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Richard Cary

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# 114 Colby Library Quarterly

## BERN PORTER'S FRIENDS IN BOOKS

By RICHARD CARY

"I WAS simmering, simmering, simmering; Emerson brought me to a boil." Walt Whitman's kinetic metaphor directly applies to the situation of Bern Porter not long after he had taken degrees at Colby College (1932) and Brown University (1933). Ravaged by two abrading forces — the social urgency to make a lucrative career and the hypertensive passion to reconcile *de facto* separation of science and art — his health declined to the point where he had to abandon his researches toward the Ph.D. A desultory period of wandering through Canada and short tenures in odd jobs around Maine and New York City ended when he hired on as a physicist with the Acheson Colloids Corporation. Here the simmering started. He began to write steadily, both technical and popular articles, and to mix in the world of art which included Salvador Dali and Max Ernst, striving always to articulate his own presentiments. It was not, altogether, a powerful personage like Emerson who brought Porter to a boil. Rather, a circumstance which confronted him with an ethical dilemma. Drafted arbitrarily into the Manhattan District (the secret federal project to create an atom bomb), he sought reaffirmation in publishing, painting, sculpting, and was honored by his first one-man exhibit at Princeton University. Notwithstanding, the probable use of the bomb impended heavily over his sense of moral reality. The day after it was exploded on Hiroshima he resigned.

In 1942 he had been transferred to California. The climate of intellectual and esthetic excitement prevailing in the area opened his mind to the full. At this point his multifold absorption in the arts, literature and science effervesced into an extraordinary complex of accomplishments. He came to know and encourage a legion of the avant garde which was breaking through the crusts of accepted forms.<sup>1</sup> And at this time in

1 As examples, in a bound volume containing four issues of the *Evergreen Review*, Eudine Porter wrote on the flyleaf that her husband has known and worked with the following contributors to these issues: Robert Creeley, Karl Jaspers, Philip Whalen, Jack Kerouac, Denise Levertov, Antonin Artaud, Charles Olson, Gary Snyder, Federico Garcia Lorca, William Carlos Williams, Anthony C. West, E. E. Cummings, Gregory Corso, Allen Ginsberg, Kenneth Sawyer, William Saroyan, Wallace Fowlie, Paul Goodman, Stanley Kunitz, Richard Wilbur, and Hilda Doolittle.

## Colby Library Quarterly 115

Los Angeles he met Henry Miller who, if we *must* provide an Emerson to Porter's Whitman, aptly fills the bill. Porter immediately started collecting materials by and about Miller, wrote about him, edited and published some of his books. Porter rapidly stretched this kind of adherence to swarms of generally younger, newer, experimental authors, editors, and publishers (as will be seen below). The years since then have engendered a brightening revelation, as much for Porter as for the subjects of his ministries.

A little over eleven years ago I became aware of Bern Porter, then living on East Colorado Street in Pasadena, through a copy of his biography by James Schevill. Intrigued by him triply as person, artist, and Colby alumnus, I accepted his offer to donate personal books to be shelved together as a Bern Porter Collection in our rare book division. Within two weeks arrived the first shipment of what he called "Vanguard Expression . . . singular works which stand alone and apart and point the way to new developments . . . books like *Sleepers Awake* by Kenneth Patchen, *Maldoror* by Lautréamont, *Residual Years* by William Everson . . . contemporary classics if you wish." Porter was frank from the start. The "master collection," he told me, would still be centered at UCLA (see Renée Simon's exposition in this issue); what he would mostly remand to Colby were the items his friends sent him. Excepting intervals when he was traveling on other continents, hefty packages of this description have been arriving regularly. Today the Collection runs to hundreds of unique and attractive volumes.

By virtue of content or format, all of these books give off a definite aura of Bern Porter, most of them vivified by the inscriptions and signatures of his friends. They come from the hands of authors, editors, publishers, translators, and in one graphic case from the illustrator of Hardy's *The Return of the Native*, Clare Leighton, who creates for Porter an original drawing on the endleaf (see next page).

