

Gail Sher

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KARAMU

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KARAMU

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FOR BART

II

Feeling the mule
tighten.

Finite arms
placed squarely
on the chair.

Placate me.

Stroke my hair.

I can flounder
from that
cookoo.

Fixed to her
skin. Help me
understand.

A amount of people.

His brink &
my brink.

The candle is
open.

whose hairs become
my goblet.

Once I pray
it is gone.

My song my
component.

The tonsure
violence concurs.

Such hands are
travesties.

Which the woodcock.

Only my tirelessly
calling to her.

Rocking &
calling
the pulpit.

*

Its embryo down.
Her strand is there.

Patted. Patted.
Hence from herself.

Whose vendetta is
voices.

Being my dust
passed the hero.

Two positions I
acknowledge.

Remote from my
terror my Christ
was nothing.

Figure my role.

Rabid & approximate.
There I am.

How he stands
essentially defeated.

*

Utter the toy.
Shatter & replay
it.

Which was elastic
doll babies.

Prettily the settee
hunts your lips.

Place it on my
thigh.

Methodology & me.

Beside myself.

Strangers are aware
of my vulnerability.

Each of my throats
wish us
inside.

Omnivorous & withheld
from me.

Her talons are a mood
in my withdrawing
body.

—Gail Sher

tramen 4

Charles Bernstein

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Ted Pearson

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For Bart

Is something
that I am
a warrior.

I am immune
and withdrawn.
It must be
very still
to feel
I might be
torn. Gelling sub-
liminally
achieving my own
wet hair.
But outside
I just
say hello.
I say hi and
sit down.

A portion of
my body is
excluded and
dead. That which
ignores this
is also
dead.

Normal passion
but I would
want to
continue it
see where
it goes.

Generalized words
are not especially
sensitive to me
nor directed
toward me.

Seeing the person's
access or feel
this is not
the case
infinitely.

I stand shod
within the boy.
Erase the rain
to see myself
be alone.

Have my genes
if others
ask.

Each night
neither belittled
nor sad.

Thereby proud
with a sense
of owning
others.

My asthma
wings.

Fish are
tight.

The lamb is
starlit.

/

I can eagerly
see sheer
wood.

The blade itself
lips & gutters
by the
magazine.

Is the bane
convex.

Snorts he
tips fasten
it.

Fallow walls
plasticity that
would cover
her too.

Mellowing beauteous
crackers.

I offer
sweets.

That form of
towel.

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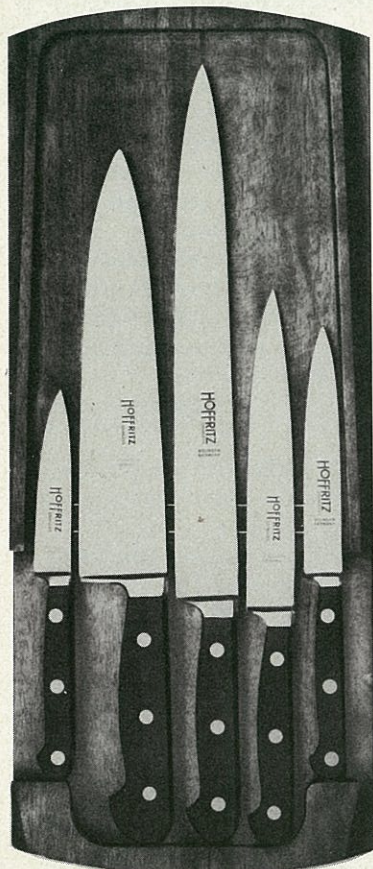
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COVER: Golden, sweet carrots are a perfect addition to winter dinners. They're used to flavor the Venison Hash on page 53. Watercolor by Sara A. Barbaris.

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THE SPONGE METHOD



Bakers are rediscovering an effective, old-fashioned technique for fragrant loaves of bread with a tangy, yeasty flavor and good texture. Any bread recipe can be adapted to the sponge method with no extra effort.

BY GAIL SHER

Besides the underwater creature from Tarpon Springs or a cake leavened with eggs, *sponge* can mean a batter used in the first step of an extremely successful bread-making technique. The sponge method of bread-making is simple and effective and produces a good-textured, fragrant product richly imbued with the characteristic yeast

Gail Sher, author of From a Baker's Kitchen (Aris Books, 1984), was a baker for many years at San Francisco's Tassajara Bakery.

flavor of a superior loaf.

Made by whipping air into a mixture of yeast, liquid, and a small quantity of the bread recipe's flour, the sponge rises before the rest of the ingredients for the bread are added and the dough kneaded. We tested the recipe for Pear Bread with Pepper included here. We compared it to the same recipe made by the conventional method (all ingredients mixed together at the outset, two rises in the bowl and one rise in the bread pans) and the conventional method with one additional rise in the bowl. The resulting loaves required equal baking times and looked identical. The bread made with the sponge method, however, was tastier and had a more yeasty aroma.

