4-2001

Bern Porter International: Volume 5 Number 8 (April 15, 2001)

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
Porter, Bern; Holtz, Sheila; and Bernstein, Natasha, "Bern Porter International: Volume 5 Number 8 (April 15, 2001)" (2001). Newsletters. 61.
https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/porter_newsletters/61

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. For more information, please contact mfkelly@colby.edu.
Bern Porter International

A Literary Newsletter and Bulletin of the Institute for Advanced Thinking

April 15, 2001

ISSN 0991-156

Volume 5, Issue 8

Special Issue: New Voices
About myself: I grew up in Los Angeles. I now live in Japan and teach English as a Second Language. I have a B.A. from the University of California, Santa Cruz.


Michael Onofrey
7-3 Nakane, Wakamatsu-cho
Okazaki, Aichi 444-0826
JAPAN
Tel: +81-564-71-4703
Fax: +81-564-714711
e-mail: onofrey@jade.dti.ne.jp

HOT WATER

by

Mike Onofrey

A glass door slides open. Jake steps onto wet tile. Four naked men at the twenty odd spigots along the walls, but it is the man in the bath with the shaved head who causes Jake’s eyes to hesitate. Two young boys, perhaps four and five years old, skim the surface of the pool with their hands, water splashing in front of the bald man’s round face.

Jake squats at a spigot. Soap, shampoo, and a razor are placed on a tiled ledge. His plastic basin catches gushing water. He tests for temperature then pours water over his cold body. In the fogged mirror above the spigot, an image of a large body moves, two small bodies follow.

Mounds of hot water cascade over Jake’s hair as suds disappear. To his right three men with wrinkled skin squat before low spigots. The attentive motion of a young man leaving the sento forces Jake to look at the mirror, for the man is too careful in his step. Jake turns to his right.

From the bottom of the bald man’s wide back to up and over his broad shoulders and on down around his arms to where a short-sleeve shirt might end, there is a brilliant tattoo. The smaller of the two boys is next to this illustration and

cont., p. 6
Memories of Agnes, 1972
By Lee Clark Zumpe

once, curled into a corner
of the davenport
long after bedtime

choleric winds
raising furious voices,
swaggering gales

driving rain clean
through cinder blocks,
father, nervous

as water stretched
fingers down the walls;
lamps impotent,

television indifferent,
quiet and empty,
not even lightening

to tame the power
of an ignoble night;
only the dim glow

of a flashlight
held my focus.
we waited for dawn.

Execution

How long before the wind dies out,
How soon before the rain?
Before what mountain must I shout
To clear this cliff dappled terrain.

How far before the ground collapses,
Before the ice begins to melt.
I wait till all my time elapses
And drains the hatred I once felt.

Is’t soon until the cushion hardens,
Until the earth dries into dust,
When will I hear G-d’s gracious pardons
To sinners overcome with lust?

What time will all the graves be plundered
And all the corpses come alive,
I hear the sky will then be thundered
And buried those that attempt to survive.

How short the path to blissful pleasure!
How easy to slip underground...
Will we find secret’s holy treasure
Or will we be shot by the next round?

How long ago till I forget
To melt before the pavement red,
Will you, will you ever regret
The blood marooned on my eternal bed...

-Irene Khaytman
Rational Shortcomings

(An intertextual marriage poem of an excerpt from a teacher’s letter to parents, a letter from a mother to the child she gave away for adoption and a letter that I should not have seen.)

Dear Parents or Guardians,
First I want to say that I didn’t hand you over because I hated you
The photography man is coming
Hello, I just wanted to remind everybody about spelling
I didn’t hate you you might not believe me but I truly love you
Between 6:30AM and 6:45AM to set up
The last test scores were horrible and I threw them out
I want you to know that I am hoping you are reading this letter
I warned him that the klubs are here in the morning
I will not do so again
And hope you do not have any hate in your heart for me
Until 8:30AM
Your child should practice spelling their words
Because if my life was different I would have kept you
He still wanted to come
And do their spelling homework every night
So close to my heart because you are so special
That’s his problem...
Spelling homework for the week is:
I know you are saying
Monday: Write the first five words three times
"Why she gave me away."
Tuesday: Write the last five words three times
My life was so hard at the time...

By: Christopher J. Grasso
315 Landis Ave.
Oaklyn, NJ 08107
(856) 854-2597

Actual Converse From My Graffiti In The 9th Floor Men’s Bathroom Stall, Tisch Building, NYU

ME: Another year in this PIG HOLE called NYU.

HIM: Wow I feel really bad for you – have to pay $30,000 a year to be here for your life to be pathetic and in misery. I bet your parents forced you to come here, stuffed all that money down your throat and held a gun to your head. I bet you’d love to have your life for yourself, working like the rest of the world for shit. I bet you’d love to be on your own supporting your own sorry ass - if you only had a worthy brain cell to figure it out, and the guts to do it. But alas, you don’t and probably never will as seen by your blatant cry of IGNORANCE. So if I were you, I’d prepare myself for a life of worthlessness. Honestly, I FEEL BAD for you, I really do.

ME: You are just a puppet whose strings I’ve pulled.

