

now

To Jano Kelly,
Jan Steel
September 73

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Editor: Stewart Brown.
Address: Box 225. St. Anns Bay P.O.
St. Ann. Jamaica.

EDITORIAL

By popular demand I am going to write much less editorial blurb from now on.

Also as a result of popular demand I have included a list of brief notes on contributors and included a couple more graphics, although not as many as I would like, these are especially requested for future issues.

NOW 1 seemed to be received fairly well, thanks to all the people who wrote with reactions and criticism, both are always welcome. A lot of people recommended I heed my own warning not to take myself or the magazine too seriously, or solemnly, which is very fair criticism. The tone of some of the editorial and the reviews in that issue was rather pretentious... I hope I've learned my lesson.

The scope of this issue is slightly wider, a long article on Robert Lowell's poetry making a break from the poetry and reviews, hopefully future issues will include more prose work.

A word of explanation about the 3 British poets in this issue. They are included as a group (although I'm sure they would object to the idea) to illustrate the way in which poetry is going in one part of the 'underground' in Britain. All 3 are widely published on the small magazine circuit in Britain and all are

20 cents Jamaican/50 cents Eastern Caribbean
25 cents U.S./ 10p U.K.

involved in putting out magazines that are part of that 'scene'. Theirs is a different kind of poetry, I hope that you find the comparison interesting. In a future issue I hope to be able to use a similar set from young American poets.

Hopefully the West Indian poetry doesn't need any words of explanation from me.

Thanks again to Lois Langenfeld, Pete Virgadamo and Ed Wallace for their help with the production of the magazine. Thanks also to Mr Carr of St. Ann's Bay for allowing us to use his machines.

Finally I print the 'little verse' by Esther Chapman below because she dared me to. I'm not sure if there's money in it!

' I'm
In advance of my time.
I've discovered rhyme ! '

Contributions are always welcome;- poetry, short stories, articles on any aspect of art or poetry, concrete, graphics, etc. Please enclose SAE or IRC with all contributions.

Subscriber rates are \$ 1 Jamaican, \$1.25 U.S. \$2.50 Eastern Caribbean and 50p U.K. for four issues, postage included.

The best way to help the magazine grow is to try and sell some copies to your friends (or enemies), any number on a sale or return basis, and you make 20% on each sale. Any offers to do this will be much appreciated.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

- AMBIT: Martin Bax, 17 Priory Gardens, Highgate, London N.6.
BIM: The Editors, Woodville, Chelsea Road, St. Micheal, Barbados.
BOGG: George Cairncross, 31 Belle Vue Street, Filey, East Yorkshire.
CARDINAL: 'Wisconsin Poetry Issue', 821 University Avenue, Madison, Wis 53706.
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SECOND AEON: Peter Finch, 3 Maplewood court. Maplwood Ave, Cardiff, Wales U.K.
STAR WEST: Leon Spiro, P.O. Box 731, Sausalito, CA 94965. USA.

- ANTARKTIKA by Peter Finch (Writers Forum 262 Randolph Ave London W9.)
THE BOOK OF BEN by Opal Nations. (Marconi, Bandage and Lint Press, 35a Edgware Road, Marble Arch. London W2 2JE)
ON THE DEATH OF ARCHDEACON BROIX by Martin Booth. (Second Aeon Publications, see above)

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Cover Drawing 'Birds' by Mary Crooks.
Other graphics by Stewart Brown.

Wayne Browns poem 'Cat Poem' is from his
book 'ON THE COAST' published by Andre Deutsh
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CAT FOEM

1

In the Beginning
The cat
Watched for a while from the edge of the
world.

On the seventh day
It moved in,
like your dead neighbour's, casually.

2

Adam and cowering Eve
Felt the eyes watching and vainly tried
to cover their privates: but all that night
The cats streamed in through the garden gate.

3

Noah, while the others stood round in pairs,
Reached forward to greet the bird with the
branch.

But the cat killed it
with one slap.

4

The wite cat's eyelids slide shut.
The Alps are completely snowed under.

5

Antony dead, the woman dead,
Rome hushed and waiting, emptily -
The cat stalked out of the palace.

6

O daughters of Africa,
Your warriors are slain.
The night is a black cat
With yellow eyes.

7

Arthur, cantering back to the castle
After an exhausting peace,
Noticed a cat trapped halfway
Up a tree trunk.

8

Whether what woke you sounded like
A dropped nailfile,
Or a bottle,
Or the night of the sailors, think:
The cat's in your garbage,
Woman.

9

Five hundred Viet Cong captured.
Race riots erupt in Atlanta.
Glancing sideways, hurriedly crossing the lit
street,

The cat loped off
Down an alley.

10

Dying in his sleep, one step past death,
Heard the love-scream of cats and made
A terrible effort to sit up.

11

The morning after the bomb
Was dropped, I woke early.
Silence past stillness, the city in ruins-
My hands touched fur and the cat purred.

Wayne Brown.

7

MAIDEN SPEECH

Born today our daughter
naked of influences,
(neither your science nor my art
blinding her with preconceptions)
responded spontaneously
to unknown stimuli,
spoke substantially this:

bright cold hard noise
hurt my flesh
i do not like
these are no

warm soft quiet dark
in and around me
as what i want
these make less bright cold hard noise

work is hurt
hurt to my flesh
but gets what i want
work is yes
until come back warm soft quiet dark

air i need always
lets me relate to others
rhythm i have
sensed it all along
beating a measure
doom-doom, doom-doom
doom-doom.

A.L.Hendriks.

SCORE by Victor D. Questal & Anson Gonzalez.

Published by the authors from 1 Sapphire Drive
Diego Martin, Trinidad. W.I. No Price stated.

Some of Victor D. Questal's poems leave me
with the impression of a man who is;-

'drunk on the rum
mage
that is language'

His poems are fast moving and gush images
that slide from the excellent to the atrocious,
we are always made aware of 'the poet' standing
between us and the poem. Some of the poems build
up a good level of tension but then sag - having
nothing, really, to say. This nothingness is
apparent also in the more blatantly philosoph-
ical poems; TOM: MUSE: WHEN: etc, where his
lofty tirades fall flat, too often he seems to
be looking around asking;

'but who to sock it
to now ' ?

However, when he comes down closer to the
earth and starts, as Derrick Buttress would say,
to show us rather than tell us - we find some
excellent poems that manage to criticise and
reflect upon the wrongs of his Trinidad in a
most effective manner.

In 'PAN DRAMA' we see a justifiably angry
young man who is: =

'sick of your
blurred bourgeoisie
amile

pinging
and
ponging
calypso tunes
of
chamber pot drama

or
racial melodrama

for colourless
mocking folk from
far away smog
lands.'

