

Cream of the Crop!
Raised in the Onion Fields
Onion Weeders Turn into Gracetal Dancers
 a favorite attraction of the tourist seeking natural beauty.

July 1977

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POST CARD

La-bas 8
 Box 509
 Hollywood Sta.
 College Park, Md 20742

Dears,
 So here we are! But Gladys is
 already down with another attack
 and with Carl tagging along
 and always saying dirty things
 I don't blame her. Yesterday I
 nipped on his sunglasses and he
 hopping mad. I just told
 he a swim Spool sport!
 tubform! as a mule
 'ng for the seal
 Hagg & Kines, Maryland

P76575



LA-BAS: A NEWSLETTER OF POETRY & POETICS

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*

Poetry:

Daisy Aldan
Jackson Allen
Barry Alpert
Carolyn Canon
Michael Creedon
Dave Evans
Grant Fisher
David Gitin
Jack Grady
Ted Greenwald
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Commentary:

"Two, Real," William J. Higginson (on Phillip Lopate)
"Writing the Line," Ron Silliman (on Ray DiPalma)
Selected New Books

*

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Box 509, Hollywood Station
College Park, Md. 20740

Douglas Messerli, editor

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

OF THE

AMERICAN PEOPLE

FROM THE

EARLIEST PERIODS

TO THE

PRESENT

BY

W. H. CHAPMAN

AND

W. H. CHAPMAN

AND

W. H. CHAPMAN

AND

W. H. CHAPMAN

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W. H. CHAPMAN

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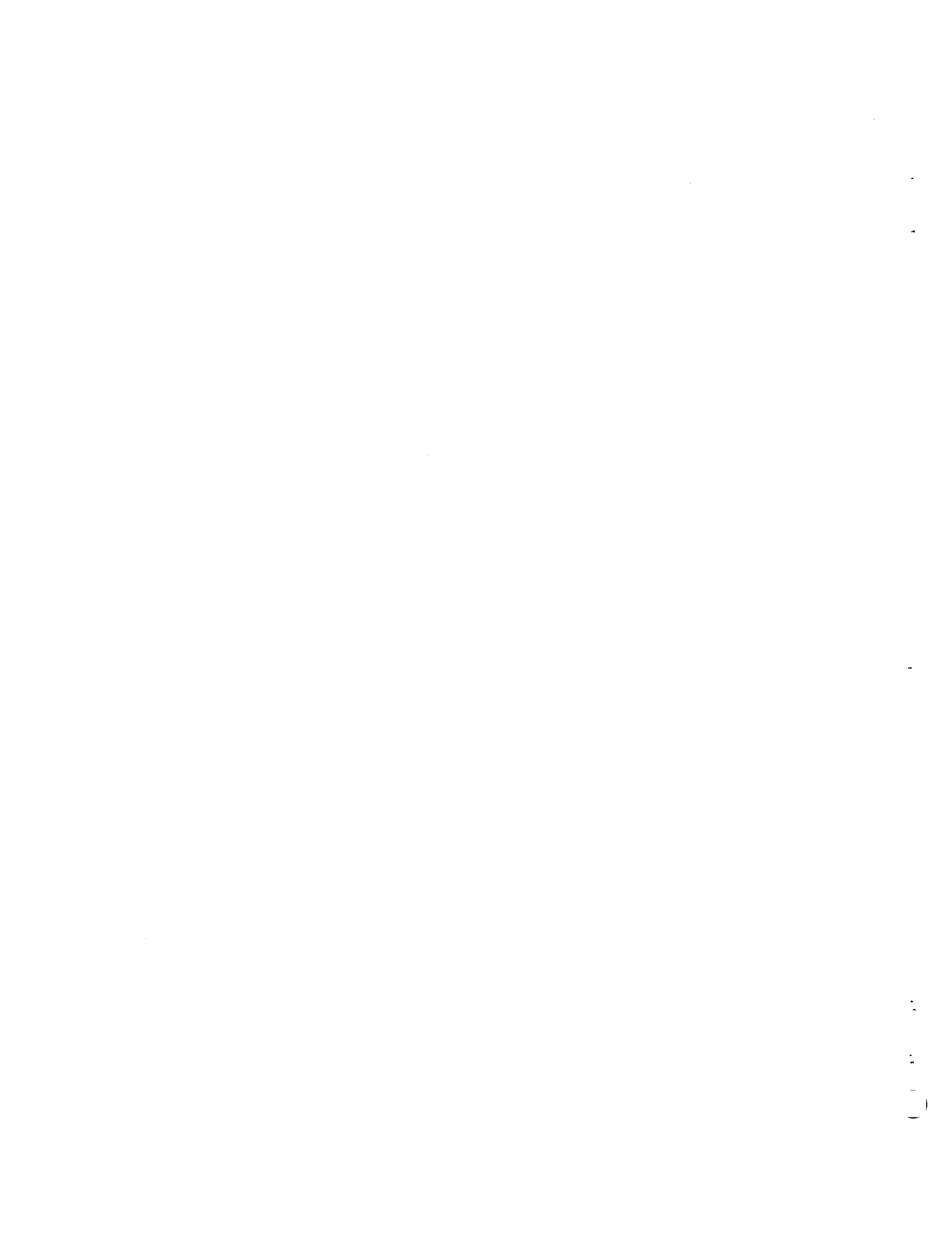
W. H. CHAPMAN

AND

W. H. CHAPMAN

Q
O
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T
R
Y





in seclusion

rising

with marrowless bones of a bird: rising
in light; Ah, golden fish upstreaming
from the spilled blood of the river, to sea;
casting the clangorous phosphorescence
of skeleton, you hover with halo
and horns out of thorns; open palms spending
balm to shoulder blades where the dagger was thrust.

white

Yours not the sepulchre: Seek Him not There!
You wore white: Yours the resplendent dawn fanning
out in a snow silence, in a snow Spring.
Seek him, for He is Here! In perpendicular
crocus lance, in snowdrop, in reversed rainbow,

in flight

in the Flame
in the fLow
in the breath of 'I'
in ascent from the Grave
in the Heart's throb
in the crux of Time and space

in the I of rIising
in the I of whIte
in the I of flIght
in the I of lIght !

-Daisy Aldan

GARDEN VARIETIES cont.]

V

About sex in the garden
said a ripe tomato mounting
the ivy clad podium ahem!

 bromeliads do and bird-
 nest ferns like a cigarette after
 possibly mugwort is the fastest
 comer and the cabbage family

well

foxglove likes a deertongue at the waning
of the moon as much as magnolia likes it hot
and sassy (peppers excell)

 much might be said
said the tomato of the low pain threshold of most
turnips some of whom have been seen sneaking
towards newly composted blackberry
 circumspect.
 members of the species tortulata oblongata
 accomodate the hawthorn mid-winter

said the tomato
pinching a blousy petunia
who'd been compromised by creeping
clemitus earlier in the season

VI

Diagnosis:

 ash more
 ash or bonemeal, something
to ground you grinding out
 the acorns of horticult-
ural insight? arboreal hindsight

& such jealousy ruffles the acorn community
such vying for a kind word

from the holy oaks

-Jackson Allen

CHAIRS

via Brecht (George): "There is so little to do,
and so much time to do it in."

"I think being born is one of the great fictions of modern times,
hence
I allow myself
to reinvent
my birth-place
& time whenever
anyone asks me."

Brecht sits the world down and
of course if the essential part of music is time,
then all things that take place in time
could conceivably be music.

Experiential time can become the perceptual situation
and stimulate the structural faculty
of the time-keeper.

You can't avoid arranging.

9/6-7/74, 6/28-29/75

-Barry Alpert

MORE CHAIRS

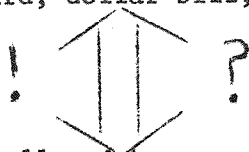
homage à George Brecht

Let's exchange the Arctic ice-pack
for the Antarctic.

Get out the storage trays.

Fill 'em with appropriations:

pocket watch, tennis ball, thermometer, plastic and rubber handballs,
baseball, plastic persimmon, 'Liberty' statuette,
wooden puzzle, tooth brushes, bottle caps, house number,
pencils, preserved worm, pocket mirror, light bulbs,
keys, hardware, coins, photographs, playing cards,
postcard, dollar bill, page from thesaurus . . .



