

Editorial – Another skipped **Supplement** and, thanks to a festive bout of Covid that continues to have lingering after-effects, an extremely-slow start to the year. Apologies. Hopefully, that will change soon.

However, online issues of **View From Atlantis** have been appearing regularly and haiku continue to be added to **The 5-7-5 Haiku Journal**. So, why not submit some haiku and check out what the next theme for **View** is...

Best,

DJ Tyrer,
Editor

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Submissions for issue 33 remain open until the end of April and the issue will be online in June.

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<https://575haikujournal.wordpress.com/>

Coming Soon From
Atlantean Publishing

Bobcats and Billycocks

By Emma Sanderson

Watch this space...

Send us your letters of comment!

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Lightning Tree

By Aeronwy Dafies

Growing strong and tall and straight
The tree ruled over field and hedgerow
Until the storm clouds gathered
Until the thunder drums hammered
And lightning lanced down to shatter, burn
Leaving a blackened and tortured shell
A landmark still, but no king
A broken and ash-scarred wraith

*Originally published in **Tigershark***

The Supplement needs you!

We always need reviews, articles, opinion pieces, and news. Whether a brief capsule-review or a 5000 word article, we want it!

Reviews by DJ Tyrer

Codex Yith

By Cardinal Cox

Codex Nemedra

By Cardinal Cox

For a copy of each pamphlet while stocks last, send an SAE to him at 58 Pennington, Orton Goldhay, Peterborough, PE2 5RB.

Codex Yith has an image of one of the Great Race of Yith on the cover, simple yet evocative, and opens with the poem *Yith*, which takes us back eleven-billion years to the desertion of their home planet and the Great Race's mental occupation of primordial beings on Earth and their war with the Flying Polyps. We then follow them as they cast their minds into other eras from mythic Cimmeria and prehistoric Nazca to the dread empire of Tsan-Chan, three-thousand years in the future, and a new home on Mercury as the sun finally gutters and dies in the distant future. A wonderful romp through the broader Cthulhu Mythos with several mentions in the footnotes of other of Cox's codices. Highly recommended.

Codex Nemedra takes us through the worlds of Robert E. Howard, travelling back to the Hyborian Age with *Conan versus the Tcho-Tcho*, through Celtic history (*Bran Mak Morn*), Tudor times (*Judgement of Solomon Kane*), and even across the heavens to the world of *Almuric*. Another enjoyable romp with mentions of other codices for those who like to explore further. Highly recommended.

The Pen

January 2022

July 2022

Sample: \$4 (USA) / \$8 (RoW)

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The Poetry Explosion Newsletter, to give **The Pen** its full title, is a delightful cornucopia of poetry that revels in the beauty of words and spirit. My favourite poems in the January issue were *Female Blackbird* by the late Miki Byrne and *Stolen Heart* by Lee-Ann Azzopardi (SchiZ). In the July issue, Lee-Ann

Azzopardi again produced one of my favourite poems, *Night Sonata*, the other being *Lost Light* by Jane Hutto. The newsletter also contains adverts and personals. Recommended.

On Spec

#120 (volume 32 number 2)

onspec.ca

The Canadian Magazine of the Fantastic has over 100 pages of poetry, fiction, art, and non-fiction. In the latter category, this issue contains an author interview with Douglas Smith and an interview with the cover artist, Kari-Ann Anderson (the wonderful image of a raven is reproduced in all its glory with the interview).

My favourite story in this issue was the wryly-told *Broken Vow: The Adventures of Flick Gibson, Intergalactic Videographer* by Peter G. Reynolds. Flick Gibson doesn't film weddings. Conferences and trade shows are more his thing. But, after a few whiskeys, he agrees and finds himself on the way to a Federation – sorry, Coherence – space station to film a wedding intended to end a centuries-old war. What could go wrong? Plenty, of course, in this enjoyable adventure.

The other stories didn't grab me in the same way that *Broken Vow* did, but the two poems in this issue, *Dante Goes West* by Colleen Anderson ("It's the birds I notice first, coming, going / unassuming chickadee, sparrow, dove / twittering like brass chimes") and *Song of the Exiles* by Swati Chavda ("This distant planet is our dwelling now / With rivers roaring in spate") were both very good, especially the imagery of the former.

It is with the art that we discover the magazine's strong point. There's more from Kari-Ann Anderson, in the form of line drawings of a warrior woman and, across two pages, a kitchen-dwelling dragon (I now have the urge to make use of the inspiration that has stirred in me!), both of which could be used for colouring, if that is your inclination. There's also the charming *Henry 300*, a 'robot' made by Lynne Taylor Fahnestalk and photographed by Fahnestalk, and an amusing comic panel, also by Lynne, rounding out the issue.