And in 'DOWN BEAT' we see the life of an average Trinidadian with no assets but his hands and his brains. Out of work, bored, dissatisfied and apparently powerless, he has to improvise a living;-

'now an-then
as Mighty Suck Eye,
seranading some tourists-

Hustling some coins for a
four tirty '

and later,

'Pulling at meh weed
Smoking out meh need
Cursing dem all
Forgetting it all

Swaying down the kiss me arse
streets
to a rythm rehearsed in bed
and the down beat in meh head.'

Anson Gonzalez's poems fall into two blocks, there are slight, pop inspired little poems that are often trite and meaningless and on the other hand there are some much heavier, powerful, angry poems in the latter part of his set that speak with an original voice on important themes. In some of these later poems he has retained his 'pop' idiom but uses it as a tool of cutting irony;-

'Proclaiming with papal pomp
a paternal encyclical
medieval rome
rejects the idea of sex-is-fun
Ban the pill
Ban the condom
Ban abortion '

and later,

'I meditated
and saw the wisdom
of the Holy Ones
decision.

The population growth
is absorbed
in Viet Nam

Biafra
Latin America Pakistan '

(from 'CONTROL')

His best poems however give up this 'pop' style and are concerned with revolution, or at least the struggle for change. In these poems, 'TO....' 'HEY ALFIE' 'DECISION' 'CANE BALLAD' and 'CADENCE' we see a young man and the dilemma that he (along with millions of others all over the world) is faced with when he has to decide where he stands in relation to the obvious evils that are being committed by governments and large business concerns everywhere. To ignore or just to accept the

situation as 'the way things are' is a tacit approval of the system - but any sort of action means that you sacrifice what little you have - as he says in 'TO....'

'And we in the harsh burning sun
blinded by the glare of Dereks
corrugated sea must determine
whether to languish or to make the
ultimate futile sacrifice,
for Fanon's and Carter's long march
goes on. '

An interesting book, with enough good poems to make it well worth reading.

ONE CULTURE

Arrogant like hell,
Comming from a culture deep
In blackness, pride an eloquence.
Caesar - stomping words an stance,
A glance denotes concern an flattery;
Agree - I am a proud black man.
Guyanese, age of conflict
Big mouth - like it is !
Man Cholmey does inspire love,
His sense O'humour straight like razor
He blazin West Indian flavour.
Is so dis man get top-tree,
He communicatin' for you an me.
Peace brudderman - when you work is done
We will all be freeman !

(of Hugh Cholmondely... Caribbean Culture.)

Patti Hinds.

BALLAD OF A TEENAGE 'QUEEN'

FLASHING!
FLASHING!
flashing!

The concrete above me, cut out of the darkness.
The pulsating sky beyond Stoned-henge city skyline rippling with tides of a submerged energy.
As I sit, head on knees in a hazy shop-doorway.
Round the tower of crested crenellated concrete on silent wings the insane mind movies revolve.
The regurgitated Jack Kerouac Upanishad embryos orbiting out of the cradle - endlessly voyaging lost searchers for the pith of the myth of time - but my wings are nailed with lead. The sphere of sound and globe of light collide in a frozen scream. As my vision chants 'POETS THE UNIVERSE IS YOURS FOR THE SEIZING AND YOU ALL ARE POETS' another mocks with 'Why heliograph rumours from vertical rooftops when all that you communicate is the total meaninglessness of communication - when my love is your hate, when my hate is your fate, when my fate is your faith, when my faith is your fiction, when my fiction is your facts, when my facts are your acts'. Until it subsides leaving a concrete pavement beneath me, and the concrete wall against which I lean and concrete skylines which line my eyes seeming suddenly to be unreal, and I am lying around a metaphysical used car lot jumping wrecked Cadillacs chanting 'HASHISH TO ASHES - MUST TO DUST', and feelings of disgust at the husks of rust at this shrine, intense carbureter madness, and 'Have you heard its in the stars next September we collide with Mars' and the sky is so high and pulsating with such energy, beyond the concrete that only time will silt to become such strange forgetfulness.

flashing!
FLASHING!
FLASHING!

Andrew Darlington.

GRAFFITI OF MEMORY

terrace houses shunted away like goods wagons
into years and demolitions..

sandbanks twisted dead belly up, fish who have
temporarily mislaid their sea

rocktongued island spitting
foam

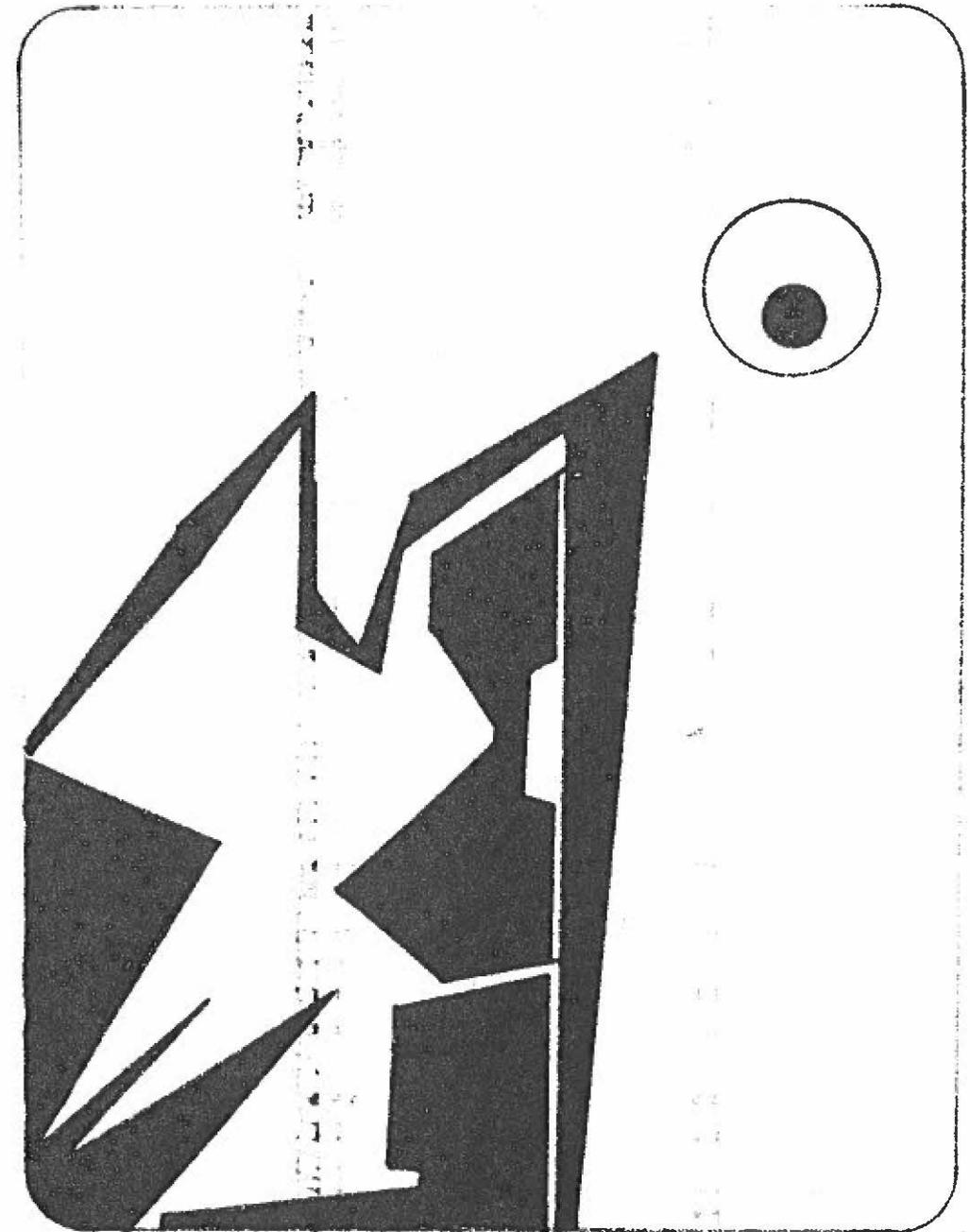
like a lost mouse the starlight runs
before the claws of springing sun
seeking a hole to hideout in

