk nonsense to one another, much to the annoyance, understandably, of others present. But this “nonsense” was a language I had spoken since adolescence. It recalled long, melancholy walks at dusk, when, feeling a poem coming on, I would hear rhythms, but not distinct words, and would find myself muttering incantations in what sounded as foreign to my ear as Old Norse—in a kind of inexpressible groping toward articulation.

Borges, Williams, Olson, Creeley, Levertov and Duncan were some of the poets whose books Lu gave me, and they were all writers who would be important to me—Olson immediately, as, for a season or two, I became hyper aware of my breath in relation to the line, and I listened for the pattern of “heart to breath to ear” (if I have the order right) as I began to experiment with free verse. Luis and I read our poetry out loud to one another and to friends, a thing I had never done before. Imagine! I was thirty and had been writing poetry for over fifteen years, but had never read in public. My few publications were a terrible secret on account of which, at the same time, I felt absurdly proud. I was teaching at Stanford, but it was Luis who had a community of friends among poets and artists; moreover, he was a poet 24/7, whereas I was still wondering what costume to wear. Luis helped me to be a poet in public. After my book (*101 Different Ways of Playing Solitaire* University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973) came out, he invited me to read with him at The Comet, a bar in the Marina district; Cabrillo Community College; the Encore, a small theater in downtown San Francisco, and other venues. In those days, I read with a great intensity—inspired by stage fright, more than the content of the poems—thumping out the rhythms like Yeats on those early recordings that nowadays make my students snicker at old-fashioned notions of the prophetic bard.

The name which occurs most frequently among poets in the English canon is William. It was Luis who pointed out to me that William Carlos Williams proclaimed his Spanish roots by retaining his middle name “Carlos”—a flash of Spanish color like a red hibiscus blooming between two staid columns of Wm/Wms. Bringing together the Anglo and Latin traditions that are his own heritage in poetry, Luis braided imagism and surrealism—which does not enter the English tradition until Eliot, but throughout the history of the Spanish tradition, I’m told, is not merely present but prominent. In his early twenties, Luis lived in Chile and immersed himself in Latin culture and the poetry of Neruda, Cesar Vallejo and others. The poems Luis wrote in his twenties are surreal, but, at the same time, unexpectedly contemporary and American:

A coffin with the mouth of a fish
Is talking to the lady in black

who has hidden his mind
in a box created by distance.

That’s me they’re discussing,
he screams, here’s my I.D. to prove it.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your attention please.
This is your driver, Luis Garcia.

(from "Friday, October 13th, 1967")

Imagism focuses on the literal thing, the very thing which, for a surrealist, is insufficient. Luis finds a middle ground which is both real and surreal:

suddenly I could see
the branches made of blood
in the eye of some strange deity.

Influenced by Williams and Levertov, as well as Neruda, Luis's images arise from the natural, physical world, as well as "the imagination," as we have seen in the poem "Ribbons" (quoted above).

For Luis, unlike Williams, there is no distinction between the thoughts of the old man (in "Ribbons") and palpable things. The reality of thoughts is comparable to that of the "grass, wind, sunlight," not merely an intangible "correlative." "What he called nature," is a line perfectly placed to complicate our understanding of the dichotomy—so assiduously maintained by the English tradition—between physical and mental images.

One can't date Luis's poems from his books, for he often combines revisions of earlier poems with new, but after "Ribbons"—after, say, about 1973—the language of his poems, for a decade or so, becomes opaque, as if the words on the page were shapes cut out of construction paper and the poem a collage. (The fact that Luis makes Kurt Schwitters-like collages cannot be irrelevant). Many poems of this period seem to be made out of a single reserve of words, almost like refrigerator magnet poetry, but with a vocabulary less self-consciously "poetic." Like certain musical forms, the poems in *Two Pears* proceed by repetition and variation. In its second stanza, the small, odd poem "Prisoners" seems to describe its own method:

Prisoners of water,
bars of water,
candy bars
as a reminder.

Mind repeats
one thought
twice

A place of minutes,

ours, he said,
ours is

a place
of
minutes.

Although the formula “Mind repeats/one thought/twice” describes the stanzas that follow—and, indeed, many other poems in the collection—the results, far from formulaic, are continually surprising.

The spring of 1972, Luis drove me past a house where I used to live in childhood in the north Oakland hills, on Merriwood Drive. For the first time that year, I noticed and named the pale blaze of the tulip magnolias. Could it really be I had never noticed them before? I was thirty three and had never noticed spring? It was a time of new beginnings. The life whose claims I neglected for Lu’s company was behind me now. At Stanford, where I’d remained as a Lecturer three years after receiving my MA, I was about to be shoved out of the nest and would soon accept full time employment as a writer-in-residence on the East coast. It was time to say goodbye to Luis. I had become a poet 24/7.

Now in his late sixties, Luis is still writing and giving readings in the Bay Area. The most recent of his poems I have seen is this one:

A MESSAGE FROM GARCISMO

A voice mail poem for Gail and Alan

You have not reached me.
You have not reached me today.
No. You have reached the beach
of your own desolate dreams
where the scream of your last phone call
is lost in the wide tide
of no answering.

No one is available. Now.
Or ever.
The fever of your call
cannot add
a single calorie
to the cool chill
of my unresponsive instrument.

Let it be noted that the original “Message from Garcismo” is an actual historical document, a war report sent by Major General Calixto Ramon Garcia Iniguez to his Superior, the Commander in Chief of the Cuban

Armies in 1898, providing an account of the conflict leading up to the surrender of the city of Santiago and the liberation of Cuba from Spanish rule. Among the legendary incidents in General Garcia's life, according to the biography posted on the centennial website of the Spanish American War, is this:

In September 1872, surprised with sixteen men by five hundred, seeing that there was no chance to get away, and unwilling to be captured alive, Garcia put the muzzle of his .45 caliber pistol in his mouth and pulled the trigger. Instead of going through his brain, the ball come out his forehead between his eyes, and he recovered.

Such an incongruous twining of good news and bad may help us understand the tone of the poem; what on first hearing is greeted by audiences as an hilarious send-up of answering machine etiquette, on subsequent reading becomes the inexorable communique of a dead man. So any poet's work must one day sound in the ears of those readers who are perhaps his closest friends.

Helen Breger



HELEN BREGER, a Californian artist known for her prints and drawings, was also a teacher for many years at the California College of Arts. She was born in Vienna, Austria, and was studying art at the Weiner Gymnasium and Kunstgewerbe Schule when she and her family were forced to flee to Trinidad to escape the Nazis. There she met her husband, an artist as well. Together they moved to New York City in 1945 where she continued her art education at the Arts Student League. In 1950, Breger and her family moved to California where she studied printmaking at San Francisco State University and San Francisco Art Institute. She completed her MFA degree at the California College of Arts and Crafts in 1970.

While pursuing her art education, Breger worked as an illustrator and designer. In her words, "I was wearing two hats. I was a fine artist exhibiting in galleries, and I was an illustrator/designer who did fashion advertising primarily for Joseph Magnin. Ads were very good then. They were full page, attention-getting and very dramatic. There were no photographs.

Her teaching career began at the California College of Arts and Crafts in 1959 where she taught drawing and was a tenured professor until 1987, She also taught at other art schools in the bay area. At the University of California, Berkeley, in the Environmental Design Department she developed a course for freshmen in sketching and visual communication. She taught drawing and design at San Francisco Art Institute, printmaking at Lone Mountain College in San Francisco and Sonoma State University. And she taught parttime at the Santa Rosa Junior College.

Breger's work is varied – from watercolors, drawings, monotypes to sculpture. Recently she has studied bronze casting in Italy. Her work has appeared in numerous exhibits, private collections and some museum collections. Her website address is: <http://home.earthlink.net/~hbreger/About.html>.

With respect to the present drawings, in the fifties and early sixties, Helen worked for the San Francisco Chronicle as an artist doing all kinds of illustrations. She says that her favorite assignments were for the book page which was edited by Hogan, and that her drawings were to accompany book reviews, interviews with authors and poets in the news, and other literary events, such as occurred at the SF State College Poetry Center.

Helen died at her home, in Berkeley, October, 22, 2013.

ART SHOWS

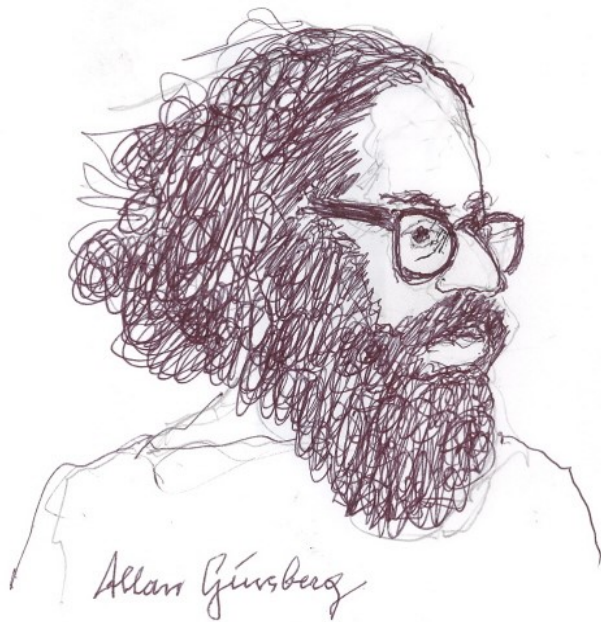
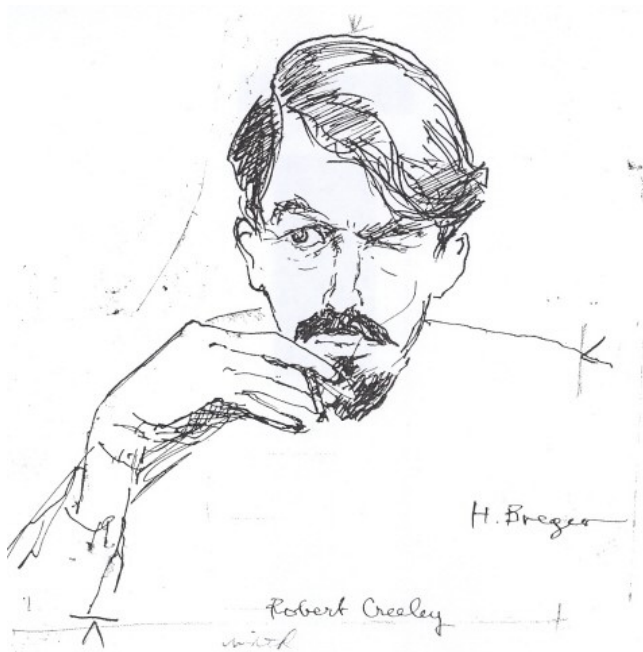
Fuji Art Center, Tokyo, Japan
Associated American Artists, NYC
IBM Galleries, NYC
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
San Francisco Art Institute
California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco
De Young Museum, San Francisco
Oakland Museum, Oakland, CA
Richmond Art Center, Richmond, CA
Walnut Creek Art Center, Walnut Creek, CA
Los Angeles Printmakers, Los Angeles, CA
Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA
Cincinnati Museum of Art, Cincinnati, Ohio
Boston Printmakers, Boston, MA
Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn, NY
Seattle Museum of Art, Seattle, WA
Pratt Graphic Center, NYC
University of California, Davis, CA
University of California, San Francisco, CA
Crocker Art Center, Sacramento, CA
California State University, Hayward, CA
Berkeley Art Center, Berkeley, CA
Eufrates Gallery, Palo Alto Cultural Center, Palo Alto, CA
Bradford Smock Gallery, San Francisco, CA
Giorgi Gallery, Berkeley, CA
Expressions Gallery, Berkeley, CA
Portland Art Museum, Portland, Oregon



In bull session, above, are (left to right) Leroi Jones, Nat Hentoff, Ralph Gleason and Kenneth Rexroth.









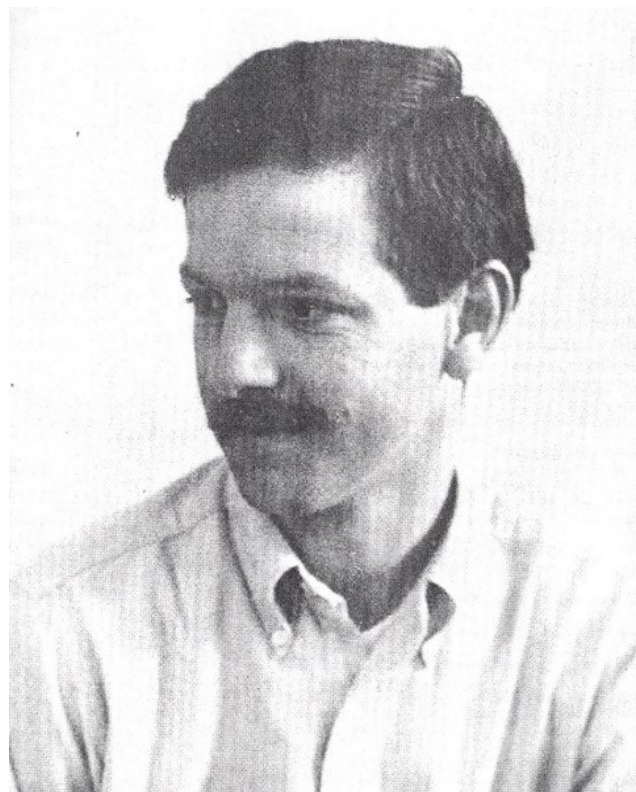
Neal Cassady

Helen Breger



Robert Peterson

Ron Loewinsohn



RON LOEWINSOHN writes: “I born in the Philippines and first came to the US with my family in 1945. After a few years in LA my family settled in San Francisco, where I lived till 1967. I graduated from Abraham Lincoln High School in 1955, with the Beat generation happening all around me. I met all of the principals, heard Ginsberg, Snyder, Whalen and McClure read in Berkeley in April, 1956, and continued to write, mostly poetry, in that vernacular and (I thought) oracular mode. In the fateful year of 1960, I was included in Don Allen’s landmark anthology *The New American Poetry*, and had a chance to teach for the first time—a poetry workshop at SF State Extension. The experience changed my life: I realized that what I really wanted to do for a living was teach. I went back to school and graduated from UC Berkeley in 1967. I did my graduate work at Harvard, and in 1970 came back to UC Berkeley’s English Dept. where I taught till I retired in 2005. I’ve been privileged to meet and to benefit from knowing some remarkable poets and writers. Allen Ginsberg not only gave me useful critiques of my earliest poems (I was 18), but urged me to show them to W.C. Williams. The two men (and mentors) graciously wrote introductions to my first book of poems, *Watermelons* (1959) A partial list of poets and writers who were enormously influential would include Robert Duncan, Jack Spicer, Richard Brautigan, Philip Whalen, Gary Snyder, Charles Olson, Robert Creeley and Denise Levertov. In the early 1980’s, I began to spend more time writing fiction, and published my first novel, *Magnetic Field(s)* in 1983. I’m currently working (with a Canadian producer) on a screen adaptation of this novel, and also on a memoir of growing up in San Francisco in the 1950’s. My poems, stories and essays have appeared in journals and anthologies in the US, Canada, Mexico, the UK, Germany, France, Italy and Hungary. My book reviews have appeared in the SF Chronicle and in the New York Times Book Review. Most recently, one of my poems, “Siv, With Ocean (Pacific),” was included in the Addison Street Project (curated by Robert Hass), engraved on a bronze plaque and imbedded in the sidewalk of Addison Street, along with roughly a hundred other poems by Berkeley poets.”

Ron died, in Berkeley, on October 14, 2014.

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Where All the Ladders Start (novel), Atlantic Monthly Press, 1987

“THESE NINE IN BUCKRAM THAT I TOLD THEE OF”

The impingement of those dare
trees, on me, alone. The sun
in the east, unseen (the false dawn)

will come up, & will awaken us.

But now, driving in the pre-dawn fog,
the trees, the trees, state-
ly & single, looming. Not a forest at
all, but trees: that dark one & that
tall one & that— flanking
me. Each among their
number: complacency, & egotism,

& one tall conifer with a blasted trunk:
selfishness, or self-indulgence. How
I cut myself down. My wife & my son
in back, asleep, & myself driving,
marching on me from the banks of the road,
a horde: firs, the ground fog
around their (needs) knees

SONG

O power of Spring enter their bodies!
O melter of snows, chipper
of glaciers, painter of leaves green
upon the trees, O March
ram that unlocks the flower, fuse
with that Arizona sun & stream
into their bodies like Vitamin D.

Push their legs faster round the bases,
blow on those balls, push them
out of the park.
Roseate their faces & open their eyes
to holes in the outfield, unlock
their wrists to place-hit into them.

Quicken their hands for the double play
 & place into them that pennant
(a real one this time) & let them
 bring it home to us again,
next fall, tho you'll be gone by then.

AFTER THE (MIMEOGRAPH) REVOLUTION

In Berkeley, San Francisco & the Bay Area, during the 1960s, there was a sudden proliferation of little magazines, many of which started taking shots at each other, & this sharpshooting quickly blossomed into a 'little magazine war' only slightly less spirited than the pamphlet controversies of the 18th century. It seemed like every poet in town had access to a mimeo-graph machine, & was using it to crank out his own little magazine, filling it with his own & his friends' poems & criticism, & either invidiously or good-naturedly putting down his 'rivals.' There were magazines titled 'with letters of the alphabet & magazines with titles like "Open Space," "Rivoli Review," & "The Capitalist Bloodsucker." Titles which were immediately satirized to "Open Sore" & "Ravioli Review," But while the sniping was a local phenomenon, the mimeograph magazine boom was far from that: LeRoi Jones & Dianne Di Prima had been publishing "The Floating Bear" for years from New York, where Ed Sanders was spewing out his classic "Fuck You: A Magazine of the Arts." There were mimeo magazines coming out of Pocatello, Albuquerque, Vancouver, & Toronto, to name only a few unlikely places.

Of course there was a lot of cliquishness & schlock in these journals, but there was also a good deal of exciting writing. James Koller & Joanne Kyger were first published in those blurry pages; Joe Dunn turned out a whole series of "White Rabbit" booklets of poetry—on an offset machine in the Greyhound Bus Co.'s printing department; Jack Spicer, Charles Olson, & Robert Duncan appeared in "Open Space," where the only good James Dickey poem I've ever seen was pirated; Denise Levertov contributed an excellent poem to Rick Duerden's "Rivoli Review"; James Herndon (*The Way It Spozed To Be*) had an unforgettable 'review' of a Giants-Dodgers game in "J."

But more important than the quality of their contents was the fact of these magazines' abundance & speed. Having them, we could see what we were doing, as it came, hot off the griddle. We could get instant response to what we'd written last week, & we could respond instantly to what the guy across town or across the country had written last month. Further, many poets who didn't stand a Christian's chance against the lions of 'proper' publication in university quarterlies or 'big-time' magazines could get exposure & more

importantly, encouragement &/or criticism. For all its excesses it was a healthy condition.

Those dancing days are largely gone now: there seem to be fewer little mags in operation now, & the ones I've seen recently seem to lack the zip the old ones had. This may be more symptomatic of my own aging than of an actual drop in quality, but that's the way it looks to me. But whatever the situation presently, the energy of those middecade mimeographers has borne fruit, if only in the fact that almost all the poets I want to talk about here had early work published in those 'fugitive' (un)periodicals. (There's more to it than that, of course: a community of poets was established which, while it held together, was a valuable, nourishing culture.)

But even tho 'big-time' publishing in America has loosened up- the mass media have become almost scarily efficient, quickened their reflexes, & will now print virtually unknown poets—don't think you'll be able to get any accurate sense of the directions right-now American literature is taking by simply reading the "New York Review of Books" or "Evergreen Review." For that you will also have to search out the little magazines & the small, even the mimeograph, publishers.

Jack Collom is a case in point-one of the most exciting young poets around, & almost totally unknown outside the mimeograph subculture. His concern with language is everywhere evident in his first collection, *Wet*.¹ He writes three distinct kinds of poems: a more or less conventional poem, of which "Brag" is a good, fun example, in which he brags of having the "second best left-handed set shot in Middle Park," but also of having seen "a small leaf level with my chest." Then he writes poems with rather more tangled syntax, in which he gives us scenes of a domestic life with humor, affection & tenderness, but without sentimentality. In these, his language allows him to shift location & point of view quickly & sharply, as in "Stole." A somewhat longer one of these poems deals with Sequoyah, the Cherokee who invented an alphabet with which to record his tribe's language, & was almost persecuted to death for his 'black magic.' Finally, he's done some striking linguistic experiments which I'm not sure I can call poems, but which are certainly some of the most interesting things like them I think I've ever seen. Some of these work with single words in sequences or chains, as this section from the middle of an untitled page:

lion	boy	baby	bug	sky
eat	beat	bite	hypnotize	eat
boy	baby	but	tiger	sun

Others set up streams of words that run across & into each other from various points on the page. Others play with parts of words, not to make cute puns, but to investigate the possibilities of the words themselves, as by plugging prefixes onto words that don't ordinarily take them, e.g., "rebird."

Again, these experiments don't give me what I want & need from poems, but they are not 'concrete' or tricky. They have an integrity that's extremely attractive, & I think that Collom has gained from writing them, as other poets might, from reading them.

Two 'big' publishing houses with nation-wide distribution have recently begun series devoted to first books by young poets. The first Frank O'Hara Award from Columbia University Press ("intended to encourage the writing of experimental poetry and to aid in its publication") was earned by Joseph Ceravolo with a very fine book, *Spring in This World of Poor Mutts*.² If Ceravolo's poems seem difficult at first, it may be because he often unexpectedly switches voices & points of view, & because he often stops his focus down very fine, giving us extreme close-ups of very small things & taking us places where we've never been—the roots of the marsh plants as the fish see them, or the water-bugs. His language is lean & supple, functional, & if his diction is sometimes startling ("And I/ feel sacred in/ you like the tongue./ See, even this/ animal's gamboge one")—it's usually both accurate & apt. Clearly he has learned from O'Hara & Williams about the poetry of the quotidian, & he's learned from the French symbolists as well—his excellent poem "Passivation" is built, like Mallarmé's *Un Coup de Des...*, around a single conditional clause, whose phrases form the titles of each section. In one passage of this poem he demonstrates how language can transform description into enactment—

O beautiful pale seagull who
stands near the trucks and
tractors and when they
start, looks around
surprised and turns (into whose wings
open from him) and change

That's a rich & complex poem on how to live in a world that's both , sustaining & "corroding."—

O great world that trains me! that loses my
head in the balance of coordination, even when
I'm ripe. I sting myself.

Once in a while Ceravolo writes a corny little nature poem, *à la* low-intensity Williams, but in general the collection is very strong. The Frank O'Hara Award is off to a fine start.

Volume One in the Follett Publishing Co.'s "Big Table Series of Younger Poets" (Does that sound vaguely familiar?) is William Knott's *The Naomi Poems: Corpse and Beans*.³ Now, Ezra Pound said years ago that "you can always tell the bad critic because he begins by talking about the poet instead of the poem," but in Knott's case I can't resist starting at the 'wrong' end because his publisher, & he himself, have gone about so methodically to manufacture a

myth in which to shroud some essentially ordinary poems with the allure of mystery. On the jacket the poet says of himself, “Bill Knott (1940-1966) is a virgin and a suicide,” & the unsigned blurb talks about this “mysterious young Midwestern poet who calls himself Saint Geraud.” The editor’s foreword tells us that in 1966 Knott sent a mimeographed letter to “poets, critics, and readers of contemporary literature” announcing his own ‘suicide’ in conventionally mawkish circumstances: orphan, unlaid, tenement room in lonely, bleak North Side Chicago. It all sounds pretty lame, even as a PR gimmick: the eternal adolescent, threatening suicide so that “you’ll all miss me when I’m gone.” Incidentally, Knott is currently living in New York.

But the poems themselves. When I first saw some of them, in *TriQuarterly* two years ago, I was struck by their intensity, & by their sharp & powerful imagery. But they have not kept well, & seeing a whole book of them is no help. The short poems are meretriciously startling: they seize the attention & sympathy & then fail to engage them, or else trail off into rhetorical fluff. Others are sensational, insisting on sensation for its own sake. Compare either of these poems (much praised in the Middlewest)—

POEM

The only response
to a child’s grave is
to lie down before it and play dead.

DEATH

Going to sleep, I cross my hands on my chest.
They will place my hands like this.
It will look as though I am flying into myself.

—with these two lines, by a poet who truly thought & grieved about death, the real death of a real child:

For sothe ther fleten to me fele,
To thenke hir color so clad in clot.

But Knott really does have some steam & some talent. This poem, for instance—

What language will be safe
When we lie awake all night
Saying palm words, no fingertip words
This wound searching us for a voice
Will become a fountain with rooms to let
Or a language composed of kisses and leaves

—is a fine, strong thing for the first four lines (Cf. Rilke’s *Sonnets to Orpheus*). But in its two closing lines it collapses into easy imagery &

fake surrealism. There are also some anti-Viet Nam War poems here which, if they work at all, work because they are pure rant, & capture that rage & frustration that can't be articulated. I just wish he would spare us the adolescent sentimentality of leaving kisses in the "nests" of his girl's black bra. & I really wish that he & his flacks would turn off the myth machine.

A number of large commercial houses have begun publishing first books by young poets who have not yet been thru the "natural selection process of the little magazines & small presses," as one senior editor put it. One of these first books is Sidney Goldfarb's *Speech, For Instance*.⁴ In that collection, in a poem called "Customs," Goldfarb tells us, "I have nothing to declare but energy!" But clearly he is smuggling some other things, rare & valuable, which we can all use more of: humor, intelligence, & compassion that doesn't degenerate into sentiment. In a jacket blurb Robert Lowell writes that "Goldfarb has genius," which is true, I suppose, if it means simply that he has a very large talent. But Lowell also says that Goldfarb's lines are short, which is not always true, & that "Goldfarb derives from no one," which isn't true at all. Sidney Goldfarb is a young poet who derives from Whitman via Apollinaire, Williams, & the modern Russian poets. The mixture, however, is fresh & exciting. He has a good ear for conversations which have never occurred outside his poems, which at their best are enactments of affective states, rather than talk *about* them. Check out the opening of "Moving Breakfast."

I get out of bed without breaking anything
I give my daughter Cheerios and bananas for breakfast
First I let her stand on the table
Then I let her put her foot in the cereal
I put on my necktie because I have one
I go outside and find myself in Chicago
I say, "Boston, you faker, cut that out!"

He often plays phrases against line-endings in an intricate counterpoint of accent & sense.—

You can stay
 but you know
 There's no place
for affection,
 no occasion
 for comfort
in the crossing
 of ways.
 You can speak
but you know
 there's no place

for affection
making other
 in special,
 the one,
the woman
 or the son
 at best a moment,
isolate
 and circled
 with the stench
of despair.

That “Border Song” is a powerful statement of the search for some country, some location or community in which affection & poetry can occur, truly & viably. In “Customs,” from which I’ve already quoted, Goldfarb gets across entertainingly his sense of the past as it’s manifested in this individual, this Sidney Goldfarb—a family history, a tradition from which something usable may be salvaged with a struggle. But that poem & the best of these poems aren’t merely entertaining, but wise in a way that is all the more impressive for its lack of pretension. There are some weaker poems here too, attempts at a kind of surrealism which don’t come off, & at least one poem, “The Man at the Embossing Machine,” sounds like it was written for someone’s (perhaps Lowell’s) poetry workshop. Too easy. But what marks this first collection is its zip, its range, & its fun.

There isn’t anything unusual in a large publishing house snapping up a young writer after his commercial value has been tested in the little magazine & small press wars. But it’s often amusing to see the big fellows proven wrong. Grove Press, for instance, published Richard Brautigan’s first novel & tried to push it as a “Beat Generation” book. It wasn’t, but Grove Press people have a bizarre single-mindedness. When the book bombed, they abandoned him.—Now Brautigan’s second novel, *Trout Fishing in America*, has become an underground (or underwater) classic that has, finally, surfaced. Originally published rather unobtrusively by Don Allen’s Four Seasons Foundation, the book had gone into four printings & sold some 25,000 copies—with negligible advertising & promotion. All it has done is to seize the imagination of this generation in a totally new yet accurate way. Now it has been collected in a handsome hardcover volume (designed by the author), together with another Brautigan novel, *In Watermelon Sugar*, & his selected poems, *The Pill versus The Springhill Mine Disaster*, by Delacorte Press, which has also issued the three books individually in paperback.⁵

One difficulty in reviewing Brautigan’s books is that you’re tempted to try to do in your own prose what he does in his. He makes it look so easy.—

I laid the girl.
It was like the eternal 59th second when it becomes a

minute and then looks kind of sheepish.

Half a block from Broadway and Columbus is Hotel Trout Fishing in America, a cheap hotel. It is very old and run by some Chinese. They are young and ambitious Chinese and the lobby is filled with the smell of Lysol

The Lysol sits like another guest on the stuffed furniture, reading a copy of the Chronicle, the Sports Section. It is the only furniture I have ever seen in my life that looks like baby food.

The creek was made narrow by little green trees that grew too close together. The creek was like 12,845 telephone booths in a row with high Victorian ceilings and all the doors taken off and all the backs of the booths knocked out.

Many reviewers have tried to do that, & of course they can't. But I don't even want to review *Trout Fishing in America*. I just want you to read it because it is one of the funniest books you will ever read, a book you may not want to read on the bus to work because it will keep you laughing out loud & everyone else on the bus will turn to see what's the matter with you, but you won't be able to stop reading, or laughing. It is also a very moving book. Sometimes you will finish a chapter & you will just put the book down in your lap & look out the window for a while, trying to keep the fleeting savor of what Brautigan has made you feel, a feeling you will not have any words to describe. I don't.

Brautigan's language is magical, & absolutely accurate, a kind of lens which allows you to see his vision of America, an America you never suspected was there, but of course it has been there all along, & you have lived in it, & now you recognize it. His prose is a poet's prose, in which each word, each image, has been chosen with intelligent & sensitive care. Yet it is not "poetic," but usually flat, modulating at times into an intensely understated lyricism. His chapter "The Towel" (about a page long) can stand by itself as a quietly powerful prose poem, one whose themes are woven & whose climax is built up to with consummate skill.

So it's a fun book, & a moving one. It's also an important book: it may be the *Great Gatsby* of our time. & I would ask those people who think it's not a novel at all, but merely a collection of amusing vignettes: What's Benjamin Franklin's function in the novel? How does economics function there? How does nature? How does the past—both of America's history & its literature—figure in it? Why are trout described in the second chapter as "a precious & intelligent metal," but not silver, rather steel? & having answered that, what is John Dillinger doing in there? Finally, how is the last chapter, together with its prologue, a final summation of a noble yet un-'Romantic' statement

of the human condition?

In Watermelon Sugar is another story. Its atmosphere is at once concrete & evanescent. It takes place in a land where the sun shines a different color each day, & where the inhabitants know the sequence. The surface of the novel is gentle, even banal, but under that surface lurk predictability and repression-self-repression. The irony is all the more cutting for its subtlety. The ‘villain’ of the piece, inBOIL, lives in “the forgotten works,” where things are found which no one can even name. He is right when he tells the ‘white hats’ of the novel, who live in a kind of commune called iDEATH, that they don’t know anything about iDEATH. “This is iDEATH,” he tells them as he cuts off his fingers & his nose. The ‘good’ characters have insulated themselves from death, & even from all intense emotions, in various ways, but the crucial device is repression, & the ‘heroine,’ Pauline, tells inBOIL, “You are an asshole,” as she mops up his blood. “And the last thing that inBOIL ever saw was Pauline standing beside him, wringing his blood out of the mop into the bucket.” It is only when we come to the end of the novel that we understand fully its opening sentence: “In WATERMELON SUGAR the deeds were done and done again as my life is done in watermelon sugar.”

The Pill versus The Springhill Mine Disaster collects most of the poems Brautigan has written & published over the past ten years. Most of them are short, & many of them are funny. There are some real gems here, poems that stand up to repeated readings: “A Postcard from Chinatown,” “The Sidney Greenstreet Blues,” “The Fever Monument,” or “1942,” that begins,

Piano tree, play
in the dark concert halls
of my uncle
twenty-six years old, dead
and homeward bound
on a ship from Sitka,
his coffin travels
like the fingers
of Beethoven
over a glass
of wine.

Piano tree, play
in the dark concert halls
of my uncle,
a legend of my childhood, dead,
they send him back
to Tacoma...

or my own favorite, “Sit Comma and Creeley Comma”—

It's spring and the nun
like a black frog
builds her tarpaper shack
beside the lake.
How beautiful she is
(and looks) surrounded
by her rolls of tarpaper.
They know her name
and they speak her name.

But mostly his poems are either very clever or very sentimental. Further, he seems not to have much sense of the possibilities the line proposes, so that the poems often seem like one-liner jokes chopped up into verse. But if you read these poems in the light of Brautigan's own "Private Eye Lettuce" (p. 5), you will see that he is concerned more deeply with naming things, or re-naming them, finding their true, secret name, than with any of the sentiments or jokes which form these 'poems' surfaces. That yields mixed results: while it's an admirable concern, it gets in the way of his perceiving the *process* involved in the things he names or defines. Definition is just that, a closing off, & what Brautigan leaves outside the door of classification is any acknowledgment of the on-going-ness of things, & of himself. That's why the poems are so easy to take. You finish one & go immediately on to the next, because the poems don't resonate beyond their final (usually very final-sounding) line. In his prose he gives himself more room & more time, & there he is more enduringly satisfying.

Anthologies seem to be the work-horses of the major houses' poetry-publishing action, the form in which poetry is most salable. This strikes me as odd, something like promoting an 'all-star' game made up entirely of left-handed players, or players whose last names end with on,' or (perhaps a more apt analogy) players with batting averages below .200. One recent 'major' anthology is *The Young American Poets*,⁶ whose editor, Paul Carroll, has done something intelligent in making his selections—he has excluded all poets from the now-classic Grove Press anthology, *The New American Poetry: 1945-1960*. Carroll has understood that it would be pretty silly for a poet who was "new" in 1960 to be "young" eight years later. But after that, I'm afraid the rest is all downhill. There is just no sense of a critical imagination at work in Carroll's anthology, no discernible principle of inclusion. *E.g.*, Carroll tells us in his preface that "the purpose of this anthology is to introduce work by young poets largely unknown at this stage," & then goes on to name some "celebrated" young poets he deliberately left out. He could have made room for them, he says, "only by excluding other poets whose work I admire. Such exclusion seemed unfair: to become known as a poet is hard enough as it is." So far so good. But then we find that he has included work by thirteen poets (better than 20% of his roster) who have published at least one book with a major commercial house or university press & two of these have edited their own anthologies with major publishers. The question im-

mediately comes to mind: who was excluded to make room for *them*?

Organizationally, the book fails badly. The poets are arranged alphabetically, putting concretists cheek by jowl with Iowa Writing Factory Products, who are rubbing elbows with Lower East Side Surrealists—as if all these directions in contemporary poetry were equally ‘significant.’ Now, this is a very tired brand of that old & vapid theory of some kind of ‘democracy’ of the arts, usually articulated as, “Oh, let’s just forget all about all these schools & labels & factions, & just sit back & listen to the various & exciting voices of this poetic generation.” (Elsewhere Carroll has spoken, sentimentally, of a “poetic fratricide,” as if all poets were brothers.)—Sorry, no sale. The poetry of any period is not like a bowl of oatmeal, each spoonful just like the last. It is moving, in many directions, tho I won’t say that anyone of them is ‘forward.’ & in any period the bulk of the poetry is moving in one (very general) direction, something like a weatherfront, a movement that includes within itself many individual directions, all valid-while the rest of the poetry is moving in some other direction, equally general, but opposite to the primary flow. If an anthology is a kind of map of a literary scene, its dynamics should make some sense. It ought not to be, as this one is, merely a collage of various high & low (mostly low) pressure areas.

Carroll seems to have given more attention to the packaging of his product than to its contents, that is, the poems themselves, & in his comments on individual poets he has an irritating habit of ‘counting coup’ rather than suggesting any handle by which the work of this or that young poet might be picked up. Instead we are given lists of the prizes they’ve won, the books they’ve published, the degrees they’ve taken & the schools at which they’ve taught. But we don’t want credentials & testimonials. We want poems that speak for themselves. It might have been more useful if Carroll had given us an intelligent comment or two on what he saw in this poet’s work, why he wanted to include it.

The poetry itself is mostly a bomb, I’m very sorry to say. The concretists play jejune games, the imitators of Frank O’Hara free-associate sloppily & to little purpose, & the Iowa kids count syllables. There is a good deal of bombast & self-important posturing here, but considering the average age of the contributors that’s a minor fault. One thing that really disturbs me is the wholesale regression to the old neo-metaphysical ‘event poem,’ in which an event is recounted or an object described, one ‘meaning’ is extracted, & that one ‘meaning’ is strung out to make a single, heavy-handed point. Certainly poetry is richer than that. & so many of these young people are falling all over themselves & each other to write ‘startling’ images & ‘strong lines.’ I’d thought that we’d all had more of that than we could take once we’d got past Crashaw, with his

Hail, sister springs!
Parents of sylver-footed rills!
Ever bubbling things!

Thawing crystal! snowy hills,
Still spending, never spent! I mean
Thy fair eyes, sweet Magdalene!

Well, “These dull notes we sing/ Discords need for helps to grace \hem,” & there are enough discords in here to grace Ted Berrigan’s “Tambourine Life” pretty good, tho that poem doesn’t need foils. Berrigan’s poem, while it goes on a little too long, is impressive for its humor, its living speech rhythms & diction, & for its richness of tone & texture. Check out the number of times & the shifting contexts in which the word “life” is repeated. & pay attention, too, to the way he breaks up the surface of his poem.—It is clearly a performance piece, & Berrigan is constantly moving back & forth between the occasion of the poem’s composition, its presentation at a live reading, & the various scenes the poem enacts. It’s a solid job.

The only other high-pressure area in the collection is Gerard Malanga’s use of the line. Malanga commits most of his neighbor-poets’ faults, but he is the only one among them who has some sense of what a line can do, & plays off dependent clauses against each other, so that each line resonates slightly differently as the poem unfolds. The result is a much richer linguistic surface than any other work in the anthology.

Ten years ago Philip Whalen characterized his poetry as “a picture or graph of a mind moving, which is a world body being here & now which is history...and you.” He has been busily & dedicatedly graphing that moving mind for some twenty years, & now for the first time (& it’s about time!) we have something like a complete record of his achievement. *On Bear’s Head*⁷ is more like a massive notebook than a volume of collected poems, especially because, as Whalen insists, he’s still busy turning out more poems.

There are really only a half-dozen living, practicing poets in America right now from whom I or any poet, young or old, can take instruction. Whalen is one of them. He shows how to get it done. It is done *daily*. It is done by listening, very rigorously, to the speech of the people down the street, to the speech of your own hungry belly & longing arms, because it is thru these voices that all of the past & present can be heard, crying & laughing by turns. Whalen is an excellent teacher precisely because, as he himself insists, he is not trying “to inherit [Dr. Johnson’s] mantle as a literary dictator but only the title *Doctor, i.e., teacher who*—is constantly studying.” In the twenty years’ work which this book conveniently brings together, Whalen is constantly studying, constantly listening to various voices, & yielding them the forms they demand: lyrics, epigrams, didactics, odes, meditations, satires, whatever. & his mention of Dr. Johnson is not gratuitous. Whalen’s poems, for all their seeming inchoateness, have an elegance of form which was one chief goal of the major 18th-century poets. A Whalen poem is typically spread out all over the page, a jangle of capitals, italics, asterisks, rules, brackets, &

quotations of various voices, the ‘noble dead’ next to teen-age girls on a bus. But the sprawl achieves a functional shape, integrated & effective. That is, each poem is a unique form transferring insights with their concomitant affective states, which is as it should be. “There is no intelligence without emotion,” says Ezra Pound. One recurrent shape that Whalen’s longer poems take is that of the mosaic. Personal scenes & utterances are set next to quotations from friends, or the classics (of Greece or Rome or the Orient), or from science, philosophy, history; time & space are ‘kinked’ to bring disparate scenes into contact. Till the shape of the whole reveals the interrelationships of its parts.

There are such varieties of excellences here that it’s difficult to characterize the book as a whole. Whalen’s voice is as sure in the direct, flat statement of “For C.”—

I wanted to bring you this Jap Iris
Orchid-white with yellow blazons
But I couldn’t face carrying it down the street
Afraid everyone would laugh
And now they’re dying of my cowardice—

as it is in the quirky, magical language of “Three Mornings”——

I wait for breakfast to drop from the sky
foghorns, cluster of churchbells
pale sun butter
traffic airplane marmalade
salt & pepper avocado branch squeak in window
I drink last night’s cold tea.

One trait that comes thru very strongly is his humor, a healthy consciousness of how he looks & sounds. (Except for Chaucer, & maybe some of the Falstaff scenes, *On Bear’s Head* is the only book of poetry that ever made me actually laugh out loud as I read it, late one night, all by myself.) His humor is an apt corrective for his occasional flights into sententiousness or his sinkings into self-pity. When he does those things he is aware of them, & the humor cuts him down to human size. But don’t be fooled: he may be funny, but he is not frivolous. The humor doesn’t take anything away from his vision, but adds a dimension that many ‘major’ poets lack.—& Whalen is definitely a major poet. This book is all about living in the world as it’s shaped from day to day by the recent & the distant past (which is what we’re all doing), simultaneously alone & in the company of everybody else (which is where we all are). It’s a great feast.

Something needs to be said about this book’s price, but I don’t know what that thing is. \$17.50 makes no sense at all to me, & neither do the three explanations I’ve had from people connected with the book’s production. All I can

tell you is that a “reasonably priced” paperback edition is now available, which you should look for & buy, & read, because it will do you a lot of good.

Way back in 1938 Ezra Pound dedicated *Kulchur* to Louis Zukofsky & Basil Bunting, “strugglers in the desert.” & Basil Bunting might still be struggling in that desert if Hugh Kenner & Robert Creeley hadn’t rescued him from the oblivion of a Newcastle financial column to bring him to America to teach & to read his poems, & if Fulcrum Press hadn’t begun publishing his books. Now, thirty years after that first recognition, Fulcrum has given us his *Collected Poems*.⁸ It’s a slim volume, considering the years that went into it, but it is almost all gold, pure & finely wrought. Bunting is a poet who is as much at ease in history as Pound, a man who demonstrates (with less stridency than Pound) how it is that the past—both a man’s personal history & that larger biography, the life of the race as preserved in its literature—wells up & becomes actual in the present of the poem. Bunting’s voice at times modulates into that of Villon’s *Belle Heaulmiere*, or that of Dante—

muttering inaudibly beneath the quagmire,
irresolute, barren, dependent, this page
ripped from Love’s ledger and Poetry’s:
and besides I want you to know for certain
there are people under the water. They are sighing.
The surface bubbles and boils with their sighs.
Look where you will you see it.
The surface sparkles and dances with their sighs
as though Styx were silvered by a wind from Heaven.

But these voices are never literary allusions. They are instances of the weight & density of the present: one man’s search for something of enduring value is the race’s search. That’s why Bunting’s “overdraft” of Catullus’ *We mi par esse deo videtur* is not a ‘mistranslation,’ but a restatement of a perennial condition.—

O, it is Godlike to sit selfpossessed
when her chin rises and she turns to smile;
but my tongue thickens, my ears ring,
what I see is hazy.

The Catullus itself is, of course, an “overdraft” of Sappho. (How succinct Bunting’s pun is.)

Included here is Bunting’s marvelous long poem “Briggfiatts,” that vast & complex meditation on love, time, death, & poetry-love forgotten & love remembered, brought to life in stanzas that sing in blocks of sound as solid as the marble gravestone which is one of the poem’s recurrent figures.

A mason times his mallet
to a lark's twitter,
listening while the marble rests,
lays his role
at a letter's edge,
fingertips checking,
till the stone spells a name
naming none,
a man abolished.

(The diction is absolutely precise: "Abolish" is from *abolescere*: "to decay gradually.") That gravestone, the above-ground memorial to those who lie rotting beneath it, is a continuing concern.—How is poetry to keep love alive?

Shining slowworm part of the marvel.
The mason stirs:
Words!
Pens are too light.
Take a chisel to write.

Or how is love to keep poetry alive?

He lies with one too long for another,
sick, self-maimed, self-hating,
obstinate, mating
beauty with squalor to beget lines still-born.

In the sureness of its meter, the richness of its alliteration, & the restraint with which it reveals the poet's heart, we can hear in Bunting's poetry echoes of the Anglo-Saxon *scop*.—

Ic to sothe wat
thaet bith on eorle inndi'yhten theaw
thaet he his ferhth-Iocan faeste binde,
healde his hord-cofan hycge swa he wille.

& that resonance adds a further weight, the weight of history, to his most personal utterance. But tho Bunting is more personal than the bulk of Pound, there is still quite a distance between the speaker of these poems & the events he animates. He is not a spontaneous or a 'confessional' poet, what Olson called "the private soul at any public wall." But he is true to himself & true to his craft. To use his own phrase, he lays the tune frankly on the air. His book is a solid pleasure.

Obviously there were many more excellent books by poets new in one sense or another published in the past couple of years. If I had more room I'd tell you about David Bromige's *The Ends of the Earth*,⁹ Rochelle Owens' *Salt and Core*,¹⁰ & Richard Duerden's *The Left Hand, or The Glory of Her*,¹¹

simply to name a few. I would not, under any circumstances, discuss Creeley's or Lowell's new books. Those poets have their audiences, which know what to expect, or can at any rate judge for themselves. There are really only two reasons for doing reviews: either to deflate a specious myth, or to bring to the attention of a wider audience work that deserves that audience. I only hope that you will continue to search out good new poetry, particularly where it's most likely to be found—in the little magazines & the small presses. If the mimeograph revolution doesn't perpetuate itself it will not have borne fruit at all; it will merely have installed itself as a new establishment.

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1. Jack Collom, *Wet*, Boulder, Colo., privately printed.
 2. Joseph Ceravolo, *Spring in This World of Poor Mutts*, N.Y., The Frank O'Hara Foundation at Columbia University Press
 3. Saint Geraud (pseudo., William Knott), *The Naomi Poems: Corpse and Beans*, Chicago, Follett Publishing Co.
 4. Sidney Goldfarb, *Speech, For Instance*, N.Y., Farrar, Strauss & Giroux.
 5. Richard Brautigan, *Trout Fishing in America*, *The Pill versus The Springhill Mine Disaster*, and *In Watermelon Sugar*, N.Y., Delacorte Press.
 6. Paul Carroll (editor), *The Young American Poets*, Chicago, Follett Publishing Co.
 7. Philip Whalen, *On Bear's Head*, N.Y., Harcourt, Brace & World.
 8. Basil Bunting, *Collected Poems*, London, Fulcrum Press.
 9. David Bromige, *The Ends of the Earth*, Los Angeles, Black Sparrow Press.
 10. Rochelle Owens, *Salt and Core*, Los Angeles, Black Sparrow Press.
 11. Richard Duerden, *The Left Hand, or The Glory of Her*, San Francisco, Cranium Press

Michael Rossman

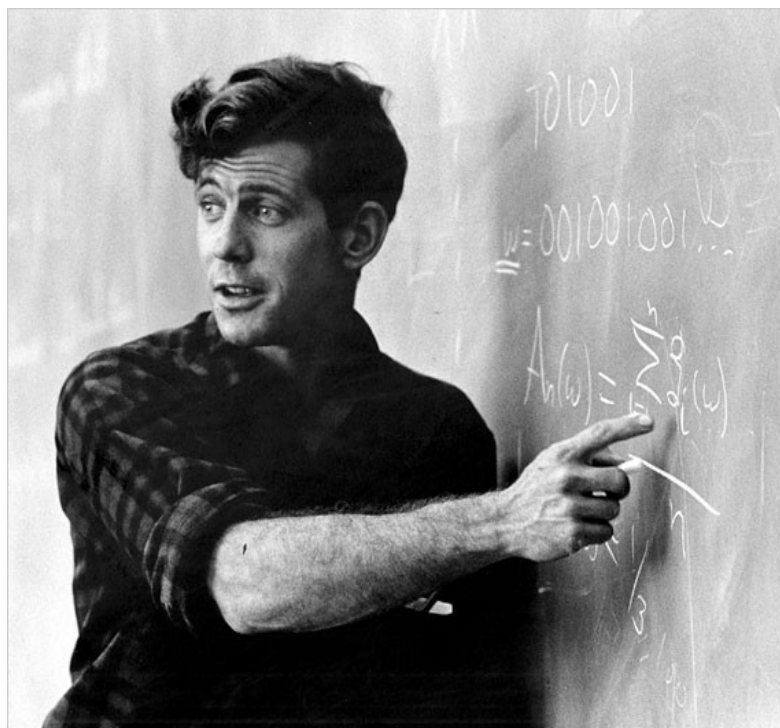


Photo by Paul Fusco

MICHAEL DALE ROSSMAN was born on Dec. 15, 1939, in Denver and reared in Northern California. He studied at the University of Chicago before transferring to Berkeley, from which he received a bachelor's degree in mathematics in 1963. He was an organizer of the Free Speech Movement at the University of California, Berkeley, and was later known for his books on politics, society, and education. Michael died May 12, 2008, at his home in Berkeley.

Editor's Note:

I was a comrade of Michael Rossman's, in Berkeley, in the 1960s. In 2008, I was asked by Michael Rothenberg, the publisher of Big Bridge, an online magazine, to write about the poetry scene in Berkeley. I sent out queries to my friends from that time, but I did not have contact information for Michael Rossman. By chance, Michael contacted me about correcting some historical inaccuracies in a short story I had published online at Seeker Magazine ("Black Friday"—included in this volume) that mentioned a mutual friend, Don Bratman, with whom Michael had been negotiating about some political posters. He had heard about my book of Berkeley poets and wondered if he could be included. Unfortunately, the book had already been printed in a limited edition, but I told him that if I ever revised the book, I would include some of his poems. That was in 2007.

Berkeley Daze was never intended to be a commercial venture. It was part of my D Press series of books, www.dpress.net. Thirty copies were printed and given to the contributors, and a gala reunion and reading was held at the Albany Library, in 2008. The book can be seen in its entirety at Big Bridge Vol. 3 #4, <http://www.bigbridge.org/BD.HTM>.

In 2015, my collected writings were archived by the University of California at the Bancroft Library, and included in the archive was one of the last copies of *Berkeley Daze*. Recently, I decided to make another short run of the book for future archival purposes. Remembering the promise I made to Michael, I looked online and found a website that informed me he had died. There was an email address for his widow, Karen McLellan, and she permitted me to include a few of Michael's poems in this edition. Michael was widely known for his historical perspective on the Berkeley Revolution. Since this anthology is from a poet's perspective, I chose poems about these events. He was a Keeper of the Flame.

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Winds of the People: The Poetry of the Spanish Civil War, Impulse Press, Berkeley, 1986. An anthology of translations of poetry from the War, including introductory material and a radio drama.

Elementary Science Education, Web-published at <[http:// mrossman.org](http://mrossman.org)>, 2007. Most of Rossman’s writing on the subject; most pieces had not been published previously.

Looking Back at the Free Speech Movement, Web-published at <[http:// mrossman.org](http://mrossman.org)>, 2007. Writings about the FSM; most pieces had been published previously, in scattered venues.

Michael Rossman’s Writings & Then Some

<http://www.mrossman.org/>

An interview with Michael talking about the Berkeley Revolution

www.youtube.com/watch?v=DKFzq9xPwiE

Remembering the Police-Car Siege That Jump-Started the FSM

In that long suspended moment
of thirty hours around the car
something fused among us, within
each in our ways as free speech
flowered in the first
public dialogue of my life, trance
forming us from atomized mass
into a true polity of the instant
of eternity. You can talk about it
in terms of political theory,
but really, it's a mystery of the soul,
this state in which we're integrally one
yet wholly each ourselves and even
more so for it. The bolt of democratic
spirit surged through us more deeply
than metaphor, we were truly
possessed, radiant not simply
as awakened youth but with a light
no eye could see, so how the #!%\$%&!!
could anyone say anything more
about it than sometimes, "Geez,
this sure is weird," who had
no language nor frame to grasp
what coursed through us, lit
our way in history. For all
we could see was only ourselves
just as flawed as we were
alive in shared will
both groping and sure.

Forty years on now, the trace
of our explosive possession
radiates in history like a vivid marker
of dye in a downstream
current, the tracks of our lives
diverging in countless swirls
yet streamed together broadly
following instincts of spirit
long harbored, protected
and expressed as best we can
in faulty, fragmentary ways
through these uncertain times.
A certain preference for both
liberty and democracy

not simply in thought
but practically shone
through us, fitful
and persistent, tingeing
and guiding our forays
into garden vegetables, personal
computers, the State
legislature, classrooms,
the public airways, poetry
for the people, ten
thousand ways
less publicly celebrated, more
part-time, still shining
with the same light
refracted into so many colors
though our prismatic selves,
the tissues of society,
and more.

So that's
what it's like, huh? To live
long enough to begin to see
how history works out, to
learn — to put it stuffily —
how a movement that gained
its formal goal and dispersed
nonetheless endured
as a wave in the current,
a distinctive signature
of energy propagating
through our lives, blunted
and reinforced by other
swirls, carrying on. Seven
tenths of my fellow citizens
feel they have a personal relation
with Jesus and believe
tangibly in angels, so
how am I different? Yet still
I take comfort in witnessing
how the holy state hath been radiant
mundanely through our lives, yes,
I remain a true fool
for the spirit of liberty
exercised in democratic union.
Damn, Sam, I tell you
it's an ecstatic mania
flaring quietly wherever we truly
hear each other and give

and take together, I think
I can actually sorta see
or feel that specific energy
glowing though I still
have no better words
than these to testify
to observations as sober
as any of other science, I swear
we shall someday understand
at least a trifle more
about this. Meanwhile
I soldier on in the peaceable
militia, slogging through the actual
textures of life, glowing a bit
as I go. At times
we do see each other in
the flow, recognize
that shared light; beside this
for me it's a matter of faith, occasional contacts
and consciousness of the deeper stream
that surfaces through us still.

Sept 2004

On Education, In America

My love I wanted to write you about America
and me out of my head with longing for you
your body sipping tea listening to a tabla
and sitar converse as I did with you
before as we do so rarely now
in America the kitten's playing tag on the bedspread
striped like a flag they sentenced me today
eight months after the Eight Hundred sat in
three months in jail two years probation
set bail at a thousand half what I make
in a year when we graze Mars' skin a first touch
like a lover seeking intimate bright foliage
dreamed jungles we burn like rainbow books
in far countries there's music I've never heard
I sing to the kitten Diego Ortiz
small carnivore Renaissance composer of changes

my love in Spain we speak so seldom
tonight I went to a poetry reading
alone I felt so sad it was postured
and cheap like the judge's speech this morning
in America rule is by law not by men
get your rights your love within law in the system
but what do you do if the channels are clogged
with scale the machinery rusted from disuse
the throat will not speak the face is hidden
like a billboard plastered with dead names we hide behind
scared of love like highway patrolmen leather judges
geared to keep the traces of human
touching tight and safe and straight
on concrete to drag the bodies of warmth
from the heart of our center of thought our voice
the poem the poets the judge nobody speaks
to me in America I speak to the kitten
of changes I write each line it costs blood
to care for you for the kitten who might die
run away far away to love to build
a poem a chessgame of tactical decisions
to fight cheap names to keep trying to keep touching
those it's for to see the changes
ahead for you for us for them
for us if you leave yourself open you say it
like it is like a poem you get hurt for no one
will speak for me for us for you
have to write your own name down be proud
of your complicity in an act of love
in America it's still possible to be an American
like my father to leave the permanent subways
of fear to leave the concrete rooms
he lived in to come to openness late
to learn the structure of trees of poems
of pruning at night in the flimsy kitchen
November rain through the holes in the roof
in the storm the apricot fell before pruning
in season by season we rebuilt that house
we learned by rooms sheetrock and wiring
insulation ceramic and asphalt tiling
concrete roofing siding shingling
joining cabinetry he taught me and learned
to take time out to love to fit
mahogany seams to a sixty-fourth
to work with words precisely working
at midnight when he rose from the typewriter covered it
deadline reached another issue edited

late nights I learned from him and cocoa
real cocoa we shared the oatmeal mornings
I remember wanting to paint you a picture
myself transplanting ferns into styrofoam
carriers in torn jeans looking absurdly
absorbed as you love me titled my father
the American political open to changes
as we are as we love a dream of America
speaking with each other free like it is
in love the political heart the poem
I wrote my heart into that building and jail
for love of you because I was open
to you enough to cry when you came
to me when six hundred cops were waiting
to rush the car of a cause we began
understanding that night around the car
as we spoke of abstractions for the first time real
of belief of rights of people in structures
of being alone and some young existentialist
joining our private and public hearts
to my chuckles it may be true and I love you
my body cries to you like a lonely child
I was with the sadness of poems without love
tonight they speak to no one alone
and cheap for no one will risk the blood
the love it takes to love to be hurt
the longing for openness open and drastic
accepted unnamed we learned to see it
like it is to say yes to say no and mean it
tuned in and something illuminates my sentence
the changes the old irrelevancies cannot
touch me I call to you in my sleep alone
and cloak my love far away in America.

19-25 July 1965

**On the Firing of Dr. Clark Kerr,
President of The University of California,
As Seen from the Berkeley Campus**

“Good riddance to bad rubbish.”
—Mario Savio

I

Should I crow, say
told you so, thrown
in your own game,
you All-American?
Don't blow my mind
with your newspaper
wonders, I've been there
down under your laureate
trees, learning
to learn to breathe.
It was bad magic
you helped spell
and articulate, in concrete
numbers, numbed us
to answer your own
ice chill, unwilling
and unfelt, efficient,
with all its accomplishments
measured in numbers
and biggers, averted
encounters, degrees.

II

About your Minerva. We put our selves
on the shelves of her locker,
and entered the lotus trance
of class and classification.
She promised them back as soon
as we left, to greet with delight
and a bit of awkwardness, drape
like discovered winter coats
over finely-tuned four-barrel Vitamine muscles
that would work like an academic's prescription
to carry us charmed through the cold
Out There. She lied, she stole
something while we turned our backs in calisthenics.
In the dark, the connection we had with the world

sublimed, like a fugitive untended hue,
and we shaved facing our mirror names
each morning as if that face were ours.
But sometimes, spun over the rail far out
at sea, from the ship you captain
of doom, we recover, shake off
the drugged weary closure, and find
our other still in touch, remember,
respond, rejoin, rejoyce.

III

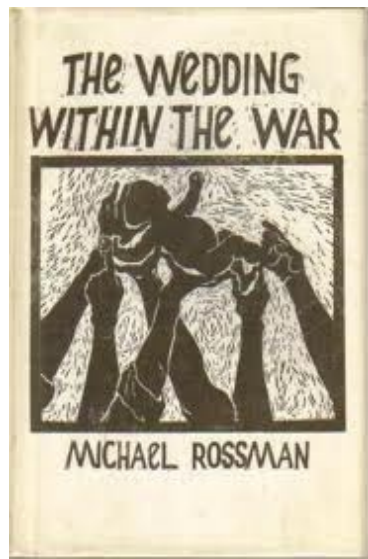
Hey there then Coach, I'm hip
to your style, and know what we lost
when we took your rulebook words
with what they said of play
to define our game's boundaries
of maybe and warmth. Your language
was legal and disciplined, all
you could offer us, proffer, profess,
answered only the questions
you knew how to ask.
So we learned at your heels,
read the inverse terminologies
of hierarchical order, stamped
on our earth like a trademark
or the signature on a decree
seen from below. Under your offices
wanting a word, ranked and attentive
we watched you and your playmates
playing at power in elaborate
silence, recorded pavlovian notes
in our muscles, responded.
And how you did chide us
for our earnest sport, whose shrillness
was metal still flesh
in dimensions of longing
that escaped your control!

IV

So what if those walls
come tumbling down
that still wear your face,
that your sojourn raised with rational grace
and speed, and your exit
leaves unchanged? Will you be

surprised, who laid it out
to our critical student selves
in dispassionate ideology
how “the Knowledge Industry now accounts
for 29% of the G.N.P.,”
how by your most excellent instrument
the Mind is bent benevolent
to service of the State?
That’s stark and crude, like the first stains
of our lost and unseen blood
now turned visible
on the steps of your Multiversity,
which will call us back
for another lesson, in that place
where we learned to spell *our minds
are not property*, and shook the State
whose backlash sweeps you on.
There was nothing personal,
as you would be the first to admit,
leaving us with our lives. Goodbye.

1967



Young Poets of the Bay Area

at the 1965 Berkeley Poetry Conference

David Bromige
Gail Dusenbery
Gene Fowler
Jim Thurber
David Meltzer

THE BERKELEY POETRY CONFERENCE

Leaders of what had at this time had been termed a revolution in poetry presented their views and the poems in seminars, lectures, individual readings, and group readings at California Hall on the Berkeley Campus of the University of California during July 12-24, 1965. The conference was organized through the University of California Extension Programs. The advisory committee consisted of Thomas Parkinson, Professor of English at U.C. Berkeley, Donald M. Allen, West Coast Editor of Grove Press, Robert Duncan, Poet, and Richard Baker, Program Coordinator.

The roster of scheduled poets consisted of: Robin Blaser, Robert Creeley, Richard Duerden, Robert Duncan, Allen Ginsberg, Leroi Jones (Amiri Baraka), Joanne Kyger, Ron Lowewinson, Charles Olson, Gary Snyder, Jack Spicer, George Stanley, Lew Welch, and John Wieners. Leroi Jones (Amiri Baraka) did not participate; Ed Dorn was pressed into service.

Seminars: Gary Snyder, July 12-16; Robert Duncan, July 12-16; LeRoi Jones (scheduled), July 19-23; Charles Olson, July 19-23. Readings (8-9:30 pm)

New Poets, July 12; Gary Snyder, July 13; John Wieners, July 14; Jack Spicer, July 15; Robert Duncan, July 16; Robin Blaser, George Stanley and Richard Duerden, July 17

New Poets, July 19; Robert Creeley, July 20; Allen Ginsberg, July 21; LeRoi Jones, July 22; Charles Olson, July 23; Ron Loewinsohn, Joanne Kyger and Lew Welch, July 24

Lectures: July 13, Robert Duncan, "Psyche-Myth and the Moment of Truth" July 14, Jack Spicer, "Poetry and Politics" July 16, Gary Snyder, "Poetry and the Primitive" July 20, Charles Olson, "Causal Mythology" July 21, Ed Dorn, "The Poet, the People, the Spirit" July 22, Allen Ginsberg, "What's Happening on Earth" July 23, Robert Creeley, "Sense of Measure"

Readings: Gary Snyder, July 13, introduced by Thomas Parkinson. John Wieners, July 14, introduced by Robert Creeley. Jack Spicer, July 15, introduced by Thomas Parkinson. Robert Duncan, July 16, introduced by Thomas Parkinson. Robin Blaser, George Stanley, Richard Duerden, July 17, introduced by Robert Duncan.

Young Poets: Jim Boyack, Robin Eichele, Victor Coleman, Bob Hogg, Stephen Rodefer, David Franks, July 18, introduced by Victor Coleman.

Special Poetry Reading: John Sinclair, Lenore Kandel, Ted Berrigan, Ed Sanders, July 17, introduced by Allen Ginsberg. Ed Dorn, July 20, introduced by Robert Creeley. Allen Ginsberg, July 21, introduced by Thomas Parkinson. Robert Creeley, July 22, introduced by Robert Duncan. Charles

Olson, July 23, introduced by Robert Duncan. Ron Loewinsohn, Joanne Kyger, Lew Welch, July 2, introduced by Robert Duncan.

Young Poets from the Bay Area: Gene Fowler, Jim Wehlage, Eileen Adams, Doug Palmer, Sam Thomas, Gail Dusenbery, Drum Hadley, Lowell Levant, Jim Thurber, July 25, introduced by Gary Snyder. There was a reading by David Bromige, David Schaff, James Koller and Ken Irby, but the tape is lost.

It was during these activities that Charles Olson was designated President of Poets, and Allen Ginsberg, Secretary of State of Poetry. Robert Creeley remarked, "There will never be another poetry conference in Berkeley; Berkeley is too bizarre."

Sound recordings from the Berkeley Language Center's Speech Archive

- **SA 638, 1:** Robert Duncan, "Psyche-Myth and the Moment of Truth", July 13, 1965. Introduced by Thomas Parkinson. Duration: 90 min. (Copies may be supplied to educational institutions and to SA 638 & 639 participants only.)
- **SA 638, 2:** Jack Spicer, "Poetry and Politics", July 14, 1965. Introduced by Thomas Parkinson. Duration: 75 min. (May not be transcribed for publication.)
Spicer sample 21 seconds, 456k.
- **SA 638, 3:** Gary Snyder, "Poetry and the Primitive", July 16, 1965. Introduced by Allen Ginsberg. Duration: 75 min.
Snyder sample 29 seconds, 632k.
- **SA 638, 4:** Charles Olson, "Causal Mythology", July 20, 1965. Introduced by Robert Duncan. Duration: 80 min.
Olson sample 11 seconds, 240k.
- **SA 638, 5:** Ed Dorn, "The Poet, the People, the Spirit", July 21, 1965. Duration: 70 min. (Personal copies only; not for further distribution.)
Dorn sample 32 seconds, 710k.
- **SA 638, 6:** Allen Ginsberg, "What's Happening on Earth", July 22, 1965. Introduced by Gary Snyder. Duration: 80 min. (May be broadcast only in unedited form.)
- **SA 638, 7:** Robert Creeley, "Sense of Measure", July 23, 1965. Introduced by Robert Duncan. Duration: 85 min.

David Bromige



DAVID MANSFIELD BROMIGE, born October 22, 1933, is a Canadian poet. He has published forty books, each one so different from the others as to seem to be the work of a different author. Bromige is often associated with the language poets, but this connection is based mainly on his close friendships with some of those poets. Bromige has twice been honored by the Poet's Foundation with awards. He won a Woodrow Wilson Scholarship and graduated from UC Berkeley. Bromige took a teaching position in the English Department at Sonoma State University in 1970. The 1980s started with a Pushcart Prize for *My Poetry* and ended with the Western States Poetry Award for his selected poems, *Desire*. At present, he collaborates with Richard Denner. Among their works is the critically acclaimed epic poem, *100 Cantos*. More information can be had at SUNY Buffalo Electronic Poetry Center: <http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/bromige/index.html>. David died, in Sebastopol, on June 3, 2009.

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- *Behave or Be Bounced*. dPress, Sebastopol, 2003.
- *Ten Poems from Clearings in the Throat*. dPress, Sebastopol, 2005.
- *Spade: Cantos 1-33*. dPress, Sebastopol, 2006. Co-author.

Poems from *THE GATHERING* (1965)

WE COULD GET A DRINK

Sunday morning, lying
in, complacencies
of the newly-wed,
out the window the slender,
sun-silver trees

lead me back to Hampsted Heath
where I run again
down sparsegrass banks
clumps of gorse, below
silver trees, I

try to tell you
but end up, "We
could get a drink on a
Sunday, anyway"
you laugh, move closer

under the covers
our silver limbs stir in the gloom like

cut-throat trout
I saw in a lake
a hundred miles out of Vancouver
hiding their strike in shadow . . .

the mind a fish,
shifting fragilely
its position when
the body's easy.
a still pool . . .

now eddies in a scene from
a documentary seen months back
girl, eyes like yours, girl
slung over
a tommy's shoulder;
mouth open, but
nothing said until
the commentator, as the camera pans
past the black patch I don't watch
because
my eye hooks
on the hatrack hips

says, “Starved to death” – the soldier
throws her into a pit
that’s a tangl of white
 very slender limbs

went sliding down the crater’s muddy side

the instant I calld “There’s a bomb
fell here last night ! Let’s look at
the crater !” went running over the Heath
laughing
 my friends along, running

down to today, when
looking at silver birch
I say nothing at all but
“We could

 get a drink there”,
move closer beneath the blankets

 while the cut-throat
 flick
 under their bank.

WITH SOMEONE LIKE YOU

“I tell you” who’d not inquired “I’ve forgotten
John, Arvids, Charlie, Ken, Walter
& that fascinating guy I met in
the Cosmopolitan Restaurant”,

the wedding ring isn’t dry on her finger
as they sit down to her albums
the fire bright on her first
husband, arms akimbo in the Lake
District, & other pictures

she tears out & throws in the coals
fiercely as she embraces the present
seen in that light, representativ.

ALSO A CHOICE PIECE

The lost chance salon, still
those rooms haunt
wherein his will
will make her beautiful

down to the love
dyed sheets, those roses
on the wallpaper, all's
done, through undone utterly

what's past is
still to come
to the tenacious
mind, & echoes in

the senses, a senseless
torment of
one self, compelling
pleasure.

DOWN IN THE DANCE

“What was banisht forever
I thought, laid by
lovers, by stages, by
roomsful of pupils,
frends spelling it out
for me returns

its clumsy legs to wear
mine out, its idiot
grin to spred
my face”

I'll drink it into the ground, he cried, Even though
the monster & my awareness
of him be
one & the same.

MY FAILING

Her eyes, the sheets her fingers
work over like lapels.

Morals, faded labels from foreign hotels
we slept in, our luggage.

A scream begun now would round the world
& return to find itself still going strong.

How pretend nothing has happened
when precisely that is your conviction.

THE FULFILMENT

The eyes just do
not meet
 those of the man
rolld in
mor than his fair
share of bedding

her shoulder
 turned
but kindly
sets her alone in
no animal loss, only

the fulfilment of a plan

as though there'll always be
mor time
 & every night
were not
as adumbration of an act

neither will be
 able to control
when no time at all
shall come to him

DAVID BROMIGE & RYCHARD DENNER DIALOGUE 3/31/07

R: Directly behind the poetry scene of the 60s is the Berkeley Renaissance, which began in the 40s. Duncan probably felt partially responsible for the debacle.

D: He was involved in putting together the Conference in 1965. He felt that he had made a lot of this happen, and he felt bad about it. He told me, “Your line endings are terrible. You’re all doing it. Like Creeley. ‘As I said to my FRIEND because I am ALWAYS talking,—John, I SAID, which was not my name, the darkness surROUNDS us...” I can’t remember what comes next.

R: “...why not buy a goddamn big car, drive, he said, for christ’s sake, look out where you’re going.” The poem is full of surprises, surprised me all the way through. But there’s only so much surprise poetry can accommodate.

D: And then, we have to go back to boring poetry.

R: In general, there’s always been a rivalry between the poets in the San Francisco scene and those in the Berkeley scene. It seemed to me that Rexroth and later, Ferlinghetti, were at the center of the San Francisco scene, & Duncan, & to a great extent Spicer, were more representative of Berkeley.

D: And Josephine Miles.

R: During the conference, I walked across campus to the North Side with Allen, who said he had to visit Josephine Miles, and I asked why, and he said it was important for him to pay his respects. At the time, I didn’t get it, but now I see that it is important to pay respect to your elders.

D: When we get older, we see things differently.

R: Bob Kaufman, who was on the street, I’d have coffee with him in the Med, and I didn’t know who he was. One day, he told me he had a book coming out from New Directions. Wow, I thought, is this guy for real? I wish I could go up to him now and pay my respects. Trying to fit him into the street scene, I came across Digital Interview of Ken Kesey <http://www.digitalinterviews.com/digitalinterviews/views/kesey.shtml> (reads)

I can remember driving down to North Beach with my folks and seeing Bob Kaufman out there on the street. I didn’t know he was Bob Kaufman at the time. He had little pieces of Band-Aid tape all over his face, about two inches wide, and little smaller ones like two inches long -- and all of them made into crosses. He came up to the cars, and he was babbling poetry into these cars. He came up to the car I was riding in, and my folks, and started jabbering this stuff into the car. I knew that this was exceptional use of the human voice and the human mind.

And Brautigan. I ran into him coming out of Moe’s once, and I asked him if he was buying or selling books, and he said, “I write books; I don’t buy them.” I thought that was kind of weird.

D: After he got famous, he got weird.

R: I didn’t know him after he got famous. I was surprised in 1972, when I was at the University of Alaska, and Larry Kerschner gave me a copy of

Trout Fishing in America. What surprised me the most was that he was wearing my hat.

D: Why your hat?

R: Well, I knew it wasn't my exact hat, but I had two unblocked Stetsons around the time of the Berkeley Poetry Conference that I wore regularly, and this hat was a part of a style I had adopted—kind of the gunfighter look. I guess it was an archetype hippie look. I wonder what would have become of Richard if he hadn't died? He might never have been labeled a Beat poet.

D: He would have been a novelist, who at the beginning of his career had written some poems.

R: These were guys who didn't have to sell their books on the street; they had people selling their books for them. They became successful.

D: As for Brautigan, I think he had a growing dislike of himself as he became more and more successful.

R: And he took his life violently. Maybe Hemmingway's death affected him. That had happened in the early 60s.

D: And, like Hemmingway, he was depressed. He drank too much.

R: Yeah, but what do we know? We're acting like a couple of armchair psychoanalysts.

D: Right. But one thing is for sure, you're either a happy drunk or a morose drunk. There's not a lot of ground in between, and when you're happy, why write? I once asked Duncan if he enjoyed writing, and he said, "No, it's very painful." For me, it's painful to start.

R: I'm writing all the time, so I don't notice. I write serially, and when I stop, I don't feel that's the end of anything. I just come back to it later. I don't have blocks. My writing overlaps into other things. I do collages, and when the writing stops, I do collages or work on my junk assemblages. If I could quit writing, I'd almost be relieved. Just about the time I give it up, I get a brain storm. I'm cursed. I don't feel the need to write as oppressive. For me, it's like food. I like to eat. I do it pretty well; I'm not the greatest; but I'm not the worst. The poems are fairly original; and I've got some good ideas on how to package them for our consumer oriented society. That's my contribution. Poetry as a package. I'll establish this in the piece I'm working on: *The Berkeley Daze*. D. a. z. e.

D: Could you leave the "the" off of it.

R: Right, *Berkeley Daze*. I'm putting it up on a free wiki space online.

D: Oh, the marmalade...what do they call it? The *peanut butter* space.

R: Where're the women?

D: They're off at the Laundromat. We need a new washing machine.

R: It's quieter in the house without.

D: Women?

R: Without machines running. Have you've been writing?

D: Lately, a piece called *My Compensations*

R: You've been writing your compositions for fifty years.

D: Well, not steadily.

R: What's it about?

D: Books I've been reading. The way I talk about it is: *In the Southern Su-*

dan, one tribe attacks and despoils the land of another, and is driven into flight, if not killed, and has to survive in Central Sudan, in very different circumstances. This is all made very clear in this book by John Sinker...

R: Stinker.

D: Quit making it up...*John Sinker...and is highly recommended.* And I do several of them.

R: Got another?

D: My mind is stuck in the desert of Sudan...*In the mountains of Tibet, he savagely usurped the rule of Tibetans. This is told with a great deal of sympathy by a Tibetan sympathizer...a notable Tibetan sympathizer...*

R: ...*who spent many years in a Chinese prison...*

D: ...*who spent many years in a Chinese prison for his views. Well worth a look at.*

R: Yes, I like it.

D: Books like that have been my compensation.

R: By *compensation* you mean they relieve you from the tedium of existence?

D: Exactly, they compensate me for being alive.

R: For having to suffer Life.

D: For having to suffer. Actually, anything fits.

R: That's right. I was standing on the corner of Highways 12 and 116 downtown, and all the Women in Black were there with signs to stop the war now, and the other people were across the street supporting the troops, and the sun was beating down; the cars were honking; and everyone was flipping peace signs. When I pushed the button to cross the street, a man with a sign that read Love Thy Neighbor, said "Nice day, how are you feeling?" And I said, "It's always nice to have another day to feel anything." And he said, "Somehow, I knew you'd say that."

D: Because you're a Buddhist, I suppose.

R: Pure optimism. I might have said, "It's a lovely day to have a mouthful of puke. I've got the constitution of a...of a..."

D: Door mouse.

R: Door mouse, yes.

D: Not like when we were young and had vitality and were first trying to find out what a poem was.

MY MEMOIR

In 1954, I was (not) selling magazines from door to door in southern Ontario. In 1955, I was (not) helping Ukrainian wheat farmers recover their everyday senses in Oliver Mental Hospital in Edmonton, Alberta. But in 1956, I was in Vancouver, staying at my sisters, and talking to a registrar at the University of British Columbia into admitting me to the University of British Columbia because, although I had only a 10th grade education, it had been gotten in England, which probably made it the equal of Canada's grade 12; and to my

surprise, he agreed with me. I didn't know that education in BC was in crisis: the baby boomers were in desperate need of teachers. He told me this. And he added that I should have to take four education courses and one Survey of English Literature course. Sign here.

The ed courses were terrible, except for one taught by a man who had clearly realized this long before. I much enjoyed the various moves he had invented to deal with this discovery, like leaning into the room from the hallway while talking, or lying on the table and teaching to the ceiling. The other classes were hell on wheels, but I carried on by improving my doodling, waiting for the bell to ring and thinking about my English class. UBC had paid me bursary of 750 Canuck bucks to help me get thru this first year, after which they hoped I would become a teacher in Kamloops or Castlegar, or some other slight dot on their map overflowing with the products of postwar lovemaking. Those fucking soldiers and their fucking wives without intending to had found work for me that I liked to do. Teach their fucken kids.

But not just yet. In the following summer, I worked with my muscles on campus. My muscles got big with planting and shoveling. My skin, shirt off, got tanned, and when one Saturday afternoon I went to see a play opening on campus, I saw two actors, a man who would be my friend for life, and a woman who would be my wife, and thereby interrupt my UBC career, since she was going back to England almost at once to take up a scholarship at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art, LAMDA. I spent the summer working for a landscaper on the UBC campus, drinking beer at the Georgia, and writing long letters to Ann. (She wrote with equal intensity to me, and I still have those letters, bibliophiles.)