On Spec is varied in content and I am sure any reader will find something to enjoy here. It is also available digitally from weightlessbooks.com (both individually and on subscription), which makes it accessible

for overseas readers who might otherwise be put off by its prohibitive mailing cost. Highly recommended.

Dreams and Nightmares

#123 (January 2023)

Sample copy: \$4 (print) / \$1 (PDF)

Subscription : \$25 (USA/Canada) /\$30 (RoW) from

David C. Kopaska-Merkel,
1300 Kicker Road, Tuscaloosa,
AL 35404 (205) 246-9346, USA
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Another wonderful issue of this long-running poetry zine. It begins with a great cover image by Chris Friend, and contains various excellent poems in a variety of lengths and styles. My favourites in this issue *Leda, the Morning After* by Shelly Jones, *Wiggle-Room* by J. F Haines, F. J. Bergman's amusing yet cutting (in more ways than one) *Exploitation*, and the untitled shorts by Rich Magahiz, Sarah Cannavo, and Randall Andrews (the latter two of which have especially good twists). Highly recommended, as ever.

An Incident in the Library

By Neil Leadbeater

So what does it mean 'to throw the book at someone'? Books are not meant to be thrown – they should be handled with care, especially the Penguin Modern Poets. Throw them and you ruin their jackets, or worse, fracture their spines.

The gods had other ways to express displeasure: Artemis turned Actaeon into a deer Zeus bound Ixion to a burning wheel, while Apollo flayed Marsyas then turned him into a stream. In anyone's book, these would be deemed 'severe' so you pick up the volume you hurled in anger, mutter an apology, and leave.

Got an opinion? Share it!

Letters of Comment

Dear DJ,

Thanks for your letter, glad to hear that things are moving into gear and you are keeping busy with the typing!

Also, thanks for **Bard**. Some good poems in there – DS Davidson’s was movingly sad. (I’m assuming it was about that dog sent into space in the late 1950s?)

Yours,

Chris Catt James

The Editor Replies – Yes, I believe it was about the dog, Laika, making it a Laiku...

Dear DJ,

Thank you for this surprise edition of **Bard**. Good breakfast reading. Love Jane Stuart’s poems.

Best regards,

Sally Plumb

Dear DJ,

T'Supplement #102 received and read with a futuristic 3-D outlook held in check by rose-tinted shades of restraint. The main feature, AC Evans’s *Beyond The Breakthrough*, was an engrossing history lesson. The subtitle, *Modernism Or Anti-Modernism?*, seems to imply that one has to adopt one stance or the other. Obviously this applies more to art creators. We consumers can have both together or as much or as little of either as we like. Let the artists battle it out, while the audience applauds quietly from the side. The aftermath might make an amusing mural. One thing’s for sure, there will never be any shortage of art, whatever its ‘period’ designation.

Perhaps the best way to avoid conflict would be for all forms of pictorial art to be produced in hologram form, like those old pictures with raised surfaces showing different things according to the direction of the light. Thus you could turn them one way for the modern version, and another for anti-modern. Of course, it would mean a lot more work, but two artists – one of each persuasion – could be employed in tandem. This would enforce a temporal symbiosis, possibly leading to an ultimate conciliation. If not, galleries displaying the works could be designed in such a way that visitors have to walk

in one direction for the modern view, but can only get out by going back in the other direction for the anti-modern view (or vice versa). Alternately, lighting could be programmed to randomly change from one side to another, and so change cultural viewpoint without bias.

An interesting sideline to this (or that) is that, while art may never run out, we may run out of suitable terms to describe each new degree of modernity. ‘Modern’ itself is decidedly old-fashioned and ‘postmodern’ is already sounding quaint. Since terms like ‘new’ and ‘latest’ have such fleeting lifespans, it would seem better to invent entirely new words to define each upcoming era – ‘qualb’ or ‘mithric’, for example. This would give critics a specific purpose beyond merely throwing out opinions.

Yours, looking forward and back with cross-eyed opti-pessimism,

Neil K. Henderson

Hi, DJ,

Awen is as strong and positive as ever – unusually positive, even, after all that has come down upon us recently. I notice unanticipated hope and vigour in real time everywhere I go and look. It shows up shamelessly in my other subscriptions, too.

In **Awen** 117, Jane Hutto’s *Repetition* seems to be happening to us on a grand scale!

Ligeia’s Unholy Tomb by LindaAnn LoSchiavo is a 21st Century horror-poem based on Poe’s short story (I finally read it) – in the form of a Petrarchan sonnet!

In *DNA*, Arthur C Ford once again enflames mind and sense with his music and purity of belief, in a world where things are often erroneously presumed to be strictly black and white.

There are several other remarkable compositions, like *A Ragged School* by Ed Chabarek, humble in content but grand in manner. What a way to convey a significant historical event – with six keen blank verse quintets.

