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REVIEW DATA

1. Title: Minimal Poems Written in 1979
2. Author: M. van der Slice
3. Price: \$ 2.00
4. Publication date: June 20, 1980

CAMELS COMING PRESS

P.O. Box 703

San Francisco, CA 94101

The reading of M. van der Slice's Minimal Poems Written in 1979 (the work, actually, has no title) reminded me of a book I have seen a long time ago, called Truth, which had not even a single word printed inside. In either case we have a sample of how often excentricities can prove efficient means of artistic creativity, in this new literary trend known as Minimalism.

What people such as van der Slice propose is a new approach to life and art, an "éloignement" which is free from former prejudices, the end of a dual Man/World perception brought about by author and reader, who are to work together, from now on.

All eleven minimal micro-poems presented in this work are so open to interpretation, because of their closeness (why not?), that they bring the reader the opportunity to get in touch with their 'MOOD', with every single data-1 or emotion. The book doesn't have to be read as a reference to its author's sexual life: it is now complete as a work of art which behaves more or less like a mirror. And it is impossible to the reader to get near it without having his/her image caught there.

(Review by Sandra Sirangelo Maggio)

KANT, ASCHER/STRAUS AND A STEP FURTHER IN THE SEARCH
FOR ARTISTIC CREATION

BY SANDRA SIRANGELO MAGGIO

In The American Adam, R. B. Lewis refers to Whitman as the apostle of a freedom which was a "climax as well as a beginning, or rather, the climax of a long effort to begin". He is compared to the first man and the first poet, at one time creator and creation. What Ascher/Straus present, in "Between Two Walls"⁽¹⁾ is their own contribution to this American Genesis, where the reader is summoned to come along and help break the "pane of glass" which separates real life from Artistic Creation.

In the five opening propositions⁽²⁾ the reader is confronted with a concrete wall and learns that emotions can be projected into it, which is old newspaper or faded hopes-and-longings". And as we couple these symbols of inner and outer reality we get two walls, one existing independently of our will ("a guide to nothing but itself"), and the other, product of individual imagination ("a guide to another universe or anti-universe"). We could add here the notion of complexity by comparing these two walls with two mirrors, one facing the other and image-ricocheting an infinity of symmetrical projections. Between these walls stands the prophet and priest of the newest truth, the AUTHOR, who lies "approximately half-way

(1) Paris Review, Number 64.

(2) "Between Two Walls" is divided into three parts:
Five Propositions, A Walk on the Open Moors, and
Five Anti-Propositions.

between detective fiction and the durable ugliness of yellowed walls".

We are left, therefore, with plenty of options: we can examine the actual anatomy of the wall (wall for wall's sake); we can project sensations into it; or also ignore it, while reading a book (where we can find either a detective story or the wall itself).

How are we to define Reality or Art, now that these concepts become questionable and we can slide freely from one to the other and back again (as the five closing anti-propositions state)?

Are Ascher/Straus somehow tangential on a central idea in the work of Borges, proposed in "Caminata" as:

Yo soy el único espectador de esta calle;
Si dejara de verla se moriría.

Or, according to Ascher/Straus:

Life until now = fiction until now. One
has only to topple life to topple fiction.
Or to topple fiction to topple life.
Or: Fiction, if it's anything, is a
methodical technique of bumping into oneself
by accident.

In the Robbe-Grilletesque section "A Walk on the Open Moors"⁽³⁾, we are confronting the detective's realization of how pathetic his quest is. The impression he experiences is familiar to any human being who has faced crucial moments: the floor dematerializes under his feet; the very notions of time and space grow dim inside a mist which carries him into another dimension:

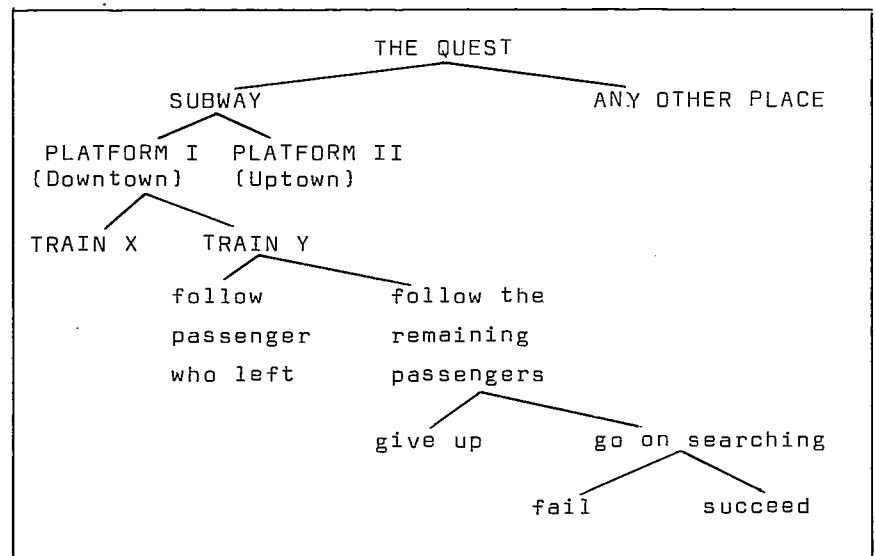
One instant ago things were like a pane

(3) cf. Robbe-Grillet's Les Gommages.

of glass. You looked straight through actual life... into a vacuous other world. Now you or circumstances have struck the glass with a hammer and a million forking paths, sharp fragments, webs of logic, appear where there was nothing.

