

ALL THAT HEAVEN ALLOWS: PARADISE IN THE TRENCHES

PARADISE

by Ron Silliman
Burning Deck
Providence, Rhode Island
63 Pages \$7.00

The trench war in poetry continues with no end in sight. First it was Ezra Pound battling the cornball Victorian parlour poets, then Dr. Williams and his staff members Stevens, Zukofsky and Moore accepting field commands. Before Williams died of exhaustion, he lived to see that his illegitimate sons from his liason with Pound; Ginsberg, O'Hara and Olson, had wandered well into no-man's land, their enemy, the son of their father's enemy, Robert Lowell. Lowell led a bloodthirsty host, armed with M.F.A.s and middle class manners. The anarchist guerilla Rexroth dubbed them, "cornbelt metaphysicians."

Generals Olson and Ginsberg turned Lowell's hordes back into the confines of the academies. A truce was signed between the raw and the cooked. An uneasy peace existed until the early 70's when a new threat emerged from San Francisco, New York and Washington D.C. They declared the victorious anti-academics had become exhausted old coots and their many children, imbeciles. The work seemed strange, discontinuous and seemingly non-referential and it was dubbed "Language Poetry" and the trenches filled again with poets.

Ron Silliman is identified in many reader's minds as one of the most articulate spokespersons for Language Writing. Although his critical writings have helped develop the parameters for the current debate, it is his poetic works that remain the most significant aspect of his career as a writer. Silliman's Paradise is the most recent installment of "The Alphabet", a long work-in-progress that Silliman has been composing for the past five years. Appropriately, each section of "The Alphabet" stands in for a letter in that signifying system; 26 sections, no two alike in structure.

"Words situate in newest state of unions (shadow text in margin)." As with his previous text Paradise reflects Silliman's concern with system and structure. But unlike Ketjak (paragraph blocks redoubling with repeating sentences as the skeleton), Tjanting (expanding paragraphs, altered sentences as the matrix) and Sitting Up, Standing, Taking Steps (no nouns), Paradise's structure exists on a more discrete level. As with much of Silliman's current work, Paradise could best be categorized as a prose poem. "Simple sentences, again & again." The paragraphs that form the work represent a single 'sitting' of continuous writing and the twelve sections making up the whole represent a calendar of writing; a year ongoing in the writer's life.

"Write in any state of mind" says the poet who doesn't need a job." Paradise? Silliman's two puns on his choice of title point at the work's composition. "Paris dice." "Pair of dice is lost." Chance. Mallarme? Max Jacob, perhaps? The work begins in self-referentiality, "Words slip, does type, hand around the pen a clamp, a clip." And concludes in front of the TV set, watching Hill Street Blues, be careful out there. Everyday life in the modern world.

Paradise, from the old Persian- 'to mould' and 'around.' According to philosopher Ernst Bloch, all great art contains traces of Utopian yearnings. Or 'Paradise', as a bitter acknowledgement of Reagen's New Era of Good Feelings; Patriotism in the mirror of a credit card, Silliman applying a periscope to the world around him. "Sometimes I come home from work so tired that I don't know whether to cry or throw up or lie on the floor, shaking."

The bottom of the page is only a dotted line across the screen. A flock of starlings high over the valley. These are not facts. She stood naked by the window, smoking a cigarette, looking down at the scene at Broadway & Columbus while her boyfriend behind her slowly pulled on blue trunks & an orange shirt. The thick smell of liver steamed up from his plate. The red letters disappeared into the grey background. The boiler room is referred to as the Chinese basement. These are not facts.

(Paradise, page 40)

Somewhere in the middle of Paradise, a paragraph filled with "Your perfectly Silliman sentence[s]." The great pleasure in reading Silliman is the wide space he creates for the reader to make meaning. Wittgenstein: "Anything your reader can do for himself, leave to him." The reader is challenged again and again to shape the text. The possibilities of Paradise are culled from the everyday. "The lone boy hooks the basketball towards the hoop nailed to the side of the garage, but it bounds away." Likewise the political, "Freedom is the access to two malls," and the silly, "Old Butterick Sky" and beyond.