Ute Margaret Saine’s style evokes such a mood of calm mystery that would take a lot of concentration to create. I like to google artwork that ekphrastic poems are based on, but have not (yet) found the Claudio Bonichi work of *Still Life with a Mask*.

I’m pleased to read Neil K. Henderson’s *The Invisible Legacy of Harry Chambers, Poet*. He is brilliant, of course, and such a work could only be thoroughly

thought out. Yet, there’s something missing: There was not one LOL on my part. Anyway, I can’t help but go back and read it a 2-½, 3rd and 4th time, to determine what (if anything) is missing.

Best,

Christine Despardes

Dear DJ,

A few comments and thoughts on **Supplement** 102. Rereading *Beyond Writing* several times I couldn't decide if AC Evans was arguing for or against style... or for or against writing poetry (at least "these days"). At the mid point of *Beyond The Breakthrough* Evans reveals the fungibility of the term ‘Modernism’ (and all its corollaries) with his lament for the fate of John Ruskin... “a defender of The New may, in time, become an opponent of innovation... a champion of the 'modern'... transformed into a reactionary anti-modernist”.

Apropos of this discussion, doesn't every artist consider themselves to be a ‘modernist’ in their own day? Didn't Ibsen consider himself a modernist in his day, as did Wordsworth, Shakespeare, Dante, and Homer in theirs? Was not the first caveman who drew pictures on the wall of his home a modernist? Also, if anti-modernism is the reaction against modernism, and postmodernism its successor, what comes next... post-postmodernism? Ultra-postmodernism? Then Neo-plus-ultra-post-modernism?

DS Davidson's poem *The Eye in the Darkness* has a Lovecraftian eldritch atmosphere perfect for **Cyaegha** magazine in which it originally appeared.

Best Wishes,

David Edwards

.....

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Twilight of the Avant-Garde

By AC Evans

Loss or debasement of traditional values is a nightmare scenario for contemporary anti-modernists. Doubtless many defenders of 'genuine' culture sank into despair when, clad only in an itchy bitsy bikini, Britney Spears appeared on an edition of *The Late Show with David Letterman* to list the 'Top Ten ways in which the world would be different' if she were President.

Indeed, the contents of Britney's manifesto – including a proposal to establish a night-club on the Moon, and a pledge to only invade 'fun places' – might well encourage the view that modern life is the product of an absurd, tacky pseudo-culture propagated by a *louche* 'rockocracy' of celebrities and wacky fashionistas.

Of course, it may also be the case that failing to see the joke is itself a symptom of cultural decline. As Andre Breton once wrote, humour is the 'paradoxical triumph of the pleasure principle over real conditions at a moment when they may be considered to be most unfavourable' and, consequently, a potent line of defence, or mode of offence, against reactionary attitudes and encroaching banality. It is also the case that, like an unexpected wardrobe malfunction, or like a high-kick from Charlotte Greenwood, the accidental poetry of human behaviour in the mass media is often strangely surreal in an inadvertent and often unpredictable manner.

From a point of vantage in 1960, French-American cultural historian Jacques Barzun was able to map out the terrain of an emerging sensibility and to uncover some of its roots in the previous century. Taking a view that, in certain respects, echoed the fears of many other critics, Barzun dissected the arts in the period just after the Second World War and identified two conditioning factors leading to a Neo-Romantic 'rebirth of feeling'. Firstly he identified the emergence of a 'near-nihilism' among the Late Modern avant-garde and, secondly he condemned the socialising of culture as a by-product of the post-war welfare state settlement.

This 'near-nihilism', he claimed, took the form of artistic 'Abolitionism',

an attitude of total rebellion against Western culture. The last gasp of Romantic revolt, it soon became a 'creed' an article of faith and the 'mark of the sensitive' for Existentialists, Beatniks and others. He observed that this total repudiation of art (The Death of Art) by leading innovators coincided with a 'frittering away of high art through vulgarisation', through the efforts of mass journalism and public institutions committed to the processing of 'culture for all'. This processing of culture, involving an infinite task of 'introducing and commenting on the classics' and the introduction of mass-marketing methods into the artistic arena, seemed to create a kind of developmental stasis as 'genuine cultural change was again postponed'. Here we have arrived at the terminal twilight phase of the avant-garde adventure embodied in a stance of total denial which Barzun reluctantly defined as 'heroic'.

Also it evokes that 'alternative tradition' of the previous era. A tradition rooted in the work of some French Symbolists, in Decadent Aestheticism, in Futurism, in the Expressionists, in the Surrealists, in Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty, in the novels of Celine, and in the work of proto-Absurdist writers like Jarry, Pirandello and Kafka. It is a tradition that hovers between the twin poles of decadent *ennui* and existential angst, before veering off into either Primitivism or the Absurd.