The sponge method succeeds because it makes it easier for the dough to "ripen" fully before shaping and baking. Though recently out of favor due to the advent of quick-rise techniques, the sponge method increases preparation time only minimally.

Fully ripened dough, which will produce the best loaf of bread, requires several chemical changes in the dough prior to shaping. During ripening, enzymes in the yeast break down the starch in the flour first to compound sugars, next to simple sugars, and finally to carbon dioxide gas and alcohol. The sponge method essentially gives the dough a head-start by providing the optimal conditions for ripening prior to the remaining "business as usual" steps of bread-making. The warm liquid encourages yeast activity, and the flour and sweetener nourish the yeast. The absence of inhibitors such as salt, shortening, and any of the bread recipe's heavier ingredients in the sponge helps the yeast grow quickly. Since the sponge contains only a small amount of flour, it is easier for the yeast to make this mixture rise than a heavier dough. Whipping the sponge increases its oxygen, which also stimulates yeast activity. The sponge gives the dough a good stretch with less yeast than other methods, and it is easier to incorporate the remaining ingredients into the frothy sponge than it is to combine all

of the ingredients together at the outset.

The sponge method also facilitates the fermentation necessary for the best bread flavor and texture. For the dough to develop proper elasticity, the molecular structure of the flour's protein must be rearranged. Gluten, an elastic protein, begins to develop while the sponge stretches, and it develops further during kneading. Gluten results from the combination of certain flour components in the presence of liquid. The three insoluble proteins in flour—glutenin, gliadin, and globulin—and the two soluble proteins—proteose and an albumin—all interact closely in the dough. Fermentation during ripening mellows their toughness and causes some of the insoluble protein to become soluble, which helps the dough to develop elasticity and also ultimately determines the bread's ability to hold moisture and stay fresh. The gluten molecules link together and form elastic filaments that trap carbon dioxide and help keep the other ingredients suspended. As the yeast grows, the filaments of gluten stretch to contain new yeast cells and their gaseous by-products. Without development of gluten, the air would escape, causing the bread to lose its porousness.

The protein changes affect flavor, as does the development of acidity during fermentation. The longer the sponge is left before adding the remaining ingredients, the more "sour" flavor develops. In fact, the sponge is somewhat like a sour-dough bread starter. A difference between the methods is that all the sponge mixture is used in one batch of dough, while only a portion of the sourdough starter is used, and the remaining starter is replenished and reserved for more loaves at another time.

Acidity also increases dough volume. The sponge dough is even easier to knead than conventional dough because the starch of the flour gets more time to soften in the sponge, and the gluten, more time to develop. The purpose of kneading is to develop gluten; the bread will require less kneading the more the gluten is already developed. In our test, the bread made with the sponge method required 20 percent less kneading than the bread made by the conventional method.

The time needed for ripening varies depending on the flour, but cannot be hurried simply by increasing the amount of yeast. While adding more yeast will produce sufficient gas and create a big loaf, all the chemical changes needed for ripeness won't have occurred, and the bread will lack the rapid pungency of ripe,

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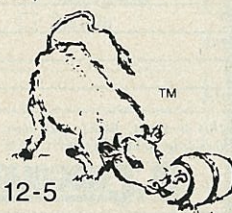
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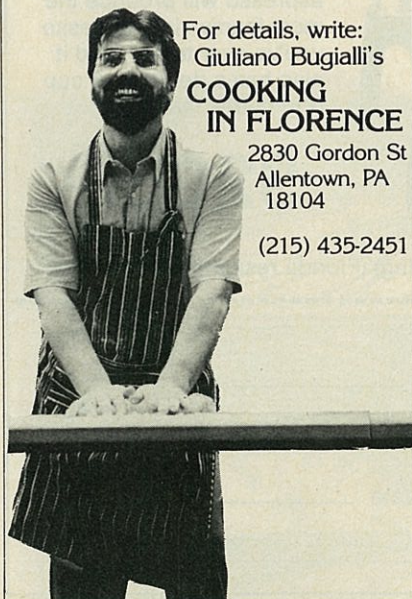
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long-process dough. These changes begin while the sponge is set aside for an hour or two—or more or less time up to eight hours, depending on your schedule. The remaining ingredients are added, and the bread-making proceeds as in any other recipe. Ripening actually occurs throughout the entire bread-making process until the heat of baking kills the yeast, and will occur without a sponge, although not as readily. The sponge method is a practically foolproof way to guarantee full ripening. You can compensate for lack of a sponge by more vigorous kneading to develop gluten. The beauty of the sponge method is that the sponge does much of the work itself.

With any bread-making method, if you consistently use similar ingredients and allow a suitable fermentation period, you will soon become able to recognize the optimum point of ripeness in the rising pattern. Since gluten becomes paler as it stretches and matures, ripe dough shows a lightness and brightness of color. The crumb of a finished bread made with ripe long-process dough will have a noticeable sheen. Another indication of ripeness is increase in volume, although volume alone cannot accurately measure ripeness. A dough doubles in volume after the first rise, but is not ripe at that point.