Come September, together with Geof Eliot, a Yorkshire lad who'd been studying Forestry at UBC, we flew to NYC, spent three days there seeing a play each night, "Look Back in Anger," "Death of a Salesman," and "Long Day's Journey into Night," which latter turned me into a playwright. I wrote a play that winter in London, which took four hours to read when we invited a group of Ann's fellow-students to the Bromige home, where Ann and I had a small share of a big house that my father bought for \$1,000 in 1943, as you couldn't insure a house against bomb damage—luckily, we sustained none. (My sister, to whom the house was left, sold it for some 80,000 pounds in the late 80s, about one fourth of which was sent to me. With an even more unexpected gift of about the same amount from my father's widow, his third wife, I was able to buy the house I live in today, which is worth half-a million plus.)

Back to the 50s: I worked as a supply grade school teacher—in one case, at the school I had won a scholarship to a high school named in a British way "public" (it was, in fact, private) that had been in existence for four hundred years and whose most famous modern scholars, apart from me, have been Sir Leon Brittain, Home Secretary in Thatcher's government, until she made him the scapegoat for one of her swindles; and the movie actor named Cohen, who played "Borat" in the film of that name. It was duller in my time. The best times I had at that all-boys school were trading jerkoffs with a variety of lads, right there in class. Oh, there is Sir Samuel Brittan, my mate

in grade school, whom I've visited several times when poetry events have brought me back to England.

But enough of the future. My teaching job didn't pay enough: at Dad's suggestion, I applied to a firm of solicitors in New Suare (it's very old); and they hired me for 11 quid a week, twice what I got for teaching. I was given a sheaf of old accounts, which I was to tot up in case there were mistakes. It was boring work, but I was quick with figures. Then, after a while, I took out a paperback and read it, covering it with a sheet of accounts when anyone came by, which they seldom did. I liked this job. One of the clients who frequently stopped by was Group Captain Townsend, so good-looking he made me feel like Princess Margaret.

Meanwhile, Ann and I saw a lot of West End plays without paying: management papered the house on opening night if there weren't enough tickets sold. Soon I too wanted to act, and found a small theater that could use me. I mention this because one critic reviewing my poetry years later said I read as though acting a part. Perhaps his insight is why I've written in so many styles.

I might have stayed on in London—I know Ann wanted to—but one day the mail brought an unpleasant surprise. It was a notice to appear at a nearby hospital to get checked out for the draft. My father, twice wounded in the first World War, had always told me never to join the army. I went for my physical, thinking all my drinking and smoking would save me, but I was pronounced A-1. Not only would I have to leave my wife for two years, but I would have to shoot whoever the enemy was, and be shot by them.

So, I wrote the draft board a letter saying that I was due to return to Canada to resume my studies in the Fall, and they replied, giving me until the end of September to leave England. As I feared, my wife was furious. "My big opportunity," "Just the right time to make my West End breakthrough," etc., etc., but I was holding the winning hand: if I went into the army, I'd probably step on a landmine and have my legs blown off and be a cripple for the rest of my life. My cock might be injured too.

"Ah," I would add, "but I'm being selfish. We've had a good time together. Forget Joan Reid, she meant nothing to me!" How she should launch forth on her own, "And my deepest good wishes go with you, and watch out for that Brummagen accent at auditions," and she would cave in, sobbing, "I'm only 25, and you're already my second husband. I can't leave you," and so we flew back to Vancouver. (Did I give Dad one last chance "to lend" us the fare, or were airline tickets still affordable to the likes of us?)

I went back to UBC, part-time, keeping three days-a-week free for substitute teaching (still at grade school level, the eleven year-old girls were my favorite fantasy figures) and hard going Ann and I made the ensuing year, '58-59.

I kept on writing plays, but I also wrote poems, my first as a grownup. By school-year's end, Ann and I were apart, after a hellish year, which included her attempt to drown herself in English Bay—or was she just acting?—and my going on tour with UBC's production of "Charley's Aunt" thruout the province of British Columbia.

When I got back, all the summer jobs were gone, so I helped my friend, Roy Cooler, later a West End star, with his window-cleaning business. Later that summer, I met a lovely blonde two years my senior, who was mourning being ditched by a local theatre director, Norm Young, and promised her I'd be more famous than him, so she should marry me. Which sooner or later, she did.

Now my life, at last, was waking up. I wrote a poem, "For Joan", which won the poetry prize at UBC—50 bucks, equal to about \$250, today; I won a prize for a play I wrote that winter, "Save What You Can", \$1,000 in the dollars of those days; I got straight A's in all my classes, save for Psychology, which I took in the wrong room by mistake of an usher, and so was passed, a lucky break. And Kenneth Patchen came to read with a jazz combo, and I saw that poetry was entertainment.

Joan Peacock's salary—she'd been thru Law School—was enough for me to go to Summer School, which was useful for appearing to learn French, since class met every day. I read Rimbaud. I read Kerouac, Dylan Thomas, Ezra Pound. My interests were all over the map. If only some genius could come tell me which lines of inquiry would be of most use. If only.

That summer, Robert Duncan came to teach in Vancouver. I was a bit put-off by the people he drew to him—people whose own poetry often seemed suspect, not up to par—simplistic, in a word. But I heard such tales of his talking that I cut class and sat in. The group had pitched in for his bus-fare from San Francisco, so I offered him five bucks, but he said, "Don't bother, I've got enough already." He was fantastic to listen to. Yes, he too was all over the map, but he always knew where he was headed. I waited intently for his next book.

Meanwhile, the Allen anthology came out. "Who is this Ronald Duncan you're always reading in that book?" my now wife, Joan, asked me. "Joan, it's Robert, and his work is so—mysterious. I don't know whether I hate him or love him. Both, I guess. But take a look at this anthology—there's some dumb fucks, but there's this great one, Robert Creeley, and dozens of others who are great to read." We had many happy moments in our coach-house days. For me, discovering that anthology was like discovering a new continent.

Creeley read at UBC in the winter of 61-62, but Bowering and I missed him, because we were at a writing conference being held at the University of Oregon in Eugene, where at the party he and I acted out a book title, "The Naked and the Dead." George looked good, dead. But I got more screams.

Next spring, 1962, I was invited to go to Seattle to be interviewed for a Woodrow Wilson fellowship. I went, and I got one. But the rules stated that you couldn't do your graduate work at the school where you graduated from. I asked my UBC mentor, the poet Earle Birney, and he said: "Berkeley." So, that's how I left Canada.

But before I did, Creeley, who was going to teach at UBC the next year. Damn it, he came in the summer and offered the same kind of workshop that Duncan had done the year before. I was there for every one of

those. At some point, Bob found this out and said, "Let me give you Robert's phone and address, and don't forget to look him up." Excitedly, I wrote this down, but I knew I would not use it. I was still so damn British. However, being British likely got me into Thom Gunn's poetry-writing class, and to this class, Fall of '62, came Bob Creeley, who'd read on campus the night before, and with him came, goodness gracious me, Robert Duncan, who sat next to me and said, "So, there you are—regressing?" Creeley reading, Duncan talking—and after class, we three, with several more, went to Telegraph Ave and sat at a table in Robbie's, and talked for hours on end.

After that, Robert D looked me up at least once a week, when he took the bus over from SF, and we'd meet at various places—often, just across Telegraph from Robbie's, The Heidelberg—someplace where we could get a sandwich, anyway, without risking the anarchist splendor of The Med.

Robert had always an errand to run on campus, sometimes someone else to meet, often an old friend from his Berkeley days, so I met a variety of persons thru him. He'd also show me poetry he was writing (wasn't 1963 the year he began "Passages"?) Sometimes, I would show him a poem I'd written, to which he might suggest improvements, but often say nothing—perhaps because he had nothing to say but perhaps because that was the quicker way to let me grow.

Suddenly it was summer, my wife and I rented a house near the Vancouver campus which, payment forthcoming, we were willing to share with as many others as its broad walls might accommodate. I can't recall them all. Ed van Alstyn was one, and Richard Sassoon was another; RS was the last tenant to be squeezed in there, and I had cause to regret his presence, an exemplary instance whereof was a piping hot day when he found out the windows of his little room had been, by the landlord, painted shut. I could hear him struggling to let air in, but was nonetheless shocked to hear glass breaking. This he refused to pay for, because the owner's not to have done such a thing, but Joan and I felt the window had to be fixed, so we called a pro in and paid for it. Sassoon kept refusing, perhaps this was because he had inherited his poet-cousin's determination "never surrender" game, first against the Germans then later as a pacifist, but it was awkward for us, and it was good of Joan to tell me he had paid her for it but sworn her to secrecy. He was writing plays, then; the last time I heard of him, he was counseling persons in Arizona on how to stay calm.

Van Alstyn was another bowl full of impatience that those days brought forth. He had been fun AND helpful at the Eugene conference, for instance, making me poetry editor of the Northwest Review, which he edited, but how come he accepted a wad of Whalen without submitting it to the eyes of his poetry editor, me? But I actually got paid for doing it, so I put up with my madman editor's ways.

Inevitably, things got worse. For our next issue, we had a poem by Whalen in which he said he must stop masturbating so often; a poem by Michael McClure in which God was named blasphemophemohemomoblashpelasphem. I sadly advised Van that he should put one of these poems in this issue, one in the next, and one in the third. I knew a thing or two about our

editorial board. Three poems like this in one issue would sink it. Van was right, of course. We had to fight for freedom of expression. But we were all fired, the journal produced by the faculty, and nothing of worth put in it. Van went on to publish Coyote's Journal, never published a poem I sent him, went south to teach at SF State College, affecting a number of students, then went north to settle on the Oregon coast, where he has drawn some like-minded spirits.

I had gotten my MA at the end of Winter quarter. My wife, Joan, was six months pregnant, and was determined our child would be born in Canada. So, we traveled N to Vancouver and then NE to a little settlement called Deep Cove, then cheap enough for us to afford to rent a house, a house almost at the end of a road and just steps from the endless forest. Bears lived there, and we sometimes saw one, standing up to look at us. Across Horseshoe Bay east ranged 6,000-foot mountains. Once a week, I drove out to UBC to collect a stack of essays, which I'd bring back to the house and grade for a professor, whose name I've forgotten. For three months, this was my only paid work. My wife was soon too big to go on walks in the forest, so I would go on my own, praying I didn't meet a bear on my way.

But I did encounter dizzy spells and other signs of ill health I could not decode, and finally I went into West Van to see my doctor, who was also my father-in-law, and Dr. Peacock said I was diabetic, and put me on insulin. My wife was due to give birth any day now, so he could hardly be blamed for fixing me up best as he could, although it was likely that I was suffering from a temporary condition brought on by nervous strain, and using insulin to deal with it was going to render a temporary condition, permanent—which in fact it did. But even the doctor didn't know this.

And meanwhile, my wife was delivered of a 12-pound boy we called Christopher, some male to really suck on Joan's hefty breasts. When you have a kid, we discovered, you need more money, so it was good I got to teach summer school. When it was over, I was told they thought I'd got my PhD or they wouldn't have hired me. There had been no way I could have earned a PhD in the short time I'd been there. Thanks, for the kindness, though.

But now I was coming back to Berkeley to begin teaching, while Joan resumed her former job. I also had a job with Fybate Notes, typing up what a kindly old Russian had to say about the 19th century of Russian writing, twice weekly. After awhile, Joan had to go back to work, and we had to make crazy arrangements and finally hire a baby-sitter, so I could get to my Russian class, which probably just paid for the sitter. But what distracted me further began when I couldn't make my way through a crowd of students blocking Sather Gate. I was trying to get across Bancroft in order to deliver my typed-up version of yesterday's lecture to where they could be checked for errors and then mass-produced to be sold to the waiting masses. (Well, there were some thirty in this class.) "Hey, I know it must be fun to do what you're doing, but I actually have some work to deliver!" A couple recognized me and began to build an archway to the exit. That the protesters made way for me smilingly made a big, lasting impression on me. Some guy stuck

a flower in my hair, and I wore it proudly. When I talked with a campus friend about the matter that evening, he made me feel that the protesting students had right on their side. Why should they be solicited on-campus to go get shot in Viet Nam?

Quickly things snowballed and led to students sitting-in at Sproule Hall. A student of mine, Sherril Jaffe, was among this crowd. She has a great laugh and a winning smile, but I was impressed with her gravity when she told me she expected to be arrested, and grateful that she advised me not join her: "I'm just a Jew, but they might send you back to Canada. Remember those long winters. Besides, we'll miss you here." She impressed me. She had the tone of the times.

And those fucken pigs were rough on them. Hey, why not? It was their big chance to get at these privileged pigs, while they had the chance to win a battle in the class war—fuck the law, drag them down the stone steps so that they bounce their over-educated heads on the stone edges.

Yes, tempers were rising. But take the long view: more children of Oakland cops were dying in Viet Nam than Cal grads. And President Nixon's big disgrace was already charted in the heavenly stars.

Now, let's cut to the summer of '65. What changes? Well, at the beginning of the Berkeley Poetry Conference, Robert Duncan ran into me, accompanied by Suzanne Mowat, an 18-yr old who had just graduated from an exclusive girls' school in Vancouver, and who, while Joan and her baby were vacationing in Vancouver, was using our spare bedroom, which as far as I could observe, she never used by night, except for the night when she was eluding Warren Tallman (she said), and sobbed her heart out recounting her various exploits, named in my still-clothed arms. But people love the conclusions they leap to. "I see everything is changing at your house," RD snarled as he ran down some stairs I was ascending. Suzanne's ascension did not stop until she had Mr. Big, Charles Olson, fall in love which, I admit, was not hard to do. CO's sexual performance can't have amounted to much the night he gave and gave his reading. Meth, grass and hard liquor were some of the alleged and witnessed substances that he took and from which he drew inspiration that night. Listen to the tape, a remarkable performance. I found it best when he read his poetry, but he never read one thru to the end. There are so many things dope can make you say. It was a bad show, tho remarkable. Duncan and Jess left at halftime. As far as I could see, I was the one person who wouldn't stand to honor Charles Olson's blitzed and staggering performance when the janitors had called for the campus police to rid them of this troublesome knave. I admired his poetry very much, but not his drunkenness, drugs or love-swoon. I wanted them for myself.

But others of the poets outdid themselves. Duncan's voice had a cold fury I'd never heard before, in his new poem against the slaughter in Viet Nam: "Now Johnson would go up to be" the devil's agent—an anti-war poem that still makes me shake, all these years later. Creeley, too, gave a great reading, and also a wild (yet sober) talk—prefaced by a little trouble with Richard Baker, the unfortunate man in charge, now subject to RC's order that those who had no money should be admitted to his talk, so that Richard

Krech and Richard Denner, the man who has for five years has been a close friend and ace collaborator, along with other colleagues from the Berkeley underground, could sit inside and listen. As for Baker, he went on to become a Buddhist monk, and later a disgraced ex-Buddhist monk, and later still, a renewed and respected teacher in Colorado. Or so they say.

The last poet I heard that summer was Jack Spicer. In the tape, I can hear my youthful (tho now 31 year-old) voice challenging his professional pessimism: "People on all sides challenge this war. It can't be won." Spicer had his habitual answer. And a month later, he was dead. He couldn't wait for the good news, tho he was barely forty.

And a uniquely beautiful and surprising poet.

But it was Fall again, I had a scholarship, and another gig at Fybate Notes, and my second book soon to be published by Black Sparrow Press. I was to go on and on win big prizes, and make alarming mistakes. Maybe, I shouldn't have told the truth of my stay at Harry Spider's place. Had been wiser than to expose editor Josiah Panting in print. (Jersey Roth let me know the truth of that.) But this mean archive is still intact and still for sale. Read the letters from Michael Davidson, Pat Nolan, Robert Duncan, Andrei Codrescu, Michael Palmer, Kathy Fraser, Susan Geviritz, Steve Tills, Richard Denner, Belle Randall, D.A. Powell, Robert Hass, Rachel Loden, Ron Silliman, Clayton Eshleman, Charles Bernstein, Nick Piobino, Steve Benson, Diane Ward, Bruce Andrews, Kit Robinson, Rae Armantrout, Ray di Palma, Bob Perelman, Robert Grenier, and more than 400 others—friends, acquaintances mainly poets.

I thank them for a full life in the Age of Letter-writing.

LONESOME SONG

"Write, speak, come to me
out of my dream of you,
dearest my interest, tell
all about myself"

"She makes friend or
lover
as caves are wornan
at the coast, wherein
the ocean echoes"

Gail Dusenbery



GAIL CHIARELLO

Born March 9, 1939 in Albany NY (Gail Evelyn Sherrell)
Married to Walter Dusenbery 1961-1969 (Gail Dusenbery)
1969-present: Gail Chiarello (sometimes spelled Gail Chiarrello)

Education

Cornell University, Ithaca, New York (1956-1959)
University of California, Berkeley (1962-1963) AB 1963
University of California, Berkeley (1973-1974) PhD Program in English.
No degree.
University of California, Berkeley (1977-1979) MCP Master of City
Planning 1979

Honors/Awards

National Merit Scholar Finalist 1956
Phi Beta Kappa Theta Chapter, Cornell University 1959
Guilford Essay Prize, Cornell University 1959
Elizabeth Mills Crothers Short Story Award, First Prize, University of
California, Berkeley 1963
Woodrow Wilson Alternate 1963
Ina Coolbrith Memorial Poetry Award 1965
Grove Press Scholarship to the Berkeley Poetry Conference 1965
NEA Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines Grant for San Francisco
Earthquake 1967

Books Published

The Mark (Poems), Oyez Press, Berkeley, 1967. (Gail Dusenbery)
The Bhangra Dance (Poems), Oyez Press, Berkeley, 1970. (Gail Chiarrello)

Books/Magazines Edited

The San Francisco Earthquake, A Magazine of the Arts, San Francisco.
Co-founder and editor with Jan Herman, 1967-1968
Charles Bukowski, *Erections, Ejaculations, Exhibitions and General Tales
of Ordinary Madness*, City Lights Books, San Francisco, 1972 (Gail
Chiarello, editor)
Malvina Reynolds, *Not In Ourselves Nor In Our Stars, Either* (with Gail
Chiarello), Schroder Publishing Company, Berkeley, CA 1975.

Poems in Magazines

Poems published in: *Wild Dog, Cow, Poetry (Chicago), Free Poems Among
Friends, The San Francisco Earthquake, VDRSVP, Colloquy, Aldebaran
Review, R. C. Lion, Akzente (Munich)*

Poems in anthologies

Poems Read in the Spirit of Peace & Gladness (Doug Palmer & Tove Ne-
ville, eds.), Berkeley, CA 1966

Out of the War Shadow, An Anthology of Current Poetry (Denise Levertov, ed.), War Resisters League Press, NY 1967
Remember Our Fire: Poetry by Women (Alta, ed.), Shameless Hussy Press 1969
31 New American Poets (Ron Schreiber, ed.), Hill & Wang, NY 1969
Possibilities of Poetry (Richard Kostelanetz, ed.), Dell Publishing Co., New York 1970
Live Poetry (Kathleen Koppell, ed.), Holt Rinehart & Winston, NY 1971
Year of Dog (Georgia Gojmerac and Kelly Lee, eds.), Year of Dog Press, Putney, VT 1972
Peace & Pieces: An Anthology of Contemporary American Poetry, San Francisco, 1973
City Lights Anthology, City Lights Books, San Francisco 1974

Biographical Citations

Contemporary Poets of the English Language, St. James Press, London
The World's Who's Who of Authors, Cambridge, England
Dictionary of International Biography, Cambridge, England

Other Bio-Bits

Father Libertario Chiarello born June 5, 1908 San'Arca, Italy. Died July 15, 2007, Webster, New York
Claude Pelieu, OPAL U.S.A., Beach Books, San Francisco, 1968 (Character of "Opal")
City Lights Books, Editorial Assistant to Lawrence Ferlinghetti, 1969-1970

Other Activities/Employment

Medical/scientific grants management (University of Washington, Cornell University Medical College, Graduate Hospital, Mid-Atlantic Regional Human Genetics Network) 1983-2004
Friends of Magnuson Park Board of Directors and Chair Political Outreach 2003-05: Halt bulldozing of Seattle's Warren G. Magnuson Park
46th Legislative District Democrats Washington State: Executive Board Member, Demogram Editor 2002-2004, Treasurer 2005-2006, Precinct Committee Officer 2002-present
Seattle City Council Candidate Semi-Finalist January 2006
Progressive Democratic Caucus of Washington 46th District (PDCW46) Founding Member
Hawthorne Hills Community Council, Trustee and Hawthorne Holler Editor, 2005-present

Workwoman's Press Publisher, www.workwomanspress.com

The Pentameron: Tales from Fell Street and Beyond, A Collective Sixties Memoir, Seattle, 2008.
Una Cita en Santiago: Luis Garcia in Chile, Seattle, 2014.

THE BIRTHDAY

Oh, Mars, planet of death and of all catastrophe,
why were you placed in such ascendancy
when I was born?

Oh Mars, red, angry planet, visible in my life,
headstrong and obstinate—you make a bad wife
and an indifferent lover,
down unto the smallest most indifferent hour
I feel your force of death and shipwreck,
your red anger always checkmating me.

A woman who loves water best,
mistress of oceans and ponds and wet places,
and still so subject to your ungovernable rage?
Oh, ache of days, oh life there is no charm against.

MELLOW CHEESE

Long stoned and bony.
I don't mean
that the thicket was any wider
than the gateway, that the ticket
was any cheaper than
the wrongway,
that the space around the
moon was any darker
than that face,
moon. moon.
like she yanked on the lute,
pulled the thorn from the ticket
chopped down the gateway
fell in love with the cheese.

THE TURNINGS

They say that Robert Creeley knows everything.
When that lady turns her head
he is right there
with a poem.

If she lifts her hand,
he sees a thousand birds fly.

If her mouth turns down,
he says, she is no lady.

I wish I knew the myths.
I wish I saw the turnings.
In that confusion by the kitchen stove,
he looked, or didn't look,
and it was all the same.
But was it, Robert Creeley?

Did the white dishtowel
flapping
give it away?
Or his face which floated
by the kitchen door
with an enigmatic smile,
with an acrobatic smile?
He leaned on the table
and smoked a cigarette.

I'd like to put a lovely cast on it,
but there was that ugly smile, flat and frightened,
like a chastened child.
Do birds fly out of that,
Robert Creeley?

WHEN I WAS GAIL DUESENBERY; OR HOW I CAME TO WRITE *THE MARK*

Beginning

March 1960. I have just turned 21. I get off the Greyhound Bus in San Francisco wearing a black mohair coat from B. Forman's in Rochester and clunky brown shoes. I am an Ivy League drop-out, an East Coast intellectual wannabee. I am going to marry Walter Dusenbery.

I have dropped out of Cornell in the spring of 1959 and moved down to New York to "be a writer"—whatever that means. To me, it means being a Europe-focused intellectual with roots in academia.

As Gail Evelyn Sherrell, I have blazed to phenomenal academic success at Cornell (this early success becoming another source of subsequent identity problems), thanks to dexamyls which I start using fall semester 1958 to lose weight. They are very effective for focused late night study at Cornell. I also suffer from debilitating shyness and extreme social panic attacks.

Growing up in Webster, NY, I read the short stories of Guy de Maupassant, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, George Viereck's *My First Thousand Years*; *Magic Casements*. *Forever Amber*. *Gone with the Wind*. Countless book club novels on my stepmother's shelves, bestsellers from Reader's Digest Condensed Books. I win first prize in a United Nations essay contest. The prize is a week at a Quaker youth camp in the Catskills. Frizzy-haired people, dark-skinned people, Jews, guitar players, old pacifists teach me to Speak Truth to Power, how to pronounce apartheid ("apart-hate"). A bookworm with uncontrollable hair—a misfit at Webster High School—fits in easily at the Quaker youth camp.

At Cornell I wait table in Clara Dickson Hall and Balch Hall to earn my board and attend Quaker meetings. The summer after my sophomore year I join a Quaker youth group, "Interns in Industry" in Chicago. We will spread the Quaker message of non-violence and the inner light into factories and industrial sites. I panic at the co-ed living arrangements at Hull House. Boys and girls share the same bunkroom. Boys stand around in underwear. When they talk to me, my face shakes. I rent a separate room at Hull House and find a job typing contracts for Brink's Armored Car Company. My junior year at Cornell, the tuition increases 300%. My scholarships no longer cover it, so I take out a loan.

Music is important. I teach myself "Slaughter on Tenth Avenue" and *Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto in A Minor*, using the practice rooms in the Music Building. I play the grand piano in the living room in Balch Hall. Tom Pynchon's girlfriend lives at Balch Hall. He sits on a sofa waiting for her, nodding approvingly at my thundering. I slip into Goldwyn Smith Hall to

play the big concert grand in the darkened auditorium. Vladimir Nabokov lectures here and sometimes arrives early—always with his wife—and offers words of encouragement.

I read Thoreau, Emerson, the Transcendentalists, Madame Blavatsky, Yeats, Robert Frost, T. S. Eliot, Wallace Stevens, W. H. Auden. Most important is D. H. Lawrence. I am certain I am a writer, although I have no clear path as to what I want to write. I write everything—poems, short stories. Tom Pynchon and Dick Farina are the stars in my fall 1958 writing seminar. I start a novel about an intense young man, Bernie, who plays the piano, a friend, Vincent (based on my Quaker friend, Dick Taylor), and a woman, Marian, who is alternately me and Miriam from *Sons and Lovers*. Of course I am also Bernie which complicates the plot line.

I have my first real love affair in the spring of 1959. Cornell does not allow women students to spend nights away from the dormitories. I withdraw from Cornell, move to an apartment on Mitchell Street, and type fast and furiously, listening to Chopin and Mozart's *Don Giovanni* on a cheap record player. The love affair further complicates the novel, as the Vincent character morphs into an individual more like my new lover, George Fletcher. I am accepted into a summer program at Oxford University in England. Deborah Heller's parents drive us down to New York City. Our plan is to take Icelandic Airlines to Europe. I find I am pregnant.

I argue with my lover over long-distance telephone, Manhattan to Los Angeles. I call him from subway stations, putting in the quarter to initiate the call. We talk and talk and talk. "How do I know it's mine?" he asks in one brutal conversation. "What about my career?" he asks, so plaintively, "Can *you* see yourself as a faculty wife?" When I hang up, the operator calls back. I owe a lot of money. The ringing phone is drowned out by the screech of the arriving subway cars and I bound back up the stairs to the street. In late June, a Creole gynecologist in Brooklyn performs a \$150 abortion.

That summer I sublet an apartment from an aging opera singer at 302 East 27th Street, just off Second Avenue. My plans to study at Oxford University are off. I have no money except the refunded fees from Oxford. I eat stale pancake mix, found in the opera singer's cupboard, powdered milk, & water. I hunt for a job. With my untamed hair, homemade black dress, sneakers, I am absolutely *not right* for Harry Abrams' upscale art publishing office. George sends a check for \$75--and I have my hair straightened. I buy a cheap Stella guitar at a pawn shop and learn E-minor, E-major, G, C, D. I work on my novel and on poems which I send out to the Hudson Review, the New Yorker, the Partisan Review. My refuge is the 5-cent ferry ride to Staten Island. The wind blows off the harbor, I leave the oily grime of lower Manhattan. The Statue of Liberty at the mouth of the Hudson seems to be a beacon of--hope? some promise for the future? for *my* future? I eat a cheap New York pretzel. The images haunt me for many years as in

this poem from in *The Bhangra Dance* 1970.

HORN-GIRL

To swing on into it, to write, to say something of the seagulls against
the

Manhattan skyline,
the cold waves in the harbor, orange peels, bananas and burned-out
cigarettes,

rising and falling, in the waves, the oil slick on the water,
the East River, the hospitals,
but above all this,

HORN-GIRL

part Negro, part white,

with a star-spangled banner
brown eyes twinkling like postage stamps.

“And I ain’t even high yet.” There’s a phone call coming through
from the

higher ups.

Admiring the play of wind, O Diogenes,
sitting in a bathtub,
searcher. searcher. Can it be admitted
that we seek?

The learning process
has a 4-D lattice shape,

can we admit that we desire it?

In mid-August Oliver St. John Kraus of Cambridge University Press calls offering me a job, managing its Tenth Anniversary Warehouse Sale. He is impressed I can spell “Caesar”—getting the “a” before the “e.” The pay is \$200/month. A friend from Cornell, Sonja Frankel, tells me about a rent-controlled studio at 521 East Fifth Street Apt. 1-C. The rent is \$41.25/month. There is a small stove and refrigerator; an alcove serves for a bedroom. I hang a bedspread with yellow, red and green sunflowers on the alcove to hide the mattress on the floor. A plywood door on two sawhorses becomes a desk. With a new job, a new apartment, and a reliable income, I am ready for New York.

My Cornell friends recommend a German tome by Jakob Wassermann, *The World’s Illusion*. Thanks to the character Japhy Ryder in Jack Kerouac’s *Dharma Bums*, Gary Snyder’s poems are popular. I buy *Riprap* and *Myths and Texts*. I am also reading Robert Frost, T. S. Eliot, Wallace Stevens, Hemingway. I continue sending poems and short stories off, using the name G. E. Sherrell. The rejection slips pile up.

In October 1959 two Californians move in down the hall. Twenty-year-old Walter Dusenbery has completed his first voyage to Japan in the Merchant Marine. He has come to New York to study modern dance. Jim Magnuson

is a twenty-seven-year-old painter who will study art. I introduce Walter to the joys of the 5-cent Staten Island Ferry. He buys a membership at the Museum of Modern Art and gives me a spousal membership card made out to "Mrs. Walter Dusenbery." Walter was in the Berkeley High School class of 1957 with Carol Moscrip, Luis Garcia, Martin Singer, Belle Randall. Walter has also trained with the San Francisco Ballet. He is more knowledgeable than I am about avant-garde art. Walter visits Stephen Crane's home in Brooklyn; soon the newcomer is telling *me* about New York City. I quit Cambridge University Press in early December to explore New York with him.

In January Walter ships out again as an ordinary seaman. He will return in April. We will get married in upstate New York, then move to California. I take a halftime job as the night desk clerk at Cooper Union Library \$1 an hour. It is hard to live on \$20/week from Cooper Union. When I turn 21 on March 9, I inherit \$3000 from my mother. I turn my apartment over to Ruth and Kendall Allphin, pack my books in boxes, and go upstate to collect my inheritance. Thus it is that on March 14 after 4 nights on a Greyhound bus, I come stumbling off into the brilliant sunshine of San Francisco in the spring. Walter is there to meet me.

Berkeley 1960-1964

We rent a basement apartment at 2520 California Street at Dwight Way for \$55/month. Walter's Aunt Catherine (McIlrath) gives me a little outfit from Joseph Magnin—a plaid blouse with a Peter Pan collar, beige poplin skirt. I detest this preppy "good girl" look but it is successful at the UC Berkeley interview. I am offered a fulltime job in the Catalog Department at UC Library as a Senior Typist-Clerk making \$325/month.

California is a whole new world. Telegraph Avenue is a frequent destination, with its leafy trees and interesting stores. We see movies at the Cinema Guild and Studio, have espressos at the Mediterranean, and hunt for used books in Creed's on the corner of Telegraph and Dwight. The uncle of a friend of Walter's owns the Continental Art Store. He sells brass Buddhas, six-armed Shivas, tasteful art objects. A Lesbian sandal maker, Thalia, on Telegraph makes my first pair of sandals. We drive across the Bay Bridge to see foreign films at the Surf Theatre in the Sunset District. Of the \$3000 inheritance, \$900 is left. Most paid off the student loan from Cornell. Walter takes me to an stringed instrument dealer on Telegraph Avenue in Oakland. I buy an old Washburn ladies' guitar with a rosewood body, mother-of-pearl inlay, and an ebony neck for \$100. Walter buys a Heathkit stereo kit and builds us a sound system.

Our friends are Frank and Maija English, Raymond Rice and Richard Hagelberger, both gay, Ralph and Judy Guertin. Walter scores pot—matchboxes for \$5 and lids for \$20—from Terry Kelly or his slight, scruffy, unwashed

friend, David. Sandra Allen works with me in the library and becomes our friend. There are excursions to Botts Ice Cream on College Avenue for pumpkin ice cream in the fall, to North Beach to look for beatniks at The Place or for famous writers in the basement of City Lights. On Broadway we find the Walter Keane posters of children and pets with enormous eyes.

My goal is to complete my degree at the University of California, to learn foreign languages and travel to Europe. I take German in summer school. But California yanks me in whole new ways. Europe is less important; Mexico and Asia more important. Zen Buddhism is important. Alan Watts, Gary Snyder, *Zen and the Art of Archery*. At Cornell I learned to examine a work, a book, a thesis, for its flaws. Where can it be criticized? Here it's the opposite—one tries to understand how a piece of art can work. Sunshine, versus depression. Optimism, versus negativity. There is light everywhere.

There is light, but there is also pot, peyote, LSD, and the little dexedrine.

Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger sing, "Can you sew me a fine cambric shirt, without a stitch of needlework?" inspiring me to sew a linen shirt for Walter by hand. I make a skirt out of a bedspread from India Imports on Telegraph, a black leotard top, Thalia's handmade sandals. On our new Heathkit stereo, we listen to the Brandenburg Concertos, Wanda Landowska's *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, medieval French songs. We visit Frank and Maija's Victorian cottage on Ward Street. Frank hangs a blue light bulb in a Japanese lantern and plays Thelonius Monk, Charlie Parker, Ali Akbar Khan. In August we drive Walter's old brown DeSoto to Olympic National Park and climb Bogachiel Peak. We spend the night in a fire look-out cabin and in the morning I make my way down a foggy meadow to fill our water bottles from a melting glacier. Tiny wildflowers glow through the mist. I am happy. I have never been in a more beautiful place. I am living the life Gary Snyder writes about in his poems.

We create a love closet in the California Street apartment, hanging the walls with Indian bedspreads, a mirror, a big fur pillow. We smoke an occasional joint in there and listen to Indian music. In the fall of 1960, Walter ships out again. I find I am pregnant. So much for the diaphragm. Walter returns but he is not prepared to support a family. We are both 21 years old. Someone tells me about a Japanese doctor in Seattle who does abortions.

In March 1961 Frank and Maija split up. Maija takes our apartment on California Street and we move to 1811-1/2 Ward Street.

One Friday night, July 29, 1961—the day of my General Botany field trip—Walter prepares green peyote "milkshakes." Walter, Arthur Kessner, Sandra Allen, Joel—round face, dark hair, stocky body—and myself partake. The back porch with its deep utility sink is the "vomitorium"; each person makes several pilgrimages to this essential location. Arthur writhes in a fetal position. The rubber tree casts eerie leaf-shape shadows in the living room as

Thelonius Monk plays the plangent, metallic single notes of the opening of Brilliant Corners. The next day we all drive up into Tilden Park and watch the sunset in our own personal beatitudes.

Although Walter and I have been “married” since March 1960, we are worried about the draft. Married men are less likely to be called up, but our marriage is not legal. On October 4, 1961, Reverend Masami Fujitani marries us at the Berkeley Buddhist Church with Jim Magnuson and Ruth Allphin as witnesses. Walter wears his homemade linen shirt; I make a Jackie Kennedy-type sheath dress of purple fabric from India Imports.

The Friday after Thanksgiving, November 24, 1961, we experiment with a second peyote trip. Walter grinds dried buttons and pours the powder into gelatin capsules. Sandra Allen and her new boyfriend, Walter and I ingest several capsules at a house in San Francisco. We go out to San Francisco’s Ocean Beach, across from Playland, down the hill from the Cliff House and Sutro’s Baths. We gaze at the stormy whitecaps under the darkening night sky. Sandra announces she will cross this Pacific Ocean and find out what is on the other side. We end up at a house in Oakland with a grand piano. Sandra does an astounding, electrifying performance of Rachmaninoff from memory.

Three days later I walk home around 9PM. Someone runs up behind me and drags me into the bushes. Recalling the anti-HUAC demonstrators as the Chronicle photographed them, being dragged down the steps of San Francisco’s City Hall, their passive resistance, I go limp. The man takes his hand off my mouth; I scream. He jumps up. I chase him, but he runs fast with long loping steps. I am convinced someone wants to kill me. I hang bedspreads, sheets, over all the windows on Ward Street. A few nights later Walter and I have an argument. Walter hits me and pulls my hair. I rush out of the house and seek refuge next door. Our neighbors are black. Faced with a hysterical white woman in their living room at 1AM, they call the police who take me to Highland Hospital in Oakland. The week I spend there is frightening, bizarre, scary.

In January 1962 I leave Walter and move into a loft above Fraser’s furniture store at 2409 Telegraph Avenue. I enter UC Berkeley as an English major, taking English 100 with Thom Gunn, Chaucer from Charles Muscatine. Mary Haydn Webb, whom I’ve known from Cornell, is Muscatine’s reader. She grades hard. “What about *tone*?” she writes. “So what *about* tone,” I think to myself. I support myself with a halftime job at the Space Sciences Laboratory located in an old brown-shingle building on North Campus. During coffee breaks at the Northside on Hearst, I memorize Garcia Lorca’s “*Empieza el lloro de la guitarra*,” written in large handscript on the back wall. Evenings I study at the Mediterranean. I teach myself to smoke Black Sobranie cigarettes with the gold tips. I read Jean-Paul Sartre’s *Nausea*. Djuna Barnes’ *Nightwood*. I hope I look “interesting.” Although I think of myself as a writer, I do not actually write anything but term papers. I am pleased when Thom

Gunn says my term paper on *To The Lighthouse* demonstrates “a continuous luminous intelligence.”

June 1962 Walter and I reconcile and move into a second-floor flat on Wheeler Street. During the summer I take Intermediate German, Stanley Fish’s course in Milton, continue halftime at Space Sciences. Walter studies with Marguerite Wildenhain at Pond Farm Pottery up in Guerneville. He is Marguerite’s star student. Our friends are Ruth Elcan, Marty Wenglinsky, Jim Magnuson, Hank Sultan. We have play readings—*The Balcony*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Sandra Allen leaves to wait table at Grossinger’s in the Catskills.

In the fall I take my old job back at the UC Library. I take Shakespeare with Stephen Orgel, and Contemporary Authors with Mark Schorer. The contemporary author is D. H. Lawrence. Mark Schorer says of my term paper: “This is the best, the most intelligent, essay on *Kangaroo* that I have ever read.” I listen over and over to Brahms’s 4th Symphony. It seems to promise something, while telling of something else that has already happened. Sandra herself stops through in December. She is catching a tramp steamer from San Francisco to Singapore, embarking on the around-the-world tour she had foreseen a year earlier at Ocean Beach.

Spring semester 1963 things fall apart. I buy a hardbound copy of Tom Pynchon’s *V* at Sather Gate Book Store in March but have trouble getting through it. I take life drawing, Homer and Vergil, Theory of Knowledge, 19th Century French Literature, getting Cs in everything except French. I simply stop attending and I get an F. Despite this currently poor academic performance, I am nominated for a Woodrow Wilson and named an Alternate. I win the Elizabeth Mills Crothers Short Story Award for \$125 (“The Proposal”) and graduate with an AB on July 26, 1963. I use my prize money to study at Pond Farm Pottery. I am Marguerite’s least-favorite student. She uses my pots as examples of how not to make pottery.

We move to 2609 Fulton Street in August 1963. I paint the kitchen squash yellow and the bathroom citron green, following Richard Hagelberger’s suggestion to use Pratt-Lambert paints because these paints have the best pigments. We have an apricot tree and a plum tree in our backyard. I make apricot sauce, plum jam. I work fulltime at the library; Walter and I plan to go to Europe in the spring. Sandra sends letters from India, musk from Cairo. Our friends are Ralph and Judy Guertin, Bob Lakativa, Cliff Ghames, Raymond Rice, Frank English, Jim Magnuson, Ruth Allphin, Bobbi Gisella, Pat Surry. I browse the book racks at Cody’s on Telegraph, drink coffee at the Med and the Forum. Ernie Rimerman rents the front room from us.

In the fall Richard Hagelberger hosts a big party at his elegant Victorian on Haste Street above Telegraph. Walter introduces me to Luis Garcia, whom he knows from high school. Luis is tall, wiry, thin, nervous, neurasthenic,

sexy, with long hair and a handlebar mustache. He is back from a year in Chile and has just published *The Calculated Lion*. Luis is indeed lionized at this party. Richard Hagelberger introduces him to everyone. The rooms are packed with bodies. The house hums.

I get pregnant again and have a miscarriage in November. For the next three months, I don't work. From my journal: "December 1963-February 1964: did nothing for 2-3 months." I start rolling joints on my own. I read Alexandra David-Neel, Evans-Wentz, the *100,000 Songs of Milarepa*. I buy patchouli, frankincense, myrrh at the Nature's Herb Company at 281 Ellis Street in San Francisco. Sandra sends a pack of Tarot cards from Paris and writes Paris, the City of Light, is the most beautiful city she has ever seen. I get a letter from Richard Taylor, the Quaker I had been in love with at Cornell. He has returned from an American Friends Service Committee mission in Guatemala. He would like to see me. I answer in a lofty manner that I am no longer the person he remembers and see no need to meet. Cliff Ghames lives with us some of this time.

Walter finds a job at UC Extension. He gets a promotion. For some reason this means we cannot go to Europe in the spring. Walter becomes friends with Dick Baker. Dicks tells him about a group who meets in an old Victorian synagogue in San Francisco to practice Zen meditation. The Zen master is a Reverend Suzuki. Not "D. T. Suzuki" who has made Zen so popular, but "Shunryo Suzuki" who teaches Soto Zen, not Rinzai Zen which Gary Snyder practices. I am disappointed. Soto Zen seems a lesser Zen, but we start sitting zazen in San Francisco mornings at 5:30AM.

Spring 1964 Walter takes a course from the painter, Bruce McGaw, at the California College of Arts and Crafts. Bruce introduces us to Michael McClure who also teaches there. Standing up in Cody's Bookstore, I read Stan Persky's Open Space Magazine with poems by Lew Welch, Philip Whalen, Robert Duncan, Gary Snyder. Gary Snyder returns from eight years in Japan and gives a poetry reading on campus in May 1964. It is the most exciting event I have ever attended. I am blown away with the power of his voice, his vowels.

During the fall 1964 I assign myself writing exercises. I am also writing poetry. Meanwhile the Free Speech Movement rattles the UC campus. Mario Savio shouts on top of a police car in Sproul Plaza; students jam the steps in a massive sit-down strike. It is electrifying to be on campus. I am working fulltime at the library. I know I am on the side of the students.

It has been over two years since I experimented with psychedelics, but Frank English is taking LSD and, in his charismatic way, convinces us it is much safer than peyote, with all those unknown aldehydes. At Thanksgiving Walter and I take LSD and visit the potter, Jack Sears, at his hillside cave studio in Calistoga. We meet Gordon Beam. Frank English and his new girlfriend,

Meredith Redmond Moss, come with us. The stars explode in the black Napa Valley sky. Meredith points out the constellation of Orion, and Cassiopeia. I see a message flashing in the universe, "EAT, OR BE EATEN." I have powerful flashbacks of feeling threatened by Walter or the unnamed "murderer" from two years earlier. I commit myself to Napa Hospital.

[From the July 5, 1965 journal looking back at the past year]: Okay. LSD in the winter, but that cracked things open, made them more fluid and loose-running and it led to poetry which was clearly and unmistakably the best thing I had come to do for five or six years. Before then, the terrible fall, with those terrible arguments with Sandra and Raymond; and the summer, during which I had been very very high, some kind of sun goddess I fancied myself, always lying in the sun, absorbing up the sun, drinking it in, turning the same color as it, craving it as being more-than-love. Reading the Tibetan books, introduction to the Zen Center, first introductions to San Francisco poetry via Bruce McGaw—which takes us back to Gary Snyder's reading in May, that bright sparkly starry dark night in which Walter and Bob Lakativa and Judy and I walked up to that happy poetry reading, which turned me on much (I was turned on so much already that evening, feeling that I was pretty and very very high and very very happy to be anticipating seeing the real Snyder whose poems I had so long lived in; and then the reading and the person were all better than I had anticipated, soberer, a kind of plain joy, which I hadn't anticipated, closer to the ground; but then with that poem to the great magic city of San Francisco, and Snyder adding, "It is magic, you know!" I really began to find my eyes open! That Snyder really did see and believe in the magic, the way no English professor or even Thom Gunn seemed to. No one since John Senior had seemed so much *alive* to me!

I am aware that my life bores me. I want more.

Becoming a Poet 1965

In January 1965 I enroll in the graduate program in English at San Francisco State with the vague idea of getting a teaching credential—but the courses in the English Department are dull as dust. My adviser suggests I try English 204 Advanced Poetry, given by Robert Duncan. The class is crowded. Robert Duncan has an odd gaze. His eyes do not track together. He is nonetheless amazing—all thoughts of the teaching credential fly out the window. He tells us to read Rilke's *Letters to a Young Poet*, then Lorca, Cocteau, Neruda, Rimbaud, Breton. And we should make a list of the people we wish we'd never read at all! We are to submit 1-3 poems a week to him. I take notes in a small, cramped handwriting in an old flexible black 3-ring binder.

Robert talks about “learning how to play the language.” He suggests we play with vowel sounds, patterns, stress patterns. Work on a list of all the possible vowel sounds. Work around in the sounds. Recognize the poem form when you start writing-but do not force the poem into a form.

Read Ezra Pound’s *ABC of Reading*, Section 1. Take notes. Analyze what you feel goes into the music of a poem. Add the skin—the outrageous. Practice with blocks of words—let the sounds dominate; make lists. Also with dreams: use dream tones, dream symbols. Robert speaks of “bardic qualities”—how well a poem is remembered, and how well it is projected. He mentions “the Vates” or the fates, as the god-voice; inspired. Poetics, from the Greek “to make,” means “the made poem.” Use variable spelling, or misspellings. How does that change what’s going on in the poem? Measurements in poetry are relations of volume & length; proportions.

Go over your poems looking for concrete objects realized in your poems. Look at the world your poem furnishes--what do you put in it? Immerse yourself in the world that appears in your poems. Become more familiar with it. How far can it become real? If you keep writing about saints and angels, find out what or who they are.

Robert’s reading list: Dante. Charles Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice*; Pound’s *The Spirit of Romance*; *De Vulgari Eloquentia*; St. John Perse, *Éloges*; Corbin (Bollingen) Avicenna; Gwendolyn Bays, *The Orphic Vision: Seer Poets from Novalis to Rimbaud*. He recommends *The Golden Lotus*; *Eros Denied* (Grove Press); *La Vita Nuova* in either Italian or English; Coomaraswamy, *Transformation of Nature into Art* (Dover Press); Thomas Merten, *Child Bomb*.

Meanwhile Gary Snyder is giving his own poetry seminar at UC Berkeley. Robert Duncan suggests I sit in on that. I meet Lowell Levant, Eileen Adams, Gene Fowler, Hilary Ayer.

Saturday, February 27, 1965: Snyder’s at the center. I think about those fantastically beautiful poems of his youth—”But deathless are those who have fed/ At the breasts of the Mother of the Universe” and the one about the plum blossoms falling/ The whole world drifting north . . . Where did that voice come from? At his worst, slightly radio announcerish. Low and rotund with the full liquid syllables, a hushed gurgling waterfall, sometimes full volume, constantly being turned up and turned down . . . Reading the Cantos, they’re very closely sounded, and the images come hard & fast on top of the other. Sometimes pretty showy, hard to read, hard to follow—quite a take-off from Homer, who used the repeat

and had sonority working for him. Lots of humor, self-laughing, in the Cantos. A very groovy box within the box scene. Gives insight into Snyder's intellectual techniques. Long dream about Gary Snyder teaching in a poetry camp. Concludes with:

“We love what we desire from afar,
without wanting to eat it.”

Can't trust myself to open my mouth . . . when I open my mouth: hoots, scratches, stick-in-the-throats, a loud fuzzy voice; resonant—over-resonant, but sloppy & loose, with lisped s's and garbled words run into each other. My thought takes a turn and yanks the sentence after it. Ask Snyder how he learned that control of his voice.

I struggle with the assignments in Duncan's seminar.

Monday, March 8, 1965: I thought first to myself that I was not a poet. I was not a poet because I could not write poetry for Duncan's class and could not bring myself to read poetry in Snyder's class. I was not a poet because I felt the whole weight of five years between myself (a “do-nothing”) and those kids in the class. I was not a poet because my poems were not good. My poems were not good because I could not make my mind concentrate. My mind was so unused to concentrating or else so naturally incapable of it, that when it occasionally overcame its characteristic impulsiveness and did actually concentrate, it overrated the importance of the thing it was concentrating on. In short, my mind lacked sweep, it lacked a large, closely-concentrated-upon, overall view of things.

But was it necessary to be a poet? In addition to the foregoing, I was not a poet because I did not read poetry. Occasionally I would turn to it for concentration and consolation. Apart from these times when I had been pushed by events outside myself into a kind of desperation and solitude, I did not consult with poetry. Did I want to read more poetry? I was not able to bring myself to it. I did not like poetry. How about the whole body of the English language, did I want to become more familiar with it? No, I found I did not like poetry, any poetry. What could it mean then to think of one's self as a “poet,” to want to write “poetry”?

Well, I felt that left to my own devices, I saw strange lights in things, strange relations and meanings; and these absorbed me, held all of my attention; and occasionally my involvement with these lights and meanings burst all bounds—and then I had to write a “poem” or write something.

Duncan said, Why in god's name should anyone who wanted to be a poet or thought of himself as a poet, want to have anything to do with a "poetry workshop"! He snorted with contempt! Well, of course. Of course I can't do assignments. That is the most antithetical scene possible to the one in which I actually see my lights and hear my voices.

There is something I expect of myself which at the same time I do not want to do. That is, I want to be a "little somebody," and I am upset with my life because it has not made me a little somebody ... But at the same time I dislike doing all the things which might some day make me a little somebody. I dislike them morally, and because I am lazy. But even if I could see the contradiction between being a poet (existing in a state of mind in which I see lights and meanings) and being a little somebody, I would still have to take steps against my laziness.

Robert Duncan takes the occult very seriously and uses it in his poems. He may also believe in it. The following notes give some sense of what Duncan had to teach about the occult.

Monday, March 15, 1965:

O great themes of life & death
—does it make your hair stand on end?
god of the waxing year; god of the waning year
the weird or rival or prince of the air
the tall spectre, lean, dark-faced
who tries to drag the dreamer out of the window
sow, mare, bitch,
vixen, she-ass, weasel, serpent, owl,
tigress, mermaid, or loathsome hag

O great survivors
deathly pale, with lips red as
rune berries; and startlingly blue eyes
mother, birds, & layer-out → 8-fold goddess
the ancient power of fright and lust
when owls hoot, trees sway together;
a peal of bells in frosty weather

Friday, April 2, 1965: Meditating on Rilke's poems pulls me together. There are layers and layers of life—some lie very near the top, and do not reach down into anything. One must not connect to these layers: they are the place at which all I can write are allusions to "flotsam and jetsam" and "streaming." There are other depths—spaces—which can be inhabited by the mind; and must be. Rilke opens these up, he must have spent most of his time in those spaces.

Even thinking about the flotsam layers is value-less. Any attempt to deal with those layers is a mistake: they seize control of your mind, especially control of the unpracticed, immature mind. Better to be a bum like Jack Spicer, with a pure, clear, independent mind, than a librarian.

Tuesday, April 6, 1965: “Aren’t they ready, my finished poems? Shouldn’t I just send them off and wait?”

Thursday April 15, 1965: A way of going about things which is honest, careful and serious—very far-seeing. This is a shaky period I am passing through, working fulltime, and utmost “dedication to perfect self-hood” is required. I think I can write good poetry, after a lot of training and meditation and work. If I listen to Duncan now, he will probably tell me my poetry is terrible or some such thing.

Gordon Beam has become a constant presence in our household. He and Walter are creating raku pottery—the hand-formed cups used in the Japanese tea ceremony. By April I have fallen in love with Gordon. I do not share this realization with Walter who is making plans to ship out again. I go with Walter as he makes his ship calls and skip Duncan’s class. Walter hits me for reasons not clear. Undated May entry: “... all topsy-turvy with the imminent always imminent departure of Walter.” Walter ships out the first week of May 1965 for six or eight weeks.

Wednesday, May 5, 1965: I’m tired, stoned; I’ve been writing a lot of bad verse lately. Why so weak and sloppy? Because verse is true experience—requires a real honesty of mind.

The coolness born of some pain,
some knowledge which had cut to the bone,
about the non-existence of the I,
then freed them for their greater work—
their goal was no longer confirmation of their “picture” of
themselves,
but some highly abstract and complete design
which their movements made.

Undated: Duncan praised the poem today I had written solely for Gordon.

To my surprise Robert Duncan likes my poems and asks my permission to send them to Poetry (Chicago). Gary holds a party for his class on Saturday June 12th out at Stimson Beach on Highway 1 past the grocery store and “Dall’s pines.” “Be there by 6PM.” I take Gordon Beam to this party.

When Walter returns, I move out of 2609 Fulton Street. I rent an apartment—two rooms separated by a sliding door—somewhere in Berkeley. I have no record of the address.

Sunday, June 27, 1965: The Magicians are Here, and so are the Worldly Schemers, the Sharks and Fins of Poetry: Toad, Pig, Muddled Mr. Worldly-Otherworldly ... It takes me away from poetry, to see the politics and intrigue. And Walter is fascinated with it—even more than he is with me! The Magicians are Here! The Magicians are Here! Remember that last cell in the maze? The days following that remarkable noon when I read Gary's description of how to do it and bought Duncan's *Opening of the Field*; and bought and saw what there was in *Roots and Branches*: The development, in another personality, of my *own* poems, the maze, the mother, the *madrone* mother, incredible. . .

Dick Baker is organizing the Berkeley Poetry Conference with Robert Duncan, Tom Parkinson, and Donald Allen and arranges for me to receive the Grove Press Scholarship. This is a "work" scholarship; I sit at the door of California Hall and collect registrations in exchange for tuition. The first week is very intense. Robert Duncan tells us:

There are things which grow and produce, and lead into a life in the poem. You can't go out into a realm of ideas you don't feel. You can't not be with it yourself, and then ask your audience to be with it in your place. There are the long gathering periods you must go through, *before things come up*. Waiting to begin is boring as hell. You have to take the poem as it is. Poems are not simply statements of feeling, they must evolve toward their own form. If a word is bringing up other words, while you're working, then I'd say the word is operating. Look for the elements that begin to produce other elements in the poem. Harmonies and immediacies emerge from the material. When I write a poem, I like to know what it says. I'd like to know what *I* am saying. It's a dilemma. What *am* I saying, as I am writing it?

If you don't feel it, you won't be able to work at your best. When you don't work your best, you're bored. Poems are a feeling-experience of *language*. Let's keep the experiences where they are—not all experiences occur in language. You think, I've had this experience—why can't I write a poem? Well, it wasn't a feeling-experience of *language*. Do not deny the poem you have written—you put your total self into the fascination of what is happening--you put yourself completely in the hands of god.

Raymond Radiguet said: "You can never do it any better than you do it." I could destroy Heavenly City, Earthly City, which makes

me uncomfortable, but I keep the uncomfortableness. Yes, I wrote that. Charles Olson wrote in 1952, “Duncan is always bigger or littler than he is.” I was dismayed. “Why can’t I be the *size* that I am?” Then I realized, “Well—I just better explore *the way I am* and *be* bigger and littler.” Proust had a friend who said, Your sentences are too long. A professor of Gertrude Stein’s told her, You better learn how to punctuate. Stuart Perkoff: “Man, if your sound is a drone, *then drone!*”

Take a person with you, as Dante took Vergil. Counterpoint is so fascinating. One form can haunt another. Alfred North Whitehead believed behind the universe is a dream universe. Paris and London consist of layers of dreams of cities. Magicians sell maps showing how to cast spells in these cities.

When I write a poem, I wait for a certain body-tone to start. *I avoid when I have a muddled mind.* Little shadows, little secrets—not things that I know, that you don’t know, but things about myself which I don’t know. Put down or avoid anything which takes you away from your own activity. He says, I’m not particularly interested in health. If health were a good thing, then novels would have to take care to always keep their characters healthy. But they’re always having diseases and accidents and being shoved under choo-choo trains.

Take what you need from other writers. I take on the clothes, the words, of Gertrude Stein, to see how they fit, because I love her & wants to be close to what I love. If the coat fits, put it on; if it doesn’t fit, no amount of care will make it work.

My notes from Gary Snyder’s seminar on July 12, 1965:

Focus out over the mountain peaks, and in on the grain in granite. Take vows of silence (“Mouna”). Form is not solid; form is all there is. The universe is like a fountain; when the flow stops, there is no fountain. What is long equals what is short. If you change the scheme, what was long is short. The universe is energy, in constant motion; & it was not created in time; it is created NOW. This sense of *the NOW* is the thing that has to be activated. “Very little has to be studied if the NOW is understood.” In the west the creation of the universe is a chore; it tires God to do it—he has to rest afterward. Shiva creates the universe and it is fun; he’s simply dancing—he’s not creating it for a purpose. A poet must be thoroughly acquainted with all of literature and literary theories—from classical Greek theories all the way up to the latest little periodical.

You must be in a state of complete oneness with what you’re doing

at the time. The trouble is, doing more than one thing at one time-- this is the muddle and the indigestion. "You don't have to know the truth to be a good poet; you don't even have to be a good person. But poetry makes contact with the cool, straight & accurate level of mind; it happens despite the personality & beliefs of the man who writes it." "I don't try to make a distinction anymore between being wise and being silly; the mystical state is the outcome of experience—you don't always have to be at a high peak of intensity, on the edge of a WOW—you can be down, and stupid, and that's okay, too. It really used to bother me if several months went by without writing poetry, but now I just say, the ground is foul; it will come up later." Work as hard as hell *but don't strain for it* and it will fall into your hand when it is ripe. You don't learn anything except by taking risks. All you can do is fulfill your Karma.

Don't strain for abstract individualism, for possibilities that are not your possibilities. You don't need a pleasing & teasing surface, if there's something going on beneath the surface. Project the images of the poem like a movie, in front of you, *see it*; & then put that into English. "The inferior man embellishes his mistakes"—Confucius. Abandon a lose early in the game.

The universe is an experience which is neither outer nor inner. *Mind* permeates everything. Consciousness is everywhere. hsin - chin "heart; mind" Where is it? A Japanese sumi wrestler walks from his belly. He slaps his belly. Put your mind in your belly. Stage fright—take 2 or 3 deep diaphragm breaths. A gathering is a con-spiracy, a gathering together is a "breathing together." Breath prosody is *belly prosody*, based on the way you breathe. A poet's style is the rhythm of his body. His mind is in his belly. Japanese & Chinese locate the center of consciousness in the BELLY. (Gary quotes Charles Olson, T. S. Eliot's poetry is all head poetry, exciting as chess or mathematics.)

SARASVATI is the lute-goddess. Goddess of poetry & music. Consort of Brahmin. VOICE = vocal cords; breath; throat. LANGUAGE = tongue & lips. VAC (goddess who is voice) is married to MANAS (mind/intellect) → the outcome is Dharma (truth). SOUND in the pure sense of reverberation. Base tone provided by the drone = *OM* the base sound of the universe AOM. Sanskrit poetry falls into 2 classes: each vowel sound: a name, a power, a potentiality, a color; an incantation - the Mantra - a sound used for its own magic. Influences for Gary are D. H. Lawrence, Chinese poetry, Robinson Jeffers, Whitman. Han Shan's *Cold Mountain* poems.

Meanwhile, with my “work” scholarship, I am shoved and hassled at the door. It is a mob scene every morning. People are angry that they should have to pay to attend the conference. They give me a hard time for demanding to see their registrations. I wave in my friends from Gary’s seminar—Gene Fowler, Hilary Ayer—and finally stop asking to see any registrations. Not long after this Robert Creeley and Robert Duncan announce the Berkeley Poetry Conference is free.

I go to a party and hesitate at the door. Bobbie Creeley lifts her large leg, blocking the door so I can’t enter. She turns her head away from me. I insist, I’m not crashing, I’ve been invited. She drops her leg. I enter. My debilitating shyness kicks in. I don’t have a good time. Most evenings, exhausted, I go home to my “dowdy, Shakespearean” apartment. The conference is too intense. I eat, walk around Berkeley, smoke a jay, try to write down the lessons of the day.

Saturday, July 17, 1965: The poetry conference has thrown me into a muddle. Too much is happening. I just can’t accept it. I see all that is happening ... Allen Ginsberg and Robert Creeley, closely talking, whispered excitement of their joint magic, watching it work, fail to work, taking note, comparing notes. They are two great hooded magicians, in hooded pointed caps; *old* skin; time-bitten. When you look at the old, what scares you is the subtraction taken out by time; you see their death hooked through their flesh. Allen and Robert seem *kindly*. They are well ahead of me in the maze; but what I want to know is, what do they know? and can they teach it to me? in the lessons of their presence? Is it teachable? seeable? ...

Gary Snyder organizes a reading of poets from his class for the last day of the conference, Sunday, July 25, 1965—“Young Poets of the Bay Area.” This is my first reading. I wonder if I will be able to read my poems in California Hall auditorium. To combat my enormous shyness, I take a small amount of LSD and spend the afternoon in bed with Steve Worldie. Then I drive to Berkeley and give the reading. I am trembling with a sort of defiant sexual energy. The reading is a success.

Saturday, July 31, 1965: Tom Shiels grins in the sun, speaks softly, sun on his face and bare feet, dirty toenails. “Sensei sent Steve home. Sent me over to see how he was doing. You know, he’s been bum-tripping the past three or four days.” Sesshin all day today, Tom Shiels says, “You ought to make it over.” He also tells me, very politely, Jim Thurber told him I was a real good poetess.

1360 Fell Street San Francisco

Pulled by “the goddess San Francisco,” at the beginning of August I move across the Bay to 1360 Fell Street. Although I’ve saved some money to go to Paris, those savings are spent by the end of August.

Who is sleeping with whom? Everyone is sleeping with everybody. The sexual currents flow through, in and around Berkeley, San Francisco, and the Bay Area. Women have disconcerting new freedoms. Men have always been expected to sow their wild oats. Since 1961 birth control pills have been available. Now women can sow their own wild oats, and sow their wild rye, their wild wheat, and their amaranth as well.

That summer I sleep with several more people. In January 1965 I had slept with only three men. By December 1965 that record is increased by quite a number. This is a time of “free love.” Men say of women who will not sleep with them, “She’s frigid.” “She’s inhibited.” “She’s up tight.” No hip woman wants to be frigid. Inhibited. Up tight. She wants to be flowing. Free.

In a poetry reading, Joanne Kyger explains why her marriage to Gary Snyder ended. “He was always telling me he wanted to try on other bodies for size.” Trying on bodies for size is a large part of the scene in 1965-1966.

In August I become friends with the poet Jim Thurber. Jim had been part of Gary’s seminar at Berkeley and he sits zazen at the Bush Street temple. Jim is always playing a harmonica or a flute. His friend, Doug Palmer, is Facino who runs around North Beach with a signboard: “I will write you a poem.” Jim is Flambeau, Facino’s sidekick. Jim lives in a few blocks away in “the Spaceship” on Golden Gate Avenue. His roommates are Silas Hoadley, who is active in Zen Center. Tom Shiels. Duane and Nia.

Jim introduces me to Norman Stubbs, the manager of an old Victorian apartment building at 1360 Fell Street. There is a vacancy on the first floor of 1360 Fell Street—Room No. 5. It is a single room for \$35/month with a shared bathroom down the hall. I take it.

Jim has just written his “Moon Poems.” Everyone is talking about them. They get published in Stephen Mindel’s Cow Magazine. I also have a poem in Cow. Jim introduces me to Diane Moran. Diane’s thick blonde hair falls down to her waist. The relationship between Jim and Diane is on-again, off-again.

Gary Snyder invites me to visit him at his apartment in North Beach, to talk about poetry, or perhaps to talk about my poems. Gary serves tea. We haven’t talked very long, before the doorbell rings, and it is Allen Ginsberg, dropping by. Allen says there is a lot of energy left over from the Berkeley Poetry Conference, and he is interested in staying on in the Bay Area longer—

maybe a couple of months. These days he is driving around in a VW bus with Peter Orlovsky, taking LSD and dictating into a handheld mike. I mention an apartment for rent where I am living. The rent is low. I am surprised that Allen is interested. He asks, how could he see it? I tell him I'm driving back there—we can go look at it right now. I'll give him a ride over in my VW bug. Norman Stubbs shows him the apartment which consists of two rooms on the first floor, on the west side of the hallway. The rent is maybe \$55/month. Allen rents it on the spot, but he has another commitment, and will return in September. Allen pays him all the rent then and there—two or three months rent—to hold it.

Friday, August 13, 1965. . . . One weekday hot afternoon in Foster's downtown on Geary Street near Market, waiting for an appointment with the Legal Aid Society, I wrote and wrote in my Green Street Book about Robert Creeley's message. I felt tingly, all alive; much was happening . . . I dreamed of Mary Haydn Webb--remembering old Gertrude Atherton's modern dance recital, Cornell, in November or December 1957; and at that concert all my friends were there--my soul friends, since I knew none of them except by look: Tom Pynchon, John Senior, Richard Denner—always the dark haunted look, lean wraiths, with the reddish black beards and damp thick hair . . . In the dream, I passed her and we did not speak and then I turned back and called, Mary! Let me tell you some good news, I've had a poem published! And she was more than scornful, saying, Is that all? I've had so many published, we all have, those little magazines take anything.

I work on my poems, but I spend a lot of time smoking grass, taking LSD, and small amounts of amphetamine. I live on unemployment and temporary jobs through agencies like Kelly Girls and Olsten's. I spend time in the Panhandle of Golden Gate Park. It is summer, and the eucalyptus trees sway back and forth, very magically. I can almost understand what the birds are saying. It is clear they talk to one another about human activity in the Panhandle—and about me. I live only a few blocks from the Fillmore. Young black men roam through the Haight. They are tense, strong, possibly angry. I teach myself not to be scared of them. I look into bloodshot eyes with yellowed corneas without flinching. I smoke Marlboros because they are cheap. I also smoke Camels because Camels are cool, more 40s, more beatnik. Sometimes I treat myself to a pack of black Sobranies with the gold tips.

In September Apartment No. 9 on the north side of the second floor opens up, with a stove and a refrigerator. I take it. Pat Marks takes Room No. 5 on the first floor. Barbara Schlosser lives in the apartment next door to mine; we share a bathroom. Jaime Leopold has a room on the second floor on the south side. I spend a lot of time with Jim Thurber, arguing about poetry.

[undated] The green sign flashed LAUNDRY at the bottom of the Downey Street hill. The green sign flashed its neon unnatural greenness into the cavernous innards of the black car. Three poets raced down the street shouting of Miller and Durrell. Two inhabitants passed them on Waller and looked up, leering with curiosity. It was 2:30 in the morning. Golden Gate panhandle was dark. Venus or was it Mercury and I held out for Jupiter was a big gold globe in the eastern sky. The moon was a big gold glove half-shrouded in clouds. Mike [Hannon] beat back and forth between his friends, growling, grabbing, hunched over, low, snarling.

Friday, October 1, 1965: When I came in the apartment, the phone rang, and it was the girl from Olsten's with a day job for me, for Monday and Tuesday. I had once had my fortune divined by the Grant Lewi method. According to his calculations, I was possessed of great intelligence, nobility of character, and unusual luck. Lately I have begun to let the luck work for me, let it take its own course. "Work as hard as hell, but don't strain for it, and it will fall into your lap when it is ripe." I see Gary's flat, grinning, faintly diabolical brown face with the squinted eyes, as he stood in full-diaphragm-breathing aplomb during the poetry conference, delivering this oracle.

I give a poetry reading at the Blue Unicorn, 1927 Hayes Street Allen and Peter Orlovsky move into Fell Street around the beginning of October and live there for two or three months.

On a Friday night, October 8, 1965, Luis Garcia reads at the Buzz Gallery at 1711 Buchanan Street in Japantown. Jim Wehlage—whom I've met in Gary's poetry seminar--invites me to the reading. I wear my black leather coat. I have just had my ears pierced. Jim Wehlage admires the aluminum studs in my ears. I look very Bauhaus, nouveau, in this black leather coat and aluminum earrings.

The reading begins. A cone of light flares on a thin, nervous poet sitting on a high stool. He has a sheaf of onionskin papers. He starts reading. His voice squawks, rants, whispers, shouts, murmurs. His sound is nasal, loud, cutting, unforgettable. The gallery is electrified. The house cheers. We stomp on the floor, we clap. He has to do an encore. This is Luis Garcia, literary lion, poet of the moment. Jim Thurber is at the Buzz Gallery. I can hear Jim's wild, chortling glee. "Oh, *man!* That's where it's *at*, man! Listen to those sounds he makes! His voice is a *saxophone!*" Luis Garcia becomes the new standard to which we all must live up. Lu can do a poetry reading almost as good as Allen Ginsberg ... Allen is sonorous and deep-voiced and all holy man. Lu is pure jazz—thin—intense—nasal squawk. In his own way, more hip.

Lu invites some of us to his mother's house at 1800 San Antonio Road off the Alameda in Berkeley. We will have a glass of wine, smoke some pot, discuss poetry. His mother and father are out of town. The house on San Antonio Road is large and handsome. A huge living room—almost a drawing room—looks out over the lights of the Berkeley flatlands, the black water, the twinkling Golden Gate Bridge. There is a grand piano in the living room. Oriental rugs. Framed prints on the walls. Two large sofas are upholstered in gray satin stripes; large chairs. His mother's house is immaculately clean—a commodious, capable, comfortable home. There is too much smoking, too much wine drinking, it is too late. Lu suggests we all crash at his mother's. He offers me a room with a single bed, a white chenille bedspread. Wallpaper with thin pink-and-white stripes, roses and green leaves intertwined. A bedside table, a lamp. This becomes my refuge for the next three or four days.

I do not meet Blanche Garcia, but I absorb her spirit. I adore her house; it is the house I want for myself. Large rooms; solid furniture. Ceilings of a good height. The kitchen substantial in the same way. The pots and pans used, with a few dents, but of good quality. A big gas stove; a wide sink with a window looking up a wet green hillside with sword ferns and camellias as Richard Denner shows up. I have seen Richard at the Berkeley Poetry Conference, a handsome outlaw poet, with a tall black Stetson hat. Richard is always coming and going. He and Luis have a thing, a connection, a way of talking to one another which implies great affection. Lu may call Richard a whore. Richard agrees. Richard will agree with anything that's said about him. It's clear they like each other. They read one another's poems, write poems on the spot, smoke cigarettes and joints. Someone provides "window-pane." Coltrane, Horace Silver, Sonny Rollins, Thelonius Monk—Lu plays a lot of jazz, very loud. The stereo equipment is high quality. Jim Wehlage stays a day or two, maybe Saturday, Sunday. He may have a job he has to return to. Richard Denner keeps arriving and leaving. His persona is intense, moody. He has damp white lily-petal skin, long black hair. He exudes an exotic, morose, romantic fascination.

Luis is aristocratic, lean. He holds himself like one of Picasso's acrobats, an elegant Saltimbanque. Lu is a Spanish nobleman of the old school. Not one of Christopher Colombo's rampaging conquistador thugs. I am in awe of Lu and a bit guarded with him. His humor is a knife, nasal, sarcastic, very hip. He knows everyone, has done everything. Nothing escapes the cutting edge of his wit.

Poetry is written nonstop. Lu uses Elbe Spring Binders No. 37—black snap binders—so his sheaf of onionskin poems can be sorted and resorted, shuffled, pages retrieved, eliminated, added, clamped shut. I obtain binders like this for my poems. Richard Denner is already using the black snap binders.

Lu is an enormous fan of Robert Creeley's short, spare lines. He is less in-

terested in Robert Duncan. Really not at all interested in Allen Ginsberg or Gary Snyder. Lu's own literary influences flow from the South American surrealists and magic realists. Nicanor Parra. Pablo Neruda.

Lu's room is on the third floor at the top of the house. Everyone gets a turn through that room to make it with Lu. Kay Okrand comes back from a hitchhiking trip across the United States. Lu has a phone call; I go up to the third floor, I hear Kay Okrand and Lu getting it on, uh-uh-uh-uh-UNH!

Lu sees Marianne Baskin on Telegraph Avenue a few days after the party. Marianne is as beautiful as an Italian actress. She looks like Sophia Loren. Lu says to her, "I have been looking for this face all my life." They get married within 48 hours of meeting. Marianne's father has given her a red MG convertible. They are a hot couple, with Lu driving the red MG, beautiful Marianne alongside him.

Monday, October 11, 1965: Sitting in the white room, reading the *Odyssey* and Sappho, and high on frankincense . . . Ezra Pound about William Carlos Williams, he was a foreigner in America and so he was happy just to observe her as one observes any phenomena, the flora and the fauna. He did not feel impelled to act when he saw things he didn't like. He ruminated and any anger he felt found its place in the poetry . . .

Friday, October 15, 1965. Here is a state I can record, because it is slightly messy and out-of-hand and characteristics—beautiful October clear day, bouffant, after the rain yesterday . . . The details of the table. Typewriter, typing paper on the hotplate, a jar of peanut butter, stubs of long brown cigarettes, a fucked-up address book, a clock, a transistor radio, a waterproof container of matches, a flat wallet, letters from the winter of 1963 from an old best friend, a box of pot seeds, can opener, bottle opener, green ballpoint pen, pencil, lid to a container (waterproof) for pot, a pocket-sized notebook with a red cover, written in with a red ballpoint pen, an emery board, another emery board, a box of incense, dozens of sheets of onionskin paper with my thought-turds all typed out impeccably, each typographical error beautiful erased and corrected . . . wish the same could be done to my mistakes in the other realms . . .

Toward the end of October, Walter moves into Apartment no. 9 with me. This is a period for us of ambivalence, reconciliations, separations, reconnections. Walter installs his small electric kiln for firing raku, mounting it on a few bricks so it will not set fire to the old wood Victorian structure. He creates raku pots—hand-formed and fired at a low temperature—earthenware, not stoneware.

At Halloween there is a huge party at 1360 Fell Street. Allen Ginsberg, Peter

Orlovsky, the Fugs come. The building both upstairs and downstairs is so crowded no one can move. At some point in the evening, the word comes down, "Allen is taking off his clothes." This is something that has to happen at any event involving Allen Ginsburg socially. Peter Orlovsky and Neal Cassady come to my door. They invite me to go somewhere with them. I am still subject to the "shaking face." Their total ease and hip banter make me freeze with pathological shyness. They frighten me; I disappoint them. They move on.

I move away from Fell Street for a month and hitchhike down to Santa Cruz with Harry Monroe. I give a poetry reading at The Barn in Santa Cruz.

Tuesday, November 16, 1965. Enlightenment in a dirty furnished apartment on Page Street . . . Dynasty tea, instant coffee, marijuana, and a good typewriter. I've got to see the whole world-picture with nothing but cigarettes, keys, an address book and Wheat Thins. I want to read in here—*The Scarlet A*, and Katharine Mansfield; Virginia Woolf; Gurdhieff. Start reading again. Creeley said finally he saw no difference between reading and writing

I haven't thought about writers lately, being so caught up with lovers. My lovers. It has a less glamorous ring than it used to . . .

Saturday, November 20, 1965. Jim and I are both writing novels. I want to write some stories. I want to read *The Scarlet A* and the American novelists. It's our background. And Camus. Finish *The Holy Sinner*.

Sunday, November 21, 1965. A good poet follows the exact changes of his own emotion and does not put the picture first. A bad poet, me, is in love with the picture, or the sound, or the image, or any superficially attractive device.

Friday, December 24, 1965. Last night at Ruth's three things stood out. The eggnog, which was perfect, yellow and creamy and not too sweet, spiked with liquor; and Reverend Suzuki in a brown wool robe, smiling in the kitchen, while the Spanish-looking girl with the tapestry skirt said idiotic things to him about needlework, talking in a kind of baby talk which she imagined was all Reverend Suzuki could understand; and Steve's startled, pleased cry: "Gail!" So I think he loves me. Was his date the funny girl, blonde, in the bunched World War II coat?

The questions teem out like a cloud, from each personality, his own view of things, with himself at the center. I tried to render that a long time ago, describing a little party at Fulton Street, with each of the thoughts of each of the people present. Virginia Woolf does that

perfectly in her novels: how the question in each mind brushes the questions in the other minds. Intersects, or fails to intersect.

In December I hitchhike alone up Highway 1, the coast highway, to Mendocino. This is reckless, but I am learning to overcome my extreme shyness. I talk to complete strangers because I have no choice. This poem from *The Mark* is about that beautiful day.

The wind blew through my hair,
I caught my own rides, I carried a colored string bag,
and when the Sausalito musicians stopped for
oysters, down below Nick's Cove,
I walked out on the pier with Judy the floozy
and Hal the saxophonist,
whose only comeback was a flat
"I'm sorry about that!"
The sun was setting over Tomales Bay, the boats rocked in
the water,
there was no one near, Hal smoked,
Judy dragged her feet, Hal made to
push her in,
the sun was grayish-gold, the hills were soft,
the pier was gray and ran back toward
the land,
the hills were gray and green, folded in shadows,
no birds, no sound, a fading light
on water.
It was as if a lyre,
who was a human being I had known,
sang inside for days and days,
curlicues of joy flashed out of me toward sun
and road,
tramping alone up the coast
highway.

A few poems of mine appear in Wild Dog #19 and #20 edited by Drew and Terry Wagnon. They are students of Ed Dorn's.

Meanwhile, the occult which Duncan has invoked so often is becoming a baleful influence. I may have a good mind, but my sometimes pathological shyness, the hospitalizations, indicate profound unconfidence. Magicians. Mazes. Murders. Spells. Curses. Are these just "in the air"? "In the times?" Or mostly in myself? I tell myself that these are images to be used in poems. Yet at times I veer in a strange direction, slip into strange currents.

The astrologer Gavin Arthur has an apartment on Buchanan in the same

building as the Buzz Gallery. Gavin Arthur does Walter's horoscope. Gavin sees three Grand Trines. This horoscope is so unusual in its scope, so majestic, so amazing, that Gavin Arthur doesn't even charge Walter. Gavin Arthur has never seen such an auspicious, such a magnificent horoscope.

