

## KRIS HEMENSLEY, NOTES AND COMMENTS 1

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Paragraph 1 follows:

COMMUNITIES ARE BORN, live a while then die, sad and necessary movements flourish, undergrounds emerge to eventually consume the decaying old structure, resuscitating Poetry's spirit, and, finally invite new rebellions. C'est la vie! It is interesting to quote Peter Schjeldahl (interviewed by Victor Bokris in *Sesheta*, Winter 72/3, 32 Pinfold Lane, Skerton, Lanes., UK) on this cycle of change. He says, of New York .

2:

'...Certainly its importance is less there's been enough of a gap between the generations, so now because that if I were a young poet starting right now being terribly ambitious, I think I would be terribly resistant to the idea of St. Marks ... It becomes a kind of establishment. I don't know whether it will or not, but I've heard enough young poets saying things resenting this older congress in their thirties, and that's as it should be ... The New York School came into being because several poets like Ashbery, Koch, Schuyler, Guest were fleeing from the literary scene ... they found some painters and some jazz musicians and some choreographers ... they set down stakes and made their work there. The intervening territory still hasn't been crossed, 20 years later. But that's been a source of vitality I think, though that vitality is waning now ... The same thing happened in Art. I mean the energy of abstract expressionism, you know, playing itself out in an incredible number of forms. And now that energy is practically spent. Which if you're a young artist is a big relief.'

2:

One reason for the sophistication in Sydney and the apparent lack of it in Melbourne poetry circles is that Sydney retains the same complement of practising poets as five years ago, whereas Melbourne is really a new scene. The change is marked not only by death (Charles Buckmaster and Maurice Benton), but the retirement of Ken Taylor and Ian Robertson, the dispersal of Bill Beard, Allison Gilmore and others. The drama of the community of 1968–9 (with its attendant magazines and readings) was succeeded by just as dramatic a disintegration. However, on the fifth anniversary of the first La Mama Poets' Workshop, a new fraternity is forming.

3:

Key to this is *CONTEMPA* magazine (edited by Robert Kenny and Phillip Edmonds, P.O. Box 113, Armadale, Vic. 3143), although both *PARACHUTE* (ed. Mai Morgan, 513 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne) and *FITZROT* (ed. Peter Oustaba-sides, 489 George Street, Fitzroy, Vic.) claim the contributions of the new Melbourne poets. In fact all three magazines, plus Robert Hughes (whose magazine *POETRY* is closer to myth than imminence), co-produce a broadsheet, *FREE*, which is pressed upon the innocent public on publication day, a display of their engagement and democracy. Aside of 'veterans' (e.g. Dugan, Lea, Morgan, Egglestone, Jenkins), the new poets include Billeter, Kenny, Edmonds, Hughes, Oustabasides, Harris, Talbot, Dickens and Yeomans, with as many knocking at the door. Generally speaking, *FITZROT* is an engaged magazine, an explosion from a depressed inner-suburb of the city, whose editor is very much heir to the poet-as-prophet/the pariah as the blessed, politics, whose poetics is better summed up by the exclamation 'pow' than anything else. *PARACHUTE* is more ecstatic and mystical, and is as important a

breakthrough magazine as FITZROT, featuring the old grouping with the new.

4:

CONTEMPA is a magazine that in its 6th number (August, '73) has found a direction and selected a focus. It has a desire to move Australian forms towards the Outside World. Two of its most regularly featured poets, Walter Billeter and John Jenkins, are about to embark upon a new journal, a successor to Jenkins' one-off *AARDVARK* (1970), and hope to solicit work internationally with an emphasis on longer experimental writing and essays on poetics. CONTEMPA, six most interesting contributions are Jenkins' enigmatic *Open Sequence*, a poem by Katherine Gallagher (living in Paris), and an introduction to Paul Celan by Billeter. Taken with his long look at Celan in *THE EAR IN A WHEATFIELD*, 2, August '73 (ed. Hemensley, 44 Grove Road, Hawthorn, Vic. 3122), Billeter has offered this community a sizeable invitation to marvellously new procedures, an entree to a scheme of poetry rarely encountered locally. As Bruce Beaver has commented, Billeter's essay, poems and translations in *EAR*, 2, are the centre-piece of a useful amalgamation of English and Australian poets (Hall, Buck, Chamberlain, Jenkins, Billeter, Beaver) whose examination of process is yet expressed within the ambit of the lyric, the poem's own song indeed.