Ripe dough—whether made by the sponge method or not—is elastic and stretches easily. The dough softens as it ferments and can be molded with little pressure. Its texture is fine and made up of thin, delicate strands. Ripe dough also exudes a distinct, pungent aroma that results from the fermentation.

If, once the bread is baked, the crumb has a poor color or a very open grain with large holes, or if the crust is overly dark, the dough was probably underripe. The taste, too, can be disappointing because fermentation is necessary to produce the acidity that creates the almost tangy sweetness of bread made from long-rise ripened dough.

There can be, however, too much of a good thing: if the dough ferments too long, it will lose its elasticity. The sugars will be used up, and the crust will be pale.

The sponge method, like other methods, can be adapted to suit your schedule. If time doesn't permit you to continue at any point in the process, simply refrigerate the sponge or the dough. Refrigeration will slow but not stop the yeast growth and gluten fermentation, and so the yeast's activity can continue for a longer time. This allows you to make your bread over several days if necessary. Simply punch down the dough every so often

to renew its air and prevent the yeast from suffocating from excessive amounts of carbon dioxide and alcohol. Punching down is also important because if the dough rises too long, the glutenous fibers can be stretched to the breaking point. Broken strands can't be reunited, and the resulting loaf will be coarse and heavy. Oil the surface of the dough periodically to prevent a crust from forming. Allow the dough to return to room temperature (which may take three or four hours) before kneading or shaping. Unbaked, shaped loaves can rise in the refrigerator and then go directly into the oven.

You can convert any bread recipe to the sponge method by making a sponge first with the warmed liquid, the sweetener, yeast, and about one third to one half of the recipe's total flour. Air is whipped into the sponge with a whisk or wooden spoon to make it billowy. The sponge then rests at room temperature while the chemical changes begin. Forty-five minutes to two hours is generally an adequate time period for resting, although letting it rise a bit longer or shorter will not harm the bread. (After eight hours, however, the yeast in the sponge exhausts itself.) Once the sponge has rested, you simply add the remaining ingredients and then proceed with the instructions for kneading, letting rise, shaping, and baking given in the following sponge-method recipe for Pear Bread with Pepper.

PEAR BREAD WITH PEPPER

- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup honey
- 2 cups lukewarm pear juice
- 1 package dry yeast
- 5 cups unbleached, white bread flour
- 4 teaspoons salt
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup puréed pears (about 2 pears)
- 1 cup dried pears, softened 1 hour in boiling water to cover, drained, chopped
- $\frac{1}{3}$ teaspoon black pepper
- 2 cups whole-wheat flour
- 1 egg mixed with 1 teaspoon water for glaze
- Cornmeal for dusting

1. For the sponge, put honey in a large mixing bowl and stir in warm pear juice. Add yeast and 3 cups of the white bread flour, 1 cup at a time, and beat mixture well after each addition. Whip 100 strokes to incorporate a lot of air. Mixture should look spongy. Cover bowl well with a warm, damp towel or plastic wrap so that



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the sponge does not lose moisture and set aside at slightly cool room temperature, 45 minutes to 2 hours, to suit your schedule.

2. From this point on, be careful not to lessen strength and elasticity of dough by cutting or tearing. Fold in salt, butter, pureed pears, softened dried pears, pepper, whole-wheat flour, and all but ½ cup of the remaining white bread flour, sprinkling or pouring ingredients into center of sponge and folding batter over from outer edges with your hands. Continue folding until dough holds together and begins to clean itself off sides of bowl. Transfer dough to floured work surface (excess flour from bowl will probably be enough for the initial flouring). Dough will be somewhat ragged and limp.

3. Knead dough, incorporating extra flour little by little. Less and less flour will be necessary and finally no flour at all will be needed to prevent sticking. Scrape kneading surface and add scrapings to mound of dough. Continue kneading 8 to 10 minutes until dough becomes smooth and elastic and an indentation made with a finger vanishes rapidly.

4. Butter or oil bowl and put dough into it. Turn dough over, making sure all surfaces are coated with butter or oil. Cover bowl with warm, damp cloth or plastic wrap and set aside until doubled in size and an indentation made with a finger remains, 1½ to 2 hours.

5. Punch dough down, using firm, hard strokes to release all air. Set aside again until dough is doubled in volume and an indentation made with a finger remains, about 1 hour.

6. Punch dough down and remove from bowl. Knead it a little to release all air and set aside for 5 minutes so that gluten relaxes. Divide dough in half and set mounds of dough aside for 5 minutes.