With all this good fortune is flowing to Walter, I reason that even more wonderful fortune must be flowing to me. After all, are not my very first poems are coming out in Poetry Magazine? I approach Gavin Arthur and he draws up a horoscope. It is undistinguished, filled with the ordinary frustrations of an uninteresting life. I will never have to worry about money. I will always be surrounded by beautiful things. But I will never be loved. At least not until I am 72. Then I will be loved for a very brief period, after which I will die of something having to do with my stomach. Gavin Arthur writes me a bill for \$50 for this bad news. I am deeply depressed.

Meanwhile I am friends with Jim Thurber, Jaime Leopold, Barbara Schlosser. Walter and I live together and don't. On Saturday night, January 8, 1966, I attend the Acid Test at the Fillmore Auditorium. Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters are there. The social paranoia, social panic, which I've been struggling with since I was 12, continues to haunt me. It's not *always* there. I hold jobs, I go to work, I give readings, I have friends. But the reason it is so scary is that I just can't predict when it will come on and disable me.

[Undated ~January 8, 1966] Okay, so why do I go to Acid Tests, and get freaked out, especially on a quarter cap of acid, although I can freak out that way, anytime, without warning, total self-doubt comes over me, like "Where am I?" "Am I doing anything that makes sense?" "This is horrible, to make so little sense, and to have this fear and terror showing." I wanted to stay and dig what it was that I was in fact so totally afraid of--I came up with, *I am afraid of being looked at*. And since anyone can throw a look, where does that leave you? If that's the one thing that frightens you? Jaime and Barbara want me to go when this happens to me. I tried to tell Jaime what I was feeling, but he pushed me away and said, in a loud voice, GO. LEAVE! I suppose Jaime is too young to understand . . . some funny weird trip of my own, feeling big and conspicuous in these public places (seventh grade art class or getting on the school bus, boys jeering "The Witch! The Witch!")

Up in Mendocino, Phil and Daisy Lewitt, are separating. Phil offers me a job house-sitting his farm out on the Comptche-Ukiah Road while he tours the Continent to get over his broken heart.

Monday, January 24, 1966: Phil Levitt's appearance Friday night—looking very drawn. Reading at Walden, lit the ceremonial beeswax candle Heidi gave me. Later, at the Trips Festival: Jack Sears,

Mardi, and then Gordon, who really came on in a friendly spirit. Walter gave the guard 4 bucks to let us in. I wide awake, afterward, and Walter sleepy. I talked to Jaime, then washed all the dishes and cleaned up the kitchen, Friday night. Saturday slept until 12. Relaxed, Lu and Marianne stopped over. I made a Japanese dish; about 9PM we all split for the Trips Festival. Charlotte and Larry, Sam and Suzanne. Jaime's sugar cube—when it came on, my own wild dancing. Then Martine's party; the beach; stayed up all night. Sunday, very tired. Pancakes with Barbara and Sam. I went to bed about 4, up from 7 until 9—and now, Monday morning, cool sunny streets—about to split for Mendocino.

[undated but most likely Thursday, February 3, 1966] The poem addressed to emptiness, this is the courage supreme. A muddy house, a messy place; garbage strewn in the back yard. Thursday. A dark day. Rain. Mists, rising like cold steam out of the valley, with the river invisible, at the bottom. Preparing for friends, for love, company. It's five after noon. That one dark reality, nose glowing, flesh, skin, close-grained, like some fine cheese glowing, Camembert face in the dark, has given way and faded sideways, softly out of the picture. And in from the right, the mist, the perpetual twilight of these rainy days, the opening of February. Where are we going? This part of the poem is a dark house. A cold house. Twilight music, lute notes, at noon, cold notes with the water in them. . . the dark land poem has not begun, is that the same saying, as meaning, that perhaps it has begun? It is beginning . . . ?

There was the great peace coming up in the car,
how the mountains lay around
with their close-cropped vineyards,
the dark purple stalks and vines
beneath the gray sky;
a warm wind, intermittent,
and at mid-day we stopped by the river,
I found the speckled stone.
There was love, like a river,
carrying, the body of love, the child of it,
the colors of it in the sky and water,
sad, sad, to be March's daughter.

Saturday, March 19, 1966. The squawking horn, Charlie Parker, coming out of the record player; Dave Helskie chopping wood with a small axe, kneeling down by the fireplace; the sight of my long cigarette on the saucer next to the typewriter, all the paraphernalia of the kitchen table: plate of margarine with *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* half stuck into it; sunglasses; spoons; papers; boxes of pipe cleaners, envelopes, tobacco, glue, a jar of honey. The light is

a warm dull yellow, very dim, and without my glasses my eyesight is equally dim and blurry. Presences exist around the house, focal centers of energy, streaming from their corners out into space. Barbara on the piano bench, and Dave kneeling by the fireplace; Jim, unnaturally sprawled out on the brown sofa, crying, "Man, this is a beautiful cut," in a weak voice, unlike the usual hard-edged, twist-and-shout as you bring down the word-knife Thurber . . .

Return to Berkeley 1966-1967

Sometime in April I move out of Comptche-Ukiah Road and move with Walter back to the Fulton Street apartment in Berkeley. Some of my poems appear in Dave Sandberg's Oar Magazine which he publishes in Boulder Creek.

Monday May 9, 1966. Azaleas—are those the big showy pink flowers all in bloom on my way to work? Big bushes? Not the sort of flower I usually care for but so huge and proud and pink, with the rain falling on them. So bright, a bright splotch of pink against rain-soaked stucco houses. Hydrangeas—the blue and bluish-purple. I borrowed Farrell's *Daily Cal*. Farrell, with his old brushy reddish-gray mustache and bright little ferret eyes, saying "Good morning!" Old flesh. I went off and sat alone. I am too much enclosed in myself, I don't like talking to people. If I run into someone I know at breakfast, I am sorry. There we sit, across from one another, I responding with slightly insincere cheerfulness. I prefer sitting alone. Sitting alone is pleasant at 7:30AM in the morning, rain falling on the terrace outside. I walked back at 8AM but the house was still cold. I wanted cigarettes. I made a lot of phone calls, then walked back to the corner of Telegraph and Bancroft for cigarettes. The sky over Telegraph was moist and heavy; the red brick hotel stained with rain. All the record shops, import shops, foreign food. Later in the morning now—about 9AM—a few students hurry along with umbrellas and books. A few of my sort, in no particular hurry, walk to a different tune. Old Telegraph Avenue types, all of them passing me by, in a faceless, indistinguishable blur, in the rain.

In mid-May I take a fulltime job as a secretary at Donner Laboratory on campus. Walter and I are making a renewed effort in our marriage. We buy a used Volkswagen Bug with a credit union loan. We visit Luis Garcia and Marianne frequently; they visit us. I also stay in touch with Diane Moran who has a new British boyfriend with a great accent.

Thursday, May 26, 1966: Jim Thurber came by. The young Jim Thurber, twenty-four. His forehead was sweaty. He stood, cocktail

glass in hand, waiting in the kitchen, slightly round-shouldered, tense, smiling a smile of puzzlement, expectancy, and inner certainty. His grin irradiated the kitchen. He was there, standing on the kitchen floor, his two feet planted on the linoleum, and the floor heaved and rose and sank and shifted itself. He was an island of presence, smiling, and holding his glass of vermouth, with a thin slice of lemon floating in it.

[undated] Went out into the sun to get strings for my guitar, ran into Kay Okrand on the next block. Her hair was parted in the middle, falling in two brown loops over her ears; she had freckles. She introduced me to the man who was with her. John. Whom she was going to marry in the coming week. How happy she seemed. So when I got to Lundberg's guitar shop, I was very turned on. I was looking forward to the new live strings. Kay's boyfriend, fiancé, had smiled at me and suddenly yelled, "Hey!" I turned my head to see what he was yelling about, but he was just smiling as if he suddenly understood I was high. A little Spanish-looking man turned around when I came in. He had a white face, bony, like Richard Denner's, with enormous black eyebrows. A man pulled up in a chair was playing the guitar for a girl behind the counter, nineteen or twenty, blue jeans, brown hair, brown hands. The guy was playing to her and talking to her. Both stopped talking and stopped the music when I came in the door . . . Whirlpool moments. This moment in the whirlpool has no date.

Several poems are published in June 1966, in *R.C. Lion #8* edited by David Bromige, *Poems Read in the Spirit of Peace & Gladness*, edited by Doug Palmer and Tove Neville; and four poems in *Poetry* (Chicago). During the spring and summer 1966 I also work on the manuscript of *The Mark* with Robert Hawley and Graham McIntosh.

Saturday, June 11, 1966: Haven't run into anyone I know in the past 24 hours. Been reading over all those old papers I've been holding since Cornell. I had a strange sophistication then, not based on much contact with the world outside myself; a sophisticated smoothness and surety which didn't ring true. High on dexedrine every day; otherwise square.

Friends play particular parts in the film—dashing Jim Thurber, at first small and Quaker nowhere; then coming out as Natty Bumppo in his coonskin cap, squirrel's tail; then suddenly the young, intense brooding, somewhat taller Jim Thurber, with his hands fixed behind his back, wearing a marked frown, bending forward sternly through the park; dreaming of cathedrals and church bells and high nuns in white caps, "Noon rang the hour as she died," walking the hilly pavements of Broderick and Golden Gate, over the crest of the city,

mind-altering helicopter poised there in the sky, mechanical bug droning live-wire messages which Jim alone of all persons in the city heard that Tuesday noon, bells banging, St. Patrick's or St. Ignacio's, and Jaime lounging with a sulky face, sitting on the concrete-and-gravel front stoop of 1360; wiry-haired Barbara coming up slowly from Safeway as if undecided, her serious face, intent like a rabbit, burrowing away at some feeling which cleared . . .

Thursday, July 14, 1966. Last night in the city, meth *and* dex, one-half tablet of each; four or five tokes from the waterpipe, the two hand-rolled Heinies. Walter and I standing in the New Pisa. Oil-cloth tablecloths with an Italian plaid, pink walls, smoke and steam, waitresses resting for a second while they took the order leaning on one hip. I drank two small bottles of wine. We walked over to City Light—Shig smiling in his enclosure which raises him up, a tiny partially enclosed stage on the first floor. Books, magazines, all my friends' poetry—Hilary Fowler's book, Pam Millward's. Buzzing with excitement. Berkeley has nothing. This pastel drab town filled with middle-aged people. Bourgeois.

During the fall I sing Bach's Magnificat with the UC Chorus. Richard has married and he and Cheri Denner live close by, on Ward Street. Walter paints a brilliant mural in their living room with huge floor-to-ceiling triangles in chartreuse, cobalt blue, magenta. Perhaps he is thinking of his Grand Trines? We hold a dinner party for our friends. Luis meets Diane Moran and falls in love with her and leaves Marianne.

I am working on *The Mark*. The poems in it have been written the previous year on Fulton Street and on Fell Street. It's sad to see so much confusion in my younger self, but the poems I write during that year are clearer than I am. It's as if my life is just a pot of stew, simmering, and every now and then something bubbles to the top, and it's a usable poem.

Poems from *The Mark* are subsequently anthologized in *31 New American Poets*, *Possibilities of Poetry*, Denise Levertov's *Out of the War Poems*, *Live Poetry*, and many others. But even as Gail Dusenbery and *The Mark* gain some recognition, the person who has been Gail Dusenbery is disappearing.

In February 1967 Walter and I have our final split. I take an apartment at 2428 Bancroft Way and begin a three-year relationship with Jan Herman. In April 1968 Walter files for divorce in order to marry Janet Stayton. The divorce is finalized in 1969. Feeling there is one Mrs. Dusenbery too many littering the universe, I change my name to Gail Chiarrello.

EVERYTHING IS AT SIXES AND SEVENS

Everything is at sixes and sevens.
That's the Harlequin of love.

Light blue and green crystals
festooned the gazebo.

Rain shook the woods.

A lady shook her hair.

A DATE IN SANTIAGO: LUIS GARCIA IN CHILE, 1963

(Notes taken in conversations with Luis Garcia in March & October, 2007)

In 1962, Luis Garcia was dating Wefe Langhorst whom he had met while they were both students at Contra Costa Community College. Wefe had been raised in Europe and was two or three years younger than Luis. Her parents, Fred and Lois Langhorst, were prominent architects in the Bay Area, although by 1962, Fred, in his early 60s, was divorced from Lois. Lois was in her 40s, still very beautiful, and held a position in the UC Berkeley School of Architecture. Wefe lived with her mother and her younger sister, Lothian, in a house on Magnolia Street, near Ashby and Claremont in Berkeley. Lu spent all of his time at the house. He was given permanent accommodation on the living room sofa. The entire Magnolia Street household was gifted, artistic, and musical. Lothian played the harpsichord and piano. A young cellist friend of Lothian's, who went by the name of "Uitti" (her name was actually Frances Marie Uitti, but everyone called her "Uitti" as if that were her first name) inspired Lu's poem, "The Cellist" in *The Calculated Lion*.

THE CELLIST *For Uitti*

Unexpectedly this music,
this sunlight arrived.
The sky turns
suddenly clear;
flowers sprout in my head;
deep in my body
gardens begin;
the most suburban
cells april.
Your fingers move
over cello strings;
the sunlight falls

breeding flowers.

I had been long unfamiliar
with greenness:
for a long time contentment
had been only a distance.
Then
unexpectedly
this sunlight.

Fred Langhorst was awarded a Fulbright to spend 1963 in Santiago. He took Wefe with him and invited Lu to come along. They flew to Chile in January 1963. Chile in 1963—these were the good years. The Christian Democrats were in power. Lu was 24 years old.

Luis enrolled in the Universidad Católica de Chile. He lasted two weeks. It was difficult to understand lectures taught entirely in Spanish. He and Wefe broke apart; she took a new Chilean lover, and Luis fell in with the surrealist painters and writers who frequented the cafes of Santiago. Soon Lu was spending long hours with his new friends, drinking coffee, wine, taking over-the-counter dexadrine, and trying to write poetry. Sometimes he slept in hotels; the rooms cost less than \$1/night. Sometimes he crashed at the apartments of his new friends. Many times the parties in the cafés lasted all night.

He met the poet and physicist, Nicanor Parra, whose “Anti-Poemas” had been discovered by Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Allen Ginsberg the year before. Nicanor Parra became a mentor. Parra was 50 years old at the time and maintained a residence on the outskirts of Santiago, in the foothills of the Andes Mountains, where he lived with a very beautiful Chilean woman. The late revolutionary singer, Violeta Parra, had been Nicanor’s sister; her children—his niece and nephew—were the musicians Isabel and Angel Parra. Lu would often visit him.

Also very important during this year was Stella Diaz Varin, a powerful feminist and a Communist, who had gained fame in her 20s with “The Autobiography of a Tree.” Lu and Stella would talk for hours on end. Luis learned a great deal of Spanish from her. Through Stella, Lu met a group of artists who created works involving giant puppets. These left-wing artists were fond of referring to the right wing as “las mumias” or the mummies.

Luis spent considerable time in the Parque Quinta Normal, one of Santiago’s most beautiful parks, visiting its galerias to study the work of the Chilean Surrealist painter, Roberto Matta. Luis was reading Cesar Vallejo and Pablo Neruda, and was very influenced by the “Generation of 27”—Luis Cernuda, Federico Garcia Lorca, Luis Buñuel, Salvador Dali—who had all lived at or been associated with Madrid’s “La Residencia de Estudiantes” in the 1920s and 1930s. During this year Luis, struggling very hard to get the

sound, the images, playing with fragments, wrote the poems in *The Calculated Lion*.

He returned to Berkeley near the end of 1963. Nicanor Parra had given him the address of Fernando Alegría, a Chilean poet who would become a cultural attaché with the Allende government, but who was then teaching at UC Berkeley. (Alegría later took a position at Stanford University.) Sometime in early summer 1964, James Schevill set up a poetry reading for Luis at San Francisco State's Poetry Center. Lennart Bruce came up afterward and introduced himself. Lu became lifelong friends with Lennart, and with George Hitchcock, the founder of Kayak Magazine and Press. Later Lennart Bruce and Matthew Zion would translate Fernando Alegría's *Instructions for Undressing the Human Race*. Lu still considers this a unique jewel of a book.

In 2007 Luis describes himself as an "atonal cynic" who is just trying to put together a small body of his own work. "As age encroaches, I'm in a hurry to get nowhere," he says. "I realize the hour is getting late." From his forthcoming collection, *A Message from Garcismo* (Tangram Press, 2008), he reiterates this sentiment in his poem, "Happy Birthday."

HAPPY BIRTHDAY
(1/10/2006, the poet's 67th)

He's all dressed up
and he's got

some place
to go—

but no time

to go there.

A KEY OF GRASS

for Gail Chiarello and "The Invisible Circle" (circa 1965)

Wherever we went,
the grass bent.

Wherever we went,
green times we remembered.

Time did grumble and groan.
Time did stumble like a wounded stone

when death finally
made itself known.

Nevertheless, wherever we went,
the grass bent.

Wherever we went,
green times we remembered.

Wherever we went,
we found a key of grass.

Wherever we went,
we found a door of glass.

Wherever we went,
we found a field of light

filled with brilliant blossoms
that would not break,

but only bend
before an ever-rising wind.

Time did grumble and groan.
Time did stumble like a wounded stone

when death finally
made itself known.

Nevertheless, wherever we went,
the grass bent.

Wherever we went,
green times we remembered.

—*Luis Garcia*

Gene Fowler



portrait by Gayton

GENE FOWLER was born at 1:35 am on Monday, October, 5, 1931 in Oakland, California, on the western coast of the North American continent. From that place and time, he has ventured forth on this globe in a journey that has taken him through loves and exiles, through adventures and cafes, and through the many strata of existence inherent in human experience. The true landmark events are undated – even within his own notice – and referenced for the biographer only in quick glimpses within the poems. The moment when a human face was something definite and on its way to being a human face...and the later moment when a human soul shone through the now familiar human face to be observed. Or the afternoon or evening or morning when the stubborn, fibrous stuff of a handful of phonemes bent to his will...and a meaningful word was carved out of air by tongue and lips, cheek and jaw and throat. These things formed the man who loved and who threaded a way through exiles and traps, the man who noted and reflected on things and events and responded to those things and events, the man who drafted these gathered poems.

The external history? – full of common-places and exotic events and, finally, no explanation at all for the poems we have in hand. Born into the home of a self-educated professional man (chemical engineer) and a quiet woman who spent her time reading, perhaps dreaming, and finally sculpting in clay: Donel and Janice La France. The oldest of three children. A sister, Anna, three years younger than himself; a brother, Thomas, three years younger than Anna. These two the children of Donel, though our biographee was from a brief and annulled marriage to a wandering and sullen laborer, Jack Fowler. Into the public schools at the Kindergarten level and out at the end of twelve years, or grades, in June, 1949. A stint as a (by special permit) night club comedian and special materials writer overlapping the last school years. He enlisted in the U.S. Army – when “we were being pushed off the Korean peninsula.” Three years in the Army, 27 months of it on Okinawa. Trained to operate a message center, he was, on his arrival on Okinawa, metamorphosed in an hour to a demolitions expert and a teacher of mine warfare policy and technique. He was very useful, being competent, and exploited this to “go AWOL when steam built up, to wander in the jungle, go out at 4:00 in the morning with ‘native’ fishermen, and drink potato saki through the night.” He was returned to the U.S. and released in late 1953. A whirlwind existence. By early 1954, he’d been a gas station attendant, a bell-hop, a college freshman, and an armed robber up and down the length of the state...and was in San Quentin Prison. He served four years and nine months – and the middle half of his “twenties” – in prison and came out to another three years and three months on “parole.” Various jobs, mostly filing one thing or another, a semester at a community college, a time filing reprints at the U.C. Berkeley Stat Lab, but sneakily learning to program the big computer and doing other people’s work rather than his own; another time presumably “editing” manuals for the Department of Criminology, but in fact, “designing and writing” them.

Finally, in December of 1963, he “just walked out” on all that. He was prepared to “sit in the bars and starve to death” as alternative to futility and the inner wheel-spinning of a mentality nobody’d pay him to use. Hilary Ayer, poet and folksinger, daughter of artist Richard Ayer, convinced him to sit, instead, in coffee houses...and to write poems, thereby applying his mentality – and the rest of himself – in a field the academic hustlers and commercial realms had little interest in. So...he became an “outlaw poet” – quite a different turning than that of a decade earlier, when he became an “outlaw” proper!

The rest is a history, rough and varied, acted out in public and this biographer must assume the reader knows something of it. It leads from the first chapbook, *Field Studies*, in 1965 that sold an unprecedented 3,000 copies. Three printings! It winds its way with his riding of the crest of the “mimeo revolution” (in literature) in the sixties and on into the seventies and his FIRES: Selected Poems 1963-1976 in 1976. It comes into a busy and a full 1981, what with marriage to April Corioso in May, the publication of *Return of the Shaman* in July and *The Quiet Poems* in December. And it has seen the writing and self-publishing (for the spring of 1982) of an amazing document: *Waking the Poet*. This book is a textbook – on the presumably unteachable. A “how to” for acquiring those deep craft skills everyone has left black-box and called “talents” or “gifts” of “the Muse.” But this, of course, is the culmination of that other history I spoke of in the beginning. The one without dates or places.

STIRRING UP MEMORIES OF BERKELEY IN THE 60s

Now, to just stirring up some of those almost half a century old memories so that if you have anything specifically to ask about what I recall from those days I c'n maybe talk usefully about what I perceived going on at the conference, bein' one of the people around the outside and, then, being in that reading which wasn't much on the inside, but was on the program. You said something about profiling me as one of those readers, too, so I've got to try to pull up what profile I had then, and why it was relevant. Why Gary (Snyder) asked me to read. I don't recall, yet, his actual asking or where it was or a why, though I can guess. Hilary Ayer, who I was with from 63 until 70 and I were back in Berkeley, or maybe north Oakland, because don't recall which of our places, at the time of the conference. Hanging out around the campus wasn't difficult. Weather was good and a lot of activity was on lawns (and in the Med, of course). But, earlier, when Gary said I could sit in on a writing workshop he was doing at UCB, we were still in the city. Most of what profile I had has to be from our time in the city and mainly in the year when I started and, for maybe a year, did Wednesday night readings for Bob Stubbs in his *Blue Unicorn* coffee house on Hayes. After all, 1965 was the year of my *first* book. Len Fulton, Bob Fay, Andy Curry and three other people had put together the cost of a magazine, so that's pretty low profile. Did not put in *Vivisection* or *Shaman Songs* (which was my second dust-BOOK in 67), but I'd read them at the Unicorn....One night I read *Vivisection* and a guy came up afterward and said he'd been about ready to hang up his parole, but just maybe he'd pass on that. Which profile stuff c'n spread from

Domino players on the yard
Lined on the tables: wooden faces
With white and black eyes – players
And pieces alike without expression.

Rain comes; it is whipped around
The tables and under:
 an angry wind
A dervish mystically dancing pain.

Domino players on the yard
Don't see the rain; their ritual
Belongs to a God of the servo mechanism.

My coat is thin, tugged about blue
Ears. Click. Click. Click.
Domino players on the yard
Lined on the tables. *Such*
Furies as we know shall
be set upon thee.

I've been scratching my head to get the blood flowing, but I can't recall how I met Gary, but at some point he invited me to sit in on a writing seminar he was doing at UCB and I said (I must have), sure. He was living on Green street and riding across the bay on a new Honda (later stolen off the street). After the session, we'd sit on the terrace over a coffee or whatever and talk, then bike back over the bridge. I'd been on bikes even drove a small one briefly, but up in that wind...

305 HONDA

for Gary Snyder

Leaving a forest of bikes,
leaving the university, headed for San Francisco.
 [After watching the wistful look
 at a different set of handlebars, a wider grip,
 a deeper control.]
Leaning into the curve, sliding along the arm
of inertia,
settling into the traffic, edging around it,
headed for San Francisco.

Move forward, hold onto me, not the bike.
Find the center
of gravity, the Buddhist
oneness & uniqueness.
Leaning against the arm of the curve.
Two poets, personal perceptions
one rider, multi-armed, -legged.
Point of intimacy:
from the first tools, crafts,
metals & men laboring, hot, sweat
wetted, laboring with flesh & minds.
Fires & dreams, fires & gradually the machines.
The long sight.
The whole technology, a series
of carefully timed openings, man with his fire
manipulating the frozen rhythms
of road surfaces,
the intricate network of wind-rivers, the falls,
lurches, sudden eddies.
A line of intended movement.
Be loose & heavy
against the movement's changes.
The changes -
we throw our movements out, read them

& prophesy.

Along a bay shore highway,
wind falling loose, snapping tight with a whipped
crack at my ear, past drift-wood sculptures
on mud-flats - a sailing ship, a
locomotive, a huge & angry Indian -
movie sets, but with a looser texture, allowing
the different movements of sea & sky to show thru.
Past - leaning to the curve, headed for the tollgate
& the rise of the bridge.

A quarter given, a brief touch of a stranger's
hand, shoulders moving in front of me
& the bike jumping up over the bay, drawing
the winds into the center -
the bay, like any sea, the lands rushing into the center,
the carefully timed movements of man & his fire.

The other poet calling
back
over his shoulder,
the voice cut loose, drawn thin,
wavering, snapping past my ear.
Gone. Missed.
A strange wind-eel, wavering, curious, vanished.
The silent wind-eels crawling like ropes
over my forehead, thru my hair, down my neck.
Vanishing.
Wind-eels edging around my glasses, pulling
at them. Testing my vision.
Crawling into my eye-sockets, changing the shape
of things seen -
the shape-changers, the wind-flowing
& sounds of rice-paddy girls
& distances.

The bridge supports reach up,
drop back, & the wind rushes down, pushes at us,
keeps up its peculiar chants & animal cries, comes
out of the void & sings of the invisible planets,
suns, distances; & the changed landscape sits
in its new perspectives, indifferent
to the wind-rivers, silver & muted violets, the poems

at the edges of the bay
large shapes at the edges of the bay, chiseled

out of light

the rough sketches, reaching out of
sight, nature's poems & the clumsy rectangles
& silent windows of man's,
the edges of the grounds carefully surveyed, the hours
of construction computed, paid for.

The cathedral chants of the wind; we lean to the curve,
falling into the shadow
of the city. Our sound louder, now, than the wind-rivers'.
Words coming back,
& a heaviness, & the old geometries carrying us over
subdued hills;
falling into the shadow & headed
for a vodka martini

...I'm trying to get a forty-seven year old swirl to rouse up and then settle down.... I don't yet have any idea what I read, who else read, though I remember one reader because he and I were recycling names other's 'd used. that's Jim Thurber. I c'n sort of see the auditorium we had or maybe it was a lecture hall or something. I don't remember walking into it. Not many people. Readers, a few friends. Olson showed up and with at least one person because he was wasted and talked through the whole thing - which echoed pretty well in an empty auditorium. But it as okay.... It was his conference and no talent scouts had shown up.

I'm pretty sure I'd already written "Credo" in those first years, though I couldn't read it at the *Unicorn* or any place else, which you'll see. A few years later Al Winans published it in my *Felon's Journal*. I was playing with composition by field (which I think was Duncan's, but Olson made a big thing of it in his projective verse stuff). Here's a link that'll get it on my site. It's a book page. <http://home.earthlink.net/~acoriosof/FJCredo.htm>

I sure didn't try to read that and I doubt I read 305 Honda. I might have read some of my shaman songs, with a nod to Gary, though not like his shaman songs in *Myths & Texts* nor, as most like to think, "Indian" knock-offs.... Not the whole of them, as that's take nearly half an hour.... Here's a view of 'em. http://home.earthlink.net/~acoriosof/SS_TOC

You know, you're getting off light what with my habit of going back and roping in context. I was writing versions of this letter while dancing in and out of sleep last night and the night before went clear back to getting out of San Quentin, in late 59, and taking up residence in June & Herman's hotel across from the Oakland police station on 14th street with other new ex-cons (I'd served four-nine of a five to life for armed robbery and had three-three on parole going. Anyway, I got a job in the basement of Kaiser Hospital on MacArthur and Broadway. The main building had been the old Fabiola

building and I'd been born in it, October 5, 1931. I met a young guy named Lu Garcia and we got to walking around, talking and I stumbled onto, or, I guess, into, Berkeley.... See how all the trails interweave...?

* * *

Now, (speaking to Richard) I'm going to go enjoy that walk you and Lu are taking. http://www.physikgarden.com/berkeley_walk.html

and, from your sketch of Berkeley street life you don't *need* me for the redundancies I c'n add, which leaves me free to meander....

For now, before I leave for your walk with Lu, here's a Telegraph Ave. poem though the coffeehouse isn't the Med, probably Hardcastles', but, as usual, I'm hazy on dates. Anyway, it's a long night's journey into day...

OBSIDIAN

A pilgrim's processional

“your poems carved from obsidian”
A way of telling me
I have the Evil Eye.

Cut away from poet scenes. Di...vision
Nobody is left to talk to.
Slumping in Hardcastle's coffee house. Die...vision.
Can't get it out.
Not the landscape wasted, Mr. E.
Me wasted, image chained in the center of my head.
My monastery: place of singled star.
“Man” s p e l l e d backward is “name”.

Unhoused and living on sidewalks.
Walking all night; watching for the sun.
Hello Helios!
Food over Berkeley hills, an eating of pure light.
On sight: loosing belly snakes
held tight lest space winds suck the last crawling
 into their black draft,
the sun coming yellow obsidian.

No winter in Berkeley
according to the sleepers behind steamed windows.
Blood running silver

in my 3:00 a.m. veins.
6:30 a.m. yellow-brown iodine stain
turn my head inside out
a flower opening.

Midnight coffee house closure
ejecting mumbling freaks into the night,
Venus long gone earlier a diamond tip
on the moon's horn. Mars hot.
Walked night sidewalks
Hunting poems in the greyed, grainy stuff.
Walking night sidewalks

now

for lack of a bed's rent
feet fading into the grey blocks.

Walk diametered night.
Walk against being busted for having no place to go.
Walk to shove blood through slowing serpent body.
Walk to get away from each spot as it takes on the smell
of my death place.

Sidewalk mania
fingers tipped
into wet cement
years earlier,
glyphs deciphering into
"return to go."

Mist.
Glasses evolving into ice.
I look out through frozen waterfalls.
Owl telling me: "Get off my turf."
Beak shattering the water.

Color sucked from the flowers
by vampire night. Night underneath
teeth sunk into pores.

Watch beat slamming my wrist
breaking up my pulse
sending its spiked blows
to cramp my heart.

Along sides of the street
see...mental squares
in mazed sequence

for a poet's sightings.
My ghost going back to a coffee table and
warming ghost hands around a wavering cup,
telling the Virginia Slim girl
against a burlap coffee bean sack,
"I'd take yeh home
an' fuck yeh into smoke, jinn;
but livin' like I do
I've lost my ki."

Stoned on cold.
Window's echoed light a man of blue granite.

Wanted, from the beginning, to teach.
To reach a poetfinger (non-electric brain probe)
into the quiet cells
and waken the fine hairs, the nerve hairs,
the light drafting edges.
Secret of Jupiter: induce flow.
Nothing thrown. All done with mirrors.

Helios!
The pyre amid the ghosts in my senses.
My feet are numb and numb the two legs.
My back is numb and time, gone numb, stops its flow.
A wooden bench melts to velvet.
A magnet of velvet tugging at my back, flesh drawn out
from my rib cage
but lying down is a bust, a sun-burst of cop
in dark arrest.
Demon screeching under the street lamps
of his city.

Thick maple light in Mel's drive-in
and golden waffles to soak it up,
if pocket lint were gold.
Stopped hands of the watch just above my stopped hand.
Blood running silver
in my 3:05 a.m. veins.
6:30 a.m. yellow-brown vomit stain
stomach heat
a seared line in the sky.

My ghost going back to a coffee table and
warming ghost hands on a wavering white dwarf,
silvered see...mental squares
against burlap windows.

Water gas under grey coat.
Water gas under grey skin.
Water gas under grey nerve lining.
Breathing an icy placental water
cold belly of a bitch Muse.

Blood running silver.
'Lectric pain.
3:47 a.m. 'lectric vein.
6:30 a.m. platinum sky
gold tears fry
turn my head inside out
my hand on a cold dawn.

Night is 300,000 steps
on spongy knees
under broken lips and icicle nostrils.
Dawn is pale piss.
Everybody out and hurrying, hands in coat pockets.
And it's warm enough
to sleep on wet grass
dreaming a woman's warm belly
and smell of breakfasts
while ants crawl in my eyes.
Uncarved obsidian.

* * *

"...Luis Garcia, my closest friend and collaborator, has been my greatest mentor, always present with insights and humorous twists of perspective. I met Lu right after the Berkeley Poetry Conference, and we continued meeting with other poets for weeks to come. Lu's style of writing is unique—playing with the words within the words, he directed me to meditate on the morning light and helped me understand that it was important to discover my own voice, to forge a blade, as he put it. Lu's poems sizzle. They move so fast, if you aren't ready, you miss them. By imitating Lu's use of jazz rhythms and breath notation, I began to read my poems aloud. Just like Lead-belly learned to play the 12-string, I learned my craft by putting my spine against the piano." (Richard Denner)

Finished the walk, went back and picked up the preface. Great. I've never seen a description of Lu, of his usefulness.... 'Course, the forging of a blade. Most anything jumping out at me will have a ref. to a tool....

* * *

The mention of people on the windows of California Hall wakened not only

the memory of seeing people on those sills but where the lawn was that many of us lay sprawled upon. And the windows opened for warmth...confirmed that it was weather for the peripheral encampments. But I do not recall seeing anybody entering through those windows or showing signs of listening.... I c'n tell you definitely that nobody reported within hearing distance that entry fees were tossed out or I would very likely have wandered in to listen - even in the good weather enjoyed on the outer edges. Continued conversation in homes and coffee houses? Well, no way I was likely to be invited to the homes, but I sort of remember sitting at the edge of a conversation in the Med, far back on the first floor. No invitation I c'n recall, but I had a chair, Hilary sitting on the floor beside me with long, amber hair. I recall her comment that Ginsberg was either looking at her hair or my crossed-legs ankle. No recollection of what I said. I'd have said today that he was likely listening to somebody (eyes would move if he was speaking) and his eyes were left where they'd been as he started listening. I don't know why I'd wandered back there. I usually went up to the balcony, sat near the front. Don't like sitting without a table...

THE SEA

Again at the table.
My arms, just below the elbows,
calloused from the gentle
swells of the table pulsing
under these twin hulls.

And I watch intently
down into this paled sea
from which
forces of constant rising
push into the swells

those creatures that will burst
forth to flounder or find footing
on my beach
and tell me in their dying
gasps or first breaths of alien

ways that shaped them
beyond my ken
and sent them, in their
last moment, or first, to stretch
my ken.

I need the table to throw my poet kit, a South American woven bag with a

“across the chest and back” strap, on and to plant a coffee cup on, and, often as not those twin hulls.... Anyway, my memory of that reading, and it’s here I might have something to write that’d be relevant, description, what c’n be drawn from it.... And nothing. Not being asked, not going to a building and entering it. And just a few stills, or such short clips they register and stills....

* * *

Tools and materials. You know from my other notes I like that way of talking, thinking. What I’ve been tossing into the cyberhum in the phone lines (I use a modem, too) is all about making the poem with tools, mainly the line-break. A lot of talk about the American haiku, for instance, being when you come down to it *a three line poem*. With or without syllable countings like 5-br-7-br-5. Well, you could make one of those with a single word, tying off a line by karate-chopping the word, with or without a marking hyphen (best without)

by
old Poto
mac
candidate
jumps
in yo
noises
from
thrashing

I outta say, that *by* is key. It’s not the river that’s jumped into.... I use the American *yo* for the Japanese *ya* which marks the major break and counts. With it, I’ve only 5-6-5, I guess, but I read the *yo* as a bell-tone and it feels like two. Anyway, I got onto this by thinking about blank verse and everybody thinking good Will was writing in “iambic pentameter” which means counting and leaving a line made only by the recurring count. I figured, he was, in your terms, tying off the stitching holding a line together and stitching up another one.... He was making, to keep the innards from their terms, *pentiambic lines* and made *lines* was the key and these were played off against the phrasing and the line-break was the *tool*. Not so much a blade, though, as a Swiss Army Knife. Anybody who c’n count c’n do the metric thing. making lines is harder.

If ye take the jazz guy (and I know, I ain’t got a license), he’s got to learn how to play the horn before he c’n get it to talk at all, and then, if he wants to get some different sounds out of it, he’s got to find a way to make it do that. I talk about it to set up for talking about playing our *language-and-body* instrument the same way, which is enough to make eyes glaze over....

Oh, I’ll add about that sketching, still borrowing from the jazz guy who has

to earn to *play* his instrument before making it do anything useful. I was saying to some folks - maybe not listening, but exposed - who were getting together to play audience and give each other "feedback". I was sayin', poets' shoptalk ought to be sketching ideas, not making suggestions or agreeing or disagreeing with content.... o, you pick up your *instrument* and you play a passage, then, maybe, riff a couple different takes on it to see how they'd work. I c'n imagine how that'd go over. Bill Evans, the jazz guy...

One night we were playing "Tuxedo Junction," and for some reason I got inspired and put in a little blues thing. "Tuxedo Junction" is in B-flat, and I put in a little D-flat, D, F thing in the right hand. *It was such a thrill. It sounded right and good, and it wasn't written, and I had done it.*

What I'll do here is throw in a couple Med poems. First one on learning from place, a person, things at hand. The other's about blending times to let 'em transform each other and make a third thing worth playing...

TARO

for Julia V.

Place them on the table
for reading designs in time.
Taken, each, from my deck.
The first card -
this cup of dark stained waters.
The second -
this squared, curl-fingered hand.
The third -
crossings in this live realm.
And more cards
to be laid out in woven array,
with each
only to be found,
its place in the deck
its last mystery.
And in this laying out
of Universe's momentary chips
there is no tarrying,
only the turning, in wild
rhythm, of rota-
ting, humming, reddened wheel.
And one thing
more - the reading in array,
the finding of what I've found.

QUICK SKETCH

for Vickie

Shadow haired
raccoon eyed
black clothed
interweaving the sophisticate
from some Balkan state
and Billy the Kid,
the wench, Trian's "beautiful
bi-sexual in Berkeley," half slinks
half stalks into
Caffe Mediterraneo
in her Balkan gunslinger's
black trousers stuffed
into needle-heeled gunslinger's boots
with gunslinger's black
blouse tail-tied to set off white
cleav-
age and fair
maiden breasts.

At the table, after she
paces off the streets between tables
where shootouts occur,
she unloads the trick holster on
her right hip.
And what's in there are photos
of her paintings -
and this Balkan Billie
the Kid is
a post-WWI German Expressionist
left out of the shows
with Munch and Schiele and Kokoshka
and Kollwitz, maybe
wiped out in the influenza epi-
demic before her first
canvas and waiting to be reborn
as Balkan gunslinger
in Berkeley.

The black Pilot
Fineliner lines going down
on the napkin
at the lower rim of my vision,
a growing blossom in

the napkin's center,
can't catch my vision
as I watch the pale
gunslinger's midnight
face, waiting
the bursts of umber
conflagrations
roaring up, again and
again, to see
splintered spaces where I
thought I waited to
exchange seeings.

* * *

"...it's just that for me, the avenue was the grail"

"especially the ones i knew that climbed up on the window ledges of california hall to eavesdrop on the berkeley poetry conference, and paul x and i climbed up at random and found ourselves outside creeley's workshop, there were a number of these workshops going on during each day for two weeks, but creeley was going on at this location, and it was warm and the windows were open, and creeley was saying..." (Richard Denner)

How could such a Quest, once you'd swarmed up the aides of a building, *not* have Creeley inside an open window just then? How could a colleague *not* urge inviting you in? how could these magic beings *not* hand you a grail in which to catch notes...?

So, the focal point was a "conference" And, now, it's a *refresh point* maybe not quite an oasis in time, but a *place* in time when forces crackle like unseen lightning....

Somewhere along the line, with nods to Attar and Chaucer, among my Cafe poems - meaning, mostly, Med poems - I broke down these conferences to their fundamental connivings, though I had more earthy interests than sweeping in disciples...

CONFERENCE OF THE BIRDS

Find the rebirthing
love? - personal renaissance?

The only way

is to nudge into being
a whole damned Renaissance.

No other way.
All the hunting grounds
are used up, worked
out.

Inspired thoughts come.
The design for a hunting preserve.
Pull those I might wave
my Poet at, pull
'em into a room.
Then wave it in long, slow
wavings, deep, encircling moves,
wreathes of voice and word, winds
from moving hands, lips, eyes.

Make it double barreled:

a conference, place
where secrets
are divulged.

A reading, a place
where egos, theirs, may unfurl.

Be subtle: not just women
invited. Everybody. Poets,
publishers, patrons, those tickled by
muses . . .

Then, slick down the heavy wool
on my bent leg, tune
my three note whistle.
Attend

BUT, how I loved, hell, envied, your quest and how the eerie forces of chance wrote that script, from CalPoly, up the coastal path, onto that building, in through the window and into Creeley's realm.... I thought, yes, I'm on that list of readers, some memory of being in the room, and, now, what with the image of people climbing California Hall (I'd even forgotten where the lawn was we were all camped on, the event coming back. I'd had, still have, no memory of seeing anybody going in, and I'm quite sure word never reached me of doors being opened to non-paying anybody. I wasn't included in after workshop gatherings or parties in homes, I recall that one gathering was probably in the downstairs back of the Med. Somebody must have said,

Come on over,” but that is only wild surmise.... If anything useful was said in my presence I do not recall it. So, while writing notes like a diary of my reading, I was envisioning a page...with two long out of print chaps (made of woven tumbling weeds) books thumbnails on the side. They are from 1965 and 1967 (close enough, and better printing). They were published in El Cerrito - though not by in publishers - and so would belong. On the page, well something sparkling, intriguing, coming out of being in that reading and touching the spirit, or spirits, of the conference and, as I picked up on it, your quest, fit for the refresh point.

The going back to *that* Telegraph avenue all too easy and not evoking anything much, the feel of shit and spit ground into concrete underfoot, shadows, being a shadow, a ghost of Telegraph Avenue. It's a fifteen minute walk from where I live now, but I haven't been over there in some years so it was easy enough to walk it from before....

...people, conversations, events, the long talks of discovery that, maybe, did happen in the homes and conversations, hell, even in a workshop. And, if you generalize to all the goings on in your Athens of the West, well, I'm still a ghost. Hilary, who I was with until 70 (the year, not my age), went out at Sather Gate with Facino (Doug Palmer), wrote for the passers by.... I didn't.

My conversations of discovery, my following toward *my* grail (oh, I've got one, and God help, as they say, the man or woman without one, or more) will be pretty much dialogs or trialogs held in the confines of my imagination where, indeed, I can get at people long dead or as yet unborn. You saw something, for instance, of what poets around me, among friends, is with the “barnstorming spirit”

...take Lu, he led me into Berkeley and San Francisco and what was to follow from that basement in Kaiser. Now, he drops by the house every year or two with a beautifully made book. (Sends me notices of readings he's given, such as the one in Cody's just before it closed and one at the 4th Street location just after they moved). I haven't given or attended a reading since 1980. Anyway, the visits with books. He generally says something about being impressed by my intelligence... But the other half of the sentence would be “if not by the poems”.... I'm not plugging in enough context. I'm grabbing at a feel and I'm only leading toward something else, anyway, about Olson, if you'd believe it. I have no recall of Lu ever saying he liked a poem...

...I've not been reverential to the pillars of the scenes. I suspect people think I was name-dropping when I named Gary Snyder on 305 Honda. But too little, too late would be the official opinion. He was driving the bike. We'd been talking on the UCB terrace. I used Basho's sensibilities to phrase as a seventeen syllable, 5, 7, 5, haiku, if you take the embedding and read from a preceding comma and into an empty line after a period.... I did that, as they say, unwittingly. But this was my epiphany in the wind.

I mentioned my grail.... My grail is what's out past what I've got going in a poem.... And in talk about poems. So, I gave you a link to "Credo" in *Felon's Journal*... <http://home.earthlink.net/~acorioso/FJCredo.htm> ...which pushed "composition by field" into something useable, uses it, and turns that field into a poet's mind-stuff and reaches through for what comes from - well, I've got to use *some* word - "deeper"....

...I'll explain how my grail search works... Then, I'll knock off this lengthy shoving through the winds of time to get back from, say, a cold, grey Telegraph outside the Soup kitchen where Julia liked to spring for soup and thick bread to my little North Berkeley village (of sorts) and, I fear, old age....

... Olson spoke of going beyond phrasing to "forces just beginning to be studied" that integrate as *impulse*. He wrote (in a quote I just found on the Web), "...get on with it, keep moving, keep in, speed, the nerves, their speed, the perceptions, theirs, the acts, the split second acts, the whole business, keep it moving as fast as you can, citizen." Don't hurry it. Like a gymnast, do one skill at a time. Chunk it. Then, fast, slow, it's always full of time. Mark off the relative times. Sit at the center of it. For us, *one skill at a time* matches up pretty well to *one phrase at a time*. I thought of a gymnast as a follow up to thinking of the horn player (who I use to get poets to *feel* their voicing of the phrases) to draw on a bit of conversation I heard while watching a 2001 women's gymnastics team competition. Thirteen-year old Carly Patterson, the 2004 Olympic all-around gold medalist, was on the high bar. Al Trautwig, the sportscaster, said, "It's almost like she's moving in slow motion." Tim Dagget, ex-Olympic gold-medalist and commentator said, "She takes her time. She does one skill at a time. *I don't know that this can be taught.*"

Two and half paragraphs and the pop-up annotations are in a small window. Here, it's spread out and I don't feel like punching in line breaks, but you can read the whole annotation if comfort and the poem. I grabbed a typical Olson thought off the Web as I was coming out of what I was saying about playing phonemes, and laid it down. Now, here's grail work. It's said by a boss poet. So, what's wrong with it? I'd take something I'd said and ask the same question. What's wrong with it? And I was playing old gymnastics tapes, because Carly was sixteen when she won the 2004 Olympic gold metal. I use the tapes when I'm working out. I don't want work-out tapes with just more gym. But I want indoors, individual sets, but some crowd and the noise of competition. So, gymnastics has been the best and I've got 'em going back to the late eighties. This one was one I'd been looking at earlier in the day or the day before and this small exchange had been in my head for years.

Amateurs, and it'd seem some pro's, even a boss poet, c'n get into that breathy/breathless kind of poetry, and to be sure, the desire for a "rush".... Two things cause falls from, say, the bars in gymnastics. Something happens

and you lose momentum. Or, you *rush* it and lose it....

Carly isn't in slow motion. She'd lose the delicate interplay of momenta if she did that... What she's doing is so clearly articulating what she's doing, the separate skills that are then seamlessly welded together that she forces detailed seeing and the time slow down is in the observer....

Well, I get into playing it again, riffing on it. And nothing more would come of it. But, you can see how my conversation wouldn't fit easily with people who'd discovered guys who seemed to know something and around that something was acceptance and belonging and having a sense of some solid ground underfoot - maybe even ending up in novels.

So, I was a ghost on Telegraph and, now, I'm a ghost in the phone wires, an undetectable thread in the billion-thread coursings of cyberhum in the phone lines and the air currents....

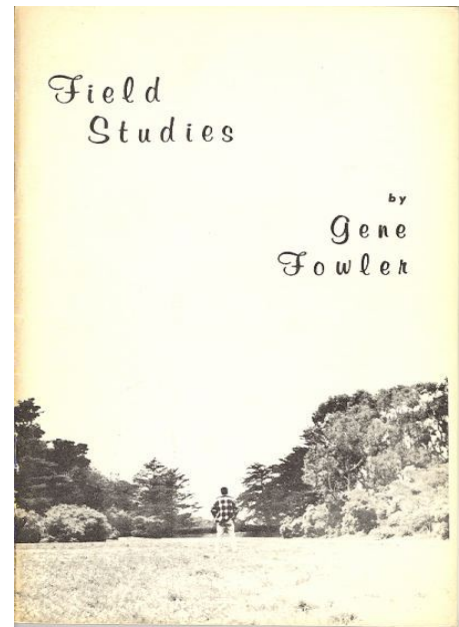
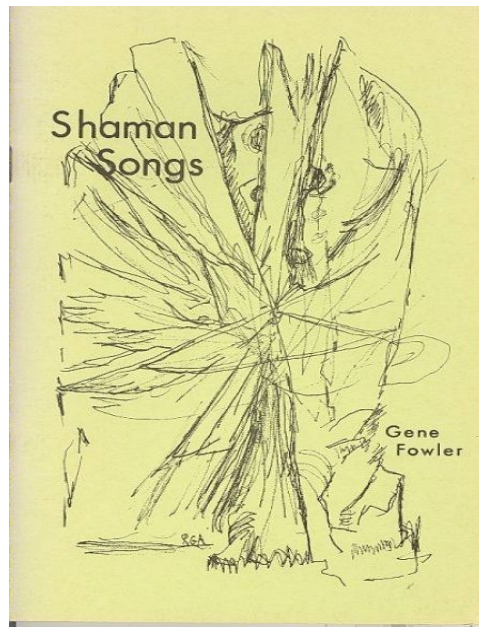
For the hell of it, I'll close with just the opening of "Credo". If spaces before or within a line are collapsed by your mail program, it's only a small death. The footnote number signals reading in a side note (the two column page) and that's a voiced *phase-shift* or *shape-changing*.... Figure it's a subtle grab at your attending, like the Old Mariner grabbing with his eyes when grabbing with his aging arm failed to grip the other, but now it's no Sargasso sea, but, abandoning surfing where vision is turned in toward the beach and the mall behind it, and taking up cyber- seafaring...

The syllable moved
somewhere in the void
a basic block where we build.
Later, a phoneme was isolated
& another: a mu-phoneme & a pi-phoneme
several hundred in all,
but these are seen only in hermetic chambers
where magnetic forces are intensified to MIND.

The syllable moved
displaying an attractive intelligence
described, first, as ACTION

at a distance:
)syllables cluster(
-a one dimensional cluster forms
a LINE

-a two dimensional cluster forms
a STANZA
-clusters carry architect



BIBLIOGRAPHY

FIELD STUDIES - 1965

Drawings by Richard Gaytom - including the portrait on my index page here on Big Bridge. http://home.earthlink.net/~acoriosofieldstudies_TOC.htm

SHAMAN SONGS - 1967

A second dust BOOKS poetry chapbook. after some printing troubles on a first run, a lovely book with off-white and green paper and drawings by Richard Ayer. http://home.earthlink.net/~acoriososhaman_TOC.htm

HER MAJESTY'S SHIP - 1969

From Ben Hiatt's Grande ronde Press which began in Oregon and moved "down" to Sacramento in California or onto a mountain near Sacramento. Cover linoleum block by Hilary Ayer. http://home.earthlink.net/~acoriosohersmajestys_TOC.htm

THE OCCASIONS - 1971

This was the first non-broadside publication of "Vivisection" and everything else included. http://home.earthlink.net/~acoriosothetheoccasions_TOC.htm

VIVISECTION - 1972

Paul Foreman's Thorp Springs Press brought the poem out as a chapbook with a powerful lithographic cover by Amelia Gianelli on the links). http://home.earthlink.net/~acoriosovivisection_TOC.htm

FELON'S JOURNAL - 1975

Al Winan's Second Coming Press brought this out in 1975, though it too reaches back. Opens with a prose journal entry - sort of - on experiences in San Quentin exploding my vision into something different. http://home.earthlink.net/~acoriosofelonsjournal_TOC.htm

FIRES: Selected Poems 1963 - 1976

Paul Foreman's Thorp Springs Press. In 1971, Paul printed a simpler *Fires* after Grove Press released it. http://home.earthlink.net/~acoriosofires_TOC.htm

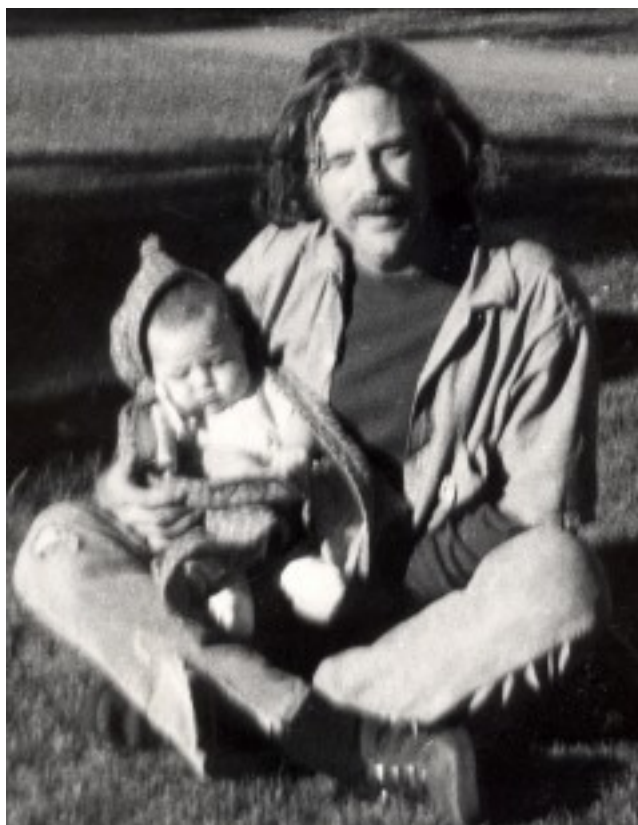
RETURN OF THE SHAMAN - 1981

Al Winan's Second Coming Press brought out this square back perfect-bound paper book (now, a hyperperfect-bound hyperbook on the site). I pair this with the next, and last, book in the list, calling this the "raw" and the other the "cooked" and these two sort of finished things up until we rolled over into the 21st century.... http://home.earthlink.net/~acoriosoreturnoftheshaman_TOC.htm

THE QUIET POEMS - 1982

Judy Hogan's Carolina Wren Press brought this perfect-bound paper book out. Judson Crewes reviewed it in a single sentence: "We've too many quiet poems." http://home.earthlink.net/~acoriosothequietpoems_TOC.htm

Jim Thurber



Jim and daughter, Julesa, Golden Gate Park , 1968

JIM THURBER: grew up in the mixed farming/light industry area of the Spokane Valley east of Spokane. Formative years spent in a children's home located on a large farm. After high school and a few semesters at local college took off for San Francisco. Enrolled in S.F. State early '60s in English and Creative Writing. The San Francisco Renaissance was underway and was a poetry hotspot magnet on the West Coast. Opted out of S.F. State in favor of writing "street poetry", participating in many local readings and mimeo'd poetry rags. Mentored occasionally by Snyder and interacted/discussed poesy with Whalen, Welch, Spicer, Blaser, the Gins, and Rexroth. Rexroth was very helpful on two short occasions where I talked to him. Gary's dedicated support and mentoring of many young poets led to being included in Berkeley Poetry Conference in '65. Bill Bathurst has been the single most influential person on my poetry and my understanding of the artist, since I met him around 1967. Grim denouement of '60s led to a long-term entanglement with drugs and the struggle to understand a basic law of Physics: "Whatever goes up must come down". Got a "real" job with the Postal Service for 23 years and retired as small town Oregon postmaster. Over the last 3 decades I have been deeply involved in caring for the planet, most importantly with the great Salmon and Steelhead runs of the Pacific Northwest. Meat-gang poetry-slave lifetime membership still in effect.

[Ed., Jim Thurber died in 2017.]

Publications

Synapse, Cow, Hollow Orange, Peace & Gladness, "Manifesto of Red & Blue" (broadside); *Thyme & The River, Calapooya Collage, Suisun Valley Review, Oregon English Journal, Stafford's Road* (anthology).

"The Rube," *The Pentameron: Tales from Fell Street and Beyond, A Collective Sixties Memoir*, Workwoman's Press, Seattle, 2008.

Just before Dark

for Diane

We come back and do not get lost
in our shadows. You smile and wait
for me at the bottom of the stairs.
The wise man accosted you about your wisdom,
the wisdom of your heart
which, held in my hands,
fluttered to a stop. We came to
a stop. We came apart like a smile.
This is the way. The way to emptiness.
Put out the light. See how the night is dark—
dark with chance. The city rises up
in blue velvet from the earth.
The moon is parked in the dust.
Fog covers the windows, fog
covers the land. We uncover
our shadows and put them on like fog.
Our shadows grow into us and do not get lost.
Fog and our shadows go to bed together.
They transpose bodies. My shadow
belonged to you. Now night has
put an end to the dreams of our shadows.

1964

The moon and I aren't friends
since it failed to drive me
crazy. Now I look at it,
a cold coin swelling
up over the Panhandle,
seducing eucalyptus
to heavy-rooted dances.
Traffic flicks down Fell St.,
rows of lights,
rubber-tired swishing moans,
throats of adoration
for the moon. The moon
goes up on edge and rolls
straight west out over
the ocean and sinks
like an iron grapefruit.
Some nights I can see your face
and some nights I can't.
That is the pleasure of the moon.

1965

Bebop & Lullaby To The Goddess Whore City San Francisco

I pad around your dome-topppd
crown of emptiness & jewel'd light
O City
soft on cat feet
stoned eyes bugged out behind clear focus sharp
perfect angel vision
hungerless holy stomach tight
body lit w/ grace instinct movement
brain new birthd innocent infant fearless

Curious dream search
Propels my tireless loping strides day & night & day again—
swift lung-heave over measureless hills
I'm seeking a cave to hide in
lie down in your arms of night
wrap myself around your hidden Body
trace your skin of dream-seducing Sleep
easing my spider thoughts of trapped streets
stopped clocks &
black rainbow cave behind green dream-web
O wake up new to
your sea of white buildings blue bay &
sun glinting off bridges
high in the East
lighting up dewy clock time hands on Ferry building's face
far below near water's edge

1966

Horn in the morning why
am I dead in your soft love
brass melting my night long
thoughts, the small lists
of rats on a wheel to keep from
being smeared in mirror photo-still
remembering the pretense
giving me the energy
solitary knowledge of my arrival
to robohood; the hypocrite—
my shadow on the wall. So
wife by blind luck; love blinds her eyes
to this weakness for a fatal light,
a card, a door, dreams
the ambushes of remorse
that cannot be repeated
even by lovers
who lie to one another,
the walls of self-exile jammed closer
by the stupid hand of self
waving in spite / of
seeing this is our flesh singing
the shame of the waste of our lives

Days of thinking like snow
falling and drifting,
the plan never complete
buried by our hesitant love
blinding us in the cold
world, wife, friends
all to save their own
skins, a cruel test
winter & cities. Jail
blowing towards us like
a wind. Or the hospital
with heat. No voices
or anything like that,
just fear and anesthetic,
turning away from the child,
infant, daughter muse
Julesa, the name dreamed
and called
forth from the void, the

father a double—on earth
and in heaven, flesh
and imagination
the cold begins to crack
in on me, stupidity
like ice growing on me.
All of this failure & neglect
losing me in a storm
no love can stop

1967

Watching Peacocks in the Garden from the Music Room

The peacock is the light!
The light in the eye of
the real peacock dreaming
on a green field when
the mind snaps—

The auras of queer light
mushrooming green & violet & black,
opening in the air
like a fan around us.

Eyes and jewels, the music
room blossoming
in a shock of yellow light

Everywhere there is light!

A race of beautiful Beings
is born among us!

The peacock is the light!

1965-66 (LSD)

THE RUBE: MEMORIES OF THE 60s

I was the younger of two brothers in a family that was firebombed by the alcoholism of my parents. I was born in Cleveland, Ohio in 1942 and my life was one of dark secrets, fears and the inability to understand why my parents acted the way they did. Every waking hour my older brother and I operated out of a fear-based reality.

During our most formative years we were placed in a children's home in the Spokane Valley in Eastern Washington. I was the youngest and smallest of the 20 boys who lived in our "Cottage." I survived by always maintaining a secret inner life filled with dreams of the way things should be and how I would discover the world via a fantastical, chivalrous quest for the Holy Grail of The Meaning of Life. Inwardly, I was terrified and repressed. Perhaps I was somehow the cause of all the confusion and loneliness that life consisted of. Perhaps by some super-human effort I could experience some kind of goodness or normalcy that kids from the "outside" with families had. Outwardly I was always on the offensive, verbally fending off the bullying by the boys above me in the pecking order. Language became my special weapon.

The night of high school graduation I drank my first two beers and dived into the Spokane River at midnight, a little light-headed. I was a 17 year old virgin and was ignorant of racism, drugs and sexuality. Spokane was devoid of art and literature. The only liberating thing we had was rock and roll.

One summer I worked at Glacier National Park in Montana and met a girl who, over the course of a very short time, ignited my journey to San Francisco in 1962. She was the first person I had met that exhibited a complete obeisance and belief in the transformative power of Art. I had hung out with a tiny group of writers at Whitworth College near Spokane. One of the most gifted writers there was on his way to enroll in the S.F. State Creative Writing Program and he continually advised me to do the same. Knowing that my Guinevere was already there sealed the deal.

I was so green, so astounded by San Francisco that every day was like being struck by lightning. Teachers like Walter Van Tilburg Clark, Mark Harris, Jack Sheedy and Clancy Sigal nuked my consciousness. When a rube pulled up to the pump at S.F. State in those days, popped the top of his head open and said "Filler up, please", they gave you high octane and "topped it off." The City was on fire with the San Francisco Renaissance—poets, writers, artists and musicians were screaming their joy and their doom. Many of the Beat poets were there and openly available to young poets at their readings, informal seminars, bars, cafes and in their own homes. Snyder, Whalen, Welch, Joanne Kyger, Rexroth, Duncan, Spicer, Blaser, McClure, Charlie Plymell, Ferlinghetti and the elusive Bob Kaufmann lived in or near the city. Allen Ginsberg, Peter Orlovsky and others in Allen's entourage would also

show up in S.F. sometime each year. They read anywhere and everywhere to large crowds—sometimes several hundreds or more.

I plunged into living my dream of becoming a poet. I was writing every day, reading like a drunken glutton and drinking red wine, smoking grass and dropping dexamyls. Later, experiences with LSD, peyote, morning glory seeds and even belladonna broke down my repressed self enough to write in a more doubt-free way. Almost every evening groups of young poets would get together and drink and declaim their poems to one another. There were so many poets in this wild melee of those times that it would be impossible for me to remember them all but of the 32 poets in the Peace & Gladness anthology published in 1965 I had met all of them at one time or another and a number of them came to have a life-long influence and soul-bonding that still lives over 40 years later. Without question the deepest friendships I had as a young poet were with Doug Palmer, Dave Hazelton, Dave Sandberg and a little later on with Gail Dusenbery. Reb Barker was already too far gone to be close to but he had an undeniable influence, especially in his somewhat erratic publishing efforts. Even though I was not tight with Luis Garcia, he probably was, for a long time, the most singular influence on my way of seeing and hearing *the language* of poetry.

In 1963 I met Diane Moran. I began experiencing feelings that were new to me. These were feelings that I did not know existed for me. It was like going to a foreign country for the first time, discovering a secret wish had come true or the joy you might feel after finding yourself the only survivor after some mad accident. In church I'd listened to stories of miracles since childhood but falling in love was the truth. To my own amazement I was still conflicted; I lacked the simple recognition of the reality of what was happening. I was still on my sweeping crusade for what—the Meaning of Life? The chalice of Art? There are many Zen stories characterizing the Seeker as someone whose delusion consists of going around looking for something he thinks is lost or that he doesn't have, finally to discover that he was in possession of it the whole time. But being in love with someone, being in love with Diane, opened my eyes to the primacy of love, sex, union and the merging of soul and body in the expression of Poetry. It is the core. I saw in the writings of Tagore and Rumi the expression of images of God as the beloved and the unwavering desire of the supplicant/lover to give himself over to the beloved completely. Diane and I were together and apart until 1966. At the time of the Berkeley Poetry Conference I was writing many poems “under the influence” of my feelings for her.

Another signature event that triggered crucial and ongoing friendships and, for me, becoming part of a *community of poets*, was meeting Doug Palmer and Dave Hazelton in a poetry class at S.F. State taught by Mark Linenthal. The class was either in Spring or Fall of 1964. I believe it was a Modern Poetry class, although the reading of poems aloud seemed to involve a lot of time—interspersed throughout whatever lectures or discussions Linenthal

gave. It seemed to us young, unbridled riff-raff of poets that the whole conduct of the class was a mirror reflection of the times—the stultifying effect of the Academe and the classroom on the actual experience of poetry. Ludicrously, the most important thing the entire term was whether or not we could arrange our chairs in a semi-circle so we could see and freely talk to each other or whether the class would take place with the desks in the traditional, authoritarian manner where we could simply look at the back of someone else's head for an entire hour each day. Doug Palmer and Dave Hazelton were in the class and we became fast friends. Linenthal didn't care to talk about poets that weren't dead or in the so-called "canon" of modern poetry so our desire to discuss the Beat poets was dismissed. To counter this, Doug, Dave and I would spontaneously stand up during class and read our own poems aloud—often interrupting his lectures. Palmer was the most sincere, down-to-earth, salt-of-the-earth guy that has ever walked. He believed he should only work with his hands and never for money—only barter. He had an ancient pickup truck, super-wife Ruth and his young son Tad, and lived in Berkeley. His penchant for "found objects" meant that he spent hours picking up string, coins, bottles, cans and almost anything you can think of from the sidewalks and "saving" it for other uses. Hazelton had gone to Oberlin in voice class and met and married Jeanne Lee there. She won the Downbeat Jazz Singer Poll in '63 and we used to go to some of her concerts. She was the real deal. They had a daughter named Naima.

About the same time Palmer was out on the streets writing poetry in exchange for food, candy or whatever you wanted to give him—he wore that immortal sign around his neck that began: I WILL TRADE/ WITH YOU – A/POEM/I WILL WRITE TO YOU... They arrested him on Market St. for "begging" and the story became a "cause celebre" in the S.F. Chronicle. Shig, from City Lights, cut a deal where poets could write free poetry in front on the sidewalk in front of the store. At first I wasn't too interested but he got me to try it and it was fun—basically to go out there and free-associate; improvise. Hazelton did it too and we took the "street names" of Facino (Doug), Flambeau (me), and Cinzano (Dave). David Sandberg had just come to town with Phoebe (she's still around) and soon became part of our group. Hazelton was publishing a mimeo mag, "Synapse" and Sandberg was doing the same—his mag was "Or" or "Oar".

We lost the battle with Linenthal over chair arrangement but he sponsored us for student readings at the Student's Union during the noon hour. The first S.F. Poetry Center Readings were going down and I remember hearing Snyder, James Wright and Leroi Jones around then. Doug, Dave and I all eventually dropped out of the class and began having a lot of "face time" with the various poets around town who were open to mentoring us. The most available ones were Snyder, Welch, Whalen, Blaser, Duncan, George Stanley, Jack Spicer, Michael McClure, Rexroth, and Ginsberg when he was in town. Basically, sexual politics made it easier to pick a mentor. For some reason Duncan, who mentored so many wonderful poets, was not as availa-

ble in S.F. as he was in Berkeley—which was like going to a foreign country to me at the time. Spicer (he was helpful as long as you stayed on the fringe), and Ginsberg were definitely out. Snyder, Welch and Whalen were the poets we most gravitated toward. Snyder, by far and away was the best. His poetics (if he had any) were all-inclusive. He saw poets as contributing members to the community like carpenters or electricians would be. He still was an I.W.W. member and went to their leadership to establish a new worker’s “category”—a Poet’s Union. He got the paperwork done and we all signed up as card-carrying I.W.W. “Wobbly Poets.” We each had a little red membership card. Beyond that we then could use the Wobbly Hall (on Minna St.) for regular poetry readings and the use of their mimeo on which we duplicated hundreds of poems to pass out on the streets. Besides the Wobbly Hall readings, Snyder had an informal seminar-class we dropped by. It was his and Palmer’s idea for the Peace & Gladness Anthology—which took more hard core work than anyone could have believed at the time. Even better, Gary went to the organizers of the Berkeley Poetry Conference in ‘65 and created a “New Poets” reading selecting nine poets from among our commonly known group. Apparently that was the first time I had heard Gail Dusenbery or met her. We later became friends, arguing poetry and magic when she lived at 1360 Fell St.

Gary wasn’t about critiquing people’s poetry at all, nada. It was more about building a community that included esteem and respect for writers and artists. He, Welch, and Whalen shared a pad on Beaver St. (off the Mission?) and I remember going over there a few times. Doug developed a lasting friendship with Lew, but to me Welch was up and down a lot because of extremely hard drinking and possible life-long depression. It was an incalculable shock to me when he died—I never saw it coming the way those who were very close to him might have.

The street writing branched out into “road readings” where Sandberg, Barker, Norm Moser, I and others would go out to Santa Cruz and other small towns and churches and stage readings. One time we gave a reading and no one showed up. I dubbed it the “Ghost Reading,” but out of boredom we developed a very effective technique that we would later use in several readings. Each one of the poets would go to a different corner of the stage or room and then all would begin reading to each other simultaneously. It was kind of a free jazz or audio “cutup” pre-Burroughs. It worked very well as each poet got into the other poet’s rhythms.

The ‘64-65 time slot was our “15 minutes of fame.” (Of course, many of the poets like Lu Garcia and others have kept on “keeping on” right up to the present.) I read someplace with Kyger, Welch & McClure (I think.) Of course, it was a big reading. Also the Longshoremen’s Hall with Ginsberg, et al. after which the Lovin’ Spoonful played live. Just to be around the Berkeley Poetry Conference was monumental to me. I thought Olson was a huge blowhard and he definitely lived up to his rep—was openly loaded on acid,

speed, juice etc., and seemed to be in some kind of bisexual “phase” with some other poets/people he was embracing/swooning. He openly harangued lecturers from his seat and seemed to believe that he was the center of the universe concerning poetic theory. His final reading was one of the most spectacular “crash and burn” episodes of the times. It was also the first time I ever heard Wieners read—he wore lipstick, earrings, and mascara, and it was perceived as his big “coming out.” Like Creeley (whom I also heard for the first time), John’s reading was very low key—you had to strain to catch the words. It made it all the more dramatic as you could hear a pin drop and everyone was hanging on every word. It would be hard to overstate the influence of John Wieners on my perception of poetry as tone, phrasing—breath. It is completely inimitable. Wieners was like the “Prez” or Billie Holliday of poetry. There’s only one.

After I started injecting speed regularly I was never a part of another big reading that I can remember. Sometime in ‘73-74 I read at Cody’s with Bill Bathurst but it was an unbelievable nightmare best described elsewhere. I read at the Loading Zone another time where I blew on a harmonica to punctuate the poetry lines I was reading. We were always edging toward “performance” art to jazz up staid poetry readings. In 1966 I embarked on a journey with Susan Dornfeld that lasted for six haunted years, and I became the father of two children, a girl and a boy—a teacher and a musician. Those years could only be written about in a long memoir outside the scope of this project.

Andre Codrescu said “Poetry is the Art of being kidnapped by Circumstance.” By the end of the ‘60s not only was I kidnapped and held hostage, but the ransom seemed impossibly high. Thinking to escape, I took a fork in the trail that led into impenetrable underbrush where I thrashed around for most of the next two decades. In the end, I was still that rube from the country at heart. I had been burned in the fire; tempered. But in the end it was not my character to travel the paths of Huncke, Burroughs, Wieners and so many others attracted forever to a fatal light. I didn’t have the strength of character to surrender completely to such a vision of suffering, pain and love.

Again, in the days leading up to the Berkeley Conference, Gary’s mentoring was subtle and self-effacing. Like the Bodhisattva’s vow he stood aside patiently awaiting a whole new generation of poets to go before him. Here were all these poets you practically had to take a ticket for and (to me) there was too much sexual quid pro quo, so to speak. After all, we were in our early 20’s, not knowing what we were doing and looking for some one to trust. Gary was a person you could trust unequivocally who gave off the vibes that we were all working in the fields together as equals. What’s not to like about that?

I’ve lived in rural Oregon for 30 years while my friends have often complained that there just couldn’t be any “culture” here. Wherever we are there

is a “culture” in that place—specific to that place. Gary once said to draw a line in the sand right where you were. He’d tell the story about the couple who moved to the absolute wilderness up North and woke up the first day to the sound of the chain saws. There are tons of poets, musicians, writers and painters everywhere. Because of time and distance etc., we link up in different ways, different programs, and different cultural events. One of the best things is that they’re always home-grown, grass roots stuff. We couldn’t just snap our fingers and order up Allen Ginsberg for a local reading. I do have to say that Bill Stafford carried a hell of a lot of water for poetry in Oregon and like Snyder was a very accessible person, a wonderful guy. Oregon is filled with a generous, open-spirited community of poets and writers who have created many financially supportive venues and an exploding array of publishers and on-line ‘zines.

* * *

In 1972, in the darkest part of the underbrush I was trapped in, the light of love broke through again. This time I recognized it instantly—after all, I’d seen it once before. This time I embraced it; this time when I ran I came back. This time her embrace was unbreakable, indestructible. “This time” is now 35 years later. This time it is Detta, my wife.

When we washed up on the banks of the North Umpqua River in 1978 I was soon galvanized into action regarding the environment. It is extremely difficult to contemplate the wholesale destruction of the very ecosystem that sustains all life when you are so much closer to the fabric of it. Whole watersheds and eco-regions have been irrevocably altered. The life of the old-growth forests and all the life forms that spring from it and depend on it have been reduced to tiny remnants. The whole Pacific Northwest has had the Salmon Culture as its icon or central foundation for the 10-20 thousand years of indigenous habitation and the salmon life-history itself extends back for 40 million (!) years. Now there is approximately 5% left of wild coho and steelhead runs in Oregon. 26 different runs are on the “threatened” or “endangered” list. Needless to say but I’ve opened my veins over the last 3 decades in Sisyphean attempts to stem the tide.

When Gary was asked what his greatest fear was, he shot back: “Diminution of the gene pool.” That is exactly the threat to wild fish—as their gene pool is altered and diminished, extinction draws closer. Asked how we could remain sane and calm in the face of the practices and people who were destroying the planet he said to practice “right thinking in the face of inevitable squalor.” And so, the beat goes on—we do the best we can regardless of the outcome. If we don’t, who will?”

David Meltzer



DAVID MELTZER was born in Rochester, New York, at the finale of the Great Depression in 1937 of bohemian parents and immigrated to Brooklyn in 1940. He began writing poetry at age eleven. In 1960, his poetry appeared in the ground-breaking anthology, *The New American Poetry*. He has gone on to create a substantial body of work that is pervaded with “a kind of bop-perfection.” Having arrived in San Francisco in 1957, he is associated both with the Beats and the San Francisco Renaissance, often reading with jazz musicians at bars and coffeehouses. His recent book, *Beat Thing* (La Alameda Press), winner of the PEN Oakland Josephine Miles award, is both tribute to down-in-the-street wildness and rant against the romantic commodification which surrounds the Beat Generation. Meltzer brings forth the original spirit of Beat in an encyclopedic cascade of details whose dense, deep, fierce, funny, raucous, free associative jazz energy infuses every line. *Beat Thing* is an ecstatic chant of defiance and celebration. *David's Copy: The Selected Poems*, edited by Michael Rothenberg, contains nearly 50 years of Meltzer's poetry and provides ample evidence of his stylistic breadth as well as the music and humor active in it. David died, in Oakland, Dec. 31, 2016.

SUNY Electronic Poetry Center <http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/meltzer/index.html>

Selected Bibliography

David's Copy: the Selected Poems of David Meltzer, edited by Michael Rothenberg, Penguin Books, New York, 2005
Beat Thing, La Alameda Press, Albuquerque, 2007

David Meltzer & Richard Denner Correspondence

On Aug 2, 2006, Richard Denner wrote:

Luis Garcia and I've been close pals since the Berkeley Poetry Conference in 65, he was at your reading at Moe's, sitting in the back, dug your red shoes and the biting Bush bits, sees the world as mostly on fire, that is when everything isn't just water, he has a beautiful new book called -The Token- which you would like...

On August 02, 2007. David Meltzer wrote:

I remember the '65 Conference -- but the night Big O talked the talk, was on Derby Street w/ others getting the pad ready for the aftermath party-- Creeley was in a mood to deck somebody -- I passed

PS Luis Garcia & I used to be stablemates in/at Oyez Press in the '60s.
Onward in word

On August 2, 2006, Richard Denner wrote::

My wife and I had a pad on Derby Street near the blind school, where I hosted a party for Ginsberg, I think it was the night the new poets read, Olson was there, Creeley came late, I had given him cryptic directions stuffed in a wine bottle filled with weed, bet that was the night...

ALL THE HEADS OF THE TOWN LIT UP

I filled vials with violets and grass.
I made baggies of marigolds and grass.
I loaded a wine bottle with grass
and announced a Party for Allen.
I underestimated by a hundred
how many would attend this bash.
I was in a spot, so I put out my stash
and passed my Stetson.
Olson filled the papa chair
and passed his pipe—that was some pipe.
Orlovsky and I made it to the liquor store
much to everyone's relief.
Krech read a diatribe seated on the commode.
Lew Welch swung from the chandelier.
It was Creeley demanding everyone know
where the firemen and police were located
that cleared the place.

So, I added the cost and the cost of the cost.
Nothing was stolen, and nothing was broken,
save for the chandelier.

On August 05, 2006 10:10 PM, David Meltzer wrote:

Re: all the heads of the town lit up
not the same pad or night, but what gobsmack synchronicity --
yr poem sums it up as good as anybody --
Onward in word & beyond it

On April 14, 2007 Richard Denner wrote:

I wonder if you have written anything on the poetry scene in Berkeley in the 1960s or have memories you would like to share or know of any discussion.