to clear a seacock
preparatory to sabotage
first clear your own mind
as to why this must be done
to sink the life you travel in

see here upon the airport tarmac smart & clean
in trouser suit here's Miss Brylcreem..
bomb up her quim
guerillas have asked her to bring in
o the warm echoing comforting

a choir behind the altar stand
hands in
pockets masturbating in time to the hymn
like a crowd of doves flapping
their wings unwilling to take off
till all the bomber squad has gone
that their prayers have called in..
& all the time the sun
like a dirty old town
hooter calling men to turn around
& come & go
& work & sleep
splits night from day
& me from you

Steve Sneyd.



A Spring Parod



Nude & Shadow

FIASCO PUBLICATIONS

'POEMS' by John Elseberg & George Cairncross.
'GRAPHICS' drawings by Joe Hirst.
'DEAF EYES' by Andrew Darlington.
'POEMS TO THE PASSING' by Paul Berry.

All free for postage from Fiasco Publications.
31 Belle Vue Street. Filey. East Yorkshire. U.K.

George Cairncross is something of a legend. Painter, poet, editor and 'anarchist' he has for years been preaching that poetry can and should be 'free'. These booklets are the fruit of that belief. Run off on a spirit duplicator, the format might offend the purist or the collectors who are more interested in building a 'valuable' library than in poetry - but when one considers how much important work has been published via machines like George's (one thinks of the real 'underground' literature put out during the wars and of Samizdat in Russia today) their petty quibbles fade to vanishing point.

Paul Berry's poems I find difficult to follow, often he seems to switch ideas in the middle of a poem and the punctuation, or lack of it, leaves my meagre brain stranded. However there are a few poems that follow a single train of reasoning and are quite effective, I particularly like 'WALLACE: RECIPE FOR A YOB', the final section of which runs;-

'Wallace is fifteen;(much hairier than before)
Has raped a guide, slashed seats and has
two minor offenses for drugs,
He no longer sits on a shelf
in a cupboard,
(and they still don't understand)

I've always liked Andrew Darlington's poetry.

Hard, surreal, often near to prose, he seems to reflect the feelings of futility that being a 'no-body' in a complex industrial society gives one;-

'Can it be doubted that
we are wondrously insane ?
Faced by the climax of Death
with a life that has no meaning.'

(from 'MONOLITH')

'Deaf Eyes' is a good set; Darlington's apparent preoccupation with painting has made his imagery powerful and exciting;-

'Mid way through the act of love
I realized that you had grown
through the roof of my head.'

Joe Hirst's book of graphics is effective, funny and pretty well done. Resident illustrator for Cairncross's magazine BOGG, his drawings are visual satires, more than cartoons, on aspects of British culture and counter culture that are obviously ridiculous from his particularly original viewpoint. I especially like his skit on the pop painters and 'BLOW YOUR MIND. SMOKE GUNPOWDER'

The poems in the Elseberg/Cairncross booklet are simple and direct. Cairncross is closer to the working class roots of British Society than most of the patronising poets who claim to be 'telling it like it is' from their third storied office or classroom. His poems are couched in today's language and deal mainly with 'ordinary situations' looked at through his slightly cynical eyes. (See page 52)
John Elseberg's poems are less topical, softer, with a gentle but effective irony that can't be illustrated by random quotes.

Altogether an interesting series of booklets and obviously well worth the asking price!

POEM

heavy
earth-mothers
in sterile kitchens
ponder and prepare
for better or worse
hard times
so
saltfish is back in business
cheek by jowl with
filet
and who says
no words of consequence
were ever spoken
on suburban patios ?
the aborted poet
intones
art is commitment
heads nod
while the earth cries out
(mine eyes have seen the glory)
with jerks of spastic
enthusiasm
revolution !
heads nod
in gin-soaked approval
this too shall pass.

Jennifer Bell.

THEMES IN THE POETRY OF ROBERT LOWELL

by Miles Buxton.

Lowell's poetry is based on three elements: his own personality, religion and the corruption of man. The latter element is developed within the dimensions of historical significance, a New England background and, to a lesser extent, political ramifications. Lowell's personality is seen in relationship to his own poorly-defined God-head, the conflicts of his mind and also in relationship to other people.

The early poetry is violent due to Lowell's bitter disillusionment with man who appears to have lost his spiritual power to break the cycle of stimulus and response, each new response being simultaneously a new stimulus. Human motivations are materialistic ones and, as such, are fundamentally inward looking. Man's direction, therefore, is regressive and must culminate in final destruction. The form of this destruction is seen in epic terms and the poet appears to take satisfaction in the retribution which awaits man. Lowell's 'lamb of God' is forsaken in preference to the avenging Michael -

'Flocks / scavenge for El Dorado in the hemlocks.