The droll and humorous,
meaning perfectly everything
depending on "the looks".

Imperturbability,
or detached wonderment:
most sensible attitude.

Marcel Duchamp plays chess and
I play pick-up sticks.

ca 9/8/74, 6/29/75

-Barry Alpert

SOUND TRACK

via Ken Jacobs

Exquisite exalted intact material acknowledged commune point.

Amusingly and mysteriously explicit mental tugging cut into volume illusion
as it came scintillatingly out of the camera.

Particularly savoring the amoebic grain pattern and the loop-character,
he most reverently examined
the vivacious doings
of the cine-recordings
and infinitely complex cine-tapestries.

A certain tableau illuminated
the grains! the grains!
Silhouettes rippling past
always poignant because always past illusion.
While the merry touch of syncopation
pulled an eye into shape,
almost perfect lip-synch
loops the loop.

The failure of boredom is that it's never gripping.
There must be some sense of trespass
on film's monumental homogeneity.

7/3/75, 7/19/75, 9/10/75

-Barry Alpert

MATCHING NUDE STATUES:

TENOR'S TONSILS AND HORSE'S HINDQUARTERS COME ALMOST CLOSER THAN YOU'D LIKE THEM, VIEWED THROUGH OUR 2 1/2 POWER GLASSES.

MUSICAL PHONE REST

Plays "Around the World in Eighty Days" when phone receiver's placed on it, to entertain a waiting caller. Dial on base gives time all over the world for long distance calls. Wind up music box needs no batteries. Flying around a small room to touch a cage on the ceiling. People dead and still. A violence within accepted... A villager. A city. I am walking. My leopard runs swiftly, runs to the forest and returns to leap atop a building. A friend walks with me. She is pleased with the leopard. A hawk circles and settles on her hand.

BLACK KNIGHT BELLIES UP TO THE BAR

He takes two steps forward, one to the left, and collapses- into 6 cork-lined coasters for all the rooks at the party. Matte finished black or white knight is 10" when he's got it all together, looks so statuesque you'll keep him ready for battle right out on the coffee table or bar. Like sailors with good sea legs, Alan and Arlo jump and run boxcar to boxcar on a moving train- speeding past the one I stand on. An older man directs boys who erect a guide rail on the slower moving train. I stand swaying- holding a broken rail- wondering how long it takes to be so sure footed.

UNDERHANDED CHESS

A one upmanship handbook of frauds, lures, put offs, come ons, end games, side games, tantrums, other gambits for the crooked rook and the hassled castle. Malicious good humor, in good taste, illustrated. I am captured by soldiers. Unafraid, I offer to cook my captor some fish. He is pleased and I go about the task. In the next room, my father is lying in a basket. A fraternity party goes on in the next room. I ask why he is in the basket. "I am tired," he says.

"JAR OF BEANS" FOILS BURGLARS

No thief would be dumb enough to look in a jar of beans standing right on the pantry shelf, so that's the perfect place to hide extra

[Cont.]

MATCHING NUDE STATUES cont.]

cash or jewelry! Standard pint glass jar of real beans has a secret double wall; inside is your cache for private belongings, so obvious no one will notice it. So you see, a hill of beans does amount to something! Enter a cafeteria where two friends eat. Outside a sign: "HEART OPERATIONS AHEAD." A regatta. The men and women approach the race differently. Naked, they race around in a clockwise motion. The women toward the middle and counterclockwise. Many women beautiful like nymphs of a 1920's calendar picture. Men grab autos from the banks, push them in the lake- drive them until they sink. There is absorbed enthusiasm among the participants.

COMMUTER COFFEE CUP CAN'T SPILL

If you must drink and drive, sip like a baby from a hole in the lid, and you'll be dribble free! Holder attaches securely to dashboard with Velcro, provides a spill-proof caddy for the insulated drinking cup. For coffee or soda in car, boat, truck, plane. A book. I can read it, but not until I can perform tricks- physical tests- in a structure of metal bars.

TALKING TOILET'S IN GOOD TASTE

Pressure on the throne activates a number of witty comments, like, "Hey, I'm working down here" or "Move over, you're blocking the light". Small white plastic battery-run unit just clips on all seats, invisibly. Makes the powder room the center of attraction. I dreamed I had two cats, both black. One of them I thought was evil- sometimes I was sure and tried to wrench the evil out of it. Sometimes I would look at both black cats and not be able to tell them apart. I made a great effort to strangle the evil spirit out of one when I was sure. I may have succeeded, but the cat was smaller then and looked sick. I felt badly at having hurt the cat and asked someone if there really could be evil spirits. He said yes it was very possible. I stopped an old man who would know and asked him if my sunglasses were evil. He looked at them and measured the width of the lenses with the width of my mouth and said, "Perhaps, but be sure to get round glasses next time."

-Carolyn Canon

SEANCE

He wants to see her
He wants to see her alive he wants her
To meet with him she will not be
She will be she will be granted distance she will not
Be followed alive she will be alive wants her
Be followed will not is she
The FBI or anyone she will not be
He says she is not very likely is
Not alive is he says
She is not alive he wants
Her in person alone her he wants her to meet her
Alive he says safe he says secret she will not be
Followed if alive she is he does not believe she is
To an undisclosed place alone with guarantee
Alive he wants her to come he wants
To put his hand in her she is not

The news says the father the mother the news the girl
It was planned from the first it was an accident
it hasnt happened
the pictures the gun the tapes the gun the girl the cold face
the tight lips
the hip the kick would shatter automatic

"It's the work of a taxidermist," Annette said
when she saw the picture.

The news the need the prison vibes the
drifting confusion
let it bleed
Stephen Weed/people in need
High Quality Meat.

He wants to see and talk with her alone
She's not just gone she's gone she's not gone
The sudden strange coffeebreak questions the stuttering
and she and she and they and she and And and And and And
He says he wants a conference in a new Toyota
that nobody knows about or recognizes Oh who knows

I don't want my little girl to go on stage.
We love you Honey.

-Michael Creedon

TOO MUCH FREUD

Coming down the steps from the balcony in the moonlight
I walk out across the pale courtyard (a driveway)
& glance up to the lit windows where old George meditates
& enter the basement to snip a coke I've stashed
in the storage refrigerator -- it's hot & dark.
Dostoevsky gambols with Rokha in my spirits,
turbulence of blood & politics, fevers for continents;
I have always been tormented by innocence in my home.
No nightbird sings -- it's been years
since I heard one -- but 2 small black hounds bark
til they recognize me emerging from the gulp of dark;
& I wave my coke like a bottle of whiskey to greet them
& climb the stairs. Across the balcony & thru
Jack's room & down the hall, my own room
awaits me, my orange serape bed stacked with books
calling for an avalanche I cannot produce.
Years ago, women seemed this way to me: as a kid
fears of impotence made me shudder-- but this
isnt that. That was a glamour I could finally enter & taste;
this swirls around me ineffable in purple, in light, thrills me
without end & with eternal half-satisfactions --
a constant ecstatic ultimatum always half-surrendered.
Flowers on my arms, lightning on the moors, dull coals
of aged satisfaction I seldom reach -- perhaps
this is that, I don't know (too much Freud!) it
doesn't matter, you're lovely tonight.

Oct 3, 1975

-Michael Creedon

I THINK WE KISS OFF THE NIGHT

I think we rip the paper and go to El Monte
boldly; nothing stops us! Music is the purple crash
of insect air on the windshields: but you're weeping. Oh,
don't. Smoking cigarettes and singing hoarsely,
swigging from private bottles, life blinds not delights
but we are bold and smash days.

You're listening; why do you pay attention,
does this mean I don't get to be Neal Cassady who
just raps endlessly and nobody listens Oh I don't
have the speed anyway and refuse James Dean,
I did it just last night.
I remember my own topless places, so much love
in such confusion I.

The last stanza of the Lucille cycle still burns
for the connection of beginning and end; I'm bored.
Voices all day means eventually total music.
Dagwood asks me if I still have "sex" with "S", and I
can't believe he's serious, as if "sex" were some "thing."
You've stopped crying.