As might be expected from so assorted and unpredictable a gallery of personalities, the range of sentiments on flyleaves and colophons extends from no sentiment whatsoever to one occupying eight pages. One wonders about the literal silence of the first group: were these ordinarily verbal people newly struck by the psychosis of the blank page, were they preternaturally shy,



or were they just averse to autographing books (a common occupational hazard among authors)? Why should such ept handlers of language as Robert Creeley, Philip Corner, R. Buckminster Fuller, Robert Duncan, William Everson (Brother Antoninus), Sidney Omarr, Hendrick Willem Van Loon, Hilda Rebay, Leonard Wolf, James Purdy, Yvan Goll, Wilbert Snow, and Alison Knowles have suddenly been struck by a loss for words? These among others simply affixed their names and occasionally a date to the many volumes they presented to Porter. Indeed, Charles Bukowski limited himself to a bare *CB*. Dick Higgins practiced double diffidence in his doubledecker, *Postface* and *Jefferson's Birthday*, each novel beginning at one end of the book and working toward the middle. He signed summarily at both ends.

Timothy Leary, high lama of hallucinogens, signed his *Psychedelic Prayers* with exaggerated capital and terminal letters in vivid green, flanked by an encircled stylized flower. A note by his wife Susan is laid in.

Jean Genet wrote with self-effacing smallness in the highest right inch of the front endleaf of *Our Lady of the Flowers*, "a Mons. P." and "J.G." — curiously seeming to want to run off the page and hide. Others who indited Porter's full name with only a variation of "To" or "For" are Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Bill Everson (bandmaster turned printer turned poet turned monk), Peggy Guggenheim, Kenneth Beaudoin, Miriam Allen de Ford, James Laughlin, and Parker Tyler. Ferlinghetti registered in expansive red but affected lower case for the initials of his name.

Still in the spare category are Charles Henri Ford who added "yours sincerely"; Josephine Miles, West Coast academic and

## Colby Library Quarterly 117

poet, who prefaced "Signed for" and sometimes appended "with the regards of"; R. Buckminster Fuller who raised it a degree to "warm regard." John G. Moore addressed Porter with his honorary "Dr." and called him "my friend" on Christmas of 1967; twice he was satisfied to offer "good wishes." Dane Rudhyar compounded this to "warmest wishes," and Paul Rand went to the apex of "best wishes." The longest of these bromide bestowals is from Lloyd Emerson Siberell, "To Bern Porter with kindly greetings & felicitations." In André de Ridder's study of his work, Ossip Zadkine is brief and Gallic (Genet-*esque?*): "To Bern Porter, en souvenir, from O. Zadkine." A surprising entry in this taciturn class is Porter's biographer, James Schevill, poet, playwright, professor. Of the twelve volumes in our collection which he has written and inscribed, four have only "To Bern Porter" and Schevill's signature, four "Inscribed to the Bern Porter Collection, Colby College Library," as though done belatedly and on request. The remaining four greet the presentee with first-name familiarity and have a mite more to say: 1) his critical biography, *Sherwood Anderson* (1951), "For Bern, Friend & publisher, with gratitude for his faith in my work"; 2) *The Stalingrad Elegies* (1964), "For Bern, With best wishes and friendship. Jim"; 3) *The Black President and Other Plays* (1965), "For Bern, with all best wishes. Jim"; 4) *Release* (1969), the most provocative — "For Bern, with western & eastern memories. Jim."

Contemplating the stark economy of statement in the foregoing, one is led to conclude that for some authors there is a time to compose and a time to dispose, and, patently, time for the latter was not at hand. This is true in two of Paul Goodman's three books here. "For Bern Porter," with signature and date sufficed for *The Break-Up of Our Camp* and *Kafka's Prayer*, the second volume evidently picked up backwards and upside down, for the inscription appears at the bottom of the rear endleaf (as it also does in Walter Lowenfels' congruously-named book, *The Writing on the Wall*). Goodman dilated a trifle on Porter's Maine provenance in *The Empire City*: "for Bern Porter, With praise for the North Country, tho this book is about the Empire City." Ralph Setian garnished his *Impressions and Expressions of Youth* with a cryptic reference to "A second time around, with thanks!" Kenneth Sawyer gladly

## 118 Colby Library Quarterly

yielded his *Poems & Drawings* "after a most stimulating evening of Saints and verse"; a penciled note below the first poem, "Moon," reveals that it was read over radio station KTIM in July 1950.

