

# News & Reviews

Fifth Estate Collective

David Watson

Allan Antliff

1999

In his foreword to Clifford Harper's *Designs for Anarchist Postage Stamps: Postage Stamps for After the Revolution*, Colin Ward reminds us that some public institutions are worth saving. No radical activist could deny the immense importance of sending and receiving mail, and what this international public institution has meant to us.

Indeed, one of Kropotkin's examples of admirable, large-scale, essentially non-authoritarian communal activities, Ward points out, was the international postal service. Ward wisely remembers to mention as well the contrasting highly authoritarian structures of the Post Office (which in this country have contributed in their own perverse way to generating such vivid slang as the phrase "to go postal").

As someone who has always appreciated stamps, adorning my blank book journals with them rather than collecting them in any systematic way, I found Clifford Harper's striking postage stamp-style anarchist portraits delightful and inspiring.

Each black and white woodcut is accompanied by a facsimile page of stamps and a representative quote from the person portrayed, and includes portraits of Winstanley, Godwin, Stirner, Bakunin, Kropotkin, Goldman, Oscar Wilde, Zapata and others. It ends with Harper's appealing memoir of his father and uncle, who were postal workers.

Anarchist Postage Stamps is available for £4.50 from Rebel Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1, England.

—Coatimundi (David Watson)

**Etcetera: Correspondencia de la Guerra Social** has published issue number 30, containing articles on the 1997 Spanish "labor reform," the art of photographer Kati Horna (whose documentation of the Spanish Revolution and Civil War has finally begun to attract the attention it deserves. In addition, the issue contains an original and scathing demystification of the famed "Generation of 98" (which included celebrated members of the Western Canon such as the existentialist Unamuno, Angel Ganivet, Azorin and others).

The defeat in the 1898 war with the U.S. divested the Spanish empire of its last few overseas possessions apart from the African colonies, and thus its former imperial "glory," and initiated a famous meditation by its leading intellectual lights on the meaning of the national decline, and on the theme of Spanish identity—the so-called *preocupacion por Espana*.

The authors don't take this *preocupacion* terribly seriously, pointing out that the "enlightened" project of Spanish regeneration was being carried out more profoundly by an increasingly radical and combative working class (promoting literacy, secularism, cultural expansion, free thought) than by the well-intentioned literary and philosophical regeneracionistas, whose confabulation of "an ineffable Spanish 'being' rooted in the Castilian landscape and a rich literary and cultural history, tended to be colonized and reduced to banalities that could be exploited not only by academics but by the literate caste of Spanish fascism. An anthology of texts from the Spanish revolutionary press in the years 1872–1910 follows this mordant critique.

*Etcetera* has also published, in cooperation with Al Margen and Ateneu Llibertari “Poble Sec,” the first Spanish translation of Fredy Perlman’s essay, *The Continuing Appeal of Nationalism* (El persistente atractivo del nacionalismo), with a biographical essay on Perlman by FE staff writer David Watson.

*Etcetera* and its other publications are free (though donations for postage and expenses are welcome and probably needed) from Apartado 163, 08080 Barcelona, Spain.

—DW

**Here and Now** is original and thought-provoking. Number 18 includes Peter Porcupine’s considerations on “why birds have so much fun” as an investigation into the follies of utilitarian biology; Mike Peters’ “Critique of Instrumental Emotion,” which comments on the current fad of so-called “emotional literacy”; and a discussion of dying and the forces presently undermining the original impulses that generated the valuable hospice movement. There are also reviews, exchanges and more. Subs are £4/3 issues in the U.K., £7.50/3 issues (Europe) £8.50/3 issues (elsewhere). Contact them at P.O. Box 109, Leeds, West Yorkshire, LS5 3AA UK.

—DW

**Mesechabe: The Journal of Surre(gion)alism** number 17 is a special issue, featuring poet Anselm Hollo’s “Some Notes and Quotes from the ‘Different Homeland,’” which explores the twisting labyrinth and subsequent mysteries and nightmares of what some call “national origin.” Dennis Formento’s “Ecologisms: 50 Epigrams of Surre(gion)alism” comments, “Politics is an obsession with everybody’s worst nature. And everybody’s worst nature is troubling my sleep.” Poems and essays also by Jack Collom, A. di Michele, Charles Henri Ford, Biljana Obradovic, Ronnie Burk and many others, as well as an interview with Eluard Burt remembering Beat poet Bob Kaufman. Always worthwhile, *Mesechabe* is \$20/5 issues from 1539 Crete Street, New Orleans LA 70119–3006.

—Allan Antliff

John K. Grande, **Balance: Art and Nature**, Black Rose Books, 1994, Montreal, 250 pp. and *Intertwining: Landscape, Technology, Issues, Artists*, Black Rose Books, 1998, Montreal, 182 pp.

Recently, while speaking on anarchism in Montreal, I met John Grande. I was delighted to discover he is a committed anarchist art critic who combines an ecological orientation with incisive critiques of art-for-the-capitalist-status-quo. *Balance* and *Intertwining* bring together essays from disparate publications, many discussing unknown artists. John seeks out those who are activists and environmentalists and, through them, explores myriad strategies for integrating art with resistance against to megamachine.

Highly recommended; but given the publisher, steal them if you can.

—A.D.

**Culture Battles: The Meaning of the Vietnam-USA War**, Peter McGregor, Visions of Freedom, P.O. Box 13, Enmore, 1042 Australia, 214 pp., \$15 postpaid. In these essays, written about the bitter military and ideological conflict in which Australia was an U.S. ally, McGregor equates the struggle against power with the struggle of memory against forgetting. His experiences as a draft-age resister give him a unique perspective on the period and how history of the war is currently being defined.