O Michael, hurry up and ring my bell'

The major examples of this human corruption are Lowell's own ancestral roots, the Puritans of New England for whom the poet reserves all his most vicious attacks. Though the condemnation is basically a moral one, the intellectual energy released by Lowell materializes in physical forms. 'Mr. Edwards And the Spider' is an attempt to illustrate in visual terms the nature of man's relationship to

his God and also the nature of the Hell which is his retribution. The 'spider' is an image which is repeated quite frequently by Lowell, the relative distance between man and the spider being the distance between man and God. Man shares with the spider the pursuit of physical comfort -

'They purpose nothing but their ease '
but also shares with his God some imperfect form of the divine insight.

'To die and know it'

and this is man's personal hell, the realization of infinite nothingness just prior to the point of annihilation. The alternative of heaven is similarly described in 'In Memory of Arthur Winslow', the point prior to death provides the inspiration (similar to other higher emotional experiences, such as love) for infinite insight and the religious contentment of perfect calmness. The physical representation of abstraction is also repeated -

'wrestling with the crab '

The careful presentation of metaphors is one example of Lowell's concern for form, this itself being an aspect of the poet's deeper concern for a position of authority, a viewpoint which translates the apparently trivial into global implications.

The violence which marks Lowell's early poetry is subjectively inspired, even though the poet attempts to put his opinions in lucid morality. Religion supplies the necessary

independent point of assessment upon man's action, but it is Lowell who provides the vehemence. It is only by struggling that life is imbued with any meaning, the acceptance of an all forgiving God of peace is a soporific product of man himself. The energy which inspires this violent struggle can also obscure poetic meanings as well as fill in argumentative gaps. There is a lack of flexibility which, ironically seems to typify Lowell's rejected Puritan background. All sins are worthy of apocalyptic condemnation, there being no adjustments in the moral viewpoint which Lowell adopted. The violence is also there because the poet is not unaware that he is himself a member of humanity and the condemnation is therefore all the more bitterly felt. Lowell's indictment of man is a form of personal judgment in order to regain a justifiable poetic identity. It is impossible to hold an opinion from the 'Black Mud' which binds humanity. The tension is unrelieved by Lowell's God, for, just as there is no communication between man and the spider, so God's guardianship of man is imaginary -

'What are we in the hands of the great God?'

Lowell's complete disenchantment with man is not only prevented by his sympathetic links with the race, but also by the realisation that man still possesses the power to resurrect himself and that the freedom to choose wrongly is also a divine gift. However, points of optimism in the pervading pessimism are rarely and artificially wrought. The destruction of Germany by the allies in the poem

'The Exile's Return' is only marginally relieved by -

'but already lily-strands
Burgeon the men Rhineland, and a rough
Cathedral lifts its eye'

Lowell retains the idea of man as a fallen angel, still capable of spiritual insight from highly-emoted inspiration, but ignoring it in pursuance of temporary wealth. But Lowell is sensitive enough to be aware that the higher emotions, to which the poet himself aspires, are also indicative of a kind of blindness in this case to life in actuality -

'These are the undefiled by women - their
Sorrow is not the sorrow of this world'

A form of philosophical polarisation is necessary if the integrity of the character is to be maintained. Inevitably this implies sacrifice -

'If they die,
As Jesus, in the harness, who will mourn?'

The pessimism in the poem is reinforced by the juxtaposition of religious past and technological present -

'Listen, the hay-bells tinkle as the cart
Wavers on rubber tires along the tar
And undered ice'

Juxtaposition of contrasts is a technique which is regularly used by Lowell for dramatic effect.

The reasons for which Lowell forsook his emphasis on form and a complex religious standpoint were a mixture of artistic and moral inadequacies. The persistent criticism of man, if continued, would have ultimately been self-destructive without some relief for constructive appreciation of the world. Also there was Lowell's reconciliation to the fact that, though humanity may be corrupted, there was really no practical alternative. All men are caught up in their own cycle of events (the spiders web), Lowell included. Religion had failed to provide a realistic code of values and so Lowell moved closer to man and also to a form of personal mysticism.

'The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket' continues to pursue the themes of New England materialism but the Quaker God in this poem is merely a cypher. There are a series of subtle ironies which develop the idea of man's short-sighted predicament. Inanimate things are seen in animate terms, the sailor only achieves the appearance of life after his death -

" He grappled at the net
With the coiled, hurdling muscles of
his thighs'

Those still alive are depersonalised by a lack of any detailed attention, they merely become impotent victims of the forces around them. In contrast, these forces fill the vacant characterisations -

'night/ Had steamed into our North Atlantic
Fleet'

If God still maintains an instrumental presence in the poem, it is not in the form which the Quakers would recognise. Their attempts to rationalize God's indifference are childishly pathetic (resting on the notion that their postponed death is God's mercy). Lowell's last two stanzas show the insignificance of man's attempts to control his Biblical inheritance in relation to the dimensions of Time and space which God controls. The mythical nature of the poem -

'where mariners had fabled news
Of IS, the whited monster'

shows that rationalizations are not the aim of the poet, rather the inarticulate communication of a religious experience. Again there is the artificial inclusion of some hopeful glimmer for mankind -

'Hide/ Our steel, Jonas Messias, in the side'

This reference to the crucifixion illuminates a more sympathetic deity in whose image all human inadequacies may be absolved. This conscious softening of the divine image is unconvincing due partly to Lowell's own Puritan inheritance. The Catholic image of Mary appears just as much a stranger to Lowell as she is inscrutable to man. Her tranquility is the feature which Lowell wishes to communicate but tranquility comes perilously close to indifference in the reading of the poem. It is possible to believe that Lowell himself instinctively requires a stronger vision of his God.

Lowell's view of time, a recurring poetic element, is a complex one and explains the strange contemporary nature of his historical allegories. The theory is largely derived from Jung. Firstly, history contains certain character types which can be seen to reoccur. Secondly, man can escape this submergence into archetypes by mysticism, by a return to Christ's divinity or by insanity. The confining, destructive nature of time leads Lowell to equate time with death -

'Or hourglass-blazoned spider, it is said,
Can kill a tiger'

Man's failure to act immediately in the preservation of his soul allows the intervention of spiritual temptation.

The historical poems show an informal, low key overspill of the past into the present. Caesar and Mussolini fuse into one figure so that the focus is thrown on to the issues involved rather than the characters. The issues in this case are man's historic failure to reconcile life and religion, that man himself is a symbol of disorder who maintains the flaws of his own self-destruction. Man is unwilling to meet the significance of nature's deteriorating superiority:

'Reading how even the Swiss had thrown the
sponge
in once again and Everest was still
unclimbed'

and allows the incipient convenience of technology to pervade our lives -

'His electric razor purred'

whilst simultaneously proclaiming inadequate tokens of dogma to stem the spiritual decline-

'When the Vatican made Mary's Assumption dogma'

By historical reference Lowell calls into question man's movement towards physical truths which inevitably cause the destruction of spiritual supports such as legend, mythology and religion. Scientific analysis is an inward quest, unconcerned with the larger implications of survival in a philosophic sense. Technology is the tangential force which disrupts potential harmony and Lowell attacks the former with typical irony -

'There were no tickets for that altitude
once held by Hellas, when the goddess stood,
prince, pope, philosopher and golden bough,
pure mind and murder of the scything prow'

The attack gains force because Lowell himself has departed from a religious viewpoint and uses his own personality with no external arbiters for moral reference.