On April 14, 2007, David Meltzer wrote:

Was earthbound in the '60s -- "beatniks" were '50s dissidents, middle-aged guys like beloved Allen -- I was a red diaper baby in Brooklyn in the War Years -- already against the grain, already aware of acceptance -- a lad --

Yes, have some sharp invisible Polaroids of '65 -- Jack Shoemaker & I were involved w/ The Rolling Renaissance inter-city gallery, performing space, &tc & had 5 days at Glide to assemble programs of local younger poets & elders --& made a night open to the "Berkeley Poets" of that moment like Al Young, John Simon &tc. -- will try to reassemble the disassembling hoo hah for yr edification -- or total mashed potato paste of past -

Met the Big O in '65 at a party pad after the Big Talk at UC Berkeley -- also had to negotiate a boxing event between me & Creeley (bless him) -- he was too drunk to punch my lights out: I was too young to treasure his illuminated works --

Ask me more

On April 16, 2007, Richard Denner wrote:

I remember being introduced to you by Allen Ginsberg at a party on the south-side of campus one day during the conference and later sat in a car with Jack Spicer and, I think, Ed Sanders. Do you remember? It was a stucco California bungalow, kitchen off to the right as you entered, bedroom to the left, I thought it was your house, since you were standing in the middle of the front room, but I know now you lived in the city, so I mistook you for the host, Allen proceed to sit down on a mattress in the front room and a couple of chicks slung themselves around him, and I was surprised because I thought he might not like girls, so little did I know.

Asking you more--

what was the flavor of the street in the mid-sixties?
how did the political situation and civil rights affect your work?
what books were you reading, did you read Artaud?
what haunts in Berkeley were your favorite,
do you remember Robbie's Cafeteria?
did you encounter Ron Silliman in those daze?
what was Glide and the Rolling Renaissance?
could you tell me more about your impressions of Olson?
funny about Creeley, I too nearly got in a fight with him

Back to you

On April 18, 2007, David Meltzer wrote:

Scrambled yet focused, back from New College.

This is buckshot but first off, you shd contact Bob Hawley & arrange some kind of interview w/ him since he published Gail & Luis & Doug P &, in a sense, was the behind the scenes Diaghalev of those spring rites. Am unaware of Silliman's Berkeley daze but admire his work & activism.

For me, the key event was when Jack Shoemaker & I (of Maya Press) coordinated the 5 day reading events at Glide in conjunction w/ the city-wide Rolling Renaissance arts celebration. One of the nights was given over to the Berkeley contingency like Al Young, John Simon, Alta. (There's a curious footnote to the post-readings celebration at Fritz Maytag's Anchor Steam Brewery where the "Berkeley" contingency felt free to nude themselves.)

Jeez, in a car w/ Spicer & Ed, holy smokes. Was it in SF or Berkeley?

For a geezer, have a rather acute clarity on details of what everyone else was forgetting.

Will try to address yr beehive of questions in the next installment.

Keep on my sluggish case, ace.
Amazing moment.

On July 30, 2007, David Meltzer wrote:

i knew spicer pre berkeley big tent event
was on derby street w/ the hawleys
who were the open door party for
the post big o talk

spicer was a remarkably generous & uncomfortable man
jack & robt duncan used to meet at joe dunn's pad every sunday
for an ad hoc salon where us tadpoles plied our torpid stuff
imagine being evaluated by these 2 forces
a most profound exchange

jack was for metaphysical conflation
compression
whereas robt was the grand maitre of the rhetorical hermetic

my wife & i & the hawleys & van aelstroms [sp.?] were setting up the
scene for the post

my first visage of the big o was he bending down beneath the door frame

to enter
he had two co-eds in each embrace & a bottle of jack daniels
he found a throne seat right by the door
sat down
& they sat on his lap & he & they guzzled
& chas popped some pills
god knows what
(this was not too long after his wife died)

creeley was in the kitchen getting angry drunk
& picked a fight w/ me for no know reason
(i'd met him earlier at the brakhages)

ginsberg stripped
& wandered longingly
& nakedly through the crowd

from: **The Clown (1959) for Wallace Berman**

1/The Unknown, the Classical
Jugglers in Xanadu,
acrobats in Creet.
The essential is always balance.
Swing forward on springed feet,
hands up, spin & reach,
cartwheel, bounce on earth
& roll into a new dance.

Re-mime the beginning
of Time & Dream, insane,
grace. Dazzle the demons
who watch you fall.

Ravens crying: Ave! Ave!
striking him & eaglets
bit & stripped him of his ribbons.
Ave! Ave!

Maccus, Pappus, Cicirrus.

Faces painted on faces,
blossoms on humpback cranky forms.
What we will be:
warty gourd nose bent down
to punch a hole in the chin,
leering toothless mouth
& a patch of flaming hair
sprouts atop the white face.

*

The roots which hold a poem to earth
reach to suck out the wordless instant.
Send out the clowns.
Box & bash each other.
Struck sideways by the goat-bladder.
Goosed by the staff.

He-who-got-slapped first wore the centunclus,
rags & patches for a bull's-eye.
Harlequin's eye-blinking diamonds.
Christ's cross. Diversion is speed.

*

On flag shanked horses
minstrel, drug peddler
wander to stopped wagons
offering amusement.

Medicine show showers handbills
like dove feathers on mud roads
leading to the Church.

Beneath stained-glass, stone demons,
Christ arose thru a trapdoor,
sulphury smoke belched from Nebuchadnezzar's
red-hot furnace scorching papier-mâché Hell.

Machines unwind flying angels,
thunder, wind & Dossenus flees
from God's butt-clubbing love.

Lamentation

for Zap the Zen Monk

Cold grove to grow pot in.
Wet dew sops thru
sleepingbag.
The hibachi's all rusty,
crudded with dove shit,
dung of cranes.

Wind
topples down bamboo tent
& tender flesh bruises.
Only the mind hardens like ice
to crack & melt into a stream

which perhaps
touches roots (like nerve-ends)
closest to this dream of earth.

Lamentation

for Jack Spicer

Sir, I'm out of touch with stars.
The bar's closed. We go
stumbling down Grant to Columbus
to the Park to somebody's parked car.
Somebody says, Let's all go to Ebbe's.
Says Ebbe, Sure, why not, let's all go.
We're gone in the car, piled in the back
seat, breathing wine on the windowpanes.
This seven years ago. Tonight

It is pain to realize you're dead,
your last book on the shelf,
your last words to a nation
not indivisible but invisible;
a nation that will never will its mystery to poets
who even in Greece weren't poet enough to handle man
nor touch the dark forms. Gone.
Maybe that night it was Marco
who fell back upon a park bush.

We left him there to sleep.

Oyes!

Thy seed shall be as the stars of heaven

ST. CLEMENT OF ROME

In hope I offer a fire-wheel,
12 stars a-sparkle on the black
waters of the well,
jasmine & rose leaves
stolen from an albino hare
& 5 lily petals
pilfered from the dove

knowing stuff of tribute is only for the hand
O Jesus what to awaken the sleeping heart?
Off with my robes, roll my rings & coins
down cobble, shave my head, set fire to my flesh:
a star instinct follows?

Light thru wound & wings
break thru my back:
wings of light, wings of snow
O Christos! your four mirrors

turn the fox blind,
give sight to the mole,
my face four times
broken in your light
O Christ!
I seek sight beyond glass

& offer a fire-wheel,
12 stars a-sparkle on the water's black
disc, jasmine, rose leaves
stolen from an albino hare & 5
lily petals pilfered from the dove.

[December 1965]

The Bath

1

Movie over, we draw a bath & in it
face each other,
legs around hips in wet embrace.

Splashing in the jug
I upset, then sink our daughter's fleet of
plastic boats
docked along the tub's rim.

2

Arise with dream speed from the steam.
Sea beasts
shimmer in fogged mirror. Ah

the dance now is only dance,
a race to cold sheets thru
chill hallway.

New Year's Poem: 1967

Why it's my old friend the piper
back from last year's dying, blind
in one eye, one lung lost
hard of hearing, toothless, drinking
blackberry wine from a paperbag

leans on a car to watch the people go by.

Berkeley Street Poets

Doug Palmer *Facino*

John *the Poet* Thomson

Julia Vinograd *The Bubble Lady*

Richard Denner *Rychard*

John Oliver Simon

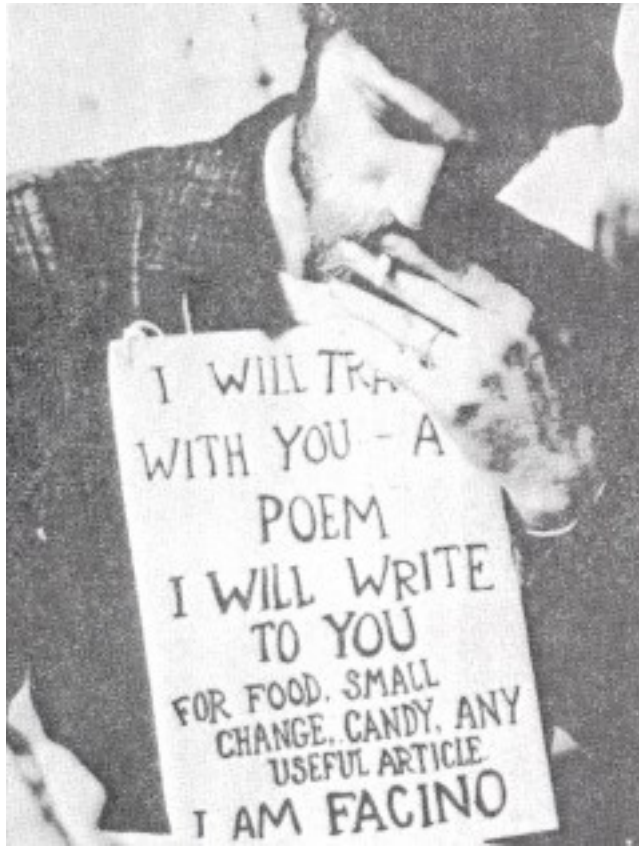
Richard Krech

Charles Potts *Laughing Water*

Joel Waldman

Harold Adler: Photos

Doug Palmer



MY EXPERIENCE AS A POET IN THE 60s

Barely anything, than life itself, loomed larger to me during my twenties, than that idea 'I am a poet.' When George Stanley, who was probably ten years older, spoke of writing half-dozen or so poems in a *whole year*, I regarded that with contempt. I was not only a poet, but was writing literally thousands of poems. (1965-1975)

How does a poet write thousands of poems? And, the very leading and natural question that follows, *are* they poems? The first question is pretty easy to answer, at least on one level: I wrote thousands of poems because thousands of people asked me to do so. The second question may never be answered, because those poems were carried away by the people for whom I wrote them, and as I did not make a copy for myself, unless the poems held meaning enough for people to retain them, they are lost forever.

Literary criticism of the street poet, should such ever be deemed worthwhile, will necessarily prove fragmentary, though, I would hope not without reward. My conviction is that among all these poems are to be found some of such worth as to justify the critic and collector.

I was the poet Facino. I wrote first in San Francisco, on Market Street, and North Beach, then on the campus of the University of California, Berkeley. Sather Gate and City Lights Bookstore were the twin touchstones of those years of writing, which extended from 1965-1975. Figures that loom large, and about whom I will write a great deal hereafter, were Pan at Cal campus, and Shig at City Lights. But what about Ludwig, and Julian Michel, and Larry Cantor? Dave Hazelton, Mark Morris, John Simon? And hundreds more whose names I will have forgotten, but whose lives in that moment's passing remain, as acts of kindness, thoughts shared, the smiles of recognition that gave those years their warrant of worth.

1.

There are a few people we want to remember to the world, thereby restoring somewhat of what the world has lost. A man's life is mainly lost, most of all perhaps to himself. Yet if that life has borne meaning into ours, how firm is our hold upon that spar of spirit chance has lifted in our way!

I would appreciate Lew Welch.

On Saturday night of my first week writing street poems in San Francisco, I was arrested. The charge was begging. This was mid-January, 1965. Dave Hazelton, editor of the magazine *SYNAPSE*, was with me, also writing street poems, using the name CINZANO. Subsequently, through our mutual friend, Mark Morris, who was involved with Committee for Non-Violent Action

(CNVA), a reporter for the San Francisco Chronicle interviewed me, photos were taken, and a couple days later, the story of the arrest made the front page, with accompanying photo.

Mark mimeographed the Chronicle article, along with some of the street poems I had written before my arrest – I kept copies of all those first poems. Dave’s wife Jeanne Lee (Hazelton) was appearing at the Jazz Workshop. Dave encouraged all his poet friends to go hear Jeanne sing, so that among the audience were Gary Snyder and Lew Welch.

I had my mimeo sheets, and handed them out. I wrote a poem to Gary, and one to Lew. Each wrote me one in return. Lew wrote his on back of the mimeo sheet. Here is Lew’s poem that has grown so in my heart, ever encouraging:

Han Shan on the rocks—
Brecht, with proofs in
hand,
to the printer—
“A workman, in a
City, of
workmen”
but neither of them faced
the City Face

to face
with nothing but a poem

I set up a reading in Berkeley at the Jabberwock on Telegraph Avenue, with David Meltzer and Lew. This must have been a year or two later. Lew read last. He talked of Kenneth Patchen in the hospital, read some of Patchen’s poems, tears coursing down his cheeks, full of the other man, and his trouble. During the evening he read ‘Desiderata’, which he said he had up on his wall.

These words seem so flat and lacking, yet of the many poets I’ve known, and readings I’ve been at, none moved me more than Lew, talking his love out, the pain.

When the reading was over, I gave Lew his share of the money taken in, which couldn’t have been much more than ten dollars. Yet he was gracious and genuinely appreciative.

It is not difficult to envision Lew in a shelter he’s put together deep in the river canyons of Nevada Country, the last old Bear of the River: And each of us who’s been taken to heart by him, could rejoice to be the one to find him there, and bring back the news.

My spirit grieves his loss more than any other I've known.

2.

THE ROCK FLOWS UPSTREAM

Your letter
wasn't in the mailbox.
Climbing the hill again
I read an old poem about our firstborn.

What's happened lately?

Here it's a clinic.
An occasional patient
stumbles down from the city
to share this silence.

Up the north fork of Limekiln
is a place I want to show you.
White water washes our pain.

RICHARD BARKER

3.

I was helping Dave Sandberg move in San Francisco. I had an old white '52 Dodge pick-up truck, with no tail gate. We had loaded up, Dave was putting in the last of the load. He was to follow me in his car. I am heading downhill, at a fair clip, when suddenly I hear a horn blow. Looking out the rear-view mirror, I see a mass of sheets of paper blowing every which way, many of them making better time than I was.

These 'sheets of paper' were Dave's poems.

We had a lot of help from people along the streets, but even as we gathered, far in the distance other sheets were blowing, both up and down the street.

Dave was disconsolate. Yet the humorous aspect of the thing was not altogether lost on us.

Dave interpreted this as a sign of direction to take, and started his 'Free Poems Among Friends'. He invited his friends to submit poems, and he mimeographed these, with the poet's address, so people might make contact if they wished. Wherever Dave would be, in Union Square at an outdoor reading, in

the Haight, etc., he would hand out these poems to whoever would receive them from him, like a leafleteer.

4.

One evening when Dave Hazelton, myself, and several others were all jammed into what I remember as being a pretty small car, on our way to San Francisco from Berkeley, perhaps for one of Jeanne's appearances at the Jazz Workshop, Dave told me of a visit he had made to Jack Spicer in the hospital.

Apparently, at the time, Dave was irritated, but now he was part-pleased to be recognized by Spicer. Dave edited a mimeographed poetry magazine he called *SYNAPSE*.

Spicer quipped that Dave ought to change the name of his magazine to 'Synapse, Pops, Crackles'.

5.

Great smile
on the forehead

the shirt –sleeved
slight red-faced

cabbie
nods,

the guy gets
in the cab.

To enter
so, by such leave
is the hope I have.

as FACINO, 1967

6.

I first knew Dave Hazelton and Jim Thurber through a poetry class at San Francisco State College. Mark Linenthal was the instructor. The class was not working because we sat back to back as in other classes, and harsh, un-

kind criticisms resulted. Thurber, who was for several of us, the fire of the class, started coming less and less. Finally, I wrote a critique of the class, suggesting, among other things, that we form into a circle. Mark Linenthal read this out loud, concluding with some non-supportive comment on sitting round in a circle.

Immediately, the whole class turned their desks round, so that we were sitting in a circle. (The sequel, however, was that after a couple sessions, the back-to-back seating was resumed.)

FOR DOUG AND JIM

to give:
the song starts
from its place
in the heart
a traveling
steady in its
path toward the
outward moving
circle, the rings
expanding like heart-waves
that lose the eye

a simple friendship:
spurt of soul
from the one to the
other, a glad
handing of worth
to worth, increase
in the song that
is solitary, sung
from the singular
need

D.R. HAZELTON

8.

The highest moment of Dave's and my relation, and one of the most delightful of all moments in my life, came the Saturday night we were arrested street writing.

I had been street writing earlier that day on Market Street. He wanted to go out with me street writing near City Lights and offered to treat me to a Mexi-

can dinner at a nearby North Beach restaurant. He had been there before and had a high regard for their food and hospitality.

Indeed, it was as he had led me to believe, and we had the whole works, plus beers. He had not figured on the extra beers we had had, when he had calculated what he'd have to pay. The upshot of it was he was short about a dollar. I had a few cents, so we emptied our pockets, leaving them an odd assortment of wonders in lieu of the dollar. I had been given a bright fresh red apple street writing, which was the best I had to give. So we piled it all together, got up as nonchalantly as we could, said thanks, got out the door before they reached our table, and ran like bats out of hell, down to our street writing station at Columbus and Broadway!

9.

When I picture Dave, I see him dancing. In one vision he is holding his small daughter, Naima, close against him, one hand behind her head, as they turn to the music; then he holds her out in front of him, looking down into her face, as she looks back up. In the other vision, I see him dancing, his arms outstretched, as though pointing, and he waggles his forefinger to the music.

10.

One of Dave's poems starts with the line "We have failed each other." I didn't like the idea. One of my poems of that time starts

Keep
what might have been,
that it is,
and you just don't
see

At first thought, these ideas seem contradictory to me. The second thought is that the self (or succession of selves) remains a constant, even when others are lost to me. Yet I cannot reconcile myself to the belief that the self remains whole and undiminished when others fall or recede from my life.

I have never admitted of a loss in the spirit's own substance, as it has regard to itself.

FOUR POEMS TO LEW WELCH by Doug Palmer

LEW WELCH

The trees stand
over you, as
they always have.

AFTER L.W.

And what is there now,
after you've gone? Of
course, I will go on,
an occasional thought
of you has reminded me
of feelings I so long
denied. But now, there
is no such respite. You
are in me nearly every
day, and I welcome you
there. What's left
is the dimensions of
my heart, that must
grow larger for me
to express your effect,
the effect of my heart
upon itself. Who will
understand I speak of
you, when I speak of
myself now? Now I try
to tell of the largeness
when I am but the
seed of an oak.

AFTER L.W.

What brief light glanced
from the cover of cloud
crystalline and strong,

rivers pouring down falls,
in mist, in brilliance,
forging great heights of stone,

in counterpoint to pillars
and columns of cloud,
in density bred, living in darkness:

An alien substance to yourself,
shredding stone drops from
ledges, trails turned to space,

your feet seem hinged to
the bottom of time.

I have tried to reconcile
the life I loved with what
is left. He is gone,

having given himself up,
having handed his heart
into our crude keeping.

I cannot call him by name.
Only in silent caring
do the words approach

my unfound feeling.
And what of my feeling,
when its only living object

is these words which would
betray his secret.

Letter to Lew Welch

What are the winds
that softly hum in
the heart, like tears
that have stopped falling

Rough and brittle like
the shed bark of old pines

Who will drink and cry
the dying Kenneth Patchen
Whose heart will bound
like stags pierced and lame

Moon upon night's rivers,
swept glistening upwards

When he learned of my arrest, Shig sent word that I could street write in front of City Lights Bookstore. I accepted this invitation. But I did not street write there until the case was settled in court.

Dave Hazelton and I were charged with begging. We were represented by an attorney who was recommended to us by Mark Morris. He accepted the case because it involved civil liberties, and made no charge. We entered a plea of not guilty, and requested a trial by jury in a few days.

We were told to return for the setting of the date of the trial. We requested that we be allowed to go free on our own recognizance, and that our bail of \$23 be returned, but this was denied.

Such a relatively small amount of money may seem inconsequential, yet for Dave and me it was not. At the time I was separated from my wife and basically living on what I could find in the streets. I remember how good I felt when I found an unopened can of mixed nuts in Golden Gate Park. And a wet paper dollar I found on another occasion.

When I was brought into the police station I was told to empty out the contents of my pockets onto the floor. It was such an odd ball mess and assortment of stuff that one of the policemen remarked to the other that I was a packrat. These were things I had picked up off the street.

12.

When we were arrested, Dave asked if I wanted to go limp and force them to carry us. Dave had been involved with SNCC, and this was a tactic they apparently employed. I told him I felt that would only compound things, and we would then be charged with resisting arrest.

Two San Francisco policemen had approached us, looked us over, and may have asked us what we were doing. One said he'd have to check with his superior to see if that was legal. He went off to call, and in perhaps ten minutes, returned, and told us that we were under arrest.

We walked quietly with the officer till we came to a paddy wagon. We were loaded in back, and driven to an underground garage. We then were taken to an elevator. Dave and I got in, the officer drew a sliding gate across, which separated and enclosed us away from him. Upstairs we were fingerprinted, and photographed. We were allowed to make a call, and Dave called his wife, I believe, asking her to let Mark Morris know so he could bail us out. As I recall, I had that much money saved up somewhere, perhaps at my wife's, or at Mark's. I think Mark went Dave's bail.

Then we were taken to a cell, and locked in. I think the greatest impression of the whole experience came then when I heard that heavy metallic sound of the cell door closing. It is a truly final sound.

Even then it remained for us an adventure, and we seemed not to be afraid. Within two or three hours Mark came and bailed us out.

Mark was excited, amused, and delighted by the whole episode.

13.

When we checked out the police returned our belongings, such as they were. But two things were not returned to me. One was the sign I was using when I was arrested street writing. This was retained as evidence. The other was a nice piece of cheese, probably half-a-pound or more, that had been given me street writing. I was later interviewed by a San Francisco television station, and the plight of this cheese became, for the interviewer, a source of well-meaning amusement.

14.

When Dave and I returned to court for the setting of the date for the trial, the judge dismissed the charges, but warned us to not return to writing poems on the streets of San Francisco. We learned from our attorney that the law governing begging defines it as asking alms, which we were not doing.

15.

Shortly thereafter I was able to reclaim my street writing sign. Mark Morris lettered the original. The first day I was going to go out street writing on Market Street I had printed on a small scrap of paper the words that appear on Mark's version, and was going to safety-pin this on my shirt front. Mark offered to make me a sign which would show up.

Mark lettered a second sign, which we used for the Chronicle interview. On that sign he unintentionally omitted the word "candy".

16.

The place Mark Morris held in my life in 1965 should be stressed. He was already a man, with much experience, good sense, and worldly wisdom. I was still pretty much a wild-hair kid, in love with poetry, and convinced I was an incarnation of Jesus Christ. Mark had stability, and an on-going creative life, as well as strong commitment and organizational talent applied to CNVA, to the paramount importance of peace, to the ending of war.

He tempered my enthusiasm with his experience, and is one of the only men in the whole of my life I listened to.

It is with sadness one acknowledges how much more one has received than he has given in return. I think of Jim Thurber as the person of all I have known as being most full of fire: Mark Morris as the most full of light, enthusiasm, and encouragement.

17.

Jim Thurber represents a freer, wilder time in my life. He was one of the many open doors, which were later to close to me. Living was a succession of open doors, a secret of life behind every one.

One night in Alameda we walked, long striding, with the night as much in us as out. Destined but with no destination.

18.

This poem makes me think of Thurber; I may have written it to him, though I don't recall.

THAT'S ALL, IN THE NAME OF GOD

Beautiful thing
in a box-car
stomping stomping
hearing someone
stomping
you are
there.
I saw a rock.
The car is
made
of
well, I'm
made not
the same.
But precisely,
if
at all.
Beautiful
thing that you ARE
thing that you
shall be if
you shall be
beautiful, thing.

I saw half
a rust of
can lid once
cut off of the
top of a
can of
maybe
well
maybe
if it's red
then
first I am
myself,
whatever I shall
be told I was.
Beautiful.
Think of
pieces of
cardboard
between the rails
of the
track of the
seagull's wings.

19.

When I was first street writing at Sather Gate, Jim, Dave and I all went together. Facino, Cinzano, and Flammbo. I had suggested the name to Jim after the C.K. Chesterton story, 'The Flying Stars'. Flambeau is the master-thief. Jim had never seen the name written out, and from its sound came Flammbo.

Someone offered me a peach for a poem. Jim, seeing it, says 'Do I dare to eat a peach?' And from that I wrote this street poem.

INDECISION

Do I dare
to eat
a peach

If so
do I dare
to eat
a fig

If so
do I dare
to swing
a swing

If so
do I dare
to lay in
sun

If so
do I dare
to doubt

If so
can I
doubt

If so
will I

If not
no problem

To Bob

20.

Thurber was he who came and went, the elusive. He was the spirit of the free. Freight-hopper, far-strider, late-nighter, first-gone, least-accounted for. His poems were as much a mystery as he was. Dave Hazelton published two or three in *SNYAPSE*. These were the only ones any of us had seen till the *Peace and Gladness* anthology.

Jim was the figure of a myth, a lost spirit perhaps but truer to himself than anyone I've ever known.

I cry out that I am forsaken.
But in your nature
there is nothing which forsakes me.
The wind sweeps the leaves
from every branch,
and for miles in the woods
I hear only that sound.
Where are you hiding?
And why do I not hear
your inevitable movement toward me?
I listened to the brook endlessly.
I saw my own face in it,
tasted its fire and coldness.
Have you already arrived at my cabin

shamelessly, while I was away?
I have come, empty-handed and without reason
thousands of miles. I am sure
to prefer death to your absence.
I cry out that I am forsaken,
and that you do not answer me.
Forsaken, how is it –
that one forsakes himself?

JIM THURBER

21.

It was Thurber who told me that one of my poems had been stolen from his rooms. It was this one:

Whether the
man says
I'm alone
or
not,
remembering
how the men
threw/throw
their lives
like
stones to skip
over the stream.
Stones/skip
given the
desire
and
effort
a stone
and
the stream.
And the
man,
whose aim
it's all
attributed to.
Who/stands
silent
watching
the stone,
plunge.

/The water.

Finally.
And
you ask,
where
would you keep
or would
be found,
the record
of this
small
occurrence?
And its
place, its
feel in your
hand, the
proper weight.
Man-sized.

/And the

winter waters
carry much
weight of wood,
trees/the
rain fell
of the mountains
And later/the
melt of snow.

/Cold water.

And finally
the warming up,
the last summer
or any other
year things,
rocks that heap
up, as the
walls of water,
the river lowers.
A day, you
can see
the wet sides
of the rock banks,
indicating the
water was higher,
even today/and
before your eyes.
And finally/
you can

swim in the
waters, with
little fear.
And you can/
drink
of the water,
thinking only
of your thirst,
and the quality
of cold
that the water is.
And how the
sun sets
the water
askimmer, and
the water
over rocks
and in
deep-colored
pools, and
think
of animals
that have drunk
here/
before you.
And after.
And you will
not disturb
the still
with a shout
or a stone-cast
and rings.
Nor maybe
will you come again.

22.

Thinking on Thurber I feel our greatness. The greatness that is of the heart, greatness in the feeling. The feeling of Thurber is greatness, though it remain forever unknown. The spirit that lays a permanent claim upon us, to feel its power upon us never diminished, to blaze from kindled memory, fresh and lithe as ever: in this I knew I knew greatness of Thurber. Thurber was great, and so was I.

BIBLIOGRAPHY (circa 1967)

BASTA. Poems written in response to Basta! La Historia de Nuestra Lucha: Enough! The Story of Our Struggle, a publication of the United Farm Workers of California, headed by Caesar Chavez.

MOON SERVICES. Street poems written as Facino, mostly on Cal. campus, Berkeley. A collage accompanies each poem.

GRAND GESTURES. Poem-observations of people written while street writing. Calligraphy and illustrations by Jenny.

MARGARET'S EXPERIENCES. Sexual love poems. Illustrated.

John Thomson



JOHN THOMSON was born in Queens NY in 1942. After seeing Bob Dylan perform at Town Hall in 1962, he wanted to become a songwriter. After reading *HOWL* in 1963, he wanted to become a poet. After reading Ralph J. Gleason's liner notes for *LENNY BRUCE: AMERICAN*, he wanted to become a music writer. He hitchhiked out to Berkeley, California in 1963 and became a poet, music journalist and eventually a songwriter and singer. Somewhere along the way, after the "FUCK" poem, he became j. poet, the name he uses for all his creative endeavors. His poems and music journalism have been published internationally in magazines and newspapers including All Music Guide, Avalanche, Berkeley Barb, Crowdaddy, Creem, Folk Roots, Goldmine, Litmus, Musichound Guide to World Music, Native Peoples, Pulse, PlanetOut.com, SF Chronicle and Examiner, The Temple and many more. His album *LSDOA* is available at CD Baby <http://cdbaby.com/cd/jpoet06>

A New Song

One thousand spices
One thousand fragrances
One thousand recipes
One cook, One kitchen
One mouth
Always open to eat, to sing, to sigh, to pray.

One breath
One song
Who is this singing?
Who is this listening?
What is this new song
I've known all my life?

Dead Musicians

the night watchman sits in a darkened room
smoking a cigarette
listening to jazz on a small plastic radio

he's guarding a store full of things
that no one in their right mind
would ever attempt to steal

outside the streets are cold and empty
there is nowhere to go
nothing to do
no one to see

the steam pipes cough

dead musicians play
a lonely music

how does a man walk at six o'clock

like a river

like a blade of grass

like an insect death

like first light on a doomed city

like blackbirds exploding

from a dead
tree

like mountain dust

like slow gunpowder drift as

i put the moon up to my skull & pull the trigger

may 5,69

Love at First Sight

a soft crescent of lite
turning slowly in the sky
it is the moon
it becomes a smile
it becomes yr face

there are thousands of stars in the sky
twinkling twinkling
now there are only two
yr eyes

you turn to me &
the air dances in the space between us

Wedding Poem

Four eyes One vision
Four feet One road
Four lips One kiss

Two tongues One song
Two hearts One beat
Two souls One soul

Many friends One celebration
Many children One family
Many pathways One journey

May you walk together all your days
in peace and beauty, surrounded by love
and light

Prayer

now i lay me down to fuck
to kiss an fondle touch an suck
if i shud come before my mate
then i will help her masturbate

STREET POETRY IN THE 1960s

What can I say about Berkeley, San Francisco and the Bay Area in the 1960s? How to convey the giddy sense of infinite possibility that hung in the air? You didn't need pot, hash, or acid to get high. There was a feeling of weightlessness permeating the air. Every day was sunny, everybody smiled, students at UC Berkeley almost danced down the street on the way to class. The air was cleaner, purer, sweeter. The streets were litter-free— this is actually true. People didn't lock their doors, strangers began talking on a street corner and became life long friends, poets and musicians were everywhere, soon to reinvent the way America produced art and made music. Hair was getting longer, morals were getting looser, women were getting stronger,

men were getting gentler, non-violence was the word, even as the police beat down anti-war and Civil Rights protesters. In 1964, I had just come out from New York City and couldn't believe how friendly, laid back and open my peers were. Everything was possible, love was all around us, the world was changing fast and my new student and political and street friends (soon to be called hippies) were making those changes happen. The Free Speech Movement (FSM) had started at UC Berkeley to protest the administration's attempts to clamp down on anti-war and Civil Rights organizations, and we all believed that concentrated, non-violent resistance to authority would win the day. Despite the assassination of President Kennedy, it seemed that all doors would soon open and the walls of corruption would crumble. America would see the light; we are, after all, an optimistic nation. We'd stop the war and hold out a healing hand to blacks, browns and Asians and turn the military machine into some kind of giant Peace Corps, helping to undo some of the damage we'd been doing for centuries. This all sounds impossibly naïve now, but if you were there, you know it's true. We were immature and unrealistic perhaps, but we had a faith in ourselves and in our country that could not be repressed. We went to the South and registered voters, we went to Africa and built dams and irrigation systems, we went to Canada so we wouldn't have to kill our fellow human beings, and we went out into the streets protesting, singing and dancing, knowing that it would take time, but confident that a change for the better was coming, something so big and holy and blissful that we'd astound the world and ourselves when it happened.

Cynics will say nothing happened. No revolution ever took place, but the women's movement, Gay Liberation, Black nationalism, psychedelic rock, protest music, and the ecology movement set in motion back then are still sending shock waves throughout America and the world. The things we did and said and sung and wrote reverberate through the years. The right wing is still afraid of us, kids are still fascinated by hippies and beats and sex and drugs and rock and roll, and anybody who has a heart knows there's nothing funny about peace, love and understanding.

STREET POET FACINO

One interesting side trip that came spinning out of this swirling vortex of creativity was the street poet phenomenon. I don't know if it started in Berkeley, but it was on the Berkeley campus that I met Facino (Doug Palmer).

"I am Facino. I am a poet. I will write you a poem for any useful item." The sign was on a piece of cardboard, hung around the neck of a gentle, sandy haired young man with a full beard and odd haircut that looked like someone had put a bowl on his head and chopped off everything they could reach with a not very sharp pair of scissors. The shaggy haircut looked like an inverted bird's nest, not the usual head of untamed long hair that many students and artists were starting to grow in 1965. The day was sunny, the air was clear, and the poet was sitting on the edge of the decorative fountain in the center

of Sproul Plaza on the UC Berkeley campus known as Ludwig's Fountain. His khaki pants and work shirt made him look more like a construction worker than a poet. I walked over and sat down next to him.

A few feet away there was a young mother and her little girl. The mom was scooping up water in her cupped hand and then pouring it back into the fountain. The girl giggled with delight, then she'd stick her tiny fist into the water and try to grab a handful. When she opened her hand, nothing was there. She looked at her mother, who was pouring another cupped hand full of water back into the pond. The little girl grabbed again, making a serious face as she looked at her empty hand. She couldn't understand why she couldn't grab a handful of water. Facino started writing a poem about this incident and when he was finished, gave it to the mother. She read it, smiled, and gave him a few bucks and a big, warm smile. The little girl was still trying to grab the water.

I asked Facino if he made a living doing poetry. He said no, he had a day job, but it was important to take poetry to the streets, to get it out of libraries and into the lives of everyday people. To make every day, every experience, a poem, to be aware of the magic and beauty that's always there, all around us. The little moments we tend to ignore. (As Doug Palmer, he eventually edited an important anthology of 60s poets called *Poems Read in the Spirit of Peace & Gladness*.) I introduced myself to him. He smiled. "You're the fuck boy," he said, shaking my hand. "Pleased to meet you."

THE FUCK POEM

On March 3rd, 1965, I sat down on a planter on the edge of the UC Berkeley campus at the corner of Telegraph Avenue and Bancroft Street. On a sheet of 11 1/2" X 8" notebook paper folded in half, I had written the word FUCK. This led to the so-called Filthy Speech Movement, which wasn't a movement, or filthy, although it did point out some of the contradictions that are still plaguing the left to this day.

I've spent decades searching my brain trying to understand just what confluence of events, inner and outer, led me to produce my first "street poem," the legendary FUCK sign. Were the stars aligned in a particular way that caused a ray of invisible light to permeate my cortex and produce those four letters? Was my brain chemistry bubbling extra potent combinations of creative juices, or under-producing the elements that held impulsive behavior in check? Was I desperate for attention or crying out for help? Was I fed up with the seeming hypocrisy of both the establishment and the young politicians, who hoped to replace the system with something more benign and life affirming, but ultimately were just as cautious about unlimited free speech? Was it lack of sleep, lack of judgment, the calling of a higher (or maybe lower) power? Was it a prank, an aberration, an inspiration? Did I want to join the big FSM party in my own unique, slightly dissonant way? Or was it a burst of pure

joy, the opening of doors long held shut by fear and insecurity?

I still can't say. Over the years, I've given people many explanations and rationalizations, but the truth is, my mind was blank as I wrote that poem/sign. I *did* feel the lack of love in the world that I later spoke about, but doesn't everybody? Does anyone feel content and loved the way they want/need to be loved? I was not unique in my lack of love, or my small suffering, which was nothing when compared to the battles over civil rights and the war in Vietnam that were raging, and pumping enough mad money into the economy to allow the students, beats and soon to come hippies the disposable income to pursue the dream of freedom without limits.

I felt no different that day, a slightly overcast day, than on any other as I sat down on the planter with a pen and a piece of paper I'd borrowed and wrote THE WORD in red ink. I sat there for hours, largely ignored. At one point a large blond man, I read him as a "frat boy," came by and tore up the sign and threatened me. "There are girls walking around here," he raged throwing the scraps of torn paper at me. I got another piece of paper and wrote another POEM. Mario Savio stopped by and pointed out that fuck, in American vernacular, could be a noun, verb, preposition, exclamation or adjective. I added (verb) in small print on the lower left of the sign. Then the frat boy came back with a cop and demanded that I be arrested for outraging the public morality, or disturbing the peace, or something. I surrendered my sign and myself and got arrested.

The flap that ensued has been written about and analyzed to death. Read David Goines' excellent *The Free Speech Movement* (10 Speed Press, Berkeley, 1993) for all the historical and hysterical background. I was convicted of public obscenity, lost an appeal to the US Supreme Court and served 30 days in jail. Art Goldberg, one of the few FSM politicians who supported me, and I are currently the last persons to ever serve time for obscenity in the United States.

STREET POET NEW YORK

The fuck flap was not an important event in my life, even though it looms large in the memory of many historians and politicians. I was naïve and far from politically savvy. I was also more or less homeless, but in the 60s that didn't matter. If you were young and hip and a poet or musician, every door was open to you and a bed and a meal were not hard to find. As soon as I got out of jail on bail, pending the appeal to the Supreme Court that we eventually lost, I went back to New York City, which is where I started my career as a street poet. New York is harder, darker, and more dangerous than Berkeley, but that same aura of endless possibility was in the air, especially on the Lower East Side, Greenwich Village, SoHo, and the campuses of Columbia University, CCNY and NYU. I thought Facino's approach to street poetry

was a good idea, but I didn't do the street poet thing in Berkeley because I didn't want to step on Facino's toes and I was too inhibited. But after underground magazines in Berkeley had published me, I felt I was a real poet, so I took the plunge. In New York, being a street poet seemed preferable to pan-handling so I made a sign:

I am poet. I will write you a poem for any useful item, toothpaste, socks, notebooks, carrots, apples, the list went on and on in very small print. It ended with the parenthetical expression (money is an acceptable substitute for a useful item).

I hung the sign around my neck and hit the streets. I stood around the Fillmore East on Third Avenue, near the offices of the East Village Other newspaper, hung out at Washington Square Park and Central Park. On Sundays, Central Park was awash with hippies, blacks, Krishna chanters, poets, musicians, gawkers from the suburbs. I'd grown a mustache and attempted a beard, but I'm not a hairy person, so the beard looked sad and/or scary, depending on your perception. I went barefoot, even in the winter, and had pads on my feet. My jeans were colorfully patched for both decorative and practical reasons. I had little money and enjoyed sewing. I wore paisley shirts, or the most colorful hippie Hobbit shirt I could find and a rabbit fur vest. I had dark hair down to my shoulders. I bathed frequently, despite what the media was saying at the time about dirty hippies. I was clean and sober and didn't like pot. Everything I owned, including a growing collection of poems, fit in one small Army surplus knapsack. I had little money, but I was content and frequently happy. I had no grand plan for my life. I wanted to write songs and play guitar, but had no guitar and I was self-conscious about my voice, so I wrote poems. Lots and lots of poems. People would ask me to write a poem and I'd comply. Some liked them; some laughed and tossed them away, but most of them gave me something, usually money, from a dime to a few dollars, but often fruit, a can of soda, a sandwich, or a phone number and a place to stay. I had no fixed residence and never worried about where I was going to land next. The winds of karma always seemed to blow me in the right direction. Looking back, I realize I was incredibly lucky. I was never hippie bashed, arrested, hassled, hustled or taken advantage of. I never got any serious diseases. I met and loved many women and made many friends. One old man read the poem I wrote him and then asked if I had any objections to taking money from an arms dealer. His family made rifles for the US Army. He said he was assuming I was against the war, so he wanted me to have the option to refuse his money. I said we all have our own path to walk; if he wanted to give, I'd take. He gave me 20 dollars, the biggest tip I ever got for a poem.

STREET POEMS – NEW YORK, CAMBRIDGE, ANN ARBOR & BERKELEY

Freaks were everywhere. Black hippies, gay hippies, Puerto Rican hippies, old hippies, crazy hippies, Buddhist hippies, hippie families. Communal houses were springing up everywhere. Vets coming home from Vietnam joined the tribe. I met one of them, a guy named Jim, who wore an American flag decorated with his own blood, on the back of his fatigue jacket. He was living in his Ford Econoline van, and offered to drive me around the city in exchange for a poem. An artist I knew lived in a big apartment building on the Lower East Side. I thought he'd put us up. Turned out he was having problems with his wife, but he introduced us to the hippies next door who took us in. Billy Bob was an artist from Kentucky with long blond hair down to his waist. His buddy Harry worked a straight job somewhere. It was a tiny one-bedroom apartment, and two girls – Anne and Susan - were already crashing there, but they made room for us on the floor. The girls had jobs at a dog-walking agency and told us that next door to the dog walkers there was an illegal moving service. If you had a truck, they'd hire you. Jim had a truck, so we went down the next day. They paid 25 dollars an hour per man, plus all your gas, to help people do small moving jobs. They told me I'd have to wear boots to work, so I borrowed a pair of Jim's combat boots. We moved a lot of stuff for the next two weeks and built up a stash of about 1,000 bucks between us. I'd always avoided hard work, but I enjoyed hefting impossibly heavy objects around the streets of New York. One job stands out. An air conditioner we had to pick up from a florist's shop and deliver to his girlfriend's apartment. The florist came with us, but refused to help lift the AC unit. We had to call the moving office and wait until they sent another guy to help. The girlfriend lived on the 5th floor of a walk up apartment building on the Lower West Side. The narrow staircase left us about an inch of clearance and the sucker was heavy. It took us all afternoon to get it up the five flights. When we got to the top floor, we had to take the apartment door off to get the unit into the house.

One afternoon, Jim asked me what I thought about Cambridge. I told him it was a college town, pretty laid back, and a good place for a street poet. He suggested we drive up and look it over. We went back to Billy Bob's to say goodbye and walked into a huge drama. Anne lost the keys to one of the fancy apartments where one of her dog-walking clients lived. The dog-walking office was closed, so she brought a pure bred Afghan hound home with her. When the matron who owned the dog didn't find the dog in her apartment, she called the police and sent them down to Billy Bob's apartment to arrest Anne for dognapping. Dog, Anne, Susan, Billy Bob, Harry and two police officers were in the hall outside Billy Bob's apartment screaming, crying and shouting. The dog was barking wildly and wouldn't let the cops come near him without growling and snapping. It took an hour to get things sorted out, and after the cops finally left with the dog, Anne and Susan asked if they could come to Cambridge with us. They were sure they were going to get arrested for dognapping. Jim said it was fine with him and the two girls and Jim and I piled into the van and drove to Cambridge.

We stayed in Cambridge for most of the summer, crashing with a woman named Marilyn. I spent a lot of my time on the streets around Cambridge Square, writing poems for useful items. The editor of the local underground paper wrote a story about me, including the fuck episode. He published a few poems of mine. For the next week or so I was famous and got better tips for my poems. Then I got a letter from my lawyer; I stayed in touch because of the appeal. The US Supreme Court turned me down and I was going to have to do 30 days for the FUCK sign. Jim said he'd drive me back to Berkeley.

On the way back to California, we stayed in Ann Arbor for a couple of days. I was writing poems on the street and was offered a place to stay by Jenny, a good-looking college girl. She'd just broken up with her boyfriend, she said, and was lonely. She let me bring Jim along to the communal house she lived in. The next morning, Jenny's ex appeared in her bedroom looking crushed. I quickly slipped into the bathroom fearing the worst. Jenny and her ex went downstairs and soon I heard the sounds of frenzied lovemaking. I found Jim and we got back on the road to Berkeley.

I did my 30 days for obscenity, Jim vanished the way people often did back then, and I went back on the street to write poems. On one of my last days as a street poet I ran into Marcus, a black militant I'd met in Cambridge. He used to ask me for a poem every day, but eventually got mad at me for riffing on the same subjects all the time. A young man had asked me for a poem and Marcus walked up and accosted my customer. "Don't give him your money man, he's a scam artist. You ask for a poem and then he writes down something about you, or describes the way you walk and calls it a poem." I finished writing and said, "That's the poet's job, man. To call your attention to the magic of everyday life. To remind you that everything is poetry, everyone is a poem." I was paraphrasing what Facino had told me a year before. Marcus frowned and shook his head at me. Then he walked away.

CORRESPONDENCE

From: Charles Potts
To: Richard Denner
Sent: Thursday, March 29, 2007
Subject: Berkeley Street poets

Richard,
count me in. I'd love to be consulted on this project or loved as the verb tense should be. Maybe present progressive. In my opinion the quintessential Berkeley street poet was John (The Poet) Thomson. He still lives in San Francisco, with his psychiatrist wife. He and I formed a Buddhist marching band in 1971 (Hot Air) and toured the US selling Litmus #10 and playing the 100 Thousand Songs of Milarepa and our own compositions

On April 8, 2007, Richard Denner wrote:

dear john,

charles potts mentioned you, and richard krech gave me your email address

i was in berkeley in the late 50s and early 60s, and i am currently writing an online feature article for big bridge about the poets in berkeley during the 60s, and i plan to profile street poets from the time, poets connected to the 1965 berzerkely poetry conference and a few outriders in the scene

would you like to contribute a profile, meaning documents from that decade of your work, memoir, essay, poetry, pictures?

On April 09, 2007, John Thomson wrote:

Richard:

We knew each other back then. Had friends in common including Krech, Potts and others. I believe you were committed by a girlfriend and later moved to Alaska for a while. I remember liking your poetry and you sent me a small book of poems you printed in Ketchikan. (looked at your website and it is in fact the you I thought you were. Feel myself getting sucked back into the 60s vortex and way of writing. Egad!)

I know I have some poems laying around somewhere from that time, but many were stolen in a long ago break in. I think I have at least one photo of me in my youth that I can make a pdf. Let me know what you'd like and I'll get it to you. Thanks for reaching out and good to hear from you again.

On April 09, 2007, Richard Denner wrote:

you made the berkeley street poet thing famous with your writing “fuck” on a big piece of (was it?) butcher paper and sitting outside sather gate writing poems for food and useful objects, and i did a variation of your gig by trying to sell my poems for cigarettes and small change on the street, and on the first day of the berkeley poetry conference, in 1965, i even sold a poem to the mediterranean cafe for a cup of espresso, and i began writing poems and a design that i called a’flower-star’ which i drew on arms and legs and bare feet with colored markers, later max scheer printed some of my poems that had been illustrated by wesley tanner in the berkeley barb and christened me the barb poet, and i sold that issue with zeal on the street, so perhaps you could write down a few of your memories of events and feelings

On April 09, 2007, John Thomson wrote:

Richard:

You may need to nudge me on this, as I’m alternately proud and embarrassed by my shenanigans in the 60s. The first street poet I knew was Facino (Doug Palmer) who used to walk around Telegraph Avenue and Sproul Plaza with a sign that said: I am a poet. I will write you a poem for any useful item. I later borrowed that technique in Boston, Cambridge, Ann Arbor and other places with a sign that said: I am a poet. I will write you a poem for any useful item. (money is an acceptable substitute for a useful item)

I didn’t do the street poet thing in Berkeley until the late 60s, cause I didn’t want to step on Facino’s toes and I was at first too inhibited. I feel myself getting lost in a haze of memory and nostalgia right now, and I have a bunch of deadlines that need attending to. I’ll drop another line at day’s end, or hopefully, before week’s end. I wrote the true story of the “fuck sign” for David Goines and he included it in his history The Free Speech Movement (10 speed press 1993.) Great to hear from you, glad you’re alive and well.
Best, Jpoet/homson

Julia Vinograd



JULIA VINOGRAD (December 11, 1943 – December 5, 2018) was known as "The Bubble Lady" to the Telegraph Avenue community, a nickname she gained from blowing bubbles at the People's Park demonstrations in 1969. Vinograd was born in Berkeley, California, and graduated with a B.A. from the University of California at Berkeley in 1965, and went to Iowa, graduating with a Master of Fine Arts from the Iowa Writers Workshop at the University of Iowa. She was heard to say, "I love intense print media, hard rock music, getting high, deep weirdness and movies that leave scars on your brain. My life is rich in friends and awash with drama."

MEMORY OF THE 60s

I was never exactly interested in politics. On any campus there are groups with theories and projects and fiery long speeches. I was vaguely in favor of a lot of stuff—for example, I signed civil rights petitions, but it would never have occurred to me to go south and organize voters. I didn't keep track of wars or laws or names of government officials. I was a very ordinary student. And precisely because I was ordinary, I wound up getting arrested in the Free Speech Movement. Every little table the university was trying to shut up and close down signed a petition and they ran the gamut from the John Birch Society to the Communist Party to some totally nonpolitical groups, one for hiking, sailing, and mountain climbing, if I remember correctly. No, I can't tell you what it was like; let me show you.

THE SPROUL HALL SIT-IN

for the 30th anniversary of the Free Speech Movement

I remember telling my legs,
legs you aren't going into that building, no way,
stop walking legs, you listen to me.
My legs didn't listen
they walked into Sproul Hall
carrying me with them.
I was scared silly and not just of the cops.
Joan Baez was singing, it was too beautiful
the way the air on a high mountain is too clear.
I was scared of the beauty, it was hard to breathe.
I remember everything.
Girls dressed as secretaries,
boys dressed like law clerks
and we expected America to keep the promises
it made in 8th grade social studies.
Free Speech.
Freedom to Assemble.
I remember the food when we didn't get arrested at once.
Organized people brought cardboard boxes

of cardboard baloney sandwiches and oranges.
But I also remember a big cauldron of cold spaghetti
and even a tin of caviar and we took
a fingernail each till it was gone.
I remember classes springing up in every corner.
I remember passing the huge black walnut table in the lobby,
the constitution was probably signed at a table just like it
and a TA was standing on the table
giving a lecture about the war of the roses
to his class who were sitting under the table,
cross-legged and taking notes.
It looked like a scene from a foreign art film
but the subtitles was the Bill of Rights.
About every 45 minutes
someone would hear the cops were on their way
but people did try to sleep.
That was the first time I saw tv cameras,
they didn't look electrical,
they looked like high noon on another planet.
"These are the protesters asleep in Sproul Hall,"
the reporters said, and they shone those cameras
and everyone woke up.
It was a long night, it isn't over yet.
I got arrested by a young black cop with a big adam's apple.
He was half my weight and looked at me and said
"Please miss, don't go limp."
Nothing went as planned.
I hadn't planned to be there;
part of me hasn't left.
I remember a light brighter than the tv cameras,
stronger than fear.
I remember us.

(From *The Eyes Have It*)

I'd been writing steadily of course and of course making the same mistake everyone makes which is resolving to make no mistakes at all. I thought avoiding failure meant success. It took me years to learn that if you don't expect to crash and burn sometimes, you'll never set the world on fire. There's no rulebook for poetry. If it works, use it. If it doesn't, forget it. I don't care if Shakespeare used it to sell toothpaste to his mother.

After I got my B.A. at Berkeley I went to the Iowa Writers' Workshop for a Master of Fine Arts. Everyone there seemed to be from California or New York. I only met one Iowan in the workshop and he looked lost. We lived in three falling-down old houses with a connecting basement that held the falling-down stoves and iceboxes. Poetry classes in an English department, even

a very good one, are very different from classes in a school where everyone thinks of himself as a full-time poet. And some really inspired teaching, mainly by Paul Carroll, blew the lid off all my safety boxes. Paul made me appreciate Ginsberg and Whitman by reading them aloud, he called it the test of breath. Paul taught a catch-all class called Form of Poetry, theoretically from seven to nine in the evening. We yelled cheerfully at each other and at nine we adjourned to the local bar and continued the argument. In the morning no one was quite sure what the argument had been about, but we were all sure we had won.

There was only one problem. It took me till I left Iowa to digest what I was learning. During the two years I was there I couldn't control it, never wanted to control anything again and simply wallowed. While I was there, everything I wrote stunk.

When I came back to Berkeley in '67, the world had totally changed, and I hadn't heard or seen any of it in Iowa City, Iowa. There'd been politics before I left, but I used to have a picture of all of us arrested in the Free Speech Movement. The girls all looked like secretaries and the boys all looked like law clerks. Now everyone had long hair, bare feet, bright clothes, and looked like they'd just stepped out of a tapestry. Over it all hung Bob Dylan's early lyrics, which were poetry for me. I decided Telegraph was Desolation Row, and I liked it that way. I was in total culture shock. I scuttled around with my mouth and my notebook both open, staring at what I saw and trying to write everything down at once. I forgot about writing styles and just wrote; I didn't want any of it to get away. I've lived in Berkeley ever since, trying to write the autobiography of the street which keeps changing.

My first five books were written in total street persona, first person plural. My first book, *Revolution and Other Poems*, was beautifully put out by Oyez Press, cost five dollars, and didn't sell. My second book was a chapbook put out by Fred Cody called *The Berkeley Bead Game* and priced at a dollar. I rescued my book from the elegant mortuary of the poetry section and sold it on the street and in coffee shops. I traded with the vendors and the dead-heads; I got half my holiday presents trading. I sold 3,500 copies and could have sold 4,000 but my feet gave out.

It was a revelation. Often enough people would buy one of my books just to make me go away and later on come look me up, part bewildered and part suspicious. "Are you sure that was poetry? I mean, I liked it." That was how I established my main audience, people who hate poetry. Or at least they thought they hated it. They became regulars, asking if it wasn't time for my next book yet. I wrote a summer and a winter book to keep up with the street. My shorter poems began appearing on bathroom walls all over Berkeley, and my books became popular as souvenirs of Berkeley, sort of like New York postcards with the Statue of Liberty. It wasn't literary elegance, it was communication. There are people out there; they need us.

Eventually I made an arrangement with a printer at GRT; he paid for the books and I paid him back through the sales. He said the only other person he had that arrangement with was a minor rock star. It was only sort of vanity because I didn't front the money. A grey area that worked very well till he sold his press two years ago.

I was here for People's Park. I lived just across the street from it in a room at the Berkeley Inn. The Park was almost my front yard. I couldn't have avoided it if I'd wanted to. The Park caught the local politicians by surprise, and they didn't really approve. They thought we should all be out protesting Vietnam and not wasting our time on some silly little issue. But we'd been against so many things it was intoxicating to be *for* something for a change, to plant a whole block of yes and be able to look at it afterwards and say, "that wasn't here before us."

To begin with there wasn't much trouble. The first night we lit a fire. The Berkeley cops came and said, "Put it out." Someone asked why. "Cause you can't have a fire at night unless you got stones around it." "Oh, OK." We put the fire out, got some stones around it, relit it, and when the cops came back they saw the stones and said, "Oh, OK." The drummers played late into the night around the fire. A church was being torn down across town and donated some pews for park benches. Even one of the newspapers had an article claiming "at last those street people are doing something useful." There were roses, and—because it was Berkeley—a revolutionary corn garden, and the slogan was "Everybody gets a blister." Then Governor Reagan called in the army and all hell broke loose. You've seen the pictures; everyone has. Ten years later one of my People's Park poems got misquoted in *Life* while they were attempting to figure out what happened.

As well as being a local poet, I'm known as the Bubblelady. And that got started as part of People's Park. There was going to be a riot the next day, but I was a pacifist and didn't want to throw stones and besides I'd probably miss. At the same time I was angry and wanted to throw something. I decided I'd blow soap bubbles all night in the park, and if they wanted to arrest me for it, fine. I bought two large bags full of bottles. There were two rookie cops in the park, and I marched up to them and announced my intentions. They pretty much shrugged.

I started making bubbles and after a while one of the rookies asked if they could try. I told myself this wasn't happening, didn't say anything out loud, and handed them each a bottle. They started a contest. "Mine's bigger than yours." "Yeah, but look at mine go, it's the motion that counts." I quote. After about twenty minutes of this, a cop car with a real cop in it turned the corner, saw us all blowing bubbles, and screeched to a halt. (I think he thought I'd dosed his rookies. This was the sixties when everyone, including the cops, believed some morning we'd all wake up with the water supply dosed

and everyone stoned.) Anyway, he ran up to us, checked out the rookies, and damned if one of them didn't try to hand him a bottle. He said he didn't play childish games and stalked off, while the other rookie commented, "He's just scared 'cause his would be too small to see." Again I quote.

I'd only planned a one-night symbolic protest, but I hadn't expected this much reaction. And from cops. I started carrying bubbles with me to see what would happen, and I discovered they could both heckle and applaud. Little kids came running up to me and saying, "Bubble? Bubble?" I'd make bubbles for them and they'd chase them, but if I didn't have a bottle they'd say, "No bubbles?" and look sad. Pretty soon I always had bubbles and wound up a lot more famous as the Bubblelady than I was as a poet. Oh well. Bubbles don't help anyone, don't solve any social problem, and are totally unimportant. But I'd never realized it was so easy to make people happy.

Being the Bubblelady made me an honorary street person, trusted in worlds I need to write about. When my first selected works, *Berkeley Street Cannibals*, was published, the review in the *San Francisco Examiner* book section was headed "Bubblelady Writes Book" and had cartoon bubbles coming out of it. When the mural of the People's History of Telegraph Avenue was painted, I posed for my portrait with the bubbles. Right up there with Mario Savio on the police car and the famous picture of James Rector dying. They painted me from the back, preserving my posterior for posterity, and my bubbles floated through all the great issues.

LISTENING TO THE RADIO

I am listening to the radio.

I am not listening to the radio.

I am listening to the silence in my room
behind the radio.

I am the radio. Listen.

I can hear the night sucking its burnt fingers
that touched the quarreling lovers.

I can hear the big trucks going out,
the white line whipping at their windshields.

I can hear the old women selling terrible roses
in the chlorine-lit subway.

I can hear the young hustlers, their tight jeans
glowing in the greedy dark.

I can hear the ghosts mowing their own graves.

It's very late.

Everyone else is asleep
with commercials pulled over their heads
dreaming of sex and cigarettes and money and work.

No, I don't know what they're dreaming,
I don't even know
if there's anyone else left.
The radio talks to itself like a bag lady
in an empty room.
Not to me.
I fell asleep an hour ago and didn't notice.
I am the radio.
I am the bag lady.
I am the night.
Listen.

GINSBERG

No blame. Anyone who wrote Howl and Kaddish
earned the right to make any possible mistake
for the rest of his life.
I just wish I hadn't made this mistake with him.
It was during the Vietnam war
and he was giving a great protest reading
in Washington Square Park
and nobody wanted to leave.
So Ginsberg got the idea, "I'm going to shout
'the war is over' as loud as I can," he said
"and all of you run over the city
in different directions
yelling the war is over, shout it in offices,
shops, everywhere and when enough people
believe the war is over
why, not even the politicians
will be able to keep it going."
I thought it was a great idea at the time,
a truly poetic idea.
So when Ginsberg yelled I ran down the street
and leaned in the doorway
of the sort of respectable down on its luck cafeteria
where librarians and minor clerks have lunch
and I yelled "the war is over".
And a little old lady looked up
from her cottage cheese and fruit salad.
She was so ordinary she would have been invisible
except for the terrible light
filling her face as she whispered
"My son. My son is coming home."

I got myself out of there and was sick in some bushes.
That was the first time *I* believed there was a war.

FOR THE TOURISTS IN THE 60s

I remember how the tourists saw us.
They were wistful middle aged men
who were about to meet a barefoot girl
in an orange mini-skirt
who'd give them a flower
and take them to her pad
and after one toke on a joint
they'd be drugged and helpless
and make love non-stop on a mattress on the floor
and in the morning they'd wake up a communist.
You could tell they were worried about it
and even more worried
that for some reason it hadn't happened yet.
They believed in us
more than they believed in the stockmarket.
Even when they heard scary rumors
they went right on trusting.
I remember when I was hitchhiking
this couple slowed down, looked me over,
and then to be sure,
asked me cautiously, "Are you a psychopath?"
Of course, I'd tell them if I were. Of course.
And the newspapers wrote furious articles
about how naïve and gullible we were.
I remember the tourists,
clutching their cameras like teddybears,
clicking their loneliness at us,
getting everything wrong and waiting for magic.
Sometimes I remember our magic
just by thinking of their puzzled faces.

A POEM IS A STREET HUSTLER

A poem is a street hustler
living on its looks,
smart enough to play dumb,
tough enough to look easy

and not hiding its meanings
any more than it has to
to keep from getting busted
for indecent exposure.
Despised and irresistible
in carefully torn jeans
a poem leans against the doorway
not quite looking at you
and saying nothing just yet.
Only the tip of its tongue curls,
as if forgotten in the side of its mouth.
It's young,
it's got a fake I.D.
and it ran away from home
and it doesn't care what happens
as long as everything does.
Culture makes people yawn.
Beauty drives them crazy.
As long as a poem is beautiful
it doesn't need anything else
and knows it.
It laughs dismissingly
at everything that isn't perfect.
It's a little unkind.
Culture comes later when the game gets it
and it needs a pimp and a publisher,
and drugs and distribution
and reassurance and reviews
and it isn't so young any more.
Then the English Teachers get it
and it isn't even a poem any more.
Just homework and a social disease.
 A poem is a street hustler
 leaning against a doorway
 not quite looking at you.
 And you can't look away.

TV

TV calls to the oldest childhood fantasy:
I don't belong here, it was all a mistake,
this isn't my real home.
I live on Starship Enterprise
with an android as artificial as I feel

and the counselor with the cleavage
(it takes an empath to know
what the men around her are feeling?
Come on.)
Or I'm fighting bravely thru the jungles
against impossible odds and my strength
is as the strength of Arnold Schwarzenegger
because I hide my heart.
Or I'm just about to win a million dollars
on a game show because I know –
what do I know? I don't belong here.
I belong in a cartoon world where everyone hits
and laughs and no one gets hurt.
Old movies rerun on TV over and over,
but my days don't come back.
The commercials are in code,
they're selling loneliness.
I'm a lifelong subscriber.
I don't want to watch TV, I want to look *thru* TV
to all the other people watching.
I want to follow the programs like smoke signals
and find my tribe
lost in the wilderness,
waiting to go home.

THE CHROME GODDESS

This is the time of the great chrome goddess,
the female fender, the stolen smile
made of steel,
the molten maiden, the metal mother, the rusted crone,
and of course the consort with his can-opener.
Burning oil is sacred to her, cars run on it
and corporations.
She is the Dea ex Machina and baby vacuum cleaners
nibble power from her fingers,
their bags bulging like bullfrogs' throats.
The meanings of her magical language are darkened with lawyers,
with a judge's robes, not a sorcerer's.
Even her latin is legal, everything is legal
in her hands except the law.
She is a flight attendant on a modern airline
considerately offering everything
except the illusion of flying.
She is strong and even beautiful,
she will redesign Eden if you tell her it's a golf course.

her skin glows on and off at night like a cafeteria sign.
“Eat,” it says. There is no food.
Her eyes are radiation blue.
There is no water.
The sign on her forehead says
“Restrooms for Customers Only.”
Each day she dresses in a different set of fingerprints
taken from her files.
You can feel it a little when she’s wearing yours.
There’s an alarm clock in the cleft of her breasts
and a pink slip up her sleeve tells you you’ve been laid
off.
And since it’s metal she certainly has
a heart of gold that everyone wants.
She has levers and lovers but finally
chrome stands alone.
All her polished surfaces shining
as the skies darken.
 She is the goddess we deserve.

AMERICAN DREAM

I’ve been trying to remember America
when Walter Cronkite of the handsome white hair was president
and there weren’t any politicians.
When fireworks and immigration were both legal;
we *wanted* everyone to want us,
it proved we were the best.
I held a sparkler, the Statue of Liberty held a torch,
I expected my light to grow into hers.
I remember when boys who wore baseball caps
played baseball.
There were maps full of geography
but they were the past.
We had fast food, fast cars and movies
of the slowest kiss in the world,
the one that’s still going on
but I can’t see it anymore.
America. I grew up believing it worked
even though it didn’t work for me.
Like all the sad housewives
sure their neighbors’ marriages were happy,
watching afternoon soaps in empty houses
with the blinds pulled down.

It might even be better now
in the dark where nothing works.
We're all scared and the birthday cards
painted on the sky peeled off long ago.
No more pretending.
Everything's broken from promises to plumbing,
it's not just us anymore.

TRADE

I can't believe I just traded one of my poetry books
for an old dog collar.
Studded limp brown leather
beginning to show thru black polish.
But this 19 year old punkette had nothing else.
She took the dogcollar off her soft neck
and tried to talk me into the trade
by saying she thought it came from an actual dog.
I asked what sort of dog
(I was going to ask about fleas)
and she said well no, she herself,
she did buy it in a shop
but it smelled really horrible, please would that do?
I think I was too startled to refuse.
I think I'll take the dogcollar home
and put it in my bookcase.

YOU'RE ONE OF US

(for David Lerner, poet and friend, dead of an overdose)

You get up glowering in that stuffy little room
a big hulk lurching in rumpled sweat pants
lighting a cigarette before your first poem.
And your thick hands take so long fiddling with a match
that wild horses ride out of your bristling black beard.
Scotch-tape sort of holds your glasses on.
You bulge above us like a lost blimp.
And all this before the first word.
Then your voice booms like a church bell
running off with the circus.
You need all the air.
We hold our breath.

You're one of us.
You and Bruce talk about poetry
like you'd both just invented fire
and didn't know what it could do yet.
You're a marshmallow monster.
You're a heavenly hippopotamus with untied shoelaces,
and you owe everyone money,
and all your promises melt, junky promises.
You're a Cossack general in that old, fur-collared coat
drilling an army of teddybears
and waving a ham sandwich.
You're a prophet singing in the wilderness
except every now and then
you lose the wilderness the same way
you lost your car keys when you had a car.

You sweat New York City, roses, and lithium.
You burnt everyone, even the burning bush.
You're as proud of not going to college
as a pacifist is proud of not going to war.
You're not a rocket scientist
but sometimes you're a rocket.
You're natural as an earthquake and you're always late.
You like action movies with explosions
and shiny red cars going thru plate glass windows.
You know the end of the world can wait
while you stop for another pack of cigarettes
at the corner liquor store.
You were always sure you could boost them
because you're inconspicuous, of course,
you're not even in the New York Times.

You're one of us.
I met a guy who helped put you in rubber restraints,
he liked your poems.
I watch you and Phillip exchanging nuthouse nostalgia,
mimicking shrinks advising calmness
and ceremoniously addressing each other as "Michael".
When I ask why you shake your heads at each other.
"She doesn't understand anything, does she?"
And now you're dead I understand even less.

For years you tried to settle down with your true love
in an apartment with roses outside the window
and a piano you talked about playing,
but you're no more housebroken

than the two pet cats who pissed in the poetry box
and the needle kept calling –
“It’s so sad,” you say,
your voice caressing sadness
the way a woman’s hands stroke a mink coat.

Your back hurts, your hemorrhoids hurt.
You eat so much your psych meds are always wrong.
There’s something wrong with every chair in the world,
you can’t sit.
Your junky veins hurt. Your foot got infected.
You have a crick in your neck from staring up
waiting for the heavens to open and anoint you.
And you have a great big laugh
like a fountain of furry fireworks
that makes us all forget why we’re mad at you.
You hurt us and we’re glad to see you.
You’re one of us.

You love the ocean and us
and get angry when the waitress doesn’t know you’re god.
And get angry at us for trying to shush you
and then forget
and five minutes later want to know
what we’re all fussing about.

You’re one of us:
how can you be dead?

RAIN

It’s raining between the worlds.
I saw a gull on the telephone wire
with blood dripping from his feet.
When the blood hit the street it fizzed gold.
Icarus must’ve been blown off course
and landed in the bay.
Gulls are territorial, it was his rock,
marked with his droppings
so he walked on the bloody wound.
The rain washed it away and the gull sailed off
with a little shrug.
Flying is so easy.

It’s raining between the worlds.

The river Lethe overflows its swollen banks,
stranding shadows wrapped in plastic
but still getting wet.
They're not sure which world they should forget.
Coins in their Styrofoam cups
fall from their unfocused eyes
and when they huddle into doorways the walls melt.

It's raining between the worlds.
Big trees crash into power lines
and there are other power lines down
P G and E can't fix.
When the lights went off I clung to my side of the bed,
on the other side was a man I'd loved
and never let him know,
long ago, when he was alive.
I could feel him wondering why his knife wasn't in his boot
and from which direction danger was coming.
he was breathing fast,
I was holding my breath,
then the lights went on and he was gone.
he hadn't seen me, he'd never seen me
and the tv told me the storm just swallowed a trailer park.

It's raining between the worlds
till there's only mud in slow motion
rolling down hills and out of mirrors
calling to articulate mud.
What can I say to prove I'm more than mud?
It's raining between my fingers.
It's raining between the worlds.

STREET INCIDENT

3 large cops make one of the street people
pour out the full bottle of red wine
he just got.
But instead of spilling it into the gutter
he goes to the corner tree
and pours it carefully around the roots
so that all sides of the tree
have an equal chance to breathe in
the delicate bouquet.
It's a kind of communion

from red blood to green.
"Take this and drink."
The tree will get drunk for him.
The wind will blow the branches
the way he'd wave his arms.
The tree will stand tall
and take on all comers
the way the cops are worried he would.
Even his hangover will hand with the ripening fruit.
The cops can't arrest the tree,
it's bigger than they are,
it's over 21
and it wouldn't fit in their paddywagon.
So the cops go away.
He leans against the initial-scarred trunk
and the leaves, now lightly veined with liquor,
whisper marvelous drunken tales in his ear.
They pause occasionally as the wind pauses
in case they give offense:
 "It's the wine talking,"
 and the leaves apologize,
 and finally he smiles.

FOR MOE WHO DIED

I keep thing it's an April fool's trick
and Moe'll come back growling contemptuously
over his cigar,
"You people'll believe anything,
whadda you mean dead?"
I've still got a Moe's trade slip, Moe money
with his picture and the slogan
"in God and Moe we trust."
I'll feel funny about using it now.
I never minded George Washington being dead
but some people just aren't supposed to die.
I remember Moe's voice loudly unharmonizing
with whatever blues the ceiling was playing.
"She done him wrong" would drift upstairs
and splash over the book I was browsing,
hunched on a stool or pouring thru the rickety carts.
I remember the continual cheerful grumble
that came out of Moe like cigar smoke
and of course the cigars.

Freud said “sometimes a cigar is just a cigar”
but not now.
I want all cigars to have Moe’s face on the gilt band.
I want Berkeley’s no-smoking ordinance to go up in cigar smoke
at Moe’s memorial, they can reinstate the silly thing
afterwards, if they have to.
I want to plant cigars on Moe’s grave instead of flowers
and see what grows, something will.
I want exploding cigars.
I want to watch the endangered whales
blow waterspouts out of Moe’s bald spot.
I want every book in all 4 floors of Moe’s bookstore
to be about Moe because I don’t know much about him
and I never needed to before,
he’d obviously always be there.
I want Moe back.
I recognized Moe’s photo in the shop window,
it’s from the employees’ bathroom
and it’s one of a pair of photos in the same frame.
The other photo shows Moe with his back to the camera,
facing the john.
And I want that other photo to be in the shop window.
I want to see Moe pissing all over that April fool Death
that fools everyone.

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Julia posing with her portrait on the mural at the corner of Haste and Telegraph

Richard Denner



RICHARD DENNER (sometimes known as Rychard and, after being ordained a Buddhist monk, as Jampa Dorje), born 1941, attended Oakland High School. Rychard dropped out of UC Berkeley, 1960—the “Poet of the Berkeley Barb”—self-exiled to the Alaskan woods after the Summer of Love, printing on a Kelsey hand press small, smudgy chapbooks, graduating from University of Alaska, Fairbanks, 1972, continued printing while working at Queen Anne News in Seattle, moved with family to 800 acre cattle ranch east of Ellensburg, Washington, 1975, to punch cows and write hayseed verses, finally finding a twenty-year career as the proprietor of Fourwinds Bookstore & Cafe, settling down to civic responsibilities, Masonic Order, alcoholism and a total freak-out after separating from the most beautiful woman in the world, finding happiness in the teachings of Buddha, 1989, moving to Tara Mandala Retreat Center in Colorado to manage another bookstore and do a long retreat until called back to California in 1997 to care for his elderly parents, staying on after his father’s death to write and publish dPress chapbooks in his family home, near Santa Rosa, California. He completed a traditional Tibetan mountain retreat in 2013. He now lives in Ellensburg, Washington. A great-grandfather, he is adjusting to his role as an elder.

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BLACK FRIDAY

(Prefatory note—I have always told the following story as it is here presented, but recently Michael Rossman, author of *The Wedding in the War*, pointed out some historical inaccuracies. He wrote— “Don Bratman says that the suicide did NOT happen while he was working there, but before that. As for your reference to Fred Moore, who was sitting-in alone on Sproul steps in ‘61 to protest compulsory ROTC, I can correct that from my own memory. Gosh, it’s hard looking back that far without documentary sources, isn’t it? Also, I believe you are referring to William J. Lederer, who co-authored *The Ugly American* with Eugene Burdick. Professor Lederer may well have been subpoenaed to appear before HUAC in their planned 1959 visit in San Francisco, as many people were, but that visit was cancelled; and it was not until May 1960 that HUAC actually did visit, to interrogate other dozens of subpoenas, and to face the protest you speak of, in which we were hosed down the steps.”

Political Science lectures at U.C. Berkeley, 1959. Professor Learner is showing us both sides to an ideological conflict, revealing positive and negative forces in two systems of economics and government, Marxism/Communism vs. Democracy/Capitalism. For this he is accused of corrupting youth and is subpoenaed by the House of un-American Activities Committee (HUAC).

Black Friday. I go to the county courthouse in San Francisco with my friend Dennis Wier. I’ve known him since grade school. We’re on assignment for KPFA, the non-profit, listener-sponsored radio, and we are trying to record for posterity hundreds of agitators giving the seig heil salute to Congressman Willis, the chairman of HUAC. Later in the day, the demonstrators gain admittance to the courtroom, which has been packed with American Legionnaires and Daughters of the American Revolution. The city police, fearing they are losing control of the crowd, turn on the building’s fire hoses and wash the protestors down the steps of the courthouse to the sidewalk.

The first edition of the “San Francisco Chronicle” reports: POLICE ATTACK STUDENTS, but the next edition quickly reverses this headline to read STUDENTS ATTACK POLICE. This is the first use of force by municipal authorities on the public since the San Francisco General Strike during the Great Depression. In the morning, my father sits down at the kitchen table and opens the Oakland Tribune. He begins to choke.

He’s sputtering. “What...what is this?” The newspaper is being wildly waved in my face, but it is clear to me – my picture is on the front page. I had climbed up on the cement portico with a hand-held microphone, and someone from the “Oakland Tribune” took a profile shot of me with my hand held up against a backdrop of placards and protesters giving the seig heil salute. A protest movement is arising, and I can still feel the exhilaration. It is the formation of a hive—the Birth of the New Left—the buzzing of mindful bees.

My parents send me to a local psychoanalyst, who hypnotizes me and gets

me to repeat after him, "I am not a Communist. I am not a Communist. I am not a Communist." I think of myself as the patient of the phrenologist in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* having my cranium measured, a 19th century scientific method of determining psychological change in people sent into the jungle. I'm headed up the river. I have read some psychology and know a little about hypnosis. I fake my trances and give myself autohypnotic suggestions to counteract any effects of Dr. Gompertz's attempts at brainwashing. I gaze at the reproduction of a Gauguin painting of Tahitian maidens in the doctor's office. I lift my finger in response to the doctor's inquiries. "Yes, I hear you. No, I am not a Communist."

I'm moving upstream. Up to this bend in the river. I write a diatribe. I'm on my way to the Dean's office with this scabrous piece of scatology in my fist when I'm waylaid on the steps of Sproul Hall by Don Bratman. Don is a poet, older and wiser, and he knows I am headed for trouble and steers me in a different direction.

Don has been working as a watchman in the bell tower of the Campanile, and a man jumped—perhaps while Don is sorting out the pattern of alliterative "s" sounds in Robert Frost's "Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening." (I'm told the guy climbed up on the guardrail, tossed his briefcase over, yelled "Look out below," and followed it down.) Glass partitions are finally installed. There is talk that the Campanile is a phallic symbol which is across the bay from the Golden Gate Bridge, which is designated a maternal symbol because the spans form the shape of breasts. There sure are a lot of interesting theories floating around. Somehow the combination of male and female symbolism creates a vortex of energy that works on the unstable psyches of people prone to suicide. Interesting. Nothing about both structures being tall and accessible, and that falling from them is lethal.

Don tells me he thinks it would be better to revise the poem and correct some of the misspellings. We walk back across the plaza towards our dorm. We stop to look at a young man sitting just inside the campus boundary with a sign on his chest, indicating he is on a hunger strike until the U.S. withdraws its advisors from someplace called Vietnam. America sleeps. A war machine is slowly slouching its way towards Saigon to be born. I watch the son of an Air Force officer sit in his hunger strike for several days. Finally at the prompting of the university administrators, his father flies out from Washington D.C. and talks his son into having himself committed to a mental institution. This is the beginning of the Litany of the Dead.

HOLLOW AIR

L' IDÉE DU DÉLUGE

Oh! les pierres précieuses qui se cachaient,—les fleurs qui regardaient déjà.

I finished reading Hydiat's *Blind Owl* and ingested eight capsules of peyote. August, 1964, I awaited what *Time* claimed would be the strangest experience of my life. My patience wavered, so I took another eight caps, lit up a joint, and drank a beer. Then I walked to the corner druggist and signed for two bottles of codeine cough syrup, knocking them off at the end of the alleyway. A door slammed.