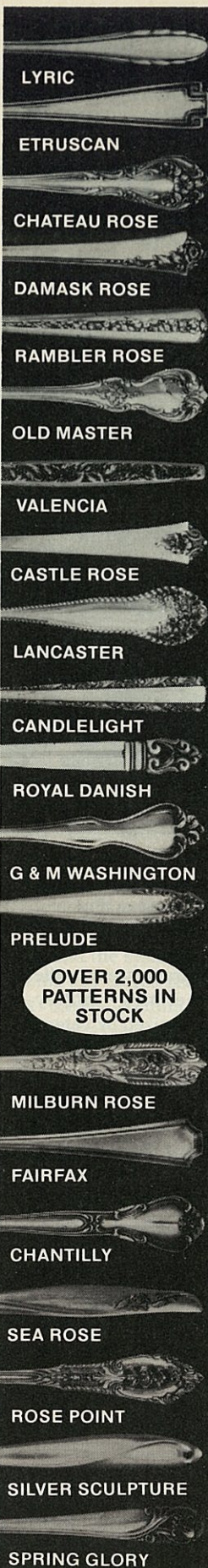
7. Butter 2 8- by 4-inch loaf pans.

8. Shape loaves and turn into prepared pans, seam side down. Press dough firmly into corners and bottoms of pans. Cover pans with warm, damp cloths to prevent skins forming on loaves and set aside to rise until center of each loaf is level with top edge of pan, about 45 minutes. Do not allow to overrise.

9. During rising, heat oven to 350°F.

10. Using a sharp knife or razor, slash top of each loaf decoratively with shallow slits. Brush with glaze and sprinkle lightly with cornmeal. Bake loaves in preheated oven on center rack until they are deep golden, 35 to 40 minutes. Tapping the bottom of a loaf should produce a hollow sound. Transfer to racks until cool, about 3 hours.

Yield: 2 loaves



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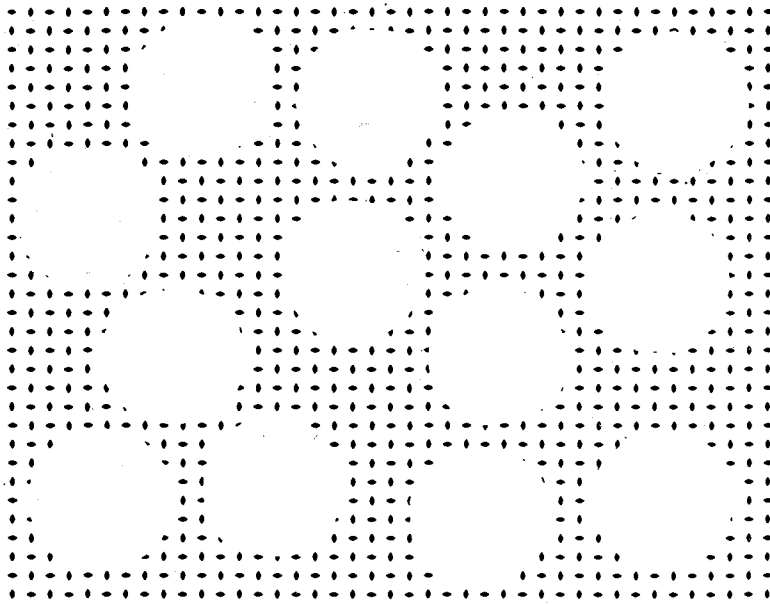
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GAIL SHER

Chests in exact spiritual
(ostrich) is the steep
person.

The bundled dish. Woken
and woken. Slightly grouse
stubbles twirling as a
part of things.

Nighty spuds laugh.

Plate after plate. Sifts
of her a.m.

Steels queues (possibly)
addict.

Tongues wrists claps
(guavas) in the old
car.

As a path. Gentlelike
among the car.

Homes sheets like circular
(cinder) chairs.

Strides I bruise.

Is pigmy fall as
she dug the way.

To gaze a nerve. He so
dubbed.

We two. Crack. Mothers
carcass jealousy.

*(What follows is a short introductory
section to an untitled work in progress)*

Aware of this as a social act which the presence of another person demands.

Useful equals funny within this code. What is left in the effete aspires inward.
The drawing motion of a straw against some bottom liquid. Its keel is
obstreperous.

Walking is uncomfortable as the air turns cold.

Talking about plants his tone is buoyant as if the relation were a distant one
(the place of concern at a tangent to the subject.) Another time they climb a
hill the foliage angling stubbornly.

What was fake held apart loosely. The room is without lights and without background
for this encounter.

She opened the gate and carefully closed it so that several minutes passed.

It was just a memory, the desolation a past occurrence involving her. Thus she
watched carefully noticing the concrete and the marbled patterns that the sun
made on it.

A large man in delicate shoes.

Only his thighs and hips are visible which is babyish she thought. She adjusts
the switches of the heater carefully. Then thinking of this finickiness, turns
them off.

Later he removes everything from the table replacing the soiled cloth.

Shirts are pushed together. Shoes are thrown on an upper shelf.

Some topple over and seem dusty in the dim hall light.

Curves of energy jackknife so that pressure stutters to & fro, coursing & meandering unpredictably. She feels this in her chest and finds it useful suddenly.

(A child fells a jar nearby.)

Sight slithers over and vanishes into memory.

Which proxy compels deceit. More is a potential that solidifies mentally.

Lacks identity like boiling water lacks identity.

A radio from another room having something circumscribed allows the same desolate space. A voice begins and lessens in what circulates through this.

He squats before her applying attention restfully. Once or twice he asks a question. It is unsurged.

