Bern Porter Cosmographic: Volume 1 Number 4 (April, 2000)

Bern Porter

Sheila Holtz

Natasha Bernstein

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/porter_newsletters

Part of the American Literature Commons, Art Practice Commons, and the Poetry Commons

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/porter_newsletters/18

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Bern Porter Collection of Contemporary Letters at Digital Commons @ Colby. It has been accepted for inclusion in Newsletters by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Colby.
said Zuluf. It was lots of...
And then the many sick and maimed came to Jesus, asking him, "If you know all things, tell us, why do we suffer with these grievous plagues? Why are we not whole like other men? Master, heal us, that we too may be made strong, and need abide no longer in our misery. We know that you have it in your power to heal all manner of disease. Master, have compassion on us."

And Jesus answered, "Happy are you, that you hunger for the truth, for I will satisfy you with the bread of wisdom. Happy are you that you knock, for I will open to you the door of life. I will lead you into the kingdom of our Mother's angels, where the power of negativity cannot enter.

And they asked in amazement, "Who is our Mother and which are her angels? And where is her kingdom?"

"Your Mother is in you, and you in her. She bore you; she gives you life. It was she who gave to you your body, and to her shall you one day give it back again. Happy are you when you come to know her and her kingdom; if you receive your Mother's angels and if you do her laws. I tell you truly, he who does these things shall never see disease. For the power of our Mother is above all. It has rule over all your bodies and all living things.

"The blood which runs in us is born of the blood of our Earthly Mother. Her blood falls from the clouds; leaps up from the womb of the earth; babbles in the brooks of the mountains; flows wide in the rivers of the plains; sleeps in the lakes; rages mightily in the tempestuous seas.

"The air which we breathe is born of the breath of our Earthly Mother. Her breath is azure in the heights of the heavens; soughs in the tops of the mountains; whispers in the leaves of the forest; billows over the cornfields; slumbers in the deep valleys; burns hot in the desert.

"The hardness of our bones is born of the bones of our Earthly Mother, of the rocks and of the stones. They stand naked to the heavens on the tops of mountains; are as giants that lie sleeping on the sides of the mountains, as idols set in the desert, and are hidden in the deepness of the earth.

"The tenderness of our flesh is born of the flesh of our Earthly Mother; whose flesh waxes yellow and red in the fruits of the trees, and nurtures us in the furrows of the fields.

"The light of our eyes, the hearing of our ears, both are born of the colors and sounds of our Earthly Mother, which enclose us about, as the waves of the sea a fish, as the eddying air a bird.

"I tell you the very truth, Man is the Son of the Earthly Mother, and from her did the son of Man receive his whole body... I tell you truly, you are one with the Earthly Mother; she is in you, and you in her. Of her you were born, in her do you live, and to her shall you return again. Therefore, keep her laws..."
3.
Today there has been
Left to my concern
By research scientists
Scanning
The long-term memory unit
As must be done
Periodically
By the Brain (my boss)
A pervasive problem.

Who am I?
I am your memory speaking.
No, I am memory,
There is nothing
Really wrong with my memory
As there is reported to be
On my slate
A real humdinger of an indictment!

ARE HUMANS OBSOLETE?
The argument has become more meaningful
Not just because of Computers
Winning over Chess Masters
But with the missing behavior of
Generations
Repeating the mistakes of just
Yesterday
Without constant prompters
Not over an occasional
Or monthly to weekly
But a daily period.
In this fin de siecle
What has happened:
Technological paradigm shift?
Weaned and bred on TV screens?
High-tech toys as opposed abstract sources
Like reading, calculations?
Re-enforced and nurtured
By teachers and schools
That care nothing about history
Memorization, rote, adventuresome research?

All we know is
The memory of children
Has grown lazy, soft, discouraged.
No where is this more evident
Then with the supposed ahistorical line
That the past is inadequate
Or at the most radical it
Simply does not exist
Or need be studied, remembered, envisioned
And when it is
It is nothing more than fiction.
But I not just any memory
I am a kind of trouble-shooter
For a company of worker-memories.
I love my work
So you must pardon
If I repeat myself.
What the evidence proves so far is this:
Problematically
People are discouraged to use
Long term memory
Which is rusting rusted into inaction
Take what it actually means to write:
Simplicity does not
Omatically mean profoundity--
Unless one is interested
In mental handicaps--the lowest or the most modest
Standards of a Memory's capability--
Thus the puzzling absurd repetition
And the belief it is "NEW"!? 