5:

Presses which might yet establish themselves as running mates to *Prism Poets* (Sydney) (Buckmaster, Adamson, Thorne, Ravlich) and the two series from the University of Queensland, *Paperback Poets* and *Gargoyle* (e.g. Dransfield, Tipping, J. S. Harry, McMaster, A. Taylor, Hall, Slade, Shapcott, Rowlands, Packer, Wearne, Kefala, Jones) is *SEAHORSE*, edited and published by Robert Harris (P.O.

Box 217, Greensborough, Vic. 3088), whose first two titles were his own *Localities*, an undeniably good first book, and Shelton Lea's *Paradise Poems*. Colin Talbot (whose *Crystal Brook* is Contempa Publications' most imaginative to date) and partners are beginning a project of prose titles, the first of which will be an anthology of experimental prose edited by Dugan and Jenkins. Two other books which will excite more than a little interest are Billeter's *Sediments of Seclusion* (parts of this are anthologised in *Australian Poetry Now*) forthcoming from Contempa, and a selection of the poetry of Ken Taylor which at last will make up for his neglect over the past few years (incidentally, one of his epic poems *Pictures from the Sea*, is included in *Ends and Beginnings*, a primer for secondary students, published by Macmillans).

6:

The linking of poets across national boundaries is of course the feature which separates Australian magazines from English and American. The inclusion of foreigners in *Meanjin* or *Southerly* is more exotic than useful. A special-issue is something else to be sure, as with *Poetry Australia's* Canadian issue in 1967. But the presence of Robert Duncan, Charles Tomlinson and others in recent issues of *New Poetry*, and the critical focus on Olson, Duncan, Ashbery and others, does establish a referencing which must skin the local scene of several layers of naivete. It is exciting that Billeter should be invited to contribute work to Paul Buck's *CURTAINS* (12 Foster Clough, Mytholmroyd, Hebden Bridge, Yorkshire HX7 5QR, UK) which is the foremost liaison magazine between contemporary French and English poetries (#5, Spring 73, was an all-French issue with work by Ponge, Jabbes, Royet-Journoud, Guglielmi and others, which should be read in conjunction with *MODERN POETRY IN*

*TRANSLATION*, #16, French Issue, ed. A. Rudolph, 10 Compayne Gardens, London, NW6 3DH, UK, which presented Bonnefoy, de Bouchet, Jaccottet, Dupin, Deguy, Pleyner, Albiach, Daive and others in addition to those in *Curtains*). Or that David Miller (ex-Melbourne) has work forthcoming in *Agenda* magazine and the *Enitharmon Press* (an essay on Lowry) in UK. Or Bob Adamson be lined up with such living legends as William Bronk, George Oppen and Duncan, in *lo* magazine, USA.

7:

Tom Shapcott is attempting an anthology of American and Australian poets, *Francis Webb meets Frank O'Hara*, which, at least locally, should be a break on isolation. As is travel, Vicki Viidikas presently moving amongst various London-based poets, in contact with John Robinson, ed. of *JOE DI MAGGIO* magazine, *the jumbo* of the mimeos, whose programme so far includes collections from Raworth, Macsweeny, McCarthy, Gogarty, Marley, Hilton, Temple, Benveniste, as well as two anthological magazine issues covering almost all other new British poets. (*JOE*, 6 Knowle Avenue, Bexleyheath, Kent, UK.) Shapcott himself, and Tim Thorne and Andrew Taylor, are all recent travellers in the USA. Interchange and cross-fertilisation is surely the mood of the moment.

8:

*ORIGIN*, edited by Cid Corman, throughout its three great series from the early 50s to the beginning of this decade, was the model of purposeful internationalism, the expression of the community of the word, a place where Americans, Canadians, Italians, Frenchmen, Japanese and even an Englishman (Dennis Goacher), could meet and exchange. *Origin* and its confreres, e.g. *Montagna Rossa*, *Coyote Review*, *the Grosseteste Review*, differs from e.g. *New Directions*

*Anthology* in that its world is a projection of the internationality of the language of poem, the like concerns, whereas ND publishes a Nigerian, an Estonian, Americans, etc., in service to the notion of an international avant-garde.