Doing something purposefully or doing something tight as a way of surrounding himself.

Paint had been splattered on the steps giving a dingy feeling. The hall itself lined with thin green carpet juts off to the right.

She is aware of this and also of the plate of food off to his right. The section of the room is broader here several windows and a small hall exaggerating this effect.

Poetry Flash

POETRY FLASH •

THE BAY AREA'S POETRY CALENDAR & REVIEW



Joanne Kyger in Venice, California. Photo credit: Alastair Johnston.

Ad Libbing

□ ALASTAIR JOHNSTON

GOING ON: *SELECTED POEMS 1958-1980* by Joanne Kyger, Dutton, New York 1983, 86 pages, \$5.95 paper.

IT WAS ANNOUNCED AT THE PARTY IN HONOR of *All This Every Day*, in December 1975, that the poet, Joanne Kyger, would not be giving a reading from her new book but would instead give "intimate" readings to members of the crowd at large. I was standing next to Jenny Dorn when Joanne approached and, holding up her book like a purdah, looked over it at me and said:

*I want a smaller thing in mind
like a good dinner*

*I'm tired of these big things happening
They happen to me all the time.*

The Japanese haiku poets, Basho and Issa, always tested a poem by slipping it into conversation. If it passed unnoticed in talk, it was a success. For them the most important aspect of poetry was its capacity to correct and refine the commonplace. As Buddhists, too, they were always looking for the true nature of an object in order to establish true symbolic correlation between themselves and the object. Their simple connections appear to make even the stone Buddha sensate.

The most difficult aspect of this Buddhist poetry,

however, is the abandonment of the poet's personality, whether it's subsumed into the objects s/he is identifying with or eliminated (as far as possible). It's this lack of "first person" subjectivity that's apt to trouble the "Me" generation reader or contemporary consumer of poetry.

Though a Buddhist poet, Joanne implies there's nothing to it: Visiting the Dalai Lama with Allen Ginsberg, he pressed the spiritual leader with questions about how much he meditates.

"I don't have to," he replied.

Twenty years later, Joanne notes another Buddhist poet, Phil Whalen, worrying his prayer beads. When she asks him which mantra he is reciting he says, "Oh you don't need any of that in Zen, you can just *play* with the beads." Reaffirming a Taoist truth that has become a part of every day life on the West Coast.

Joanne is not a latter-day dabbler in Buddhism though. She studied Zazen in Japan, received a degree in Ikebana from Tokyo University and started writing poetry with the 'first wave' (which was started by Alan Watts and D.T. Suzuki in the late '50's). Her first poems are very formal, written out of her dreams and readings in Homer.

It took some years for her own voice to assert itself after the early success of the projections from the "Homer-dome." The "real" voice has a frivolous tone, mocks itself for "yakking," and doesn't resurface till the poet has gained confidence in its power to evoke humor and appear genuinely conversational without being

continued on page 7

National Writers Union

□

STEVE HELLMAN

FOUNDING CONVENTION OF THE NATIONAL WRITERS UNION, New York City, National Writers Union c/o Media Alliance, Bldg. D, Fort Mason, San Francisco, CA 94123 (415) 929-7149

JUST WHEN HIS SELDOM-SEEN FRIENDS MIGHT have given up on him for good, poet Etheridge Knight turned up last May Day in Brooklyn at the founding convention of the National Writers Union.

What-ho! It was unlikely that his mercurial reputation landed Knight inside the serious, nationwide assembly of writers. Yet there among the delegates from Oklahoma was the Indiana ex-con, editor of the landmark 1970 *Black Voices From Prison*, poet and teacher. Knight looked fit and pinned to his sweater was an NWU button. Add union member to his identities.

Poets were also on hand from NWU locals in Washington, D.C., Boston, Upstate New York, New York City and Santa Cruz and San Francisco. The NWU now counts among its 1,600 members, the well known poets Carolyn Forché (Washington, D.C.), Marge Piercy (Boston), Meridel LeSueur (the Heartland), and supporters such as Ishmael Reed (Oakland). Knight was conspicuous at the convention as its most well known poet and only Black.

Poets, however, remain a small portion of the NWU's

continued on page 2

A Question of Origin

GAIL SHER AND MERRY WHITE BENEZRA

LASCAUX, Trike, San Francisco, 1983, 32 pages, \$3.50 paper. "LASCAUX" IS A POEM OF ORIGIN AND SOLACE, a poem readers may wander through. For this purpose, it is chalked into eight "chambers" or sections which correspond to the chambers of the Paleolithic cave from which it derives its name. Each chamber reveals a fresh permutation, devolving from a continuous skein of thought whose themes are (loosely): existence, language, the world as image, death, sexuality and grace. Within each chamber these themes arise with a kind of will to evanescence and unrelenting development, often disintegrating just before the point of their first coherence.

The way images quicken and are distinguished, as though making space for an endlessly further proliferation of images waiting in the wings of existence, reiterates both the experienced movement of the human brain and the underpinnings of a philosophy. It is therefore not arbitrary, not facile and not "surreal."