I think we're ripped, the paper blows El Monte
in our faces; nothing touches us! Music crashes
the metal of the night, we fly in solid flame
against the grapevine and return from private bottles
and you cry for a return to delight and I
kiss off the night

-Michael Creedon

PLAYING A CONGA

Time makes no excuses for the minutes
wasted by idiots who run around and
snap photographs of monuments
which are here but for a short time.
Dropping a pebble into the Grand Canyon
I fell a few thousand feet in a
dream seance with the blue cow
speaking French, "Pourquoi tremblait-il?"
Rue delaware, the state which started
the nation but refused to progress.
Spit. Undoing her dress like peeling
a banana that has become rotten
with age. I'll be thirty in October.
And they say, "Adieu."

-Dave Evans

WAITING FOR 2 O'CLOCK

The mute who only thought in
Greek visited Rome thinking
of meeting Aristotle on the road to
Thebes. Alas, alak the mute
only had intercourse with a
prostitute in the hell of Newark,
New Jersey, gray stench walls
returning with Dante watching
wide world of sports with Curt
the cowboy. Pissing in the urinal
on Rue Montmartre, the mute now
named only. Died.

-Dave Evans

CRYPTIC LIFE

Spaces between words and letters juxtaposed
In an order which hints at my
Raison d'être.

The secret is there, only to discover
Which letter is which.

Which word or day has meaning
In relation to other words or days.
Is tomorrow today? Is Darwin
A degree?

Questions like mortar I slab between
The bricks of my senses
Only to have a counter-revolutionary
Write slogans on the wall of my
Mind.

"Go to hell Fidel!" Jamaican logic
In the Western hemisphere of time.
Ocean breakers caress my eyebrows
In a furrow which has me question
Every moment, the meaning
The meaning. Of every moment.
Telephone conversations become epics of
Mystery. "Why did you call?" I want
To ask. "Why me?"

Newspaper headlines: Navy sea lifts
Americans from Lebanon" indicates
The answer may be in Beirut. (Bā rōōt)
"A seaport in and the capital of
Lebanon."

My mind cannot comprehend the
Puzzle. I quickly inscribe a letter
To Sartre with a one word message: "Why?"
But receive no answer,
Save a magazine clipping indicating
That Jean-Paul is blind. Existence
Is blind.

The words run together like an e.e. poem
wheredidigowrong ?

Poetry, then, is the puzzle of existence.

I, the poet
Am the key to
"Raison!"

I, the poet
Am

I . . .

PHOEBUS: apollo as the sun god

Ancient words have more flavor than present tense thoughts about
A suburb being destroyed by some freeway off-ramp.
Man in nature has poisoned the being and sense of existence
As a Philoctetes arrow to Paris
Trojan War tragedy.
Dear Phoebe,

Pray to the moon for me. Direct the tides in my
Favor. Be a goddess of poets as well as mystics who see
Power in the pretence of eternal philogyny.

Your lover in sin

I dissolve into the sky like a wisp of smoke rising above
Mountains, plains, stratosphere to dizzying heights where
Air meets space
Dreams meet reality
And the shopping list, basketball games, TV dinners and
The nation-state known as 'America' ceases to exist.

Aristotle knew I was a philhellene from the gentle swagger
In my steps. His warm brown eyes sought solace
In my smile, yet there was none yet to give.
"What do you call this place?" he asked in a tone of a
Child requesting a favor as a promise.
Delmarva was the answer. I hoped he would not ask the
Time.

A time ago (1968) I attempted to arrive in Athens via
Moterscooter. A young Ulysses whose chariot made it only to
Milano, and crashed there in the streets, tripped by the
God Henry Ford. I lay in the Hotel with only a lightbulb
Above the bed to pray to
I cried.

I keep searching for the mad scriptwriter who continues my
Peril and moves my soul from place to place with the
Measured tones and bells which drives us all
Mad.

Flickering smiles offer only that which is unaffordable
In moonbeams of Phoebe I grope for that which is generically
Called sex. My penis shakes the world as the
Sun
Replaces my brain.

-Dave Evans

SALT

under the knife
of love's doubt
poems writhe

thunder settles
where you go
and cannot stay

a sky turns pale
where you are
I think of rain & stone

your eyes look back
to the sun
there night is

Aug 4 1976
-Grant Fisher

HOLST

for John Herbert McDowell

Friday afternoon. Angelic
choirs amid traffic
& jack-hammer clatter
praise an ancient god
nobody knows in waves
of glistening light more
air than water. Their
golden robes their voices
of ruby amethyst & emerald
on tape, tape that runs out
while finally sun-lit
day rattles & hustles on.

2/27/76

-Grant Fisher

1836 (Eighteen Thirty-six)

On a line on a wall twelve
poets are shot.

Their shirts dry.

Casually, elm leaves flutter by,
stiff
as a ten-year-old winter

or a river that abandoned Peru two weeks
after Spain had been delivered the compass.

That wall is a throne, not arbitrarily the,
on account of the dead presences there;
the room is kept full of live wagers,
in scale, I might add,
with all candles burning.

March 11, 1976

-Grant Fisher

MILES BEYOND

lucid in ecstasy

cool

riddle can is

be as only

another's other?

-David Gitin

ANOTHER SONG FOR MARIA

prismatic
bearing

consonant
with the rhyme

of growing

together
dazzled

we make it

-David Gitin

HORIZON (#2)

for Michael Palmer

I do not know where I am he said
walking toward the horizon

he was walking upon the horizon
another saw

and a third saw these two
bisecting a line leading to the horizon

which was a line
imagined as final and so unseen

-David Gitin

LOVE YOU

more, certainly,
certainty

the more I
you (you and

I) love

-David Gitin

PACIFIC GROVE

Not one word. Nor many. Not any.
No body. No breeze.
A torque where the spirit eye (I) (whatever)
demands routines of alliance or the defiant
fuck the past! Karma doubling
as the destroyer underlines rescues
the music of life. That would
keeps breaking as possible restorer
one wave upon another a single
if not particular or singular
motion. Dark, Mr. D? Hell
yes but night is no excuse
except to bring on the breeze
pathetic fallacy (sound the words
measure the pity). Introducing
piety. No other leverage
on concern unless it's my ass
getting colder on this rock
where fear is the flipside of desire
for the one who stole fire. Man
burning. Hope. Yearning. That German
ancestor dunked me in striving
and I will sit here until I drown
dumb speechless without a word
a thousand redundancies (these waves)
until I drown

-David Gitin

DREAM OF TIBET

for Jeffrey Hopkins

We are all in Fenway Park, ordinarily the home of the Boston Red Sox, but now somehow transplanted to Tibet, perhaps in Lhasa. We are all ready to play baseball: this is the nightcap of a Day-Night Doubleheader. My umpire's uniform is lotus-red & skyblue. I am positioned behind the pitcher's mound, slightly off line, toward the third base side of the infield. Also seem to be the only one, so I better remember to pay attention.

(it's after sunset, and the lights of the CITGO service station stand out sharply against the dark Himalayas beyond the left-field wall, beyond Kenmore Square. . .)

Batting practice is over, & we are in the middle of the game: the attendance figures are announced over the loudspeaker: 41,093 (over five-thousand more than the usual seating capacity) the whole world is here waiting, my adrenalin tells me. . . It is Yogi's Night, & each holy man has been given a free baseball. They meditate by fingering the baseball, which has 108 regulation stitches in a continuous loop, just like their rosaries: one for each book of the Buddhist Scriptures. There are also many nuns here. They have been given free paper plates. Cardinal Cushing is also in the house.

The Reason the game has been held up is because 3 tricky Tibetans have stolen 3rd base. They have just been apprehended, 3rd base is re-secured, & they are released. PLAY BALL, I shout. . . and find that. . . it is now the bottom of the 9th inning, a tense situation: the buzzing of the crowd is pierced by the crackling announcer:

Your attention, please, ladies & gentlemen,
now coming to bat, Number Fourteen, the Dalai Lama

He emerges from the dugout, wearing brightly colored robes, sunglasses, and a huge grin. He's the essence of compassion. The cleats of his sandals dig into the soft sand around home plate, & the outfielders go into the Lama Shift, backing out towards the wall, the "Big Green Monster". The right-fielder flips his sunglasses down, and leans against a bright billboard that says

JOIN THE VOID & SEE THE WORLD

another says

OM MANI PADME HUM

[Cont.]

DREAM OF TIBET cont.]

the public address system says:

#14, Tenzin Gyatsho!!