By: Christopher J. Grasso
315 Landis Ave.
Oaklyn, NJ 08107
(856) 854-2597
The Pope’s Penis, part II

It’s hard to believe he jokes about it, 
grabs it like the throat of a bottle, 
pointing, “Can you believe this thing?”

It’s not at all the holy relic you’d expect, 
but rather a temperamental limb 
the color of sweet apples, the sort 
of pawn shop item you consider buying, 
but never would be caught dead actually purchasing.

The central spiritual nerve of God’s #1 fella 
is a slack-skinned, eggplant-veined cock 
that rises to the horizon each night in ecstasy 
as the ultimate dénouement to evening vespers. 
Y pues nada y nada y pues nada. Amen.

I am a freelance photographer originally from Chicago and my poetry has 
appeared in recent issues of Green’s Magazine, tight, The Vinyl Elephant, and 
Blue Collar Review; new poems are forthcoming in Anthology, Mutant Mule 
Review, Odin’s Eye, and The Iconoclast.

Classic Movie Haiku, #3

Hell’s Angels

Would you be shocked if 
I put on something a bit 
more comfortable?

She Done Him Wrong

Is that a gun in your 
pocket or are you just 
real glad to see me?

Mutiny on the Bounty

I’ll take my chances 
against the law. You all take 
yours against the sea.

ORANGE NIGHT

David Stone

was born in Chicago in 1949, graduated from the University of Illinois with a degree in philosophy, is widely published in 
journals and the author of 5 collections of poetry: SPECULAR 
SHARDS, THE DARK SHIP ECLIPSE, THE JOKING MUSE, COLD WAVES and 
THE SPHINX HOTEL. David’s most recent publication is the inter­
national anthology of art and poetry entitled BLACKBIRD, pub­
lished by Phoenix Press. David currently resides in Baltimore, 
Maryland.
Onofrey

the man is soaping the child’s glistening body. The other boy is playing with a plastic basin. Jake turns back and draws more water.

Walking over to the vacant baths, Jake glances at the tattooed man. The two boys are lathering the man’s back with soap. In the man’s wet mirror, Jake sees the man is smiling and looking at the mirror. Jake’s eyes quickly come back to the hot pool of water he is gingerly entering. Jake’s lean body slides in until he’s sitting on a submerged ledge of tile, water midway up his hairy chest.

The two small boys have a full basin of water. Four small hands on the basin’s flanged lip, lifting, teetering, and finally dumping hot liquid over the tattoo. The children drop the basin and laugh. Then they yell, “Okaa-san!”

From the low murmur of women’s voices on the other side of a wall comes a distinct, “Hai.” The boys take off in a run. They throw the sliding door back and dash through the changing room and past the old lady who takes money. The tattooed man picks up the basin and turns back to his spigot. Jake soaks.

The man is done rinsing. He walks toward the baths, his black eyes look at Jake. He sits on the tiled curb of the adjacent pool, his colorful back in front of Jake. Given this naked opportunity, Jake stares at a large carp in vivid detail, the fish emerging from a fierce display of water. Each scale is sharp with shading, while the carp’s wild eye is alive with fear, or rage. Jake’s gray eyes go down the length of the man’s thick arm to its terminus; a baby finger is only a stub.

The man, hints of fat on a stout body, slips into the water with only his shaved head floating. Jake steps out of the bath, his skin steaming.

Dressed, a worn wooden door is slid back and Jake steps outside and faces a moderately busy street, headlights moving in a cold night. A half a block away, Jake’s warm body turns up a narrow, dark lane. Silence. There are flecks of snow in black air. There are gangsters in Kyoto.

THE END
in a boat

in a drawer

succored

glitters

the scarf

eating too fast

flavored

the

stew,

winks to Orion

in prayer.

The NSA
politely
listens
in a cottage.
An Invitation to the
Porter Literacy Room Dedication

The public is invited to attend the Dedication of the Belfast Free Library’s Porter Literacy Room, on Saturday, March 10 at 2:30 PM. The program, hosted by the Library Board of Trustees, the Friends of the Library and the Literacy Volunteers of America Waldo County, will recognize recent literacy tutor training graduates, as well as officially dedicate the literacy room.

The Porter Literacy Room is located on the Mezzanine Level of the new Library, and provides space for trained literacy tutors to meet with their students. There is a special collection of books that students may check out, as well as a computer that the tutors can use with the students to practice word skills and concept building. Tutors may reserve the Literacy Room by calling the Library at 338-3884 x13.

The program will also honor two Belfast residents who have connections to the Literacy Room: artist Dudley Zopp and writer Bern Porter, for whose wife the Porter Room is named. Zopp created an acrylic and pastel drawing entitled Chinook Prayer, and donated the work to the Library for the Literacy Room. The artwork combines the text of a Native American prayer for the earth with an abstracted drawing of rocks. “As such the work is representative of the midcoast area of Maine which has served as the inspiration for most of my work. It is especially suited for a library, the repository of literature and literacy.”

The Porter Literacy Room is named in memory of Margaret Eudine Porter, wife of Belfast resident and nationally known writer Bern Porter.