Streaks of purple light, raw as butchered beef, flood in on a high tide of effulgent hallucination as one solitary child stands upon the brink of knowing the Meaning of the Universe, partially seeing—furry clouds modulating in confusing colors—the essence as if always known, what does *essence* mean?—the primary substance emerging in eclamptic convulsions, granted by Divine Sophia *a priori* understanding, a fateful step into the opaque transparency of contradiction, where each generation is relative to absolute birth, an aftermath of rhythm and sound contrasting with shades of fuming gray, curling, covering, uncovering the piano of Armageddon.

I lean against the alley wall. Currents of mist form and play in and out between the fence slats—a child's first sight of unrecognizable twinkles of bronze light, a partial appearance in one dusty corner of desolate shapes of undulating turmoil, fluctuating figments of remorse and fear, a paraphrase of past captured, held in wonder, accepted as the fragrant blossom of fragmented eternal fruition—an epiphany of my mortal nature draped in flowing lavender—but as I look closer, my clothes are wrinkled, my hands are wrinkled, and as this synapse fires, an abundance of wrinkled lines become saturated in green and then drip from gashes in my fingertips.

I reach the street, the sidewalk snaking, parking meters drooping like sunflowers, people moving in ectoplasmic quivers—can they see the ecstasy and nightmare of tremulous trepidation on my face?—the street a sulfurous plane of carrion, the sky is yellow, and at my feet an abyss of weird delight and grizzly horror, butterflies of gas and putrid phantoms nourished on tortured prayers.

My heart twists like a bucking bronco, ice-blue blood in my nerves, animal blood cursed and coursing, translucent blood trapped in a fiery alchemical casement, even this alchemy converting each moment to the next, fashions freeways in my heart.

I decide I need a haircut and enter a barbershop and emerge with a new style of haircut, very punk for this time, the barber not pleased about his work, but I can't stop jabbering, and I keep craning my neck to see around the corner in

the double mirror reflection, my life in seaward ruin lies, retreads bare, a mummy cloth stuffed in my bloodclot soul, breaking full tilt to the moon.

I sit in the Mediterranean Café drinking double espressos, listening to ethereal angel voices drift over, then to the Garden Spot for a pack of *Gualoises*, stop by Mario's for a plate of rice and beans, decide to take in *Battleship Potemkin* at the Guild, but when Mother Russia comes down the Steps of Odessa, I freak-out and head down Dwight Way to the Steppenwolf where I can drink and blaspheme in peace—*Abandon All Hope Ye Who Enter Here* and below that, another sign—*For Madmen Only!*

A table of Hell's Angels are deep in their cups with Mahler's *Songs of a Wayfarer* accompanying their animated movements, strobed by candles in the deepening shadows—Scorpio, Scorpio rising, I feel gladness linked to madness.

I sit at a small table by the wall down range from the boisterous boys with their furious guise, and the wood grains form hieroglyphs, characters moving in rhythms syncopated to my breathing, waves of color, flowers whispering I am a special guest in this sad dream—knowing when the moth flew out of my eye, the Dead would teach me to dance.

A heavenly biker named Michael joins me, and I am trying to concentrate on what he's saying, but his words come out like we are in slow motion—something about efficient work starts from idle not from toil, or perhaps his motorcycle is idling and he wants me to pay the toll, so I project myself frame by frame through the flames onto an accelerating explosion of leather and chrome. Oh, God, I will keep on until I reach your blessed Paradise!

BALLAD OF MYSTERY & DEATH

Singing arias. She's singing an aria, while we're dancing a waltz to a Brahms string quartet. A busty contralto in a long blue dress. Her mouth quivers. She sees humor in the antics of my trying to entertain her. The moon is a flower. The day is a song. She is under the watchful eye of a cherubic, blushing tenor. She agrees to drive me home, and the tenor tags along. I live in a converted coalbin in a large Victorian on Blake Street.

Moon moves into fragments. Visitation comes—wordless, shapeless. We light a candle and some incense. I proffer my hashish pipe, brimful, and after the pipe returns, I exhale in bliss. It is sweet, the taste of the tree, children running, guns clicking, the shaking of my head. It seems to me these children would like to be alone, so while they are talking, I go out the door and down the hall of fading portraits, my face in the mirror above a broken vase.

Something shadowy follows me—a dark bird with large wings. I spin quickly and jump out of my black sportcoat. I'm crossing the Avenue, and

the Circus is in full swing. A red MG waits for the light, the driver and navigator dressed up like mummies. I feel weightless, floating outside myself. I grab a passing church steeple, and a priest in a cassock calls me down, but I ascend into the night.

There is a cemetery in the mind. Tombstoned, we find it. I sit in the foyer of an apartment building waiting for a friend to return. I decide to make an offering of my naked body. I take off my clothes and sit in the Padmasana lotus seat with the fixed intent of attaining the Ego-death of “I” through my embodiment of the creative energy of the cosmos, the energy of love. I expect a yab-yum goddess to appear.

A heavy blow to my back. Probably the door to the foyer. I hear, “Hold it, or I’ll shoot!” I streak up the stairs to hide on the roof, but another cop has come up the back stairs. I’m an angel. I can fly. I walk to the window and climb up on the sill. The window is open, the pavement two flights below. The cop’s face is ashen, and his hand with the gun is shaking. I scream, “*Eli Eli Lama Sabathana*,” as loud as I can and fall on my back on the floor, keeping my eyes closed. Soon, there is the cooing voice and soft hand of my Beloved. I look—no, it’s her roommate. The cops lift me by the arms and dump me in the backseat of their cruiser. They collect my clothes, and I dress as we drive to the station, stopping once to cajole a streetwalker.

I’m stripped and given blue coveralls to wear, while the cops paw over my motley black suit for drugs. “Hey, kid, looky here.” A rookie exams something in his hand. Two seeds of marijuana—one for analysis, one for evidence. Note there are three classes of asocial behavior—criminal, insane, and criminally insane. This combination can lead to my conviction as criminally insane.

I’m put in a cell after being booked for indecent exposure and possession of the killerweed. Relieved to be out of handcuffs, I find a copy of the Gideon Bible and begin to read, first to myself, then softly to the shadows, then loudly to the drunks in the next cell, who begin to moan and cry out, “Yea, right on.” “Stop it, no, no, stop it.” “That will be enough, Mac, knock it off.”

My Christ-complex recedes to that of John the Baptist. “Be purified in the holy toilet water of jail, you sinners!” I dunk my head in a toilet bowl full of turds and pull the lever just as the guards enter, grab me by the ankles and drag me to a padded cell to bounce about until I’m weakened by bruises and abrasions.

Early the next morning, I’m led back to my cell where I find the Bible, in the struggle torn across this verse in Isaiah:

We cried out because of oppression when thy chastening was upon us.

Like a woman with child, as she draws near to give birth, as she writhes and cries out in her pangs, so were we in thy presence, O Lord; we were with child, we writhed in pain, but we gave birth only to wind; no deliverance did we achieve...

I keep the Bible hidden away. My plan is to heave it at the judge when I appear in court, but when the time comes, and my lawyer asks me routine questions, I reply with babblings about Cervantes being imprisoned in the Castle of Chillon for not paying his taxes and Henry David Thoreau claiming "One man in the right is a majority of one."

When I am ushered into the courtroom, it is as though I walk through a revolving mirror, and I am pleaded insane at the suggestion of a consulting psychiatrist. I am transferred to Herrick Hospital in Berkeley, and after ten days observation, talking in tongues to the Queen of Hearts and her minions, I am taken to D Tank in the Alameda County Jail.

After an asshole inspection and delicing, I am introduced to my cell mate, Homer Gideon. Homer spends his time drawing on photos of Blacks in the newspaper with colored pencils. Homer hips me that my behavior will bring the bull down on my neck. I'm trying to organize a sit-in. When it comes time for head count, I refuse to stand up, engrossed in my reading of *Job*. A blow to the solar plexis and a dazed bumpbumpbump down the alley to The Hole. I find myself in a 4 X 5 foot room with a steel door, a 60-watt light bulb behind a grate, a vent, and a hole in which to relieve myself.

On the second night I am given a plastic mat, and it is like I'm floating in an elevator-cloud, hearing creaks, booms, and cackles from those that operate the celestial machine that transports me to my morning cup of diluted coffee. I imagine I am the statue of David being transported in the hold of an ocean liner from one museum to another.

On the third day, I'm offered release if I will shave, but I flip the guard the finger and go without dinner. My cell is opened by a trustee, who tells me no harm will come to me if I will only shave off "that ridiculous red beard." Cautiously, I enter a cell, and an inmate named Pluto hands me an electric razor, smiles, and motions me to sit down. Then he sits down very close to me, and my hand wraps around the cord of the razor, which I attempt to swing like a bolo, but the razor falls to the floor. Pluto laughs and says I'm free to go, so I climb out of the corner of his cell and go back to The Hole.

When I next see the guard, he says Monday is my day in court and I had best get a haircut or the judge will give me a stiffer sentence. Adjacent to The Hole is the barber. I sit in the chair, and just as the guy is about to cut my hair, mail is delivered. He stops to read a letter, and to my surprise, tears come into his eyes. Apparently his mother died and his wife is asking for a divorce. I say it is all right, he needn't cut my hair, but he insists, and these

are tense moments while he converts a scraggly Mohawk into Mr. Organizationman.

It appearing to the Court on this day the above named defendant appeared to answer a charge of violating the Health and Safety Code. It appearing a doubt arose as to the sanity of the said defendant, the judge dismissed criminal proceedings and certified the above named to be committed and confined as an insane person until such time as he shall become sane. Done in open court.

SEASON IN PURGATORY

“Do you see any visions? Do you hear any voices?” From D Tank in the Alameda County Jail to D Ward at Napa State Mental Facility. Here, I’m being interviewed by the admitting psychiatrist. His recommendation is, “Just take these pills at pill call and be good for ninety days.” Stelazine and something to knock out the side effects.

Napa State contains painted landscape walls. I’m to be a hermit on one of these furry mountains with fabulous beasts for companions. I muse on the darkening wall. Friends write letters; family visits; doctors change; books from the Red Cross; even permission to freshen things up. Marionettes leave their cells to scrub and mop and scrape sperm, spit, shit, piss, blood and vomit from the halls and walls, ceiling-crack-crevice-hole-spot-place.

This is an extravagant society, elastic in its tolerance. We plant periwinkles and sit beneath shade trees manufactured by Dame Kindness’ computer, while behind the walls there is lobotomy, shock treatment, psychotropic drugs, straight jackets, hydrotherapy, and pingpong.

September 10th, 4:30 p.m. Richard is the name of the Mongoloid idiot in the chair next to me. He is a classic case of bad manners at the table, stuffing oranges and bananas, peel and pulp, into his maw with delicate, aquiline hands that have a bluish hue. After his meal he goes back to rocking in a stationary chair in the dayroom. He looks out the window or at the TV. He varies this routine by hitting himself with his fists. Then, the orderlies outfit him with a football helmet and shoulder pads, and if he begins his “bear dance” and tries to spar with anyone, he is put in his cell. We are warned that his bite is poisonous. Richard was here when I arrived, and he was there when I left. Is he my *doopelganger*?

Bob arrived in a Rolls Royce and is undergoing his sixth series of shock treatments. A Seventh Day Adventist, he’s convinced he is Jesus-The-Word-Incarnate-Daddyoson&HolyO. His mission is to make Richard talk. X-rays reveal gaps in Richard’s brain, but Bob doesn’t believe this matters. My last glimpse of Bob is of him standing in his cell with his hands outstretched, the

front of his skull red and swollen from blasts of electrical shock, crucified in the midst of his misery.

Smitty has been transferred from San Quentin because he is stir crazy. His most prized possession is a blanket made of stitched-together *Bull Durham* bags. This is a gift for his daughter. “If I can just get my hands on her,” he hisses. D Ward will be his permanent home. Spirits in his heart want vengeance.

Lewis is huge. He is unconscious when they wheel him into his cell. Upon regaining consciousness, he breaks the straps holding him to the bed, breaks off the bolts holding the bed to the floor, crunches the bedframe into a ball, and smashes the bed into the door. Four orderlies enter his room with needle guns, and after a bit of scuffling, all is again quiet. Later, he comes through the barred doors and begins crawling along the path, nuzzling the flowers like a tame housecat. Every day there’s a new pattern in the tapestry.

Wayne, a logger, who’s taken one too many rides down the high lead, is setting choker in the backwoods of his mind. The theory with shock treatment is that a patient gets better or he gets worse. But Wayne’s condition remains unchanged. Tiiiiiiiiimmmmmber.

Mike is undergoing a series of brain scans. He shot his wife and daughter with a .22 and then put three slugs into his right temple. The bumps are still there. One, two, three. The women were lucky to receive only superficial wounds. And so, the family survives, and they visit and seem concerned about Mike’s condition. Trephined by his own hand, Mike shimmers in a hell of his own making.

Peter is a cocksman. Tall and dark with curly hair, he plays jazz on his tenor sax. After a couple of days on D Ward, he’s transferred to an open ward, but he soon returns, having been busted for doing the two-backed beast in the women’s head. He blows out his anger through his horn. The orderlies take away his sax and put him in solitary until he quiets down. One afternoon, his parents visit. I sit at a table near the toilet, and Peter enters from the garden. “Do you want to see me make a break?” He enters the john, and when the doctor and his parents walk down the hall, Peter is out the door and over the wall. I continue with my game of solitary Scrabble. E1S1C3A1P3E1S1. Eleven points—a cosmic number. He’s not detected AWOL until supertime. By then he’d test-driven a used car and driven it to Oakland and wrecked it and been busted. Wild energy. Let that dog bark!

Tom has cut his wrists. We find we have a mutual acquaintance, and this breaks the ice. Confused and disorientated, he stares into my copy of Pound’s *Cantos* and I into his copy of Daniel Moore who

sing(s) like a clear— visionary.

The Silent Yes that doesn't fall
a writhing bleeding warrior from our lips

but flutters
poised on their curved edges,
a dry / precise drum-tap!

“Listen to the sweetness of this *Dawn Vision*, Tom.”

NO-PLACE

Marie-Claire, a nurse, interested in the philosophy of Alan Watts and a par Scrabble player, is an angel of mercy on the night shift. I've had a toothache for a couple of days, and I go to the dentist, who drills the tooth. When the Novocain wears off, I'm in severe pain, and I start climbing the walls. An orderly on the day shift doesn't want a scene and shoots me full of Sparine, a muscle relaxant, and straps me in my bed. I can't move my lips to moan, let alone my limbs. When Marie-Claire comes on her shift, she checks my chart. By then, I can tell her my tooth is killing me, but she says she can't give me anything for the pain—just something to knock me out. Energy follows consciousness. Where am I? At the end of the asylum ward in my cell in this bed by the wall imagining Marie-Clair's breast, her features composed as an organ—a tit with a blue eye, a kind, calm nurse for me to suck, to succor me. I begin to drift down an impassive river with no one to guide me. Everyone has been shot by yelping Redskins.

My neighbor, René is masturbating, and his semen will mutiny and fail to enter orbit. Dejected in his personal pleasure, he'll wait with soaked lap and ride the Purgatorial assembly line.

Space is either space or nothing (*ie.* not space, or something) but not both space and nothing. That which neither *either/or* nor *both/and* expresses must be expressed both within and/or out of whatever context to be true as *trueandfalse*, to be true as *trueorfalse*, and to be true as both *both/and* and *either/or*. In other words, Is is *is* and Not is *not*. Masturbation is the highest art form.

Further conception of space as a concept of place—“I have come to thy sweet thigh,” said the anacromystic lover. I lust after the ubiquitous space-time hole.” As a manic-depressive-non-decisive, I'm hip to having it both ways to be one way—my way.

It is the same in that it changes
the same changes
the same is one
that it

is two
too.

Let us create an Arcadia of sensuality
beyond all thermometers and let the rigor
of the climate annihilate our inhibitions.

Cock in cunt on nose in bum on toe
in mouth on tongue in ear, my hand
speeds to your prize.

The rapids of our flesh gleam
as the red meteors of your lips suck
my fiery shaft.

There, on the bed in the crux—
blood in the tears of the time
spent.

Newton holds the concept of matter to consist of units of matter without void (*plenum*) between which there is void or empty space. Isaac is a geek atomist.

Aristotle argues that place is an attribute of body, not as matter, but as its boundary—a vessel, a container. He says, “If a body has another body outside it and containing it, it is in place, and if not, not.” Let me enter your body. Put me in my place. I want to fuck on the moon with a harvest Earth rising above your buttocks.

Augustine holds *Earth* (*cf.* “The Earth was void and empty.”) to mean formless matter and because formless—void, empty, invisible, and shapeless. Matter is Place. He feels the weight of angels dancing on the head of his prick.

Space considered as receptacle is Matter devoid of Form, not the matter of three-dimensional bodies. It is this third-person omnipotent/Holy-I-Ghost kind of Space the Jesuits carried to Canada.

1626. C. Lalemant, one who *seeks only the glory of God and the salvation of souls* in a place which is a *promising field ...for the Gospel*.

1634. P. Le Jeune, who sees *the benefits to be expected for the glory of God from all these...places...*

1649. P. Ragueneau writes that the society is *all of one heart, one soul, one spirit...there is not one who does not seriously attend to his soul's salvation...* so the soul can become the receptacle of holiness.

Says René, “The same extension which constitutes the nature of a body constitutes the nature of space.”

5'2"/eyes bright blue/35-22-35
5'6"/legs amour/36-24-37
6'3"/relativity/42-30-44

He's got shoulders, and she's got hips.
He's got pecs, and she's got tits.
These are differential equations.

Are you there Marie-Claire, or are you still in the æther?

LETTER TO SITO IN TIME OF WAR

we find
ourselves
in a new
world
speaking
an old
language

we speak
of beauty
and feelings
while the
machines
blast
the birds
from our
hearts

watch
the words
hear
the howl
come
to the ear
eye
nose
lip

scream
at the
dichotomy
of the
comma—

a dream
an illusion
how time
passes

dinosaurs
dance off
the map
where you
and I sit
drinking
coffee

we hold
down
this loose
end
of the
universe
feeling
at home
in the smoke

FLOWER STARS

it begins
like this

and ends
like this

and continues

.

in the
beginning
it was

done on
a blank
page—

white
on
white

on the
day of
creation

.

hear
here

is a bird
in the
window

is a bee
a flower

a garden
in the
mind

.

dilute the
potion

pour in
water
with the
hemlock

open the
windows

look for
patterns
in this
dream

.

a new
dimension?
shaped

words,
canvases
of space

.

song
bird

word
word

heard
third

.

we are
running
we are
mad

stars
point out
the way

we are
naked

we are
free

there are
flowers on
the path

.

I was
told

I was
shown

it was
pointed out—

the narrow path
the word's wisdom

•

so
intricate

so
complex

so amazing

dead
leaves

on the
sidewalk

a dog
barking

a man
scratching

•

what's out
side is
within

is there
emptiness
without
awareness?

•

word

wise
will

word

weed
worm

word

weld
wink

word

wild
wing

word

wall
war

.

construct
something
out of
clay
dirt

obscene
words
in the
wash
room
stall

VietnamVietnamVietnamVietnam
ietnamVietnamVietnamVietnamV
etnamVietnamVietnamVietnamVi
tnamVietnamVietnamVietnamVie
namVietnamVietnamVietnamViet
amVietnamVietnamVietnamVietn
mVietnamVietnamVietnamVietna

no time
no place
no mind
for it—

a dark
sentence,
a joke on

the wall

.

a problem today
is to put down
the black-white
marble of mind

draw a circle
take your shot
feed daffodils
to crocodiles

.

there
is a
cemetery

in the
mind
tombstoned

we look
for it—
the door

that
opens
onto

gardens
and
graveyards

.

there
are stars
in the
branches
of the
tree

all the
windows

of the
moon
open and
close

.

Spring
do not

mistake
me for

a flower
or a tree

Death
knows

there's
music

in the
air



SONG

the president of the univers-
ity Ph.D LL.D
acting in good faith
opened the key to symbols
and saw

the new requirements
applicable to persons
not embarked
are shown in circles

Do Not Fold, Bend
Stipple or Mutilate

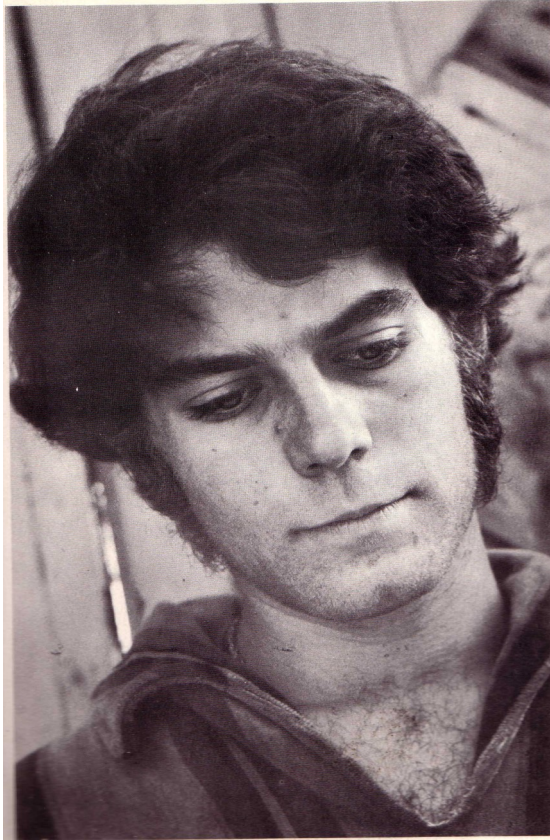
Beware of kindergartens
early elements
exceptional
specialized
adults
credentials
supervision

TEXTBOOKS
MAPS
IRS regulations

under the current regulations
peace and gladness
cannot be deducted

1965

John Oliver Simon



JOHN OLIVER SIMON was a fifth-generation Californian born in New York City in 1942 and educated at Putney School, Swarthmore College and UC Berkeley. His books of poetry include *Roads to Dawn Lake* (Oyez, 1968), *Rattlesnake Grass* (Hanging Loose, 1976), *Neither of Us Can Break the Other's Hold* (Shameless Hussy, 1982), *Lord of the House of Dawn* (Bombshelter, 1991), *Son Caminos* (poems in Spanish, Hotel Ambosmundos, Mexico City, 1997), *Caminante* (Creative Arts, 2001), *Grandpa's Syllables*, (White Violet Press, 2015). Journals: American Poetry Review, Elysian Fields Quarterly, Nimrod, Poetry Flash, Puerto del Sol, Rhino Magazine, Runes: A Review of Poetry, The Temple, Turnrow, ZZZZYVA.

Approximately 290 of his translations of contemporary Latin American poets have been published in journals and anthologies in this country. He is a former director of California Poets In The Schools and a member of the American Literary Translators Association. He was a contributing editor to *Poetry Flash* and *The Temple*.

John died on January 16, 2018.

MT. CLARK POEM

for Doug Palmer

reached the last
ridge at
dark/ ranges

north. still teeth
on earth. the gray
wolf's country

nation of the pale horse
picture of
my hands. the five-

fingered-knot drawn
in the full
moon/ on the

stone. there is
no road from here
anywhere.

none of man's stone
left in this
world/ come

to high horn
of earth,
this had a name

before the Americans
and the white
guns. toothed

mountain (dreamed the
strange girl
caught in thorns

opened mouth. berries
darker than blood
spoke wolves language

now on the dim
ridge, stand over
my death (I think

you are wrong/ death
happens and it
is like love

or a sudden country,
not what you
thought.

now I
can make the
first names of a

few things. give me
your hands, and
I will tell you

ALDEBARAN REVIEW

I began publishing a poetry magazine entitled Aldebaran Review in Berkeley in the fall of 1967, when I was twenty-five years old. I had started to meet the young East Bay poets about a year previously, beginning with Doug Palmer, who wrote street poetry at Sather Gate under the name of Facino. Doug's hand-lettered sign said he would make up a poem for a flower or a smile or any donation. Such was the spirit of the times. I am Facino, his sign read, I do not speak well, a statement which excused him from taking part in tirades characteristic of those threatened by the notion of spontaneous composition, though as Doug he talked about as well as anyone.

Ah the full wealth
of the day is
slinging wind

at us and we turn
the other cheek
to it

—Doug Palmer, *Peace & Gladness*, 1966

Aldebaran Review was not my first editorial post. At the Putney School in Vermont, a progressive arts-oriented coeducational boarding school on a working dairy farm above the Connecticut River, I was tapped by English teacher Jeffrey Campbell to edit the literary magazine in my senior year, 1959-60. Jeff was an African-American Unitarian Universalist minister from New Hampshire who spent his conscientious objector years during World War II organizing the coal-mines of Wales, and often launched into a rendition of the Welsh national anthem in a stirring baritone. Putney had nurtured the naïve Beat poet Ebbe Borregaard a few years ahead of me, and would produce the language poet Bob Perelman as well as the eminent translator Eliot Weinberger a few years behind me.

I cannot kill a king in spring.
And if you say: a cloud
Can be a shroud

I'll tell you—

Not in spring.

And if you say it still—

I'll tell you—you may think to kill

And that the world can die—in Spring

But I—
Cannot imagine death to be
Anything but fantasy
In spring.

—Sally Thrun [Silver], Putney Magazine, June 1960

I was a newcomer to the Bay Area, having arrived in Berkeley in September 1964 in time to sit down in the crowd on Sproul Plaza surrounding the police car which was holding Jack Weinberg prisoner in the back seat in the first act of what would become the Free Speech Movement. I came west three months after graduating from Swarthmore College, planning to get my Ph.D in English at Cal since I had not been accepted to graduate school at Harvard, and because my mother's forebears had arrived in San Francisco a hundred ten years before that and California was my terrain of legend.

My great-great-grandfather Henry Perrin Coon was mayor of San Francisco in the 1860's, my great-grandfather Emil Kehrlein was busted in 1899 for operating the largest whorehouse on the Barbary Coast, and my grandfather Oliver Kehrlein was a mountain climber with a Minaret in the Sierra Nevada named after him. My mother, born Frances Cassandra Kehrlein in San Francisco in 1908, rebelled against her conservative Catholic upbringing, married a Jewish theatrical press agent, lived in Greenwich Village, joined the Communist Party, and got exiled from Orange County, New York for her vocal opposition to the Vietnam War. On her deathbed in Berkeley in 1991, Frances revealed that her first husband had not in fact been my father. That's another story, and that's how I came to grow up back east.

Doug Palmer kindly included a few of my poems in a handsome 1966 anthology, *Poems in the Spirit of Peace & Gladness*, although I hadn't studied, as had many of the young contributors, with Gary Snyder when he was a visiting professor at Cal in 1964-65. Buried in my books at Cal, I had known nothing about the big reading at the I.W.W. Hall on Minna Street featuring Lew Welch, George Stanley and many of the younger poets in the Peace & Gladness project. I was still out of the loop when Philip Whalen, John Logan, Robin Blaser and Stan Persky read in a benefit series for the publication at Walden School.

I am standing
far out in space
on a moonlit hill
In Berkeley.

—Luis García, *Peace & Gladness*

In the summer of 1965, as I began to climb the mountains of California in my grandfather's footsteps illuminated by my first reading of Snyder, I continued to be oblivious while Charles Olson rambled on ingloriously up the street at the Berkeley Poetry Conference. The only event in that historic venue which I managed to get to was Jack Spicer's reading. Spicer looked like an old man to me; he was barely forty. Tired, nondescript, he read all the way through the seven poems in each of the seven books of *The Holy Grail*. I was mesmerized. I noticed the Grail book in the window of Cody's Bookstore as I headed up Telegraph Avenue, and I thought to myself that if it was any good I would buy a copy on my way home. When I returned down the Ave the Grail was gone. Within a month of his reading Jack Spicer was dead of cirrhosis of the liver, occupational disorder of poets.

A grail, a real grail. Snark-hungry.
The Grail hung there with the seagulls circling round it and the pain
of my existence soothed.
"Fool," they sang in voices more like angels watching
"Fool."

—Jack Spicer, *The Holy Grail*

These great names more or less define the ambient poetics of Berkeley as I first knew it in the mid-sixties: post-Beat, pre-hippie, with something pastoral and fey remaining from the Berkeley Renaissance. Other poets I sharply remember from Peace & Gladness include James Koller, Lowell Levant, Eileen Adams, Thanasis Maskaleris, Luis García, Robert Lax, Lennart Bruce, Sister Mary Norbert Körte, O.P., and Gail Dusenbery, who as Gail Chiarello was running an activist candidacy for the Seattle City Council in 2005. Each of them would be more than worthy of an understated paragraph of praise, but the smartest of all of us was probably an okie kid named Sam Thomas, who proceeded to blow his mind on multiple hits of acid and spent Easter morning of 1967 in Doug Palmer's blue-painted bathtub deeply saddened by the absence of tangible evidence of the Second Coming. Sam appeared again in Berkeley around the time of People's Park after a profound barrage of electroshock, doing numerology with empty eyes. Not much later, disappointed by the failure of his sharp mind to come back, Sam Thomas put a bullet through his head.

At a time like this, when color's no distinction,
how can you possibly tell your wife you've
been to the doctor who says
you've got clap?

—Sam Thomas, *Peace & Gladness*

By my second year in grad school I was only in staying in school for the student deferment, which I lost anyway after taking the Berkeley program's vestigial M.A., because my draft board, back in a town where I had never

lived in upstate New York, rightly concluded that if they were sending their dear high school boys to the meat grinder of Vietnam one graduate degree was enough for any man, so I had to go down to the induction center in Oakland and impress the shrink with my dysfunctional attitude. Deferred, I saved up money from driving Yellow Cab in Oakland and flew off to backpack around Europe and the Middle East, twenty countries in seven months, coming up with enough work, plus my California mountain poems, to fill up what would be my first book, *Roads to Dawn Lake*, published by Oyez in June, 1968.

Returning to Berkeley I hooked up with a young divorcee out of a bad marriage in suburban San Lorenzo named Alta Bosserman, who already had a three-year-old, Lorelei. Our daughter Kia would be born in July 1969. I was casting about almost randomly, reassured by instant family, but Alta, who shortly dropped all male-oriented last names, knew exactly what she wanted: as a certified poet, I could provide an entry into a literary world where she would have a chance to grow. The post office hired me and I began to look for somewhere to publish. In the fall of 1967, Robert Parker (married at the time to a young African-American poet named Pat Parker, later known as a lesbian poet before her early death from cancer) included me in a beautifully spare mimeo mag he called *Centering*, along with Doug Palmer, Sister Mary, Luis García and Sam Thomas.

In the fall of 1967 I decided to start a magazine of my own, and I asked Bob Parker and Murray Schwartz, a brilliant psychoanalytically oriented English grad student at Cal, to be my co-editors. Alta, whom we all would have taken a lot more seriously if she had been a guy, elbowed her way onto the masthead. When Alta got up the courage to submit her poems for the first time to the mag, she did so anonymously. "These are pretty good," said Pat Parker, who had by then replaced her erstwhile hubby on the editorial board. "Who wrote them?" I did, Alta asserted in a small voice. "Oh, you did not!" scoffed Pat, the future lesbian feminist separatist.

I named our venture for the the bright orange star in the Hyades, the eye of Taurus, and printed the first two issues typing directly onto paper masters which I ran off on an AB Dick offset press in the attic of Holmes Bookstore in Oakland under the tutelage of Graham Mackintosh and with the kind sponsorship of Robert Hawley, publisher of Oyez. Physically, the first number was 8 1/2 x 11 upright with a purple construction paper cover and three staples. Print run was 500 copies, a ream per page minus copious wastage, collated and stapled by hand by friends over a gallon of rotgut red wine in the upstairs apartment where Alta, Lorelei and I lived near Grove and Ashby in South Berkeley.

For three months I debated,
acorn, walnut,
butter brickle.

When I discovered it was my mother's nip

I was already in the womb.

—Michael Attie, *Aldebaran Review 1*

When my grandfather Oliver Kehrlein died, I came into a small inheritance which today would last about a month, but which I used to quit the post office, buy an ex-Sears International Harvester panel truck which people's carpenter Dick Coulter kindly fitted out with a floor and storage so we could live in it, and I went in on the purchase of a used AB Dick 360 press with young Berkeley poet Richard Krech, editor of *Avalanche*. Krech and I went into business as job printers to the revolution, operating as a union shop affiliated with the Industrial Workers of the World, in the Boneyard, a liberated industrial zone at Fifth and Delaware in West Berkeley, now replaced by tasteful boutiques. Eventually, our press passed into the custody of Alta, to become the eponymous Shameless Hussy Press.

sick child
lemon in my tea
I squashed another cockroach

—Alta, *Aldebaran Review 2*

The first issue of AR included Larry Eigner and Sister Mary Norbert, as well as Doug Palmer, Krech, Gene Fowler and the charismatic Charles Potts, who had recently blown into town. Bob Parker resigned as co-editor after I unilaterally included Potts after hearing him read at Shakespeare & Co. on Telegraph. Charlie had studied with Ed Dorn at Idaho State and began to publish his magazine *Litmus* in Seattle. That first time through he was on the way from the Northwest to Oaxaca. By early 1968 Potts had settled in Berkeley and the local poetry scene, reflecting the overheated culture as a whole, began to take on a distinctly messianic fervor.

The Spirit of Rebellion! Old maps

the finger tracings
of a blind man.

Wisdom attained
in the accumulation
of trivia.

—Richard Krech, *Aldebaran Review 1*

The second issue of AR reflects how the Berkeley poetry scene began to revolve around the weekly Sunday night poetry readings at Shakespeare & Co. at Dwight and Telegraph. I was blown away by the oratorical legerdemain of an exquisite rant entitled “I Smile with My Teeth but Not with My Purty Eyes” by Peter Koch, later to become a legendary fine printer, and the poem promptly popped up in the mag. Krech and Fowler were back, plus Alta, seeing print for the first time. Also David Meltzer, along with Yale Younger Poet James Tate, D.r. Wagner who later became a well-known visual artist in Sacramento, John (Poet) Thomson and small-press legend Judson Crews. I met Al Young in my day job as a postman, knocking on his door with the mail to ask, “are you Al Young the poet?”

All beginnings atart right here.
the suns & moons of our spirits

keep touching.

I look out the windows of rain
& listen casually to latest developments
of the apocalypse
over the radio

—Al Young, *Aldebaran Review 2*

By our third issue in the summer of 1968, Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy had been assassinated, political comedy was on in the streets of Chicago, and AR began to take on a decidedly revolutionary tone. Charlie Potts was on the cover of the mag grinning in manic glory at the Conference of Small Magazine Editors and Publishers (COSMEP). Krech and I edited an anthology of the COSMEP readings featuring Andy Clausen on the cover clad in nothing whatsoever but his poetry and an American flag tie. We were in a moment when getting undressed to present your poetry seemed a transcendent revolutionary aesthetic statement.

Yet I am naked

underneath my clothes
I conceal nothing...

I can't go on, I say
going on
with what I am saying...

—Peter Koch, *Aldebaran Review 2*

Pat Parker (Charles Potts's lover by spring 1968, although her adoring lesbian constituency later on never wanted to hear about her heterosexual history) and Alta were in the third issue, along with Al Young and Larry Eigner and

small-press heavies Doug Blazek and Ron Koertge. Lowell Levant represented the Peace and Gladness crowd, while Joel Waldman and Vanish (aka David Hiatt) came out of the Shakespeare readings. I printed one poem by Khoi Phuc, a briefly employed pseudonym of Edward Smith. Ed Smith, a tragically neglected poet (1941-2003), wasted thirty years abstaining from poetry as a fundamentalist Christian pastor and came to visit me in the summer of 2003, ranting against what he saw as the pernicious influence of Theodore Roethke, which is how far out of touch three decades of not writing will put you. A few months later he was dead of the flu.

charlie potts is dead
and I wonder if I shd
be opening his mail
just as tho it had
been addressed to me
from all his friends

—Charles Potts, Aldebaran Review 3

AR 4 was a mini-issue featuring Doug Blazek, Lyn Lyfshin and Gerald Locklin, but I don't seem to be able to locate a copy. AR 5 was Alta's first chapbook of poems, *Freedom's In Sight*. AR 7 was Charles Potts's *Little Lord Shiva*, with Charlie grinning from the surface of the moon, which had just been walked on for the first time. That volume was been reissued in 1999 by Glass Eye Books in Northampton, Massachusetts as *Little Lord Shiva: The Berkeley Poems*. Glass Eye called it "one of the era's defining documents of personal and social apocalypse."

Another publishing venture in February 1969 which bears no trace of our personal imprint was a free pirate edition of *The Holy Grail*. It had been three years since Jack Spicer's death and since the last copy disappeared from Cody's on the night of his reading it had become impossible to find a copy of his masterwork. Robin Blaser was reportedly blocking on the introduction to what would become *The Collected Books of Jack Spicer* (Black Sparrow, 1975). Finally one copy of the Grail passed through the hands of Julia Newman, a San Francisco rare-book dealer who incorporated herself as the Tenth Muse. Julia allowed me to sit down at her IBM selectric typewriter and copy the text. Richard Krech and I printed it up with each of the seven books on a different color paper (Gwinevere on pink, of course), with the admonition that "anyone selling this book for money will be drawn and quartered."

The following month, I carried pregnant Alta over an outcrop along the trail to Muir Beach for a mussel feast in which the Bay Area literary community planned to welcome Gary Snyder and his new wife Masa back from Japan. I climbed up on a surfside boulder with Lew Welch, who told me, “this is Wobbly Rock.” I’m a Wobbly myself, I replied, thinking of our underground printshop. Upon arrival at the deck where the grand spread was laid out, an older man I didn’t know called me over and grilled me about my reasons for pirating Spicer. Apparently my answers satisfied Donald Allen of my fierce poetic purity; he had no further questions.

By AR 6 in the summer of 1969, Richard and I had thrown tear-gas canisters back at the forces of the law in the riotous aftermath to People’s Park, and Alta had given birth to our daughter Kia. Krech and I mastered the AB Dick so that rainbows of color ran behind the words. I printed a poem by not-yet language-poet Ron Silliman (after I rejected his first submission he sent a letter of protest dropping a total of 29 names across two and a half millennia, which I really should have printed instead). A Canadian yogi named David-Dougald had a front-row account of the massacre in Tlaltelolco entitled “Mexico City Sutras” which we printed with photos smuggled out of the Mexico City morgue in orange on yellow behind the verse. Margaret Randall was in there, along with the Canadian concrete poet bill bissett and posthumously, two “Konkret Assays” by the first poetic martyr of our generation, Cleveland’s d.a. levy. Also Potts, Thomson and Alta.

the whole thing is silly . young kids with pancho villa moustaches playing
pancho villa . little libertad signs and phrases when the shooting starts
it’s all controlled by wallstreet someone says... someone has a lot
to say : siva in a purple dhoti investigating the effect that

heart transfusions have

on the anahata chakra

—David-Dougald, *Aldebaran Review* 6

Alta edited *Aldebaran Review* 8, in January 1970, most of it while she lay in bed “pregnant & bleeding & fearful” and hoping to keep the baby who 37 years later has become a prize-winning filmmaker. This was the last issue in our upright 8 1/2 x 11 three-staple format and included Paul Mariah, John Gill, Art Cuelho, and Julia Vinograd. Alta wrote “the first 6 months I worked on this mag there was nothing in it. from jan to june I rejected. finally in june some poems came in the mail that hit what I wanted hit and so it went – nearly a whole issue compiled from poems by poets I never met.”

SHORT HISTORY OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION

the gun

the bible
whiskey

—John Thomson (John Poet), *Aldebaran Review 8*

AR 9, in August 1970, had work by Gary Snyder, Alta, Blazek, Eigner, Meltzer and Susan Griffin, with some nice stuff out of the mail. I am particularly taken at this distance with a long poem entitled “The Soldiers” by an unprepossessing young fellow named Stafford Leland, who has since dropped completely out of sight, and I am also glad to have published a fine short story entitled “Ingrid” by my late stepbrother, Cyrus L. Adler, a reminiscence of his days as a soldier in West Berlin in a doomed affair with a German girl, perhaps Cy’s only published writing.

 this man bending to tie his shoe falls over,
 that one falls over like a wheel,
 this one collapses like a sense of order,
this one falls head over heels from the cliff,

this one falls reaching for a flower,

that one falls like the flower

—Stafford Leland, *Aldebaran Review 9*

Our last issue which was really a magazine per se was AR 11, in December, 1971. An almost-square 7 x 8 1/2 format based on saddle-stapled legal replaced the upright 8 1/2 x 11. We published one short poem by the late great Frank Stanford, while Lifshyn, Young, Potts, Eigner, Alta and Krech were familiar names, and there was a lot of nice work over the transom plus some lovely woodcuts by Mady Sklar. There was a centerfold chapbook printed on goldenrod, a 20-page poem entitled Looking for th Llamas by bill bissett. And that was the last of us for submissions and rejections — everything afterwards under the Aldebaran imprint would either be a chapbook or some kind of anthology with a specific focus.

On Jesus Highway

When the rain hits the snake in the head
he closes his eyes and wishes he were
asleep in a tire on the side of the road.
so young boys could roll him over, forever.

—Frank Stanford, *Aldebaran Review 11*

Why did it become harder and harder for me to publish the magazine? At

first it was just a question of asking friends for poems and slaving over the press with ink up to my elbows. Then submissions started to come in from all and sundry and it was hard to reject those which were sort of okay, or to respond to people, like Silliman, who would get their noses out of joint. The momentary community which Aldebaran had briefly represented in Berkeley before and around People's Park pinwheeled apart. Alta and I broke up and continued to raise the kids turn and turn about. Charlie Potts had a schizophrenic breakdown and painstakingly put his life back together in Salt Lake City and then Walla Walla.

For years, my main mode of distribution was to peddle the rag on Telegraph Avenue, bending over unwary diners with a suave, "Could I interest you in a magazine of poetry?" When she was little, I carried Kia in a blue canvas sling over my shoulder, with the poetry books in my backpack. One great day I made \$50 pushing poetry from noon to midnight. Julia Vinograd has certainly taken up that torch over the last thirty years, but for me it was physically and psychically wearing to expose my poems and the poetry I loved to so many strangers, most of whom would turn it down.

so many faces the repetitions wear me
"could I interest you in a book of my own poetry?"

... my spirit

given out half-open to so many

almost like a rock star.

concrete & junkies,

a small crinkle of dollars in my pocket.

—John Oliver Simon, *Animal*

One evening in the spring of 1973 I tromped down late to Spats' bar on Shattuck feeling done in. "How you doing, John?" asked a local character known as Sister Mary, not Mary Körte the tough ex-nun poet who had flown the coop of the convent with William Everson's help and landed in the eponymous refuge of Sanctuary Station down in the canyon of the Skunk Train out of Fort Bragg, but a blonde of mysterious provenance who dressed up in full nun drag with bright red lipstick and ministered to the down and out. Not so good, I confessed to her, I'm so tired of selling poetry on the street...

Sister Mary put both hands on my head. "Dear Lord," she witnessed, "please find this good man a right livelihood which will support his family and allow him to pursue his art and keep his life together, we ask in Jesus' name, Amen." Within 36 hours I got a call from California Poets In The Schools

offering a ten-session residency at Martin Luther King Junior Junior High School in North Berkeley which led to an ongoing teen poetry workshop and then a teaching credential program, after awhile an area coordinator gig and finally a real job running the statewide program and more grants and many hundreds of classrooms later... a life work. I never had to sell poetry on the street again.

Most of the later numbered issues of AR were poetry chapbooks. Several of these titles were my own work, which always sold pretty well on the street, inscribed on the spot and by now those holographed apocrypha would be worth serious money. The Woodchuck Who Lives on Top of Mount Ritter, in November 1970, was issued as Aldebran Review 10. Another one of my own, A Ten Days' Journey from Badwater to Lone Pine, a true account of an extreme desert backpack adventure, came out in 1971 from Galactic Approximation Press (GAP), another one of my nommes du jour, but wasn't numbered as an AR, while Animal, in 1973, was perhaps similarly a non-issue, but Snake's Tooth, a series of poems to my father, Bernard Simon, who turned out in the end not to have been my father (but that's another story) was published in 1974 as AR 16. Finally, The Panamint City Badman Ballad, my long poem overlaying the colorful history of a Death Valley ghost town in the 1870's (a pair of bandits named Small and MacDonald terrorized the mining community) and the 1970's (a pair of narcs named Little and Muldoon hassled the hippie squatters), after appearing in E.V. Griffiths' seminal poetry tabloid out of Eureka, Poetry Now, was issued in 1976 as AR 23.

AR 18 was Theme & Variations, a sequence of 120 short poems by Alta. AR 19 was dial artemis, a selection of short poems by the unjustly forgotten Beat outsider Charles Foster (1922-1967). AR 22 was a thin, beautifully designed chapbook by Steve Sanfield entitled A Fall from Grace. David-Dougald's Mexico City poems were issued belatedly as an unnumbered AR in 1984. The last straw may have been number 28, printed in January 1978, A Month of Shits by Ralph Pred, which wasn't a bad idea at all, as writing assignments go.

“words have meaning.”
—is that why we do not
understand each other?

heart flutters, jumps, skips beats
there is meeting without words
spirit-threads marking streetroutes
and soaring to cries & flame

—Charles Foster, *dial artemis*

I got the idea for Aldebaran Review 25 from a submission by Richard Denner of three poems set beautifully on Acton Way. But I really couldn't stand

the notion of another general issue, so I sent out a call for Berkeley poems, and the results became a joyful 1977 collection of poetry about my home town entitled *City of Buds and Flowers: A Poets' Eye View of Berkeley*. Many veteran Aldebaran contributors such as Alta, Gene Fowler, Luis García, Richard Krech and Al Young were on hand, along with famous folks including Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder and Josephine Miles, lots of poems by Julia Vinograd, and a rich scattering of anyone who had anything to say about my bizarre home town. Philip Whalen was the only one I approached who crankily opted out. The title came from a haiku Snyder sent me, all in caps:

BERKELEY

CITY OF BUDS & FLOWERS
WHERE ARE YOUR ROOTS
WHERE ARE YOUR FRUITS

—Gary Snyder, *City of Buds & Flowers*

In 1975 I heard Max Schwartz preaching about a creative writing workshop which was taking shape within the maximum-security confines of Folsom Prison. I had to see for myself, so I went up to Folsom and read my work to a room full of some very tough hombres. They read their strong and vital work back to me, and asked me about my imprint. Could I publish something by them? AR duly put out an anthology of Folsom writing, *Latitude Pain, Longitude Anger*, which came out I believe in January 1976, but I no longer seem to have a copy, although several are advertised on-line. I co-edited LP,LA with a very articulate prisoner named Gordon Kirkwood-Yates, who now lives with his family in the Sierra foothills and writes cranky right-wing letters to the editor of local papers.

Inevitably, the prisoners' work was over the top, uncensored, apocalyptic, revolutionary. We were only a year or two down the road from the Patty Hearst kidnapping, wherein a charismatic ex-con convinced a bunch of naïve student lefties that the country was ready to follow their lead into apocalypse. Inevitably, the outside poets visiting the workshop reached for the moon. Max Schawrtz bellowed "Strike! Strike!" at a poetry reading in the prison yard, and the inmates duly went on strike, which did not endear the poets to the warden. Jack Hirschman sent letters of protest to Corrections which were a visionary blend of Russian, English, utopian hyperbole and Stalinist dogma. On February 27, 1977, the authorities shut down the workshop, claiming that a tea-bag brought in by a San Francisco poet contained marijuana. Several prison poets were thrown in the hole. The Folsom Prison Creative Writers' Workshop became a cause celebre.

AR brought out three more Folsom-related publications. The Caged Collective was an anthology focusing on the workshop shutdown, with poems of

protest from near and far, including a three-page telegram from Max Schwartz and a dryly worded justification from Corrections. Van Purcell's *Ain't Got No Country in My Face* was a posthumous chapbook from a young prisoner-poet who took a shank between the ribs. And finally, *Anti-gravity* was a series of visionary poems by a young Nicaraguan-American raised in the Mission who was by all odds the workshop's most talented writer, Pancho Aguila. Aguila had been convicted of first-degree murder for shooting a Loomis Armored Car guard in 1969 during the commission of a robbery. Pancho was soft-spoken, friendly, a prolific writer and a quick learner. His poems soared. *Anti-gravity* was one of four chapbooks of Pancho's poems published by small Bay Area presses in the late seventies. It was obvious to me, as to most observers of the workshop, that one steel door was all that stood between Pancho Aguila and a brilliant literary career.

I wonder of the nexus of fear
The seeds of a bitter lemon
Eager mad flies
Blowing trumpets
Inside an asylum of terror
So much fear between strangers
A vast continent
Never kissed by the sun
A rugged terrain
Feeling only the sweep
Of guntower lights
Utopian distances
Of light years
The space
Between strangers

—Pancho Aguila, *Anti-gravity*

It turns out that Pancho Aguila's real name (but who did Corrections think they were holding?) is Roberto Ignacio Solis. By the early nineties, Pancho — or Roberto — was paroled in San Francisco, and hooked up with a twenty-one-year-old Seneca Indian woman with a history of drug abuse named Heather Tallchief who was angry at her father and ready to fall for a little poetic charisma. Pancho, or Roberto, impressed Heather with shamanic rituals: he had an altar with skulls, chalices full of milk and blood. He hypnotized her, she later claimed, with sexual magic; they ate peyote in the desert in Mexico, and he instructed her to sew a wizard's cloak covered with owl feathers for him and a plain cloak for herself.

Pancho and Heather moved to Las Vegas. He suggested that she take a job with Loomis Armored Cars. Do you see where this is going? On the morning of October 21, 1993, Heather drove away from the Circus Circus casino with \$3.15 million in cash. Within an hour, she and Roberto were on a rented private jet bound for Denver. Their trail led to Miami and then went cold. The

police figured they were on a beach in Central America. Or somewhere. Their mug shots decorated America's Most Wanted.

In September, 2005, Heather Tallchief returned to Las Vegas to turn herself in, telling a tale which cast herself as the easily-manipulated accomplice of Roberto's dark magic. She had been living in Amsterdam as a soccer mom with a phony British passport, with her eleven-year-old son, Dylan, Pancho's son. She left Roberto when the baby was two months old and hid from him awhile, fearing his vengeance. Either he couldn't find her or didn't bother going after her. Heather finally became tired of living on the lam. She cast herself on the mercy of the court and got sixty-three months in jail. Pancho would now be sixty-two years old. He's still out there somewhere, with the money. Antonio Banderas plays him in the movie, while Scarlett Johansson might be a little too blonde to play Heather. Pancho, if you're still writing poetry, send me your latest opus in a plain brown envelope.

When prison writing made a comeback, it would be with better boundaries and guidelines, as in the wonderful work of Judith Tannenbaum at San Quentin. I decided that I wanted to take poetry to young people who had more of a shot at a life. As I began to explore the poet-teaching vocation which Sister Mary had beseeched for me, some of the Aldebaran non-issues began to disseminate the work of my students. Numbers 15 and 17 represented the poems of an amazing teen-age poetry workshop which came out of the gig at King Junior High which had been bestowed on me by the power of prayer. One of these kids, Edith Hodgkinson, later had a chapbook published by Hanging Loose. Another, Sarah Kennedy, learned to print on the AB Dick and started her own magazine, Velvet Wings, and her own imprint, Paradoxical Press.

Number 20 was Toddler, the selected poems of Kia Simon ages three to six, while number 12 was The Loving Elephant Book, poetry and prose from People's Community School, the parent cooperative free school which provided my first poet-teaching venue. Number 29, the last numbered issue, in June, 1978, was A Raindrop Has to Do Her Work, an anthology of poetry from California Poets In The Schools, which had just hired me as Statewide Coordinator, an all-consuming missionary incarnation which gave me the nudge I needed to drop my publisher's hat entirely and formally lay down the imprint which had not really been a magazine of poetry for quite some time. Succeeding statewide student anthologies would be published under CPITS' own auspices.

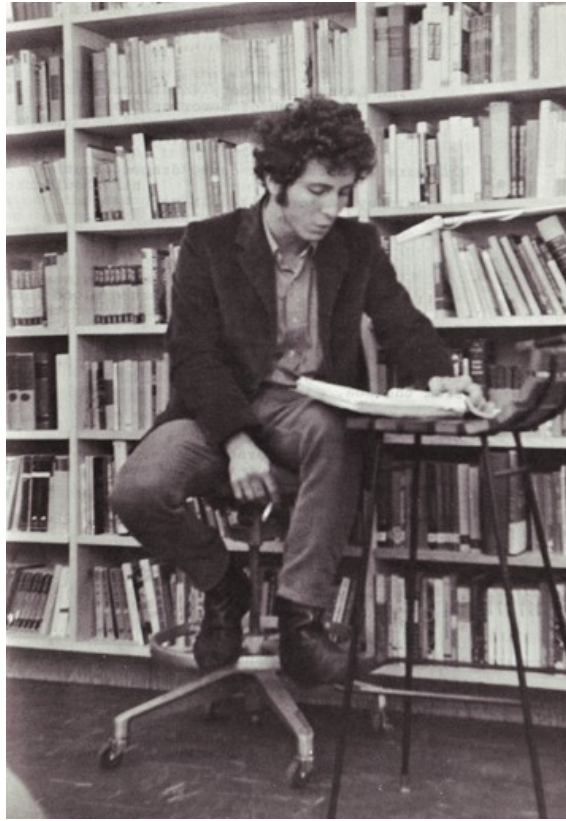
my mom goes on
living
declaring
her superiority
but i have
done something she hasn't

done
I have slept
on the sides
of her womb
—Leesa Feliz (age 14), *Between the Survivors and the Stars*

I informed the Canadian yogi-traveller-poet David-Dougald I would publish his Mexico City poems as a chapbook, then decided I was overloaded with CPITS work and sent the manuscript back with an apology; my envelope returned from Sault Ste. Marie, address unknown. I threw up my hands and decided to publish the chapbook anyway to clear my own karma. Mexico City Sutras appeared as an unnumbered edition of *Aldebaran Review* in 1984, just as I was plunging into Spanish, beginning to travel intensively in Latin America and starting to translate contemporary Latin American poets.



Richard Kretch



Richard Kretch reading at Shakespeare & Co.in Berkeley

RICHARD KRECH was born in 1946, and grew up in Berkeley, California. He became involved in civil rights and anti-war activities in 1963 and started writing soon thereafter. His first book was published in 1967, by d.a. levy, in Cleveland. He published a poetry magazine, *The Avalanche*, which lasted five issues. Along with the *The Avalanche*, Krech published several chapbooks under his Undermine Press imprint and sponsored weekly poetry readings at a Telegraph Avenue bookstore in Berkeley from 1966 to 1969. His poetry appeared in various small magazines around the country including *Work* (from John Sinclair's Artists Workshop Press in Detroit), *Ole, Manhattan Review*, *City Light's Journal for the Protection of all Beings*, and *Kauri*. During that time, and afterwards, he wrote for the underground press, including *the Berkeley Barb*, *the San Francisco Express Times*, *the Seattle Helix* and other publications.

Richard stopped writing poetry in the mid-70's and in 1976 *The Incomplete Works of Richard Krech* was published by Litmus Inc., and that same year Krech started law school. After graduating from New College of California School of Law, Krech has been practicing criminal defense in Oakland (a good place to practice criminal law) since 1980. His practice has included everything from murder to shoplifting as well as pro bono representation of anti-apartheid demonstrators in the 1980s, anti-war demonstrators in the 1990s and 2000s, and others similarly situated. His practice includes trial and appellate work.

After a 25+ year line-break Richard began writing poetry again early this century, and has recently had five chapbooks published and numerous appearances in the small press and on-line. Krech lives with his wife, Mary Holbrook, a former lawyer and now a therapist in Albany, California.

Books

- *Some Global Positioning Dharma* (Red Barn Press, Santa Rosa 2007)
- *Rumors of Electricity* (sunnyoutside press, 2006)
- *Second Opinion* (Bottle of Smoke, 2006)
- *The Devout Man's Late Night Prayer* (Low & Outside, 2005)
- *Poems for Mary's Garden* (dPress, 2005)
- *The Location of the Triple Jewel* (dPress, 2003)
- *The 1932 3A of Claret* (dPress, 2002)
- *The Incomplete Works of Richard Krech; poems 1966—1974* (Litmus, 1976)
- *Poems from the Free World* (privately printed, 1972)
- *Mythology for the People's Liberation* (Undermine Press, 1969)
- *Poems from the Interrupted Journal* (Gunrunner Press, 1969)
- *The Hashish Scarab* (Runcible Spoon, 1968)
- *How Easily Your Mind Can Slip Off* (Runcible Spoon, 1967)
- *We Are On The Verge of Ecstasy* (7 flowers press, 1967)

Raga No 1. Sanskrit Translation of the Earth

They drink Scotch for status
the old maharajahs;
have 3 or four servants,
sit around in a dilapidated house
watching the Jeep
drive across the horizon...

They hallucinate giraffes, antelopes,
the navel of Buddha
riding across
the ocean
floor.

1954, what
more
could you expect them to do.

The world falling apart
at its stitches.

driving high in the hills: a good trip

You, sitting there
next to the window; the words
all spread out like blue flowing streams
the red woods of big sur & the cross-hatched sampler
of fuzzy lsd forests sliding by your window
on the sharp curves
& steep hills of the night road
as we drive deeper in-
to the forest
beyond the orange sky
and the purple hills
of the evening!

Your brown fur coat
wrapped about your nakedness,
your body, your openness
to the world you see about you
your kindness, knowledge
& beauty:
“if that cop knew

how beautiful he was
he couldn't kill anyone"

You say it all,
in a smile
your eyes
the way you look at me
it's all wrapped up
in your fur coat.

Telegraph Avenue Poem
section .13

Jean Genet walking up the Avenue
past the Mediterranean.

The two men from France
last night, explaining what they mean
by Marxism-Leninism.

Goddard's film
"See You At Mao" poorly received
by the audience. "Is it possible
to have a revolutionary film
that is entertaining?" - question from floor.

"If you think struggle and sacrifice
is entertaining:" he says,

estranged from the audience by \$2
and hundreds of years of history.

The girl weatherman
shaking as I hold her in my arms,
she talking about a charge
thru police lines in Chicago
last October.

The F.B.I. agent on the corner
saying "hello Richard" as we pass.
The man from Scotland Yard
and the beat cop following,
making a surveying party of 3
on notorious Telegraph Avenue, Berkeley.

I saw Genet
walking towards campus.

The Thief in Big Sur

Long rides
up the California Coast. Pausing
for a drink of water
half-way up from Gordo,

driving away from the motel restaurant
the waitress
still yelling as the car

turns onto the highway.

Walking around Monterey
half starving all evening

then

early morning taking the key
from the dresser
& carefully removing the tips
from her uniform

cautious not to wake
the sleeping beauty. Drive carefully
five blocks toward the bay
so hungry

& the taste of stale popcorn
the only meal that day
in his mouth.

She came walking down
to the Foster's Freeze
half an hour
later,

sat in her car for an hour
& cried

while he watched her
thru the glass
still eating his hamburger.

Foggy parties
up Palo Colorado Road
where M. & I turned on
with the two hitch hikers
a year or so later.

The coast
with its constant travelers
hitching up from Redwood Lodge
to Jap Flats
where everyone swam naked
all day

amused by the fishermen
in their high rubber boots
who stared at us

in disbelief. We laughing,
young

the music going on forever

You Must Think of It as a Dance

the Way the Players move
from table to table.
the Way they take each other home.

learning survival.
the cool world outside our fingertips
just a shot away...

The tape recorder, hypodermic needle
just end-points of a culture
blasted by technology,

find the Real path out of the jungle,
miss neither forest nor trees.
Leave no fingerprints

Old sailors
stumble into the afternoon dust
of a cob-web,
the corners of the room
going faint.

Rip Van Winkle sleeping. The corner
of his laugh
turned-in. His volume boosted
by amplifiers.
In turn
boosted from record stores. The whole world
a big burn.

Acid salesmen
carrying guns
to keep from being robbed. The whole scene

going down Your drain,
Heroin;
getting fat
off the skinny bodies

the way you make them
crawl/

Mythology for the People's Liberation

The poem begins in the last garden
of the courtyard.
A vast labyrinth of sound
winding down to this moment,
this muffling of voices.
Private comments lost in the wind.

A fat sun disappearing

behind the crater like mountains
the seated rise from their wooden benches,
sunset making their outlines
hardedge red.

They move thru the white adobe walls
of the palace,
fine glasses tinkling.
Stare passionately out at the valley
growing from their feet
on up to the stars
coming out one by one
they slip off into the cover of darkness
to perform their tasks.

ARABESQUE THEATER FANTASY!
These people are real!
going about their tasks daily
in your neighborhood when you are not at home.

The poem is not changed
to incriminate the guilty,

for they are guilty
beyond any shadow of a doubt.

The poem's main purpose
is to see justice carried out.

Lighting the fuse of the imagination,
drawing events together, amid sparking
flashing gun powder cool air ticking
pointing the way.

THE LOGICAL EXPLOSION OF HYPOTHESIS

Oh Lady, on the fourth day of his mission
when he found the keys
of the enemy

in your purse he had to
disregard your sensibilities.

Murder after sex
isn't the natural order of the universe
but neither are the crimes
daily pushing the people towards revolution.

*WE WILL CELEBRATE
WITH SUCH FIERCE DANCING THE DEATH
OF YOUR INSTITUTIONS*

Oh, the smoke will rise
for many miles around
purifying the air
and no longer will our nights
be plagued by industrial fog,
purple skies.

NIGHTCLUB. BILLY COP. BE BOP
"GOT ANY IDENTIFICATION, BOY"
BLUES

It's all going to be
a brand new history
written by our children.
Our job is to wipe the slate
clean.

"Maybe by the time I'm thirty" he said
"there won't be such a thing
as over thirty."

They nodded silently
and parted in different directions.

The empty palace sat still for a few minutes
before dissolving
to assume its new role
in the revolution.

The eyes watching this scene
turn inward,
while the paper you are holding
and your hands
begin to tremble.

A SMALL SLICE OF BERKELEY POETRY IN THE SIXTIES

Berkeley has had a vibrant poetry scene since the 1940's with the "Berkeley Renaissance" a circle of poets that came to include Robert Duncan, Jack Spicer, Robin Blaser and Landis Everson, among others. These poets had connections to the University but much of their poetry enterprise was conducted in private homes. One of the best known publications of this period was *Circle* edited by George Leite and Bern Porter. This Berkeley based poetry magazine began in 1944 and had ten issues. Contributors included Henry Miller, Kenneth Patchen, e.e. cummings, Kenneth Rexroth, Philip Lamantia (then 16 years old), Duncan, and others. Another early poetry magazine was the short-lived (1947-48) *Contour*, edited by Christopher McClaine, which published work by James Scheville, Denise Levertov, Porter, Spicer, Duncan, Rexroth and Lamantia. There were subsequent publications ranging from *The Berkeley Miscellany* edited by Duncan which had two issues in 1948-49 and included work by Duncan, Spicer, Mary Fabilli and Gerald Ackerman to *The Berkeley Bussei* published by the Berkeley Young Buddhists Association which included poetry by Gary Snyder and Jack Kerouac in their 1958 issue. The Free Speech Movement of 1964 led to the non-student outside-agitator magazine *SPIDER* [Sex Politics Internationalism, Drugs, Extremism, and Rock & roll] whose six issue run was complicated by numerous arrests for selling the magazine on campus.

In sincere flattery of my then-favorite publication, *Liberation*, edited by Dave Dellinger (to whom I would become related by marriage some 35 years later), in May of 1965, I put out the first (and only) issue of a mimeographed magazine, *The Community Libertarian*, which was dedicated to politics and poetry. In it I published poems by the only three poets I knew at the time: Jim Shipounoff, Ron Silliman and myself. Ron was from the adjacent town of Albany and Jim had grown up on the same street I did in Berkeley.

At the much celebrated Berkeley Poetry Conference held at the University of California in July of 1965, I met more poets. On the first day of the Conference I met Richard Denner (then spelled Rychard) also from Berkeley and a day or so later met John Sinclair, guiding light of the Detroit Artists' Work-

shop Press. I took a 25-cent brown spiral-bound notebook with me to the readings and lectures by such luminaries as Robert Creeley, Ed Dorn, Allen Ginsberg, Denise Levertov, Charles Olson, John Weiners, Duncan, Snyder, and Spicer. In my note book I made notes to the effect that: "Poetry is like it is today because of LSD, the Beatles, racial integration and Red China is a world power - Gary Snyder"; and Charles Olson's projected verse is "belly verse." Quoting him as saying "The poem is in the style of the poet's body" and "the muse is very jealous" - Charles Olson. I also drew a picture of Robert Creeley and wrote poems starting in the back of the notebook. In addition to the daily lectures and nightly readings there were other unofficial gatherings and infamous parties. One of which has been immortalized in Richard Denner's *Xitro*.

In the winter of 1965 I went to New York briefly where I met Will Inman, read at the Bowery Poet's Co-op, and was impressed with the copies of *Yugen* magazine, published by Amiri Baraka, then known as Leroi Jones, which I found in bookstores in the Village.

I decided to move back to Berkeley and start a poetry magazine. I formed the *Undermine Press* which published *the Avalanche* magazine from 1966 to 1969, as well as seven chapbooks. We also held unstructured sign-up-sheet based free open Sunday afternoon poetry readings at Shakespeare & Company Bookstore from 1966 into 1969.

Other contemporaneous poetry magazines were published including *Aldebaran Review* started by John Oliver Simon in 1967 and *Litmus*, edited by Charles Potts, who moved from Seattle and started publishing in Berkeley in 1968. John and I became partners in a small commercial printing shop, *Noh Directions Press*, where we did outside work to support ourselves as well as our poetry. Ultimately all *Undermine Press* publications were printed at *Noh Directions Press* on an old A.B.Dick 360 offset press.

In May of 1968 the Conference Of Small Magazines, Editors and Pressmen was held at U.C. There were open poetry readings associated with the conference and John and I solicited poems from each participant in the readings and we produced an "open" anthology of the COSMEP readings.

We produced anonymous poetry free sheets, the most notorious being the *Grass Profit Review* which lasted ten issues. Ron Silliman's article, The State of the Union and the Education of Poets, first published in G.P.R. #5 without attribution, is reproduced here [on page 468].

Many of the poets I published were residents of Berkeley. Although Luis Garcia was born in Berkeley, most came from somewhere else: Martin P. Abramson came from Venice, California, and squatted in a house on Regent Street with his small family for several years in Beat non-pecuniary splendor; Norm Moser, originally from the South, was the publisher of *Illuminations*, a

beautiful large-format publication he put out with his wife Hadassah in Marin County before moving to Berkeley where he lived until the 90's when he died in his eighth decade; John Thomson grew up in Brooklyn and gained some notoriety by getting arrested for sitting on the steps of the Student Union Building on U.C. Campus with a sign saying "fuck" and in smaller letters the word "verb." He now lives in San Francisco and is known as johnthepoet and writes music reviews in the alternative press; Michael Upton, an artist (oils and pen & ink) as well as a poet, came to Berkeley from Oregon with his brother David, and lived here for many years before moving to a cabin in White Thorn in Humboldt County, in the far woods of Northern California.

The pages of *the Avalanche* also contained material by non-local writers including Charles Bukowski (five poems and a small drawing); Malay Roy Choudhury, a Bengali and English Language poet prosecuted for "obscenity" and a leading proponent of the "Hungry Generation" in India; d.a. levy, also prosecuted for "obscenity" and one of the leading proponents of the "mimeo revolution" from Cleveland; John Sinclair; Tuli Kupferberg of The Fugs contributed a song and an article to the special "Rock and Roll" issue; an interview with Andy Warhol and Gerard Malanga conducted while they were in bed with "Bruce" in the Chelsea Hotel in San Francisco touring with the Velvet Underground; and others.

Of course, many other poetry enterprises were underway during the mid-late sixties in Berkeley including the poets associated with the *R.C. Lion*, which was University based, *the Hepatitis Indians* (a decidedly non-University group of individuals) and many others.

The poems included here [in the additional documents, starting on page 470] are a small selection from the work I published at the time as well as a few timely and relevant poems initially published by others. Work by non-Berkeley-related writers is not included. These Berkeley poets were not found at the University; they read in bookstores or private homes; their publications were mimeo or short run photo-offset.





weather report:
projected highs

the grass profit review

★ freesheet ★

BERKELEY

NUMBER ONE

11 MARCH 68

The police are here to protect the crime. why didnt anybody say that during the convict strike at san quentin. the govt of the united states steals more money & kills more people in one day than all the people who have passed, or will pass thru its prison system. "vote for the criminal of yr choice." thats henry miller. who are u. where are you. registered.

INSIDE HER KINGDOM SHE TELLS THE
WASPS TO STING THE
FLOWERS, and she goes on

chanting below the
burned grass & mottled alabaster
paper
in her room. when her white voices went

for a walk in the park I went too as a
rusted pipe or a statue
with a broom stuck up my ass

wet pricks don't excite you, black
bees make your cunt heavy
impregnation of the family dog

was to be avoided I learned early

altimeter/
pisces. feb 20 - mar 20.
grass is maintaining a
steady price, lids range
from \$8 to 10, tho 10
shouldn't be paid unless
it buys a measured oz.
acid seems to be in a
slump, owsleys ltd off
4 points. but mescaline
seems to be taking over
the acid market & keeping
things at a colorful
high. opium is going at
\$100 an oz. hash is a
little lower. prices may
be dropping soon. wind
velocity in the cities
is rising. support your
local connection
--the grass prophet

POULTRY SEEN: redeings:

MONDAY 11th, 8 pm, Jeff Berner, James Spencer, Straight Theatre, SF
1702 Haight, 50¢. THURSDAY 14th, 9 pm, open reading, the Hearth, Oak &
Baker, SF, free. SUNDAY 17th, 8 pm, open reading, Shakespeare & Co., Dwight
& Tel, Berk, free. TUESDAY 19th, 9 pm, John Oliver Simon, Doug Palmer, Al
Young, Ben Hiatt, Nighttown, 10th & University, Berk, 50¢.

HAIKU FOR DOUG BLAZEK i got hair down there

July 12, 1985

- in return for a drawing -

today is the first day
of the poetry conference.
rychard came upon the world,
stoned.
rambling across the campus.

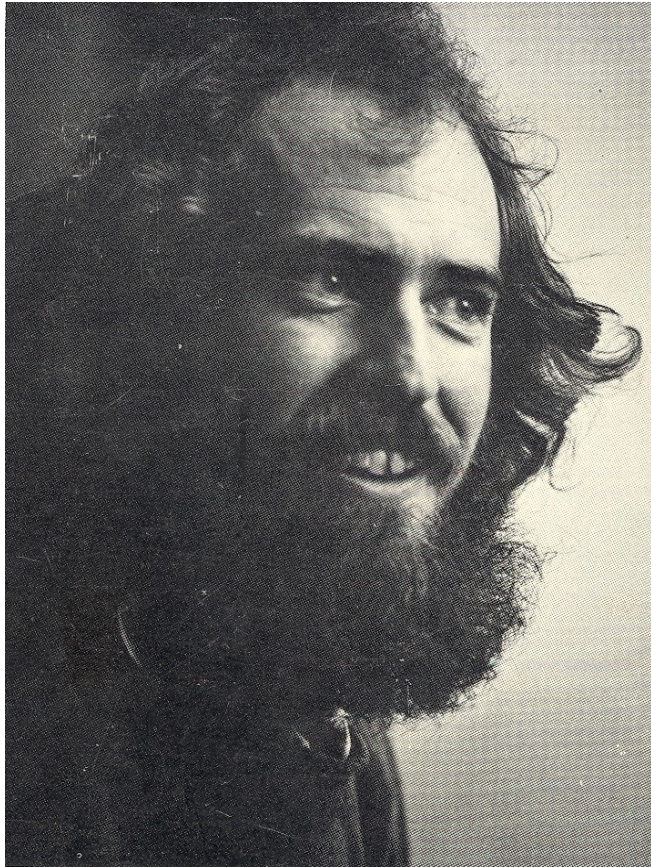
rychard ripped his new black
trousers.
tore them,
slashed them,
muddied them by stumbling
and rumbling
across green wet lawns,
and branching trees,
and big earthquake faults.

rychard ran down telegraph avenue.
shouting,
kissing the clean street,
fucking the parking meters,
being colors.

rychard bought a cup of coffee
at the mcd.
with a poem,
on the first day
of the poetry conference

rick track

Charles Potts



CHARLES POTTS was the driving force underneath The Temple Bookstore, The Temple magazine, and The Temple School of Poetry. He received the Distinguished Professional Achievement Award in 1994 from the Alumni Association and the College of Arts and Sciences of Idaho State University. He founded Litmus Inc. in Seattle and Berkeley which published 18 first editions including Charles Bukowski's *Poems Written Before Jumping Out of an 8-Story Window* in 1968. Potts is frequently on TV and radio nationwide.

Recent Charles Potts books include a reprint of *Little Lord Shiva: The Berkeley Poems*, 1968, from Glass Eye Books; *Lost River Mountain* from Blue Begonia Press; *Fascist Haikus*. from Acid Press; *Angio Gram* from D Press; *Nature Lovers* from Pleasure Boat Studio; *Slash and Burn* with Robert McNealy from Blue Begonia Press; and *Across the North Pacific* from Slough Press in College Station, Texas.

He founded Tsunami Inc., a vertically integrated international publishing venture, which published The Temple magazine, for six years ending in 2002 and several fine first editions of poetry by Stephen Thomas, Teri Zipf, Jim Bodeen, Travis Catsull, klipschutz, and the widely appreciated anthology, *Pacific Northwestern Spiritual Poetry*.

Potts produced or co-produced The Walla Walla Poetry Party in several renditions commencing in 1990. The Temple Bookstore bricks and mortar version at 40 S Colville had readings twice a week from September 2002 until it closed. The Temple building per se, at 129 East Alder in Walla Walla, began life in 1905 as a Free & Affiliated Masonic Temple with a balcony and 20 foot ceilings in the two upstairs dance, Yoga, and performing arts centers. The Temple was designed and built for the Masons by Henry Osterman, a Mason and doyen of Victorian era architects in Walla Walla. It is in process of a lengthy restoration.

Charles Potts is a Master Practitioner in the Society of Neuro Linguistic Programming, an Accomplished Toastmaster, and from 1988-1994, he was the Northwest Representative for the Pinxxiee Corporation and Chinese Computer Communications, Inc. He has been a published writer since his first appearance in *Wild Dog* in 1963.

The president and founder of Palouse Management Inc., Potts is a real estate broker who served as a director of the Washington Apartment Association in the 1980s. He has been a candidate for city council and port commissioner. From 1993 to 1996 he represented the 5th Congressional District on the Executive Committee of the Washington State Democratic Party. In the mid-nineties he spent a year in Fukuoka, Japan, where he studied the structure of Japanese language and culture.

Now that he has retired he has more time to devote to his own writing. He

toured Michigan and Ohio with Stephen Thomas in 2001; Utah, Idaho, Arizona, New Mexico and West Texas in 2002. His biography is included in *Marquis Who's Who in America*, *Who's Who in the World*, and *Who's Who in the West*.

BOOKS

- *Valga Krusa* (reissued in two volumes), Green Panda Press, Cleveland Heights, Ohio, 2007
- *The Portable Potts*, West End Press, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 2005
- *Kiot: Selected Early Poems, 1963-1977*, Blue Begonia Press, Yakima, Washington, 2005
- *Compostrella/Starfield*, Time Barn Books, Nashville, Tennessee, 2004
- *Across the North Pacific*, Slough Press, College Station, Texas, 2002
- *Lucintite TM*, Butcher Shop Press, Oneonta, New York 2002
- *Slash and Burn*, Blue Begonia Press, with Robert McNealy, Yakima, Washington, 2001
- *Prophet/Profit*, Poetnoise, with Chris Bodor, Beacon, New York, 2001
- *Nature Lovers*, Pleasure Boat Studio, Bainbridge Island, Washington, 2000
- *Angio Gram*, D Press, Sebastopol, California, 2000
- *Little Lord Shiva: The Berkeley Poems, 1968*, Glass Eye Books, Northampton, Massachusetts, 1999
- *Lost River Mountain*, Blue Begonia Press, Yakima, Washington, 1999
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- *100 Years in Idaho*, Tsunami Inc., Walla Walla, Washington, 1996
- *How the South Finally Won the Civil War*, Tsunami Inc., 1995
- *Loading Las Vegas*, Current, Walla Walla, Washington, 1991
- *The Dictatorship of the Environment*, Druid Books, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1991
- *A Rite to the Body*, Ghost Dance Press, East Lansing, Michigan, 1989
- *Rocky Mountain Man*, (Selected Poems) The Smith, New York City, 1978
- *Valga Krusa*, Litmus Inc., Salt Lake City, Utah, 1977
- *The Opium Must Go Thru*, Litmus Inc., with illustrations by Robert McNealy, 1976
- *Charlie Kiot*, Folk Frog Press, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1976
- *The Golden Calf*, Litmus Inc., Salt Lake City, Utah, 1975

- *The Trancemigraçion of Menzu*, Empty Elevator Shaft Press, San Francisco, 1973
- *Waiting in Blood*, Rainbow Resin Press, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1973
- *Blue up the Nile*, Quixote, Madison, Wisconsin, 1972
- *The Litmus Papers*, Gunrunner Press, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1969
- *Little Lord Shiva*, Noh Directions, Berkeley, California, 1969
- *Burning Snake*, Presna De Lagar, Portland, Oregon, 1967
- *Blues From Thurston County*, Grande Ronde Press, La Grande, Oregon, 1966

ANTHOLOGIES

- *Poet's Book-Shelf*, The Barnwood Press, Selma, Indiana, 2005
- *Poetnoise 2000*, Poetnoise, Beacon, New York, 2001
- *Vox Populi*, Eleventh Hour Productions, Seattle Poetry Festival, 2000
- *The Living Underground: Prose*, Whitston Publishing Company, Troy, New York, 1999
- *Portland Lights*, Nine Lights Press, Portland, Oregon, 1999
- *Will Work for Peace*, Zeropanik Press, Middletown, New York, 1999
- *40 Years of American Poetry*, Church Press, Providence, Rhode Island, 1999
- *Maverick Western Verse*, Peregrine Smith, Layton, Utah, 1994
- *Men of our Time*, University of Georgia Press, Athens, Georgia, 1992
- *The Proceedings (of the 3rd Walla Walla Poetry Party)*, Walla Walla, Washington, 1992
- *Image*, Seattle Arts Commission, Seattle, Washington, 1991
- *Writer's Northwest Handbook*, 4th Edition, Media Weavers, Beaverton, Oregon, 1991
- *Idaho's Poetry, A Centennial Anthology*, University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho, 1988
- *Café Solo*, Solo Press, Atascadero, California, 1988
- *Gargoyle Fiction '84*, Paycock Press, Washington, D.C., 1984
- *A Critical (Ninth) Assembling (Precisely: 6789)*, Richard Kostelanetz, editor, New York, 1979
- *Turpentin on the Rocks*, Marlo Verlag, Dusseldorf, Germany, 1978
- *The Face of Poetry*, Gallimaufry Press, Arlington, Virginia, 1977
- *The Far Side of the Storm*, San Marcos, Los Cerillos, New Mexico, 1975
- *The Smith/17*, The Smith, New York City, 1975
- *Hellcoal Annual 3*, Hellcoal, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, 1973
- *Trubador Anthology*, Rainbow Resin / Folk Frog Presses, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1972

- *The Living Underground*, Whitston Press, Troy, New York, 1972
- *The Anthology, (of poems read at first COSMEP conference)*, Berkeley, California, 1969
- *Do You Want to be in Our Zoo Too*, Zoo Press, Pocatello, Idaho, 1966

BOOK REVIEW OF *VALGA KRUSA*

David Bromige

“Beneath the Underground: Charles Potts’ *Valga Krusa*: A Novel of the Bay Area 60s, and the Poetic Ferment in the Wake of ‘The New American Poetry.’”