The language in "Lascaux" is, rather, connected to itself by a kind of prayer, an impelled longing that scaffolds its sometimes gaping structure of utterance:

Well, and this was over
begins the poem,
Instead of an opposite

An ochre car momentarily alone on the turn

the image reaching its passion

The longing implies a search which unearths nothing that can be proved an answer. Yet the act of opening one's eye to "the sign of the/offered world" may create a free moment in which existence itself ("instead/of an opposite") speaks lucidly and candidly if not rationally. And this is how the poem (and the world) is grasped: "feelingly."

This "blindness" might be wrong were it not for the music of "Lascaux" which, like all melody, has its own logic and which carries the poem when sense fails. For music can perhaps be thought of as a pure logic divested of the bothersome friction of words. "Lascaux" is neither entirely divested nor encumbered, but maintains a fine balance between the two possible states. To put it another way, we can imagine the poem as sometimes explicitly appearing to shake its finger at us, but then vanishing elf-like into the foliage:

There is this life insisting

the city as the air

the powerful peddling of matter

— so that the foliage is also heard, and what we thought obscure later reveals itself as wonderfully articulate:

The milk white restraint
our hands as we forward the money
and the reader comprehends what he thought was not susceptible of comprehension.
"Language is beautiful even without us. Once it was put into motion it was beautiful." (Beau Beausoleil)
This is what I mean by solace.
The material words in front of us

Not merely the words themselves as blocks of some kind, but the "motion" of the words, the forms and gestures they are constructed to take and make, and the way these forms and gestures have the power to move us even when they are merely fragmentary—this in itself is beautiful. And each word has this motion, this power of resonation. In a line from "Lascaux" like "Say stand there" the word "say" is beguiling and beseeching, and it works in this line similarly to the way it does in a conventional question like, "Say, have you got the time?" It is like being gently tapped on the shoulder and asked to do a small favor. Our response to what ensues is unbegrudging, and we do what the poet asks even though it may be hard to know, at the end, exactly what it was we did.

Say stand there on the way to work and watch as the cars are brought out from between your hips
Again, this is not a cheap surrealism, a pointless blue grapefruit, but a question of origin and responsibility. Another more subtle word which flourishes in the dispassionate ambiance of "Lascaux" is "the." Grammatically, "the" is simply a word which signals the

specific as against the myriad. Yet this ability of "the" to imply the concrete and present is utilized here with a drama that is quite rare.

The clouds as they are thrown up over us

The form as it values to remain

The first color is black

The first rendering reveals the economy of names
If you say "a form" there is some doubt as to what kind of form you mean. But saying "the form" assumes a shared knowledge and that the reader will, almost without thinking, acknowledge what he has in fact never encountered. Again we are gently tricked into complicity. However, since in truth there is no actual point of reference, the phrase can be seen as a deflection. It stands in its opacity purely for itself. Here once more is a sense of solace, of relief.

Further, there is a list: the clouds, the form, the first color, the first rendering—and each time "the" appears it is to specify that which dissolves before it can be analyzed. Can we trust that we cannot "have"? Here is a way to see.

The list adds up to something. Each stanza beginning "The" forms a discrete entity not unlike a smooth pebble, a coherent whole which defies elucidation but welcomes close handling. This list can be thought of as an ordered collection of small pebbles. The sensual, obdurate "thingness" of each stanza invites a nearly tactile appreciation, yet at the same time the stuttering repetition of "the" creates a rocking motion, a sense of unyielding death and regeneration which suggests an inner breaking up, a formative gnashing beneath the sea calm.

"Lascaux" is preeminently a poem which addresses the most ancient "thoughts" of our flesh and our life. What is language and what is sexual are often intentionally confused, the one propelling and originating the other: "the transgression/that directs speech" and "the menstrual/trace of the letter" and there is a continuing sense of the power of sexuality whether raw ("Your father/parting his legs") or refined ("where such walls curve/to contain") and a deeper respect for its implications: "this long forgiveness."

But the final question is more ancient, for the desire to use language, to touch/procreate, and also the desire to exist are all in fact one desire:

one time some where this begins from lower than our belly

Conception is one urge, whether it be the conception of thought, life, or existence itself. Our breath IS creation, IS origin. We do not "contain" God; we are God, and it is our will to exist and acquire that brings the world (and its pain) into being. "The long forgiveness" is not simply between person and person but between one's self and the created world, one's self and all persons, one's self and one's self. The acceptance of this responsibility and blame opens the door to intimacy:

the meaning of sympathy in the street
and this intimacy is perhaps our deepest form of grace (as it is the grace of the world itself to speak intimately to us), for death is merely "the season/that continues/over itself" and we are bound by the world.
And the world also does speak.
the truck parked east of the river

in an oral angle
and the entrance on the shore of smoke

The world speaks its pain and its beauty; both are exquisite. There is a melancholy, as though the earth itself is fatigued by its labor and its products. It has stood witness to life, chasing its own tail for millenia, marked and augmented by the kill and the hunger the displeasure and the satisfaction

"Lascaux" offers no exact recipe for enlightenment or escape, except that there is a nearly equivalent solace in one possibility: "The see this/in a material way." To see and not pretend, to simply stand and see. This is a universal task insofar as each of us may discover a longing and initiate a search. "Lascaux" is a record of what can, in truth, be found. □

Editor's Note: Beau Beausoleil will read at Cody's Books in Berkeley on July 20. See calendar for details.