The sense of History included in the poem 'Beyond The Alps' (from which the quotations above have been taken) shows the informal way in which Lowell treats history. Examples are not chosen in any apparently structured way but support the main argument almost in a random manner. This tends to increase the contemporary relevance of the items chosen, together with all their connotations

of a more ordered existence. In 'Falling Asleep Over The Aeneid' Lowell emphasizes the sense of informality by recreating images of Ancient Rome in a drowsy day-dream. The dramatic immediacy is built up gradually, so avoiding any loss of personal contact and personal relevance for the reader. Similarly, the day-dream is broken gradually by a recollection of ancestral involvement in more recent history (American War of Independence) so that present and past are never entirely disassociated from each other.

Disorder within man himself is a consistent basis of Lowell's declaration of man. The spiritual self must accept the decline of man the physical self as the necessary sacrifice for its own survival. Just as one approaches the other, so the split becomes as infinite as the gap between man and his God. Metaphors upon this theme are drawn in a detailed and complex manner, an indication of Lowell's early requirement of form. Chief amongst these metaphors is the relationship of man to nature, as in the poem 'Water'. Man in harmony with his world takes on the aspects of that world:

'white frame houses stuck
like oyster shells
on a hill of rock'

and time, the destroyer by ruined opportunity,
converts life forms into images of death -

'From this distance in time,
it seems the colour
of iris, rotting and turning purpler'

Man's lack of unity is similar to that of a man

and a woman, one corporal and the cerebral. The potential for unity is a shifting opportunity ('the usual gray rock') deteriorating with time and the elements and finally returning to God and the sea, a re-birth in death (also a Christian image of baptism). However, the final sacrifice of relinquishing physical sanctuary is not made and, once confirmed in this physical allegiance, spiritual reclamation is impossible -

'We wished our two souls
might return like gulls
to the rock'

A similar idea, the unification of man by the destruction of his physical world, is used in 'Colloquy In Black Rock' but the opposing elements here are heart and soul. God ('The Kingfisher') can only act after this physical sacrifice in the violence of whose decomposition Lowell takes epic satisfaction. This poem is more ambiguous than the later one and probably too concentrated with images to allow the separate elements to achieve their dramatic interaction.

The senses of irony and drama are probably the two most characteristic qualities of Lowell's poetry. They become increasingly noticeable as the poetry develops away from religious and mystical themes and becomes more closely associated with life. The collection of poems 'Life Studies' bases its irony mainly on the contradiction between apparent aspirations and actual achievements. The poems consist of a personal examination of the lives of various members of his family, so personal that the poet almost

completely identifies with his subjects and they become examples of subjective retrospect, their faults and virtues being assimilated by the poet himself.

The intensely religious early phase of Lowell's poetry reflected the uncertainties of the poet himself. Meanings are communicated in vague moods or feelings rather than any didactic transmission of decision and definition. Though Life Studies retains much of this subjectivity, there are now other character sources of tension and revelation. This slight retreat on the part of the poet allows the characters to maintain an individual dramatic participation of their own. The intensity of the personal conflict in the early poetry also tended to detract from the settings which became increasingly unfamiliar and occasionally verging on the cosmic rather than a worldly backdrop. With the inclusion of familiar personalities, Lowell includes settings which are relatively parochial but have the advantage of a more comfortable affinity with the reader. This affinity, however, can be used to increase dramatic power as in the reversal of accepted roles. One of the most frequent examples of this disturbing principle in the allocation of subversive personalities to apparently innocuous convenient aids, rarely present for the increased comfort of man -

'where even the man
scavenging filth in the back alley
trash cans,
has two children, a beach wagon, a help-
mate'

Later this principle is developed even more successfully by giving animal qualities to machinery, thus increasing their ominous potential for obliterating man -

'a savage servility
slides by on grease '

In a way 'drama' is the wrong label to apply to these poems as there is no development of either plot or character. Though time ostensibly moves on, the players remain inert, incapable of freeing themselves from the net of events and circumstances. Also, physical details are given prominence out of proportion to their significance -

'Like my Grandfather, the decor
was manly, comfortable,
overbearing, disproportioned '

The observations in Life Studies superficially appear coolly detached, but Lowell is really training the nature of the snare which has trapped him within the compass of life. The cumulative effect of his ancestry and environment has fixed him within the restriction of a physical world and the very technology he himself condemns. The basic dilemma for Lowell is that it is wrong to progress as we are but there is no real way to digress constructively. Also, the deterioration of spiritual values may not be entirely the fault of man, possibly he may have an intrinsic value outside of his actions. This latter factor is supported by Lowell's more sympathetic

and gentler observation of people -

'My Grandfather found
his grandchild's fogbound solitudes
sweeter than human society'

In this quotation can be seen the point that Lowell is trying to make about the value of man. It is only his increased perception in maturity which offers him the materialistic alternative to the unmotivated innocence of childhood.

Lowell's depression is never far away. 'Skunk Hour' is simultaneously a token for a worldly existence and a realisation that his attempts to perceive truths have only been a form of self-torture. He has created his own small hell and resolved nothing -

'I myself am hell,
no-body's here'

There is no attempt at lucidity, the poem being a raw appeal from the brink of insanity. His own personality and its worthiness is called into question because all he can see is corruption, and all this corruption is recorded with the same dimensionless level of conviction -

'I watched for love-cars /...../
My mind's not right'

The symbol of life appears in the last two stanzas, a stubborn refusal to acknowledge that existence is without purpose. But this symbol has no nobility, the skunk forages in minimum for survival. This is typical of

Lowell's poetry in that, though the totality of nihilism may be fractionally avoided, no solutions are offered.

A deliberate intention to avoid these intense but fruitless ideas can be seen in Lowell's later poems which appear to meet life on life's terms; that is to say, the recognition of the inevitability of compromise and the inherent screening of some of life's more ominous implications, or lack of implication. The concept of the internal conflict reflected in the man-woman relationship is repeated in 'The Old Flame'. This poem is of a simple construction and there is little of the ambiguity which marked out the earlier religious poetry. Taken as a whole, the poem is a plea for anti-intellectualism. Marriage, the worldly archetype for harmony, is split by the combined intellectual intensity of two minds seeking perception but barred from communication

'simmering like wasps
in our tent of books!'