I would like to introduce a neglected classic, the novel *Valga Krusa* by the poet Charles Potts. Potts—aka Laffing Water—who arrived in Berkeley from Utah [Idaho] via Seattle in 1965, and quickly made himself a familiar figure in the poetry scenes not only of the East Bay but of San Francisco. He was a tireless organizer of reading series, a liaison between poets, revolutionaries, and the pacifists of the Peace and Freedom movement. He had already begun publishing the magazine *Litmus* before he arrived in California, and continued to issue it for many years thereafter. *Valga Krusa*, like *Litmus* records much about this time of social ferment and upheaval, and in doing so, affords a unique view of the poetry of the sixties. Published on Potts’ own press,

Litmus Inc., in 1977, the novel was written years earlier, concurrent with the excitement it records.

Those poets who matured in the previous decade, who were to some degree instigators of the excitements of the sixties—Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, Michael McClure, Robert Duncan, Charles Olson, Robert Creeley, Diane Di Prima, among many others—look very different when viewed from the community of younger poets even further out than themselves. Potts and his peers exemplify the ways in which the New American Poetry shaded into poetry of the streets, the be-ins, the mimeo mags, even the Sexual Freedom League. Richard Krech (ed., *Avalanche*), Julia Vinograd (still the bubble-lady poet of Telegraph Ave), Andy Clausen (strips off, reads nude), John Oliver Simon (ed., *Aldebaran Review*), Alta (sexually outspoken no-b.s. woman poet), John Thomson (of FUCK fame), Pat Parker (who brought blackness into the largely white world of these writers), Herb de Grasse (wildly eccentric filmmaker), Mel Buffington (ed., *Blitz*), and Country Joe of the rock group C. J. and the Fish, are just a few of the colorful persons who undergo little literary transformation into the same-name characters of Potts' novel.

We see their impatience with the better-known poets, who are often at odds their heroes and their villains, figures being transformed into the latest establishment. There is no doubt that the existence of this underground-the-underground community in the Bay Area had its effect on those poets whom we now think of as the principals of this period. Their appraisals helped keep them honest. While few among this loose-knit group are remembered today, their radical faith in the revolutionary power of poetry constituted an horizon for the times, an instigation and a goad. While much different in their formal approaches, some of the poets, later to be known as Language poets, started out in this ferment: Ron Silliman first met Barrett Watten on Telegraph Ave. (Nor should we forget that Lyn Hejinian lived on a commune during the 70s.)

There is another novel that makes a good companion for *Valga Krusa*. Short, where *VK* is long, quiet, where *VK* is definitely not, Pamela Millward's *Mother* (published by Don Allen's 4 Seasons Press in 1970) is an account of a young woman accommodating (and not) herself to the hippie life of the Bay Area and Sonoma County (where she lived for a while on a commune). Some of the same, famous figures can be seen in Millward's book as appear in *VK*, and again, through a contemporary lens that offers distinctly uncommon views of their subjects.

(This review was originally delivered as a lecture at The National Poetry Foundation Conference in Orono, Maine, in July of 2000.)

FIVE CHAPTERS FROM *VALGA KRUSA (THE YELLOW CHRIST)*

The Grass Prophet Review

As I had come back to town, though really for the first time to stay, and not really town either, living in Oakland, not in Berkeley, where I had intended, but only a few blocks south on Telly, Simon had brought out the first of the *Aldebaran Review*'s. Then as March began *Litmus* 8 was out but selling it was so hard on my head, having not the graces for that that Krech and Simon had, and Vanish who was supposed to have been there to take that aspect of it off my hands, continued to string me out. I wanted something to hand to somebody who might be interested in poetry, but not so interested that they had not the money, the quickness poor mouth is the original excuse, or perhaps genuine one, that they did not care for it, and I'd feel better if I had something to hand to them. Berkeley was the leaflet capitol of the western world.

Sad to relate the column called appropriately enough, "The Roving Rat Fink" in the *Barb*, written by an old and to all internal evidence, used up fellow traveling beatnik, took it upon himself to lament without any evidence that Hippys were readers not writers, and to heap all that vomit of the good old days nostalgia for Kerouac and the boys in that band. Being somewhat of a belligerent Hippy and knowing extremely better and having run a \$35 ad in the previous *Barb*, I went to see Max Sheer to see if anything could be done about this ignorant columnist. I wanted to write a column. He said to write up some samples and he would see what he thought. I wrote one thing called "Back Talk" for Le Roi Jones as of his bullshit poetry in the December *Evergreen Review*. It got me into a flap with Ed Dorn, who asked me in his most piercing tone as an "innocent abroad," exactly how had Jones gone wrong, without getting any help, and I had to say the gist of my article was, that if he really wanted us, whoever we are, to leave his bitter bullshit rotten white parts alone, why be so persistent in exhibiting them. That particular article, even though Max said he liked it, was sat on by the *Barb* until it was too late to run it and local politics had in a great measure eclipsed its content. The other article started with the uncool phrase, "I am one of several thousand poets who are slowly starving to death," essentially a get out the poets rap and review of the Nighttown reading, chiefly Pat Parker's part of it. The *Barb* actually published it under the headline, HEY LISTEN ROVER, why not even in Barbese, MOVE OVER ROVER, but there was to be no column, and no poetry, though I tried to get them to run some. Max didn't really like poetry and didn't care to believe me that I did, though he told me to do up some sheets and sometime when he had nothing to run, he will run them, he says. But I never got them done for him because of all the other things I was doing, I left some poems by Edward Smith for him to read, but he refused so I put my time in on something a little more likely. Not of course, without feeling putdown and strungout and suspicious of the sensationalist motives of the *Barb*'s proclivities for the reactionary ravings of Jerry Rubin.

In the midst of this need for something regular of our own, Richard had

been talking of this periodical he had a fantasy for doing, to be called, *The Grass Prophet Review*. Like maybe we could do free sheets, maybe 2 sides of an 8 1/2 by 11 page, once a week and we could put in this that and the other. Simon had come with a poem for possible inclusion in the first issue at the Nighttown reading and later said, "Charlie doesn't say anything about it, which must mean he doesn't like it," though actually I preferred another poem of his ending with "the grass was the darkest green."

I had written a riff about Seattle. Krech, Simon and myself talked up what it should look like. A letterhead had been designed and printed on many colors of paper, the different colors were to give the clues as to which issue each was to be, to keep them separate in the minds of the people. Malcolm queered the riff I had written, but it was true that it was to some extent a patronizing smaltz and I agreed that we should deal with local questions and issues. A poem of Richard's called "White Man's Song for Huey Newton" was on the back. Simon's poem "inside her kingdom she tells the wasp to sting the flowers..." and the Altimeter, a business review written by the Grass Prophet himself. Krech's idea, it resembled the Wall Street report of the drugs prices and availability. And we rounded off the first issue with my complete riff: The police are here to protect the crime, why didn't anybody say that during the convict strike at San Quentin. The government of the United States steals more money and kills more people in one day than all the people who have passed, or will pass thru its prison system. "Vote for the criminal of your choice". That's Henry Miller. Who are you. Where are you. Registered.

Alta's haiku for Doug Blazek, to wit: I got hair down there, topped it off and it contained a schedule of all the poetry readings that were coming down recently. Simon printed it at Holmes' Bookstore in Oakland on whose multilith he also did the *Aldebaran Review*, and we passed it out to people as they went by. For five consecutive weeks it came out wham bam thank you sir, and then it hiatused until the Rolling Renaissance in June. I took to passing mine out by osmosis, leaving them in Daily boxes, where people could pick them up themselves, leaving them in laundromats, putting them up on bulletin boards.

Alta had taken a dim view of the article I had published in the *Barb*, though Martha Krech had said it was the only thing readable in the whole issue. Alta thought that I was not really, literally starving, and that since she knew people who were, it was not fair to be metaphorically. But I had said slowly, remember, and I had begun to lose weight as *Litmus* was eating my bank account. I had given Dawn a hundred when I first went to Mexico, got boosted of \$175 in Los Angeles to the maintenance of the system, and I had started eating less to keep my money together. When Alta confronted me about the article, I came rite back and then she said I could eat with them. She made some bread and soup, I joked that I wanted steak, I mean if you're going to say I'm not starving, I want to be eating nothing but the best.

"You can always eat here," she said, and I became a regular of some irregularity, eating there as much as I could without feeling guilty about it. I saw Pat Parker over to their house once again and noticed some weird shit

between her and Alta. Hadn't seen her since she had helped collate number eight, except for the Nighttown reading, and I borrowed her umbrella to walk home with in the rain. Later she came by my runway and I made tea for her and served it in the cheap pottery cups from Toluca.

The rascal Simon was getting another issue of poems together and had copped the marvelous poem of Koch: "I feel I'm going to be here / forty more years. / This day has just begun." Alta was in a class of contemporary issues at Merritt College, the black junior college in Oakland and she had to have a project to complete the requirements for the course. Her first project had been the initial number of *Aldebaran Review*, which she had taken to class and remembered that the people dug my poems, so she asked me if I would like to go to Merritt to the class to be her project. It sounded simple enough, maybe read some poems, so we went. All bleary eyed that morning listening to Amad Jamal who was somebody else's project, and I had to tell them I just remembered why I dropped out of college, it was held too early in the morning. 9 o'clock, but a pleasure to hear Jamal at any hour. I read some poems, one of them Alta thought they mite like for the magazine, but Pat didn't like it which caused a simple riff on opinion to go down. I had to say I'm not interested in opinion, yours, mine, or ours, unless it subscribes to the facts as they are all known in any case. So the poem was out as it deserved to be. After the class in a jammed up room that passed for a lounge, we talked to Delio, and I tried to get him to look at my article on Jones, but he passed it back to me without reading it saying, "you're not angry enough," to which I tried to say I wasn't angry at all, that anger was a liability, but couldn't get him to take it seriously, who wrote poems with the heart lifted out of Shakespeare.

The Grass Prophet Review rolled along with poems and riffs anonymously, Simon in two "him and Judas were trying to bring off a Chicago in August." A think and do issue for three, with John Thomson's letter from Venice about Hippy hassles there, backed up with some hi brow shit from Malcolm, poems from Edward Smith, D. R. Wagner. Passing out the happiest one came at the University of California. The Rimers Club presented a reading by Robert Creeley, and I talked everybody into going and sat in the back near the top of this auditorium and couldn't believe it when a huge grey haired man came in too. Little knot of hair on the back of his neck. I couldn't wait for the reading to be over, much tendentious explanation, quote unquote to heighten nuances that were no longer mostly there. At the end Creeley asked if there were any requests and believe it or not there were, a lot even, mostly for old famous poems which had somewhat dried up on the roof of his mouth.

Afterward, I'm down the stair regaling Olson with our first *GPR*, feeling like a dwarf as I had once dreamed that I had been standing on a table when we were introduced, in order to shake hands. Huge hands, and though he was sitting on a stool, a walrus poet, someone said, he said, "afternoon manatee" of his mind. I felt electric pumping on his hand. "I knew Dorn in Pocatello."

"There was a guy there who used to do one of these," he said waving the yellow paper, "one of these marvelous free things that just come out fast. . ."

“Drew Wagnon,” I offered.

“No, no some-body else.”

“There was *Wild Dog*. “

“Yeah, *Wild Dog*, that’s it, but what was that cat’s name?”

“You mean, Gino, Gino Clays?”

“Geenoh, Geenoh,” he said rocking back and forth on the stool with pleasure. I could have stayed and talked for much longer but there were many others up to see and touch the oracle, and I went over to Creeley, intent on re-introducing myself.

“I know you,” he said.

“You remember me?”

“Yeah, I got the things you sent.”

“You did, I never knew if they were reaching you or not.”

“Yeah, I got them, keep in touch,” he said again as he had said before as Gino had once said in Brighton, “everybody says Olson used to say, tell Gino to keep writing, his last letter was fantastic, but whenever I do, I never get an answer, fuck it man, that’s like masturbation.” One way touch. On the way out I saw Covici with his \$75 copy of *Le Fou* in a little box, he was holding it up like a ring bearer with a samovar, hoping Creeley would sign.

Supposedly an important source of funding for little magazines comes from university libraries as I got a card from Cal, asking for back issues and continuation, and went in to see Covici about it. What I hoped for was to sell them a lifetime subscription and back issues for a hundred dollars. Not much, but Covici balked, and said he’d have to go over it with Robert Duncan who traipsed over once a week when he was in town to help keep them advised on what to library and what to pass on. “I don’t dig these triplicate forms any better than you do,” Covici said, buddying up.

“Then why do you put up with them?”

“Somebody has got to do it, and it’s necessary for bookkeeping.”

“I suppose you know poets always dig a library burn?”

“Yes, but you might consider for a moment that maybe libraries will be thought of as hastening change rather than retarding it.”

“Fat chance, look you can’t buy these?”

“No, not until Duncan has a chance to ok it, but I can tell you that we’ll probably end up doing is taking a regular \$5 subscription, \$100 is too much.”

“But you get a complete backfire and who knows how many others I will do, it might be cheaper in the long run.”

“I can pick up the back issues one at a time, see if I could just talk the library into giving me a slush fund, and then when I see them in the stores, I can pick them up.”

“But you don’t think you’ll be interested in buying a lifetime subscription?”

“No, I told you.”

“Listen, when is Duncan supposed to ok your pending purchases?”

“He usually comes over on Thursday, but he’s been out of town, he should be back in a week or so.”

“Could I meet him?”

“Yeah, just come up in the afternoon.”

“Krech has a whole drawer full of those handouts, leaflets, what not, you want I should tell him that you mite be interested in acquiring them?”

“Yes, I’d appreciate that, you also said you had some letters and holographs, one of the things hard about giving you a hundred dollars for *Litmus* is none of these poets you publish are well known.”

“Well, it’s not hard to publish well known poets, in fact it’s easy, the hard thing is to get the best of the unknown out where people can know it and you can’t do that if you publish people who are known. I realize the hardness of the sell, but if I was interested in money, I’d get into heroin, or diamonds or something. Money is just a big drag.”

“Unless you don’t have any.”

“Unless you don’t have any, then it’s a big drag both ways, getting and spending.”

“Shall I come over to your house some night this week and look at the letters and holographs?”

“Yeah, why not tomorrow night,” to which he agreed and when he arrived, he entered with the courteous lie.

“This is a nice little apartment.”

“Thanks, it’s little all rite, can I get you some tea?”

“Thanks, yes, how old is this guy Smith?”

“Twenty-seven, twenty-eight, I don’t know.”

“That’s usually old enough for seriousness to set in.”

“O, he’s serious enough, you don’t know anybody as serious as he is, or any more.”

“Yeah, but have you got copies of your replies?”

“Replies?”

“Yes, replies to the letters, you should make copies of your replies.”

“Well...”

“I mean what good is half a correspondence? I could maybe use these letters from Dorn and Bukowski, if they only had the replies.”

“They’re not for sale.”

“But what you should do is make copies.”

“That’s such a big pain in the ass.”

“But a complete file would contain both initial letter and response.”

“Any news yet on the *Litmus* subscription?”

“Duncan is back and he’s coming over this Thursday, Why don’t you come on then.”

“Great, I’ll be there.” Saw him walking. Knew him by the eyes. Saw him walking in the warehouse Bancroft Library is, several stories off the ground, with a young man with a beard, one eye ahead, and one eye aslant, he says crossed but I hold out for cocked, saw him walking and watched him and Covici go upstairs.

“Ah, oh Robert, this is Mr. Potts.”

“Hello.”

“We have his magazine here among the ones we need to consider today, he wants a \$100 lifetime subscription and to include a back file.”

“That’s quite a bit, I think I’ve seen this before, others of it, will the library go for it?”

“I doubt it, even if you recommend it, but do you think we should get a regular subscription?”

“By all means, this is, you can tell, some care was expended on it.”

“Well, we have got a lot of things to talk about Mr. Potts, why don’t you wait down by my office, if there’s anything you want to ask Mr. Duncan about,” he said turning to Duncan, “He’s been waiting to meet you.”

“There are about a million things I’d like to ask Mr. Duncan.”

“It looks like a nice magazine, I’ve seen it before.”

“I sent some to Oregon, La Grande, with some friends of mine when you were reading there, I asked Ben Hiatt to give them to you.”

“You were in La Grande then?”

“No, I was in Seattle, just passing through, where I did these.”

“Bayes, Bayes, that’s the guy who had me there to read, is he a friend of yours?”

“Yes, I’ve got some copies of the last two or three issues, I can give you when we get down to the bus stop. Once Dorn was playing a tape and looking for some poetry on it, I don’t remember what, but he flashed past ‘The light foot hears you and the brightness begins’, and I said, go back, go back, and he said to what, and I said to that line, I just wanna hear that line again, and he did.”

“That’s an old poem.”

“Yeah, but still great.”

“You know Dorn then?”

“Yeah, they used to publish me in *Wild Dog*.

“But wasn’t that in Pocatello, I thought you were from Seattle?”

“I used to be in Pocatello too. Gawd that library is a pain in the ass.”

“Yeah, I advise them.”

“I’d almost rather they didn’t ever even see the shit than go thru the hassle.”

“It’s their problem all rite, gathering the material, are you going to publish any more?”

“Yeah, we got a couple issues planned, I’m doing a book of Bukowski’s.”

“How is he?”

“Wrecked.”

“Oh?”

“He’s doing this thing with Penguin, and I got this incredible letter about how they sent him a tax exemption, so they could send him his hundred pounds without paying the taxes, and like the forms didn’t make any sense, but he fills them out and then months later they write and say we sent you the wrong forms, here are the right forms, please fill them out...”

“Jesus, it’s so typical that would happen to him.”

“Really, he deserves better.”

“I’m going to Illinois next week, then I’ll be back. Then I’m going to New York in June.”

“You get a lot of readings these days.”

“Yeah.”

“We do a lot of readings all over town.”

“Here’s my bus.”

“Here’s the other *Litmus*, goodbye.”

“Oh, Mr. Potts, I went home and read all my *Litmus*,” he said after many weeks hiatus, after his reading and autograph party on the second floor of Cody’s Bookstore, throwing his arms around me in a bear hug. I had approached him hoping that he would remember me. On the way into that reading the Rabbi Simon had introduced me to Gene Fowler. Simon had been on uneasy feet since discovering inadvertently that there was a tiff in the air between me and Fowler, and he had both of us in his first issue. He was worried that there would be smoke, but I wasn’t worried, nor did I have any powerful feelings one way or the other. Fowler didn’t seem to write well enough to account for all the deference showed him by others.

It was Waldman who had interested me since the tremendous presentation he had made at the open reading at The Hearth. It was a relief to me to see him sitting in the Mediterranean one day talking with some people, since it meant I wouldn’t have a completely dry run, lugging around town as I was then this canvas bag of magazines and barely selling any, going home each night with a heavy head and promises to myself to do better the next day. I breezed rite up to him in the Med, and said, “Here, this is for you,” handing him a *Litmus*.

“For me?”

“Yeah, you’re a poet aren’t you, I’m supposed to be selling them but you should get one free.”

“Why me.”

“For that terrific reading you gave at The Hearth.”

“Thanks man,” he said waving the little black and white book. I had wanted to talk to him but it seemed I was destined to just go on walking. I made some more rounds up to the Cal plaza and then back down the other side of Telly, there he was in the gutter just across Dwight, hitchhiking in his heavy sweater and whisps of hair.

I went up to him again, “Hi, how are you, what’s happening?”

“I’m hitching over to the city.”

“Did you get a job?”

“Yeah.”

“Listen man, you should give me some poems for *Litmus*.”

“For this?” he said, again waving the magazine.

“Yeah, my address is in there, why don’t you just bring some by for me to look at, ok?”

“Ok man, in a few days. I’ve never done anything with my poems, perhaps it’s time.”

“You should man, they are great.”

“What is the best time to catch you at home?”

“I’m usually there in the mornings,” which was true. At first I had been getting up really early, as Calvin would approve, but now I was just lying in bed, working very late at night and not getting up until noon. Joel came over

with a valise full of poems and hauled a few out.

“Look at these.” I went shuffling through them a bit, recognized the couple I had dug so much at the Hearth reading.

“Do you have any more?”

“Well I can leave this whole bundle with you if you want to look at them, there’s some from a book I’m working on called *Carole, and other poems*, you can publish any of them you like.”

“Ok, that’s fine, I’ll just bring them back to you when I’m finished with them.”

“When will these be out?”

“Well I’m doing two more issues, I’ve got these four long poems I want to put in number 10, and your poems will be in number 9. I hope to get it out in a month or two.”

“Sounds great man, look I live on Essex,” he said and gave me the address. When I returned the poems a few days later, his girlfriend Susan was there and he was writing a new poem. He had written one for her that ended, “by the way lady, / welcome to immortality,” which I thought had been a little strong, and even if true better off unvoiced. It was not one of the ones I wanted for the magazine, although the rest of the poem was fine, and I suggested that I would take it if you delete that line.

“Let’s ask Susan what she thinks.”

“Ok,” I said without really meaning it, I didn’t care what she thought really, she could like the poem or not like the poem, that didn’t make it any better. She picked up the piece of paper and read it over, occasionally looking at Joel.

“I don’t know,” she said, “I’m not sure if it belongs in the poem or not.”

“It stays,” Joel said.

“Fine,” I said, “but I can’t publish it with that line.”

“Oh, man, what difference does it make?”

“Doesn’t make any difference, I just think it ruins everything that went before it.” I didn’t want to make it a hassle, I had just thought I would mention it.

“Joel tells me that you’re selling these magazines,” Susan said, lifting one of them up.

“Yeah, I’m trying to, but it isn’t going very well.”

“Why not?”

“I just don’t have the knack, is all, or enough time, I mean I’ve got to edit the thing, and there’s lots of correspondence, a lot of people are offended by the cover, this poet named Vanish...”

“Vanish?”

“Yeah, Vanish, he was supposed to be here to help me sell them but I haven’t seen anything of him.”

“Where is he?”

“Portland I think.”

“I could sell some of them for you.”

“Really?”

“Why not? I could just take some of them up on the Avenue, or onto the

campus with a sign of some kind.”

“Gawd if you would it would really help me.”

“Sure, I can do it.”

“How many do you want?”

“Maybe a hundred.”

“Do you think you can sell that many?”

“I can try.”

“Great, I’ll just bring them over, maybe tonight.” That was a great move I thought, at least somebody else is willing to help me, I told her that I would give her forty percent of whatever she sold, which seemed to be all right with her.

A few weeks before I had gone down to Oakland to file for my unemployment. It seemed everybody I knew had at one time or other been on unemployment except me, and since I had been working for over a year in Seattle before I came to California to stay, that I should have unemployment coming. The first mistake was in going to the unemployment office in Berkeley, which was way to hell and gone down on University. After I got there they said, “We don’t take applications for unemployment here, we’re only a place where you can get jobs or get lined up for jobs, but you have to have a job application on file here before you can file for unemployment.” So I filled out one of those “what have you done all your life” forms. I didn’t want a job, I had a job, I didn’t even want to b.s. them, unless I had to.

I caught the bus and went thru Oakland and over to the unemployment office, and there were huge lines of people. I told them there that the only work I would consider was that of a poet.

“There are no job classifications for poet.”

“Great, then you have to give me unemployment.”

“No, not exactly, what you have to do is seek the kind of work you have been doing.”

“But I don’t want to do that kind of work.”

“Well, it is the only basis on which you can file for unemployment.”

“Why should I have to take the fall, just because your civilization doesn’t have enough imagination to provide jobs for poets.”

“I served in the military for twenty-four years.”

“So what?”

“So people like you could make arguments like this.”

“No man, I’m making this argument on my own. You may think you were keeping me free, but you were just keeping yourself in tow.”

“Look at all these people out there just waiting for a handout,” he said with a sweeping gesture toward the lines of waiting victims.

“You don’t seriously think they enjoy coming down here do you?”

“They come down here, week after week, the same people.”

“So?”

“So they must enjoy it.”

“No man, they’re just coming down here because that’s easier than blowing it all up.”

“Humfff!”

“You think they enjoy standing in these lines, and putting up with the likes of you?”

“They don’t have any choice.”

“Exactly, and that’s why your system is failing.”

“But we won the war.”

“No, you mean you postponed the final outcome, by winning the battle.”

“We could argue all day.”

“Fine with me.”

“But we have to get on with your case, you can do warehousing work, bartending, and listen when it says something here, it means it, you comply, you have to be actively seeking work in one or more areas of which you are qualified.”

“How many a week?”

“It’s not how many, you just have to keep looking and you have to look in all the regular ways. You have to read and answer ads, in newspapers. You have to call employers up.”

“I don’t have a phone.”

“You can call them from pay phones.”

“That takes money, which I don’t have.”

“And you have to go see people in person.”

“You make it sound harder than work.”

“Well we don’t want to encourage anybody to stay on unemployment if they are capable of working and looking for a job, they should find one. There are lots of jobs going begging.”

“It would make more sense to go begging.”

“Ok, now look at this, you worked from September until October of the following year. Now when people file these interstate claims, we just can’t put you on the unemployment here, we have to have all this information verified from the state of Washington. And that sometimes takes time.”

“How much time?”

“Oh, a week, maybe two, maybe longer.”

“What takes so much time, all they have to do is get the information and run it through their computer?”

“Yeah, but they have a lot of cases to check out, and if they decide you’re qualified, then you have to send us or bring us one of these forms, completely filled out.”

“Completely filled out?”

“Yes, completely filled out as to what activities you have engaged in in the previous week to seek employment for yourself then they figure out on what quarters you are applying, how much money you should get per week.”

I left them with my head in a daze. I didn’t want these creeps to chip me out of what I had coming. But a couple weeks later they send me a letter saying that I was qualified for unemployment compensation. Based on the quarterly earning period that applied, I would be receiving a check for \$18 a week. \$18 a week! What horseshit. It seems as though they had run a number on the quarters and in spite of the fact that I had worked for a full year, they were assessing my earnings on less than half of the time I had worked, which

made my check so small. If I applied again after the first of July it seemed to me, I would a been getting in the neighborhood of \$50, just because that would set up the sliding wheel of unemployment to where they were then taking into consideration more of the work I had already done. Well I would just have to wait and do it then, it wasn't worth the hassle for \$18 a week.

I went into the post office down town and signed up to take a test a few weeks later. My long range plans had come to include slipping in the back door of the post office when my funds ran out, which was one job I was sure I could get, because I could pass the test high, and get a good rating and theoretically at least, they didn't have a shit thing to say about what you looked like. In fact there had been an article in the paper, asking rednecks in general, what interpretation they put on the facts that people with long hair generally scored higher on the post office tests, indicating hi levels of native ability. And since it was a meritocracy, they couldn't do much about it.

They gave me these sample type questions, and little route charts, which I laid right into, studying them for a while, and then when I went to Oakland to take the test, I felt pretty good about it. Kepley had said of me that I was more likely than he was to take out an insurance policy.

* * *

Residual Super Cool

I kept suggesting Joel to The Rabbi as a poet that he should include among the ones doing the readings at the Art Center, but he kept demurring. There had been the ridiculous flap over whether a person was a reader or a poet at the Shakespeare readings, a lot of low level bickering about who's any good, rather than solid attention from each onto each's shortcomings, noticeable or not. Joel didn't live far from the Fulton junction with Ashby and came over one night to rap. He was telling a story about a girl named Irma that he had met. Joel had incredibly expressive eyes, furtive, shifty, twinkling, he could embellish the dullest rap heavenly by increasing or decreasing the amount of lite he would let flash from his retinal cones. "I just stood there," he was saying, "I guess you could call it, residual super cool," at which there were loud guffaws. He had told me that this woman Susan who was living with him and who I had seen with a sandwich board trying to sell *Litmus* for us, had ran off, and not only had she ran off, she had taken the magazines with her. I wasn't very worried about it because she seemed to have an abiding interest in it, else why would she run off with them. At least maybe they would get to people who would give them a once over, maybe even read them. Joel was upset about it though, and had some money that she had made from a few she had sold, and one of the reasons for his visit was to lay this money on me. The last time I had seen him, I had told him about the switch of guts for the next two issues. To him it meant simply that his poems

would be appearing in number ten instead of number nine. I had tried to explain to him why it was happening, ergo that maybe we could get color covers on each of them, and the color cover for the original ten came first in priority with the man who was paying for the color printing, Kepley's patron, and it went with the four poets issue, hence the switch. Joel gave me \$20 for the books that Susan had sold and was very apologetic for the ones she had run off with. I could tell that something was eating him beyond the embarrassment of admitting that she had split, and after the traffic in the big room upstairs had thinned down to the two of us. Only Jan, who had turned Vanish's closet into his work room for the time being since Vanish had hi-tailed it for the tall grass of eastern Oregon until the COSMEP readings, was still around.

"Charlie," Joel began, then followed a huge pause. "Charlie," he said again, "give me the poems back."

"What poems?" I said not quite comprehending what he was talking about.

"My poems," he said with a hang dog look.

"Why?" I immediately wanted to know.

"I don't want you to publish them."

"Why?" I repeated my question, hoping to see what was going on in his head.

"Just give them back to me," he said resignedly, but I hadn't heard any reasons yet so I didn't act on his request.

"I want to publish them. What's the matter with you?"

"If you wanted to publish them they'd be in number nine, like you said."

"I can't put them in number nine, I told you man, that is the four poet's issue."

"Put them in number nine, or give them back to me."

"No, I'm not going to give them back to you, and in the first place, the copy for number nine is already at the printer's. I couldn't put them in number nine now if I wanted to. If I hadn't of wanted to publish them I would never have asked you for them."

"Why can't you put them in number nine?"

"Because the printer has the copy now. It mite already be printed."

"Why didn't you put them in number nine?"

"Because number nine is the old number ten, and I want to get color covers on the issues. Don't you want your poems to be in an issue with a color cover?"

"Yes, but how come they aren't in number nine? You said they would be."

The rap we were having was beginning to feed me up. "Because I had individual ideas for each number and your poems belong with the ones that are going into number ten, that's all. If everything was going ok, I wouldn't have had to switch the guts, but I'm barely going to have enough money to do one issue and then if we get the color cover on it, there will be enough money hopefully to do the other issue. If I do them in the reverse order, there won't be any money to do number ten with."

“Why can’t you put the cover of number ten on the guts of number nine?” he said, still insisting.

“Because I chose the covers to go with the contents, and I wanted to switch the entire issues. I mean you’re up tight about it, but I can’t help you. There isn’t any money left for them anyway, maybe I won’t get either one of them out.”

“Well, I’ve looked over your ‘stable’,” he said tersely, and pausing for effect, went on, “and except for Gino. . .”

“You ought to read more carefully,” I said, beginning to be angry. Though I had gotten a lot of rave letters about number 8 from Blazek who had tried to send me poems for the subsequent issues, but I had sent them back. d.a. levy had invited me to send him the screened cover picture of 8 and he would run me a free ad in his paper, *The Buddhist Third Class*

Junk Mail Oracle.

“Shot me full of poetry,” he had written from Cleveland. I didn’t have any illusions about it. Some people at least thought it was great and they were not quite wrong, and some people thought it was fucked and they were not quite rite.

“I’m not impressed with what you like and what you don’t like. You come in here and try to give me the same kind of bad time you have been trying to give Ferlinghetti. Well I don’t give a fuck.” I was thinking then that I should shove his poems in his face and shove him right out of my life, but he was inadvertently, giving me a chance to ventilate on him. I thought, I don’t give a fuck, I’m not going to return his poems to him. That’d be too easy. He’s just going to have to understand this. “I mean there is a difference man, between the people who have money to publish and those of us who do it without money, except what we earn. I mean I worked for over a year in Seattle saving money, stacking tires so I could publish this shit in the first place, and I won’t have you people who have never, have you by the way, ever done anything for any poets other than your self. All you people who aren’t doing anything have all kinds of time to belly ache about The Rabbi and Krech and me because we don’t do things exactly like you would like to have them done, and if you don’t like the way we’re trying to get this scene together, why the fuck don’t you do something for it yourself. What the fuck do you do for the scene? I mean your girl friend tried to sell some *Litmus* for me, great, but, and you gave me the money, I mean when I took the *Litmus* up to Ben Hiatt’s the other day, I spent my last bucks for gas to get home on, and the rest of the last of it for paper to print the issue on do you understand? I don’t have any money and I’m not interested in changing my plans and I’m not going to give you your poems back. I intend to publish them when I get the tenth issue out.”

“I... I’m, sorry,” Joel said, after quite a long pause ensuing when I ran out of breath.

“Don’t be sorry, be careful. It’s not your fault, but you should have a less precious attitude toward it all. It’s just work that has to be done.”

Kepley had heard the ruckus and had come in and was sitting down listening. Joel had become contrite in the extreme and I began to hope that I hadn’t

bruised him too badly, but for Christ sakes, it was pissing me off. We used to say in the old days in Pocatello about the *Wild Dog* boys in San Francisco, how they would get plagued to death with poets coming over and trying to get them to publish their work.

“Watch out for the San Francisco literary trot,” Norm Sibum had written to me from his Canadian exile. Hence I had rented the post office box, which the inveterate Vanish had lost the extra key to, and now I had the only key, but it didn’t keep the poets from coming by where I lived and giving me a hard time.

“Here, man, take this,” Joel said, handing me a handful of money.

“What’s this?” I said, not reaching out for it.

“Take it, it’s money.”

“I know it’s money, but you need it as bad as I do.”

“No, no, I don’t really.”

“I don’t want your money man, I just wanted you to understand.”

“I know that, but Susan took off with all your *Litmus*. I lost them.”

“They probably wouldn’t be selling anyway. Maybe she’ll give them to people who’ll dig them.”

“But I feel responsible. Take it, it’s another \$80.”

I began to consider the money. It would make it possible to mail some of the subscriber copies, some of the exchange and contributors copies. “But this is your paycheck,” I protested. He had been working as had Andy Clausen on the BART project.

“I’ve got enough, take it,” he said again, at which point I decided that maybe I should take it and reached out and counted three twenties a ten and two fives. I began to flash around for something I could give him in exchange for it, because I was feeling a little foolish and no longer full of righteous indignation and moral superiority as I had been. When I had first met Waldman I’d had premonitions about him. Later I had given him a copy of number 8. Then when I got the poems from him for the rag, I had laid on him a copy of number 5/6, the last one I had done in Seattle.

“Here man,” I said, reaching into a box in the kitchen storage place and filching out an envelope with the other *Litmus* numbers 1 thru 4 in it. “Take these, they will make you a complete set. There aren’t too many of them around.” I thought of the trip trying to sell them to the Cal library. “They are probably worth a hundred dollars,” I said hoping that it would sound convincing.

They pleased Joel a great deal. Whether they pleased him as much as the money he had given me pleased him, I couldn’t say. Now he didn’t have Susan, nor most of his money. All he had was a set of *Litmus* and his poetry. He must have thought I was trying to give him a fast shuffle with the switch of the guts, but as I had tried to tell him, there were at least ten other poets whose work got shifted also, and none of them gave me a hard time, why should he. I mean, try to understand. Apparently he had, and had taken a giant step backward. He was into dealing these days with the notorious Richard, their poems began to fill up with knives and guns and kilos and ripoffs. Joel kept on working at the BART project until he got hit in the head one

night at work with a pulley and then was off work for a long time.

A couple days later when I came home from rummaging around on the avenue, Jerry Burns was at my place with some young man whose name I didn't hear when Jerry introduced us, and since I was hoping to minimize my relationship with Burns, I didn't inquire who it was. "They've come through with Dwinelle Hall for sure but were worried about the unorganized nature of the readings."

"They're not unorganized, they are *open*," I said.

"Well, I've been talking to some people and we think that at least some of the readings should be scheduled so that there will be something happening for sure."

"Oh, there will be all kinds of things going to happen."

"Let's go talk about it with Richard," Jerry suggested.

"Ok," I shrugged. Richard only lived a couple blocks up Russell, and as we walked over there, I wondered if Richard would be home. He was and offered everybody a toke, as he had a piano bench full of the shit, and I got loaded but Jerry Burns nor his friend didn't take any of it.

"They want the readings to not be open," I blurted out after a toke in the direction of Richard as we got rite down to the business at hand in the haze.

"Why?"

"Because," Jerry began, "there are some people who think they are too loose, and if we don't get some organization into them, they won't let us on the campus with them."

"They are organized," Richard said.

"I mean for purposes of PR and stuff like that."

"We can make PR" I interrupted. "We have a pretty good idea of who will be reading, I mean at least some of the poets."

"Then why not schedule them?"

"Because then everybody will think, 'Why wasn't I scheduled?'"

"Well you can handle that."

"Of course we can handle that. I'd prefer not to. It seems unnecessary."

"Well, maybe we could have the open readings. Like Simon could have an open reading at the Art Center, right. . ." Richard went on with his suggestions. "Because that's not on campus and anything that happens there is none of the university's business, and we can have the open reading just like always at Shakespeare's. Maybe we could organize the readings only at Dwinelle?"

"Now that makes sense," Jerry offered. "There are a couple people coming that I want to make sure get to read."

"Who are they, give us their names."

"Well, there's Paul Mariah, who's a local poet, and Marilyn Cadogan, also local, and Jau Billera, who's coming in from Cleveland."

"Did you send rjs money to come?" Richard wanted to know.

"Yes," Burns said, "He got a ticket."

"How about d.a. levy?"

"He didn't want to come."

"Why not?"

“He didn’t say.”

I would have preferred not to make the concession, not to get into the “formless calm of compromise,” which phrase of Le Roi Jones’ had led me around some bad shit, but it seemed like it was ok with Richard, and I didn’t know how serious Burns was about the notion that if they weren’t scheduled, they wouldn’t let us on campus with them. Worse still, I didn’t have time, nor any notion of where to begin to check it. So I said all right. We walked back over to my place. On the way, I finally got it straight that the guy with Burns was none other than Tom Kryss, the best poet from Cleveland and once a co-worker with levy and rjs.

“Oh, you’ll come and read wont you,” I said, wishing I had been more alert.

“I don’t know,” Kryss said, “I’ll see.”

When I put it to the people at the house that the readings would be only semi open, and semi closed, that the scheduled readings would involve only twenty-four poets, everyone wanted to make sure that he was reading. I included a place for Vanish. The next morning I went through the streets to Joel’s house and asked him for sure did he want to read. He said yeah, and I sat there drinking tea with him for a while, looking out his window.

“I mean vision, of a more ordinary kind. How far out that window can we really see?”

* * *

Khoi Phuc

Tuesday

Dear Laffing Water

Don’t hold a place for me to read. Still working on Japan. Only, 2 persons, plane fare as personal check from Fulton wd induce me to change my mind. *Dust Mote* reviewed *Litmus 5*, mentioned Krech, Blazek, etc, not my work. There is absolutely no excuse, they can go to hell. Perhaps if you had not liked my work, all this would be coming out different--as it stands, I can maintain my reserve. Diane Di Prima spent the day with us on stopover from Vancouver. She is where Jones & Wieners are at. Very very sad. Did not read my work when handed to her. Did not ask me to read to her. I hope she will somehow get reborn. This country is too sad. I’m leaving. New York killed Diane.

Keep yr headsomewhat. Still thinking about a book, let you know

Khoi Phuc

Ordinarily a letter from Khoi Phuc was a jolt of no predictable order. Occasionally they would contain new poems, great poems, or particularly incisive remarks about books or questions I had asked him. Once he wrote and

said the proper Chinese thing to do would be to ball Pat Parker's socks off, which I suppose I would have done anyway. Or at least was anxious to do it again. It all seemed to make sense after Pat and I came together. In fact it made so much sense, that way, that it began to make *the* sense, the rest of it just something to get thru until you could be back in your baby's arms.

"Hi," she said, standing in the doorway. Late afternoon visit and we get naked. Before that it's her butt and her smile that turn me up, my hardon was smoking and she whispered, "Go down on it wif your mouf," and I'm dragging a tongue from inside her mouth, around her little sweet ears and across her boobies, I just have to stop and suck each one a minute, she is breathing through her mouth, I stick my tongue on her belly button as hard as it will go and then hair on the end of my tongue is not growing finer, neck bent over too, hands lifting under her legs, I get a warm wet groove on the top and lick on into it, pussy pussy pussy makes the world go around, she's on her hands and feet with her torso lifted off the bed a few inches, I'm on my knees between her legs and she slides around me, we rock and groove on into the dark. She tells me a story.

"You don't know what it was like man, all those people there for the third or fourth time, all looking at you like you're lower than earth, the dirt, plus the pulling on the inside, but I got out of that, and I ain't going to go back, gawd yes its hard, but I can't go back, everybody there wants out," and as she talked she warmed up the room. It became a different place with her voice filling it up. She sitting with her arms around her knees and her back to the window, I could barely see parts of her face lit up in a crescent by the light coming in at one side of the shade, until it got dark completely, then we pulled up the shade and more lite came in, street lite, under the bulbous rays of, love is made in the city. "It's so good to talk to you, you know, sometimes, it's all one thing and nobody gets to know anything."

—For some ungodly reason, Adler and Simon showed up one day with a red rap horn, a bullhorn for controlling crowds or making yourself heard outside in a stiff wind. Red horn of power, they were like children over. I hated to touch it at first. We went over to San Francisco State and sold a few magazines. John Thomson, alias J Poet, was with The Rabbi, Alta, and myself, as well as Andy Clausen. He read his long poems outside the front of the student union. Few stopped to listen, they were too uptight and backed off with their own bored vibes to get into anything deeper than their own heads. We sold some magazines though. Andy was pissed that nobody was listening to him.

In the back of the truck on the way, he related that he had been fighting with Linda. "I think I'm going to try being a queer for a while."

"Why?" J Poet interjected, "because you think they don't have the same hassles?"

"Yeah, I suppose," Andy replied, his arms wrapped around his body rolling around on the floor of the van in lover's agony.

Alta wanted to stop and visit Blazek. I was reluctant, and she took my reluctance for something about not wanting to troupe in with her because of her and Lorelie being women. What it actually had to do with was the facts

that Jan and I had paid a visit to Blazek when Kepley first came down, just after I had moved into Oakland. I had been thinking of paying him a visit the first opportunity and Kepley and I were in San Francisco, in the neighborhood, so we said, why not. It was a nice visit, Kepley showed Blazek the collages and Blazek was impressed with them. "I hadn't expected anything this lush." Later Blazek had sent me a congratulatory note about *Litmus* 8, which I scorned, mainly because I had gone so far beyond thinking that it was any good, also some poems which I had returned with a crabby letter. Upon which he tried me with another envelope full of poems, which also went back. I was not particularly sure that Blazek wanted to see me. Much less an entire vanload of poets. Fortunately or unfortunately, he was not at home.

It led Alta to say, "I don't think some of the poets in Berkeley understand women."

To which I had to reply, "I don't think some of the Berkeley poets understand men, either."

So we left it at that and went down onto Haight Street, selling poems and John Poet and I got enough from one young lady to buy some goodies at the market. J Poet had misplaced Simon's copy of *The Book of Changes*. The Rabbi was in a rage, though Thomson was a bit absent minded, he had just left it on a bench. Happily, it was found.

The Rabbi had come over to the house on Fulton street, near to the time we got it all together there, with Alta and *The Book of Changes*, and cast an oracle for me, and then for himself, then for Vanish, Edy, Alta, and Lorelie. Kepley had passed out of the proceedings and returned only as we were all thinking of our various "roles in the revolution," as The Rabbi had put it. Kepley came back into the room announcing, as he did occasionally, that he was the only member of the "Holier Than Thou Church", and everybody was holding hands in a big circle sitting in the middle of the room on the floor. He joined the circle, a man without an oracle. The 7th bar in the hexagram. I got Hexagram 26, leading to 19. Edy's oracle was 39, Obstruction, also changing to 19.

When we went to San Jose for the campus party that was going on down there, Andy didn't accompany us, and we sat watching, Vanish was back with us these days, a play take place before a crowd of a few hundred people. Immediately after the play had terminated, I took the red rap horn and began spewing out, "Hexagram 24 No Hangups," but I was a real "crowd pleaser" as the Rabbi said, and there were only the merest handful of people still listening when I had finished.

The Rabbi read a poem and then John Thomson asked everybody to join hands and then he read some of his poems. It and they seemed to impress the people who were strangers who had stayed, as well as the people in our troupe. I had, when I had the red rap horn, it seemed to be you couldn't speak without it in public, it was like the floor, people carried around with them, blown it. A conch, I have the floor it seemed to say. I named the fountain, "The Andy Clausen Memorial Plunge," where he had taken off his clothes in order to get people to listen to his poetry. A different kind of floor, horn, power.

Carter was there from Portland with a big sombrero and a busfull of posters made of his drawings and he was selling them left and right. Later back at Fulton Street, Carter and Ben Hiatt and somebody else I didn't know was crashing at my room in the house. Naked men walking to and fro. I had gotten so loose lately that it was all turning me on. Perpetual hardon that I had for Pat, tho I didn't see her much oftener than once a week. If anyone had asked me, I could have probably gotten into head with the boys.

Once a teenager in Levi's had accosted me on the street and asked me if I knew of a place where he could crash. I told him no, because I didn't know exactly how to take him through the changes of knowing that we would have to take other people through the changes at the house, and if they would say yes. It didn't really matter whether they would say yes or not, although we did have a lot of people crashing around that time, but they were mostly friends, so that might have had something to do with my voiced reluctance, and we didn't have a lot of room to crash in addition to the eight people who were living there already. He said he was from Sacramento. I got the impression that he had just left home in his cowboy boots and jeans. There were times I wished I had taken him home with me and made a lover out of him.

As I wasn't seeing Pat often enough. Once I tried to call her, but it didn't work out. We couldn't talk much on the phone, so I let it pass. Meanwhile I had taken to wearing her necklace outside my sweater, letting it pendulate from side to side as I ripped around town going nowhere fast.

I had a few fast words with Carl Worth about the review of his art show that I had published in the *Barb*. I got out by saying that I had said if anybody wants to say better about this show, let them, and in fact, somebody had written back to the *Barb*, one of the artists in the show, and the *Barb*, with guacheria style had put it in under the headline, LISTEN LAFFING WATER. Which made a double dirty joke of it all, as one of the chief accusations the latter had made of me was that I was merely on a get famous trip. Maybe they weren't as bad as I thought. On the evening of the 3rd Art Center reading, I had been telling the Rabbi as we went to another nearby location of the city parks department, to get some tables and chairs for the reading that hadn't been secured before hand, of the last fist fight I had been in.

Smokey and I were cruising down Twin Falls on our way out on Kimberly Road. I was driving and this Riviera kept trying to almost run into us. "Go ahead and hit 'em," Smokey had roared in a drunken not quite stupor. But I was too careful, and after a couple more passes, they might have just been drunk too, I was relieved to see them turn off ahead of us, but as we went through the lite, Smokey rolled down the window and yelled, "Adios, mothers," and they whipped a U turn on the right turn they had made leaving us, and pulled alongside again. Alongside of this beat 56 Oldsmobile I had lost the brakes on coming down the east side of Donner with a u-haul full of Smokey's furniture from San Jose in the back of, a few months before my first trip to Mexico.

"Pull over," the guy riding shotgun said, as I rolled down my window in response to repeated gestures on his part. I considered it briefly and then without thinking further, whipped to the side of the road. So quickly that

they didn't have time to do more than pull over also, but too fast as they ran through an irrigation ditch and stopped halfway up on the lawn of a trailer court. Amazingly enough this guy who was driving who came around the end of his car, wanted to talk. What shit thinking I would stop to talk to anybody wearing a PKA sweat shirt that late in the night, and so I just walked up and belted him in the mouth. We had a brief drunken tussle, deciding breathlessly to call it a draw and turned around, as our slugging had taken us half-way across the street, and there was Smokey, half the size of the man he was holding down with his foot.

"He bit me, he bit me, disinfect it," Smokey was doing a mock screech the rest of the way home. This story had apparently overloaded the Rabbi's adrenaline circuits, for when I got back to the readings, the Rabbi had thrown Paul X. out of the readings with a further promise to "break him in two." Either for not having any money, or refusing to pay, or for wanting to read, or maybe even for general obnoxiousness, I never quite puzzled it out. The poets for that night were Richard Krech, John Thomson, who had brought me some chocolate chip cookies, and Marianne Baskin. Paul X. was walking around outside on one of the fireplaces in the upper part of Live Oak Park, first on one foot, and then on the other. I went over to listen to his tale of woe, and he read me a poem that he was carrying with him on a sheet of paper.

"It's a good poem," I offered, when he had finished reading it.

"It's a great poem, Charlie Potts."

Well, I don't know about that. It's not bad."

"It's a great poem," he continued. But I had to go take the tickets, what were all these hassles for. Worth and I were still keeping a measured cool distance between ourselves, although we were icily polite.

He had said before, "I've heard your poems now," which he hadn't when he first gave me the tour of his art show, "and I can tell where you're coming from. You think you want to be your generation's Baudelaire," which had taken me by surprise. Knowing diddly shit at the time of what Baudelaire was into, but it gave me a chance to see where he was at, this monkey business of not being able to take me as the one I am, but rather as the type they could most comfortably fit into what they thought they knew of the world. I'm the Laffing Water of my time, I thought of saying. Too bad for them.

I had received my score from the post office test and it had been a 93-94 range, and everybody from the letter on down indicated that that was a high score, and that I could expect a job soon. Unhappily it came at a bad time. It said to report for work on the 7th of May at 2 p.m. at the main post office. I considered taking it for a time, but then decided that the readings needed me more, if I could just get through this period, I could tuff it out until my number came back up in two or three months. So I asked them for a rain check, explaining that I was doing something important that simply couldn't wait and that couldn't be done if I had of taken the job. They seemed to understand, and said to go ahead and take the powder.

Kepley was having trouble getting even his living money expenses from the venerable patron who had sent him off in such raptures of innocent glee a

few months earlier. And though he had said he would send money to print the color cover, we finally decided that it wasn't to be forthcoming, and so took the cover in to Kirwain and had it done in black and white. We were anticipating the guts from Ben L. Hiatt any day now.

Earlier Sunshine had lost his job and had went to Sacramento to complain to the authorities as he thought some shit was being dripped on his head. It was a thing to do in those days, to go to Sacramento, Kepley had recently, to help Hiatt out a bit and to forget temporarily about the big hassle he was having with his patron.

The COSMEP readings were almost upon us, only one more Art Center reading, and then they were there. Vanish had returned and went walking with Edy one evening. I had noticed her and The Rabbi giving each other strange looks in the kitchen one night as we went out for a reading, but decided it was no affair of mine. We had been in the lobby of the Straight Theatre, waiting for the beginning of the KPFA reading with Philip Whalen, Lew Welch, and Skip Upton, to begin, when the Rabbi confided to me that she needed a fucking. I shrugged him off.

* * *

Cosmep Rising

Richard and I decided to feature three poets of twelve reading each of Friday and Saturday nights, and to make one poster for each night. On Friday night which was my bag to MC, we had Andy Clausen, D.R. Wagner, and Pete Winslow. Heading up the collage flyer for Saturday night, that Richard had put together included the names of John Thomson, Pat Parker, and Douglas Blazek. Richard did a good job on the Friday night poster as he had started from scratch. On the Saturday night one he started with a collage Kepley had made, and ruffed it up fairly well, claiming how loaded he had been.

The rascal *Berkeley Barb* finally got one of a half dozen pieces I had written trying to drum up interest in the readings published, the very week the readings were on, it went like this:

IT'S NOW

Poet burned alter ego at first COSMEP reading Thursday night at the Berkeley Art Center, worry if you missed it but Friday and Saturday at 145 Dwinelle on the U.C. campus at 7: pm you'll get still another chance to hear John Thomson, apostle of the fuck and unsung hero of the Filthy Speech

Movement back when politics were fun, sing the bloody mantras of the Hippy movement, “Hare Krishna and got any spare change?” Take John and see—all around good lay.

And if you have not heard Andy Clausen you’re missing a great new poet, the body of which over 2,000 people claim to have hallucinated completely exposed in a fountain to the south of here. Whose line from “Extreme Unc-tion,” “it’s all about god and fucking,” is one of the widest very thin lines we’ve all crossed hopefully.

And more good sounds will be forthcoming from D.R. Wagner, the *Run-cible Spoon* man from Sacramento who has one of the smallest (50cc) count ‘em 50, bladders in captivity. And more than 20 others and it’s all free and come if you can and also go to Shakespeare’s bookstore, 8 pm at Telly and Dwight on Sunday for the final reading of the COSMEP trip, open to the first 15 poets who sign up on the sheet. Everything that’s not poetry is dangerous. Relax, and welcome off the political thorazine. It is a fantasy, told by a vot-ing machine, signifying recount, everything furthers, no blame. —Laffing Water.

I had run across the beleaguered editor of the *Barb* in front of his estab-lishment one day and we discussed insomnia, his and mine. He said he had been reading Dostoevsky, and so I laid a copy of the new *Litmus 9* on him and said the next time you can’t sleep, read us. To which he demurred a bit saying that he was getting old and didn’t have any time to read, that I would understand that someday, to which I replied if we live right we never get old. It was true he had more people on his case who wanted something from him than anybody else I was trying to deal with.

My party mood was abruptly tempered one afternoon a couple days be-fore the readings were to begin by the strange antics of Adler who came home and said that Paul X. had finally flipped out completely this time, and was going to bring a gun to the poetry readings, because he was pissed off at me and Richard for scheduling Andy Clausen to read first. I thought I would just intercept this storm, arising in the idiot compromise, so I got Paul’s phone number from Harold and called him up to hear him out.

“Why did you put that fascist on first?”

“Andy is no fascist.”

“But his poetry’s all about what a great thing this America is and I hate that shit.”

“Listen Paul, I put him on because he is a good reader.”

“But it’s all jive.”

“No, Paul, it’s not all jive.”

“It’s all these new comers coming into town and telling us how to run it.”

“Oh bullshit Paul, there wasn’t anything going on when we got here and we did something about it. Now if you, who have been here all along are content to rest on the laurels of the things you did years ago, fine, but some-body has to do today’s work.”

When The Rabbi had boosted his ass from the Art Center readings, he had had second thoughts about it and was asking me what I thought, because

some of the people had thought he had come onto Paul too hard, and I had to say, "Don't take shit from people who aren't working. Advice is cheap. If they want to do something, then you can listen to their criticism, if they are just going to sit around and bitch, don't fucking listen," I had trailed off as I bailed out in front of the co-op.

When I put that rap on Richard and Harold, they talked about the things they used to do with Paul, but it didn't impress me, some readings and happenings they put on once.

"I'm coming to the reading tomorrow night, and I've got this thing I wrote, and by God I'm going to read it. It's not a poem."

"Fine, bring it."

"You and Richard Krech, you think you're running this."

"That's right, because we are in fact running it because we came forward and expressed an interest in filling the need. If we hadn't done it, there wouldn't have been any readings, and you could shoot off your mouth in the vacuum Paul. Nobody is paying us."

"Why don't I get to read until Saturday night?"

"Everybody has to read sometime. You're number 23 on the list."

"23!" he fairly shouted, why am I so far down the fucking list?"

"Listen motherfucker, you're 23 and I'm 24. You get to read before I do. What the fuck else do you want? You can't read first and you can't read last too."

"Well, I'll just read this thing I brought for tomorrow night at the open reading of Simon's at the Art Center. I don't want to read in Dwinelle. Fuck that shit. I'm going to bring my gun."

"Bring it, motherfucker, but it's only because you're scared that you are bringing it."

"I'm not afraid of you."

"You won't be if you have your gun you mean. If you don't have the gun you'd be just like anybody else."

"I'm not afraid. What are you going to do about it?"

"I'm not going to do anything about it. If you start anything, you'll be dealt with, that's all."

"You wouldn't dare."

"Don't start anything, and then we'll never have to find out." I had scheduled myself after Paul in the readings for Saturday night because he had a habit of not reading poems at the open readings but of wailing off into something sometimes incomprehensible, sometimes right on about politics. As though he wasn't announcing it, you could feel a bad scene brewing with him, it was true as he pointed out that he had offered to bring me some poems for the rag, but it was after plans for the mag had gone completely awry and I wasn't in a position any longer to deal with more poems. The scene with The Rabbi had pissed him off to a great extent, and it seemed to me that Richard and Adler, and a little bit from John Thomson, all played along with his sometimes fake outrages, so that he had fuel to continue. The only thing to do was to bring them to a halt. Therefore, I would read later than he did, which was the most I could give him, and if he made a bad scene, I would

just erase it. It didn't seem fair to schedule someone after him who might have not been able to cope with whatever he might come up with. He had made a lot of sense politically, the night he had stayed in my place, leaving a bag of seeds and stems I got hi on for a few days after. When I offered to return them to him, he scorned even ever having had them, then patronizingly left them with me. It was rumored that he was a master booster.

By the time we finished our phone conversation, he had simmered down quite a bit, and so I thought well, it may work, and I told The Rabbi that some shit storm may be coming, but that I would try to help him deal with it.

There was a fight and a footrace to see who would get to read at the open reading. It was an error on my and Richard's part, that we didn't exclude any of the 24 poets who were reading at the Friday and Saturday night readings, because that would have given us a lot more breathing room. I ran onto Jon Grube one day on the Avenue when I had exactly one more place to fill for the Friday night readings and asked him if he wanted to, and he said yes, and got very excited and started stopping people on the street and telling them that he was going to be giving a reading on the campus at the University of California. It was amazing what a change in format could do. Veblenists. When I told Andy that I had put Grube on the schedule, he said, it should have been done earlier. Oh shit.

So he was there on Friday night also, and Andy, and Paul X. And Joel Waldman, who had a continuous flap going with Paul X. Over what I never quite understood, though it had something to do I thought with the riff from Shakespeare's over reader and poet. I met Len Fulton for the first time that night, though we had been writing letters back and forth talking about the conference, and I had been trying to get out there to El Cerrito, perhaps with The Rabbi or Richard, to rap about the readings, but it just hadn't come off that way. Also met Harry Smith, whom I didn't have any idea who he was. That night he was with Caroline Rand Herron, or seemed to be. Everybody was milling around outside, there was more of a crowd than had been to any of the previous Art Center readings, which was gratifying. I was sitting in the hallway outside directly in the middle of it when Paul X. came bolting in with a scowl on his face and managed to get signed up to read second after Jon Grube. Paul started such a bad vibration that it boosted Ben L. Hiatt literally from the reading. He ejected himself and stormed out, saying to me who was still sitting outside, "This shit isn't shit that should take place at a poetry reading," and bolted the scene, Sunshine tagging along behind.

"This is not a poem, it's an indictment," Paul began. I wasn't any more interested in stopping Hiatt than I was in hearing Paul, so I just sat there and let it unfold. Paul denounced Richard for the favors he allegedly got from his father, and made a pointed reference to being relegated number 23 in the readings, "Mr. Potts and Mr. Krech," but the longer he talked the more steam went out of his rap and he wound up by pounding on one of the sculptures that was on display in the modern art show at the center. I was gradually getting on better terms with Carl Worth, and that night we were able to exchange a few words. We had begun by discussing The Rabbi's qualifications or lack of them, for dealing with poetry readings, which we admitted he had

a lot of good things going, but might have been just a bit too impatient. I admitted that I maybe had more than a little to do with his most sore thumb to date, the original Paul X. flap. Worth's and my rap got around to how hard it was to get anything together, and he mentioned that he had seen the rap in the *Barb* and thought it quite small for a conference. I then had the pleasure of relating to him that they hadn't run all of the articles I had written for them, then told him that the very week they had run the review of his art show, they had continued to sit on a couple other raps about poetry from me. I had in fact replied yes to doing the review for them of the Art Center show, specifically because it might help me get one or both of the other things I had written published, and had a much more intense interest in getting published than my review of his show.

"Oh, you mean then that they screwed everybody, all the way around."

"Exactly," I said and the reading went on. Joel wandered out at one point and wanted to know if anyone had called his name. He thought he had heard his name being called, or somebody had suggested to him that it was being called.

"No," I replied, I hadn't heard anybody call his name. Things seemed pretty settled down inside and so I thought I'll take a break and walked out of the Art Center and under the bridge and down by the little stream that wanders through Live Oak Park. I sat on a table and listened to the sound of the water passing. I must have sat there for nearly half an hour, and when I came back up the walkway into the Japanese style building, Richard and Martha were standing out on the rails, and we talked briefly, it was nice to see them together, they had been having problems with their relationship.

I also got into a rap with Alan Zacardi and Jerry Tamayo, two old friends from Pocatello, who for gawd knows what reasons, happened to be at the reading. I hadn't seen either of them for three or four years, or what seemed like an entire lifetime ago. But there they were, living in Oakland.

After the reading was over, there was some effort to sweep the place up as most people drifted away. Some friend of Paul X.'s trying to act like a heavy but when he saw that I wasn't very interested, backed off. Paul himself swept out in a still huff, but had gotten his rap all the way down to even, in his own head at least, and sliced a cliché at me as he moved out, "You cant put a round peg in a square hole."

The Rabbi and Carl Worth, as they worked in a closet putting the brooms back in after the sweeping, managed to tip over a can of whitewash on the pair of themselves, and the accident lightened up the proceedings. The Rabbi in his blue silk shirt. Worth in a suit. "I've seen a completely different Simon tonight," Worth said. I lent The Rabbi my handkerchief, as I referred to it, while we were walking out. I had Joel's sweater over my arm, he had left it inside the building. The Rabbi corrected my nomenclature to snotrag.

I had so thoroughly anticipated the Paul X. episode, that I had written the article that had appeared in the *Barb* a full week before our phone conversation. And it appeared almost instantaneously with the reading. Reading on Thursday, paper out with article on Friday. Ben Hiatt was crashing at my place, there was much excited talk and laughter and interest in what had gone

on at the reading, since they had missed it. And more importantly for some, the conference proper was to be starting the next day. I could barely sleep and found that my own vulgar curiosity wouldn't let me leave the conference alone. So with scant sleep and still rummy, I went up to the campus in the morning, trying to talk to these people, who seemed to be going on a different time warp than I was. It didn't seem like I had gotten any sleep at all since the exchange of obstructions between myself and Edy, certainly no rest, and I was feeling adrift in the breeze. There was an initial confrontation with Caroline Rand Herron at the first meeting when she tried to explain CCLM's role in the distribution of funds for publishing literary magazines. There was an unbelievable broad there from L.A. in white gloves and a panty girdle, to give you an example of the ruffraff we had to deal with. It was then I learned that the money they were giving away was half raised by the editors of the slick rags, and only half originating with the government, which took, at least half, of my indignation away. What difference did it make then, if they raised the money, that they should give it back to themselves? There was a coterie of hard core little maggers in the back of the room, Blazek, Wagner, Hiatt, The Rabbi, rjs, Krech. The Rabbi and Krech sat on a bench near me, we were all amused by one guy who looked very straight, suddenly threw a handful of books he had been holding onto the floor, jumped up, and started addressing Rand Herron specifically, and the audience in general.

"These are *academic* magazines, they are publishing 19th century pastoral poetry, they don't deserve any support, much less the government's, they are irrelevant," he went on at some length. Later Krech is trying to induce me into expanding the reading lists to include this guy he's leading around with him, trying to get my approval.

"It's Hugh Fox," Richard said, which meant only a little bit to me, having seen his poems in Blazek's mag *Ole*, and I told Richard, to put him on Saturday night if he wanted to. I got hysterical at one point and made a reference to the effect that if CCLM couldn't help get the reverend, who was a helper in the Cleveland scene and was then in jail for two years, out of jail, that it didn't make any difference how much of the government's money they had or where it went. I broke into tears and went out in the hallway. I hadn't been getting enough sleep.

Fowler later approached me as we had been sitting on the same row of seats, saying he wished I hadn't of left, because he had intended to use *Lit-mus* as an example of a worthy literary magazine that hadn't gotten a grant, but there was no shortage of such examples. "It's all right to cry in public," he said to me and it made me feel better about it. But there were events to come, and in the afternoon session, I left and walked down to the post office and ran onto Hugh and Lucia Fox, who were out walking, looking Berkeley over. We had a rap up the streets until I came to Fulton, down which I was going.

I thought I would duck home and take a nap so I would be refreshed for the evening reading. I crawled into bed, but no sooner done than Sunshine appeared out of his closet, asking me about the reading last night, I tried to brush him off. Then he got out *The Book of Changes* and tried to engage me

in a rap about that. I don't know why I didn't just look up at him and say, "If you want to know what goes on at the readings, go to the readings, now get the fuck out wouldja, I've got to get some sleep," but I didn't. Why should I have to be that obvious, I wanted him to pick up for Christ sakes, that I was dead tired and didn't want to tell him about something he could have stayed at if he had of been interested. In fact I got so angry at him without apparently him ever so much as noticing, that I couldn't sleep even then, at least not with him sitting there with the *I Ching* on his lap.

Eventually I got up and took a bath and left him sitting there. I was to MC tonight, Richard tomorrow. Richard was reading tonight and I was going to read tomorrow. There were 12 poets on the list for tonight. I went over to the campus about 7 o'clock and as I passed the student union I got a big rush from Vanish who was just coming out of it. He had taken over the supervision of a little magazine and book display, which was in the upper stories of the union for the meetings, but was now on its way supposedly to Dwinelle hall for the readings, and for the additional meetings which would be held there also. And there was nobody to help him with it. My rage increased, not at Vanish, for certainly he had helped me more than most, even if he had been late getting to town and lost the key. My rage was for the others, who he couldn't ask or who hadn't noticed that he might need help. We started carrying the rack across campus. We were intercepted about three-quarters of the way over to Dwinelle by Andy and the troupe of baboons who were following him around, Brady, and the sculpturer, who had brought his goat skull into the Art Center the night Andy read there. They were all tromping along and began chanting alongside us as we carried this rack. My eyes were bigger than my head for it didn't look so heavy or big when I told Vanish I would help him carry it, but under the burden, the lack of food and lack of sleep began to show on me, so I managed to get it near a bench where we could set it down. I then proceeded to tell Andy and his friends off for razzing us. They seemed to be good natured psychedelic lollipops, having a good time at my expense. After which Andy then offered to help carry it, but we were within looking distance of Dwinelle and I turned him down with a curt, no thanks, and helped Vanish take it the rest of the way in and set it up. Adler came streaming in about 7:30 with his electronic gig, supposedly it was to have been already set up.

"I stopped to eat dinner, pardon me," he said in a quaint little sarcastic tone.

"You poor thing, I haven't had any dinner yet, never mind, get the shit set up." Later I apologized for snapping at him, too delicate to miss a meal, probably never missed a meal in his life. We were getting a fairly good crowd and that was gratifying. I introduced Andy and he started to read but it was very tense in the auditorium. Paul X. and his partner were sitting in the front row and I didn't know what to expect from them. I had asked Andy earlier, if he would back me up in case there was any trouble, not that I was expecting any or hoping for any, but that if there was some, could I count on his speed, muscle, and guts. He said sure.

"Fuck it," Andy said a few minutes into his poem, *Extreme Unction*, "I

can't read this way," and reached over and untied first one and then the other shoe, kicked them off, unbuttoned his shirt, and took it off.

"You're ruining my act," a poet named Robert Dawson who had got into taking his clothes off at a Shakespeare reading one time and did it apparently, whenever he read, interjected into the proceedings.

Andy stepped out of his pants, and socks, then completely nude, re-assaulted the microphone with his usual adrenalinated rush, and in a few minutes had everybody else soaring right along with him in the poem. I turned in my seat which was left front on the aisle, and could see a few other people had also taken off their clothes and were really getting in to it. I was getting higher and higher and thinking maybe I should take my clothes off, but I am an inverted gymnophobe, and the rush to do it was getting a rush from my counter will loaded with advice not to, when all of a sudden, Alta's daughter, Lorelie, appeared, having ran down the aisle and said "Hi, Laffing Water," and I reached out my arms for her and she got up in my lap for the remainder of the reading, very happy and excited. When Andy got everybody going, Paul X. stepped up to the stage and lectern, draped and then threw an American Flag necktie at Andy, commensurate with his feelings about Andy's fascism, but Andy just wrapped it on around his neck and went on wailing. Even Paul looked happy, and when Andy had finished, came over to me half crouching and asked if he could read there tonight, to which I had to say no, you had a chance to be on this program and you didn't want it. As Andy finished there was a huge standing ovation that lasted a good five minutes, with people running everywhere nude, the only people not completely blown away were the professional sullenist, rjs, d.a. levy's stand in, and Douglas Blazek, who though he didn't look as happy as everybody else, at least later asked Andy for a copy of the poem to include it in a book of riffs on Neal Cassidy. They were the only two people in the place that I could see still sitting down.

I still had Lorelie in my arms and it was a good thing because I was about to burst chemically and psychologically, but didn't, and with her in tow, got up on the stage and began to try to smooth the connection to the next poet, D. R. Wagner. Who, I supposed because of his rushes from Hiatt, had asked me one day when they were in Berkeley with a trace of a sneer, if we were capable of putting on decent readings in Berkeley, him thinking of it as the stale acid smashing stereotyped bummed out spare change fuckups. I got a big rush that it had been a mistake to put him on the schedule after Andy, but then thought, well it would have been a mistake for any poet I'd ever heard to try to come up to the reading Andy had just given. And that was why Andy was reading first. And besides D.R. was a hotshot poet from New York who had recently moved out to Sacramento, he could handle it, if I could just get everybody settled down enough for them to listen to anything, except them happy selves. Lorelie was in my arms and waving her index finger at the audience, as I bounced around on the stage trying to find the equilibrium. Richard and Martha had brought Rachael.

"That's the way she gives the bird," Alta shouted from her seat in response to a question about what was Lorelie doing with her finger. Eventual-

ly I got D. R. introduced and he read, but there weren't a lot of people listening. He finally read his *Union Camp* poem almost directly to me, or at least he was using me for a lot of eye contact. Then Pete Winslow read. Then Hiatt with his humorous riff that ended with the line, "An honest suspicion of preachers."

At intermission, when I went out to get a drink, I was accosted by a young man in a cape, black with red lining, and slits for his arms to go through, pointy toed shoes like an elf mite wear, tight black pants and black gloves. His face was as narrow as the blade of an ax. "I'm a friend of Kenneth Irby's" he said, "and I'd like to read some poems."

"I'm sorry, you can't."

"Why?"

"Because the schedule is all full. If you want to read you can come to the reading on Sunday night at Shakespeare's."

"But I only want to read a couple of poems."

"That's what they all say."

"But how did these people get on the schedule?"

"We asked some of them, some of them asked us. It was strictly on a first come basis."

"But I didn't know about the readings."

"I can't help that man. I never saw you at any of the other readings we've had either. We busted our ass trying to get the word out. What do you think that we were trying to keep them secret or something?"

"No but."

"But shit, listen. I've been working hard trying to put these on, so we could get this step ahead, and I don't have time to listen to you right now. I'm supposed to be reading tomorrow night, but you know where I'm going to be, because I can't stand poets anymore, I'm going back out to the ocean where I got the idea for my new poem, because that's where the poetry matters, not in here." He started shrinking away from me, which was just as well. I didn't have any reserve left.

Jerry Burns came up to me and asked me if I would get some information to Hiatt, insofar as it was impossible for Burns and Hiatt to talk any more, Hiatt rumbling about a desire he had to pound on Burns' head. I told Jerry I would if it were possible. No sooner had I re-entered the auditorium than I was accosted this time by Norman Moser, who also wanted to read it seemed. I'd met Moser on Bancroft some months earlier. He was sitting down and I had asked him if he liked poetry, and he said yes, in fact I am a poet, upon whom I had laid a *Litmus*, but I hadn't seen any more of him. His problem as I saw it was that as I went out I had heard him saying that he was only going to stay until he had heard Ronald Silliman read, then they could go to the party. Again, he wanted to read right now. I told him about the Shakespeare reading. He said he hadn't known of the readings.

"Listen man, you want to rusticate out of town, don't expect to know what's going on inside of it. We did all we could to get the word out."

"But I want to read right now."

"You can't."

“Why not tomorrow night?”

“Talk to Richard. That’s his bag, if he wants to.”

“I can’t read tonight?”

“No,” I said spinning on my heels and walking away to introduce the rest of the poets, then went out talking with Pete Winslow. There was to be a party at Richard’s after the reading, and Pete Winslow wanted to know if I was going, and I said yes, but I ducked into a Laundromat on Telly, and tried to compose a poem, that I could leave with someone, so that they would at least know where I was on the tomorrow night. I had taken myself seriously when I had brushed off the young man in black, that I was going to drop out on these people. I no longer wanted to see them or be part of them. Then I began to think that maybe I would be more conspicuous by my absence than I would if I just showed up. That would be a better way to forget them. I mean to really forget them. I had something coming but I wasn’t sure what it was.

I decided to go ahead with it, and went over to Richard’s. Andy as usual had the floor. Joel and Paul X. were there. I didn’t stay long, just went in, had a few hits, and went home to try to get some sleep. There was Hiatt, and a couple people who had been lost around the readings, somebody he introduced as John Bennett, from New Orleans and the magazine *Vagabond*. Could they crash there. I was too tired to deny anyone anything at that point. Joel came in all aglow. He had given a great reading, as had Jon Grube. Judy was with Joel, his new girl friend. I tried to interest them in listening to the songs I had written, Joel said that he liked the poems better.

* * *

Laffing Water Drops Out

“Kennedy has been shot,” Pat said dropping by the house.

“I hope he dies,” was my immediate response, which caused a big frown to go over her face. She then making some defense of liberals, because it was “her” people who were being killed. It didn’t make much sense to me. I thought all our people were poets, and those who were not poets, were somebody else’s people. Certainly not in the categories I would mourn for.

While I was out, there was a call for me from The Rabbi, the message was that he wanted to get it together to revive the *Grass Prophet Review*. I decided to walk over to see him. Next week was the beginning of the Rolling Renaissance readings in San Francisco, which The Rabbi had been able through his friend David Meltzer, to garner a whole evening for what became, “New Berkeley Poets.” He had asked me what the Glide Sanctuary, where the bulk of the readings were going to take place, was like.

“It’s like a tomb,” I reported.

“The Egyptians got hi in tombs,” he offered.

“Yeah, but they didn’t get out of ‘em,” I continued the repartee. It was

nice to hear The Rabbi's deep political remarks.

As in a *GPR* he had sketched, "In 1848 Marx said property was theft, in 1941 Patchen said property was murder, now in 1968 Lady Bird Johnson assures her daughters that property is the basis of western civilization."

I hadn't seen him since he had been over the day Gino left. When he and Alta and Lorelie and myself had gone up El Diablo Mountain, we had started talking about Gino again.

"You will dig him, he's into mountain climbing too," I said.

"Really? That's great," he had said.

"That's the third time you two have talked about that," Alta said with some light disgust. We hadn't realized it. It seemed she was often able to dust us off and put it straight. The Rabbi had been bouncing a red balloon around the house at Fulton one day and inadvertently knocked the Oaxacan pottery torso off the filing cabinet, where it shattered. I made an effort to disguise my annoyance.

"What happened to the balloon?" Lorelie wanted to know.

"It broke," I said.

"No," she said, "you popped it."

Alta was there when I got to their house, but The Rabbi was out playing basketball. A couple of times I had played basketball with him on the cement lots of Berkeley. Once even saying that I wanted to play basketball with LeRoi Jones. But playing it made me realize how weak I was, I wasn't coordinated anymore, neither did I have the energy for a fast game. I considered briefly going over to where I could assume he was playing, but then decided not to.

Instead, I told Alta, "Tell him I'm not interested in doing a *Grass Prophet Review*," and went home to work on a poem I was in the process of writing for him. "The *Wild Dog* Distinguished Service Cross." Not long later I got a call.

"Alta says you don't want to do a *GPR*?"

"That's right."

"Why not?"

"I'm not interested in that reactionary shit man, I haven't got time."

"Do you think we could use Julia's mimeo to print it?"

"We probably could, except I'd have to print it, and I'm not going to take somebody else's history back and forth across the bridge to print."

"Fuck you."

"Well, fuck you."

"Listen, Laffing Water, you're not going to tell me what I'm going to write."

"I didn't think I was trying to. All I was trying to tell you is what I can and cannot be bothered with printing."

"Hmumm."