But I digress
And even sound tangential
But I must emphasize
After all these years
I must state the urgency of the alternative case
For revolutionary inventions:
Mnemonic, mnemonotechnics.
That is my particular particular interest:
I try to make devices
To keep you not-so-normal thinkers
From really screwing up your lifes, making more
Of a mess then you do already
But much more than this
I approach problems bordering the crisis zone.
Hence the Brain gave me an order
To do something about the statistically
Exponential trend toward many subordinate
Memory failings
Of what is called Long Term Memory Capability (LTMC)
As soon as possible but no deadline
For the Brain knows I do not invent that way.
What off and on I am currently working on
Which may be an effective alternative
To long-term
Memory disconnection
Is a microbe chip/transistor so minute it can be inserted
Surgically into the part of the on-going but misfiring
Functioning organic brain
Mechanism which is suppose to oversee and correct LTMC.
On this chip
Which deals with only some two thousand years
Of physical and mental
Written and recorded information
Are mnemonic prompters
That are triggered
By a number of certain birdsongs.
38 Schisms believe  

I am a believer in God, try live the right way; the ideas eradicate the poor and the rich is my way humorist writing. I don't let my trust in destroy lives and thing... only revolutionary in art: never done before as art has no norm, no tenet neither school.
Maybe your belief is right on the money as Galilee or Christopher Columbus. My art don't get respect or recognition due to its aspect far out... few presents its substance! A woman in Eire told me that I do art for 200 years later? Shit man I would be dead before!

Roman era they would throw you in arenas to be rend by lions nowadays new methodology they just stay coy, ignore, neglect your thinking... when you are kaput they may make a bronze, your name to a street: honor you as Emma Goldman!

Our direction is incompatible only ground for communication is the bed! Alas but that is better than none! Isn't? By love the stars move L. da Vinci
The Blue Jay's
Instantly signals
The Age of Christopher Columbus.
The chickadees's dee dee dee dee
Makes the mind think of
All the Crusades, the first millenium.
The Indigo & Lazuli Buntings' sharp chip
Takes one on a long trip
To Augustus Rome and the times of the 12 Caesars.
The Mockingbird's indescribable medley, virtuosity
Harsh and sometimes unpleasant
In a split second
Can only mean Lewis & Clark, the early American West, pre-1849.
The Bobolink's bubbling
Reminds one of life/seasons along the Great Pharaohs' Nile.
The Belted Kingfisher's rattle
Smells now the fumes
And gore of Civil War battles, 4-years, before, during, after.
The Barn Owl's eerie cries and screams,
Hisses, snores, sharp bill clickings
Resurrect the birth of Christ, his promise, teachings,
Crucifixion.
The Purple Grackle's cacks
Harkens back to the scenes of
The numberings and figurings of Einstein's theories.
The White-Throated Sparrow's sweet plaintive song
Signals
The heady days of Raphael, Leonardo, Micheanglo, Titian.
The Meadow Lark
Brings gunsmoke, speeches, intrigue of The Russian Revolution.
The crow
Makes the mind think of Classical Athens, rise & fall, and
Hellenic passage.
The Prothonotary Warbler's long ringing tweet tweet tweet
Neatly
Pictures the Age of Victoria and nearly a century of diplomatic
Peace.
The Derby Flycatcher's
Clues one in
To lives by the rivers Euphrates and Tigris, Gilgamesh,
Hammurabi, once again to see The Hanging Gardens.
The Red-Eyed Vireo's
Evokes
The bridge between 18th to 19th English Industrial Revolution.
The Winter Wren's
The dawning age of Los Conquistadores, Pre-Columbian geography.
Darwin's Finch with long sweet warble
Fanfares
The court of the Sun King, rococo art, Wars of Devolution
And Succession.
All reminded
Remembered in every little detailed lived
As if in a time-loop
The long-term memory is refreshed, ready to answer and pass
Any test.
I am looking forward to showing it off
On new volunteers for the Brain:
The last batch vanished
After an assistant prematurely
Let them out of the Lab too soon
They were
Last seen running through the park screaming
We are still investigating
Their whereabouts
But the Lab tests look promising so far
To problems society has made
And we can fix, and why not, it is a
Very pleasant way indeed
Of learning
History.