He is a switch-hitter, batting left-handed this time. He draws a mandala in the dirt with his Louisville Slugger.

DALAI LAMA: (erasing mandala with foot)

All conditioned things are impermanent.

CATCHER: (crouching) Eat shit.

DALAI LAMA: (laughing) YOU eat shit.

There is another shout to play ball. The pitcher, wearing a grey People's Uniform & a hat he has taken a fancy to, squints at his catcher's signals. He nods. His Holiness stands relaxed & poised, waiting. The bat meets the pitched ball, a Spalding, and sends it flying over the right-field bleachers, over Kenmore Square, over Mt. Meru. Everyone is laughing & crying for joy, and pours out onto the field.

-Jack Grady

COLLECTED WORKS

People seem to be getting up
From the middle of nowhere
Garbage grinding
No birds singing, probably too cold
Although if I were a bird
Sing like crazy keep warm
Everything in place, especially brain,
For work and nightmare of work
Hands ready
Eyes ready to work
Ears working already
Nose working one nostril at a time
No one up here yet to talk to so tongue still
I'll talk to myself
Up, tongue Get to Work
Elbows working at edge of desk
Palms cradle chin
Brain working slowly
Lungs work on a cigaret
Belly working on coffee
Feet working in sneakers on 3-day old socks
Chin works on a shave

[Cont.]

COLLECTED WORKS cont.]

Palms cradle chin, stroking Hmm

Brain works on a tonsil of thought

Working into another thought

An idea's digging up the street

The idea of the street!

A whistle works somewhere

Over there near the water

A match works light a cigaret

Pen works on paper

Pen working on paper

Words in mind

Working via brain via dream

Through rays and beams of mental frames

Moves the hand around

Working up again

Through whatever vertical levels exist

Slant across horizontals

Work into notes

Work out a song

Work a song out the lips

Working on filter

Work the filter into a butt

Into the present

Working the present into the future

[Cont.]

COLLECTED WORKS cont.]

Work teeth

Working teeth

Work teeth into a grin

Work a grin into a greeting

A word or two works

Hands moves from chin

-Ted Greenwald

THE TABLE

Sitting around the table

Sun coming in window

Laughing at the dumbest things

Because they're pretty funny

You're sitting across from me

Pretty and funny

Which means beautiful

With a capital B

And old friend

We wanted are glad to see sits

Between us at your right

THE TABLE cont.]

When you turn in the light
Your skin has a golden fuzz
Of hairs makes me
Love your lips
Mainly because they're
Part of your face
Pretty and funny framed
In the window behind you
Clouds sitting
Flat on your head
Eyes framed in brown glasses
While you pick your head
With your right hand
Hold each hair up
One at a time
For its own moment
In the lucky sun

-Ted Greenwald

SHE WORE

She wore
A sky blue outfit
That reflected another time
She was
The girl with
Red hair
Blue eyes
And white tender skin
The senses
Were a face
Sponged with cold water
And toweled
By the memory
She spoke to
The boy's sense of intuition
Before
Experience taught him
To live with
Happiness and comfort
The day and night
Of the social order
In which
He found himself
And never found her

-Ted Greenwald

POLITICO

The days walk out on me; I have an apparent next to build.
I am what the sidewalk tells the curb.
I've noticed the way I smile at them in secrecy, the way
I hide the cookies in the elastic of my underwear.
I sense three fingers of another's hand in a glass gown;
the evening has staggered over to the cross of tree and star-
light.

A man, much older than I, has seen the land become calloused--
stakes and highwires to avoid. We meet each other before
the late news. I am about to continue what he has ended--
this silent glove in another's hand wearing a grass skirt;
the sundown on the subway is invisible and so are the graves.
A woman much lighter than I, has been admitted to the area.
She has the right costume for dinner, and I do not.
I am not so offended as I should be; I am more offended
everytime she speaks; soon, I become offended if anyone
speaks; then we leave the party together; soon, we are
alone again, but this time the lights stay on. She sees me
and I see her. We are both the same, but this summer, she
had no electricity in her cabin; we will be needing each other
now; we cling to the towline; she empties her bag; I remove my
wallet; I hate myself more now than I ever have before;
she can see that instantly; something about the sunshine
on her face and shoulders; she is a bra to the others, but
to me. . . .

The same place so many others have seen.
The same place we are allowed to go into.
The small air in the same place.
The window in the corner.
A bottle of soda and a bubbles.
A quiet afternoon with the radio.
She has many ideas.
So do I.
The same air in the same lungs.
The quick cross and the same holes.
The smoke filling the same crusts.
Passion, a lunch pail, the other guests.
A song that is diamond, a rude friend.
The larvae of other jungles.
A wish: a junk of jewels.
The river that he told us of.
A man in the River, talking about the Negroes.
The pain of being spit in your face; a river, I supposed

[Cont.]

POLITICO cont.]

At twelve o'clock we heard the news:
Gordon's is the best gin for non-drinkers to drink.
We swallowed all we could; much cheaper than reading labels.
It passed quickly, mouths so dry, adding the bill up again and...
So much for Italy. Will I ever see her again?
Is she the one that said, "What is the cure for this?"
Is the best she could do for you some courage, or another to share
the apartment with. When it gets you down, do you let it go?

Sally had her own place in the Village
She sold costume jewelry.
It was rough, but it was all I could afford.
The antlers hung on a short hook.
We went to the movies a lot.
She had a terrible cold throughout the call.
What is the higher aspect of talking to anyone about?
Why don't you give her a call?
Why don't you get the other and beat the hell out of me?
Who is the other one you want?
Why do you want anyone anyway?

What can anyone do to me anyway?
What is anyone to me anyhow?

Paula had on toreador pants and a red bra.
Her mettle was high. She had another problem besides me.
She had a murphy bed in the ceiling it was raining and it
dripped and spilled the ink I was writing the letter with
I cried all the way home to tell you the real truth was painful
but I did it instead of telling you my truth, which wasn't
the real truth when I wanted to make something happen that
couldn't happen anyhow.

Why do we sit and talk like this when there's work to be done.
This is the worst kind of day; the sky is clear and then
all of a sudden someone is talking on the telephone from Florida
and wants to know if he can borrow some cash for the real big
one. we wonder about the end of the summer. . . .
fishing boats and small craft warnings. . . . announcements about
the beginnings and ends of thoughts.

[Cont.]

POLITICO cont.]

Maybe I can straighten this thing out.
The foot of the bed is the property of some damned fool in Texas.
The place where she is hiding is in the clue cards.
A man with apoplexy shouldn't be allowed in her unless
accompanied by light, in the guise of sense.
I hope I haven't been too long.
I want to be even longer, but there's not much room in the
ornate door clappers or the small sitting room in the
corner, where the papers are stacked and stored.
A lip, and the stain of the lips.
A kiss, smack, a pain in the chest, the kiss, smash,
a little to the left, above the safe, ten down, to
the side pocket, in the garden, under your nose,
a misty side, like November in the Tropics,
without the penny and two, a bet, the takers,
and the long arms raking snow away from the
orifice.

-Stuart Kaufman

PROEM

The object was an adjective;
this led to disagreement among the sexes;
Time had become that sort of message,
like a note passed onto the laps of little boys
and girls: a plethora of hairlines welded
by a small distance.

I hoped for a drink of water;
my dreams were granted.
My dreams were the ones that went swimming
without feathers: the plumage of finely
spun fire.
As the flames licked the verges off their faces,
arrows faced upwards--the winter rain
then warm.

-Stuart Kaufman

SEARCHLIGHT

The sheer respect of it all;
a providence managed by turning phrases
with wing-nuts.
Here, we make excuses out of anything
that isn't permanent: semi-soft roses,
a sudden beam of daylight, missing letters. . .

Twilight was a very silver kiss--let's start it over!
Then, these focal points of seeing: a humid morning,
nothing about the weather, a higher kind of smell,
then silence.
In brine solution, a power of two is matter;
death is an oily umbrella.

On a leering strait of sound, the whisper is crushed.
Only the sight of shoes rising into cold.
The hair is a muscle of query, like perfume, only stranger--
the missing growth in a sentence of years, a short story
with legs and creeping.