A philosophical question lurks behind Barzun's use of the term nihilism (or 'near-nihilism') to define his notion of Abolitionism. For, even if the tendency evaporates into a 'void' or a blank space, like the ocean chart in *The Hunting of the Snark*, ('a large map representing the sea/Without the least vestige of land') it remains the case that the motivations of many Abolitionists (he cites Ginsberg) remained optimistically idealistic, even mystical and 'affirmative' of human values.

So, the Abolitionist revolt against Western culture did not stem from a 'pure' or rigorous nihilism, which holds that existence is totally meaningless, that life itself has no elevated 'purpose' or moral imperative. Instead it moves toward a kind of transcendental, spiritual vision of global multiculturalism which can look like a rejection of The West (still an all-pervasive tendency). The anomaly probably arises from the fact that Barzun is too vague, or all-inclusive, in his desire to subsume every tendency of the day under the label of

Abolitionism. One cannot ascribe the same teleological status to Pollock's 'Lavender Mist' or *musique concrete*, as to Genet's *The Balcony* or Beckett's *Endgame*.

With some prescience Barzun seems to anticipate a later tendency of the post-nineteen seventies, namely The Blank Generation. 'Success,' for the Abolitionists he opined, 'means to create a blank, a void...' We will have reached a dead end, or 'at least the outer edge of the known world.' This cultural void is caused by the abolition of 'oppressive things and intolerable memories'. Further, it is the abolition of the baggage of Western culture, especially the culture of the nineteenth century and it is also the end point of an 'alternative' tradition. It seems to be a critical device encoded with subliminal messages of 'escapism' and neurotic megalomania appropriate to the world described in *Less Than Zero* by Brett Easton Ellis or *Generation X – Tales for An Accelerated Culture* by Douglas Coupland. The earlier 'Blank Generation' of Punk seems more 'angry' than truly 'blank' although many commentators peddling moral panic, decried the genre as 'nihilistic' and anti-social – but also, like Pop, there are definite cultural differences between US and UK Punk.

In hindsight it can be seen that the rise of the mass media during the pre-war years (cinema, sound recording, radio) culminating after 1945, in major advances such as colour TV (1951) and satellite relay (1962), provided the technological framework for a major watershed, or turning point, in popular culture. It was a revolution that transfigured the cultural sphere, assimilating the notion of 'high culture' into a broader entity. This would be a kind of meta-culture in which distinctions between 'high' and 'low' 'original' and 'un-original', 'ancient' and 'modern', 'real' and 'artificial' dissolved forever into a limitless soup of do-it-yourself aesthetic values and anarchic, creative impulses. Far from being 'frittered away', from now on, in this mushroom cloud *massenkultur*, everything was going to be preserved and recorded. Everything was going to be re-recorded and transmitted, re-cycled and re-transmitted, copied and re-copied, because, as the saying has it: 'nothing gets lost in cyberspace' or, to quote

Adorno: 'mass culture is an organised mania for connecting everything with everything else'. This is the latent content of the near-nihilism that so disturbed Barzun, provoking his Neophobic diagnosis of the contemporary scene.

The cultural landscape is like a labyrinth, it is like 'The Garden of Forking Paths' described in a famous short story by Borges. At every twist and turn there is a bifurcation, every tendency or movement of distinct character has its antecedents and precursors, its splinter groups and secessionists, its side effects, by-products and unforeseen consequences. With their fascination of urban life, show business and modern communications it is quite possible to identify Aubrey Beardsley and other late Victorian Decadents as precursors of Pop Art. Similarly Arthur Rimbaud, in the '*Alchimie du Verbe*' section of *Une Saison en Enfer* recalled how he found the celebrated names of painting and modern poetry 'laughable'. He preferred 'stupid paintings' or stage sets, 'popular engravings', old operas and 'ridiculous refrains', not to mention erotic books with bad spelling. Rimbaud has cult status in US Pop Culture thanks to celebrity endorsements from Jim Morrison and Patti Smith.

There is an anarchic tendency in Modernism that subverts 'high art' and 'serious' elevated Arnoldian notions of culture as 'sweetness and light', questioning ontological and epistemological certainties. Just occasionally it is possible to unmask the normative injunctions of repression embodied in the reactionary dogma of autonomous, transcendental values, that 'spirit of seriousness' (*l'esprit de sérieux*) identified by Sartre as the antithesis of freedom. Like Bob Merrill's 1954 hit for Rosemary Clooney, '*Mambo Italiano*' (a grotesque Latin-pop hybrid inspired by Neapolitan cuisine) this anarchic tendency can be amplified by the incorporation of external, 'alien' or 'exotic' influences. Influences that contradict existing, traditional and academic representational conventions, offend middle-class Puritanism, inject an element of burlesque parody, or, more seriously, derail the validity of utopian 'revolutionary' alternatives which like

the Baker in *The Hunting of The Snark* will 'softly and suddenly' vanish away.