9:

The *GROSSETESTE REVIEW* (ed. by Tim Longville, 10 Consort Crescent, Commonsides, Pensnett, Staffordshire, UK), is the premier British magazine. It has been publishing books and magazines since 1966. Volume 6, Numbers 1–4, 1973, is an amazing anthology. I find myself published amongst the older Americans Wm Bronk, Cid Corman, Carl Rakosi, Gilbert Sorrentino, Peyton Houston and George Oppen; with contemporary English and Americans Garrison, Bowman, Palmer, Wright, Longville, J. Riley, Oliver, Chamberlain; with critics Hugh Kenner, Donald Davie, Tomlinson, Prynne and O'Brien. There are virtually two special-issues here: devoted to Gilbert Sorrentino, new poems, sections from his new novel *Hotel Splendide*, and interview and review of his work; the other in honour of George Oppen. Its place is not 'trans-Atlantic' or anything as misleading or banal as that. In 'A Letter to Doug Oliver', the poet and ideologue (important correspondent of Olson's and mover of the Cambridge group of poets of the 60s) J.H. Prynne does refer to nationality: '... the Anglo team have their teeth really sunk into pain, great physical gouts of it, as opposed to the water-colour joys of the American art gallery nympholepts. Your novel confirms this; its elegance is much too vorticist for the pre-sexual phenomenology preferred in l'Amerique du Nord. Only Frank O'Hara had that pail of serpents always in view.' The place on one hand is the editor's passion, as with any editor, his eccentric encirclement of contemporary poetries, and on the other hand is the

demesne of language which is both concrete and domestic and the gorgeous and imaginary, that company Marianne Moore referred to as 'the literalists of the imagination', and Carlos \_ Williams' line (immortalised by Sorrentino as the title of his beautiful novel) 'the imaginary qualities of actual things'. It is the place where we do what is to be done with the Modern inheritance of ideas and artifacts. It is an area of no compromise, as Sorrentino says in the *Grosseteste* interview, 'there are no lies in art. The only lies in art lie in the falsification of structure. Art selects and orders experience. It is not history. It is not what 'really happened' ' . But of possible worlds, a remarkable and desirable reality.

10:

*The American Poetry Conference*, held end of May, '73 in London, was the excuse for every British poet of serious intent to meet together. Tim Longville writes 'for all the quibbling, backbiting, 'mere'-ness of the assembled literary, there's a sort of cumulative and intensifying bounce to such occasions — interactions of clear and clarifying intention ... a cross-cutting of specialists". For Longville and e.g. John Hall, 'survival" is a major care. But where Longville derived comfort from the Conference (Oppen, Duncan, Rothenberg, Berrigan and Bly standing in for Jonathon Williams), Hall commented 'It's clear that living in England as an experience gets further and further away from America . . . for those of us using the English tongue, every poem is like starting from scratch."

11:

The New American Poetry is now a monument but with a potent shadow. For many English (and elsewhere, Canadians, Australians too) it was *The Place*. The day *before* the day which is (as the wit

said) the first day of the rest of your life. Schools movements and communities today are more committed to friendliness than the not-so-old sense of The Push. The heart that kills as well as propels. The dark wood becomes the Light Wood becomes the Dark Wood again. 'Seriousness', 'intention', etc., the dilemmas of purposeful activity, the ways we protect and kill ourselves. The same ways often as not.

12:

Ah but the delight! ay? — 'the poems again', just the poems, forget the rest, the poems, they're what matter! hmmm? Which is the prompting influence on Nigel Roberts and Richard Tipping's *NEWS AND WEATHER* magazine (33 Duke Street, Balmain, NSW) eagerly awaited by the hungry ones out there. Here. And for all the analysis and speculation on the origin of energies and diminishing of same, there are poets and magazines in America and England well worth looking up.

13:

The *FERRY PRESS* in conjunction with Grosseteste Review are to publish Douglas Oliver's much praised novel *The Harmless Building* next year. *FERRY*, published by Andrew Crozier (177 Green Lane, London, SE9, UK), has been publishing since 1964 (without assistance let it be said). Titles include Americans Fielding Dawson, Stephen Jonas, Sam Abrams, Tom Clark, Lewis Warsh and Peter Schjeldahl, and English John James, Crozier, Peter Riley, Prynne, Jim Burns, Chris Torrence, John Temple, Oliver and David Chaloner. Crozier's magazine *THE PARK*, and especially #4/5, attempted a similar definition of current poetry as the latest G.R. It appeared (Summer, '69) at about the same time as Horowitz's *The Children of Albion* (Penguin), and is infinitely more careful and informative. Apart from those poets already mentioned, it gathered

Olson, Borregard, Gallup, Raworth, Tysh, Bronk, Sorrentino, Harwood, Berrigan, Rakosi, Stanley, Heller and Reznikoff between its covers.

14:

*Grosseteste Review Books* have titles by Longville, John Riley, Burns, Hall, Prynne, Martin Wright, Hemensley, Byrd, Collom, Goacher and the recently published and memorable translation of *Holderlin* (by Longville and J. Riley) and Goacher's *Transversions* (of Aeschylus, Dante, Abelard, Nerval, Rimbaud). Their forthcoming titles are an exciting prospect. Books by John Riley (poems and collected prose), Martin Wright (prose), Peter Riley, Franco Beltrametti, Sean Rafferty, Phil Garrison and Chamberlain are promised. Enquiries will be graciously answered by both presses, especially if accompanied by one commodity in dreadful scarcity in English letters, money.