Paradise is everywhere and nowhere. Silliman's Paradise is the quotidian, that Obvious which most of us go to great lengths to avoid thinking about. "Blue milk crates, stacked empty in front of the corner." We exist in a society of spectacle and of the reification of our most basic values. "Warmth is fading from things", said Walter Benjamin, circa 1930's. Silliman boldly takes on the task of creating a political writing that avoids didacticism. He understands the 'non-transparency' of language, thus avoiding the problems of political poets like Philip Levine and James Scully, whose emotional responses form the structures of their poems. Paradise makes us see the wash of everyday events around us. It makes us aware of the signifiers that dance about us in discrete, though political, fashion. "--Structure

"They [the Language Poets] declared the victorious anti-academics had become exhausted old coots and their many children imbeciles."

is metaphor, content permission, syntax force--(Silliman for L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E). Everything is permitted in Paradise: ideology, sex, clinkers and the seemingly insignificant; "Gradually the cereal absorbs the milk." "The writer unmask, discovers, unveils, everyday life becomes less and less interesting; yet the author manages to create an interest in this intolerable tediousness simply by telling it, by writing, by literature." (Henri Lefebvre.)

My pleasure in reading Silliman brings to mind the poetry event of Summer '85: The Great Poetry Flash War starring George Lakoff (representing the Language Writers) and Tom Clark (proxying for American poetry in a vague Olson/Whitman sense.) Silliman, through his poetry and critical writing, is often grouped under the rubric "Language Poet." Although Language Writing has taken its lumps since surfacing in the mid-70's, 1985 marks a full blown open season on Language Writers. This hostility is no doubt generated by the Language Group's critical writings, which often take on a tone which disturbingly resembles that of the Neo-Leninist sectlets of the early 70's, particularly in the writing of Barret Watton. Another source of hostility is the Language Group's acceptance into some of the poetry world's most polite societies.

Dear Editor,

I'd like to respond to the comments made about my poem, "Reading Roque Dalton, Smoking A Nicaraguan Cigar," by Robert Anbian in his letter published in Newsletter # 115. The sad fact is that Mr. Anbian, like most ideologues of whatever persuasion, wants the reality of other people's experiences to conform to his pre-packaged notion of "The Truth." What he calls my "maunderings" in the "Dalton" poem were couched as what I took to be very tough questions directed in part at exactly the articles of faith which he has down pat. The "know-nothing" attitude that he sees in my poem stems from the fact that I can't accept the contradictions which he has so obviously swept away, the kinds of questions which, for one, issue from Dalton's murder by a rival leftist faction in El Salvador. And because the poem makes it clear that I refuse to accept right-wing attitudes and actions that dehumanize and destroy, Anbian can't box me in from that side, either. Hence, he can only dismiss my work without (as far as I'm concerned) really confronting it.

With less drama than in Central America, but with terrible results, the issues that I tried to address in my poem are currently being played out on our own streets. Mr. Anbian's determination to deride as "weakness" my struggle to think through what I see when I walk around my neighborhood suggests that he resides in a mental dictatorship in which such problems have been solved: single-minded political commitment (as construed by him) rather than admit the inescapable interaction between politics and personal experience. But he is mistaken, and that is why poets have no choice but to test the reality of their political convictions with the evidence of their own eyes. And only the implementation of his kind of solution is lacking, heaven help us. Those men and women who are unfortunate enough to tackle the anomalies in their own behavior, and to express them, are suspect, or--in Mr. Anbian's reductionist vision--"puerile." (Only children ask questions, of course, and Papa Ideology shall infantilize us all. Mr. Anbian's letter reeks of this Big Brotherish condescension.) When the troublemakers don't line up, there are more firing squads and death squads on call than

at any other time in human history to make them lie down. In Mr. Anbian's self-assured, steely rhetoric I can hear the ones who think they have "The Truth" loading their rifles.