Beneath this suffocating intellectual atmosphere Lowell is aware of the potential for harmony, but this can only be purchased at the cost of perceptive oblivion -

'we heard the plow
groaning up hill'

So Lowell does not resent the end of this phase, he welcomes the presence of new values -

'pewter and plunder
shone in each room'

but the reader cannot help but notice that this welcome, like the tokens to optimism, are conscious efforts.

Lowell's attempts to find a position of authority are not confined to his religious ideas. The poet is also aware of finding a meaningful role in relation to society and government. This role depends upon the prevalence of social conditions; in an ordered situation the poet becomes a force of disorder, in flux-like conditions (as Lowell finds himself in) the poet becomes a stabilizer. So Lowell supports order, but he is faced with a dichotomy akin to his spiritual situation. Moral order is inter-related with civil order, but civil order is preserved by government which in Lowell's time and opinion, is destructive. Lowell, therefore, postpones a direct confrontation with the state by attacking those forces which bolster the state. Here he is on familiar ground, as in the poem 'For the Union Dead' with its attack upon unbridled capitalism and hypocritical morality shows. The order that society is in the process of acquiring now is of a malign nature, an artificial container for social corruption whilst outside is a desert of moral purpose -

'The old South Boston Aquarium stands
in a Sahara of snow now '

The statue of Colonel Shaw remains as a
symbol of order based on moral awareness -

'Its Colonel is as lean
as a compass needle '

still serving as a focal point and reminder of historic spiritual dignity. The only symbols to modern wars are the graves which await their casualties -

'frayed flags/guilt the graveyards of
the Grand Army of / the Republic'

because these wars do not enoble man with the 'peculiar power to choose life and die' but embroil their combatants in the same machine-like drudgery which their weaponry and society revere.

A more direct involvement in contemporary problems is shown in Lowell's latest collection of poems, Notebook. This sense of involvement extends to personalities and institutions specifically rather than the ambiguous forces behind them. Though the political studies in this book are still rather static, they are more objective in that their relevance to Lowell is theoretical empathy rather than a blood relationship. But Lowell is still imprisoned by dichotomy, as in the poem 'For Eugene McCarthy'. McCarthy's failure to enter the power structure is because the Establishment selects its own successors -

'the state lifts us, we cannot change the
state'

The disillusionment at man's impotence inspires a bitter violence, similar to that of the epic poems, which is only slightly misted by Lowell's human sadness -

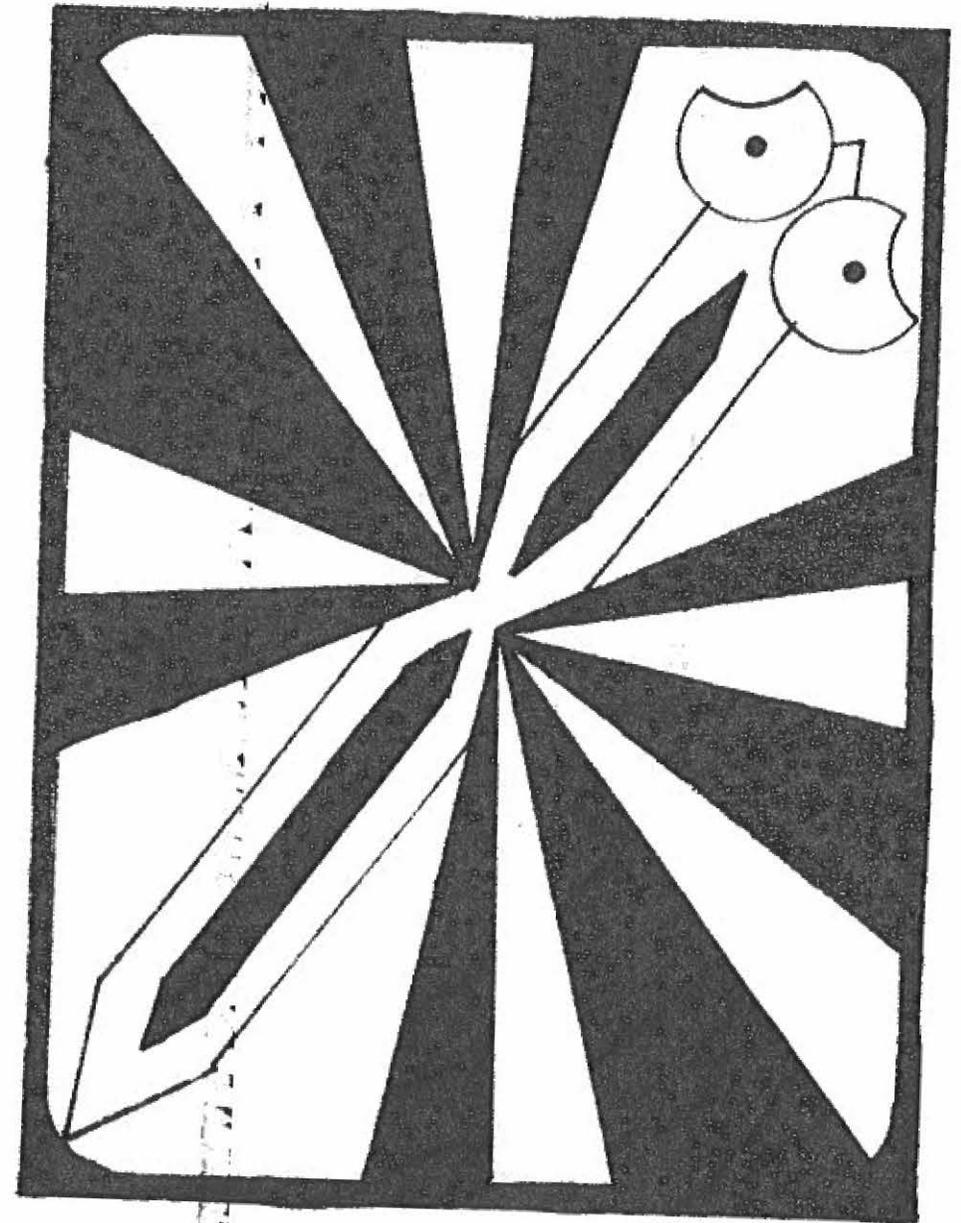
'coldly willing/ to smash the ball past
those who bought the park '

The increasing humanity of Lowell's poetry may appear to be only superficial, extending mainly to subject matter rather than treatment. 'R.F.K.' is a figure well suited to Lowell's concept of historical drama, a man condemned not by action but by the cumulative inheritance of disaster which surrounds him -