For example, an important feature of Beardsley's graphic work was the incorporation of Japanese design elements. The discovery of Japanese art, especially woodblock prints, by many Western artists was a prime factor in the establishment of a more 'modern' look to pictorial imagery. The austerity and simplicity of 'traditional' Japanese style pushed artists into a new approach, freeing them from nineteenth century academic conventions. For Beardsley, as explained by Linda Zatlin, the influence of Moronubu and Hokusai provided an escape route from both Classicism and Romantic Medievalism, allowing Aestheticism to challenge Victorian 'clutter' and the domination of Ruskinian realism.

Beardsley's described his new style as an art of 'fantastic impressions, treated in the finest possible outline with patches of Black Blot.' In his illustrations for Wilde's *Salome*, the exploitation of Japanese style, incorporating calligraphy and other unexpected approaches to format (the use of borders, fine line and general pictorial composition) created an overwhelmingly novel effect, a 'perversion of the Victorian ideal' (Zatlin). By these means Beardsley became a pioneer of *Art Nouveau* and changed the look of Western visual design forever. These elements of style, the 'fantastic impressions', the austere linearity, the problematic moral content, the non-Western influence were all ahead of their time, intimations of shifting cultural trends, a new twist to the idea of The Modern. Fantasy, which claimed G S Kirk, 'expresses itself in a strange dislocation of familiar and naturalistic connections and associations.'

In *The Cubist Painters* Apollinaire (who coined the term *surrealisme*) asserted that a new kind of art was capable of producing works of power not seen before, even fulfilling a new social function. To reinforce this idea he used the image of Bleriot's aeroplane 'carried in procession through the streets' just as, in times gone by, a painting by Cimabue was 'once paraded in public procession'. This was the conclusion of a short discussion on the work of Marcel Duchamp, described as an artist 'liberated from aesthetic preoccupations'.

Barzun saw the Abolitionists as part of a reaction to the Second World War, but, in fact, an anarchic, 'near-nihilist', anti-art tendency was gaining ground much earlier –

perhaps the Richard Mutt Case of 1917 signalled another watershed in the relentless dissolution of the old order. One must certainly note the historical significance of the moment when Duchamp decided to abandon painting in favour of the Readymade. One must note also that Richard Mutt's 'Fountain' still attracts enormous interest at Tate Modern and, as Patricia Roseberry observes, 'anticipated by many decades the sort of art which receives general attention and provokes discussion'.

Clearly, Duchamp – whose iconoclastic spirit presided over many aspects of the post-war Neo-Dada scene, from Fluxus to *Nouveau Realisme*, from Kinetic Art and Op, to Conceptual Art – was the prime instigator of anti-art – he was, one might say, the anti-hero of anti-art.

By 1912 he had rejected the direction of the avant-garde Cubists which he found far too narrow, or to use his terminology, too 'retinal'. Duchamp realised that the self-reflexive materiality of abstract painting would, sooner or later, lead to dead end; a view that, as has already been mentioned, was later articulated by Vorticist, Wyndham Lewis.

One of his responses to this situation was the innovation of the Readymade.

The Readymade, a precursor of Conceptualism, exemplifies two facets of estrangement: displacement and transgression. It was a mass-produced artefact chosen by the artist on the basis of neutrality. All of these objects, including, among others, the Bicycle Wheel, the Bottle Dryer, the Snow Shovel ('In Advance of a Broken Arm'), Comb and the Urinal ('Fountain' signed 'R. Mutt') represented a radical shift away from the tenets of orthodox aesthetics. These anonymous objects, displaced from their utilitarian contexts, actualised on the physical plane a new disconcerting element – an element eventually identified as 'surrealist'.

Partaking of black humour, they also displayed an affinity with the displaced objects that featured in works of the *Scuola Metafisica*, paintings such as 'The Evil Genius of a King', 'The Enigma of Fate' and 'The Disquieting Muses' by Giorgio de Chirico, master of post-Classical alienation. This proto-surreal, disquieting element can be traced

back to the art of previous phases, for example the 'weird' Classicism of Piranesi and Fuseli, or David's 'super-cool', unfinished 'Portrait of Madame Recamier, all the more effective for its unfinished state.