BERN ON BERN

In 1996, the year following the publication of Bern Porter’s
Questions About Henry Miller That No One Ever Asked Me—
With Answers, I suggested to Bern that he create a follow-up
booklet wherein he would pose questions to himself, then
answer them. Bern kept this project on hold for several years,
completing a number of other writing activities during the
interim. Then, about a month ago I received the fruition of this
long-awaited project, now modified to include both new and
previously published text, all selected by Bern himself. The
finished booklet gives us a personal look at Bern Porter as he
takes his first steps into the 21st Century. This publication
contains: Bern on Bern, The Number Three, Me, Not Me,
These Fifty Years Gone, along with a cover photograph of Bern
Porter.

24 pages 5 ½ x 8 ½ inches. Stapled Spine. Illustrated.
Published on Bern’s 90th birthday, February 14, 2000.
Available at $5.00. Available from the publisher and shipped
postpaid.

Roger Jackson, 339 Brookside Dr., Ann Arbor, MI 48105

BOOKS ABOUT BERN PORTER

My Affair with Bern Porter by Natasha Bernstein and Alan
Abrams. 48 pp. Illustrated by Al Berlinski. Publication date:
4/17/97. 250-copy Trade Edition $12.00

Return to Belfast by Natasha Bernstein. 32 pp. Publication date:
11/1/98. 100-copy Trade Edition $8.50

156 Art
by Nguyen Ducmanh

What is art?
Art is futile
For some is
A must, while
Other, for what
But its make
Us a Singular
Species besides eat
Shit, fuck; then
Here wonderful suckers
Still do Art
Which make them
...
I am artist
No shit man!

Order from:
Roger Jackson, Publisher
339 Brookside Drive
Ann Arbor, MI 48105
From: Bern Porter
To: the World,
by Bern Porter. 105 pp., 8.75 x 11, spiral bound. Limited edition of 100 copies; 1999. $25 (Roger Jackson, Publisher, 339 Brookside Dr., Ann Arbor, MI 48105.)

A Walk on the Wild Side, A Photo Tour of the Sculpture Garden of the Institute of Advanced Thinking, by Bern Porter. Photographs by Sheila Holtz. 10 6x4" cards and 15 photographs in hand-made portfolio; 1997. Limited edition of 100 copies—Roger Jackson, Publisher, 339 Brookside Dr., Ann Arbor, MI 48105.)


I have lost count of Bern Porter's recent publications. Among them—the majority published by the indefatigable Roger Jackson of Ann Arbor, Michigan—are a multi-volume memoir of his affair with Anais Nin; an aphoristic book of wisdom; a treatise on physics and creativity; a book on food (which includes a detachable recipe for "Bern's Brickel Chip Blondies"); an excellent descriptive catalog for the Institute of Advanced Thinking; and, of course, ongoing collections of "Founds," a genre Bern is virtually synonymous with. I have 14 volumes of Founds here at the house, for example, and it has only been since last spring that I have been getting them in from various sources around the country.

Years ago I resisted the Found concept—words, images (sometimes by themselves singly, sometimes in combination with one another) retrieved from the trash and stood on their respective heads in what you might call intensely focused settings of, usually, white space. But in spite of all this—or is it rather due to all this—Bern's Founds are distinctive. You can always recognize his deft winnowing hand in them immediately. Bern possesses an extraordinarily keen eye—combining the analytical one of a physicist (Bern is one, by the way) with that of a discriminating visual artist whose métier is books.