Artist W. Edwin Ver Becke committed metaphor and pun in his *Line in Painting*: "There is a fusion of the oil line with the life line!" while Parker Tyler settled for plain paronomasia in *The Hollywood Hallucination*: "Here's the crystal ball in which I star-gaze." He also proffered "Best wishes for Bern Porter, my soon-to-be publisher," as did Angel Flores "To my generous publisher" in the first edition of his Kafka bibliography. Will Slotnikoff amplified this aspect of Porter's activity in his book on Henry Miller, *The First Time I Live*: "To the distinguished patron of works of intrinsic literary merit even when at first unpopular and unrecognized." Amusingly, Curtis Zahn started out with Porter as publisher and eventuated with Zahn as victim, in his collected short stories paperback, *American Contemporary*: "To Bern — whom I 1st remember in 1946 bogged-down w/22# of books, in Lost Angeles. And lastly, here, where I sometimes issue from. Sorry I have no hardtop version of 'American Contempt' at hand. Jonathan Cape, Ltd of London *does* have an issue out for [illegible] shillings but loyal, interested friends seem to have borrowed the 4 copies which once abounded here. (German edition is a paperback which my pacifist brother — who speaks no foreign language — says has 'gained in the translation.') Ever, Curtis Z." Elmer Gertz, Chicago attorney-author, was "flattered" by Porter's "persistent pursuit" of his books and, in his 1968 study of a *Moment of Madness: The People vs Jack Ruby*, underscored Porter's social concern as "one who is interested in the battle for justice and freedom."

Not all of Porter's friends were obscure or remained obscure, as a good percentage of the preceding names might suggest. Authors now prominent among the generality of readers, or at least giving off strong resonances, actually form the bulk of inscriptors in Porter's collection. In fortunate parallel, their comments are customarily longer, brighter, and revelatory of themselves and of Porter. Allen Tate, qualifying as to height but not in length or visibility, restricted himself to "grateful sentiments" and "thanks for his interest" in two volumes. Rock-

## Colby Library Quarterly 119

well Kent, too, expressed banal "warm regards" to his "friend" via *N. by E.* but struck for the funnybone in his other effort, augmenting an austere black and white likeness of himself (with cleaving eyes) on the cover of *American Book Collector* with: "Here's looking at you, Bern Porter, but, in thought, more pleasurably than here appears." Among the better-known — Nelson Algren with his single freewheeling ode; Henry Miller, Anaïs Nin, Karl Shapiro, Eli Siegel, Walter Lowenfels, Allen Ginsberg, and Kenneth Patchen with their prolific contributions, deserve treatment in separate essays. Space, however, compels a compromise of separate sectors in this omnibus.

## HENRY MILLER

Within months of their first meeting, Miller detected special qualities in Porter and evidenced this breezily in *The Colossus of Maroussi*: "To Bern Porter, bringing to Berkeley a whiff of the past which is living into the future — his, mine, every one's. 'Peace! It's wonderful!' Henry Miller, 7/20/43, Hollywood." A letter of the same date from Miller to Porter is pasted on the back endpaper.

Not long later Miller clarified a point otherwise sure to be distorted by future literary sleuths seeking keys to identity. "To Bern Porter from Henry Miller, who was most definitely *not* Alf," he wrote in *What Are You Going to Do About Alf?* "Alf is Alfred Perlès, now Pvt. A. J. Barrett, of the British Army — Pioneer Corps." Stet!

Promptly upon Porter's establishment of the collection of works by and about Miller at UCLA, the sage of Big Sur donated his *The Plight of the Creative Artist in the United States of America* and *Murder the Murderer*, designating both "For Bern and the collection."

In Porter's *Henry Miller: A Chronology and Bibliography* (1945) Miller manually prolonged the printed subtitle THE WORK IN PROGRESS "and more dope, dates, names, clues, etc. as they come to me — by post card, telegram or carrier pigeon."

Miller merely signed and indicated the locale "Big Sur" in his privately printed *Aller Retour*; dispatched gruff "Greetings!" to "Bern" in *Stand Still Like the Hummingbird*.

Two volumes are innocent of inscription but contain a letter and a postcard from Miller to Porter; Miller's *Varda: The*

## 120 Colby Library Quarterly

*Master Builder* has a postcard from Eve Miller; a postcard and a letter from Jon Webb, and a note from Jon and Louise Webb, the publishers, are laid in Miller's *Order and Chaos chez Hans Reichel*; Thomas H. Moore, editor of *Henry Miller on Writing*, gave a copy "To Bern Porter, with great thanks."