15:

The counterpart of *New Poetry* (Sydney) is the *Poetry Review*, published by the Poetry Society in London, which has been wholly rejuvenated by Eric Mottram since he became editor in 1971. With Presidents and Vice-Presidents of the order of Wm Plomer, Betjeman, Lords Eccles and Goodman and Sir Eugen Millington-Drake, the degree of orthodoxy at the society can be imagined. But Mottram's programme since 1971 has been generally in the interests of modern and contemporary poetry. Cobbing, Duncan, Ashbery, Snyder, Ginsberg, Pickard, Chaloner, Williams, Guest are typical of the new roll at *Poetry Review*. The three major *New York* magazines are, of course, *ADVENTURES IN POETRY*, ed. Larry Fagin (No. 18, 437 East 12th Street, New York, NY, 10009); *ANGEL HAIR*, ed. Anne Waldman and Lewis Warsh (Box 257, Peter Stuyvesant Station, NY,

10009), and *ANOTHER WORLD*, ed. Anne Waldman (The Poet's Project, St. Mark's Church-in-the-Bowery, New York).

16:

Clayton Eshleman's *CATERPILLAR* magazine owes to both Origin and *The Black Mountain Review*. Doubleday published a selection from numbers 1–12 two years ago. Recent numbers (with the exception of 15/16) have tended to narrow upon the editor's own brand of confession and mysticism, publishing the same, small clique, and the influence of Robert Kelly is abundant, loose and rambling, knowledge for its own sake, gross. But the first numbers were magnificent, the Don Allen Anthology in current motion.

17:

*Jo* magazine, R.F.D. No. 2, Box 135, Creamery Road, Plainfield, Vermont, 05667, USA, seems to command the attention of poets that Caterpillar once had. Its editor, Richard Grossinger, was hailed by Robert Duncan in a preface to *Solar Journal* (Black Sparrow, 1970) as a seer, an example of the new man. *Jo* combines poem, speculative philosophy, science, science-fiction, interview, story, journal, in giant issues (alchemies) entitled variously Ethnoastronomy, Oecology, Dreams, Earth Geography, Baseball and so on. It enables the most diverse and diverting intelligences to be grouped. In *Jo*, 16, e.g. there are sequences of poems from John Wieners and Joanne Kyger, a collaboration-story by John Clark and Albert Glover (with reference to James Fenimore Cooper), line drawings by Joe Brainard, poem and polemic by Olson, reminiscence of Lew Welch, oh so much else! The accompaniment of the wide range is its tendency to over-projection, claiming value for everything sensed or seen, voluminous crapping. But the openness is its salvation.

Even if for Grossinger the Universe is home, manifestations emitting from Balmain or Melbourne, Vancouver, Stoke-on-Trent or Bolinas, are as valid as ever they were. Michael Palmer writes that there used to be a law in San Francisco in the 50s and 60s that no publication extended further than the city limits! The sanctity of locale. Valid when as citizens of the world we sing out of our home patch. The Canadian scene is most interesting for that. Its situation has parallels with Australia. The enormous injection of money into the arts established twenty-odd years ago coincides with the revolution in Canadian arts, whereby despite the enormous pull of the USA, poets and artists are now remaining in Canada and returning from New York to live and work in Canada. Three worthwhile presses are TUATARA (ed. Mike Doyle, 759 Helvetia Crescent, Victoria, British Columbia); *OPEN LETTER* (ed. Frank Davey, 395 Elm Road, Toronto, 320, Ontario), and the *GEORGIA STRAIGHT WRITING SUPPLEMENT* (from 56a Powell, Vancouver 4, B.C.). The Community Press project associated with the GSWS and published by Stan Persky (the San Francisco poet now living in Vancouver, as do also George Stanley and Robin Blaser), announces 'the Vancouver Series, inexpensive (\$1) books by local writers, bringing together the poetry of this place, 1960–1970 and beyond". Australian 'local' writing begins in the late 60s of course, but even now there is plenty of evidence of community, common principals. The critique George Bowering brings to bear in his introduction to a prose anthology is worthy of recall: 'Most anthologies of Canadian stories seek to present names having to do with the success of familiarity ... this book is not interested in a package of what has been done with the genre in this country. Its gathering is of voices that have seriously attempted to find words to present their singular

senses of their various places... So I look not for masterpieces because we have no more masterpieces. The pieces you may now read are not rescues from the world; they are the words of men and women turning the middle of its storm.” The point of it is ‘trying to *find* something rather than trying to pretend they *understand* something”. And for ‘Canadian” read whatever you like, Australian in this case.