Roque Dalton was nailed because, however revolutionary his politics were, they didn't conform to the beliefs of somebody else on the same side. Dalton's ironic intelligence was too "subjective," didn't tow the mark, bang. His was, however, the highest kind of intelligence

LETTERS



Illustration by Denise Barbieri

that a human being can hope to earn: to never stop questioning anything and, at the same time, to act. Contrary to what Mr. Anbian implies, the two are not, and never can be, mutually exclusive. The line between active thought and thoughtful action, between the growth of inner values and their translation into deeds, is exactly where poetry collapses into lifeless propaganda or springs into the recreation of lived experience. Packaged thought equals dead words, which only wing the mechanical applause of an ideological plaque. (And why is it that so many "political" poets forget the first rule of art--that a cliché is a work of taxidermy, whatever its message?) That is why any percentage of banner-waving poetry, whether it comes from Castillo, Dalton, Cardenal, or Neruda--all poets whose best work I completely admire--is slogan stuff. How Mr. Anbian can invoke Neruda and

denigrate the "subjective" element in poetry is anybody's guess, unless he intends to dismiss a substantial portion of Neruda's work. "Those who write pure poetry will fall on their face in the snow," Neruda wrote, and there is a pure poetry of a political sort too. To what Neruda said, I would add this: Those who think they can write poetry out of a book of slogans won't even have the snow to cushion their fall.

Mr. Anbian, then, would have us believe that poetry is the product of a half-person, that it issues solely from a it is precisely why the "subjective" element in writing that Mr. Anbian so loathes will never be used up.

Sincerely,

Bill Zavatsky

Dear Poets,

I've been reading back issues of your mimeo rag on the subway to work and I like the feeling I get from cerebral contact with some compatible beings. Much of it is avant-garde alien stuff and turns me off, being as I'm over 30 and not with it and hopelessly into punctuation. I abhor stream of unconsciousness. But some people call it poetry and these are the changing times. It's still worth it to me to have an issue of your newsletter to accompany me on the GG train. So here's my new address and 7 bucks.

Thanks for all the good work you do down there In-The-Bowery.

yours,

Anna Conti

Winter in a Boy

All the others
are unlovable
strangers again,
& the streets
sink back into
geological time

Is there to be
a glacier?
a child asks

In a book that
tells vast time
& distance
he draws a circle
as the planet
turns. And now
we're here.
Ice. Ice. Ice.

by Anne Waldman



YANNOS RITSOS
IN KORAKA

By Mark Rogers

This Month's Events

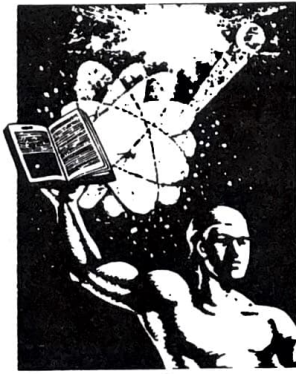


Illustration by Denise Barbieri

BOOKS



Illustration by Denise Barbieri

December 2: OPEN READING & PERFORMANCES (Free)

December 4: Walter Abish is an internationally known writer of fiction & essays; How German Is It, Alphabetical Africa, & In The Future Perfect are some of his best known books. He is currently completing a new book for Knopf. Chris Kraus is a multi-talented poet, performance artist, & stage director. Her works include "Disparate Action/Desperate Action", "Readings From The Diaries Of Hugo Ball" & "I Talked About God With Antonin Artaud"; co-written with Sylvère Lotringer & scheduled for Artist's Space in Spring 1986. She is a former co-coordinator of the Monday Night Reading Series at the Poetry Project.