Be Like the Rain

BYRON BELITSOS

THE WILD OLIVE TREE & THE BLUE CAFE by Bert Meyers, Jazz Press/PapaBach Editions, 1982, 116 pages, \$5.95 paper. TWO SHORT BOOKS, THE WILD OLIVE TREE—a lyrical testament of great purity, and The Blue Cafe—a shorter idiosyncratic collection, combine to make this posthumous volume by Bert Meyers. Meyers died of cancer in 1979 and Denise Levertov said of him: "His death at the height of his powers leaves one sore and impoverished."

I came away from an evening of reading these poems with affection for both the man and the poet. His insights are intimate, as if whispered; his images are fresh and clear, because arisen in a compassionate mind; his occasional anger and even rage seem appropriate and wise in that background.

Bert—one wants to call so warm and humble a poet by his first name—worked as a picture framer for many years after teaching himself poetry in his 20's. The elegance with which he sometimes frames his poetic images is something astonishing: there is a just-so touch of finesse, which can be heightened by his choice of simple objects: a pliers, an old dog, a pencil sharpener, an ash tray. Of each Bert takes an insightful, compassionate snapshot.

At first one is taken aback with the directness with which he unloads his disillusionment with the greater world beyond these intimate perceptions. "These Days" ends with this vision:

Lies! so many lies!
Windows malignant with things.
When at last the nail strangles the hammer and even the ant howls.

The anger recurs sparingly, though vividly:
I'm a coat hanger
Twisted with rage

Or in the conclusion of his playful and at times ecstatic "All Around Me":

This world's painted on a glass that has to break
I can still pay the rent and the roads aren't lined with corpses yet.

As if to heal himself of this despair, Meyers consistently takes up the pen of the purely lyrical poet. His strategy is revealed in the opening poem:

Be like the rain that wears a ragged coat and finds a lamp in the smallest stone and sings for nothing from street to street.

To extinguish the sense of separate selfhood, to "sing for nothing", to find delight in the smallest pebble; this is the lyric poet's alternative to the greater world in which "Nobody's honest/nothing matters." Meyer's preference for an egoless stance is shown also in "Spleen":

Sometimes I just hang around like a dead man's coat or a vacant lot that trembles when construction crews pass.

And this empty selfhood then passes into moods of extreme detachment:

I go to a coffee shop and sit for hours to watch a window's silent film— people, scrawled and erased on a long, grey page.

continued on page 7

CORRECTION

The following section (beginning with "Since Norse believes") was inadvertently deleted from "Norse Cuts Up," a review of Beat Hotel by Harold Norse. It should have appeared as follows:

Since Norse believes we are limited only by our minds, the time locus of Beat Hotel is not just 1960-63 Paris but all past/future/everywhere in the universe. This expansiveness is a primary code of the "hippy" period (Norse made first use of this term, modulating it from "hipster," but in reference to hip bones) as in dialogue such as:

"Occultism & dope keep the family together.
"Magic . . . alchemy . . . acid . . . sex . . .
dope . . . that's love . . .
"No name is real, says Aladdin . . . it's all maya . . .
illusion . . . fiction . . . hallucinated characters in a novel scripted by mad extra-terrestrials with an under developed sense of humor and unlimited mental powers . . .
"He says we're at their mercy . . . but we gotta stay completely stoned for the most gorgeous light & sound show on earth . . . LOVE . . . no harm . . . stay with the Ching—"

Unfortunately, as we now realize, neither drugs nor "staying with the Ching" eliminated war, racism, sexism, homophobia or any other kind of violence. For this, grass-roots community building, not just oracular declamation, would be required. However, the Beat/Hippy did advance some alternative social goals. But Beat Hotel is also in advance of its time in addressing such questions as self-referentiality, commodification, and text-as-painting.

HOW(ever)

Vol. I, No. 1, May 1983

Editor: Kathleen Fraser

Associate Editors: Frances Jaffer, Beverly Dahlen
Contributing Editors: Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Carolyn Burke

WHY HOW(ever)?

And what about the women poets who were writing experimentally? Oh, were there women poets writing experimentally? Yes there were, they were. They were there and they were writing differently and a few of them were chosen and did appear in the magazines for people writing in new forms. And then several women began to make their own experimentalist magazines. What about that? Well, they read each other. But we hardly ever heard about their poems where I was sitting listening. You mean in school? I mean where poems were being preserved and thought about seriously and carried forward as news.