19:

Presses and magazines who know their direction are a great help in these days of glut. Take Jonathon Williams press JARGON, which for 20-odd years has been a major publisher of the avant-garde. Current titles include Paul Metcalfe (who is Melville’s great-grandson by the way), James Broughton, Wm Bronk, Herlihy, Mina Loy, Mason, Meyer, Hamilton Finlay, Oppenheimer, Douglas Woolf. A catalogue is available from the distributor of the Jargon Society, *The Book Organisation*, Elm Street, Millerton, New York, 12546, USA.

20:

*BLACK SPARROW* is on that par. Its list covers most of the writing that is post-Allen Anthology,, e.g. Antin, Bromige, Bukowski, Clark, Economou, Elmslie, Eshleman, Irby, Kelly, Malanga, Marlatt, Owens, Palmer, Schwerner, Brainard, plus some of the originals, Eigner, Duncan, Dawson, Creeley, Roller, Blackburn, Kyger, Loewinsohn, Meltzer, Sorrentino, Wakoski, Whalen; also older spirits, Paul Goodman, Parker Tyler, Wright Morris, Charles Henri Ford and Gertrude Stein. A list can be had from P.O. Box 25603, Los Angeles, California, 90025, USA.

21:

Australia is not endowed with specialist poetry bookshops, although Paul Smith's new store, THE WHOLE EARTH BOOKSHOP, 81 Bourke Street, Melbourne, has a range of titles at least reminiscent of better bookshops elsewhere. Some of the best bookshops in the world would include the following:

22:

ASPHODEL BOOKSHOP, 17192 Ravenna Road, Route 44,  
Burton, Ohio, 44021, USA.  
GOTHAM BOOK MART, 41 West 47th Street, N.Y.C.,  
10036, USA.  
COMPENDIUM BOOKSHOP, 240 Camden High Street,  
London, NW1, UK.

23:

Really there is so much! F. T. Prince (see Penguin Poets, 20), especially *Epistle To a Patron*, the most gorgeous poem by this forgotten poet, who returned to something of a readership in England only by way of New York whose major poets have followed and fêted him since the 50s) recalls how previously life was simpler. In the 30s London was the place, the capital. It was where Eliot lived. Others would claim Pound and Rappallo, or St. Elizabeth's and so on. But nowadays this cannot be said. Prince despairs at the 'fragmentation'. Others are moved by it. The different interpretations of Babel. All of this might be summed up by the Bolinas poet, John Thorpe (see *ON THE MESA* Anthology, or *Earth Ship* special-issue, April, '72, Ed Hemensley) who commented:

24:

'What's going on here is, that in the act of reading each other's things, we hear the limitation of person. Like what's possible is the wind, and here is this man, who is

particularly HUNG, in the wind, in a shape. It's not the wind, but the human sound of it, the real — emphatically not art or talk alone. It's like the wind, it's its own answer.... The limitation that kicks off a life — we see that it has to be carried every second.”

25:

That articulation in Bolinas by John Thorpe is not so distant from a recent missive from Bill Beard, in Bega, NSW.

26:

‘I care and I don't! I don't know and I do. I go on having fantasies and seem to walk around with my mouth open in awe: but sometimes I find myself crying in the middle of the day. So what? Let's sing a song, eat a few more chiko rolls in fond memory and have a drink: the heavens will endure our indulgences as well as they endure our personal tragedies. We all live under the one enduring sky.”



KRIS ALAN HEMENSLEY (born 26 April 1946) is a poet who has published around 20 collections of poetry. Through the late 1960s and 1970s he was involved in poetry workshops at La Mama, and edited the literary magazines *Our Glass*, *The Ear in a Wheatfield*, and others. *The Ear* played an important role in providing a place where poets writing outside what was then the mainstream (such as Jennifer Maiden) could publish their work. In 1969 and 1970 he presented the program *Kris Hemensley's Melbourne* on ABC Radio. In the 1970s he was poetry editor

for <i>Meanjin</i> magazine. The son of an Egyptian mother and an English father who was stationed in Egypt with the Royal Air Force, Hemensley was born on The Isle of Wight, and spent his early childhood in Alexandria. He visited Australia at the age of 18, and emigrated there in 1966. He was awarded the Christopher Brennan Award in 2005, which recognizes poetry of 'sustained quality and distinction'. He currently manages Collected Works, a specialist poetry bookshop in Melbourne, Australia.

*Photo: Kris Hemensley, Collected Works Bookshop, Melbourne, 12 May 2014, photo by John Tranter.*

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