December 8: **ART AUCTION** Registration Fee: \$15.00

December 9: Joan Evans & Pat Olesko. Donation: \$4.00

December 11: Angela Jackson & Terry McMillan. Angela Jackson is a Black poet & fiction writer from Chicago. Her award winning writing has appeared in Contact II, First World, Open Places, Callaloo, Story Quarterly, Chicago Review & Essence. Her play, "Shango Diaspora" was produced at the New Federal Theater in New York City. Brooklynite Terry McMillan is a young Black fiction writer originally from California. Her first novel, Mama is forthcoming from Houghton-Mifflin Company. She has received fellowships to Yaddo & MacDowell. Donation: \$4.00.

December 16: Allen Comic & Yves Mousard. Donation: \$4.00.

December 18: Mei-Mei Bersenbrugge & Michael Scholnick. Mei-Mei Bersenbrugge is the author of four critically acclaimed books including Random Possession & Fish Souls. Her poems have appeared in Conjunctions, Contact II, East-West Journal, Puerto Del Sol, Roof & Yardbird Reader. Michael Scholnick is a prize winning poet & editor of Mag City. Author of Beyond Venus & other books, Michael's reviews have appeared frequently in this newsletter. Donation: \$4.00.

December 23: Charles Dennis & Claudia Siege. Donation: \$4.00.

January 1: **NEW YEAR'S DAY MARATHON BENEFIT READING**-100 Poets, Performers, Dancers, Magicians, Musicians & Rogues. Program begins at 7 P.M. Admission \$10.00.

Tuesday Night Workshop with Bob Rosenthal. World-Wide Ear, a workshop dealing with poetry from around the world. December 3, 10 & 17. 7 P.M.

Friday Night Workshop with Susie Timmons. Workshop open to all writers. 7 P.M. Workshop lasts 2 hours. December 6, 13 & 20.

Advanced Workshop with Alice Notley on Saturday Afternoons at 12:30. December 7, 14 & 21.

The World #42 is now accepting submissions. The deadline is December 31, 1985. All materials should be accompanied by a SASE & addressed to: The World, Steve Levine, editor/The Poetry Project/St. Mark's Church-In-The Bowery/10th Street & 2nd Avenue/New York, New York 10003.

Submissions for the Spring 86 Issue of B-City are now being accepted. Deadline 12/31/85. B-City/Connie Deanovich Editor/619 West Surf Street/Chicago, Illinois 60657.

COMMUNITY MEETING Saturday, December 12, 1985 from Noon till Two PM. **PURPOSE:** Election of New Community Members to the Poetry Project's Board of Directors. Community members with a real desire to contribute to the Present & the Future of the Poetry Project should send self-nominations to the Project's Office by December 18th 1985. Polls will close at 2PM. Call the Project Office for further details.

Night Watches, Inventions On The Life Of Maria Mitchell by Carole Oles. Oles, via persona, probes the mysterious & lonely spirit of the 19th Century Woman Astronomer. Alice-James Books/138 Mount Auburn Street/ Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138. \$6.95.

Rain & Other Fictions by Maurice Kenny. The Blue Cloud Quarterly Press/Marvin/South Dakota 57251. \$3.00.

Moorish Journal by Rick McMonagle. Europe & North Africa pondered in train stations, cafeterias & bus depots by a broad innocent beautifully. 21st Sensual Press/47 Erion Crescent/Rochester, New York. \$3.00.

The Landing Of Rochambeau by Michael Davidson. Language fallen from three stories, sharp angles can surprise you. The cut bleeds blood & the phrasing's on the money. Burning Deck/71 Elmgrove/Providence, Rhode Island 02906. \$7.00.

Mnemonics by Ted Pearson. Breathtaking vistas beheld through tiny portals in the ether. Gaz Press/277 23d Avenue/San Francisco, California 94121.

The Stopping Of Sorrow by Max Benavidey. So hard to be a saint in the City of Angels. Momentum Press/512 Hill Street/Apartment 4/Santa Monica, California 90405. 74 Pages, \$5.95.

The Bread Loaf Anthology Of Contemporary American Poetry. The illustrious & the educated get together to carry on the tradition. Anyone want my copy? University Press Of New England/3 Lebanon Street/Hanover, New Hampshire 03755.