### ANNAIS NIN

In the beginning, the intense and spectral sensibility of Anaïs Nin reached toward Porter with guardedly bland "good wishes," "best wishes," once truncating his given name to a formalistic "B." Her growing appreciation of his several-sidedness emerged in *This Hunger*, where she cited him as "publisher of good books," and in her *D. H. Lawrence: An Unprofessional Study* she admitted his value as wellspring: "I am learning from your books now." His "original ideas and writings" she lauded in Volume II of her serial *Diary* (1967).

Porter's particular vision — the true marriage of science and art — engaged Miss Nin in three instances: first, recognition of his commitment to both disciplines, "For Bern Porter, for his contribution to science, to literature and criticism" (in her *The Novel of the Future*); second, realization of his purpose, "with admiration for the way you fuse literature and science" (in Volume I of her *Diary*, 1966); third, confidence in his ultimate efficacy, "your dual activities, poetry and science, are the future synthesis" (in her *Seduction of the Minotaur*).

The words "friend" and "friendship" recur with unassumptive sincerity throughout her inscriptions, leaving the impression that she does not bandy the terms lightly. In *Collages* she introduced a variation of tone and intent, compelling scrutiny of her text on the order of *roman à clef*: "To Bern Porter, who may recognize old friends." (Where Miller enlightens, Miss Nin entices.)

### NELSON ALGREN

Algren's sole inscriptive offering to Porter, in *Notes from a Sea Diary*, smacks of having been indited by a man with a golden arm during a walk on the wild side. Algren's dithyramb swarms over eight pages preliminary to the main text with an infectious access of spirit. His autobiography is broad and sprawl-



Colby Library Quarterly 121

ing, starting in black and shifting early to purple ink as he evidently ran into trouble with his instrument. The lettering alternates without ostensible plan or proportion between cursive and block print. He finished with the flourish of a Rembrandt, rendering the back of a squatting cat in thick, Tyrian strokes.



In sum, something elusive of description; to be seen to be enjoyed<sup>2</sup> "For Bern Porter who once missed a meal (*Big* deal) And could probably stand to miss a few more. Best wishes from Mao-tse-tung, Ho-Chi-Minh, Sammy Davis Jr., Arthur Goldberg, Elke Sommer, Lawrence Olivier, Judy Garland,

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<sup>2</sup> Algren's spacing is capricious, and his punctuation virtually nonexistent; some commas and periods are interpolated by the editor in the interests of clarity.

## 122 Colby Library Quarterly

Grover Cleveland Alexander, Stanley Ketchell, Harry Greb, Cassius Clay, Malcolm X, Za-Za Gabor, Mickey Mantle, Wm. Heirens, Nathan Leopold, Dicky Loeb. As well as: J.E.B. Stuart, Martin Luther King, Dick Gregory, Stokely Carmichael, Phil Sheridan, Phil Harris, Nick The Greek and all the sports and all the stars and all the flashes-in-the-pan who also missed a meal — and Nelson Algren. Belleville, Ill., Aug. 1966."

### KARL SHAPIRO

The personalia provided by Shapiro in his dedications are a boon to literary history and an ingress to his creative ego. Sometimes he was forthrightly grateful for Porter's devotion, as in *Essay on Rime*, "thanks for collecting my works," and in the 1968 *Selected Poems*, "very pleased to inscribe this big one. Cordially." Sometimes he was purely informative, as in *Poems 1940-1953*, "the prototype of the *Selected Poems*," and in *In Defense of Ignorance*, "This book just appeared in Italian." And sometimes, most valuably, he set down unequivocal preferences and opinions. He rated his *Poems of a Jew* as "my most misunderstood volume"; "This is my favorite," he said of *White-Haired Lover*; and he bared bedrock esteem for Baudelaire in *The Bourgeois Poet* (1964) — "my *Les Fleurs du Mal*."

### ELI SIEGEL

Siegel's first published poem, "Hot Afternoons Have Been in Montana," was selected over 4,000 manuscripts as the *Nation* Prize Poem for 1925 and swept him into controversial eminence. Gradually he faded out of attention until William Carlos Williams revitalized his reputation with a short preamble to a selection of his verse in 1957. As author, editor, and publisher, he has since been responsible for *Definition*, a Journal of Events and Aesthetic Realism, and a spate of books, pamphlets, and broadsides of verse, analysis, and commentary. For the seventeen issues of *Definition* and each of the other works he has conferred upon Porter, Siegel struck off a gnomonic poem, comprising in effect a nosegay of rhythmic aphorisms. They date from August 1964 to April 1969, reproduced here chronologically on the following two pages.