Violating normal expectations, displaced objects occupying physical space in the 'real' world, outside the picture frame, Readymades represented another 'radical' aesthetic rupture soon to become the basis of Dada. Like Duchamp, Dada (established in 1916 at the Cabaret Voltaire, Zurich) also dissociated itself from both the 'official' avant-garde and the overarching moral-religious narrative of social respectability and pernicious bourgeois complacency seen as a cause of the First World War. In a diary entry dated June 16, 1916, Hugo 'the Magic Bishop' Ball referred to the Dada enterprise in terms of theatrical entertainment: 'the ideals and culture of art as a program for a variety show'. Performances at the cabaret involved Bruitist Music, Simultaneous Poetry and Cubist Dancing. Huelsenbeck, another Dadaist, said 'the liberating deed plays a most important role in the history of the time.' Andre Breton was later to claim Dada as an exemplification of the Surrealist principle of Objective Humour.

Dada publications were produced in a suitably 'radical' manner that still seems fresh today, incorporating extreme typography, startling photographs, montage, collage, overprinting, disrupted reading order and a close intermixing of word and text just like a Web Page. This explicit rejection of the official avant-garde by Dada, and later by the Surrealists, can be seen, in hindsight, as an early stage of a 'Post-Modernist' sensibility. For the Dadaists and their friends, like Duchamp and Picabia, conventional or established Modernism was closely allied to, if not identical with, a failed, once revolutionary 'avant-garde' now in its dotage. This was now a pseudo-radical avant-garde because it had become 'official'. It was internationally accepted by the cultured social elite and consequently assimilated into the global art market system.

This official avant-garde could no longer drive change – change required total demolition – Dada was the first

stage of this new Post-Vanguard era, the precursor to various aspects of historical Post-Modernism because it had moved beyond the prevailing normative definition of Modernity in the arts. As a phenomenon Dada was the cultural equivalent of a wardrobe malfunction – it was in fact a 'normality malfunction', it was a breakdown of accepted standards, and it was a violation of the prevailing order. Dada and Surrealism were Post-Modern, because they superseded Modernism as a radical movement and preceded Barzun's Abolitionism and subsequent developments such as Pop. It was a continuation of Duchamp's rejection of Cubism, confirming the idea of an alternative, divergent lineage distinct from Late Modernism. Tristan Tzara went further and claimed that Dada had nothing at all to do with Modernism.

It was the Neo-Dada Pop Artists of a later period who became the post-war advocates of this new era, this emergent meta-culture. Far from seeing consumer society as a nightmare of cultural degeneracy, the London Independent Group (IG) formed in 1952, set out to 'plunder the popular arts' with, according to Richard Hamilton, the strangely archaic objective, of recovering 'imagery which is a 'rightful inheritance'. Curiously this was seen as a way of protecting the 'ancient purpose' or Primitive role of the artist. On the other hand, for Edward Lucie-Smith, Pop was about 'the tone and urgency of the modern megalopolis' an attempt to forge an art of 'majority living' for 'men penned in cities and cut off from nature.' By coincidence it was also in 1952 that researchers 'rediscovered' the earliest known heliographic image (proto-photograph), hidden in a family attic: Niepce's 'View from the Window at Le Gras'.

For the guru of British Pop, Lawrence Alloway, the generally accepted type of high cultural politics was redundant and 'fatally prejudiced'. Alloway revelled in the anti-academic style and iconography of the 'mass arts', seeing the pejorative use of a term like *kitsch* symptomatic of an outmoded view. He looked at the art world and saw the collapse of an intellectual elite fixated on upper class ideas and 'pastoral' representational conventions; an elite who could no longer set aesthetic standards or 'dominate all aspects of art', as had been the case in the past.

Furthermore it was an elite that had assimilated for its own purposes the traditional agenda of the avant-garde, which

was now a diluted and spent force, a ubiquitous, corporate International Style. There were anodyne abstract paintings in every boardroom and office lobby. The grand narrative of stylistic internationalism had become dissociated from the popular base, a phenomenon apparent in all spheres and not just architecture and avant-garde art. In music for example, Schoenberg's ambition that composers of all nationalities would move towards the dodecaphonic method proved hollow. In terms of general cultural significance Derek Scott is surely correct when he observes that 'the 12 bar blues may be said to have greater cultural importance than the 12-note row'.

Mass produced 'urban culture' was to provide the raw material for different type of art. Fascinated by a world of movies, television, production lines, advertisements, fashion, pop music and science fiction, the IG simply accepted all this as 'fact' – as a tissue of signs, or as a form of information exchange. In popular art, asserted Alloway, there is a 'continuum from data to fantasy' and artists were engaged in a kind of meta-cultural anthropology. In this approach the Pop Artists were reflecting a new awareness of the 'value' of significance of popular culture, a tendency anticipated by Orwell, now reflected in the worlds of intellectual critics like Marshall McLuhan and Roland Barthes. Between 1954 and 1964 Barthes wrote his series of articles eventually published as the collection *Mythologies*. These short pieces analysed the ideological and phenomenological significance of artefacts and images such as 'soap powders and detergents', 'plastic', 'ornamental cookery', 'The Jet Man', the new Citroen DS and 'The Face of Garbo'. In the new Pop world the notion of an autonomous, disinterested 'fine art' was completely rejected in favour of Space Age populism, seeming, in hindsight, to synchronise with official policy doctrines like 'Atoms for Peace'.