How To Ride On The Woodlawn Express by Bob Hershon. Weeping glees & laughing sorrows, a humorous book & yet reverent.

Crude Thinking by Larry Price. Gaz Press/277 23d Avenue/San Francisco, California 94121. \$5.00.

Precedence by Rae Armantrout. Burning Deck Books/71 Elmgrove Providence, Rhode Island 02906. 44 Pages, \$5.00.

OUR THANKS! As you all know, these are lean times in the poetry world. The kindness of strangers has all but dried up & we are now relying heavily on our friends & our friends are responding. The staff of the Poetry Project would like to thank the following people for their generous support of our programs.

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DECEMBER'S

PO

Monday Evening

POETRY PERFORMANCE
Host Richard Elovich 8 PM \$4

- 2 Open Performances & Readings Free
- 9 Joan Evans & Pat Olesko
- 16 Alien Comic & Yves Mousard
- 23 Charles Dennis & Claudia Siege

Wednesday Evening

READINGS
Hosts Eileen Myles & Patricia Jones 8 PM \$4

- 4 Walter Abish & Chris Kraus
- 11 Angela Jackson & Terry McMillan
- 18 Mei-Mei Bersenbrugge & Michael Scholnick

Workshops

READING WORKSHOP

- 3, 10, 17 Bob Rosenthal 7 PM Free

POETRY WORKSHOP

- 6, 13, 20 Susie Timmons 7 PM Free

ADVANCED WORKSHOP

- 7, 14, 21 Alice Notley 12:30 PM Free

Special Event

ART AUCTION
Registration Fee \$15 3PM

January 1

**NEW YEAR'S DAY
MARATHON BENEFIT
READING**
\$10

ET

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**THE POETRY
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Exhilaration at the Core

LATE RETURNS:

A Memoir of Ted Berrigan

by Tom Clark

Tombouctou Books

Box 265, Bolinas, California 94924

89 Pages \$7.00

This is the first work to appear about our late-great American World Class poetic voice. It's not the one we are quote waiting for unquote. That one isn't in the works yet. When it comes on, it'll be out-sized, enormous, unwieldy. And as moving as the man himself. It will contain large sections of his work, prose and poems, reviews, talks, lectures. And there'll be memoirs by all of his many friends, both those who knew him early and those who were close by when he passed, those who actually knew him in the flesh of his line, and those who want to touch his spirit. As he touched our's. Something to give back, something we all learned.

That book has not arrived yet. It's not even in the works yet. The book at hand is a little chip off the ole Berrigan legend. It's handsomely presented, and contains loads of general Berrigan information. A lot of stories which have been tossed around the blazing camp fires of language heads to these many times since his poetic bulk leapt from and freaked from this spinning cube.

The first section contains a prose narrative by Clark, which stylistically advances the form he used to write his Kerouac book (praised previously in these pages). The rapid, chunky, slit-eyed speed line has been supported by swift info bursts mid-sentence, and frequent references to lines from Ted's poems where they might fit generally into some personality quirk or actual event in Tom's running monologue. A device that both adds to the weight of professional clout that abounds in this book, and to advance the action.

There is nothing in this book that detracts from the brilliance of Ted's poetic aura. The depth of friendship exhibited here, it would be well to observe at this juncture, should cool some of the continuing bad feeling that was kicked up into the atmosphere, when he attacked the Naropa group.

I think it's time to get behind Tom in a worthy cause. I have the sense of him to know that what we get when he gets into really writing his subject(s) out, we get pretty interesting stuff.

He is certainly someone who has kept his writing career(s) going full blast. Starting with the book on the Oakland A's, "Champagne and Baloney." Which is highly regarded, as one of the very few sports books to have succeeded in both capturing an accurate portrait, and still copped literary coherence. His Damon Runyan biography was very in-depth and long, somewhat plodding on the fire line. Both of those books seem to have been written off successive complete columns by Sports writers (Champagne), and all Runyan's own work in New York area newspapers, and in his own books. Clark worked the device of writing your narrative as if you yourself were actually in those rooms when everything went down, every deal, every argument. He worked that up past his own usage of it, worked it up into an art form.