Only the galaxy will feel the effects of the sun,
as it exposes dirt to the sky.
Under the touch is a cloth, like velvet.
All of us--doddering lies, a gull-like wonder, arms and legs,
the slight shudder, a wish the color of straw--desire
in perfect rain.

Beyond the circle of light will be shadow, and the interminable
hum of listening. The soft fields will be startled by the
poke and sway of abandonment, ambling with fear, like
waiting before giving a final decision--none will be needed
or expected.

Locked in amethyst, the cushioned blades of a thought--
blistering starlight overwhelming aeons of numbered rocks.

A fly will be speckled with moonlight like a shell.
Holding the primeval hand of a sequel, she will be like
a woman, a plaintive masterpiece on the morning before
feeling.

[Cont.]

SEARCHLIGHT cont.]

Placed beside them, as seen, something to wrap the hyacinth
in--a skin of leaves.

The bench will be uncovered. The canopy comme il faut.
Filaments of linen woven in a pattern of give and take,
an unguent.

Rehearsing for all this sang-froid, will be the doorman
with shiny leather shoes. He will open the pit.
He will spit and curse as someone in attendance at a wake.

-Stuart Kaufman

ROCKAWAY BEACH
for my father

He was closed down, and I,
deserted, hoping to be discovered
in freedom, like a field before
a beach.

It was the end of the land, for him,
still a monumentous dump and closed
prohibiting everything. For me,
dead and decaying, a lengthy goodbye,
but surely a beginning.

Fortunately,
we rolled our bodies in the blanketed
nights of song, and heard the spinning
tickle of cold water on scintillating sand.

Like a possibility exhausted, the summer
passed, a million reasons to stay.

And the place gets damp,
And I'd rather be in Phoenix,
But that's quite a wind away,
And the sun is warm yet,
And the bayberries brilliant.

I don't trust the way I did,
the older ways or the ways we count.
I pitch about in an aloneness
that only recovers with lots of noise
and a simple way to end.

On a smoothly trimmed lawn
that could never be you
without the madness of marvels,
a folly overindulges itself:
a self so encouragingly whole
it played the whole court in a
game of doubles.

-Stuart Kaufman

WORK ON WHAT HAS BEEN SPOILED

Good friend good heart openings as if I were the only one
yelling has stopped despite the crescendoing heat
that makes the work needs be done even more rapidly
no one wd believe all the skin off my hands the muscles
so hard render my hands paws I paw a little muse
and it is more possible I think than before

a walk down to the bay one of my first inspirations:
beer cans, tires, rocks, connundrums, stuck in the mud
while anise grows in every empty space and that's where
I tried to make love with my cousin no hard feelings but
she did get away and loves me yet like none other
so every time I trample an anise I get an erection

the bruised idea (Cassia) is better generative than used
like a drink our fig tree in front a really hot sun (that sun's
always the same how come we get cold and bad feet) I'm so
white in all blacks and browns (Philipinos) and Tina
has a tiny lamb leg in the oven there will be other things
I rolled over Carmen eating grapefruit and hurt her foot
only because she had her shoes on on and on

I think friend my brother truly we hit on accidentals
that's all there is am thinking of white pepper now
and maybe White Maria a drink you eat with a fork
tapioca, gelatine, eggwhite, white pepper (lots), white currants,
tabasco, angostura, lemon (lots!), garlic and a little salt
top with sour cream and of course a lot of gin...

(after a letter from Ray Foster)

-Mervin Lane

The Carp

Early in the morning
my favorite moment
was visiting the carp.

The fish in the waterfall
has no arms to feel with
no ears to hear with
no way of knowing
what kind of creature it is.

- Japanese saying

In the garden pond
at the State capitol
the carp seem suspended
until you look up.
Then the dark water flashes.

When a past image cuts through
it moves like the carp
in the dark water.

The carp, the light,
the shadow, the water,
motionlessly move.

To look
the carp turns his whole body.

The mind turns in on itself
like the thought of the image
of the carp in the water..

Green water
green carp
green mind.

The carp seems suspended
moving through its medium.
It is not easy to remember
you too are suspended.

-Mervin Lane

HATRACK

once there is a man that can't get his hat on straight.
after he goes, forget it. there's no more stories. and
he doesn't have to rush out of the house either. he could
get carried away in space like firey pieces of cow. i look
at it like this: at least he has a place for it; i could
have started "once there was"... on second thought i'm
not sure i could have said that. anyway he tries to set
the hat straight. anyway that he can, he tries. and even
though sometimes he walks down the street, looking a little
awkward, the vicesquad in his cellar busting mirrors, a
soldier under his clothes, i take his hands and say write
a poem once in a while. keep in touch.

-Rich Murphy

SHARP CURVES

finally, after
the squeaking and screeching,
waring, wrecking all faith
in justice, the mandalas
are being greased,
though the women's fingers
use vitalas.
the square, small and grey,
wedging his way down a century
in his truck, goes flying
off the universal mountain
anyway, but the bad corner
of a guardrail eats its tail
as it jacks to oblivion.

-Rich Murphy

MOTHER FUCKER

which is my lover;
which is my mother:
one has beautiful lines
growing on her face,
the other big baby blue eyes
on her lips.
i fall in thought,
and go to bed with my typewriter.
but that is after
a female creates my penis
out of inspiration.
life, life is a bowl
of ink, a paper doll--
a tab... into b slot... cut here.
o dad.you didn't mention
anything about the words and the deeds.
my heart, hard, number one,
is on a piece of paper.
a girl i know would love it
to write me a note.

-Rich Murphy

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR

you'd do better to learn how
to get along without virginia.
the earth has been stripped,
and sucking on smoke
a long time now. she went,
cues mixed,
up to the moon sometime and said,
"how about my handkerchief."
the miner wasn't such
a bad guy, seldom carried
a pistol, if you want
to get technical.
you see pits are common
right after puberty.
look at it this way:
better to plant a seed
than go without fruit
all together.

-Rich Murphy

Try Dr. R.C. Leggins' Dragon-off antispirit & Night paste,

the new wonder tonic and curative cream for the purge of evil nasties and other ugly frightfuls. Cures hexes completely.

-for Dick and Alison.

The Testimonials

Dr. R.C. Leggins,

I had been troubled by old Scratch for quite some years, nothing shifted him, until your miracle curative paste was recommended to me by a friend. Now I am happy to say I am completely cleared out (after only 500 applications).

I don't know what I'd do without your famous paste; it has been a blessing to me.

Mrs. Cynthia Flutecrate, Sandwich,
Illinois

*

Dr. R.C. Leggins,

I have been taking the Dragon-off tonic and I feel ten times better. My goatee is falling out and my horns are almost gone. I can recommend Dragon-off and Dragon-off Night paste to all suffering with spiritual disease for which it is recommended to cure.

A.G. Manticora, 2 25th St., N. York

*

Dr. Leggins,

I beg to add my humble testimonial to the benefit derived from taking the Dragon-off new wonder tonic. I have been affected with Scitalio snakes of the intestines and horrible voices in the pockets of my best smoking jacket for a great while, I might say years. After taking one bottle of the Dragon-off new wonder tonic I felt great relief.

[Cont.]

Dragon-off cont.]

I am now on my third bottle and with my friends at Alcoholics Anonymous feel like a new man, as well as being cured. I would not be without the Dragon-off new wonder tonic under any circumstances.

Yours very truly,

R.U. Satyr. Salem, Mass.

*

Dr. R.C. Leggins,

In my estimation there is nothing to equal your 'no exorcists needed' Night Paste. I have used it in my family for a long time with the best results. Young Jimmy no longer toasts the whole wheat with his tongue and out Millicent has not spread her dung in a circle on the parlor floor for some time. The Dragon-off Night Paste has cured me of walking over hot coals in my sleep. I cannot recommend it too highly.

-Rev. Abraham Yena, Grayville,
Illinois.

*

Dr. Leggins,

Sir: - I have used your Dragon-off Antispirit and I am happy to say it is the best I ever used for cleansing the hair. I also recommend your clove-free night paste for lifting the face.

Yours, A. Knight, Marenys, Illinois

*

Dragon-Off Tonic Inc:

Gents: - I have been troubled with damp slimey tunnels on the brain for years. I have lately been using the non-drip Night Paste with most gratifying results and am using the 100% proof Dragon-Off Antispirit with it to give it an extra kick. I am no longer troubled with damp slimey tunnels and have moved with my family to a highrise. The inflammation is completely gone.