## Colby Library Quarterly 123

### Always Room

In a world of doom  
There is always room  
For something else.

### We Are

We are  
When we are wholly seen.

### A Hope

A hope  
Many years can grope —  
Later proclaim.

### Some of Which

A self  
Should bear the gaze  
Of any object,  
Some of which are people.

### And It Is

The unpolluted  
Is what is as yet not uprooted:  
And it is.  
The unpolluted  
Is deep, deep, deep rooted.

### Truants

Ourselves are studies  
We are truants about.

### Greedy

The truly greedy self  
Wants to be one.

### Jubilation

As the heart beats  
There is elemental jubilation.

### Caprice

Caprice  
Is one of the more familiar words  
Of the otherwise immobile absolute.

### Center

She thought  
The World's Center  
Meant her.  
She was right somewhat.

### Both

But and and  
Both help to understand.

### Botany

The rose shows  
All of botany  
All of you and me.

### Among These Things

We are among  
Things standing for "Hello and  
So Long,"  
And Maybe.

### Grandeur

There is grandeur  
In him and her;  
And it.

### Negative

Negative is a privilege  
Which can terrify  
And should be rebounded from.

### Plural

The sight of leaves  
Makes the self plural.

### Value, Strutting

In the motion of anything  
Value struts along.

### The Haphazard, Functional

The haphazard  
Is the necessary annoyance  
Of straight lines and flatness.

## 124 Colby Library Quarterly

### To Music

Space is perpetual.  
This very second:  
— We say to music: Do tell.

### Conrad

Conrad  
Is sad and mad.  
Ah, but if he had  
All, all of Conrad.

### And Zinc

The presence of sunbeam and ink,  
And Zinc  
Should make us respect the world, incorporated.

### Blossoms

Economics  
Can help one give full  
Value to blossoms.

### Poem to Justice and Injustice

The innocent and sinister  
Meet in him and her.  
Miles has evil where it begins,  
Flora has evil where it begins.  
All sin and all sins —  
Then elsewhere and elsewhere —  
Where injustice begins.

### Against

The oneness of private and public  
Is against our being sick.

### Big Show

Every mode  
Of beauty is an episode  
In the big show.

### Aptitude

Existence is an aptitude  
Infinite, renewed:  
Every now and then.

### For Bern Porter

Poetry is music of thought,  
Thought that is musical.  
Hear every syllable tell  
This and everything  
A syllable  
Can tell  
How one can hear existence sing  
In anything.

Of the "Poem to Justice and Injustice" Siegel noted: "These are looked at in *James and the Children*," his 1969 exegesis of Henry James's "The Turn of the Screw."

### WALTER LOWENFELS

As author, editor, translator and adaptor, Lowenfels has transmitted a quindecim of presentation copies to Porter. Two are baldly "For Bern Porter," while *Walt Whitman's Civil War* has an incremental "on behalf of Walt Whitman." Lowenfels' autograph in *Song of Peace* is buttressed by that of the artist Anton Refregier. *My Many Lives*, second volume of Lowenfels' autobiography, is dedicated in red ink by the author and his

## Colby Library Quarterly 125

wife, also contains a typed letter from Porter to Lowenfels with the latter's responses typed in red between the lines.

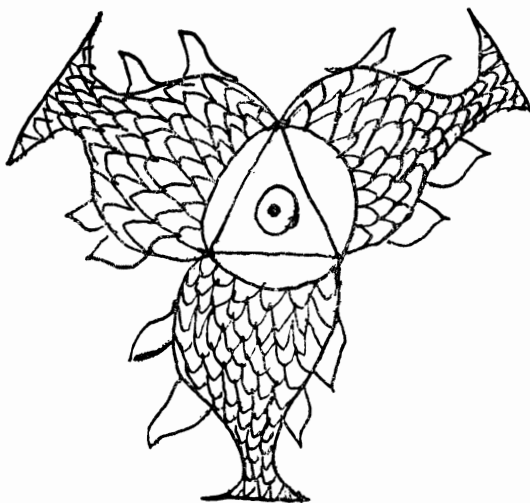
Four inscriptions evoke inspiring facets of Porter's calling: In *Poets of Today* Lowenfels dubbed him "A Trail Blazer"; in *Land of Roseberries* extolled "his devotion to the craft"; commemorated "his many lives" in *Some Deaths*; and in *Thou Shalt Not Overkill* marveled at the phenomenon of one "who not only writes poems but collects them" (in this one Lowenfels and his wife uttered admiration in happy red while Ronald Gross, who wrote the Foreword, bespoke regards in staid black).