The domino theory of communist encroachment was exalted as a principle of U.S. state diplomacy and served as the ideological foundation for U.S. intervention.

Robert McNamara, U.S. Secretary of Defense, is unhappy with his reputation as perpetrator of the Vietnam War, but McGregor doesn’t let him squirm out of his reprehensible role. Many of his villainous actions are noted. The book provides a fascinating excerpt from *The Living and The Dead*, a book by U.S. journalist, P. Hendrickson, who recounts the episode of a U.S. anti-war activist coming close to assassinating McNamara.

The chapter, “Lest We Forget,” compares losses of the belligerent parties. Five hundred Australians, 58,000-Americans, and between 1.5 and 3 million Vietnamese lost their lives (and this doesn’t include Laotians or Cambodians). “While the authorities in the USA and Australia have been reluctant to acknowledge the effects of Agent Orange et al on their own troops, the Viet authorities have been leaders in researching the effects of chemical warfare.”

In material terms too, losses were drastically uneven. The U.S. has not yet paid Vietnam the \$3.25 billion in reparations to which it agreed at the 1973 Paris Peace Agreement. McGregor observes that “this was unlike World Wars I and II (and even the recent Gulf conflict), where the defeated countries were forced to pay compensation to the victors. The situation whereby Viet Nam was unable to require the USA to honour the peace agreement indicates

how Indochina may have defeated the USA (and its allies such as Australia) militarily, but had nevertheless lost the war.”

Cultural Battles furnishes valuable reports on the aftermath of the Vietnam-USA war. Films, histories, even poems (by a regretful former U.S. soldier) are examined and analyzed. Several chapters report on activities of veterans groups. The text is accompanied by excellent photos of contemporary life in Vietnam as well as Australian protest activities.

Isn't the movement unorganized? How about the **1999 Slingshot Organizer**, 160-page, pocket-sized, day planner, featuring radical historical dates for every day of the year, plus other useful features. The low \$5 price tag (six or more are \$3) goes to support publication of Slingshot magazine. Ask for a copy when you order at 3124 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley CA 94705.

The 1999 **War Resisters League Calendar** theme is “Young People Look At The World” featuring the drawings and international voices and art of children from across the world. Send \$12 (four for \$44) for WRL, 339 Lafayette St., New York NY 10012; ask for their publication and anti-war organizing materials.

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iTchKung!, a Seattle-based band, that makes the grunge folks there sound like Elton John, has just released their latest CD, “Incite: A Soundtrack for Post World Insurrection.” Their rhythm-driven shows are at once primitive and high tech. They describe themselves as taking their “philosophy of hybridized cultural experimentation into the arena of sampling and programming, abusing the tools of technology.”

They perform regularly at Earth First!, Anti-Racist Action, and anarchist gatherings and have toured El Salvador. They've been at the Black Rock Desert in Nevada during the Burning Man festivals doing riot simulation/civil resistance training exercises which included trainees chucking molotov cocktails at life-size targets of Ronald McDonald, Riot Cop, and the Pope.

The CD is available from Post World Industries, 1122 E. Pike, #949, Seattle WA 98122; 206-568-6637.

The fourth annual **Bay Area Anarchist Book Fair** will be held at the San Francisco County Fair Building, 9<sup>th</sup> Ave. and Lincoln Way in Golden Gate Park, March 27, 1999, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Exhibitors will include 60 anarchist groups and alternative book, magazine, and publishers. There will be space for performances and a cafe. Attend as an individual or, if you would like a display table or for information, contact Bound Together Books, 1369 Haight St., San Francisco CA 94117.

**What do Chumbawamba, Bad Religion, Rage Against the Machine, and Propagandhi have in common?** (Other than being pop success with somewhat radical lyrics, and support for numerous left causes.) They've all featured Noam Chomsky's work on their albums. Chomsky just celebrated his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday with thousands of greetings solicited online from the publishers of *Z Magazine*. Although there has been recent debate as to whether he can legitimately be considered an anarchist, mostly he's appreciated for his strong critiques of the media and global capital.

Chomsky churns out books at such a rapid pace that there literally is not such a creature as “his latest.” His sold-out talks are booked almost three years in advance and his low key presentation at the lectern belie the sharp analysis he provides while turning the words of the rulers back upon themselves.

The latest entry into the Chomsky industry is the G-7 Welcoming Committee which has issued a recent talk by the good professor entitled, “Propaganda and Thought Control of the Public Mind” as a double-CD. He explores the rise of public relations and advertisement as a means to deflect radical demands in an era when overt state violence became less tenable to keep the rabble in place. Price is \$15 (U.S.) postpaid.

G-7 has a catalog of other CDs (including Consolidated and Propagandhi), books, and apparel. They're at PO Box 3, 905 Corydon, Winnipeg, MB, R3M 3S3, Canada; <http://g-7.a-zone.org>.

**Active Transformation** is, a bimonthly direct action anarchist paper now published by a Detroit collective. It was previously printed in Lansing during 1994- 95. Vol. 2, no 2 focuses on immigration law, (“No Human Is Illegal”) and its racist application through recent INS raids in Detroit. It calls for an end to all borders.

Upcoming issues will feature, “Down with the Criminal Justice” system and a May Day edition.

Subscriptions to AT are \$6 for one year; \$1 per issue, but please include 55 cents postage; free to prisoners. Active Transformation, P.O. Box 11508, Detroit MI 48211; fax: 313—841—0071; email at [activetrans@hotmail.com](mailto:activetrans@hotmail.com).

# fifth Estate

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