Yours, Mrs. Eliza Basilisk.

[Cont.]

Dragon-off cont.]

Mrs. LOUISE GARUDA, of St. Alban, Vt., says she was relieved of syrens in the bowels after having suffered deafness a great many years by using the miracle rub Night Paste.

*

Dragon-Off Tonic & Night Paste Inc:

Gents: - Have used your Demons Out Dragon-Off Antispirit, and find it very valuable. So far I have been able to sweat out sixty cubits of gold. There is a very large demand for it here.

Yours, S.D. Paracelsus, Louisville, Ky.

*

D. HYDRUS, of Red Rapids, Kansas, says he was troubled with two rows of calcified yellow teeth in his navel, since he came from the Viet Nam war. He was induced to try the free-from-fluoride Night Paste. He says the cream has done him more good than all the Blue Cross doctors in Kansas and considers it the best remedy he ever used, exceeding all other brands for healthy gums.

*

Dragon-Off Tonic Inc.,

Seven years ago I was attacked by the serpent Dipsa followed by a severe attack of high pitched singing toads with no sheet music, and as a result have suffered for years with a hacking cough, pain under my eyebrows and through my foster grants, also night sweats and chills under my tongue. Sometimes I was very weak, emaciated and thin. I was unable to use my Bank Americard, my appetite was poor, I was buffeted with pain night and day for years. All the doctors in Jackson could do me no good, in fact some of them complained

[Cont.]

Dragon-off cont.]

of the same ailments. I bought all kinds of medicines and none helped me. I was about discouraged and had given up all hopes of being ill before getting well when I saw an advertisement for the half litre Dragon-Off wonder tonic in the bottom of a garbage can on Main Street and bought some. Today, I am a well man.

I recommend it to all those who have been in contact with me during my illness, and am happy to report that the epidemic has subsided.

Ernest Jaculus, Jackson, Minnesota.

*

My mother-in-law, Mrs. Emigramus of La Grange, Indiana, had a peculiar running seps over the right ear that was called by doctors with whom she consulted "The Devil's Spectacle Frame". I requested her to try your super-salve-Night Paste as it has given such great satisfaction in our city. I also purchased a bottle of Dragon-Off wonder tonic and induced her to try it. In just three days there was a marked improvement in her condition, and in two weeks the lobe was cleared completely of the eggs.

*

Dr. R.C. Leggins,

We have over 200 patients in our Asylum and have been using your devils-deliverence, The Dragon-Off Wonder Tonic with wonderful effect. The coven in our left wing is completely closed down, and the ram slaughtered and eaten for lunch. I recommend it to all parents as a great medicine for possessed children and its application upon young tomato plants has produced a bountiful crop of tasteful green fruit.

Mr. C. GRIFFIN, Matron, Chicago Insane
Asylum, Chicago, Illinois.

*

[Cont.]

Dragon-off .cont.]

JAS W. HARPY, Esq. of Oxford, Mass., says: I bought a bottle of your Satan-solvent The Dragon-Off Wonder Tonic and a jar of The Night Paste and have often purchased more at Pay-and-Save Alchemists. I have always found them to give the best of satisfaction. I have told my neighbors all you claim for them is true. I speak after two years experience in the embalming business.

*

The Reverend Mother of the Convent of the Holy Hieroglyphs at Baltic, Conn., writes: - I can truthfully say the nick neutering Night Paste has saved my life. Few women have suffered as I have. At times my habits were so stained even the strongest detergents had little effect. Sometimes my cries were heard by my sisters who frequently complained to the priests at leather-bondage hour. It was dear Sister Salamandra who first introduced me to your wonder tonic and we have used the same empty bottle necks together ever since.

*

-Opal L. Nations

WEATHER

to Elizabeth

Heading thru November Passing Heading deeply
Thru November Under Bridge Under November Bridge
Heading However more Into the road of November

It Still Was Still It was movement Still Under
Bridge November passing November radio Radio
passing thru November the passing Passing Deeply
thru November

How deeply we said in November How deeply sung
was our saying How November Could Sing Us
& Be On Our Way

How the Coming of November the hollow regions
our own Open Mouths How on this road

This Road This road of radio November How we
are steady driving (glad we're not innocent)
On This Still Road This Slow, Steady Road This
movement & this Mode of Passing that has found us
Next to Each Other So deeply, November

-Ron Rector

LOOKS THAT ARE PLANET

"Don't gimme that shit about oneness.
Each person is their own planet."

Morri Solomon

Sweet god

I didn't want you to leave I didn't want
things to seem so separate I couldn't stand
the sight of so many backs turning, so many
affections gone wrong. But you did it sweet
god you did it & so I sat down & wrote this
open mouth, & how it goes

1

In the beginning was Atom & Evening. & they were planets
& they existed simultaneously at a great distance & they
inhabited solid intimacy in space. The air is full
of cubic inches sweet god did you know that?
& that time bends - doesn't it bend sweet god?

Well & so it was. Since then a lot of prices
have been paid (space, private property) & things
have changed

but in the beginning

was Atom & Evening.

They each received a vote,
a plea a prayer & a sense of humor.

Then things began.

They each found themselves
in a body & from those eyes
came their looks They looked

[Cont.]

LOOKS THAT ARE PLANET cont.]

around. Surrounded by air. The air
which was invisible The air
which was intimate with everything

& then a strange thing
happened to intimacy -

the air somehow failed
to connect them.

2

& this scared them (the breath
of choice in all its syllables) & to this day
they are still a bit shook up.
They try to rest from the weird but they can't.
The unconscious gets painted alive Their dreams
see to that & the air keeps them moving -

Their fears are blue ones & these planets
orbit & rub - incredible gravity in the rub
& the longing They sense
their distance & they sob & sometimes
they even get a laugh out of it

but still the planet
still each their own planet
each still in their own looks -

& the water crosses the soil
& the air settles in my invisible mouth
as my greeting to you
crosses the intimate foothold of this property

sweet god

I vote you this blue hello.

[Cont.]

LOOKS THAT ARE PLANET cont.]

3

Sometimes they meet & something
is struck, they like
each other. It then follows
that a motion is made
to close the meeting The slightest
motion.

& the air keeps them moving

& they wonder what comes next, intrigued
by the chemistry
of what comes next.

They reproduce.

4

The air drags itself
through men & through women, with a scrape
of organs. The music is heard but your house
is not here sweet god There is no cathedral here
for these birds to rest in. Their wings
fall & they dream of Quasimodo.

Yet they take it They take it They dance & rub
& they take it & they wait for occasions
to use their aforementioned senses
of humor.

[Cont.]

LOOKS THAT ARE PLANET cont.]

5

It's not the worst form of insomnia that you've left us here in
sweet god It's not the worst Somehow
we have the red wish to return
but we settle
for the blank white of going

You can leave us here with this if you want to
You can leave us here if you want to

We'll keep our distance

This whole saga had great ambitions sweet god
It sought to tell all -

I was doing a drawing & you were in it
You were the line that ran off the page.

-Ron Rector



THE RUSTED CAT

Rubbing ones head against a glassy surface

Thwarted friction
Feline pleasure

But some other fish
Meanders through green dream of pond
Washback effect on slow current of memory
Light bent deep Water
 Last year's recurrent dreams
 Eking out a second run
 Throwing an abrupt flickering shadow
 Over nearly mirrored green
The familiar archetypal Cat
(Cat--Pussy--Woman)
Submerged in archetypal Water
(Ocean--Rain--Tears)

But from what hill do we question
The inevitable circularity
Of certain persons' visits
Of the Moon
Of the dream's punching machine

-J. Reynolds

1917

1918

1919

1920

1921

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1932

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1934

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1937

1938

1939

TWO, REAL

On the cover of Phillip Lopate's The Eyes Don't Always Want to Stay Open a one-eyed mask stares at you (can't be sure of that), beads, various veils, ribbons, and possibly a wig inviting removal--like someone trying to be funny, being a bit gruesome instead. And the poet's persona is a slightly ironic caricature of himself looking on the crazy world of New York's people. The opening poem begins "we who are/ your closest friends" plan your uncertainty, frustration, and discontent, "by neither loving you/ as much as you want/ nor cutting you adrift". The conspiracy includes your analyst, boyfriend, ex-husband, who "have pledged/ to disappoint you/ as long as you need us". This announcement gives you the power to destroy our control over you, yet we note the rare sense of purpose you have brought to our group, and exhort you to "continue to make/ unreasonable/ demands for affection", if not because you are sick, "then for the good of the collective".