In Robert Gover's compilation, *The Portable Walter*, Lowenfels conjured Ulysses and Poe's weary wayworn wanderer, hailing Porter "home again to Maine from distant shores" after his quixotic adventure in Guatemala. The punster in the poet slipped his rein in *In a Time of Revolution*, "For Bern Porter, who knows what time it is!"

With faint deprecation, Lowenfels assessed his own literary mintage in a last category of four books. Seven years after writing *American Voices* (1959) he said: "This last bad book. I did better after it." He defined *To an Imaginary Daughter* brusquely as "This unimaginable book," and with a wry smile specified *Where Is Vietnam?* as "this first printing (exhausted before publication) with the original typos!" — bane of anyone who has ever nurtured private words to public print. His "upside down" volume, *The Writing on the Wall*, in turn exalted Porter "Who has more of my book than I have."

## ALLEN GINSBERG

Poet laureate of the Beats and guru to their progeny, Ginsberg has — at this printing — enriched Porter's collection with ten inscriptions, eight of which exceed routine salutation and signature. What might have been the least of these, *Kaddish and Other Poems*, recalled with an air of nostalgia that it is "over a decade gone since we met." However, over and beyond these words on the title page, Ginsberg intricately and intriguingly rubricated the facing flyleaf, which it seems wiser to depict than to describe. The cabalistic seal at lower right is the poet's personal Oriental stamp, bright orange in hue, impressed in several of his books as a mark of authentication.



*Dharmakaya + Nirmanakaya = Sambodhikakaya or Bliss  
Buddhist Trikaya Emblem I saw incised*

*on Gautama Footprint*

*Buddh Kaya*

*1963*



Like Lowenfels, Ginsberg celebrated Porter's return to Maine: "I'm with you in Rockland in more ways than prophesied," in *Howl and Other Poems*. Here he utilized his colorful seal to duple advantage. On the title page, he positioned it inside the *O* in *HOWL*, and around the *O* drew eleven large petals, forming a flower which is attached to a stem bearing two subsidiary buds. At the top right corner of the page the circular seal impersonates a sun, with embryonic rays, exuding streams of energy flakes downward to the flowerhead.

## Colby Library Quarterly 127

Twice Ginsberg genuflected to Porter's innovative verve. *Scrap Leaves: Tasty Scribbles* — nine poems in facsimile of Ginsberg's manuscript, within symbolically adorned mustard wrappers — is proclaimed by the poet to be "an echo of [Porter's] own publishing style." In *Empty Mirror*, introduction by William Carlos Williams, Ginsberg combined acknowledgment with a clue to the westward quest that put him in touch with his element: "For Bern Porter — These poems early scratches at W.C. W's American idiom & measure, written before I came to San Francisco attracted partly by the look of the books/magazine you edited — which I'd seen in Gotham Book Mart in N.Y.C."

Information useful to subsequent bibliographers and critics may be gleaned from *Wichita Vortex Sutra*: "part of a longer (200 pps?) poem made on taperecorder over the last few years 1965-'68"; from *Reality Sandwiches*: "this is a round up of scattered Poems '53-'60 that were left out of the sequences around *Howl* & *Kaddish* — thus the epigraph above<sup>3</sup> from an early Kerouac instruction on how to write"; from *T.V. Baby Poems*: "These are slightly earlier rougher versions of poems that will be published as next in Ferlinghetti's City Lights series, called *Planet News* — only that'll be 144 pages — this much was ready mss. a year ago put together for a visit to England"; from *Airplane Dreams* (Toronto, 1968): "this — is later scattered work — put together by draft dodgers —"

## KENNETH PATCHEN

Patchen outranks all others in total of autographed books present; conversely, he is the least loquacious. Once he sent "Greetings of the Season, Christmas 1947, from the Patchens." On two other occasions *The Journal of Albion Moonlight* and *The Memoirs of a Shy Pornographer* came "with all good wishes." For the rest (a round dozen) Patchen printed in large, thick, square yet cursive strokes "For [or To] Bern Porter, Kenneth Patchen," with luminescent effect of blue, yellow, or red on white, black on tan, dark blue on light blue, startling white on black, and a kind of reproachful black on white.

