

“TRUE AMERICAN POETS”—AROUSING, IRONIC, APOCALYPTIC

Antler

The Selected Poems

Antler

2000; 197 pp. Soft Skull Press

\$14 (\$16 postpaid) from Antler, c/o Inland Ocean, PO Box 11502, Milwaukee, WI 53211

Twenty-three years ago, when Whole Earth was CoEvolution Quarterly, the magazine carried an excerpt from Antler's long poem, "Factory." In the spirit of Whitman and Ginsberg, Antler's poem is a hugely detailed lyrical depiction and condemnation of dead-end work, drawn partly from Antler's own day-job experience on the line in a Milwaukee can factory.

"Factory" and scores of other shorter works appear in Antler: The Selected Poems, an arousing volume that is alive with ironic flights of fancy, biosexual-galactic North Woods canoe excursions and gayman's cannabis exultations along with fierce rants against poetry gate-keepers and other bourgeois demons.

Being a poet can be a large destiny to live out on the small means garnered from small magazines. Like many another true American poet, Antler stays passionate in his calling, gives readings, writes, teaches, wins the occasional grant or award, bears with ecstasy, voices same. Antler's poetry, the kind that energizes and democratizes the calling of poetry, might call out the poet in you.

—Stephanie Mills

“Draft-Dodgers vs. Poetry-Dodgers

Rather than fulfilling their military obligation,
fulfilling their poetry obligation—
After all, what's more fulfilling,
learning how to kill or love?
Those who become soldiers
are evading the Poetry Service—
dodging the Poetry Draft.
Isn't it their duty to their Country
more to become a poet
than a brainwashed murder robot?
When the young contemplate what branch of
the Service to join,
They should know they can contemplate
joining Poetry
That Poetry is a Service that serves
the realization of Utopia
more than becoming skilled
at killing.

Too long it was thought the young were
needed to go to war,
Now the young are needed to go to peace.
Now the young are needed to go to poetry.

World on Fire

Michael Brownstein

2002; 181 pp. \$14

Open City Books

Michael Brownstein, whom Allen Ginsberg accused of being a misanthrope while the two taught together at Naropa Institute, has written a hell of a poem. Much like Ginsberg's Howl, World on Fire takes on the apocalyptic visions vying for the corner of our generation's eye. Set in "End Times," after the last drop of oil has been sold, some time after 2012, World on Fire confronts the complacent generation that lived through a Cold War and now endures the ongoing colder war waged with satellite-operated weapons of mass distraction. Brownstein's concise lines are bumperstickers for the future, or like graffiti on the walls of Paris in the spring of 1968.

Jeremiad in its lament, quixotic with hope, World on Fire is American poetry's best contribution to End Times Lit so far.

—Joseph Richey

“ Even before it collapsed, our hallucination was in serious trouble.

But we continued living it, that's for sure.
We loved and fought and played.
We scored and were burned.
We hit the jackpot.
We fell on hard times.
Our bright youth faded.
Our hair turned gray, our eyes grew dim.
Terrible new scourges swept through our bodies.
But meanwhile global capital's trance raged on.
To feed its phantoms the nonwhite world was sucked dry and brought to its knees.
Ecosystems annihilated.
Family lineages morphed into nothing.
Cites metastasized into urban blobs.
People conditioned to disacknowledge the obvious.



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