Many of the poems in Eyes range from wry to sardonic comments upon the love unrealized or soon to be lost in various relationships. "Snowball Journal" looks into many levels of thought roving through a supposed vacation, how each thing noted touches, some distantly, some intensely, on a quirk of our society, or of ourselves. Throughout, the feeling of abandon, whether in love-making or landscape, is slightly undercut by lines like "soon we'll go back to the car, it's/ getting cold", or "nothing on television". The final irony, after having carried so much of his city mind to the country, the poet returned discovers "how little I've been able to take with me/ back one week in the city".

In these poems you never doubt the accuracy of the eye. Lopate could be a painter. Yet many of the poems play with the failure of sight to wholly satisfy, as in the title poem, where "Titian himself would turn away from Venus/ And walk out for a breath of air/ Pretending to clean his brushes", and again in "Madonna of the Masseuses", where in the sauna "everyone relaxes/ . . . the film critic/ Collects his darkness . . ./ And when no one is looking the knife sharpener/ Fondles his pumice stone with eyes closed". All wait "for your understanding fingers/ To touch us everywhere."

Part two juxtaposes the promised Japanese Fairy Tale, "How the Cloudy Lake was Formed", and seven poems of painful, direct, New York reality. "Cloudy Lake" would do justice to a risqué Lafcadio Hearn; the slightly supernatural tale of delayed love sounds for the first six pages like Arthur Waley translating a shaggy dog story, climaxes in a burst of fornication, and ends in a "natural image" that even Freud couldn't call a cigar.

The final poem in the book, "Satin Doll", shows us something of the

[Cont.]

TWO, REAL cont.]

lives of the children Lopate has worked with since 1969, in the wake for one who "fell off a roof in East Harlem". After some speculation on why George did that, Lopate remembers how

George designs a flag for the revolution
rifles across a field of
Julio Roldan's face

(Roldan had died in "The Tombs".) Lopate takes "some of his classmates on a field trip/ to Gonzalez Funeral Home" as his supervisor worries about them not staying long enough, cutting class. The family retreats as the kids enter, inspect the deceased--a head only half attractive--and make the appropriate observations:

. . . once they put you in there you can't get out
dead people are pathetic, man
dead people are disgusting
they just want attention . . .

and the poet's tongue mixes with the kids',

jive antique waxworks with no sweat
no heart no blackheads no favorite groups no erections
. . .
the motherly white orchids boast to everyone
How gentle! How well-behaved!

Life goes on. Florrie and Mary have become friends on the field trip, and everybody criticizes the mortician for his too-too fakery on the good parts, his failure to fully cover the damaged territory. The coda finds the poet on the street, where "A girl's maxi-coat blows open/ and the wind tickles/ her great meaty leg/ and the last thing I think about is you."

Phillip Lopate is a straight-forward man, after all, and as the book progresses he grows more honest, less willing to cover for himself or the world in constructed ironies, more intent on simply knowing the real ironies within and without, and accepting them. "Satin Doll", specific to one crisis of East Harlem, tells each of us a little more about who we really are.

The movement toward a reality less carefully ironic that grows in The Eyes Don't Always Want to Stay Open comes full in The Daily Round; its

[Cont.]

TWO, REAL cont.]

more prosaic title and cover photo of people eating and talking in a restaurant, the city street outside, announce its intent at a simpler directness. "Indigestible", the opening poem, begins with flat, prosey lines--"A friend called up saying he was in a pre-suicidal mood./ I told him to come over./ I'd pay for the taxi."--that gain their power precisely because of this style, this diction. The two pages that follow take author and reader through a gamut of intense half-perceptions and wide emotional swings, leaving the victim in control of more than himself, and the author musing, "The next day he was still alive./ Still alive." The reader has room for his own bitterness here.

What is sweet? This question quietly asks itself in some of these poems. In "The Dowagers of New York": "Now where? Some coffee,/ a little lunch, a napolean./ She takes her sweet tooth very seriously./ . . . Her wiser sisters have all flown South . . ." And in "Not Sadness Which Is Always There": "Even as I sit with friends in the Hungarian pastry shop/ Dawdling over sweets,/ I am shaken by the urge to run home/ To be alone with it, . . ." The gradually growing awareness that sweets substitute for living, become a place to run to as we run away from our insistent shadows, comes full in a masterpiece of this collection, "Charlotte Russe",

all gauze and veils a trick
 like the obliging women who open
 their dresses to you in dreams
Old whipped cream swindle
 But what's more fun
 than to be taken with your eyes open

Lopate remembers an outwardly successful high school life, full of scholastic excellence, and even "The Chamber of Commerce Award." But his valedictorian's address, the emptiness it is spoken into, sends him to his one true friend-- "Only you, Charlotte/ understood me"-- that same whipped cream swindle.

Another poem on childhood, "Blue Pants", has a perhaps-over-long introduction, but after the first two pages it tightened on my chest with all the old memories of my mother trying to do what I wanted, sometimes against her own better judgment; and me, hating the resultant gift, and my deceit in assuring her that this was what I wanted. For me it was ox-blood-square-toed shoes that went to the back of the closet, and Lopate's blue pants have given me again an assurance of my own parents' love for me, and the deep rightness of many of their own better judgments, which I have lost from time to time. No wonder Lopate is good with children.

[Cont.]

TWO, REAL cont.]

Another section of The Daily Round is titled "The Singles", and contains a number of poems dealing with those who live alone, in their apartments, in their minds. The feeling of almost wanting to burst into tears that many of us have experienced doing it is very quiet, but here, as in "Maybe it's good we only see each other once a week./ But don't stop on that account, keep going." The double entendres are operating at a deeper than verbal level.

A two-page "play", "The Beautiful and the Ugly", centers this group of singles poems, and though it is a mind-play, I would like to see some group improvise it. But only if Lopate himself is around for Act 3: "A beautiful, brilliant, warm-hearted young woman appears. The playwright runs onto the stage and grabs her away, thus ending the play." I have the feeling he's looking too hard for such a woman, but that he deserves her.

The final section of The Daily Round, "Meditations", shows up the one trouble area in this book, a trouble it would have been hard to avoid, writing in such a deliberately prose style. For Lopate, a "meditation" is a ramble. And some rambles never go anywhere. "In the Dentist's Chair" saunters along for over sixty slant-rimed quatrains, and has only eight or a dozen memorable lines, though it at least has some very concrete, specific detail to nail down the positions in its trek. Too, Lopate is so good in a really relaxed free form, one wonders why the bother (and the stiff lines) of constructing loosely rimed stanzas. The other meditations seem much better to me, perhaps because they don't apparently strive for some formal constraint running counter to the conversational tone.

In "The Last Slow Days of Summer" Lopate directly states the risk he takes, speaking of a poem by Delmore Schwartz: "It went on for about twelve pages, but I admired him/ For writing a poem with so little point." Well, O.K., but I still want a point of some kind, thank you. Yet, if some of the lines, and even a couple of poems in The Daily Round strike me as so mundane that they should have been left in the privacy of the poet's notebook, the real achievement here is a direct stare into the mouth of that mundane, the reality which so infrequently finds its way into poems. Those of us who live a good portion of our hours caught up in our own or another's art--or politics, finances, manufacture, science, or personal woe--often fail to note that we really live most of our lives at this, not some exalted level.

"The Truth That Hurts", another meditation and the penultimate poem in the collection, is one of the finest longer poems I've read in a few years. Beginning with the mundane recollections of himself as one of several rather undifferentiated people in college, the editor of the college litmag., the brash opinionated youth, the poem then moves to the present reality, the world in which Lopate is an expert for a fee, an expert always coming up

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against ultimate questions: "They want answers for their lives./ There is nothing I can do." The last section of the five-page poem consists mainly of the words of a woman friend, "my last girlfriend, analyzing our breakup." This device, taking on the personal of the other looking back at yourself, when I introduced it to a class of high school freshmen with Lopate's poem as an example, produced some of the most concentrated and exciting writing I've ever seen happen in a school, and had half of the participants writing dialogue better than that found in most novels. This exercise released qualities of self-examination and truth-telling seldom come across in my four years roaming the schools of New Jersey and other states. No doubt it arose because of the same qualities in the example I gave them. For in his former girlfriend's voice Lopate shows us his own courageous caution, the cautious courage that comes off--to some, but not to her (to him?)--as wisdom: ". . . you qualify everything!/ . . ./ That's how you deaden the truth that hurts."