He perfected a new writing space. His baseball poems were a byproduct of his massive plunge onto the commercial side of his abilities. He has definite credibility in the public sector.

His spectacular fluidity at zooming those books out of everywhere imaginable, drives people envy crazed on both sides of the line of how they feel about him, personally. Which, of course, obliterates his talent as a writer. Which, even this little book, testifies to admirably.

That he had the clear headed motivation to sit down and organize and write this book, then sell it to be published; this reminds us of Ted's own ability to step forward to deal with things. He stepped forward when Frank O'Hara died and had that same kind of insight that Tom shows here, mourning his friend.

We would not

wish to ride down his feelings. We have the same heart at heart. He expresses his in a really moving, raucously critical, carefully documented fashion. Too bad he had no access to Ted over the long years, or even near the end, because the book drops off in its ready-steady pace when Tom loses his thread of communication with Ted. Tom's ending

is well appreciated for his own poetic clarity, but it remains as abrupt as Ted's own passing.

Tom is Ted's perfect biographer. His reverence for his subject is obvious, and shared. We can appreciate these feelings. So, do I have any reservations about this book?

Well, yes.

It runs into trouble soon as you clear the first section, Tom's narrative. The 2nd section contains photos of Ted and related subjects that Tom had access to. The photos are not individually identified, that is, the photographers are not credited on each shot. Bad news! The one of Alice Notley and Ted's two sons, Anselm and Edmund: was shot by Rochelle Kraut, and there's no credit (not even in the beginning of the book where the photos are identified.)

Mr. Tombouctou Books, that's a real boo-boo.

It opens things up to speculation. Who did those other shots? Small thing, you say. What the fuck does it matter, you groan. It all matters.

But fuck that shit!

This book is a welcome addition to anyone's Berrigan collection. The opening shot.

And wait until you read Ted's own letters (the third and final section of the book.) They blow everything that has come before them, right out of the water.

A pure blast of Berriganism. A true shivering pinch of the man himself. Ted, exhilaration at his pounding core, free-wheeling pill works, bombed into bliss, and writing.

We are told that there were many other letters, but Mr. Tombouctou Books took them out of this section. Too bad! They overshadow the rest of what's here. But this isn't a failed work.

It remains that Ted's own "collected poems," published by George Mattingly's Blue Wind, So Going Around Cities, is still the best way to get to know the true spirit of Ted Berrigan.

by Jim Brodey

Realizing Environment

I can't find anything that won't find itself.
it takes a long time to walk through the woods.

trees lean towards light and have voices.
they've been walking for years--
willing to swear on boundary points
their roots don't even touch

there aren't any seaside salons near here
or rich vacation palaces--
they don't matter anyhow.

--no luaus.
pigs don't have apples in their mouths.

by Michael Pingarron

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James Ruggia, Editor

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NEW POEMS BY TOM CLARK

Sadly Celine

in death was spoken
of not so much
for the work which
brought with it
such inconsistencies
of character, as
for the latter. A

text is variously
a life, but the purpose
of an individual
is single.
To be difficult
is to be difficult.
There are no two
ways about it.

Regarding the technical journals of of a culture whose only distinction is in its technique

The linguistic skill
saw of the contemporary
academic manual,
a drone of interact
and interface
somehow more faceless
and inactive
than Death itself,
threatens nothing
more than whatever's
left of Sense.
A yellowjacket at least
deposits its stinger in
its victim, then goes off to die
expressing a justice in nature
that no longer applies:
for having injected you with
their toxic load, these
drones shuffle off to get promoted.