And the women poets, the ones you call experimentalist, were they reading Simone de Beauvoir? Firestone? Chodorow? Irigaray? Some were. They were reading and they were thinking backwards and forwards. They were writing to re-imagine how the language might describe the life of a woman thinking and changing. And the poetry they were writing wasn't fitting into anyone's anything because there wasn't a clear place made for it.

They must have felt displaced. Yes, they must have. They must have felt unreal. Unrealized. Effaced. Did they know it? Yes, they knew it. Did they talk about it? Yes, they talked about it. We were sitting in a writing group two years ago and we talked about it. One year ago, we were sitting there talking about it. Last summer, I was walking around talking to myself about it and feeling displaced and I wrote to one of my scholar friends and asked her about it and she said you are right. There is this gap. But perhaps we don't know how to acknowledge something, how to think about something, unless it resembles what was already there. I thought of Dickinson. I thought of Stein. Woolf and Richardson. Slashes, anarchies, sentences, disruptions. I was listening and

I said to her, but if we could somehow talk to you and tell you about us, would you be interested? Yes, she said, I would be interested.

HOW(ever) proposes to make a bridge between scholars thinking about women's language issues, vis-a-vis the making of poetry, and the women making those poems. HOW(ever) hopes to create a place in which poets can talk to scholars through poems and working notes on those poems, as well as through commentary on neglected women poets who were/are making textures and structures of poetry in the tentative region of the untried.

—Kathleen Fraser

A vehicle for experimentalist poetry—post-modern if you will, to be thought of seriously as an appropriate poetry for women and feminists. The poetry feminists usually eschew, believing that now is the time for women to write understandable poetry about their own lives, and with feeling, with the heretofore undeveloped self in prominent display.

But the myths of a culture are embodied in its language, its lexicon, its very syntactical structure. To focus attention on language and to discover what can be written in other than traditional syntactical or prosodic structures may give an important voice to authentic female experience. Certainly one should be read side-by-side with the other.

Unhappily, most feminist publications have ignored the experimentalist work which women are writing now and have been writing since early in the century. And unhappily, most publications of "new" writing have had little interest in feminist language issues, although some of the women who appear in them have written brilliantly and movingly about their lives as women. We want to publish an exception, however.

—Frances Jaffer

WORKING NOTES FROM GAIL SHER:

Virginia Woolf said something about words having auras. Poets place them in sequence. I would say about the vibrations of a word that poets order them according to their similar intensities. Also interested in concentration as it releases energy in language. Addressing not the conscious understanding but the intelligence of contained experience.

Also as a child she had
wanted to eat

Also as a child she had
wanted to eat.

Without particular motive
(to be) on her own crossing
the street on her own or
going through the door
making an effort to buy
food.

•

Always with amount of energy
she could spend with that
person (son) or even possibly
some other people.

Even simply listening. Not
urged to but that that had
already occurred.

•

Seen by the other people
(during) the day or sometime
during the course of the
day (the driver) calls out
something.

To be phased by this. To
appear calm but actually
to imagine herself
quarreling.

•

Intense expression in
striving for something
(intake) of food
(inheritance) of
something.

Having asked for something
to eat (in) one process
to eat one (particular)
part.

•

In bed for example (always)
perpetuating (striving) in
the midst of any room.

Which (she) as a lonely
person appreciated.

Avenues and walking with
such & such emotion (buses)
where they seem needed.

•

Reversing her terminology
and tendency to want
something from him. (To)
supply food here. (Not)
to move or feel like moving.

With others like her
in the same mood (hiding)
something received from
her.

Delicate relation to her
(discerned) (quarter) of
mind.

•

Children & events of the
day enter her mind. Once
while eating (in) quiet
manner of saying something.

Or being in a hurry to get
somewhere. Arrangement of
food at (moment) of giving
it to her.

By Gail Sher: *As on things (which) headpiece touches the Moslem*,
Square Zero Editions, 1982. *From another point of view the woman
seems to be resting*, Trike Press, 1983. Available from Small Press
Distribution, 1784 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, California 94709.

Pratheoryctice

as i think of rolling up the dogends
looking for papers
i see this terrible thing
thought of as a better life
sometimes i wonder
what is introspection
red white and blue
or through mud and blood
to the green fields beyond
which were the colours on a tie

— Tom Raworth



Going Round

brought here
the birds arise from this leaving

once for these nights
we were rejoicing

they told
this singing

out there mother we are dressed

— Beau Beausoliel

as it happens, a thing, for reasons that don't
include your name. any direction approaches any
body inclines.
a name suffers. what's a thing happens unreasonably.
here upon the floating traffic. things
get done.

— Rick London



Zen

a woman wears feathers
you can hear;
easy, it must be
to be a horn.

If her feet are bare,
no one asks,

"where are your shoes?"

— Jim Wilson



the door
slopes of light
your body
a delay
in glass

— David Gitin

foal the water bush

o
horse

(curled
in)

slice
of
horse

mother

horse

(her
quiet
care)

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nor
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yet

(seed
feeling)

forces
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horse

those
nails/
boy

strand
of
youth

pink

he
horse

tears

he
hung
heavy

— Gail Sher



Hoots Who

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