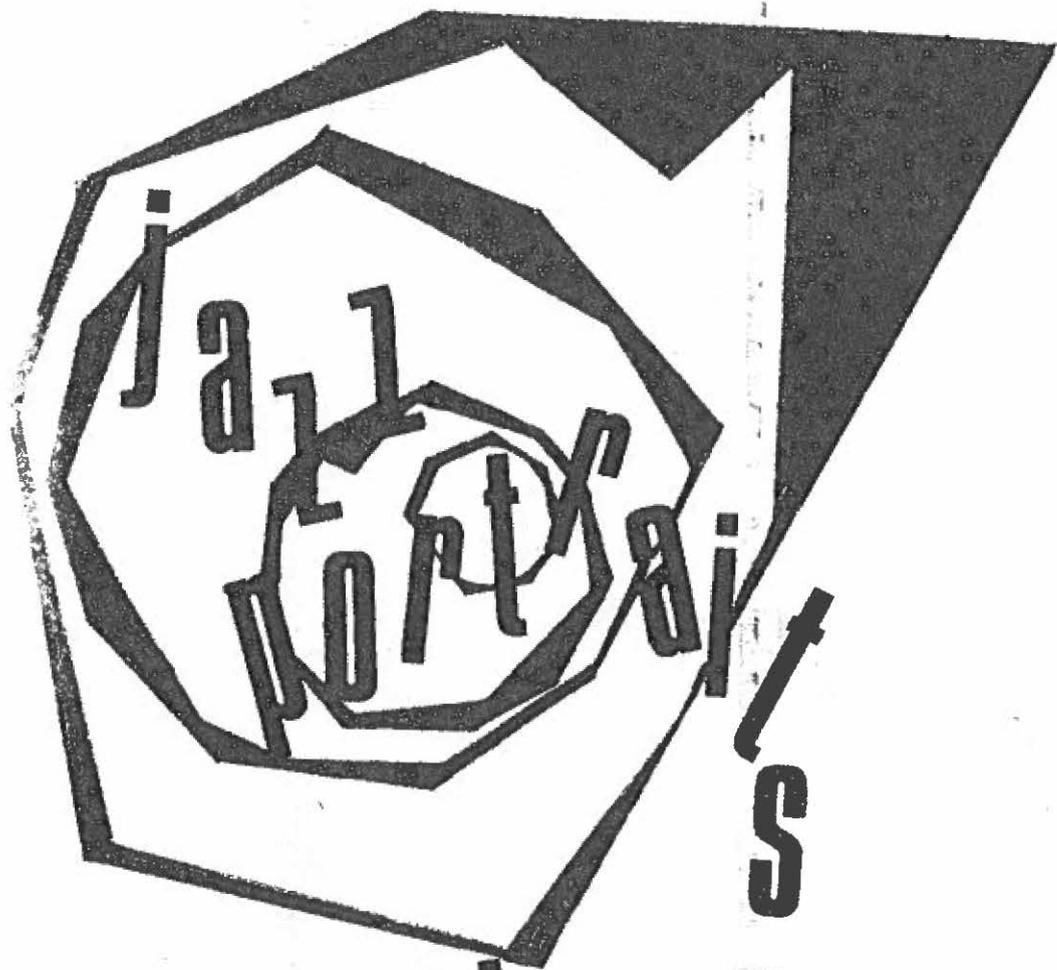
'Doom was woven in your nerves, your shirt,
woven in the great class'

At first Lowell appears a man of fluctuating ideals but in actual fact he is remarkably consistent. Alterations in the dogmatic acceptance of religion only reveal religion as a symptom of something more deeply felt by Lowell, a 'loyalty to the unreal.' The historic context of contemporary thought and action is also still a distinguishing feature of the poet and his period of intense personal conflict has only served to unify his personality so that he now has some measure of that authoritative position which he originally required. The sense of history, like religion, is used by Lowell as a literary implement to provide allegorical dimensions to spontaneous, evocative subjects. In this manner he is very much in command of the art form in which he is involved and this command allows full scope for the confident energy which keeps his poetry from a meaningless disintegration.

Miles Buxton.



The Hour-glass-blown
spider.



edward
brathwaite

1

BASIE

Hunched, hump-backed, gigantic,
the pianist presides above the
rumpus. his fingers clutch the

chords, dissonance and discord vie
and vamp across the key-
board; his big feet beat

the beat until the whole joint
rocks. it is not romantic;
but a subtle fingering exudes a sweet exotic

fragrance, now and then; you'll
recognise the odour if you listen well.
This flower blooms and blossoms 'till

brash boogie-woogie hordes come
bourgeoning up from hell,
blind and gigantic.

2

BILLIE HOLIDAY

She's dark and her voice sings
of the dark river. her eyes
hold the soft fire that only the warm
night knows. her skin is musky and soft.

she travels far back, explores
ruins, touches on old immemorial legends
everyone but herself had forgotten. she
becomes warrior and queen and keeper of the tribe.

5

TRANE

Propped against the crowded bar
he pours into the curved and silver horn
his old unhappy longing for a home.

the dancers twist and turn
he leans and wishes he could burn
his memories to ashes like some old notorious
emperor

of rome. but no stars blazed across the sky when
he was born
no wise men found his hovel: this crowded bar
where dancers twist and turn,

holds all the fame and recognition he will ever
earn
on earth or heaven. He leans against the bar
and pours his old unhappy longing in the saxophone.

6

SO LONG, CHARLIE PARKER

The night before he died
the bird walked on and played
his heart out: notes fell
like figure-forming pebbles
in a pond. he
was angry; and we
knew he wept to know his time had come
so soon. so little had been done
so little time to do it in

he wished to hold the night from burning
all time long. but time

is short
and life
is short
and breath
is short.

And so he s
slowed and
slurred and
stopped. his
fingers fixed
upon a minor key;
then sliped.

his bright eyes blazed
and bulged against the death in him
then knocking at the door.
he watched:
as one will watch
a great clock striking time
from a great booming midnight bell:
the silence slowly throbbing in
behind the dying bell.

the night before he died
the bird walked on
through fear, through faith,
through frenzy that he tried
to hide: but could not stop
that bell.

7

BASS

Bassey the bassist
loves his lady
hugs her to him
like a baby
plucks her
chucks her
makes her boom
boom.

waltz or tango
bop or shango
watch them walk
or do the 'dango:
bassey and his lovely lady.

bassey and his lovely lady
like the light and not the shady;
bit by boom
they build this beauty;
bassey and his lovely lady.