"You can write anything you care to."

"I just had to say 'fuck you.'"

"It doesn't matter, I'm just not interested."

"Are you dropping out completely?"

“You could say that. Why not let the headlines on the next *GPR* read, ‘Laffing Water Drops Out?’”

“I might. Listen, KPFA called me and asked me if I had anything to say about it. Do you want to take that shot?”

“The radio? Don’t you, what kind of shot did they want?” I had made a resolve not to do anything else on the radio until we got our mox together enough to take them back away from the FCC. When Krech, The Rabbi, Al Young, John Thomson, and myself had been on KPFA to discuss little magazines much earlier, the crackers had cut me off just when I said, “Whether or not we decide to let the government live with us.” So I had a moment’s rush of skepticism that anything serious was impossible in that format.

“Anything I guess. They said they were working up a series of public responses from responsible community leaders to the killing.”

“I could read them a poem. I’m certainly not going to tell them anything. Who do I get in touch with?”

“Just call KPFA and tell them who you are and that you have a response. I told them you might be calling.” I called up the radio station and told them I would like to read a poem. After a brief delay to hook the equipment, I put “The *Wild Dog* Distinguished Service Cross” on them as I had just finished it. They said they would play it with their broadcast.

“There’s not much else to say, is there,” said the man on the other end of the line.

“No, not really.”

Pat came over during the broadcast and there was a lot of loose uninformed talk about guns and defenses and shit that was really bringing her down. It amazed me that they put the poem on as the finale in the program. They had Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Eldridge Cleaver and others with their variations on the “shocked and saddened” speeches straight America was making.

I gave the whole thing no more thought and went over to Julia’s to work, the Incredible Poetry Reading, which was the initial number in the Rolling Renaissance series was nearly due. What The Rabbi called, “1960’s All Stars.” I talked Julia into going and we drifted into the Norse Auditorium, huge lines of people waiting to get in. I had two passes coming because I was on the program later in the week so we didn’t have to shell out for tickets. I saw Pete Winslow waiting in the line near the ticket booth and said hi to him. Inside we decided to go to the balcony so we could get a better look. The crowd was milling around. Andy and John the Poet were in the balcony also. Before long I saw The Rabbi and Krech passing through the crowd downstairs passing out pink sheets of paper. Later they brought some into the balcony. It’s was the new *GPR*, number 6, they had done it themselves, LAFFING WATER DROPS OUT on the headline in letters incomprehensible to many because the Rabbi had made them look like a middle eastern script. The Rabbi in his blue silk shirt, raised his arms as though he were on the cross, and we yukked it up, still friends.

Lew Welch was trying to talk to the audience without the benefit of the mike and Michael McClure who had the mike, was sitting on his hams,

would then repeat what Welch was saying over it. Ginsberg was pulling on his concertina and chanting loudly. Ferlinghetti was there in his Karakul hat. The great Buddha, Philip Whalen, sat with a ring of bells, and then finger chimes, and just rocked back and forth. Meltzer, who had put this act together, seemed tremendously relaxed and in complete control. I could admire that cool without reserve. There was a guy in an old fashioned coat, who was introduced as John Wieners. He read some new poems, and then put down his famous work, *The Hotel Wently Poems*, as "Simple narrative, you can get it anywhere, say Francis Parkman," he said pausing, but it was not true, they were better than his new poems. Welch read a digger riff on the city which was well received. Meltzer did fine, "I've been married 10 years, and I've finally gotten nerve enough to clear my throat." Ferlinghetti read, "They've shot him down again, they've killed him again."

Gregory Corso was on the program but he didn't show up. Ginsberg read his super fuck poem all about master let me lick your balls.

It led Andy to say when I asked him how he dug the reading, "That fruit ruined it." McClure read something he said was maybe a "fairy tale." Whalen read a handful of excellent poems, standing kitty cornered to the microphone stand, not impressed by the surroundings. After the reading there was supposed to be a huge party at the Steam Beer Brewery.

"You know what kind of party this is?" The Rabbi asked of me, finding me sitting on the stove in one corner. "It's an 'I was talking to Ginsberg, and he said,'" after which we both hooted. The overseer of the party got uptight because we were smoking and many people took off their clothes to dance.

"Do you want us to leave?" Allen Ginsberg asked insolently of the uptight overlord of the party. It embarrassed him and he hummed and hawed. We split and the party wound up at The Rabbi's.

Sunday night was the regular Shakespeare reading again, the first since COSMEP. There was an old man there who was trying to tell us that he was straight, which was obvious, and that he had been trying to find out what was going on with Hippies, but he said that he found they wouldn't level with him, and I countered with did he think that they would just "spill the beans," to any straight cat who went up to them. Why didn't he, I suggested, get some beads or buttons, let his hair grow long, and just get into something with them and then maybe he would understand it. But he came back that he didn't dig masquerade, and I had to say maybe that's because you'd lose your job if you let your hair grow long. Do you want your job or do you want to find out the truth, I said, shaking him off. He wanted to go on talking but I walked away leaving his mouth open.

One time on the avenue in front of Shakespeare's I had been talking to a man who said his name was John Brown, and was waving as he gestured, a book on the story of Christ. We were watching with some interest a policeman deal with what could have been anything from a drug overdose to an epileptic fit. The rascal Paul X. was at Shakespeare's reading, and in better humor than I'd ever seen him. In fact he came up to me and gave me a French kiss.

Monday I went to the reading at The Glide chiefly to hear Lew Welch

again, who had been so fine and out of his head on Saturday night, but for some reason he wasn't on the program and had in fact turned his part of the program over to Skip Upton. Upton read a huge poem that got half a standing ovation. In those days Upton wouldn't let anyone "Mimeo his righteousness." It must have charmed Ferlinghetti who backstage asked him for the poem for a *City Lights* book. I was pleased with that because it meant that if Ferlinghetti was open to Upton, he would love Clausen and maybe myself, if he could ever hear us read.

Dawn had called, she was staying with her parents in Pacific Heights, and wanted to see me. I told her about the readings, which she enjoyed the prospect of hearing, and I told her I would meet her after work in the panhandle of Golden Gate Park.

I had to go over to Julia's to work on Tuesday morning, and eating a late breakfast before I left, the phrase "Simultaneous crotch rot," passed the lips of Kepley as he and Edy and I were at the table. It took a moment for it to sink in, then words like "trichomoniasis," went around the table. Edy had gone to the doctor and gotten the word. It sounded a lot like trichomoniasis, which is what I thought they had told me once when I went to the derm clinic at the U of Washington. But they had said there was nothing I could do about it. Upstairs I noticed my own crotch was full of the tiny beads on the hairs, armpit hairs, pubic hairs, matted almost together. The parasites were eating me. I resolved to go to the free clinic in the Haight after work at Julia's.

I hotfooted it over Castro to the District, and then sat in line on the shit painted sidewalks of San Francisco. No doctor who could look at me, much trouble, dozens more people than could be dealt with, traditional appeals for support on the bulletin board. I read the *Poems Written before Jumping Out of an 8 Story Window* by Charles Bukowski. Clearlite had recently gotten a few copies of it to me. The first one he sent, bound out of order, with a weird cover on it, had nearly given me heart failure when I received it at the post office. Then later in specific disregard of my instructions, he had sent four boxes of them to the post office. I had told him to send them to the house, so that I wouldn't have to transport them. Clearlite had his problems and I had mine, four boxes of Bukowski books, which I was too excited about having to leave at the post office until I could get somebody with a car to help me carry them, so I started off through the heat of the afternoon, getting tireder and madder as I went along. Some red headed young lady appeared seemingly from nowhere and offered to help me, perhaps responding to the look of desperation I had on my sweaty face. The terror set in later after we had arrived at Fulton, and I had gotten her a cool drink from the refrigerator downstairs. I thought I would play one of my songs for her on the guitar, she looked good enough to eat. I couldn't make my fingers do what I wanted them to do on the guitar, I was so tired they wouldn't respond to the usual musical patterns.

So there in the free clinic I read the book, proud that it finally got done anyway. This young girl who was assigned to my problem at the clinic, didn't want to look at my pubes and in fact wanted me to return later when there

would have been a doctor, but the schedule was too hard to make and too vague. "Please look," I said, and dropped my drawers as she reluctantly agreed to examine me.

"They're not crabs," she said, but she couldn't tell me any more. Dawn picked me up and after a brief drive down to her parents house, we made it to the reading early. They were taking pictures of poets for an anthology they said. Christa Fleischmann took my photograph, Dawn's, and pictures of the Berkeley poets. Andy had written a mantra based on the candy bar wrappers, "you know why not," but it got mixed up and the pages were out of order.

"We'll try it with a one third cut," Andy said to rearrange the pages, "and if that doesn't work, we'll try a one half cut," gesturing wildly, "and if that fails then we'll try a French cut," he finished by a rapid shaking of his arms from the shoulders. Linda hadn't looked so flustered since the day we were in San Francisco at the park and she had turned the corner too fast and too long and hit the curb, flattening the tire. I had borrowed a jack from a carload of Chicanos across the street.

At the reading there was still a silly trip going down with Waldman and Simon. Joel saying, "I thought I was part of this scene?" which was true, but there certainly wasn't room for all 65 poets who had read at COSMEP to read in the one night at the Glide. The Rabbi was being as fair as anyone could have been. Alta was not on the program, but she wheedled Simon until he introduced her, she in tearful rage. I introduced myself afterward, dug reading in the dark, couldn't see anything of the audience except a few glimmers of light from people's glasses. Some clown from Florida was trying to ask me about poetry readings afterward, Ramsey something, but after telling him where there were a few open readings that he could get into, he wanted to know more. I suggested the group from Berkeley and he indicated he didn't want to get into such a "tribe." You need rhinoceros hide to be a poet in America, there are so many half educated creeps waiting to waste your time.

Wednesday I was working again for Julia, and met Tim Reynolds. Later he gave me a ride to the Wednesday night reading. Robert Duncan had been scheduled but decided for some reason to not be on the program, so it was Rexroth, and Antoninus. Ginsberg had been selected to fill the Duncan gap. He read first and it was nothing until he actually started reading a dream like poem he had written about trying to bumfuck Le Roi Jones and trying to get Jones to protect him in the coming racial war. Then especially enough, he read a letter he had received from Jones at about the same time he was having the dream that told him, "Because of the fantasies you and other white Americans insist on having is precisely the reason why it must be destroyed."

Ginsberg read this like it was a one liner, and everybody but myself guffawed. It seemed far too serious to me, and without time to think about it my mouth involuntarily opened and I bellowed, "RIGHT!"

This made the Glide very tomblike, absolutely quiet for a few seconds. Nobody knew who had hollered. I was barely conscious that it had been me. Then Ginsberg repeated much softer, "Right," then he said, "Wrong," and began to waver between the two words like a metronome who simply didn't

know. "Right, wrong, right, wrong, right wrong right wrong right wrong." I was annoyed with myself because I hate people who interrupt poetry readings, and now I had done it, not only had I done it, but I had done it to the most famous and least likely to be interrupted poet around.

Andy who was standing behind the seats, began to say, "It's all right," timed to coincide with the right in the right wrong chant, which had begun to sound like a Tony Blank riff. "It's all right, it's all right, it's all right with me," Andy crooned. After Ginsberg was off the stage and there was a brief break, I noticed Gerry Grimmett and gave him a copy of the Bukowski book on my way up to apologize to Ginsberg. But I started talking to him about it, that it had been involuntary and so forth, even though I did certainly believe the truth of what Jones had indicated, truth that these people had no business laughing at, and Ginsberg went into a, well then you get into absolutes, as though absolutes were odious to him, and I just backed quickly off, he seemed so unimpressed with the foolishness of his position and out of touch generally.

Brother Antoninus came on next in his magpie getup, black and white frock, and he paced back and forth and insulted the audience for about forty-five minutes, telling them why he specifically hated to read with a poet like Ginsberg, about how fucked up his soul was and so forth. It was the biggest drag I believe it's been my displeasure to encounter in a few hundred poetry readings that I've been to. I was really impatient to hear Rexroth. And was further to be annoyed that when the Brother began reading, even then it was nothing to have waited for.

Ferlinghetti introduced Rexroth as "Having become a great poet when he left the fledgling Soviet Union to fend for itself." Rexroth was reading a numbered series, but it wasn't impressive.

Some guy later identified as Tony Scibella was sitting in the back with Andy Clausen, saying "bullshit," at about every 10th word from Rexroth.

On Thursday I decided to hoof it all the way over to *City Lights* and cop the bread they owed me for books I had left with them. Stalking down Market Street, almost got clipped by a bus. There was nobody in at the bookstore who could pay me, their clerks being dragged in off the street and paid the minimum wage, I guess like everybody else, didn't know anything about it. I would have to come back later. Always deal with bookstores in cash. I did sell a copy of the Bukowski book upon returning to The Glide to Helen Luster of Los Angeles. The big hit of the evening was Wieners, who primped and sang, and then came over and sat beside me, made a pass putting his hand on my cock. I removed it and gave him a copy of *Litmus* 8 with his letter and the letter I had written back to him.

Whipping through the BART overturned city and home, who should I run into but Hiatt and Sunshine and Kepley in my room waiting for me to get there. I didn't care to see any of them right then because I had been writing a poem in my head for John Wieners all the way home and had really been looking forward to getting it down on paper. Sunshine hadn't gone to the Saturday night reading, and I had refused to tell him very much about it. I was still trying to get through to him with hints and indirect suggestions in-

stead of telling him, go yourself.

Hiatt was paranoid and they had been on a trip to Los Angeles with a u-haul and had committed themselves to a degree they may once have not thought that possible. I listened to them for a while, they wanted me to do the *I Ching* for the situation. I said ok, even though I didn't have my heart in it. The last time I had thrown the oracle it had been 28 moving to 49 and the message I got was that it was no longer necessary for me to consult the oracle and that I should lay off it. But I got it out and it went from 51 to 2 for Hiatt and after I got through with it, Hiatt said, "It told me three times to get off the speed," shock, the arousing, thunder. Shocks were going through me when I finally got them dispersed and on with the poem.

Again it was light before I got to sleep, and after a few fitful hours, I was on my way back to the city for the final reading, when incredibly enough, Jan asked me, "Can you cash a check for me?"

"I could of earlier, but I'm going to the city now," I said and then realizing I had cut him off too short, added, "Doesn't Sunshine have a bank account. Why didn't you have him cash it?" He had just got in the habit of having me do it. I was trying also not to care that they had been staying in Big Sur. They must have had as much time as I did to cash checks.

"Never mind, we'll get it," Jan had said as I walked out.

The last reading was a little bit of everybody, jammed to the rafters, they gave Philip Whalen's book, *The Invention of the Letter*, away en masse, "liberated it," as Whalen put it when he announced that it was being given away. Lots of little publisher's helpers moving through the audience passing it out. Ginsberg read a poem by Bob Kaufman, presumably because he couldn't be there. Waldman was trying to read a poem but he got lost in a tendentious explanation. Ginsberg finally being curt with him, "Read the poem," he snapped. I saw some of the people from the house there. The reading wasn't much and I laid down under a coat rack in the rear and didn't pay any attention until Ama, the clown poet, read. It degenerated into an open reading, I thought I might read the one I'd written for Wieners, and "Little Lord Shiva", but I decided not to. Janine Pommy Vega read a poem, "Poem Against Mass Endless Poetry Readings," to which Wieners objected with "Read a poem," and then Brautigan whose scene this last reading was, tried to tell Wieners that it was a good poem. I got a ride home with Joel, Andy and Linda were also in the bus.

"This guy Blazek thinks you're the Pound of our scene," Joel said, which made me wonder what he was thinking of because I couldn't see that Blazek had any such ideas. It finally became clear that he was talking about Hiatt, not Blazek. Now that the readings were over, I could finish the work at Julia's, the *Litmus* 10, and duck out of town.

* * *

The *Wild Dog* Distinguished Service Cross
for John Oliver Simon

Let the headlines on the next
Grass Prophet Review
Read
“Laffing Water drops out”

For I simply cannot take
Anybody else’s history
Back and forth across
The bridge to print

To quote the Rabbi
In *GPR #5*
“Politics is men distorted by time”
And that includes all the participants
And perceivers who regard it
With anything but horror
And ignore

The kind of liberty
Cleaver will be able to
Get high with guns
To free the blacks
So they can prepare for
Self oppression

And I have been convinced
The United States is over
And the less I have to do with them
The more I’ll be able to
Do with myself

I had that trip called concern yourself
With everybody’s business
Before my own
Put on me by myself
As well as the most astute
Edward Dorn
Who is as classicists go
A true one
Lover of men
Champion of oppressed people
Defender of lost causes

Whose singular bag of adjectives
Makes music of
What now turns to shit
In my mouth
I give the cross to you
'Cause you helped most
To free me from it
And made me content
With simple undertakings*

It is hard enough
To get out of
Danger
And let the water
Find its way

Forward and back
Across the abyss
To White Knob

Wild Dog
High on Cliff Crik
Aspen leaves
Does anybody remember when. . .

*The WDDSC was taped and broadcast over KPFA as the finale in a program of responses from quote responsible community leaders to Sirhan Bishra Sirhan's application of a principle dear to my heart, one man, one vote.

Little Lord Shiva

The sounds I'm hearing
Are putting me in a trance
From which I may not
Come out alive

Bodhisattvas we
Will not survive
The revolution
In a house in this much dis
Order

When it becomes
Absolutely necessary
I must leave

Apparently only one must die
For no cause
I have done everything
I can except write the last words

Let it be said everywhere
The more who know
The fewer who die
So tell it all

It has begun
And the bells of when
The saints go marching in
With Abraham and Jeremiah
Euripides and Zeus
Lawrence and Ford
Duncan and Whalen
Laffing Water Laffing Gas

Photosynthesis
I have evaporated
You all are rising
Let each of you cast the first
Stone

The many armed ambiguity
No blame comes
To the sleeping
Abyss

Joel Waldman



JOEL WALDMAN, who was born in New York City in the middle-class borough of the West Bronx on November 9, 1940, can still remember the black outs and air-raid drills of WW2.

P.S. 7, Bronx.

De Witt Clinton H. S. Class of 1957.

BA 1963, C.C.N.Y.

MA 1968, C.C.N.Y.

Joel's first book, *Ice Princess*, was published by Nho Direction Press in Berkeley in 1968; *Fifty New Poems* was published at Mole Ranch in 2002. Joel now lives in Elk, California, where he is works for the Post Office.

IN FLIGHT WITH TWA

No, Mr. Ferlinghetti,
To Fuck is not
to love again
And I love Sandy
High in the sky.
Who before have had such
visions
Lone horizons pinkly
sad drawing us
Soaring
Bird-like.
Ah, Icarus, did your
Bliss at all
resemble mine?

GURS WHO

for the girl who stole the strawberries

O Grand Canyon
Ocean
Ice
Tormentors,
Beauties
Pale blues
scudding angry seas.
O Sun
Burning Burning
Hear me.
A vision, oh,
A vision
Burning
Collision course with
Ecstasy
And I am in the clouds
And pain shuttles
Between my ears
Sinking, deeper
Burning
oh

REMBER ME (6/25/68)

Out gone away

toy tinkles

cheaply recalled

Poets

high velocity word less

sinking

in

pain

fall

lone soul

without the ease of eastern light

and no one really knows

anything at llllll

and where does that leave me ?

artificial hero

unreal salvation

Platonic bomb

Come again

come again

come again

come again

Remember me?

WHAT HAVE I SEEN ?

for Charles Potts

Mr. Charlie, go to sleep

or Canada

or the mountains

go to drugs, women

islands,

dodger – games

even though

we both know what

it
is
your
prophetic shrieks
are trying
to
shout down.
Jesus got hung-up, too.
Keep it short
Keep it sweet
Keep it to your
self
Or next of kin.

I am living in
chain letters
unwilling to
hurl my
flesh
into the
searing
potential of
your 90% pure,
holy, love – ache.
You can't win 'em all,
Charlie,
Let it go
to
Hell,
dark infamies,
juggernauts of
this and that,
Let murder lap its
cold juices –
Death comes to us
all
Regardless of race
creed
or color
But only you can make a
Rainbow.

CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Joel,
Charles Potts gave me your email address, and said you might be interested in a project I'm working on, which is to write an online feature article for Big Bridge on the Berkeley poetry scene during the sixties.

I would want to create a profile of you in those days which would include poetry of that period, a photo, an updated biography, and anything you would like to write on Berkeley in the 60s.

Dear Richard,

Good luck to you. Potts is a great friend. He sent you to a hoary old man, a poet starving for Fame and Fortune.

Right now I'm way behind those curves, spending like the Drunken Sailor who spreads notoriety and foul smells where ever he goes.

Tired and in need of kicking off my shoes, coincidentally, I just finished a contempo piece of political rant which I will include for intro and color until later.

Waldman

Anna Taylor on 5/27/07 12:10 >
Dear Anna,

I'm preparing for an interview about the literary interface between the Beatniks and the Hippies in the 60's.

And I remember what we did during the last Summer of Love. (But certainly, as we all know, Gentlemen do not tell all.)

Do you remember how we fought Ronald Reagan's National Guard; they with their murderous buck shot on Telegraph Avenue and their toxic helicopters spraying tear gas all over Sproul Plaza?

Of course you do.

And if you'd like to tell me how much YOU hated Reagan, I'll show you my scars.

However, I implore you, Ms Taylor, ...Grow Up!

As we fashionistas are wont to say, that was then, this is... etc.

Duhh. Have you forgotten that the war in Vietnam was won in the Streets of America? Everybody knows that; just as we know that we spit on our Service members if they dared travel through our airports in uniform.

Is any of this coming back to you?

There's a reason why so many Vietnam-era vets suffer post-traumatic stress syndrome and have had so many problems making a happy transition back to civilian life.

Our poor brothers-and-sisters-in-arms came home LOSERS. Remember how many people love losers?

And if you fast-forward a few years, you'll come to 1978. You want to talk about a mess!

As our Country slid deeper into decline, I think Jimmy Carter called it *malaise*, the old ambitions of the Caliphate seemed attainable to certain exiled ayatollahs.

And, when after more than a year of having our diplomats and our embassy in Iran held hostage, an act which I must remind you is considered tantamount to a declaration of war by the entire World of sovereign states, it was only the leadership of our old, B- movie star that brought our people home without loss or a shot fired.

Please do not rehash all the old "October surprise" logorrhea.

I was there.

I had to chose between whether I was going to file stories for UPI about the invasion of Iran, or go ashore behind my SEAL team students to make sure they got their writing assignments done. We inverted Sherman's march through Atlanta to the sea into OUR march FROM the sea to Tehran.

I never got around to thanking Bureau Chief Sylvana Foa for the job offer.

What we need now are positive suggestions to offer to them Yankee politicians so they can decide how to get us out of this mess.

I don't know if it's Republican or Democrat; male or female, black or white I do know we need drastic action for America's future security.

It's beginning to feel urgent.

Joel

From: "Richard Denner"
To: "Joel e-mail"
Sent: Monday, May 28, 2007 10:57 AM
Subject: interfacing

ah, joel, i can relate
i'm a great grandfather
and a monk, to boot
now, trying to get together
an endgame in cyberspace

interesting to me that
you will be interviewed
regarding an interface
between beatniks and hippies
or bohemians and freaks
as i think we preferred to be called
but no matter

i totally get your take on the troops
and have been wondering how
long will it take for this "support" thing
to wear thin, like when did not kill
cease to be a maxim?

my son's son-in-law recently rerun
thru iraqmire on his second tour
returned to the same old shit
reality, we call it, job, family,
psychic & physical deterioration
lucky he wasn't detonated

but to the project at hand
your rant has touches of what i need
would you be interested in putting out more?

To Richard Denner 5/28/07 10:57
No Fortune?

No Fame?

Hmmpf.

Listen Richard, I got to figure how to share a high school graduation in Mendocino on Friday night and get to a bat mitzvah in Baltimore on Saturday.

All suggestions gratefully acknowledged.

First we were Hippies, then Freaks.

Now look at us!

I suppose I could fall back on my bed and breakfast business, or find a border or a renter or a room mate, but its got to be by yesterday and in cash.

Although I am not as blessed as you, I have no grandchildren yet, I would love to join your Endgame in Cyberspace.

My stuff is now surrounding me- read memorabilia.

But, I fear I am facing Technodeath. This machine, which was a gift from one of my kids, wheezes and sputters. Not enough memory to open Word... no printer...no scanner...DSL unavailable from here so far.

And as I wrote to Charlie, I don't give a shit!

I can express myself with a pencil.

But I am not so obsessed with the Poetry Business as he.

Only the Temple Master bleeds for Free.

Best wishes Brother Monk,

Write if you get work.

JCW

To Joel Waldman

hmmm, fast walking is my suggestion, first to mendocino, then to the airport, unless both events are on the same day, then i'd suggest fast flying or astral projection, but if nothing works, send a note in pencil,
friendly

so, if you do give a shit enough to write some shit down in pencil, i'll see if i can scan it in from hard copy, typewriter would be better for scanning, but pencil documents sound intriguing, each one would then be a picture online, maybe write a story piece about the flavor of telegraph avenue, as you crawled on hand and knees and kept going in legible crawling

you could write this while you fly to baltimore
then i'd need a picture of you, a less hoary you
a picture from the sixties or seventies
and a couple of poems from the period
and that'd be good

ho, richard

p.s. and if you need emergency money, you can contact poets-in-need at big bridge and ask, philip whalen left money for poets with legitimate emergencies

To Richard Denner 5/28/07 4:15

Thanks for your reasoned, and compassionate, reply.

Lots of the people you contacted are featured in a book called, "The Anthology of Poems read at the Conference of Small Magazine Editors and Publishers (COSMEP)." The event documented took place on the Berkeley campus in Dwinelle Hall around the time you are trying to recall. Potts was the main man at the event and served as M.C. for the reading. There are contemporary photos of most of the poets. You have not mentioned Andy Clausen among those you are in touch with. His picture is on the cover of the book wearing a tie with an American flag motif. Potts had him and his now partner, Janine Pommy-Vega, at the '06 Poetry Party. Contact Charlie for more details about the old volume. I have one copy somewhere in my library.

There was a poem of mine published in the Berkeley Barb called, "Would You Believe Me." If you wish you may include that piece in what ever you are planning.

...I have a big picture window in my living room that opens on to Highway 1 and the ocean beyond. When I watch TV I close the curtains because I feel uneasy about people watching me watch TV.

As part of my bi-polar sojourn, today I am bummed out and in no mood for any activity that involves either thought or action. Nothing personal.

Please stay in touch.

While I love the garden that my family has become, it is too hard for me to

claim a week-end in Baltimore as an emergency need. Bless the memory of Philip Whalen.

Now I have to go to work. I have a little job at the Post Office.

Joel

To Joel Waldman

ok, joel, i understand completely your need for privacy, and i'll let all this go, but i have one last request, could you send me a copy of the poem from the Berkeley Barb you mentioned called "Would You Believe Me"? and i'll leave you alone after that, except perhaps to send you a link to the article when it come out next near, thanks for what you've told me, it all helps in its way, sincerely, richard

To Richard Denner 5/29/07 7:11

Sorry for my erratic nature insofar as supporting your efforts.

I would like to assist you in your documentation of an era that was once so luminous and urgent in our lives.

On a personal, psychic level, I think I am a few steps behind you in this work and would like to offer whatever editorial and copy production assistance you may deem appropriate.

Some years ago I had a brief correspondence with Allen Ginsberg. One of the things he sent me was a series of cartoon panels bewailing the press of his Poetry Business obligations. I do not mean this exchange has any similarity:

"Oh, I'm five years late for my deadline with Harper-Row !"

But my chore-filled life, which I love and in which I flourish, is so surrounded with dikes crying out for my fingers to plug the leaks threatening to inundate my imaginary estates that, even when I am offered as honorific an opportunity as yours, I instinctively shrink from ANYTHING new.

Just like that other "loony fruit," sometimes I, too, must stop everything because:"It's time for a very important nap."

I'll do what I can to help. Search when I have a few minutes to rummage and sort. Write and reminisce. Xerox at the copy shop twenty-five miles away, and send stuff through the USPS, my employer.

I wish I had more up to date machinery with which to do this work.

I have had to accept the fact that I can not make it to Baltimore.

Joel

To Joel Waldman

hi, joel
sorry for not responding sooner
a lot going on
thanks for your book -50 new poems-
amazing, freaky, sad, happy, lovely poems
much lyricism, and an epic arm reach to some of them
everything is there, prophetic and crazy
how do we survive in this criminal insanity?
and i appreciate your courage
i spent time in napa state mental facility, so i know
and that pic of you is a classic

... i know you say you were in the 'second wave'
but your voice is relevant to my project

To Richard Denner 6/25/07 10:32

Good morning, Richard,

No frets.

I am very happy to know your positive, appreciative reaction to my work.

Ferlinghetti scoffed, and said about Poetry, "You call it work? I call it play."

I don't know who is correct, but that's my story and I'm stickin' to it.

Charlie has a great line,... something to the effect that schizophrenia is no more of a precursor to great poetry than halitosis or arthritis... You'll have to check with him.

Remember the old, French post-romantics, Rimbaud and Baudelaire? I think they favored the derangement of the senses with alcohol and drugs and the idea stuck to this day through Burroughs and Ginsberg to Bukowski.

These days, with my slowing trickle of testosterone, I refer to my psychic

derangements as senior moments. I suppose, in my younger days, I pushed the envelope of reality to follow my impulses beyond Polite Society's bounds and got labeled with various tags that still stick.

As a personal example, and by way of trying to help you with your Endgame in Cyberspace...my two cents for your pot...here are some thoughts in profile.

Once I applied for the San Francisco Foundation's Joseph Henry Jackson Award for The Most Promising New Poet of 1969-1970; I knew It was Me and I was It.

But my style had an angry component in which I'd seem to threaten violence.

I acknowledge this part of my nature, and I suppose I've got to admit that sometimes the World doesn't take kindly to a good, that is to say, baaad, scare.

One of my colleagues from the Telegraph-Avenue-Sunday-Night-Open-Mike-Poetry-Readings at Shakespeare and Co. in Berkeley had won the coveted prize himself, earlier.

He was cool and a natty dresser, almost always in a tailored shirt and tweed jacket. He'd bop along the Ave. with an arch smile on his lips as he bobbed and weaved among the crowd. When he got to the mike, though, he knew exactly how to quiet an audience. He read Love Letters to us. Now Stanford University Professor Emeritus Al Young is serving as our Poet Laureate.

But then, he was on the panel of judges for the JHJ Award. As Al and I had been habitués at the Café Mediterranean, we often talked Poetry and compared notes on various happenings and events. Al knew I was putting together my first book, "Ice Princess."

(Please, no Disney cracks here.)

One afternoon Al introduced me to Glenn Myles, the graphic designer. Glenn went on to do the book design.

John Oliver Simon and Richard Krech jumped in with an offer to photo-offset and print galleys for the bindery. They had a hot, new press for their Noh Directions imprint and were dying for a chance to run something off. I remember how especially proud they were of their IWW bug. Only much later did I come to understand and appreciate those fellahs.

As an aside, I have one copy of "Ice Princess" remaining. I have seen my book for sale at a rare book shop, where, I'm proud to say, it appears to be keeping pace with inflation. What was once sold at a subscription price of

\$2.00, at last market check, was going for \$35.00.

And I remember how the words of the Director of the Berkeley Rotary Art and Garden Center, Carl Worth, kept reverberating in my memory.

“Joel, the only way you can apply for a grant and still be consistent with your poetic style would be to pull out a .45 and say, ‘Stick ‘em up!’”

It was at the office of The San Francisco Foundation.

They were offering a prize which I KNEW WAS MINE!

I wasn't leaving until I got it.

The San Francisco Police came.

They dragged me to the San Francisco Hall of Justice.

I passed a Bob Bastien cartoon. A be-cloaked and daggered, black version of the Spy vs. Spy Mad Magazine character labeled C.I.A. was dangling three motley puppets. They were labeled: Writers...Editors...Publishers.

I was booked into City Prison. The charge was Trespassing Against The San Francisco Foundation.

The bunk-room lock-up was jammed with men coming in and going out of the barred and gated wall. The opposite wall was paneled with glass and looked out into a narrow hallway. There uniformed police led a steady parade of transvestites and trans-gender humans in various stages of reorientation. As the prisoners passed the window they put on suggestive and lurid and lewd displays for the men in the big cell behind the glass. Some were proffering beautifully formed breasts. The cops just smiled.

And so begins my profile that is struggling now to break out into the light of day. If what the Evening News now calls torture is what torture is, than I was tortured for six months. They tried to take me to Napa. I did not go gently. I was bound for Atascadero. Etc.

Got to shut down now.

Edit this if you wish and use it.

Please save me a final cut before you publish.

I'm still surfen' that second wave.

Poems later,

Joel

To Joel Waldman

Remember what Jack Spicer said, “‘Ferlinghetti’ is a nonsense word.”

Richard

Richard Denner 6/28/07 9:03

Early Saturday morning...

I’ve finished last night’s dishes. The old dishwasher has been used to water the Mexican Sage, the Sweet Alyssums, the Fuchsias, and the Passion Vine.

The day is dawning bright and clear with a crisp tanginess to the air. The fog bank is hovering in a sharp, gray line, a few miles offshore. Across the road the divers are packing their gear to go down to the rocks at the base of the cliff exposed by the minus tide.

The news is droning in the background.

I’m thinking about what I’ve written to you and the impressions I may have created.

How can I express the totality of a life well-lived, filled with adventures and blessings few have experienced? While notoriety and adverse commentary and critical opinions have hounded me, certainly there has been more; much, much more.

Art and Poetry have been at my core for most of my adult life, but how I’ve conducted my existence as a social animal does not fit any of the notions about the lives of Artists and Poets that I have studied.

As it should be, I suppose.

What I have done with my writing is as insubstantial and ephemeral as these letters tapped out on this keyboard, data disseminated into the ether, waves and ripples of electronic on’s and off’s, signifying self-absorption.

But what about me? What has been important about me?

First, there are my children...my son, my daughter, my step-daughter.

The poem I mentioned to you that contains the line, “Would you believe me

if I told you/ That today I met a CIA trained, Red Chinese double agent...,” that was published in the, now defunct, “Berkeley Barb,” ends with the line, “All I shall ever care about is the color of my children’s eyes.” That poem was written years before Adam and Anna were born; long before I met Maria. When I wrote the poem, “my children’s eyes,” were only metaphors suggesting the audience, my readers, those who heard me.

If I kept a diary, if I had clear notes about the chronology of my life, I know I could pin-point the exact moment when I became aware of myself as a poet.

Carole had walked out and left me. She did not want to marry me.

I was living in an apartment on Essex Street in Berkeley. It was located a block away from the original headquarters of the Black Panther Party. It was a nice neighborhood with tidy, flower-filled yards. It was the mid-60’s.

She and I had just settled in to our own place after six months of living out of back-packs.

We had driven across America in a drive-away Buick convertible. Then we hitch-hiked to Mexico and lived on the beach in Mazatlan in hammocks strung between coconut palms. We lived in Mexico until the money we had saved from our jobs as social workers for the NYC Dept of Welfare ran out.

The agency from which we obtained the fancy, new car had an unusual order. We were to pick it up from the owner at her home. She was a Broadway showgirl who lived on the West Side of Manhattan. The woman seemed to be everything stereotyped you might expect of someone who lived the life of a leggy chorus-girl. She greeted us at the door in a flowing negligee with a martini in her hand and a sweeping gesture, “Darling, come in. Have a drink.” It was 10:00AM.

In an irrepressible manner she was putting her life in order. She wanted us to deliver her car to her daughter, a starlet living in Hollywood. Inoperable, terminal cancer was drawing the curtain.

Don’t stop me now, Richard. I’m on a roll. But I’ve got to go to work. I’m the local relief for the Postmaster. Neither rain, nor sleet, nor gloom of night, etc.

I don’t have a printer. You’re my only hope, Obi Wan.

To Joel Waldman

thanks, joel, actually, by sending your writing in the body of an email, it saves me time, and i can whip the words into a doc and add them to your file, work progresses, and as for what you’ve just written

this is exactly what i want
chatty but to the point,
intelligent, insightful,
peacefully reflected
personal view with historical context,
flavor of the street and of the mind space,
very post-post-modern
keep it up
richard

To Richard Denner 6/30/07 12:53

Sheech, Richard, yr givin' me a swelled head!

But now that I think about it, my head can use a little swelling.

Hey, here's a stroke, straight from the pen... ball-point, that is.

The State Becomes

The Land Lord

And buys the homes for

Medical Care

for

All.

Pussys

Until we quit

Smoking

Thank you

Until we quit.

(from- “The Village of the Dancing Demonic”))

As for the ongoing profile, I’m afraid I can’t recall the names of the Showgirl nor her Starlet daughter.

The Mama and I stretched out in her mid-town living room and proceeded to tell stories to each other over glasses of gin.

Her life, in trophies and notices, was all around us; she wanted to know about me.

“Why are you in such a rush?”

I explained that after I got her car I had to find a sporting goods store to buy a sleeping-bag for my girlfriend who was waiting for me to pick her up and get on the road.

“Not to worry,” she said.

We took the elevator to the garage. We got in the car and she drove us to the 72nd Street Yacht Basin where we found her boat. She took me below to a stateroom and opened a hanging locker. She pulled out a new, still-wrapped, down-filled beauty. She handed me the sleeping-bag, and asked, “Will this one do?”

We went back to her apartment for another round of martinis.

She wanted to know the route I proposed to take.

As Arizona zipped by, she said, “Aren’t you going to stop at the Grand Canyon?”

“I’d love to, but I’ve only got so many days to deliver the car.”

“Nonsense,” she cut me off, and picked up the phone. “There are these simply divine Indians who live in the Canyon; you must visit them.”

Here we use the sit-com convention of witnessing the caller on the phone and only hearing the garbled, yakety-yak, squawk of the daughter protesting the delay of her convertible’s delivery on the other end.

“He’s a lovely man and he must visit the Indians.”

Outraged squawking!

“Well, rent it for ANOTHER week!” Mama had spoken, and that was that.

I don't want to go into the horses and the donkey, pack-animals. There is no need to burnish the reputation of the Havasupi and their magical box canyon. Check out National Geographic. They have thousand-word pictures.

I can't remember what the Starlet was like when I dropped the car.

And this leads us to the beginning of a story that haunts me yet.

Here my ability to handle the truth weakens.

I remember e.e. cummings.

He read "I Dream of Olaf," to a packed auditorium at my college while I was an undergraduate.

When the poet came to the part where Olaf says,
"There is some shit I will not eat,"
the author read it,
"There is some S I will not eat."

So I claim precedence as a rider to my poetic license regarding the use of the N word.

The guys in their plaid, short-sleeved shirts and their close-cropped, buzz-cuts shouted "Nigger-lover" at us as we fled to the safety of the Greyhound Bus to avoid the rocks being thrown from their pick-ups skidding by.

The woman who would later become my first wife and I had gone on a Freedom Ride as part of a desegregation march. It was 1959 in Pomunkey, MD.

We fled to the sanctuary of a Black Baptist Church. They fed us there and we took the busses back to NY.

And here a few words about Ellen, my Jewish virgin, the only woman I married without issue.

She was too beautiful for her own good. When people told her she looked like Audrey Hepburn, she bristled: "Audrey Hepburn looks like ME!" Her parents proudly displayed the plaque which commemorated her award, at sixteen, of the New York City-wide Shakespeare competition as Juliet.

Later we were ushers together from the opening night in Lincoln Center's Philharmonic Hall, now called Avery Fisher Hall, until our catastrophic break-up. Great gig, though!

I shudder to think how close I came to being Joe in the song, "Hey, Joe."

Harold Adler



HAROLD J. ADLER was born on October 7, 1944, in Oakland, California, Harold is an independent curator, photographer, and videographer, who lives in Berkeley. His works are in the permanent collections of The Bancroft Library of the University of California, Berkeley, the Berkeley Historical Society, the California State Library at Sacramento, California, the Corbis-Bettman Archives, in New York City, the Allen Ginsberg Trust in New York City, the Oakland Museum of California, and the Media Center at the Moffitt Library of the University of California, Berkeley.

His pictures have appeared in many news publications: *Californian Geology* (Nov/Dec 1993, front cover); *L.A. Weekly*; *Montclairion*; *The Daily Cal*; *The Daily Planet*; *East Bay Daily News*; and *Newsweek*.

His photos were included in the PBS series, *Making Sense of the Sixties*, first broadcast on Jan. 21-23, 1990. Producer Varied Directions, Inc.

Exhibitions/Curations

“Firestorm, ‘91,” (one man show), Oct. 1- Nov. 13, 1993. Berkeley Historical Society, Veterans Bldg., Berkeley, CA

“RED Power: 30 Years of Native American Indian Activism in the Bay Area, 1969-1999,” Nov. 19, 1999, SF State University; Curator of photography and media coordinator.

“The Whole World’s Watching: Peace and Social Justice Movements of the 1960s and 1970s,” Sept. 16-Dec. 16, 2001, Berkeley Art Center, Berkeley, CA. Co-curator and coordinator.

“California Counterculture: The Sixties—Made in California: Art, Image, and Identity, 1900-2000” Los Angeles County Museum, Oct 22, 2000-Feb. 25, 2001. Curatorial consultant and participating photographer.

Free Speech Café, Moffitt Library, UC Berkeley, Curator, permanent installation and the following “Legacy of Social Protest” exhibits—

1. The Disability Rights Movement”

2. “The Creation of People’s Park”

3. “Dr. King and the Civil Rights Movement”

4. “‘We Hold the Rock’: An Exhibition of the Alcatraz Indian Occupation”

5. “La Causa: A Photographic Exhibition of the Farm Worker’s Movement”

“What’s Going On? : California and the Vietnam Era,” Aug. 28, 2004-Feb. 27, 2005. Oakland Museum of California. Curatorial consultant and participating photographer.

“The Changing Face of Disability Law in the New Millennium,” March 14-15, 2002, Boalt Disability Law Society, University of California, Berkeley, School of Law. Curator of photography.

AND SOME MAKE IT AND SOME CALL ALICE

and some make it and some call Alice
knowledge hangs from the blackboards
and LSD from the street corners
as methylated musicians purr into microphones
and love and fugs orgasm to pubic spotted dwarfs
cop flash is eaten alive by adrenaline
growing older on Harley Davidson
sylert angels hang from medicine cabinets
and are pissed on
miniature Timothy Leary dolls make commandments
to school rooms of nuns on floors
and people eat dogs and dogs eat dogs
and people eat people and than vomit
and than feed the dogs and people eat dogs
and down heads gyrate to sights and sounds
and imagine hippy notables and their partners
on the dance floor
and folksingers cry that they are tryin'
for the sun engulfed in law of escape
and dogs shit and vomit on their mattresses
and mothers and fathers shit on sons and daughters
with pleas of "Get straight I'll give you a dollar"
and fathers send checks to first sons who will
some day make it if they can sell and deal and burn
and some aim for self goals if independence
and some make it and some spirits die
and "it's not easy livin' on your own
it's a hard thing" the Stones scream
and some make it and sell and deal and burn
and finally become free as spirits die
and some fight in wars
and get shit on by other soldiers
and then die.



Max Scheer, Berkeley Barb Editor and Founder, 1969



Michael Upton, Poet and Artist, 1969



Michael Upton and friend



Cindy Helsen

Kathy Delavor

Inga



Venessa Delacourt and Kathy Holdsen in front of Café Mediterraneum, 1969



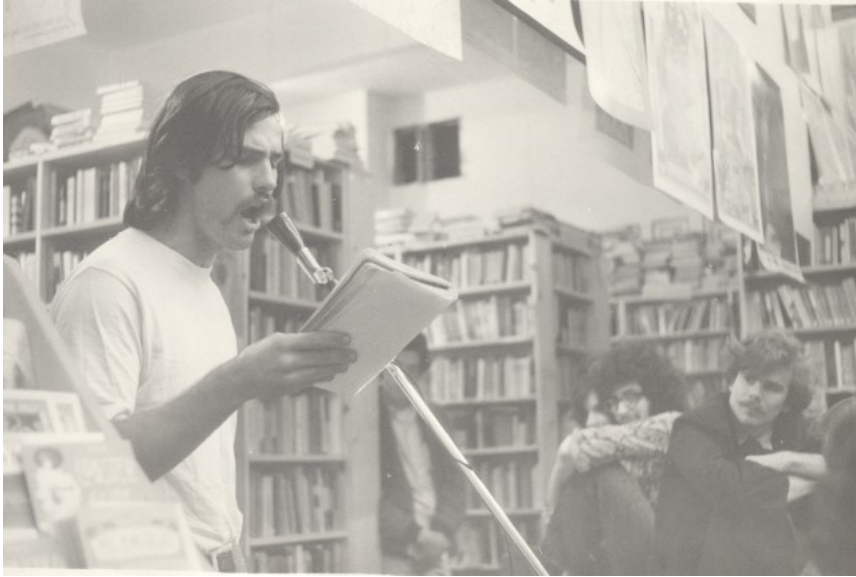
Berkeley kids, 1969



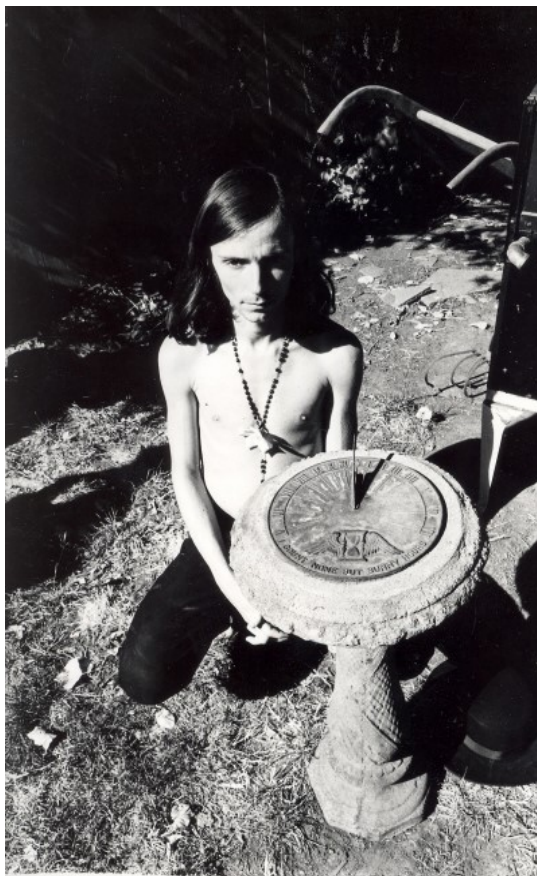
Cove Kathy Meeka



Berkeley kids on Harold's car



Andy Clausen at Shakespeare Bookstore



John the poet Thomson



Paul X in basement at Benvenue Street, 1968



Paul X and Diane, 1967

Outriders

Patricia Turrigiano

Jack Foley

Al Masarik

John Bennett

Larry Kerschner

Patricia Turrigiano



PATRICIA TURRIGIANO was born in 1940 in San Pedro, California. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Berkeley and a MFA in art from Mills College in Oakland. She now lives on the Mendocino coast where she continues to do art and write.

WHY DO WOMEN FALL FOR POETS AND THE DAY I MET GINSBERG

Poets make lousy husbands. They should be made to wear signs around their necks reading “Beware, Approach at your own Risk.” But, they don’t, and young women fall for them like “nine pins down on the donkey’s commons.” Why do women fall for poets? Falling for a poet is a bad idea. Most women who do are marked like the blue whales attached by giant squid; the grappling takes its toll. But still in the long run, the women survive, and these same poets can make pretty good ex-husbands. “Why?” Well it could be because they’re already dead from a life of whoring, drinking and drugs, and can’t make you miserable anymore, but on a more positive note, it is often because they came to their senses at the edge of oblivion, the brink of extinction, got religion, took the cure, married again, tried fathering again, became loving respectful sons again, even monks or priests, in short, they decided to live and write and not bite so much.

Berkeley in the early 60’s was a young person’s paradise, a seeker’s candy store, a miracle, a double edged sword, a giver of gifts and a taker of dreams. And, if you got a poet raw and untamed, the way Richard Denner came to me, it’s like grabbing the tiger by the tail. Richard is still the quintessentially quirky Berkeley poet. His galloping, lopsided inquisitiveness is fueled by an immense creative spirit and sense of the absurd. He has an off the wall sense of humor, and in the old days was hampered only by his annoying lack of mental equilibrium. He often could and did look like a dark bird of prey walking the Berkeley streets in his black pants and jacket, his pale skin set off all the more by his lank black hair which fell to his shoulders, his fingers stained yellow from nicotine. He was a mighty sight, self absorbed, narcissistic and a pain in the ass for anyone who loved him. But in a fey sort of way, outrageously beautiful. Ergo, the perfect example of an angst torn poet. Perfecto!

We took classes, or hung out on Telegraph Ave at the Café Med sipping espressos and cappuccinos. We saw the entire repertoire of foreign films at a small pillar infested theater on Telegraph Ave. All seats were a buck and no one complained about the pillars. We craned our necks to read the subtitles and were riveted by the dramas unfolding on the screen. The movies were a revelation, an education. We stumbled out filled with love, sorrow, and rage, transfigured by the beauty and pain of existence. It was a baptism of fire. We

drank cheap Mountain Red, drank strong coffee, smoked thousands of Gaulois and unfiltered camels and sat up until dawn debating philosophy, politics, poetry, literature and music. We would leave the Café Med in a tangle of lovers and friends and walk down to San Pablo Ave to seedy blues and folk music dives like the Blind Lemon, where we'd continue our enthusiastic conversations until they closed shop. We thought we had the world by its balls and we loved it.

Richard was an enfant terrible: terribly naïve, terribly attractive, and terribly narcissistic. Not a good combination for a mate, but compelling as a poet lover. We had called it quits by the time of the Berkeley Poets Conference, but remained friends, and he dropped by on occasion to visit the kids. So, I wasn't alarmed when he asked if he could have a few poet friends over my house – he had no place to entertain friends – after the Berkeley Poets Conference. I was a bohemian at heart, of course I said yes.

I don't know if Ginsberg remembered meeting me, but I remember meeting Ginsberg. My house full of young men in black. They were in the hallway, in the front room on the couch and floor, in the bedrooms perched on the beds, they were going through my kitchen cupboards and refrigerator scouting for food. There were jugs of red wine, and in the center of the room, a whole key of marijuana being cleaned and prepared for smoking.

I carried the girls into their bedroom at the back of the house to put them to bed. Kirsten who was 3 and ½ years old was asleep in minutes, but Gina, who was 2, was still in diapers and needed changing. I had her feet clamped firmly in hand, wash cloth at the ready, her bare bottom pointing like a compass directly at the bedroom door, when it swung open revealing Richard, as serious as a priest, leading a stocky older man with a head of kinky hair, and a big nose. I looked up from my task. They looked down, then quickly up, their eyes flicking uncontrollably as they struggled to focus on me, when with as much dignity as he could muster, Richard cleared his throat and said in a portentous voice as if introducing God, "Pat, this is Alan Ginsberg, Alan this is my wife Pat." I had read *Howl*. I knew who Ginsberg was. Ginsberg's eyes slipped down again. He was like an alien witnessing resident specie's biological oddities and thinking, "Man, this is something to howl about." To his credit, he managed a courteous bow and nod of the head. I nodded back, they withdrew, and the door closed. There I was, marooned, immersed in the world of children, and there they were moving off to the praise of their admirers. I mentally chalked up one more point against Richard.

Once the girls were asleep, I wandered around for a while listening to snatches of conversation and bits of poems. The young men were piled in drifts at Ginsberg's feet, like sand blown against a rock. They hung on his every word, and when a young boy started to read his poem and solemnly pronounced "Fuck, fuck, fuck" and I found myself having to turn away, to hide my smile. I went back to the kids. It was OK.

Jack Foley



Photo by Adelle Foley

JACK FOLEY is a poet and critic who, with his wife, Adelle, performs his work frequently in the San Francisco Bay Area. Born Neptune, New Jersey (1940), grew up in Port Chester, New York. Education: Cornell University (BA, English Literature, 1963); University of California at Berkeley (MA, English Literature, 1965). Since 1988 he has hosted a show of interviews and poetry presentations on Berkeley radio station KPFA. His current show, *Cover to Cover*, is on every Wednesday at 3:30 p.m. Foley's poetry books include *Letters/Lights-Words for Adelle* (1987), *Gershwin* (1991), *Adrift* (1993, nominated for a Bay Area Book Reviewers' Award), *Exiles* (1996), and (with Ivan Argüelles) *New Poetry from California: Dead / Requiem* (1998). He has also published three poetry chapbooks: *Advice to the Lovelorn* (1998); *Saint James* (with Ivan Argüelles, 1988), an homage to James Joyce; and *Some Songs by Georges Brassens* (2001). *Foley's Greatest Hits 1974-2003* (2004) appeared from Pudding House Press.

Jack says: "People have very odd conceptions of my biography. I have been on the scene for a little over twenty years but people seem to think I've been around forever. I was once introduced by someone who said I was an old North Beach poet, various other things. Not a single thing of what she said was true—not one! When a friend of mine asked a friend of his whether she had heard of me, she answered, 'Oh, yes. He was one of the original beats, wasn't he.'" I told him to tell her, "Yes, Foley was anda one anda two."

ZERO RELATION TO THE POETRY SCENE IN THE 1960s

I was a graduate student at Berkeley during the sixties. I knew about the Berkeley Poetry Conference, I'm sure, but I didn't attend any of it. I don't know why. Maybe I was out of town, maybe I was monstrously busy with graduate student business. Years later, I listened to tapes available at the Berkeley Language Lab. I had zero relation to the poetry scene of the 1960s, in Berkeley or anywhere else, though I had published some poems as an undergraduate...my basic relationship to the poetry scene at that time was alienation.

Here's a poem, written in the 60s while I worked at Ed Landberg's Cinema Guild Theater. Everyone was in the theater enjoying the film mightily and I was stuck outside in the ticket booth. Plus people had been at me for gaining weight.

THE SKELETON'S DEFENSE OF CARNALITY

Truly I lost weight, I *have*
lost weight,
grown lean in love's defense,
in love's defense grown grave.
It was concupiscence
that brought me to the state:
all bone and a bit of skin
to keep the bone within.
Flesh is no heavy burden
for one possessed of little
and accustomed to its loss.
I lean to love, which leaves me lean
till lean turn into lack.
A wanton bone, I sing my song
and travel where the bone is blown
and extricate true love from lust
as any man of wisdom must.
Then wherefore should I rage
against this pilgrimage
from gravel unto gravel?
Circuitous I travel
from love to lack
and lack to lack
from lean to lack
and back.

DONALD SCHENKER: A CALIFORNIA STORY

I couldn't speak because I'm incapable of praise, too critical. I'll miss our movies and I'll always love you, in spite of myself. Love forever from a very critical friend.

—Moe Moskiwitz, proprietor of Moe's Books, at Donald Schenker's memorial

Donald Schenker's *Owl* (Alice Press) is an extraordinary, unique book. Published posthumously, it contains some of Schenker's finest work. I knew Don and often heard him read from his poetry. I even heard him read some of the pieces collected here, but I was unaware of their full power until I saw this collection, edited by the poet's widow Alice with help from various local writers, friends of Schenker's.

Poet John Oliver Simon suggests that "if Donald Schenker had had the sense to write his best poems before he was thirty, like his contemporaries Robert Creeley and Allen Ginsberg, he would have died famous." Simon is probably right, but, as he realizes, it is unlikely that *anyone* would write such poems "before he was thirty." The poetry in *Owl* is unrelentingly middle-aged. These poems are at once fanciful, enigmatic, elegiac, funny and courageous. They are an elegant dance with death, represented in part by the title character, Owl, Schenker's totem animal—a successor to the "teddy" he lost as a child. I don't know of any poetry which is quite like it:

Just after dawn, someone approaches the coast
in a feathered boat,
a boy, naked but for a feathered mask.
No one waits for him.

Donald Schenker was born in Coney Island in 1930. He first visited California during a stint in the Navy in 1948. He and his wife Alice came here to stay in the late fifties. "I came," he told me, "Because of *Howl* and *A Coney Island of the Mind*." He went to City Lights to meet Lawrence Ferlinghetti, and Ferlinghetti directed him to Kenneth Rexroth. He also met Robert Duncan. In his early work, he said, he was "into T.S. Eliot." (So was Ferlinghetti in *his* early work.) Schenker's friend, Robert Stock—"a seminal poet in San Francisco in those days"—encouraged him to experiment with forms. Schenker's first book, *Poems*, was published jointly with David Meltzer in 1957. "America," the opening poem of Schenker's section, begins conventionally enough:

The flowerpots sit on the mantelpieces
under the portraits of the legendary dead
who crossed the salted oceans
to a living land
and laid it out for settlement

All the old faces rocking on shackporches....

Don was working as a picture framer in San Francisco. In 1965 he and Alice founded the Print Mint in Berkeley. Alice ran the store; Don ran the shop. "It was a very successful business," he told me, "it became a landmark, a very appreciated place." He added ruefully, "There are problems maintaining an entity like that." As business increased, the shop became "all-consuming." "Then I became a 'boss,' hiring other people to do 'the work.' That was an agony."

Schenker's next book, *Say X*, was published by The Print Mint Press in 1970. Stylistically, the book ranges widely. The author's own blurb says, "His range is enormous, from the gentle simplicity of 'The Gesture' to the brutally complex structuring of puns in 'Three Exercises in Three R's,' pointing to the fact, constantly discovered, that feeling depends upon language."

"Half Ton Chevy," a poem for Janis Joplin, is a spectacular experiment in orthography:

Thoo th rain, th old ticker thumpin from th run, th beer,
I lever ma ass inside, one hand on th wheel, slam th door.
I shiver in th damp. I small ma own self. I take a deep breath

an loosen th crotch a ma jeans. Then I choke er just enuf t'get er
primed. Reach fer th key, thumb it home in th lock and stomp th
clutch, cocking m'hed t'hear er say hullo. Turn er on....

This interest in an accurate, not necessarily "literary" notation of actual speech remained a constant. It is responsible for triumphs like this from "Hunter Death Approaching A Flock of Birds":

Here comes Hunter Death.

Uh-oh.

You sure it's him?

Yeah.

Uh-oh.

Is he headed this way?

Yeah.

Uh-oh.

Fast or slow?

A fair clip.

Uh-oh.

By 1975, Schenker had become a "businessman"—he gave the word

a negative charge—and wrote very little. He felt isolated, he told me, and had the sense that people “hated” him, “perhaps because [he] was in business.” Years earlier, Jack Kerouac and Charles Bukowski had urged him to be “free,” even to leave his wife and family. Kerouac told him, “You’re such a nice guy, Schenker. *That’s your problem.*” Schenker felt the call of such freedom and later decided that at some level Kerouac was right: “I felt in my young days that it was much safer to be tight and in control”; Kerouac was pointing to “things I probably feared.” But he didn’t take the advice.

In 1985, planning to devote the rest of his life to writing, Schenker retired from the business. A month after his retirement, he discovered he had metastasized prostate cancer, what he later called “back door stuff,” “outhouse stuff.”

Schenker did devote the rest of his life to writing—he died on Valentine’s Day, 1993—but his life was immensely complicated by the fact of his illness: “You become a cancer patient,” he said, “you become a corporation.”

Donald published two more books of poetry during his lifetime: *Up Here* (1988) and *High Time* (1991). Alice Schenker tells us that “Don wrote most of the poems in [*Owl*] during the early months of 1988 while involved in a meditation/visualization practice begun as a way of helping his immune system deal with...cancer. *Owl* was a totemic character that evolved through this process along with several other characters and a geography... These visits with *Owl* quite naturally found voice in poetry but left him feeling uncertain about publishing them as a book since they were a diary of this rather unusual personal experience.” Schenker did finally decide to put the poems together as a manuscript, which he was organizing at the end of his life. “Don chose most of the poems and which version to be used,” writes Alice. She completed the book with assistance from Tobey Hiller, John Oliver Simon, Steve Ajay, and Richard Silberg.

In a radio interview, Schenker commented on his discovery that he had cancer—an experience he could hardly “control”: “My life just stopped. I was so shattered. Something drove me back into therapy and into a kind of spiritual crisis. My desire to live became very powerful. I began to meditate. During the meditation and visualizations I was visited by this entity that turned out to be an owl. A spirit helper. I went to this place and there he was. Each time I went there, there he would be. He took me to places and I came out of each place with a poem. They came to me fast and furious. It was very difficult not to honor him. We had a deal. I was to honor him and he was to give me the poems. The poems were the honor.”

Owl’s main characters are “Owl,” “Teddy” and “the Kid.” Reading through the book, one is reminded a little of *Wind in the Willows*—a child’s fantasy. “There’s something about animals and small children that affords healing,” Schenker told me, “the innocence, the purity.” But that’s only one aspect of the complex vision Schenker is developing here. “The place in the geography of those visitations with owl,” he continued, “represented my prostate gland. There was a beach where you turned left at a stream and went into a field that was—*rotten*. There was water setting in it and you could smell it. I did a lot of work in there, draining the place.”

Owl begins with a moving entry from Schenker's journal. It's dated December 26, 1991, a little more than a year before his death. This is the opening paragraph:

There was always a reluctance to Owl's visits, a quality that seemed familiar to me. I needed his presence, and was deeply moved by it as by nothing in my life until then. Slowly I began to remember him, as a child recognizes that spirit in small animals. Remembering, I remembered Owl, and yet Owl seemed reluctant, almost recalcitrant. It was as if there were so many hours he had to give me; just those and no more; and that the quality of the visits was such that if I'd picked a creature more mammalian... But this *was* the quality of Owl and his visitations. He seemed to stand off and watch me as well as visit, and this caused me grief. Is this quality of distance not also the attribute of any deadly disease, and of our own selves, too? In the midst of Owl's presence was the very grief he was teaching me to feel about my own life that was slowly draining away. I was never sure whether to acknowledge this grief or deny it. Grief and abandonment. The greatest gifts brought to consciousness seem not to be enough. Life, taken for granted, never asks for more life, but the first look into the face of death implies a begging which no mere guide can answer. Owl's simple duty was to lead me through the landscape I had come from, appear to me in dreams and meditations, enter my waking hours with his fuzzy features, and remind me painfully about the unfathomable bigness of everything in which he and I were brothers more than victim and guide. It's a hard lesson I never did learn. And if I know it, like a kind in school who, in a flash of understanding, gets the problem on the blackboard, exulting, loses it on the way home. Someone says, "So what did you learn in school today?" and a flash of inkling passes through the mind and is gone.

"The unfathomable bigness of everything" is reminiscent of a child's perspective but the sense of "pain" and the awareness that "my own life... was slowly draining away"—cf. "I did a lot of work in there, draining the place"—is from the point of view of the adult. In *Owl*, "innocence"—which is close to "ignorance"—is constantly interplaying with "knowledge." This sense of innocence, this "rediscovery of the landscape I had come from" is linked to Schenker's discovery of the virtues of Kerouac's position, with its

emphasis on, as Schenker himself put it, “immediacy, non-conformity and expressiveness.” (That discovery is celebrated in poems such as “August 31st, 1989” and “High Time,” both in *High Time*.)

The journal entry concludes with a reference to “Sally, a dog, who at the time was a puppy, bright and vital; didn’t know any of the rules. That innocence, to me, in the midst of my experience with *Owl*, cancer, etc., was almost ecstatic. Letting Sally lick me, I remembered how I felt as a child. Letting down the barriers, the cages. Chopping down the dark trees.”

Schenker’s cancer gave him access to a kind of second innocence at the very same moment that he realized that time was running out. The poems in *Owl* arise out of *both* consciousnesses colliding in the field of his writing—“feeling depends upon language.” Owl “loosens / stuff that can’t stand light.” It represents precisely the opposite of the “safe” position of being “tight and in control.” Yet Owl—like, ultimately, “the kid”—is *also* Schenker’s death. The child and the animal may be emblems of “innocence,” but they are deeply linked to the cancer. Indeed, without the cancer they would not have appeared, which suggests that in some sense they *are* the cancer. Owl, after all, is a predator who carries with him “remains / of local mice, rats, squirrels.” Despite the playfulness and complexity of Schenker’s presentation of this less “mammalian” animal—at one point the creature is seen playing poker with its power animal pals!—it never loses its status as the bird of death; it is in fact not so different from Poe’s raven:

The feathered body, the wings
driving through a tunnel of air
toward prey

pumping so terribly clean
that direction down.

Of course, Owl’s “prey” may be Schenker’s cancer. That is the function of the deer—another totem animal—in “Healing”:

Finding the tumor, he seizes it
like a coyote. Like a wolf
he throws it back to his molars for crushing.
Like a cat he purrs
breaking it down, swallowing it down as he runs....

But it is also possible that the “prey” is the poet himself. As Schenker says, “You never know with Owl.”

Perhaps the fullest statement of the interconnectedness between life—or “healing”—and death is the penultimate poem of the series, “Owl and the Dark Tree.” The setting here is “very dark,” and the bird places the poet down “near a tree in the middle of the woods.” Owl instructs Schenker to dig a hole. He then tells him to “reach deep inside your body and take out all the things that are bothering you.” The poet does so and places them in

the hole. Schenker must then dig a second hole to be sure that he has removed all the “rotten stuff”: “I reach in and sure enough, I was right. There’s more. I pull it out and put it in the hole. How could I have missed it?” Again the poet must “bury” what he finds. He asks Owl, “That was down there, where I reached. What about the rest of me? What if it’s all up here throughout the rest of me?” Again Owl instructs him to dig a hole and bury what he finds. The same ritual occurs several more times, and the poet observes that he feels terrific: “It’s wonderful to feel well,” he says, “I’m weary of pain, weakness, sickness. I’m tired to death of it.”

Up to this point we are in the realm of “visualization,” and the visualization has done its work of making the poet feel better about things. That is precisely what it is supposed to do. But the phrase “tired to death” is an indication that things are not quite as clear as all that. Owl tells the poet to dig still another hole:

So I dig another hole. “Owl,” I say. “What’s this one for?” “Just dig,” he says, so I dig, the sixth. When I’m done, Owl gets into the hole. He says, “Now cover me up and pat me down.”

This new development confuses the poet: “What have I done? Why did Owl bring me here, and what would he do if he were in my place? I sit there in the circle of six holes around the dark tree in this dark place and I’m suddenly alone.”

The poet again hears the voice of Owl, now “from deep in the earth.” Again he is instructed to dig a hole: “I dig the hole deep and long...I say goodbye and I get in.” “Suddenly,”

green begins sprouting from each of the seven holes, luminous green sprouts, from the first one, the second, third and so on, all around. There are seven of them around the tree, and each of them grows thicker and reaches higher until they form a cage of thick green luminous trunks around the dark tree and over it, until there’s not a man anywhere who could fit through between them, nor a bird.

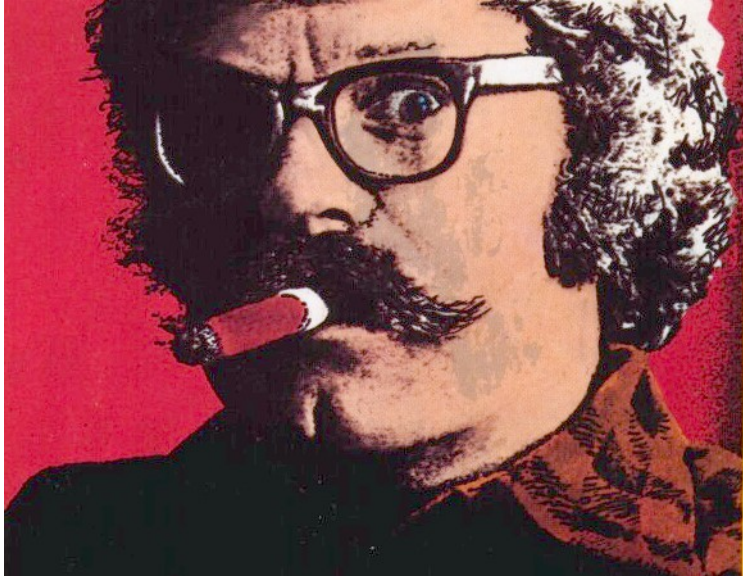
The last hole is his own grave. Alice Schenker points out that the landscapes in *Owl* are all versions of the poet’s body. Again and again he finds ways to “enter” that body and confront the “rotten” thing which is his disease. It is part of the process that Schenker calls “healing.” *Yet digging a hole is digging a grave*. In these poems, “healing” and “dying” touch. The “luminous green sprouts” are also a “cage.” Here, “healing” does not mean “getting better.” Schenker is perfectly aware that his condition is terminal. “Healing” means accepting the death which will come whether you accept it or not. Finally, Owl *is* that death:

And it's not so bad being there, with Owl close by,
and all the rest of me. And, after all, it's not going to
last forever.

Schenker was to write many fine poems after the Owl sequence ended. But it was these poems, coming "fast and furious," that supplied him with the vision which was to sustain him until his death. Thanks to Alice Schenker for making them available to us. Thanks as well for her wonderful cover, which captures perfectly the complexities and charm of this brilliant book. Like so many others, Donald Schenker was an East Coast boy who came to California to write poetry.

Owl is an indication of his late, but genuine success.

Al Masarik



JUST IN TIME FOR THE ROLLING RENAISSANCE

there is nothing more disgusting than last night's wine—LEW WELCH

I landed in San Francisco in 1968, just in time for the Rolling Renaissance. I had been writing and thinking of myself as a writer since I dropped out of law school in 1965 and got a minimum wage job as a toy packer in a Boston factory. I had a presidential scholarship to Boston College Law, named after Father Robert Drinan who was also a US senator, a very outspoken critic of the Vietnam War. I did not tell anybody I dropped out, wanting to milk my deferment as long as possible. When I did send a note to Drinan, he was outraged, said he was morally obligated to notify the draft board. Within a year I was in Korea—50,000 troops and the only incoming we got was from the whores and each other. I did not think enough of my writing to even send it out till 1969. I wrote prose and poetry, and the poems were closer to the real thing and after I “discovered” little mags I flooded the mail and had some luck. Joel Deutsch, editor of Meatball, published my first collection, and John Bennett’s Vagabond Press did three books. Kirk Robertson’s Duck Down Press brought out Nonesuch Creek, a selected poems in 1980. My wife and I moved to Tennessee in 1987, and I worked in the artists-in-education programs of several states, including Georgia, Kentucky, South Carolina, Montana, and South Dakota. In 1992 we moved to South Dakota, lived in the Black Hills, and I started writing prose again. I suppose I could make a case for being burnt-out on poetry, all the babbling I’d been doing in the schools. I aimed high when I started sending out stories, even made a few bucks. I sold stories to American Short Fiction, diana Review, High Plains Literary Review, Gallery Magazine, Hustler. It makes a kind of poetic sense to me that I grew up in Delaware, a state below sea level, and I’ve spent a good part of my life in mountains. The Cumberlands, the Black Hills, the Trinity Alps, and now the Sierra Nevada. I started my second year working in the schools here in Plumas County, last October.

Books

Vagabond Press: *Red Mountain, Agatha Christi & Love, Invitation to a Dying, An End to Pinball, and A Postcard from Europe.*

Lions Breath Press: *Broken Hips and Rusty Scooters*

Black Rabbit Press: *Van Gogh’s Flowers*

Online

IN THE BELLY OF NAKED NAKED NAKED

Thunder Sandwich #24 <http://www.thundersandwich.com/ts24/page28.html>

HUBBA HUBBA BIG BOY (excerpt)

Slipstream Issue18 <http://www.slipstreampress.org/issue18.html>

BRUSH FIRE

<http://outlawpoetry.com/category/al-masarik/>

BERKELEY CONNECTION

In 1965 I was in Boston working a minimum wage job as a toy packer after dropping out of law school. I was writing my first poems (truly awful shit), waiting to be drafted, not knowing if I would become soldier or fugitive (I was both, but that is another story, in no way connected to Berkeley). I landed in San Francisco in 1968, was not exactly greeted warmly--I was fresh out of the army, stints in Korea and Texas--I did not look like one of those gentle folk with flowers in my hair. Closest I can come to any 60s Berkeley connection is 1969, City Lights basement. I "discovered" the world of little magazines, sent out my first poems. Kell Robertson's *Desperado*, Bukowski's *Laugh Literary And Man The Humping Guns*, Hitchcock's *Kayak*, John Simon's *Aldebaren Review*. At the same time I was taking what would be Lew Welch's last workshop at Cal Extension (before disappearing into the Sierra, where I now live). Over beer at the Log Cabin on Upper Market in San Francisco Lew raved about a Marilyn Monroe poem I'd written. He said two things about my work: I should get the poems out to the magazines; I should think about writing prose. I heard on the submissions within a week, but it took me over 20 years to settle into the prose. One October night walking back through the underbelly of the city after Lew's class, I saw Jack Kerouac's face staring at me from an early edition of the Chronicle. He was dead. Within a week I had poems accepted at *Desperado* and *Laugh Literary*. Simon took one later. My first poem to see print was the Marilyn Monroe poem in *Desperado*. Later Alta republished it in an anthology. That's about it for my Berkeley connection. Of course I visited the wonderful bookstores...

I suppose it is curious, the first "living poets" to say yes to my stuff, thrown in there with a soon to be dead or disappeared Lew Welch and a dead Kerouac in the Chronicle. When I was in Boston trying to "become" a poet I actually drove toward Lowell thinking Jack would invite me in, offer me a glass of wine. I was so green at everything I could not even find Lowell, let alone Jack's house. Curious that the Bukowski and Robertson acceptance letters (glowing stuff, asking to see more), Lew's liking my Marilyn poem, Kerouac dying (I loved his stuff at the time), all these things happened around the same time, and there had been nothing even remotely resembling that YES every young writer craves...

I worked for the PO a year in San Francisco when I was waiting to exit the army from Fort Hood in Killeen, Texas, 1968 I saw a thing on the news showing "hippie" mailmen smoking pot and walking up and down the street smiling and said shit I can do that. Lew Welch's first words to his last workshop: if this workshop is good for anything, it will show you that you don't ever need to take another class if you want to write poetry...

[Ed., Al Masarik died in 2014.]

Marilyn Monroe

first saw you in the bottom drawer
of my granddad's workbench.
you were all pink & red
& so was my 10 year old face.

after that first look
I made sure I peeked at you
whenever we visited granddad's.
I felt I owed it you
so lonely & musty in the cellar.

in time you disappeared
but I remember you
Marilyn Monroe

when at 12 I saw you
in *River of No Return*
I recognized you
Marilyn Monroe
& knew you didn't always
wear those long dresses.

a year later you turned up
in the hands of a friend
who taught me how to jerk off
in a crowd.
he had but 1 of you to go around
Marilyn
so I had to share you with 5
other boys.
till that great day I stole you
during geography as my friend
spoke of South America's
bituminous & anthracite.

I took care of you
Marilyn Monroe
once I doused you with Vitalis
cause you began to smell like
neat's foot oil
(I had you hidden in my baseball glove)
you recovered, except you looked
gray & somber in spots.

I looked at you almost daily

till I was 16 & found a girl
who would “touch it for me”
if I waved to her
during football practice.
every time she touched it, Marilyn
I thought of you.

somehow you made it from the
baseball glove to a scrapbook
filled with report cards,
pictures of baseball players,
trophy winning essays on
how to prevent fires,
& holy cards from old
spelling bee honors.

you were out of place, Marilyn
but you stayed there for years, secure.

when I heard of your death
I looked for my scrapbook.
couldn't find it.
somehow I felt responsible.

John Bennett



JOHN BENNETT, alias Jabony Welter, Achilles Jones, Jacob Black, other names, too, if you're interested, born 1938, Brooklyn, New York, stint in the army, bouncer in New Orleans, window washer in Washington, black sheep in Berkeley, surrounded at the moment through circumstances beyond my control by Japanese students, milling about with vacant eyes, as if the aftermath of Hiroshima is still shimmering down through the generations, accused in the accusative, nailed up but never down, resurrected time and again, timeless but seldom timely, approaching Zero Hour on the loading dock of the Ellis Island of life, lighting up my last roll-your-own as we speak, a little spooked but as ready to cross over as I've ever been. The way we were.

Websites

Vagabond Press <http://www.eburg.com/~vagabond/>

Hcolom Press <http://hcolompress.com/>

Books

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Firestorm (shards), Pudding House Press, 2008
Tire Grabbers (novel), Hcolom Press, Ellensburg WA, 2006
The Theory of Creation (shards), Vagabond Press, 2005
War All the Time (shards), Vagabond Press, 2005
The Birth of Road Rage (shards), Vagabond Press, 2005
Cheyenne of the Mind (shards), dPress, 2004
The Stardust Machine (shards), Mt. Aukum Press, Mt. Aukum, CA, 2002
We Don't Need Your Stinking Badges (shards), Butcher's Block Press, Oneonta, NY, 2001
Fire in the Hole (shards), Argonne House, Washington, D.C., 2001
Greatest Hits (poetry), Pudding House, Johnstown, OH, 2001.
Betrayal's Like That (prose/poetry), Vagabond Press, 2000
Domestic Violence (shards), FourSep Publications, Milwaukee, WI, 1998.
The Moth Eaters (stories), Angelflesh Press, Grand Rapids, MI, 1998.
Rodeo Town (stories), Vagabond Press, 1997.
Karmic Four-Star Buckaroo (stories/essays/shards), Pudding House, Johnstown, OH, 1997.
Bodo (novel), Smith Publishers, NYC, 1995, Quartet Books, London, 1996, Mata Publishers, Prague, 1997 (Czech translation)
The Names We Go By (novella & stories), December Press, 1993.
Flying to Cambodia (novella), Smith Publishers, NYC, 1991.
The New World Order (stories), Smith Publishers, NYC, 1991.
Crime of the Century (social commentary), Second Coming Press, San Francisco, 1986.
Survival Song, (journal--three volumes), Vagabond Press, 1986.
Tripping in America (travel journal), Vagabond Press, 1984.
The White Papers (essays), Vagabond Press, 1982/83. (Four volumes.)