By 1959 kinetic artist Jean Tinguely had developed his *metamecanique* Meta-matic machines for 'do-it-yourself abstract painting'. Meta-matics were portable, tripod or wheeled devices with co-ordinated drawing arms. 'Meta-matic No 14' was a hand-held drawing machine shown at the *Art, Machine and Motion* event (a typical Neo-Dada provocation) staged at the ICA

in London. Operated by a girl in fishnets dressed as an usherette, the device produced numerous Abstract Expressionist works for distribution amongst the audience.

Tinguely also developed the 'Cyclomatic' a pedal-powered version of the device constructed from welded scrap metal and bicycle wheels. At the event cyclists mounted the machine in turns competing to see who could produce a mile long abstract painting in the fastest time. Closely related to the 'Cyclomatic' was the 'Cyclograveur', a static pedal-powered device capable of drawing on a blackboard. Earlier in the same year Tinguely had shown his Meta-matics at the Iris Clert Gallery in Paris at an event attended by Marcel Duchamp.

This was the final fade-out of the revolutionary avant-garde, the negation of the art object in favour of informational media and delirious Cold War space race techno-fashion based on catsuits, pvc boots and body armour. This was the twilight of the avant-garde.

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Reviews by John Francis Haines

Agents of V.A.L.V.E

By Cardinal Cox

A Black Mass

By Cardinal Cox

For a copy of each pamphlet while stocks last, send an SAE to him at
 58 Pennington, Orton Goldhay,
 Peterborough, PE2 5RB.

Agents of V.A.L.V.E is the third, and for the moment last, of Cox's steampunk-inspired horror and dark-fantasy pamphlets.

I recognised three references to Jules Verne (there could be others) – *Carpathian Castle*, *Around the World in Eighty Nights*, and *Hans Pfall at the Centre of the Earth*. Dr Phibes moves to New York, where “He has an apartment in the Chrysler Tower”, and Charles Babbage’s experiments seem to have come to an unexpected end in *Explosion at University’s Number Mill*.

Keeping an eye on things (in the footnotes, naturally) are the Agents of V.A.L.V.E. - Volunteer Anti-Lycanthrope and Vampire Eliminators, formed after the disappearance of Hans Pfall in 1835. Cox creates a fictional 19th century in which all the Gothic literature has become an alternative reality, and historical people rub shoulders with characters from this literature.

Fans of Cardinal Cox are well served by this latest offering – grab a copy while you can!

Meanwhile, the ghosts of Baudelaire, Swinburne, Verlaine, Wilde, Rimbaud, and Beardsley haunt the thirteen poems in **A Black Mass** that “concern the history and activities of the Decadent secret society, The Vestry.” There is grim humour, as in the footnote to *Crime Report*, which states that “the first thought was that it was just another vampire murder but... potential suspects had alibis.”

The living and the dead mingle in these pages, make love among the tombstones, and a general air of forbidden lust is everywhere. *The Jilted Brides of Dracula* “have all heard an old serpent hiss” and as *Mme. Hyacinth Chautelove* notes, “Rules mean so little against hungry wants”. There is the story outline of, presumably, an unmade film, *Jean Rollins’ Dracula*, detailing nine scenes of an updated retelling of the story.

The famous footnotes seem to be more factual than usual, though, unless you are an expert, it is very difficult to be sure quite where the fact and fiction interface actually is. This is quite a dark and disturbing collection, and definitely not one to put on maiden aunt Mildred’s bedtime reading list. Cox fans will be delighted by this new venture, and if it encourages you to seek out some of the writers mentioned, so much the better. It’s well worth teaching yourself French to be able to read the likes of Baudelaire in the original.

Upswept

Edited by Andy Robson

A4, unpaginated, free for SAE (while stocks last) from
63 Dixon Lane, Leeds, LS12 4RR, United Kingdom

If, like me, you have a **Krax**-shaped hole in your reading schedule, then I bring good news, for AR comes galloping over the horizon to the rescue like the 7th Cavalry with **Upswept** – a one-off publication full of the usual wit, whimsy, and tomfoolery. Unlike a lot of modern poetry, it doesn't leave you wrung out with angst after you've finished reading it, you just wish there was more.