Even so, the new Founds, like their predecessors, present tableaux, environments, that you do and don't recognize all at once. As Porter's biographer, James Schevill, points out in Where to Go, What to Do When You Are Bern Porter (Tilbury House, Publishers, Gardiner, ME, 1993), "You're part of the code even if you can't read it, Porter's Founds repeatedly show us..." Human behavior and the various unlabeled component parts of the manufactured universe as sampled through the new Founds are winning, in part due to their often known coordinates have been erased, cropped, or otherwise dispensed with. New meanings, and certainly questions, arise. But in spite of all this—or is it rather due to all this—Bern's Founds are distinctive. You can always recognize his deft winnowing hand in them immediately. Bern possesses an extraordinarily keen eye—combining the analytical one of a physicist (Bern is one, by the way) with that of a discriminating visual artist whose métier is books.

All of the above and more (including much staunch libidinosity) is available to the reader in From: Bern Porter To: the World, a handsomely produced book of Founds published by the incredibly prolific Roger Jackson. What initially won my over to the technique was "My Stamp Collection". It is as fine an example as any about the real possibilities of recasting, or throwing out, tired language, put upon symbols, arbitrary borders and boundaries, narrow allegiances. All very innocent looking on top of colored paper, even so this stamp collection can merrily slay an entire sheaf of your heretofore unexamined assumptions.

X-Ray Book Co. recently issued nine slim volumes of Founds. These are attractive hand-made artist books and incorporate Found materials for their respective covers. Part of these Founds' strange appeal is their often "lost" quality. What are—or were—they? Wherefrom originally? Found family snapshot shots, Japanese centavo, and piano roll paper are all liable to turn up in the X-Ray collection. The world is just that various and bizarre, especially without an insistent, overarching narrative line threading the pieces together. As executed by book designer Johnny Brewton, the X-Ray Found collection is a delicate and haunting rendering of Bern Porter's work and sensibility. Perhaps my favorite Bern Porter production though is his A Walk on the Wild Side: A Photo Tour of the Sculpture Garden of the Institute of Advanced Thinking. It includes lively commentary by Porter prefaced on index card size stock and 13 color snapshots by Sheila Holtz of Porter's Belfast, Maine, back yard sculpture. (The sculpture material is of course found in origin. What Bern Porter can do with old storm windows, for example, you would not believe.) Beautifully presented and packaged it goes a long way to countering superstore abyssal dreck and folly. "The pristine original is often more articulate, more expressive, more meaningful than anything once could invent," writes Bern Porter in the catalog. Yet the catalog itself is much like an inspiring original—Founds are difficult to put any easy handle on. Nevertheless, it is so good—so needed.

Miraculously, Bern Porter began his press, Bern Porter Books, the very year of his own birth, 1919—according to several recent editions of the International Directory of Small Presses and Little Magazines. For this possibly unique achievement alack Mr. Porter will always enjoy my devoted admiration. But he often surprises in just this way. Both Bern and his press remain vital and, I might add, accessible—especially Bern himself, as we enter into the new millennium. If you write Bern Porter, I daresay a response will be forthcoming within a few days time.

In this vein then I can hearty recommend a subscription to Bern Porter International, A Literary Newsletter and Bulletin of the Institute for Advanced Thinking, 50 Salmond St., Belfast, ME 04915 at $10/yr (e-mail inquiries may be directed to: bporterno1@hotmail.com). A list of in-print Bern Porter Books is available either by writing Porter himself at 50 Salmond St. or contacting Mark Melnicove (who handles their actual distribution) at 216 Cedar Grove Rd., Dresden, ME 04342. Enclose a SASE with your query(ies).

Still more Porter material—including tapes and videos—can be found at Xeroxial Editions, Elizabeth Way, Rte. 1, Box 13, La Farge, WI 54650. Even Found Poems (Something Else Press, 1972) is still in print via some marvelous vagary of small press book distribution. Contact Ultramarine Books, Hastings-on-Hudson, NY, for price and terms. The Fertile Mind Bookshop, 105 Main St., Belfast, ME, 04915 maintains a section of Bern Porter Books—if you are ever in that part of the woods, perhaps en route to the Institute of Advanced Thinking.

Offhand I cannot think of another living individual other than Bern Porter who spans the word experiments of Bob Brown (1886-1959, inventor of the "reading machine" and its "readies"—in theory, reading's answer to the "movies") and the borderless internet revolution. If for some odd reason you thought the well of creative publishing had recently run dry, please check again.

—SPANISCH WRENCH