A Voice

In the midst of the motor roar of another night
along the freeway feeder get-and-spend human hamster circuit
a canto-weaving kicked-dog voice arrived to spit out its petition:

We're all going to
so we might as well face it
first turn to powder
then blow away
from the material dimension completely
and the day that comes true
the things we own
will remain here in the world
laughing at us with the hyena mouths
of everything we have
most feared in this Theatre of Blurs

The voice sounded like nuts and bolts
shaken around inside a metal spinet
whose interior walls are lined with manifold sample fragments
of Existence in all its banging supermercado diversity
The voice spoke and then held its peace
out in front of it
as if offering a small delicious pink sugar lamb on Easter
or putting forward like a respectful supplicant
bent in a humble posture
a proposal
to a producer who is too busy
to bother...so it's always been so it is today
so the world began God puts the universe on hold if he wants to
His time is worth money like they say

Self-inkfolded we feel a false footing
under us is the ground and then
when it's pulled away and we begin to
fall toward a bottom that isn't there
we want to know what's happening but
the fast air as it goes by in this elevator
shaft of last chances we're dropping
through seals up the lips before
they can form around the question.

Glassitude

Silence is a distillate of noise.
Beneath the power saws and the Van Halen
Tapes of the neighbors a tiny
Island of quiet is deposited
An oasis of reflection leached out
Of the gross drone of the bourgeoisie...
Still between us and the futureway
Lies only the heavy-heavy
Metal kids' halfway house
And when Billie Holiday tries to sing into
The two hundred decibel incisors
Of their exploding mechanical tools
Forget it sister!
It's a case of monkey see monkey do
Multiplied by the potential
Hopelessness of forever

At the end of the hominid
Chain a grey sediment of tension
Quietly accumulates like a trace
Element. The miracle of any reflection
Leached out of the gross drone
Of the bourgeoisie shouldn't tempt one
To forget that out there on the
Interpersonal frontier Tab A
Meets slot B for purposes of Insert
To exactly that tune.
Whereas:
In the universe of glass I dream
(which is actually made of icy words)
The glass boat that floats in
A glass pool to the musical
Silence of a glass etude...
Is absolutely unheard.



Tom Clark and Ed Sanders

Vanity of D.

"People have changed so much
No more sincere guys handsapocket walking"

Kerouac came back to Lowell with Johnnie Walker
On his back like

A nasty monkey. Saying: "Mother
Nature gives you birth and eats you back up,

That's the ballgame..."

This was not a theory.
This was his cells talking.

Identification Tags

Ghosts do wear sheets but not for sleeping.

Sometimes people die while still alive
and then come back to life
but only partially. You can read the signs
around the eyes, which get
a dusty look like burned out hundred watt bulbs.

When they pass one another on the streets
there is a soft noise, as of muslin touching.

Yuppieworld

The last
wave of human
behavior flashing
up on the
terminal shore
with the light
click and sheen
of plastic
cards touching.

Celine Again

The world not
the abuser, the
poor single
thing inside
the person's skin
not the
abused. And
yet, and
yet.

Lewis Continued

"My favorite war is a civil war" said Ted Berrigan and I'm often inclined to that feeling. A good debate helps keep both sides honest and less full of themselves. But as writers took sides in the Lakoff-Clark grudge match, poets again displayed their propensity for eating each other alive. The danger is in becoming a variation of George Lichtheim's description of Leninist sectarianism, "Amoebas devouring each other in a drop of water." As Silliman has pointed out, what unites the Language Group are their differences. Carla Harryman's work can't be mistaken for Alan Davies', nor Kit Robinson's for P. Inman's. To play the game of 'us guys' vs. 'you guys' is, in the end, a version of what critics and English professors have been doing for years, the most recent example being Harold Bloom's canon making activities.

All this infighting clouds the value of many fine writers who only get counted as part of the 'gang.' Silliman is one of our most important poets, contributing substantial structural and textual innovation. And above the squabbling of polemical warfare, Paradise works and is an exciting and interesting text. How often can one say that? Beyond all rhetoric, there's little more you can ask from a writer. "Words do drift, black on whatever lighter background."

by Joel Lewis

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