Rhyme features quite a lot; in fact, how many rhymes could *you* come up with for 'celery'? Well, Richard Tyrone Jones, the clever lad, has five stanzas of them in *The Celery Seller's Story*. And, a gold star and a house point for Ken Lovell, too – anyone who can rhyme *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* with oesophagus gets my vote to be the next Poet Laureate! If you thought poetry and mathematics were incompatible, then Bruce McRae will put you right with *Pi-Ku* (you'll have to think about it, though).

The production is cheap and cheerful, and the poems are interspaced with illos from the likes of Alan Hunter, Chris Crielgaard, Marge B. Simon, and Alexei Talimonov – this last one could be classed as a graphic poem.

Just what the doctor ordered for these uncertain times. As John Lemmon puts it in *Last Chance* – “no-one knows if another train / Will stop at our little station.”

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Review by Christine Despardes

The Folk Show 3: Fan Mail for a Film

By Cardinal Cox

Free for SAE (Overseas: \$2) from:
Starburker Publications c/o 58 Pennington, Orton Goldhay,
Peterborough, PE2 5RB, UK

The film that **The Folk Show 3: Fan Mail for a Film** is for is the famous 1974 folk horror cult film *The Wicker Man*. Cardinal Cox composed this pamphlet for release at the January 2023 Whittlesey Straw Bear Festival.

The Folk Show 3 plunges us into the rich oral tradition of the Fenlands that goes back to antiquity and persists today (at Whittlesey Straw Bear Festival performances, for example).

Steven Roud, a Fenlands man – has done the onerous project of indexing 250,000 English oral folk songs in his world-famous [Roud Folk Song Index](#). In **Folk Show 3**, I find Cardinal Cox's improvisation on Roud-labelled pieces to be soothing fantasies. All of his **Folk Show** series suggest or depict the Fenlands of yesteryear; the people's entertainment, recreation, lives intensely lived, traditions, blessings. All prior to marsh draining, industrialization and tourism. **Folk Show 3** affirms my belief that the Fenlands is romantic today because of what it once was.

Some Mummery is a mummery's play with a murder in it, that is rousing fun throughout.

Toadman is a short prose fiction about a quack veterinarian who gets caught taking payment for a cure for the high lord's favourite horse that the toadman deliberately poisoned

in the first place. The lord promises that justice will prevail, and it all ends sorted.

The closing piece is an article, *The Legend*, which covers the background and career of David Pinner whose novel **Ritual** (1967) **The Wicker Man** is based on. Peterborough was also Mr. Pinner's place of origin; he was a novelist and an accomplished playwright and stage actor.

Among the pamphlet's exquisite fixed forms are terza rima, English sonnets, and innovated forms that reflect Roud folk songs which inspired them.

Slight Gods discusses a few of the lesser gods of Roman Britain's Celtic paganism. Created in antiquity and accessible even now, icons of them bring to the human world deities that exist as humble sculptings, an inscription, a face or a figure etched roughly in stone. Today, the lesser gods of the Fenlands may have more significance in spiritual form than in physical representation.

Slight Gods is my favorite piece. It's composed of four intriguing octets whose rhyme scheme I think I've never noticed before, that raises questions but offers no answers. Perhaps line 8, "Reality has strange layers" explains it all.

A Letter from Heaven

By Todd Sullivan

How long has it been, since you first sought out the gift
So young you were then, the future a wide blank space
You learned a new word that meant the writer of books
In secret you told me this path you would follow
Even as a child, you knew the trek would be long
Hands clasped, you prayed that you would always remain strong

Book after book you read to make your young mind strong
Friendless childhood, you did not know it was my gift
Often alone in silence, the days seemed so long
In class, teachers scolded you not to stare into space
Cease with your daydreaming, those rules they said follow
You attempted, but could not coax your thoughts from books

Worlds born in your mind, you aspired to write books
Building narratives, paving plots meant to be strong
You studied written worlds, hints you tried to follow
Deciphering clues from pages, a treasured gift
Deep inside you grew within your infinite space
This truth I whispered, time in this life is not long

You pushed on as an adult, your vision stretched long
Harvesting the buds of worlds, you published some books
Throughout the south you travelled under stars in space
Each stop you publicly spoke and soon became strong
Hardships suffered, have you yet realize they were my gift
For on your written road, there is none to follow

Over years you carved from time the path to follow
Spent many days alone, the nights feeling so long
You cursed me for inspiring you to chase this gift
That desire from youth to be writer of books
But the lesson I promised was how to be strong
So I kept others away, you needed the space

Half your life has passed, you have created your space
Surprised by those, you are, who seek you to follow
You are a writer of words who have become strong
But your path is not yet done, the distance still long
Into the world you have seeded many new books
With the hope that readers will treat them as a gift

In the space of a lifetime, you learned writer means strong
You found none to follow, to you, my greatest gift
Long you have sought, and from seeking produced many books