

Modern Trends of Poetry in the U.S.

By Alan Britt

In every generation the status quo reflects the behavior of the many, the flow of the herd. For the arts, in general, and poetry in particular, the status quo represents little if any change, minimal growth and innovation. According to the status quo, Van Gogh was an undisciplined, ill-tempered bum of sorts; Beethoven wrote string quartets that offended the ears of court patrons; and William Blake was an eccentric, mildly talented engraver who wrote poems that few if any wanted to publish. Except for the engraving part, Walt Whitman was likewise considered eccentric, even perverted, and, therefore, largely ignored as a poet during his lifetime. The United States, in general, has not been kind to its most talented poets: Poe, Dickinson, and Whitman. T.S. Eliot decided that living abroad was preferable to enduring the lack of cultural sensibility exhibited by his contemporaries in the U.S. Suffice it to say that the status quo wouldn't know a visionary poem if it bit them on the nose! Literary awards are routinely distributed to poets who write for popularity. So it goes that the most *prestigious* publishers of poetry in the U.S. are those who receive the lion's share of funding to print attractive journals and books, as well as to advertise said publications and, consequently, sell the most copies to a generally uninspired readership that appears perfectly self-satisfied to remain imaginatively unchallenged.

Alas, in spite of such obstacles to the uniquely creative, there lurks in nooks

and crannies across these vast and diverse United States a healthy and growing

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consortium of visionary poets and publishers necessary to move our poetry forward, thus, enabling it to stake its claim alongside the exciting trends in Europe, Latin America, Africa and Asia. Suffice it to say that poetic visionaries are alive and well all over the U.S. and, as has always been the case, it seems that small and medium presses continue to be the main supporters of innovation; for without such journals and book publishers, groundbreaking poetry would rarely if ever see the light of day. Several journals, for example, both print and cyber, welcome poetry that challenges convention and expands the creative imagination, thus, extending poetic boundaries. In a literary landscape as vast and diverse as the U.S., it is impossible to recognize everyone involved in such poetic innovation, but surely print journals at the forefront of this ongoing revolution include *The Bitter Oleander*, *Osiris*, *pacificREVIEW* and *Skidrow Penthouse*. In the cyber world there are groundbreakers as well: *Ann Arbor Review*, *Deep Tissue Magazine*, *Ken*again*, *Milk Sugar*, *Omega*, *Straightjackets* and *Ygdrasil*. Of the above, *The Bitter Oleander*, *Osiris* and *Skidrow Penthouse* regularly feature translations of contemporary poets from all over the globe, including Chile, China, Ecuador, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Holland, Hungary, Italy, Mexico, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Spain and Switzerland. See the trend? Given their interest in world poetry, it's no wonder that editors Paul B. Roth, Andrea Moorhead, Rob Cook and Stephanie Dickinson encourage innovation from U.S. poets. To borrow a phrase, *all roads lead to creativity!*

In the late 1960's, there was an infusion of world poetry into the U.S. literary

scene that created something of a renaissance. This infusion could also be called a

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transfusion, since it inspired such innovative movements as the Deep Imagists and Immanentism. In fact, the great French poet, Yves Bonnefoy, upon reading *The Immanentist Anthology*, proclaimed immanentist poetry to be the most exciting trend to come out of the U.S. in decades. During this period, translators and editors such as Robert Bly, Duane Locke, James Wright, Jerome Rothenberg, Clayton Eshleman, Willis Barnstone, Michael Hamburger, James Laughlin and W.S. Merwin, to name a few, ripped the provincial blinders off poetry all across the U.S., thus, fueling a subtle revolution that continues to this day.

And so, despite the best efforts of the status quo, with thanks to those visionaries who keep the poetic doors and windows propped wide open for poets from all across the globe, U.S. poets will continue to thrive, will continue to inspire and be inspired by the wonderful creativity flowering from poets such as Alberto Blanco (Mexico), Ruxandra Cesereanu (Romania), Ana Minga (Ecuador), Kristiina Ehin (Estonia), Lorenzo Calogero (Italy), Yang Jian (China), Tóroddur Poulsen (Denmark), Spíros Aravanís (Greece), Fiona Sze-Lorrain (France) and Nicomedes Suárez-Araúz (Bolivia).

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http://www.flaviacosma.com/Val_David.html

Sources

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www.bitteroleander.com and info@bitteroleander.com

Osiris, Andrea Moorhead, Editor, PO Box 297. Old Deerfield, MA 01342
osirispoetry@gmail.com

pacificREVIEW, Kevin Cullen, Editor-in-Chief, San Diego State University, Dept. of English & Comparative Literature in conjunction with San Diego State University Press, 5500 Campanile Drive, MC 8140, San Diego, CA 92182-8141
www.pacificreview.scsu.edu

Skidrow Penthouse, Rob Cook and Stephanie Dickison, Editors, 68 East Third Street, Apt #16, New York, NY 10003 www.skidrowpenthouse.com

Web:

Ann Arbor Review, Fred Wolven, Editor, P. O. Box 344164, Florida City, FL 33034
www.annarborreview.net

Deep Tissue Magazine, Martin Freebase, Editor <http://deeptissue2.blogspot.com>

*Ken*again*, John Delin, Editor
olofblue@aol.com<http://kenagain.freesevers.com/CONTACT.HTML>

Milk Sugar, Chasity Thomas, Editor www.milksugarliterature.com

Omega, Michael Annis, Editor www.howlingdogpress.com

Straitjackets Magazine, Peggy Wheeler, Editor
<http://www.straitjacketsmagazine.com>

Ygdrasil, Klaus Gerken, Editor <http://users.synapse.net/kgerken>