

Poems for Our 20th Anniversary

Various Authors

1986

Poetry has been a part of the Fifth Estate since its origins, so it is with great pleasure that we print these sent to us by The Alternative Press on the occasion of our 20th anniversary. The Alternative Press, Grindstone City, MI 48467, does hand-printed broadsides, postcards, bookmarks, etc. from the pressroom of Ann & Ken Mikolowski and comes in three packets a year for \$15.

BORN TO WORK

Jim Gustafson
Now I was born to work!
To toil endlessly without purpose or true reward.
I've worked as a stone pulverizer,
as a blue-steel actualizer,
as the dude who crawls through tunnels
full of shit to pull the plug on the mess!
I have toiled mindlessly without purpose or true reward.
Born to work! Proud to work.
Every day, day after day.
But I've had some easy jobs.
I've been paid to lay in a hospital bed
and watch Barney and Fred and all them cartoons
and twice a day let 'em suck something
from the middle of my bones.
Oh it hurt,
but they said it was important work,
and I was born to work.
To toil mightily and labor endlessly
without purpose or true reward.
I've done a bit of everything,
worked in all the important industries.
I've juggled white-hot ignorance right out of the furnace!
I was once a juice taster and power tester.
It was a double job for
The Greater American Power and Wine Company.
I was employed to travel the west in a truck

to taste the wine to see if it was fine
to test the power lines
to make sure the juices were flowing
I was paid to piss the wine
on the power line
and if it was on
that was fine and I got
a jolt to my business
but if it wasn't
I was being paid
to drink and piss!
I was born to work!
To toil and guzzle and labor endless without purpose
or true reward!
Born to work!
Born to work!
Born to work!

TURN AROUND

Mick Vranich
the line in the magazine ad
next to the picture of the leg
share the fantasy
thick carpet under the spike heeled foot
an elegant female hand holding
the spray bottle at the knee
when the magazine is found
in some damp basement
the page will carry
that smell of enticement
the mice stop chewing
for a moment
spit out the odorous morsels
reject them
unsuitable for their nest
half chewed high heel
you are the fantasy.

THINKING OF JACK SPICER

Donna Brook
I've been thinking about Jack Spicer especially
how in No. 3 of "Love Poems" in the book Language 1964
he uses the word "rhododendrons"
he says "the drift of rhododendrons"
and I think, Oh Jack Spicer, you rake,
you roue, you raconteur, Jack Spicer,

to put “rhododendrons,” “the drift of rhododendrons”!
but actually I don’t
directly address him.
I could never address Jack Spicer, I wouldn’t even dare
to wave to him from a bus, I just think
about Jack Spicer
and I’m embarrassed I even said roue about Jack Spicer
because actually I don’t even think about Jack Spicer
or know very much about literature or his aesthetics
or the real reasons why he chose “rhododendrons” although
I can see the plant. I think of Jack Spicer
as an alternative experience, you might say, as one thinks
of Spain in the dentist’s chair.

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This is going to hurt for a couple of months, they said,
so why don’t you close your eyes and think of Jack Spicer, don’t
remember how he died or that he did so just
let the rhododendrons drift by.

WOMAN

Faye Kicknosway

There is a woman standing in the doorway. She has sallow skin and hair like metal shavings. Her dress fits her as though it had been dropped onto her from the ceiling. She is fatigued and would like to sit down, but there is only one chair in the room she faces and it is occupied by someone who is asleep. It is a kitchen chair and it is pulled up to a table and the sleeper is bent forward, his arms folded upon the table and his head rested upon his arms. There is a window near the table and the curtain blows out from it, touching the fingers of the hand nearest it. It is raining. There is no fragrance in the rain, no scent which is clear and distinguishable. The woman in the doorway touches her face, remembering how as a girl she liked to walk in the rain with her head turned up into it, her fleshy tongue escaped and protuberant between her open lips, catching the rain into her mouth.

BANNER SPANGLED STAR

Ken Mikolowski

Hailed we proudly so what
Light early dawns the by
See you can say Oh.

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