What I want to analyse, now, is the part of the above quotation where the stratified order of reality is broken into a million forking paths, in order to get to the usage Ascher/Straus make of Kantian 'a priori' notions of SPACE and TIME.

As the detective decides to search for the suspect in the subway, he automatically gives up going to any other of the x places in the city. We could present a scheme of the quest that goes like this:



No matter which way he chooses, he can't escape the single truth that "The simplest action is capable of division into endless alternatives". He tries hard to break the postulate, distorts all chains of Logic

and Probabilities, missapplies syllogisms:

Since he's searching for the suspect, the suspect must be on the train. The logic of this apparently paradoxical statement is unassailable in the light of the alternatives that have led to this point.

Yet, he fails. Each step he advances in the quest represents an advance in time and a direction in space. As he walks through the open moors of yesterday - the city of New York today - who knows what tomorrow - he gradually creates his own story. He is not able to predict what is going to happen next moment, what he will be doing or saying. And this incertitude is present in the very structure of the story. New concepts start to exist, a further step towards a greater freedom. We have now what can be called the 'NEW NARRATOR' who, instead of telling a story, presents a fan of "forking paths" and gives the reader the liberty of choice brought by the 'MOULDABLE PLOT'. The old notion of "Stream of Consciousness" is given other dimensions: now we can follow the train of thought of the characters, or of the narrator, or the authors themselves at the moment of creation and, in a way, our own thoughts. In "A Walk on the Open Moors", while the character sits in the train, it is the reader who chooses whether he is (1) reading a newspaper; (2) reading a Marxist tract on Criminology; (3) reading a chapter on the "Nature of Things"; (4) or one on "Space, Time and Gravity"; (5) examining a bank advertisement; (6) chewing BAZOOKA bubble gum; (7) scrutinizing his thumb; (8) scrutinizing the thumb of a suspect, etc. The story ceases to be flat and becomes a geometric figure; now it can be touched and analysed under different, and maybe even opposite lights.

EVERYTHING, from now on, can be questioned and restructured:

How is it that the detective is able to read this hidden text...unless he's succeeded in slipping into the man's overcoat, hat, suit, shoes, mask, and so on.

And how is it that we're able to see through the detective's eyes unless...

... Unless we are the witnesses of something new, a radical revolution, a daring innovation which promises a lot.

REVIEW DATA

1. TITLE: CHICKEN
2. AUTHOR: Dennis Kelly
3. Price: \$ 4.50
4. Publication Date: 1979

GAY SUNSHINE PRESS
P.O. Box 40397
San Francisco, CA 94140

Chicken consists of a collection of 38 gay poems written and illustrated by Seattle poet Dennis Kelly. Several kinds of gay poems are introduced here, all centered on the theme of young gay love.

The author has already published Gay Sunshine & Fag Rag, and is working on a long gay epic called Cantos Northwest, whose ten first poems can also be found in Chicken. Kelly's language is simple and spontaneous, full of slang and word-games (which can be found in "Graphemics", where the real chicken is "awakened by the difference between syntax and semen/antics").

In many poems the author goes back to Greek Mythology, which he uses in a sensuous/humorous way, such as in the "Catullus Poems", where the Roman Poet addresses his epigrams to Aurelius, Juventius, Heracles, Ameana, and Rufa, in terms such as,

Is it really true, O wife of Menenius?
That you suck off your kid brother?
I can't blame you, really my dear.
How many of us would like to do what
You do. (...)

"Handsome is as Handsome does" is dedicated to Walt Whitman and his new paradisiacal man; to Melville

we have "Handsome Sailorboy", a love song to Billy Budd, and "Melville as Size-Queen", to Moby Dick.

But the best of all are the simple little poems which praise the male nymphet, such as "Chicken" or "Afterwards".

(Review by - Sandra Sirangelo Maggio)

1. TITLE: INSIDE/OUT - Prose and Poetry from America's Prisons
2. Editor: Matthew Hejna
3. Price: \$ 1.50
4. Publication date: Spring 1980

TIME CAPSULE INC.

GPO Box 1185 - New York 10001

All extremes of humanitarianism are reached whenever one finds a paper such as INSIDE/OUT, which consists of literary pieces written by prisoners. Of course one would like to get a \$ 5.00 - a - year subscription and help "those poor fellows to lead a more decent life". At least that's what I thought, as I got the first issue of this Time Capsule Magazine, which I did not expect to be good. And there's where my mistakes began. All four short-stories and five poems proved to be the best sort of artistic ingenuity, expressive in form and genuine in feeling.

The first work, "A Glimpse at Reality", by Martin Vargas, consists of a number of short dialogues colloquial post-post-modern in which a "Nigger", a Mexican, a priest and other people who are making love in "the hole" at Jackson (Mich.) Prison give us an insight into what the author calls "the abnormal and rougher side of realism, in full dress".

The idea for this paper originated from the PEN American Center's Prison Writing Program, at Rutgers University's Livingstone College, and has now the assistance of many Universities all through the United States.

Most of the works deal with the life people lead in prison: the fear of committing suicide, or going crazy; the terror at the thought that people they love won't come on visiting days; the little present they get on Christmas day, when each man is told by the guard "merry christmas fella/ no hard feelin's"; and also the hope of better days, when they are going to start all over again, outside, where joy is waiting...

(Review by - Sandra Sirangelo Maggio)