Lopate has no answers, knows he has none. He has only a huge increasing honesty--"My God, how I love this world" he says in the title, and last poem of The Daily Round. And he has the ability to put that honesty into a simple and revealing language that, like a glass of spring water, hardly seems to be there until you drink it. The Phillip Lopate of The Daily Round is capable of more than the fine, witty conversation of The Eyes Don't Always Want to Stay Open. He is capable of moving me without the built-in drama of a teenager's funeral, or the smart irony of a poet. He could be the thoughtful, human person next door. He could be my friend.

The Eyes Don't Always Want to Stay Open: Poems and a Japanese Fairy Tale by Phillip Lopate. Sun, 456 Riverside Dr., NYC 10027.

Second edition, 1976, \$2.50.

The Daily Round: New Poems by Phillip Lopate. Sun, 1976, \$2.50.

-William J. Higginson

A much briefer version of this essay first appeared in Small Press Review, Jan-Feb 1977.

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WRITING THE LINE

How read this (Marquee: A Score by Ray DiPalma), a book in whose 20-plus pages no more than 4 words--red, yellow, green & blue--occur? The words may be language's richest & most typical products (there is some evidence that sentences, not elemental words, constitute the hypothetical Universal Grammar's essential unit), they are not the whole of language: there is also the line. & has been for longer than we tend to remember--that linearity which we commonly associate with the conventions of print technology existed long before phonetic alphabets, in the age & cultures of the hieroglyph. For several years now, at least one of the three main currents in the work of Ray DiPalma (the others being words as historical entities, a concern he shares with Bruce Andrews & Bob Perelman, & impressions upon paper, print as such, explored thru rubber stamps & invented typographies) has been the writing of the line itself.

Formalist reduction serves a strategic purpose, defining the object which must then be subjected, as per Pound's dictum, to a "direct treatment." But in Marquee: A Score, DiPalma's most fully conceived & executed linear exposition to date, the strategic reduction has already been transformed, extended & elaborated. These are not merely examples of linearity, per se, but the beginning of a writing. As such, Marquee announces itself not as a concretist work (as it would have been had it contented itself with the exemplary), but as language-centered activity.

For writing is the key. How to make of the line as such, that static thing, the possibility of extension, flow & stoppage, which creates within itself the praxis of a movement, from one place to another? DiPalma's solution, imperfectly brilliant, lies in what may be understood by his subtitle, A Score. What in poetry, as distinct from prose, gives rise to the line is exactly that which, in music, makes rhythm--a limit. There can be no line without an end, for it is the end makes the line.

What then, in a nonvocalic linearity, determines, fixes the limit? Quantity, first. That which thru itself causes the line to come into existence in the same instant becomes the initial mark of difference between lines--their size, as determinable as the number of letters, figures, gestures in a sequence. The unit in Marquee is not the key of a typewriter marked off against the page, be it a or 6 or /, but the varying, variable weight of each line's length.

Second, the graphemic. DiPalma recognizes & playfully exploits the siamese relation between line & mark. The lines of the first page are largely cutup strips of wavy, often halved, os mixed with Os. At times

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WRITING THE LINE cont.]

pressed nearly one atop the other, it is impossible to conclusively count the actual number of lines on the page, a thematic declaration: the line is the problem, problematic.

The line thus is twice defined--by weight & glyph. A line of 5 es is not a line of 5 as, their relation is contrary (as 6 es & 4 as likewise form a contradiction). Identity is relative. & out of difference comes motion--the eye moves not across the page, but downward, diacritically. In this sense DiPalma's lines share an important quality with words: each is to be "read" in the gestalt of a single instant.

The page thus becomes a stanza (that word which, in Italian, indicates room, field within fixed closure). With one exception, no two pages in Marquee say the same thing. Each proposes the totality of its differentials in a fundamentally new relation, each predicated on the last, leading to the next. Within this double movement, down the page/across pages, DiPalma inscribes the articulateness of all lines, the line as such. It is a writing whose moment could not have come sooner, transcending & transforming the possibility of concretist poetics while returning it, for the first time (& here is DiPalma's unique contribution), to writing as such, beyond pattern & design.

Like all writing which extends the very borders of what is knowable in poetry, Marquee is not without scars. The publication has three, only one of which is DiPalma's. His is the failure to recognize the closure of the movement in the next-to-last page of its text, where lines connect lines, a layering effect of multiple movements. The last page recalls the first, a superfluous closure, dysfunctional as a coda.

Another is the economically understandable failure to include in the general trade editions the color of the lines which connect lines on the next-to-last page, somewhat muting its impact. The third is the inclusion of the afterword by Steve McCaffery. Afterwords are always defensive gestures & McCaffery's, tho generally correct, is too long & a bit too glib to really serve the text--it would have been better published as a review.

But the very fact of flaws--especially the first two--signals the strength of Marquee. DiPalma has accomplished what no person before him has, a literal writing of the line, revealing motion in what was previously thought static, & has done so clearly & intelligently enough to provide the very grounds from which to critique his effort. It's an achievement of a high order.

Marquee: A Score, by Ray DiPalma. Asylum's Press, 464 Amsterdam Ave., #4R, NYC 10024, no price listed. Afterword by Steve McCaffery

-Ron Silliman

SUGGESTED NEW BOOKS:

- Dennis Boyles. Maxine's Flattery (Dryad Press).
Ray DiPalma. Marquee: A Score (Asylum's Press).
Gerard Malanga. Ten Years After (Black Sparrow Press).
Harold Norse. Carnivorous Saint: Gay Poems 1941-1976 (Gay Sunshine Press).
Frank O'Hara. Early Writing, ed. by Donald Allen (Grey Fox Press).
_____. Poems Retrieved, ed. by Donald Allen (Grey Fox Press).
James Schuyler. The Home Book; Prose and Poems, 1951-1970 (Z Press).
Gilbert Sorrentino. White Sail (Black Sparrow Press).
Anne Waldman. Journals & Dreams (Stonehill).

SOME SUGGESTED NEW MAGAZINES:

- AIEEE 5/6, ed. by Jack Grady & Orlan Cannon [work by Paul Grillo, Benjamin Peret, Dan Raphael, Opal L. Nations, Francisco Aguero, Phil Trumbo, Carolyn Canon & others].
CAVEMAN (June 13, 1977), ed. by Simon Schuchat [work by Steve Levine, Lewis Warsh, Tom Savage, Ed Friedman, Jim Brodey, Ted Berrigan & Ron Padgett, Michael McClure, Ted Greenwald & Bob Rosenthal].
_____. (July 13, 1977), ed. by Simon Schuchat [work by Steve Levine, Bob Rosenthal, Philip Whalen, Rochelle Kraut].
FLOATING ISLAND II, ed. by Michael Sykes [work by Gino Clays Sky, Bobbie Louise Hawkins, Joanne Kyger, Robert Bly, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, A.D. Winans, Douglas Blazek, Aram Saroyan, Christine Zawadwisky, Michael Wolfe & others].
GRAVIDA 12, ed. by Lynne Savitt [work by Andrei Codrescu, Douglas Blazek, Diane Wakoski, Michael Benedikt, Guy Beining & others].
ONLY PROSE (July 1977), ed. by Perrault/Weinstein [work by Jeff Weinstein, Hannah Weiner, Melvyn Frelicher, & John Perrault].
THIS 8, ed. by Barrett Watten [work by Bob Perelman, Clark Coolidge, Lyn Hejinian, Michael Palmer, Bruce Andrews, Jim Rosenberg, Barrett Watten, Robert Grenier, Bernadette Mayer, Steve Benson, Kit Robinson, Peter Seaton, Ted Greenwald, Alan Davies & Bill Berkson].

Some of the above will be reviewed in forthcoming issues of La-bas.