Crazy Girl on the Bus (poems), Vagabond Press, Ellensburg, 1979.
Whiplash on the Couch (stories/poems), Duck Down Press, Fallon, NV, 1979.
The Adventures of Achilles Jones (novel), Thorp Springs Press, Austin/Berkeley, 1979.
La-La Poems, Ghost Dance Press, MSU, East Lansing, MI, 1977.
The Party to End All Parties (stories), Fault Press, Fairfax, CA, 1976.
The Night of the Great Butcher (stories), December Press, Chicago, 1976.
Anarchistic Murmurs from a High Mountain Valley (prose poems), Vagabond Press, Ellensburg, 1975.

Audio

Rug Burn (CD) (shards), Vagabond Press, 1999

Films

Adam in the Year One (surreal Vietnam drama), Vagabond Productions, 1987

Anthologies

The Living Underground, Whitston Pub. Co., NYC, 1973.
Wormwood Review #55, Special Section, Stockton, CA, 1974.
Poets West, Perivale Press, Van Nuys, CA, 1975.
The Pushcart Prize Anthology, Pushcart Press, Waincott, NY, 1976.
The Vagabond Anthology – Best of the first decade of *Vagabond* magazine, Vagabond Press, 1978.
The Ellensburg Anthology, D Press, Ellensburg, Washington, 1980
Editor's Choice Anthology – Best of the Small Press, 1965-77, The Spirit That Moves Us Press, Iowa City, IA, 1980.
Fiction/82, Paycock Press, Washington, DC, 1982.
Green Isle in the Sea (small-press personality profiles), December Press, Chicago, 1986.
Stiffest of the Corpse – Best of the *Exquisite Corpse*, Baton Rouge, LA, 1989.
The Party Train (prose poem anthology), New Rivers Press, Minneapolis, MN, 1994.
The Outlaw Bible of American Poetry, Thunder's Mouth Press, NYC, 1999

CORRESPONDENCE

John

the cosmep reading was after i left, i got my cosmep catalog in 1969, while cheri and theo and i were out in deep bay, and i had just started d-press, and i considered taking out an ad or at least registering something, my smudgy chapbooks with lineoleum nudes, but it all seemed so far away, the woods at my door, my wife and kid bundled up against the arctic wind, printing by lamplight and hanging the pages to dry over the yukon stove, cosmep seemed way too organized for my anarchist tastes, so i rejected the idea of establishing myself as a publisher, and now i see how it goes, and i wonder if you would tell me about that cosmep thing...Richard

Richard ...

your email is like an embryo of what I think you're out to do; it's an exciting and challenging embryo, I think you will fashion something handsome and worthwhile and valuable, but as you obliquely implied (and I agree), the reality (i.e., illusion) I moved thru in that time does not coincide with the illusion (i.e., reality) you were moving thru...

So, I doubt I have anything germane to contribute to your worthwhile project, as, most likely, the poets I mentioned also would not. I could go on about the COSMEP Conference, but to tell you the truth that has no meaning for me anymore, if it ever did; basically COSMEP was a cage for the songbird of the spirit...

So good luck! John

John, i came across your name in pott's -valga krusa- do you remember that?

Richard... don't have a recollection of that... don't have a recollection of a lot of things since these operations...but wld be curious to know what charlie had to say... recently ran across a published letter from bukowski to neeli cherkowski, written back in the 70s, where Bukowski said a shitload of flatout, disparaging lies about me...it was the period of time where he thought i was trying to fuck linda king, and he said a lot of stuff...i should have gone and done it when i had the chance! she was a hot number back then.... John

John, at the end of the chapter called cosmep rising, which is in the first section of valga krusa, called the yellow christ, potts writes

"I decided to go ahead with it, and went over to Richards. (ed. that's Richard Krech) Andy (Clausen) as usual had the floor. Joel (Waldman) and Paul X were there. I didn't stay long, just went in, had a few hits, and went home to try to get some sleep. There was Hiatt, and a couple people who had been lost around the readings, somebody introduced as John Bennett, from New Orleans and the magazine 'Vagabond,' could they crash there. I was too tired

to deny anyone anything at that point. Joel came in all aglo, he had given a great reading, as had Jon Grube. Judy was with Joel, his new girl friend. I tried to interest them in listening to the songs I had written, Joel said that he liked the poems better.”

and so it runs, catching, i think, a lot of the nuances of the time and place, but what interest me is weaving these threads, like a navajo weaver, leaving a little space for the spirits to come and go
Richard

To: Richard Denner
From: John Bennett

LISTS
John Bennett

Throw the carriage, ring the bell, change the ribbon--the hieroglyphic gone world of the manual typewriter. Now I have a computer with a word-processing program, mucho gigabytes like sticks of dynamite strapped around my waist, and a DSL web connection. I have email lists, a hardcore list and a family list, a list of friends and a list of enemies, a political list of mysterious disappearances, a hometown list and a list of drunks. I bob along in a wide ocean of technological grief. The rain falls in a drizzle. Sharks circle. I send an S.O.S. to my lists and hire a list consultant.

The consultant says I'm going about it all wrong. He tells me about blogs, MySpace, YouTube and chat rooms. "That," he says, "is where the action is." He says I'm invading people's privacy with my lists, their right to choose, their this, their that and their other thing. "Who," he says, suddenly angry, "the fuck," he exclaims, "in hell," he blurts out, "do you think you are?" He says I've wasted my time and money hiring him.

I take him to court to get my money back, but the case gets thrown out and I walk out of the courthouse into a pack of dated reporters with flash cameras and note pads. They're all talking at once and want to know if I have anything to say for myself. "As a matter of fact," I say, and then fall down the steps, blinded by flashbulbs.

I wake up in intensive care. There's a foot-long incision down my abdomen and I'm strung out on morphine. A nurse says that they cut my guts out. "That was your problem," she says, "not the lists. You'll feel better now with your guts gone."

Late that night, while the night nurse is nodding off at her station, I get dressed and slip out the door, flag a cab and drive straight to the airport.

So much has changed since they took my typewriter away. I unstitch the ballpoint I'd hidden in my shirt hem and begin writing small in the margins

of my flight plan. It feels strange having my guts gone, but my heart still pounds like a kettle drum. I'll leave the message folded in the pages of the travel mag in the seat pouch when I get off the plane. There's a slim chance that someone will read it.

To: John Bennett

From: Richard Denner

On my flight to a Love Generation reunion in Timbuktu, I noticed a travel mag in the seat pouch in front of me, so I plugged in my earphone to my iPod, set the microwave clock to 26 minutes, then sipped tea from the robotic food panel, as there are no cups allowed after that last clever bomb plot with plastic containers, and I was enjoying a story about Bedford County, Virginia, where my sister lives, a slip of paper fell out of the mag with these words written on it: *So much has changed since they took my typewriter away. I unstitch the ballpoint I'd hidden in my shirt hem and begin writing small in the margins of my flight plan.*

And I thought, that's strange, I just gave my portable Remington to David Bromige, so he can type up his bit about the 1965 Berkeley Poetry Conference, since he keeps losing what he writes on his computer. He needs a typewriter, not a computer. With his personal computer he could send a rocket into space, and all he wants to do is write his memoir about the poetry scene in the 60s. Good idea to write his memoirs. No one else is going to do it for him. Meanwhile, Gene Fowler sends a cd, very organized, and Joel Waldman sends a book, *Fifty New Poems* with a picture of him in cap and gown being dragged off the stage at Madison Square Garden because he wanted to deliver a poem at the CCVY commencement ceremony. And Potts is republishing *Valga Krusa*, and I still don't have the story from Bennett about his visit to the Fulton Street house, and while I was rummaging around in a closet in a back bedroom, I came across a time capsule I had left from 1965, when I took off for Alaska to get healthy outdoor lungs, that contained letters written to me at Box X, Talmage, which is where I had been committed in the Mendocino State Mental Facility, which has now in 2007 been converted a Buddhist in the Pure Land School, which is a school of thought that sees all things, sounds, minds as gods, and by this practice hopes to mingle its mindstream in the tingle of spontaneous accomplishment, and among those letters were poems from David Cole and Marianne Baskin, and David had recently told me that he had no poetry from that period because he had burned everything when he joined the Ramagiri Ashram near Petaluma, and Marianne I hadn't seen since she became a world-renown Flamenco dancer, but her poem was titled "FOR RYCHARD" and the letter with it said that Doug Palmer had accepted it for his soon-to-be published anthology *Poems Read in the Spirit of Peace & Gladness*, so I googled Amazon and found a copy for \$1.94, been out-of-print since 1966, so a real bookseller's dream to find a fine copy at that price, and fuck if the book didn't arrive in a week, and I opened it up, and a slip of paper fell out...

Rychard...

I don't have the leisure to meander around in those gone days. My karma has other plans for me. Mostly what I saw in Berkeley that week were Jerry Burns and Len Fulton, with the best of misplaced intentions, planning the organized future of the renegade small-press world. And a lot of networking, various poetry factions and individuals jockeying for position and power, the smell of money in the air sprayed with the deodorant of lofty ideals, CCLM operatives weaving in and out of the scene, striking deals, wary of this up-start grassroots organization, the birth of COSMEP. Flesh out the acronyms if you want. [Committee of Small Magazines, Editors and Publishers]

Then there were the readings, someone taking off all his clothes as he read (big fucking deal, if he'd played Russian Roulette in a two-piece suit, I might have been impressed). And the Cleveland poets who were calling bullshit on the whole thing, the only people there I felt any affinity with/to...

Grant Bunch (a running buddy from early on and the guy I brainstormed *Vagabond* into existence with in a bar called Brownley's in D.C.) and I drank a lot of beer in some basement pub with Curt Johnson and some people I did not know, mostly college-mag editors. I told a story, I don't remember what it was, but it had nothing to do with poetry and obviously did not set well within the parameters of the literary world which to this day I piss on from a considerable height (Celine). After that the people at the table (heavy wood, carved up with initials) made a point of pretending I wasn't there, what the fuck was I doing there in the first place, who the fuck was I? A friend of Curt's is who I was and still am to this day, he'd published my first published story in December when I was operating out of Munich, saying the story that makes the issue always comes in at the last minute, and I was in there with Raymond Carver who Curt would spend a good part of that weekend with in Palo Alto, away from the madding crowd, him and Carver and Gordon Lish of Esquire and a fox from CCLM who Curt put the charm on and landed some green for December Press.

I wound up one evening in a second-story pad, presumably the Fulton Street house you refer to. There was a large contingent of poets, up there, mostly Potts' people. We turned off the lights and gathered around a window to watch a girl/woman undress in front of a curtainless window in the house next-door, apparently she performed this coy little ritual pretty much on a nightly basis. We smoked some killer weed and with the lights still off I wound up sitting on a couch with Potts and getting into a strange exchange of one-liners, each one-liner topping the next. The exchange became the center of attention, people gathered around in the dark. It came to a point where I asked Potts a germane one-liner question, to which he responded, "I can't tell you that in the dark," to which I responded, "Can you tell me in the future?" and that somehow capped the exchange, and the room came alive with pot-saturated levity and amazement and the next day before the conference

was over I hitched into San Fran and drank alone in the North Beach bars and eventually wound up on a plane back to New Orleans, feeling even less a part of things than when I drove out to Berkeley in a fit of serendipity with three French-Quarter crazies including Grant Bunch and a poor college kid whose car it was, who stepped out of the bright early-morning sun into the dark interior of the Seven Seas bar where we'd been drinking all night and were gunning along on Black Beauties and asked cheerily, "Is there anyone here who would like to share gas and drive to San Francisco?" We stuck him in the back seat where he sat in horror for most of that wild, speed-fueled non-stop trip, up through L.A. where we drank a night away with Bukowski and then pushed onward into the historic Berkeley Conference that fortuitously or otherwise dovetailed/overlapped/coincided with the trajectory of our live-hard/die young lives...

Hope that helps some.

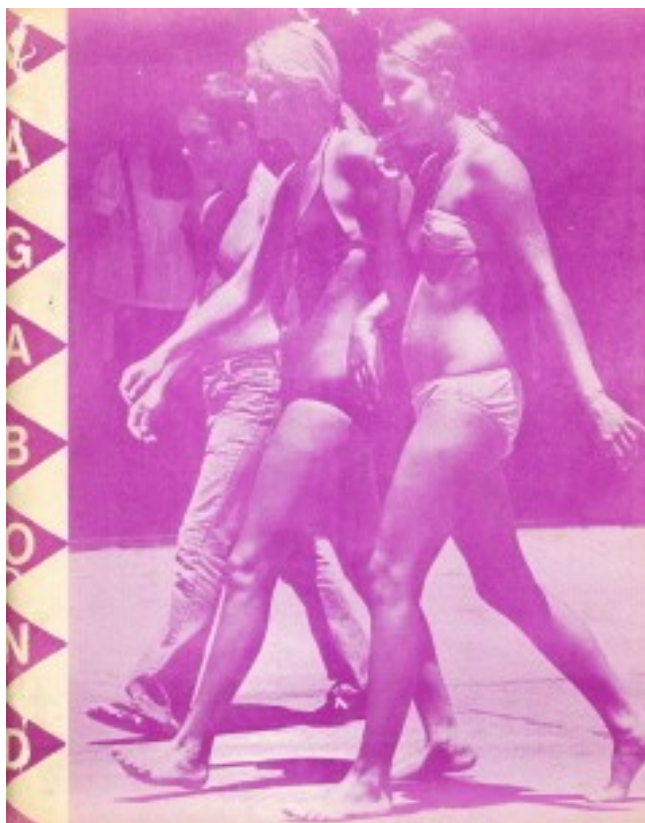
John

john, thanks for taking a moment to meander down memory lane with me, and i know your 'karma' is different, but 'karmas' overlap as well as interpenetrate, and your perspective on those particular events and your pissing on the preposterous pretentiousness of the cosmep conference and your allegiance to the cleveland poets is exactly what i need to keep the overview i'm trying to establish in balance, so thank you for your time and patience, dear friend, onward, Richard

richard..

glad it filled a niche...

john



Larry Kerschner



LARRY KERSCHNER was born in Seattle Washington November 17, 1946. He attended Catholic grade school and high school. Between 1966-1987 he put in eleven years at the University of Washington, the University of Alaska, Peninsula Community College and Tacoma Community College, ending with a Master's Degree in nursing. Larry works as a Family Nurse Practitioner in a rural community. He is active member of Veterans for Peace. He is known as Peace Poet.

Larry's blog is at: www.livejournal.com/~larrywrites/

Books

Memories, Garlic Press, Mountlake Terrace, 1989
Voices in the Wilderness, Garlic Press, Pe Ell, 2000
U.S. Military Diplomacy—From Wounded Knee to Afghanistan, dPress, Sebastopol, 2001
Transforming the Anesthesia, Pe Ell, 2007

Publications

“The Second Patient on Tuesday” Kickass Review Vol. VI Number 7
“Blessed are the Peacemakers” National Catholic Reporter Jan 26, 2001
“We destroyed 15,100 bridges in Vietnam” www.outsiderwriters.org 2007
“Caribou dream” #1 Kickass Review Vol VI Number 7
“The smell of war” Kickass Review Vol VI Number 7
“Dying light” Crab Creek Review Fall 1988
“Speechless tongues” Drama garden July 2007
“Vision of Amos” Drama Garden July 2007
“Lies wide open” www.outsiderswriters.org 2007
“Answering a question” voicesinwartime.org 2007
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“Sex” Halfdrunk Muse April 2002 <http://halfdrunkmuse.com/archives/a/kerschner/>

CORRESPONDENCE

NOTICE: George W. Bush has issued Executive Orders allowing the National Security Agency to read this message and all other e-mail you receive or send — without warning, warrant, or notice. Bush has ordered this to be done without any legislative or judicial oversight. You have no protection and no recourse — except to IMPEACH BUSH AND THE OTHER FEDERAL OFFICIALS who are involved in this illegal and unconstitutional activity.

From: Larry Kerschner
To: Jampa Dorje (aka Richard Denner)
Sent: Friday, May 25, 2007
Subject: A new poem

Jampa- I hope this finds you well...I have started on a poem about my own conception (I know--weird) and I wonder if there is a standard amount of time between death and rebirth or is it considered indeterminate? Also when we lived in Ketchikan you used to get a cake from your parents that was mostly made of nuts. Do you by chance have the recipe?
Peace, Larry

The task of poetry is to overcome government,
—Brendan Behan

On May 25, 2007, Richard Denner wrote:

not so weird, writing on the green walls of the womb, actually an interesting foray into consciousness, sure, forty-nine days, usually, between death and rebirth, in tibetan tradition, there are three bardos, or intermediate states, which describe the primary transitions through various experiences of embodiment and reincarnation, however, it is not to be thought that the bardos exist outside, as they are the content of our experience, from the onset of our experience, even now, as we wander in samsara, and here i am paraphrasing khencen palden sherab rinpoche, did you ever live in berkeley?

On May 25, 2007, Larry Kerschner wrote:

Thanks, I lived in Berkeley for about 6 weeks after I left Alaska in 1972 but don't recall writing anything there. Do you by chance have that recipe?

On May 25, 2007, Richard Denner wrote:

i asked my mom, and she says she gave the recipe to my sister in virginia,
i'll get it from her and send it to you
here are some questions

what kind of memories do you have of berkeley
what was the feel of the street, where did you drink coffee,
where did you buy books, what kind of vibes did you experience
what were you writing about during that time
did you connect with the poetry scene in any way

On May 25, 2007, Larry Kerschner wrote:

My memories are fuzzy. There was a couple who lived in Ketchikan and for the life of me I cannot remember either of their names but I borrowed a bass recorder (with delusions of learning to play it) before moving to Fairbanks. They split up and she was living in Berkeley and I stopped to return it. She was living in a communal house on Telegraph Ave. I'm ashamed to say all I remember of her is that she only had an orgasm by nipple suckling and I got head lice from her. I drank coffee at a restaurant (Mediterranean?). I recall Berkeley as being warm and laid back. It was probably late Summer 1972. She took me to see someone who was a meditation teacher of some form. I sat down to meditate with this person and it seemed as though we were jousting on a metaphysical plane...there was lightning and fireworks and we moved upward from plane to plane. It was unlike any other meditative experience I had had up to that time. He wanted me to stay and study with him but it didn't seem to be the place for me at that time. I didn't connect with the poetry scene at all. I remember sitting in the cafe with my notebook trying to write but I don't recall anything specific. I've never been one to be very adventurous in travel or meeting new people. I have always been better at just watching to see what happens and going along for the ride. I was still trying to process what I had learned of philosophy (David Hume et al) ...that you couldn't know. I had left Fairbanks with a vague plan to head to Guatemala. After I left Berkeley ended up in Del Rio Texas where I ran into my ex-wife and had my Jesus Born Again experience...that ended my trip to Guatemala. I don't know that I have anything to say about Berkeley that would be useful for your project. Thanks for getting the recipe. For some reason the memory of those cakes came back to me recently and I have been wondering how they were made...what binding agent etc. Namaste.

On May 31, 2007, Richard Denner wrote:

mornin' larry

in my mind's eye, i have a image of you sitting in the mediterranean cafe with an open notebook, not writing anything, and it reminded me of how so many of us sat there with that open notebook, writing or not writing anything down...i wonder if you could fill out that picture a bit, some of the backstory, because, in my imagination, you are still really sitting there, and i can add this portrait to my mural of the berkeley daze

and the thing you might well have been writing was the first stanzas of your excellent, long poem "military diplomacy from wounded knee to afghani-

stan” or the cave drawings of your last trip through the womb to the bardo of berkeley

from the chair in the bader’s house in ketchikan to fairbanks, and then down the alcan hwy to berkeley, what kind of car did you drive? what music did you listen to? how did you feel as a vietnam vet being in the hotbed of radical anti-war activity?

sitting in the med at a marble table, the hiss of the espresso machine at a time when there were no more than three espresso machines in the whole town,
dadada da da dadada
you write it

On June 1, 2007, Larry Kerschner wrote:

I have been reading the commentary by Khenchen Palden Sherab Rinpoche. The section on chik-khai bardo where he mentions a scintillating mirage moving across the landscape in the springtime reminds me of the meditation incident I mentioned earlier. It makes me wonder if an unenlightened person can accidentally wander into a bardo briefly while meditating. He states that some people refuse to admit that they are dead. I have always had a small feeling way back in my mind that I died in Vietnam and all since has been an illusion (other combat vets I have talked to have had similar feelings) and in one sense the “I” that went to Vietnam did not return. The experience changes you at a core level.

Also had “How to perform a war” published in the recent newspaper of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War. “O my God” and “Speechless tongues” and “Vision of Amos” will be in the July issue of *Drama Garden*.

The science of war leads one to dictatorship pure and simple. The science of nonviolence can alone lead one to pure democracy.

—M. Gandhi

On June 3, 2007, Richard Denner wrote:

Here is the recipe you asked for—

1 lb. Walnuts (4 cups)
1 lb. Brazil nuts
1 lb. Chopped dates
1 c. Sugar and yolk of 4 eggs
1 c. Flour
2 tsp. Baking powder sifted with the flour
4 Egg whites - beaten separately - Add stiffly beaten egg whites last.
Bake at 350 for 1 hour.

U.S. Military Diplomacy – from Wounded Knee to Afghanistan

1890 Wounded Knee, South Dakota Lakota massacred by U.S. Army

A blue-coated motorcycle gang
armed with rifles and pistols
rolled into this peaceful

residential neighborhood at dawn today.
Chankpe Opi Wakpala community members were herded
together and shot down.

Unarmed men, women and children were
pulled from their homes.

Commenting on reports that
those trying to flee were run down and
shot in the back,

one biker is quoted as saying

*It was great sport
like shooting fish in a barrel.*

Reports of the number killed
range from 150 to 370.

1890 Buenos Aires, Argentina, U.S. troops intervene to protect U.S.
business interests

1891 U.S. troops battle with nationalists in Chile

walking backward
my hidden face
does not go before me
I cannot see
the dogs of war
I hear
salt
blood and tears
dripping down
I hear
children become gravediggers
howling
boy soldiers flung into the dark
I hear
the knife
tearing cartilage between
the ribs

I hear two lovers
one is walking backward

- 1891 U.S. Navy in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil to protect American commercial interests
- 1892 U.S. Army kills 12 railroad workers on strike in Chicago
- 1893 U.S. Marines help overthrow the Kingdom of Hawaii
- 1894 U.S. Army occupies Bluefield region in Nicaragua
- 1894-95 U.S. Marines land in China during Sino-Japanese War
- 1894-96 U.S. Marines present in Seoul, Korea
- 1895 U.S. Navy and Marines land in the Colombian province which is now Panama
- 1896 U.S. Marines show the colors in Corinto, Nicaragua during political unrest
- 1897 U.S. military forcefully suppresses a silver miner's strike in Idaho

driving I remember to note
 sites which would be good for an ambush
 walking I watch the ground for
 dirt which may have been disturbed
 in the laying of mines
 nearly forty years later
 I still expect the bullet
 to hit that spot
 just below my left scapula
 that always itches
 like a target

nearly forty years later
 I remember when we were boy warriors
 thrown together far from home

(gun smoke thick as fog
 hot brass litter
 the lamb-like smell of napalm
 burnt indigenous personnel
 pile of bodies
 slowly moving limbs in rigor
 greenthick vietnamese jungle vines
 sticky red clay mud in monsoon season)

if he wasn't part of that
 piece of me that couldn't come home
 maybe I could
 remember my friend's face
 nearly forty years later

- 1898-01 U.S. Navy and Army seize Philippines from Spain killing 600,000 Filipinos

- 1898 U.S. Navy and Army seize Cuba from Spain, we still have base at Guantanamo Bay
- 1898 U.S. Navy and Army seize Puerto Rico from Spain, our occupation continues
- 1898 U.S. Navy and Army seize Guam from Spain, we still have military bases there
- 1898 U.S. Marines land at San Juan del Sur, Nicaragua
- 1899 U.S. Army battle Chippewa tribe at Leech Lake, Minnesota

finally in each war there are no heroes only wasted victims
 conscientiously objecting to another stupid useless death
 (arresting warm blood torn from leaking limbs
 lung rasped pink bubbles froth their breath)
 how many more times is hell to be let loose
 cursing youngsters we say we love best
 children sacrificed who may finally see
 our lies as a clear patriotic ruse
 dulce et decorum est
 pro patria
 mori

- 1900 U.S. troops fight to put down Boxer Rebellion in China
- 1900 U.S. Marines and Army again use force in Bluefield, Nicaragua
- 1900 U.S. Army occupies Coeur d'Alene Idaho silver mining region
- 1901 U.S. Army attacks Creek tribe in Oklahoma
- 1902 U.S. military supports the province (now Panama) seceding from Colombia
- 1903 U.S. Marines intervene against a popular uprising in Honduras
- 1903 U.S. Marines land in Abyssinia
- 1903-04 U.S. military invades Dominican Republic to protect U.S. business interests
- 1904 U.S. Marines land in Morocco
- 1904-05 U.S. Marines land in Korea during Russo-Japanese War
- 1906 U.S. Marines invade Cuba during their election

a talking head warmachine propagandist
 on NPR yesterday asked
 who is winning the war
 in that tone that assumes a winner

I don't know who might be winning
 but I sure as hell know
 who is losing

what if they gave a war and nobody came

fat and flatulent empire sucking
blood sucking oil sucking
life
spitting out the thin bones
of collateral damage
without even savoring the taste of the dead

the dark lord masterfully marches in place
behind a curtain in his white palace
ordering the imperial storm troopers to attention
with no comprehension
his nose pressed tight into this corner of history
blind with no peripheral or any other vision

what if they gave a war and nobody came

Gandhiji assures us that light is persistent
even in the darkness
Dr. king had a dream
for his children and yours and mine
all God's children
love will bubble up between us
in our ordinary lives
when we see each other
as we are without power
or prejudice

hope is in justice
justice is in hope

what if they gave a war and nobody came

1907 U.S. Army sets up a protectorate in Nicaragua
1908 U.S. Marines land in Honduras during war with Nicaragua
1909 U.S. Marines intervene in elections in Panama
1910 U.S. Marines again invade Bluefield and Corinto, Nicaragua
1911-41 30 years of continuous occupation of parts of China by U.S. Navy
and Army

the voice of the official prophet
speaks the words that must be seen
a reluctant vision
in which suffering has a reason
a positive tale
of the heavy-fruited tree of grief
that can be viewed from either side of the fence
in this story a willing heart

may be the cure for life
a dance where the flesh machine
steps in and out of the grave in grand style
to the sound of an ancient military tune

- 1912 U.S. Army goes to Havana, Cuba to protect U.S. business interests
- 1912 U.S. Marines land in Honduras to protect American commercial interests
- 1912-33 U.S. Army 20 year occupation and war with guerrilla peasants in Nicaragua
- 1913 U.S. Navy intervenes to evacuate Americans from Mexico during their revolution
- 1913 U.S. Marines again land in Panama to effect outcome of local election
- 1914-99 U.S. military forces annex and occupy Panama Canal Zone
- 1914 U.S. Navy fights with anti-government rebels at Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

after we are the ones to survive
after the chill
after the heat
after we have killed but
before we have thoughts of being loved
we sing a manly song
martial and stirring
not low and blue
we sing
when and because
we are distanced from the front
a reminder to remember
to forget what we want forgotten
we sing our loud song of silence
we sing again
and again
until it is done
until it is gone

- 1914 U.S. Army breaks up a miners strike in Colorado
- 1914-18 U.S. Army and Navy in a series of interventions against Mexican nationalists
- 1915-34 U.S. Army in 19 year occupation of Haiti
- 1916-24 U.S. Marines in 8 year occupation of Haiti
- 1917-33 U.S. Army 16 year occupation of Cuba
- 1917-19 U.S. military in World War I

the war to end war
to end war to

end war to end
war to end war
to end war

- 1918-20 U.S. Army and Navy land in Siberia to fight against Bolsheviks
- 1918-20 U.S. troops in “police duty” suppressing discontent after elections in Panama
- 1918 U.S. Army enters Mexico chasing “banditos”
- 1919 U.S. Marines intervene in Yugoslavia for Italy against the Serbs in Dalmatia
- 1920 U.S. Marines land in Honduras to effect the results of a local election
- 1920-21 U.S. Army forcefully puts down a strike of miners in West Virginia
- 1921 U.S. Army in two week intervention in Guatemala against union organizers
- 1922 U.S. Army fought against nationalists in Smyrna, Turkey

memorial day

a black granite wall to rest against
each name an act calling for re-write

58,195 times rendered unto Caesar
58,195 rendered like fat on a hot stove

- 1922-27 U.S. Army and Navy deployed in China during nationalist uprising
- 1924-25 U.S. Army landed twice in Honduras during their elections
- 1925 U.S. Marines suppress a general strike by the workers of Panama
- 1926-33 U.S. Marines in seven year occupation of Nicaragua

I have deemed it my duty to use the powers committed to me to ensure the adequate protection of all American interests in Nicaragua, whether they be endangered by internal strife or by outside interference in the affairs of that republic.

—President Calvin Coolidge, 1926

- 1932 U.S. Navy warships sent to El Salvador during Faribundo Marti revolt
- 1933 U.S. Army uses force to stop WWI veterans bonus protest march in Washington D.C.
- 1934 U.S. Marines land at Foochow, China
- 1941 Greenland and Iceland taken under U.S. military protection

nights he still comes to me
eyes clear
black and white
unlike his body
yellow and red

this spectre
of a rising tide of godless communism
turning
amidst the tangled pile
of bodies

the 300 piastres
and the red-starred belt
I took from his body

- 1943 U.S. Army forcefully puts down a rebellion of Black citizens in Detroit
- 1945 50,000 U.S. Marines sent to Northern China
- 1945 Military occupation of South Korea which continues today
- 1946 U.S. threatened Soviet troops in Iranian Azerbaijan with nuclear weapons
- 1946 U.S. Navy responded in Yugoslavia to shooting down of a U.S. plane
- 1947 U.S. nuclear bombers deployed over Uruguay in a show of strength
- 1948 U.S. Marines evacuate Americans from mainland China

cardinals and bishops call it a just war
just because the president said so
just because they hurt us
just because we can
just because not enough of us said no
just because the snow falls and the shadows grow longer each day
just because we see it on CNN
just because after the bombs fall there is no one left to hear
just because

- 1948 U.S. nuclear bombers threaten the Soviets over Berlin airlift
- 1948 U.S. Marines to Palestine
- 1950-53 U.S. troops in Korean civil war; threaten China with nuclear weapons
- 1953 U.S. military and CIA overthrow democracy and install Shah of Iran

Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket

*fired, signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger
and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.*

—President D.D. Eisenhower 1953

- 1954 U.S. offers use of nuclear weapons to French to use against siege
in Viet Nam
- 1955 U.S. bombs Guatemala from bases in Nicaragua after Guatemala
nationalized U.S. business
- 1956 U.S. threatens Soviets with nuclear weapons during Suez Canal
crisis in Egypt
- 1958 U.S troops occupy Lebanon
- 1958 Iraq threatened with nuclear weapons to prevent invasion of
Kuwait
- 1959 U.S. troops forcefully stop political protests in Panama
- 1960 U.S. military advisers begin to be used in numbers in Viet Nam

weapons of mass destruction

wep
wept
jesus wept
tears slick and shiny like blood
salt falling to the earth
wept words
chemical words
biological words
radiological words
wept puns
puns
puns
hidden
double meaning of mass
black hole
air hole
ass hole
bullet hole
rabbit hole
mass
holy mass
a catholic ritual
making us all holy this day
de
de
deny
dumb
dum de dum dum

haunted by the ghosts of children
banging on the catatonic piano
struck
struck
struck with the brutality of it all
struck with the futility of it all
shun
attention
shun this thought
stay in your place
self censor
three dimensional auditory weapons of mass illusion

- 1961 U.S. military and CIA train commandos for operation against Cuba
at Bay of the Pigs
- 1962 U.S. government threatens to use nuclear weapons in Berlin Wall
crisis
- 1963 U.S Army shoots Panamanian citizens protesting about return of
canal

madre llorosa

she was last seen
in a photograph
kneeling

peasant dress
little protection
between her and the road stones

none
between her
and the boy soldiers

the body lying there
looked
something like her disappeared son

- 1964 U.S. military assists Indonesian Army coup in which one million
were killed
- 1964-75 Viet Nam War
- 1965-66 U.S. Marines land in Dominican Republic during their election
campaign
- 1966-67 U.S. Green Berets intervene in Guatemala against anti-government
rebels

we move out of the treeline
spread out
surround the huts
the village headman says
two wounded men died
and were buried
several days before

a green black shimmer
rises (after three days;
the sun)
the skin
taut with gangrenous gas
bursts
with the weight of a landing fly
spewing
pus to dust

we dig
small men's bones
in a small hole
a soup of khaki straps and steel buckles
stirred and sifted
for intelligence

1967 U.S. Army battles U.S. citizens in Detroit killing 43; killing 26 in Newark
1968 21,000 U.S. troops on the streets of American cities after MLK assassination
1969 U.S. Army and Navy secretly attack North Vietnamese and Viet Cong in Cambodia

a bullet manages to exist
without a mind of its own
slowed to sixteen frames per second
it barely precedes the out-flowering
crimson and grey
from the back of the skull
dead is still dead
despite any noise of martial music and honor
the dead don't awaken

1970 U.S. troops invade Cambodia
1971 U.S. Air Force "carpet-bombs" Laos while directing a South Vietnamese invasion
1972 U.S. Army supports the FBI in siege against Lakota at Wounded

- Knee, South Dakota
- 1973 U.S. military in world-wide alert nuclear threat against those at tacking Israel
- 1974 U.S. military and CIA command operation assassinating the elected President of Chile

backs to the white bright light
 young men wearing goggles
 a boy soldier among many
 dug into the Nevada desert
 sand scoured grey mesquite
 secure the area

following orders
 he knew no
 Korea no
 Viet Nam no
 his was an Eisenhower
 time of peace

now his Auschwitz eyes in sunken sockets
 this atomic vision
 shadowed him
 these twenty-five years
 sallow grey
 against white sheets
 death fetid breath
 stomach gone to gastric cancer
 100 milligrams of morphine each hour
 bring
 a time of peace

dying
 he spoke briefly
 of a bright white light

- 1975 U.S. bombs Cambodia during attempt to free captured ship Mayguez
- 1976 U.S. military command assists South Africans attacking rebels in Angola
- 1978 U.S. Air Force provides logistical support to French in Zaire
- 1980 U.S. in aborted bombing raid/hostage rescue from U.S. Embassy in Iran
- 1981 U.S. Navy shoots down two Libyan jets during maneuvers
- 1982 U.S. Navy mines a harbor in Nicaragua as part of U.S. support of Contras

*We havnever interfered in the internal government of a country and
have no intention of doing so, never had any thought of that kind.*
—President Ronald Reagan, 09-28-1982

1982 U.S. Marines expel the PLO from Lebanon while the U.S. Navy
bombs Syria

this militaristic corporate statist
religion alive in our midst
barely hides the bronze face of Moloch
Canaanite sun god risen again amongst us
this god whose face is ours
whose name is consumption
whose tongue is greed
demands the sacrifice of our children
in blood and madness
name them warriors these boy soldiers
and our daughters now
to kill or be killed
a death hunger never satisfied

dance with the flute and cymbal
sing the patriotic anthems
loud martial songs
to drown the voices
and screams of the dying

1983 U.S. military builds bases on the border between Honduras and
Nicaragua for Contras

1983 U.S. bombs and invades Grenada four years after their revolution

1984 U.S. military shoots down 2 Iranian jets over the Persian Gulf

1985 U.S. Navy jet forces an Egyptian commercial airliner to land in
Sicily

These people expect their satisfaction guaranteed
Anything less comfortable is not allowed.
Different voices we Americans seldom heed.
Simple moral questions won't be said aloud.
The leaders state that which everyone is to see
But their type of truth is just another useless root
Of that once verdant tree that should mean liberty.
That now is hacked and sadly broken underfoot
While snakeoil hucksters proudly ply their ware
Selling safety and security in that old new offer.
A Potemkin vision in which everything here is fair
And if the evil die young it's their fault they suffer.

When Christ called us to be willing servants of all
Of course, He meant only those on this side of the wall.

1985 U.S. Army assists in raids in coca regions of Bolivia
1986 U.S. Navy bombs Libya killing Col. Khaddafi's daughter
1987-88 U.S. Navy bombs Iran on the side of Iraq in their war

blue gulf
grey sand
black oil
green money
brown skin
red blood

1988 U.S. Navy shoots down 2 Libyan jets
1988 U.S. troops invade Panama killing over 2,000 while arresting
President Noriega
1989 U.S. troops used to put down Black unrest after hurricane in Virgin
Islands, St. Croix
1989 U.S. jets provide air cover for Marcos government against non-
violent coup in Philippines
1990 U.S. troops evacuate civilians during civil war in Liberia
1990-91 First Gulf War against Iraq

the war was black and white
at first but then
in living color red and yellow and khaki green
brought into the living room but what was always missing
was the smell of war
my war smelled
of dying vegetation eau de agent orange
burnt gunpowder and burnt people
dark blood sweet and warm
piss shit sweat
testosterone
the same smell is found in what is left of a pizza shop
in Jerusalem
now the smell of war is in Jenin and Ramallah
piss and shit and blood
mixes with the frustrated cries
of the people
Helen Caldicott holds up
a picture of a baby with his head blown off
the smell of his head seeps up through the
concrete rubble after the tanks roll on
the same smell of piss and shit and blood
rose in the hot desert

some days after soldiers were buried
alive
the same smell at Waco when the embers died and
the smoke cleared
the same smell of
more piss and shit and blood
was found by firefighters
and police digging below the twin tower's space
the same smell more piss more shit
more blood
was found near Kabul raised with the dust
by bombs from 40,000 feet
next we'll find that same smell in some new axis of evil where
the smell of oil added to the smell of dead children
added to the putrescent odor of piss and shit and blood
of war and death
should gag us all

however as Erasmus said five hundred years ago
war is sweet
to those who know it not

1991-2001	U.S. bombs Iraq hundreds of times killing many civilians maintaining the no-fly zone
1991	U.S. Army and Marines deployed in Los Angeles during anti- police uprising
1992-94	U.S. Army and Navy bombing and raid during U.S. led U.N. occupation
1993-95	U.S. jets bomb Serbs in Bosnia

I will teach you how
to perform a war
a clean operation
to remove that dangerous tissue
which can no longer be controlled
we first name it cancer
we curse it for an inhuman bastard
nothing legitimate to be found
the pathologic question
must be asked and answered
weighing whether a pound of flesh will be enough
shared definitions in hand
we sharpen our knives
sanitary
chrome and steel
bright lights

remove any shadow
of doubts
patriotic anesthesia dulls the senses
common and other
to the loud cutting
ripping and
bleeding to come
once hidden viscera bloody red
broken bone white
and hypoxic blue tissue
stare out at us
unexpected collateral damage
can be dressed
with sterile white gauze
although the bloated smell
sometimes remains

afterwards
we will remove our gloves and
wash our hands

- 1994-96 U.S. Army and Navy blockade the nation of Haiti
- 1995 U.S. jets bomb Serb airfields in Croatia
- 1996-97 U.S. Marines at Rwandan Hutu refugee camps in Zaire
- 1997 U.S. troops evacuate foreigners from Liberia
- 1998 U.S. troops evacuate foreigners from Albania
- 1998 U.S. missiles attack a pharmaceutical plant in Sudan
- 1999 U.S. missiles attack a former CIA training camp in Afghanistan

I think that the targeting of innocent civilians is the worst thing about modern conflicts today. And to the extent which more and more people seem to believe it is legitimate to target innocent civilians to reach their larger political goals, I think that's something to be resisted at every turn.

—President Bill Clinton, 03-21-2000

- 2001 U.S forces attack Afghanistan in response to terrorist attack by Egyptians and Saudis

I heard it on NPR
someone said we're at war
yeah that's terror
here in North America
now we get a taste of it
we get to see the other side
now our children die now we see there are no accidents

only consequences
we gag on the dust and rubble and fumes
in New York
in Washington D.C.
in Pennsylvania
in Kabul
in Baghdad
now we gag on the truth

and

2003 U.S. military in massive unprovoked attack against Iraq leads to
the death of thousands

and

This poem initially was my response to the events of September 11, 2001. The historical data was gathered from several sources including a website by Zoltan Grossman, the Library of Congress and the U.S. Navy historical websites. I tried to find secondary sources to assure historical accuracy but this is a poem not a history book. Errors are mine. This poem has been revised several times.

Additional Documents

Selections from

*Poems Read in the Spirit of Peace
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The State of the Union & the Education
of Poets by Ron Silliman

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Selections from

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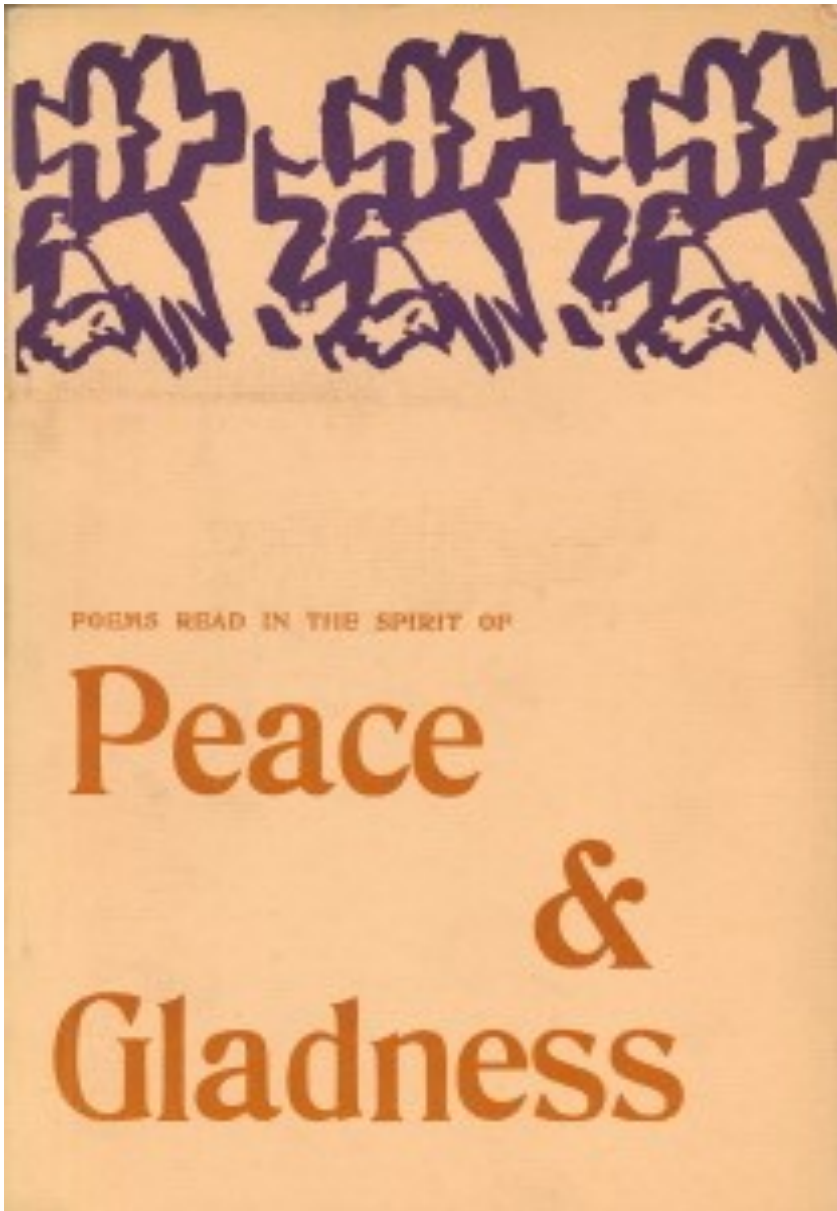
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“A Baseball Is as Happy as a Curtain If
That’s What You Want (Life to Be) (And I
Wrote.With.Love)” by Julie Belloc

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“Algebra” by Gail Chiarello

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A REVIEW OF POEMS READ IN THE SPIRIT OF PEACE & GLADNESS



NEW AMERICAN POETRY seems daring because many of its contributors had been publishing only five or six years instead of the usual fifteen or so. In *POEMS READ IN THE SPIRIT OF PEACE AND GLADNESS* only Gary Snyder, Robert Lax, Richard Barker and possibly James Koller have been publishing more than five years. Some few others of us have been publishing frequently the last two or three years. You may have seen work by about half of the others, but for the most part work published after this anthology was in process. The rest are published only recently and in hard to get publications. The average age must be in the early twenties. Some few of us are in our mid-thirties. None older, I think. Yet there is an older feel to the minds behind these poems than in *NEW AMERICAN POETRY*, a more personal and lively intelligent feel than in *NEW POETS OF ENGLAND AND AMERICA VOLS. I AND II*. I won't analysis or praise. I will go out on a limb and make a prediction: This book's reputation will grow over, say, five years into something very considerable. —Gene Fowler

Selections from:

**POEMS READ IN THE SPIRIT
OF Peace & Gladness**

Editors: Doug Palmer & Tove Neville
Art by Richard Sargent
230 pp perfect-bound

1966

Editor's note

This anthology comes out of the I.W.W. readings March-September 1965, 7 months of readings, I reading each month. They were loose and they were open readings.

This anthology is meant to congratulate the poets who took part, and to commemorate the spirit of those readings.

Thanks to George Stanley who helped me see clearly this purpose of the anthology.

Not all the poets in the anthology read at I.W.W. Hall on Minna street in San Francisco. But the spirit is the same in these people, hence their inclusion.

No attempts have been made to exclude. I have tried to include poets who are friends.

These are some of the working poets, poets of life.

Thanks to Mark Morris, to the I.W.W., to Bob Rush, thanks to the willingness of all the poets in this anthology. Thanks to all who donated things and money to our rummage sale, to raise money to publish, and especially to my wife Rut, who organized the sale.

Biggest sustaining thanks to Tove Neville, who kept me on the straight and narrow, working, and Tove constantly finding out the necessary things, giving all the time.

Thanks to those who put up money to get the anthology out: Sam Thomas, Tony and Vicky Sargent, Tove Neville, Len Fulton, Eileen Adams, Mark Morris and my mother.

And to Dave Hazelton, who set such a worthy high standard with his magazine *Synapse*, and who I hope finds this anthology respectable.

And to Lu Garcia, who put the idea of an anthology into my head.

And to Gary Snyder, whose poetry workshop class at Cal., Berkeley served as a centering point.

Doug Palmer
July 1966

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Dave Sandberg Hilary Ayer Fowler Sam Thomas Dawn F. Carey
James Spencer Robert Lax John Oliver Simon Luis Garcia
D.R. Hazelton Jim Thurber David Schaff Richard Barker
Jim Wehlage Gail Dusenbery Gary Snyder

KAY OKRAND

DEFINITION

Rollingstone you
roll back
you used to
be people

or things
the same
they are the
same all

part of the
same way
on the same
round thing

but what
is a thing
is the same
thing as every

thing else.

YESTERDAY

For Luis Garcia (Sito)

You are hung
from every tree
moonlight
land by a
rope

Love them
all you said
so love them
all i do
 love them

all of them
Are they worth
loving?

And with yellow
rain speed
you are
found in
the shallow end
feet up

with 3 nights
loss of sleep
a poem
on your cheeks

hollow inside
your rain
dry it can't
rain it
runs with
speed

all of them
Are they worth
loving?

One by one
in twos
they grow old
spidery legs
arms lips

spider webs
black widows
you know
the trees speak
to you, to me
too, differently.

You receive the
letter by kiss
in heat
lose 3 days
3 days!

Is the water deep
enough
to catch the
light eyes
straight up

whisper to me
in the night
whisper parts
parts
significantly
say so.

So find them
worth
loving or not

whatever is
right i've
said before
let your
eyes go

straight up
and the trees
-your trees-
will say it

tonight they will
louder than
ever speak
in
the cold water

leaks off your
feet you're in
the river
eyes up
see the

speed of light
ask yourself
if you're right

tonight the river
it also speaks
to spiders one
by one they

may be worth
rain autumn
leaves are

part of trees
and oh remember
that kiss.

THE BLADE

It cuts
(roughly speaking)
into awareness

into it
self makes
a scrape
leaves
a mark

rides on foot
(sharply speaking)
into the cutter

into a flesh
telling the tale:
it appears.

JAMES KOLLER

*POEM AFTER AN UNSUCCESSFUL FORAY INTO
A PAWNSHOP WHERE I THOUGHT TO BETTER MY
FINANCIAL SITUATION BY TRADING ONE UNSALEABLE
ITEM FOR ONE MORE SALEABLE & POSSIBLY MORE USEFUL*

a Springfield or Winchester
will trade for either
an even trade no money
to enter it

(crops, wheat
no longer legal
tender

what about whiskey???
what about it???

never happen)

he neither wanted nor took
the banjo no music but coin
in his ears

I wasn't prepared
to harmonize

won't come again
do, he said
with cash

what can't be done
with cash

SHOULD BE DONE

I carried it home
hung it
in the bathroom

the music room???

conservatory???

SHOULD BE DONE
save it .for a better .day

like an arrow .out of the blue .lost

a springmaid or wrench
will trade
to enter into
no money

love
won't get you out of this one

?????

DAVID COLE

That's the Way

Goodbye, goodbye,
now it's time

to leave my home
to leave my home

take out telephone
there's non-one home,
I'm gone,

 we'll go
together,
 we'll

go
no
I'll go alone
I'll go
there's no one home
any more

I'll go and lock
the doors, I'll lock
the windows,
you can't get in,
there's no-one in,
there's no-one home.

the street,
the people.
a man stops
he says

 I
think I
I think

everyone on the sidewalk
is pushing him.
don't stop they say
don't stop,
you're blocking the side-
walk
everyone is thinking
don't stop

he says
everyone
is thinking
he says
don't stop

ORIGINS

Raindrops, a thin patter
and stream swirls,
washing over the choked drain
parted
by wheels of a car
merges, meeting at the corner
the bottom of a street lamp.

Here the metaphysician
begins to heroize
an elliptical
crystal,
forged and finely ground,
fired by purpose.

The thing,
smooth,
carefully shaped,
emerges,
from the furnace,
translucent,
clear,
embodied warmth spreading warmth
through the thin ground edge.

The metaphysician,
eyes following his creation
whispers in fear a lament
to his fathers.

“It is I now; I am one with you,
I am your servant as you are mine.”

His crystal,
delicate,
placed on the edge of a curb,
balanced,
a risk of hope.

POSSIBILITIES

swimming is an act
of trusting
the water
is what holds you up.
it's thin water
that holds you up
that you trust.

that makes swimming
possible,
that makes drowning
possible,
that makes swimming
possible

great shining glass window
and

splat
a bee trying for the light
hits the pain.

Quiet conversation
at the table beneath the brightness.
stretching along
arching under the eaves
and

splat
a bee enters the afternoon.

immobility is an
ACT
of
con (I can't go on)
conscious-ness
con science, conshunce
conshusness and gry to think
it's (ouch!) in its
state of reflexive anxiety
where the work
begins.

EVERYTHING
for Luis Garcia

Lu,
I don't trust you,
you say
you know everything.
you say
I know everything.
but you lie because

you tell the truth.
to trust
every-
thing
to write every-
thing
a poem
is every thing
that you and I know.
but is that
everything?
that thing
that we know.

THE LETTER

this word,
I want
to write
this word:
it means something,
it means a thing
one thing
it means
it does not
mean one is two

more important
I
do not mean

two are one,
or live as cheaply.

What I mean
to say
what I mean to say:
what I say
means what
I say
I mean
I miss you.

MONOLOGUES

I
talk to me.
I trust you.
I tell the truth and you
believe me.
do you agree with me?

do I tell the truth
if you
do not agree with me?
I tell you to believe

yourself. to
believe me.
to agree with me is
to tell
the truth is
to be on a trip
together.

II
being together.
I see you: your
thick kinky brown hair.
little girl freckles.
small breasts.
muscular legs.
 you cross
 the room
 to me.
we wrap our arms
around each other.
I see you. but,
we are together.

THANASIS MASKALERIS

HECUBA IN VIETNAM

Hecuba: "Greeks! Your strength
is in your spears, not in the
mind."

—Euripides, *The Trojan Women*

All your strength, America, is in your bombs!
What were your eagles are now carriers of death.
Strange loves twitch in your sermons.

What fear turns you to this terror!—
to drive people into trenches and tunnels, to poison their land
What fear makes you kill the children of Vietnam so savagely?—
pounding them to bits with your bombs.
What shame!—to crush down the weak, to force them under the earth
(Little Astyanax could at least ascend to the tall walls of Troy
and gaze at his city for a moment, nobly, before the terrible plunge.)

The wail of Hecuba is rising against you, America,
rising from the wounded throats of Vietnamese mothers.
Let the faces of underground children shine in the sun!

SISTER MARY NORBERT

from *DAIMON POEMS*

*The borderlines of sense in the morning light
are naked as a line of poetry in a war.*

—Robert Duncan

Touch me,
 God!
that I may feel you
 in fingertips fashioned
heretofore futile. . . .

Burn me,
 God!
that I may sear self
 to bonebreak brittled
because bloodless used-to-be. . . .

Strip me,
 God!
that I may see through
 with patient percept
washed eye, demoted lit. . . .

Fill me,
 God!

—for Robert Duncan
as a sort of thankyou

“. . . beautiful with accomplishment. . .”
—David Meltzer

sighs filtering through
attar-of-roses in pale face crushed,
warm with bright weariness;
she is madonna, is my love,
sheltering infant with shadowed eyes

her flower, grown from secret seeling
nurtured in joyful dark
blooms with tiny bursts,
liquid, lyric, lulled in soft
air of kind breath,
 (the mother’s sweet sibilance)

*

with your wise hands you capture me close,
 child of my heart,
you grace me new godliness;
 you,
 O incarnation of a shared beauty

—for David and Tina Meltzer
and Jeffifer Love

LENNART BRUCE

A Statement

Yes I believe
so much
in so little

most reluctantly
convinced that even
those few things

are very scarcely
worth while
and exist

in such small quantities
so minute in fact
that their mere rareness

enlarges them
secretly

The Taste For It

I go
for those trees miles out
day after day
to look at them
in bloom
feel them
the smell
of them
I love their scent
I am in love
I want
I want them
I am wild
wild about their leaves
even when they fall spin
acrobats
from different angles
I have a fever rising
98 – 100-104 degrees

climbing
for them
I would do anything
for them
to get them
to buy a grove
and grow them
on a big scale
I have to have
the money
no matter how
to get them
I am going crazy
crazy about money
to buy trees for
buy those trees
to grow nuts

to crack
I am mad
about them

MARIANNE BASKIN

DEVIL
for my husband

The green
leaves red
turning
falling
past the sun
screened window
I

Love the
coffee
spoon next
to the wind-
ow where
I saw
his red shirt.

FOR RYCHARD

Handing
flowers
 Child of
 God
there's rue
for you
 Ophelia
lost
tears
mirror
the flowers
floating
in the pool

What happened
to you
 Child of
 God
casting
flowers
to the riders
on the wind

Lost souls
drowned
in the petals
pointing
in the whirling
lines of
tears.

HILARY AYER FOWLER

THE DUCK

Pressing
its flat yellow feet
into its belly
it buried them in feathers

So
with nothing left to stand on
it flew

SAM THOMAS

HOMAGE

Ludwig, like an old stump
 turned upright
takes his solid place solid
in the giant lobby
 of the Student Union
 University of California
 Berkeley.

People go out of their way
not to trip over him-
 “Hi there Ludwig, stupid dog!”
The head holds its steady gaze intent
 until an old cat tucked under a
 loud plaid muffler plastic hat &
 raincoat, orders him out.
He leaves on legs hardly there, slow
out one door – back in another
There are other dogs other men
 & today
around the fountain throwing up deep blue –
many card tables.

D. R. HAZELTON

FOR DOUG AND JIM

to give:
the stong starts
from its place
in the heart
a traveling
steady in its
path toward the
outward moving
circle, the rings
expanding like heart-waves
that lose the eye

a simple friendship:
spurt of soul

from the one to the
other, a glad
handing of worth
to worth, increase
in the song that
is solitary, sung
from the singular need

LOVERS IN THE CITY

the miracle
is still that we
come together
through the
maze of
hard-edged
machines
and blossom
always
different in
one another's
arms

strange how
afterwards
the familiar
room is new
again objects
incise their
distance on
the mind colors
soften
throb with
light
the
curious trac-
ing of a
remembered
book with
tentative
fingers

JIM WEHLAGE

the paper rustles
my thoughts in
sidious pay
per cow
 ers cow
boys rang blue bells
in the hot
desert of this
world so
sit we may sit
but u can
no not know
how
to stop when
there are no lights to
turn on
 or on or on or on
orion in the sky
so high or i in
the walking I do
like to walk some
times I walk for
miles not knowing
wher i
 am what i
am is the walker man
being at the edge of the notes
in be so finely
what i am walking-
 my spurs jangle

when i fall
into love some
times i
stay there
for years not knowing
why I laugh my
head off
so hard i
cry not in
frequently the tears

never show
them
selves to be
real joy or
in pain
my self to know why
you go a
long way off
the side of my mind
slips in
to the darkness
u go a long way off it
is be
coming dark at the end
of the hall
way

its that
the ones that
u love
u don't see
each other
we don't
see our knowledge
 makes
 us
 in
visible to
 each
 an other
 love

its groovy
it goes
it so
 far out
on the tracks
of yrself
the only thing is that
is only what it
smells
like what you eat

some times what
you are
is to be
like this

good and cold and
and honey milk
to get
lit up
by nite time
all day has
spread out be
fore you some people
un fold like
dizzy flowers that
is in time
lap
sed positions which are lap
ses in the mind so
open up the eyes so
u've got to be
hight to get
high u've been away a
gain yr eyes
have ring
bones a round them un
der the flesh the
eye brows u've got
to be so high so
often that is just
life
coming
on like a push in
side you flies in the
air inside yr apart
ment u've got to have the door
open to get the flies in side ways
like suns in
visible
to them selves

sea
water see the

water ocean
water
wet on my arms
sweat you laying
in to me
back top belly
our clothes still on
in the bed
and my hand
holding your breast
nipple never
got hard
to let you let
your self touched

and wanting
to be
taken
a cross the sand in some
one's arms not
crossing the beach going

to the water
for your sake
alone

what does it
want
so much to
give us
all
this
what do
you want little
flowers
you
live you flowers little
often tone flow
er so over my hand light
flow all o rover where
the u
niverse cushions you
fall away
through it clumsily

TOVE NEVILLE

TE QUIERO MUCHO

Five long times
fingers
toes together
makes a bed for lovers
keep warm
keep under covers
suddenly it gets very quiet
 outside
and hear hum
inside my head
and the far hum
of some machine.
My toes are playing footsy
with the sheet
they miss you
I would like to see you now
in one piece
when your eyes come
out at me in a smile
there is nothing I can do
but love you.

JOHN OLIVER SIMON

SUPERSTITION CAYNYON

the stone narrows to a dark door.
here, in seventy-nine,
they chased the Paiutes.
the troopers found no Indians.
maybe once the air sprung
with an arrow, then with
stillness. There, one rock standing
like a dumb tooth. And the dark
drum of the sky.

or with clumsy
boots they started a snake from under
clattering rocks. Moving out of darkness.
in the canyon I learn to
move in this silence, with furtive hands
pressed against stone, as slow
as sun moves on the rim of sky.
the Indians took to the mountains.
they learned to live in the snow.
in the canyon, left their sentinels:
hammered on a dark rock, the sun's face,
the white eye and dancing hair.

LETTER TO JO

HIGH COUNTRY POEM

Rafferty Creek

When you're gone the person stays
I kept in my mind. I have
no exorcism.

In the High Country
I walk to drive you out of me
till I've turned my body into one thing
hard as leather and stone
pack-wire
burns on the bone, endure
as dwarf-pine clutches rock

here, circled, the fire-hole
dangle white feet
in the slow pool

eyes that void
where water circles
a hollow in stone
rest the pack and wait
lean into where you left me
the stream falls into the
Lyell Fork, swiftly
Tuolumne, San Joaquin

Cathedral Range

rock stumbles into sky
dim lakes below us, the dreamt
world (we stiffen on the stone
hands above us, circle
the ledge, cross
into a gully,
traverse onto the face
torn ridge 200 feet higher

the highways don't lead here
peak given no name by
Sierra Club or US Survey
you might even keep me
if you came here
though I came here to leave you
and hurt of the yielding flesh
flowering tree

(this has been to tell you
but you are still here,
come like some secret
shadow, branches edge
crossing touch of vision
one waling behind us

trail ends
some mountain or highway

* * *

*(for Gary Snyder who wrote in the
summit register of Matterhorn Peak
10.25.55 "even the mountains will
become Buddhas")*

all that begins with dim
shapes of pines on ice-
color and rock, the
language of winter. in
still stars throned
darkness, beyond earth, all
these worlds are waking

tell you about this
country of death, we

have made grim metal
for China, the Indians
remember our pale
Christian faces, and
what language we speak to
them, when they are dying

escaped
out of the fish
jaws and mouth of the great god
I come to tell you

asked why I came,
I said, not thinking,
it was to die. but
he told me, if/ death
were more than a gesture, you would
have done it, not
been here talking to me.

the true journey is maybe
to some place I shall
meet you, we
often have remembered
but there are the
highways first, skull-lights, the
steel-headed men, also many
cities of the dead

to Horse Creek Canyon, the
pine and the
quiet. at
dark, the wind
cried among us like
ghosts of the Piauxes

and
we shall come to the
mountains, when
it is morning:
nine years after Snyder
I climbed the couloir and
scree-ridge, rock
in the speaking air, then
come to dim
earth's summit. he
stood and blessed it.

and
it shall be here, that the
world begins; hands
on the rock-teeth, the sky will
touch our faces; now
when the sun
comes, it shall be
day at last coming
in my holy mountain.



Ron Silliman reading at Shakespeare's

Photo by Alder

THE STATE OF THE UNION & THE EDUCATION OF POETS

Ron Silliman

The libraries are filled with the wrong books. No ! Is needed, it is enough to find Guest where there should be Ginsberg, Ciardi where there should be Creeley, Poe for Pound, Ann Stanford for Jack Spicer. One must go to the hip bookstores, but how do you find one in Blue Springs, Missouri? Good poets will never infect the young if you are not exposed. Suggestion: buy, or even lift, a few good books of your favorite people and send them to the library of your choice.

The college classes are even worse. Patching up bad poems is not path to awareness. Nor is Greek prosody unless you're many many years into the whole thing. Books of any 6 good & current Poets are of more value than any text I have ever seen. Let's learn what happens when the good are good.

Critics, scholars & even novelists are not proper teachers of poetry because they do not know, they cannot know, just what happens when a poet writes his poem. They have no sense of that kind of insanity. All of Rimbaud's poems are about poetry, directly.

The minds of poets are on the battlefronts of reality. What Pound did in 1917 to poetics the Beatles are now doing to rock, without Dante there would be no John Wesley Harding. It is time poets took over the politics of their art away from the critics, it is time to govern ourselves. Poetry is still the most advanced of the arts. 70,000 students on college campuses are taking courses in writing poetry. How many will be destroyed by their menopausal profs? 69,995?

Poet Yannis Ritsos is in prison in Greece, Nikos Gatsos has totally disappeared from the streets, many others are in exile in Paris! What are you doing? Wars will not end until the minds of all men are beyond petty jealousy & sniveling greed. It is the job of the artist, privileged to speak to the gods & to be one with them, to bring the mind of man out of the Wall Street horror.

Get on a bus to the city, any bus. How many riders are reading poetry? How many reading the Wall Street Journal? What are you doing?

Poets must rise above negation, it is the poets who will bring in the new world. Will you ever get to Grail Castle, baby? Will I?

You need not write about the war, only about the world! In a world of wars, of racists, of thieves leading nations, all poems relate directly. Be with yourself, you are what is needed, the word is you.

1968

SELECTED POEMS from **avalanche**

You Could

I could walk in a mud puddle for a
dream
I could sit on a doorstep for a while
I could take a young girl for a virgin.
I could grab a tear for a smile
O I could laugh or run or die
Or set in a shadowy room and sigh

I could hold a pomegranate for a streetlight
I could smash a raindrop with my first
I could hold an autumn in a bottle
I could find a tin whistle in the mist
Or I could steal the farmer's pigs
Or I could rape the farmer's wife
Or fall down the dark stairwell of life

I could look at a fat lady through a
window
I could kiss a pretty girl for grieving
I could run in the night for
courage
I could cry at the crows for
leaving.

—Michael Upton

Animal Man

Amazing, coruscating
chaos animal man
Kept aflame by blood
brought together most
Beautiful by spirit
honed down
To a fine edge
of near hysteria
By so-called society
and its disinterest

—Michael Upton

con(serv/vers)ation in the '60's

Child, child, look (a bird).
There, no, there. Among the power lines?
The trees! What Trees?
I don't see anything. There! Where?
South Again. Oh, it must've gone
to Cuba.

—Ron Silliman

These Trees Have Simple Names

These trees have simple names:
oak, elm, japanese plum.

My great-uncle, who helped to start
the unions, had another

for that deep purple fruit
that follows its pink-white buds.

“Nigger-apples,” he’d laugh
& bite hard into one, juice exploding

over his unshaved chin.
The black boys who pose with me

in the pool hall, backs arched,
Pall Malls hanging, eyes half-shut,

have a name for him, my mother’s mother’s brother,
which they mutter after a scratch,

& even a name for me, with my blond hair,
that is whispered only at night, alone.

—Ron Silliman

The Giant

Never turn
inward, yr eyes to find
the giant who
hides laughing at
our mincing

- steps

daring -
us to confront
our holy grave
yard of broken
- wings

and -

Never forget that
we will desecrate
the dreams
of the living with
- such

terror -

only the laughter, of
a sleeping giant, will
remain to haunt
the insane who hold

flowers with
wilted hands

—Martin P. Abramson

Touch

You stayed in
my hand on
your thigh

- today

I said it
all, With touch

no waiting

what you cd
not do, I did

- now



Martin P. Abramson

it is
much easier for us

to walk along
and talk about
different things, then
we used to

—Martin P. Abramson

A Walk

Down this street
the wrong way
bounce
off evening rush/
faces

Past trees fucking
in the wind
Past people
in the wind

Up this street
to the school

Hey is that
a boy or a girl
It looks like a boy
but..

they haven't been told

no boys
no girls

only energy



Richard Krech

flashing back
& forth

a joke of
some body
more roles
to confuse
simple-minded
folk
& watch out
even more
for adolescence
myths &
adult
 hood
 or
head
 trips

it is all a trap

beware of mother's cookies, children

Across this street

now
 my toes are tired

27.5 organisms
per city block

It is almost
too much -

walking

—Patricia Parker

The Inconstancy of Beauty

All these days were strong days,
strong like hemp, like silk
and as clear as lakes.
You came to me in the nights
but it is the days I remember.
The nights have become days,

There was a mountain air,
there the gaiety of festivals,
the stillness of moonlight and solitude.
We watched as the goats encircled
the house, one step, then another. In those days
we almost seemed to share their unconcern.
They had all I could ever have wanted in them.

When I try to conjure you, what comes up?
That solitary browning cornstalk, bent but
refusing to budge — swayback, but tassels streaming.
There were moments when I feared you would fly.
I held on, pushing no more than I could help,
happy for once just to be there.

I suddenly cannot find my stomach,
strain to see, through the mist that has come
(which has none the less some day in it).
I wish now, to be true to that which was.
Can only turn to whatever comes, & hope beyond hope
for some measure of that simplicity again.

Such days, such days, such days,
I have never seen their like, before or since.
It was, perhaps, just that sheer clarity,
that utter simplicity, that pool-like purity
that was the then unmarked sign
they would not stay that way forever
(though a small spell makes a long forever).

Surely the rains

If not the deluge

Must always come...

—Norm Moser

To and For Sharon

Ah if the day is as long
as the night / then equally
the night will grow short
and the day grow wide
the river will glow by
night and sound by day/
Or the moon establish
lovers / in the night
the trees ashake/the
grasses low/and
lovers even in among
the grasses /deep deep
at night in day of
themselves /deep deep
and after the flowing
to hold and sleep
sleep with the sun coming
up among and in
in /up to the new flow
the deep deep the deep

—Doug Palmer

i looked up

i looked up
saw those horror eyes again
flashing red doom warnings
& they said
in my head
“just a reminder

I listened
to the roaring screaming din
pass by
my sky
shouting warnings
“just a reminder

I sat up stood walked ran hid
but the voices
the eyes
and the messages

followed after and preceded me
on the walls
from the windows

branded even on my head
in blood
the warning
“just a reminder (only 168 more shopping days till CHRISTmas

—john thomson



John Thomson

Capricorn Moon

for Marion Brown's Music

when words are said they become

at that instant realities

intwined with that which we thought real.

(it is not the cold that causes the

shudder

but fear)

the real lives only words die.

Say softly G A R V E Y and it grows

right there in the snow.

Say A R K E S T R A and the SUN is

BLACK.

REVOLUTION.

(still you will not come)

—De Leon Harrison

a book entitled

when you die we will plant you beneath the magic mushrooms.
they will grow lush and perfect. in a night with a full moon
you shall hear them cry out to be gathered:

eebee
eebee
ooooo

eebee
eebee
ooooo

Listen!

they approach...

Prepare the Jell-O!
Light the sofa

—Richard Denner

The Riot Act

for Khoi Phuc

about the next timr
I almost get runover
by a cadillac in the
cross walk
5,000 dollars worth of tim
wld print a lot of poems
henry fords the name on
the only american revolution



Al Young

still going around
the mummy behind
the wheel
 body by fisher

come see
come saw
we will all say when
americans finally realize
they deserve each other
let there be no more
attempted intercourse with the dead
berkeley babble on
rubin raps for a yipee circus
we will survive bobby
 who
its all politics
they lie
the greatest sho on earth
the plague is back in town
to render them
hi octane
 natural gas

becker showed up in the city
with me and all the other
farmers
the american migration
stopped in both directions
the frontier thesis
is a closed book
maybe u'll be back
in china
before
 urban renewal

at 10:00 oclock some morning cop
will bum somebody else's trip
and get shot down

one nation
under seige
there's gold in them thar hills
for those of u who
make it
 1969ers

I shda been a gentle man
I shda known etc
the registered and elligible
and even those prevented
vote
for something else
I've stopped pretending
to the throne
the people are the people
their function is to lay
off us
and give us all the bread we need

tell them how and turn
into the rainbow
hail and
 farewell

—Charles Potts

for wild pigs

“Will he be able to find his
body, now that they moved it?”

hunters camp on skidders ridge
got no water
just got rye whiskey when hunters there

half mile



Charles Potts

north at apple tree gap they left
12 guage shells cork-
screwed in sunlight on
manzanita.

they say some doctor
panicked in first snow, abandoned
30.06 rifle & good scope too up
on that ridge.

“gonna find it when it gets to be open
season on niggers and
animals,” monterey county sheriffs
deputy bob larsen

and then this animal who was high on
pot or lsd or
something, threw away his gear and
wandered off in the snow
over pine ridge. had to shovel him
into a sack to bring him home
6 weeks later

—John Oliver Simon

The Cities are Washed into Time

the cities are washed into time
the riders begin
to reclaim the territory
block by block,

in a shadow of myself
I pass thru matching
pigs boudoirs with barbed wire & crocodiles
eating each other under the pale skin
of a violet lagoon

I was there
wandered into the next room
and you didn't know I'd even been born
hands still
tied behind my back

found a dead moth in the
pages of lamentations

being american we were
born without this knowledge.

—John Oliver Simon

Marriage
for Hilary

I trace your lip

alone

in the quiet

crystal glasses unused
smiling engraved faces

not there

just the quiet

and a ring that fits

exactly

—Gene Fowler



Hilary Ayer Fowler

from **The Kingdom of Apgar**

I was born in the year 1599. Paperhorns
boomed longer than flagshadows
flipped the courtyard stones.
Stand and cheer
Welcome the heir with the hairswish of a summer day
 child
 man
A mounted soldier rides past the wild dogs
crouched in the fog-wetted dunegrass. Follow
the dunes south
sail every sea, and where is my kingdom now
now that I am dying?
Spain 1620
I dream of who I was and who I am.

I discovered your delight secrets for the first time
on a junebuggy romp across the black moors
and barely walls of stone from the plowed fields.
To savor your uncarefully windkept hair
 I let you outrun me
 you let me catch you
 sail your pink sea without destination
In those later winter evenings unnoticed by you
I intently listened to the tuneless hum
you fantasyed in remote attention
facing the glowing heaped coals of the old fire
waiting for the new wood
to burst new heat nearer your skirts lifted
to warm our feast
snowflakes disappearing into your hair.
 later
I uncorked the wine to pour at your feet
in a humble gesture to your fertile generosity red
to enhance your whiteness
to rest and cool our passion. a cordial ruby stream
to sooth the dryness and wash down
our tencourse spent contentment

a magic potion to lubricate our balance of power.
What time is the world?

the january war
year of forty-three messiahs dying
backyards empty
diningroom tables vital phases of the war effort
a no father picture of daddy nationwide favorite
a camel a soldier Grant
Wood is dead
smiling baby will see sixty-three a better world
postwar plastic in the american way

the marriage of the poor people was consummated
on a haystack, she was
entered from every side by a rough-driving locomotive
that taught her to bear the lumber-country trade,
till, finally, a weary wisp in a new blue
pinafore fell screaming from the concrete pinnacle
erected two hundred feet
higher than the surrounding treehills.

a dedication to commotion
a construction of despair

a gray pencil of mysterious origin serving those
who subscribe by a nightly
rate. The night wait is long
and full of falling people.

—Jefferson D. Hils

from **EXTREME UNCTION, Part One**

My United States of America died of a broken heart
on the lonesome railroad tracks
just outside San Miguel Allende, Old Mexico
My United States took ship to Europe
and sends coded love messages from Istanbul
My United States is a pacifist archangel
in exile hiding from two-faced demons
of the ten-sided asshole Mammon
My United States has been put on trial
for uncontrollable dreams and
living justice outside the law, just a man
My United States is as innocent as
you, my friend, are innocent as the winos are innocent
And in your defense the birth wet infant howls
as he enters the world with a resounding slap
Ladies and Gentlemen of the jury your honor
I call you not judges for fear I judge
I call you the soapy hands of Pontius Pilate
I call you an eagle with a broken wing
I call you thumbs down coliseum of Rome
I call you Salome the head-shrinking policeman's wife
We need no more religions, we need more visions
We need not more politics but rather more crayons
It's all about God or fucking and it's a thin line
But if it sounds like something you
heard before it's because it is
and it's still all true, O my brothers.

—Andy Clausen

SAN FRANCISCO '65

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N
A
P
S
E

ROBERT DUNCAN
PHILIP WHALEN
GARY SNYDER
JAMES SCHEVILLE
JOANNE KYGER
RICHARD DUERDEN
GEORGE HICHCOCK
LEW WELCH
LEONORE KANDEL
JAMES BROUGHTON
GEORGE STANLEY
RON LOEWINSOHN
DAVID MELTZER
ROBERT PETERSON
ROBIN LINNETT
GENE FOWLER
LUIS GARCIA
MIKE HANNON
CLEMENS STARCK
GENE ANDERSON
D.R. HAZELTON
DAVID HOAG
EILEEN ADAMS
DOUG PALMER
LAURA DUNLAP
JIM THURBER
JULIE BELLOC

50¢

JULIE BELLOC

A BASEBALL
IS AS HAPPY AS
A CURTAIN IF
THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT (LIFE TO BE)
(AND I WROTE.WITH.LOVE)

There was an empty winebottle sitting
on top of
the winnie-the-pooh book
and dripdrop waterfaucet in a cold sink,
hostile night air with arrogance
drifted in
beyond the ConFines of
flesh-paint-peeled window frame.
Smokestacks of a city outside that
personified themselves when I looked
and thought
they're laughing at humanity by
pretending they can work from eight to
five and do the nightshift too....
I might say
there's a neon sign outside blinking
through the frosted up window like
a headache insolent insistence of
squeezing through the skullpane
into my brainroom.
Three hours ago
there was hot water in the pot and
my coffee tasted sweet
but that's a lousy line unless you
know i would rather have
been drinking tea.....
The knuckles and the cracks of
my nighttime withered hands softly
and silently
over my forehead question and
down over a cheek
(and i wonder if anybody else ever
wondered if maybe yes, a cheek
might always be
there in the dark all i have that's
Patient and Loving)
Tomorrow
i'll trade a hairpin

for an earring and hope
that's a new
friendship
and ask only (if even)
that when
my mind invites my body
to rise from the bed
and tiptoe (again maybe)
bare toes footprinting only
warmth
and silence
on the cold floor,
through the sound of waterdrip and
tire splash
 drryly
to the front window where
the paint hasn't peeled and
stand there
in a shadow
 knowing
other people do other things and i'm
the one i've chosen to Be,
 knowing
a ring-around-the-rosy dance
may say
as much
as a thousand of my poems,
If tomorrow i write that
i lived in a dollhouse
and wore a nightgown

and look at you and tell you
i have nothing to say
but to listen
anyway because
you might leave remembering
a fragment of my smile
or look at me back
 unaware that
you understand as much
or as little as I,

then,
then,
and only (if even)
might i ask
that when

you're walking into another day and pass
this window
when the rain
wants in but soon smothers
the sidewalk instead,
You'll look up
and remember
that I lived there.



Algebra

for Luis Garcia

He wrote equations in which clouds
equaled the world,
in which a bird
represented the unknown,
the resolution of which
opened up a great secret.

In his equations were many
missing quantities,
one often had to solve for
two--or more--unknowns.

But he always provided
just enough information
in his inscrutable calculations,
in his notations like a frog's script,
in his numbers trembling
to the left and right of the equals-sign,
as if caught in a tide,

that you could arrive at the answer,
or, at least, arrive at AN answer,
because you heard his numbers calling,
number two with its green tone,
nine was cardinal red,
and if you simply called
his number,
he
was not afraid to
answer.

—*Gail Chiarello*
August 11, 2007