3 'Scribbled secret notebooks, and wild typewritten pages, for yr own joy,' is printed on the title page.

## 128 Colby Library Quarterly

This *modus operandi*, in which the artistic prevails over the literary, is also followed by John Robert Colombo. In *The Mackenzie Poems*, he inscribed nothing but signed *J* with a graceful, elastic, long dip and retrieve, not unlike the slanted glide of a landing gull (or, considering the etymology of his surname, should the bird be a dove?). He broke silence in *The Great Wall of China*, labeling it "An Oriental Entertainment," but now, as though pledged to extremes, signed not at all. Finally, in an excess of orthodoxy, he both inscribed and signed *Abracadabra*, vouching Porter's pioneer efforts in a new art of versification: "Ten percent of this book should interest Bern Porter — the 'found' part!"

Testimonials to Porter from likeminded editors and publishers of books and periodicals spread across the spectrum from university press to far-out little magazines. In Michael Fraenkel's *Land of the Quetzal* Oscar Baradinsky tendered "affectionate regards" to Porter "from another publisher of Fraenkel," and in Anaïs Nin's *Realism and Reality* he characterized Porter as "The only other alive college prof. in the U.S. today." Gertrude Stein's *The Making of Americans* was "Inscribed by Dick Higgins, Publishing director of Something Else Press, to Bern Porter, Publishing director of Bern Porter Books." Jon Edgar Webb and Louise Webb, leading spirits of *The Outsider*, declared two issues for Porter "With love & respect" and "With immense respect"; in the third they asserted Porter "A better man at what we're trying to do than we'll ever be!" Here, in keeping with her preference to sign "Gypsy Lou," Louise plied exotic red ink in counterpoint to Jon's basic black. Walker Cowen repaid Porter "with gratitude for his kind help with this book" — Richard Clement Wood's *Collector's Quest*, the correspondence of Henry Miller and J. Rives Childs.

Julien Levy committed his *Surrealism* "To B.P. in recollection of our trip to France," but in his publication of Salvador Dali's *Metamorphosis of Narcissus* lapsed sparsely "To Bern." Equally inexpressive are James Laughlin, editor and publisher of *New Directions in Prose and Poetry* ("all good wishes"), James Boyer May, editor of *Trace*, John F. Gallagher, editor of Frank Harris' *My Life and Loves*, and Jonathan Williams, publisher of R. Buckminster Fuller's *Untitled Epic Poem on the History of Industrialism* — the last three merely apposing their



## Colby Library Quarterly 129

signature. George Leite, editor of *Circle*, did not mark his magazine in any manner, but a postcard by him to Porter is laid in v. 1, no. 1 (1944). Mary Higgins, co-author of *Reich Speaks of Freud*, is represented therein by a letter. Ernest A. Seemann, director of the Biblioteca Romica Hispanica, served similarly in lieu of author L. Jenaro MacLennan in *El Problema del Aspecto Verbal*, as did Katherina von Fraunhofer for Jerzy Kosinski (*Steps*), Dick Higgins for Claes Oldenburg, and poet Janet Lewis Winters twice for her late husband Yvor.

Which brings us full cycle, one step behind the wordless group listed at the outset of this essay. In publications otherwise ungraced by personal script, Porter has inserted a letter written to him by author or editor Angel Flores, Charles Bukowski, Dane Rudhyar, and John G. Moore. In Harry Bowden's tasteful aggregation of *Darius Milhaud: Photographs* Porter has laid in a letter to him by the dazzling polytonalist.

The quantity and quality of Porter's association in the precincts of sci-art are demonstrably impressive. It is, however, the impact, the interpenetration and effect of these associations that irresistibly elevates the stature of Bern Porter as champion of the fledgling, the unheralded, and the disfavored. The stereotype of crying in the wilderness instantly suggests itself. Yet it does not wholly apply. First to recognize so many talents in obscurer days, Porter has helped usher them into today's hierarchy. It has indeed been his portion to cry in the wilderness but, providentially, not in vain.