THE CRITIC

Squat with his hot
check shirt,
the listener
fits on his new
wide-angled ears.
now he can really hear.
Like bear
with honey
is he
with sound.
melodies were ne'er so
sweet, nor harmonies
complete, as now
he sits with his new-
fangled electronic kit
to listen. it
is a pity that his theories
dictate his joys,
because he hears
not heavenly melodies,
empryeane and dim,
but highly refined dissonance
and noise.

Edward Brathwaite.

FIRST DARK

Limp, I pillow on stone. Father
I seek your face in the desert.
My want cries up to that crater
Which carries your image and hurt.

Contained in this innocent grass
Rank origins clog up my pores.
No constellation is guiltless.
Amazed the sky breaks out in stars.

And I am man proud, watching this moon
These stars funnel up to reflect
Me, shining back from lost-heaven,
Sustaining some terrible past

Universe I lived in before
She seeded forbidden and reaped
The sorrow-filled creatures we are.
Lord, your light shone down uncensored

Until we ate darkness and were.

Anthony McNiell.

ON THE COAST by WAYNE BROWN.

Published by ANDRE DEUTSH. 105 Great Russell
Street. London WC1. England.
£ 3.50.

'I would write poems like main-sails drawn
up the bent masts of motor-schooners
floundering in the remu's flow:
held clear of that chaos but quivering
holding the strain below.'
(from REMU)

And he does. Almost all of Wayne Brown's
poems are intricate metaphors and use a subtle
irony to 'make their points'. They work, often
beautifully, on the superficial surface but
the real meanings are hidden, you have to dig
for them.

This almost metaphysical tone is set in the
opening poem, 'THE APPROACH' What is approaching
or being approached is not specified, but one
gets the feeling, as in many of the other poems,
of a concern with death, with a God, with the
unknown;-

'Something's underground alive.

And thats all you need to know
For now: how you come down
Is your business.'

This image of a subteranean power is repeated
in 'BALLAD OF THE ELECTRIC EEL':-

'Now he is king of the mineral dark,
Earths kicking time bomb, ins t like a
diamond'

And in the final poem, 'THE WITNESS', for me one of the most powerfull in the book, we see a creature who rises out of the horizen;-

'Always when the warring tides
ebb at sunset, someone comes.
At first you can hardly see
him: a black nut in the surf '

this figure personifies the race memory of the reader, its universal but particularly African...:-

'Man he is your memory,
that each sunset moves among
the jetsam of the tribe, the years
widowed past grief, yet lingering, '

Many things are left to your imagination in this set, the poems often leave you hanging i in mid-air, one step beyond the edge of the precipice. I kept finding myself re-reading a poem to see if I'd 'got it'.

Often I had to accept a poem on the one 'apparent' level but this in itself is enough. The poems are beautifully written, his images are superb;-

'Fat butterfly, fleshed in sin;
fat Nazi' (from DEVIL FISH)

'Eel lay at the bottom of the ocean
like a shambles of coils in an empty
car-park '
(from Ballad of the Eel)

His talent for description is also best illustrated by quotation:-

'The woman is barren. And the blackbirds
have had a hard time this year with the
drought
and fallen like moths to the field's floor '
(from DROUGHT)

'The light founders. Rain puckers the ocean.
I see a small town, found, then forgotten,
where liners no longer come.'

(from 'ON THE COAST')

'The sun drifts off, an abandoned balloon
gone high up and cold as a dawn-breaking
moon.'

(from TRAFALGER SQUARE)

The most concrete aspect of his poetry is found where he reflects on his race, his colour, his society - but these are not the usual 'hard done by black man' poems he is a much better poet than that. Rather he looks behind the facade to see why tension exists, why people change or aspire to positions that have no value, no honesty.

In 'SNOW' we see the poet looking across from his house to his neighbours and seeing the daughter undress. This happens regularly and she knows it happens;-

'She won't turn her back, her silhouete
knows, the ripper was black, was black.
I am a rock, climbing to midnight.
'There's a white night between my
house and yours, sister, we were
never meant for each other.'

and in 'RED HILLS' he X-rays the plush,
middle class area of Kingston.

'.....Red hill scar, red
nigger preserve,
our roses bloom whitely here'

and in 'THE WITNESS' he perhaps sees himself;-

'on the well lit train
to a colonial future
narrow as rails '

This isn't an easy book to read, not if you want to 'understand' what the man is saying. His concern for death and time force him to work in abstract terms, he is skeptical of men and their blind certainties, their frailty:-

'Men will have their truths, their
tidy legends,
their ends.'

(from Mackerel)

It is however definitely worth making the effort to read this book, worth enjoying just for the finely crafted language and precise precise descriptions....worth spending the time to dig into it, testing to see where you come up, or if you do.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

JENNIFER BELL is a young Jamaican currently studying at the School of Education, UWI.

EDWARD BRATHWAITE is a professor of History at UWI, Mona, editor of 'SAVACOU' and co-editor of 'BIM'. His poetry publications include the trilogy 'RIGHTS OF PASSAGE' 'MASKS' and 'ISLANDS' (Oxford University Press)

WAYNE BROWN is a journalist and critic from Trinidad, currently living in Kingston. His first book 'ON THE COAST' was a Poetry Book Society recommendation.

MILES BUXTON has contributed stories and articles to various magazines, he is currently working on his Ph.D. in Philosophy at Nottingham University.

GEORGE CAIRNCROSS is editor of 'BOGG' and 'Fiasco Publications' and has two booklets out from them.

MARY CROOKS is a young Jamaican artist from St. Anns Bay, she is currently refusing to be taught anything by anyone !

ANDREW DARLINGTON lives in Yorkshire, has contributed poetry, prose and graphics to many magazines and has a booklet 'DEAF EYES' published by Fiasco Publications.

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PATTI HINDS hails from Grenada.

ANTHONY McNIELL has been widely published in the Caribbean, he is currently working on his PhD in English at the University of Massachusetts. Publications include 'REEL FROM "THE LIFE MOVIE" ' (SAVACOU PUBLICATIONS)

STEVE SNEYD is editor of Ludds Mill - a poetry magazine cum street paper in Huddersfield, England. Publications include 'ICARUS LANDING' (Hilltop Press) and a new set, 'WALKING DOWN JERUSALEM' (Marconi, Bandage & LintPress)

PAYMENT DEFERRED

I received a bill this morning
informing me that my body was still
not fully paid for,
I still owe a payment for my legs.
I havent the money
and I've 14 days to pay in
if I don't they'l reposses them.

I've grown attached to my legs.
Where can I get the money ?
Perhaps if I run away,
they might forget about it,
or would a debt collector
want second hand legs ?

George Cairncross.

NOW 2. St. Anns Bay. July 1973.