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Barbara Henning

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Harris Schiff's *One More Beat* (Accent Editions)

What I noticed when I left New York City was that when I wasn't here, I wasn't here, even though I had been here for a very long time. We New Yorkers are always moving so fast and the clock on Union Square keeps flashing new numbers and new poets arrive all the time from here and there and old ones stay or migrate elsewhere. I arrived in New York in 1983, a few months before Ted Berrigan died, and it was like the end of an era that I had missed. But Harris Schiff was there and in his new book, *One More Beat* (Accent Editions), he writes a phenomenal introduction, talking about how he became a poet and who was there and where and how the East Village poetry scene fit into the greater political world of the USA back then and today.

Following Harris's introduction is an introduction Ted Berrigan gave when Harris read at the Poetry Project on May 18, 1977. And then interspersed between Harris's poems is a set of photos by Monica Claire Antonie of Harris, Ted, Susan Cataldo, Lewis Warsh, Burroughs, Bernadette Mayer, Rudy Burckhardt, John Godfrey and many others. Reading the introduction, Ted's introduction, the photographs, and then the poems is like quickly living through those years with Harris. There is a wonderful collaboration between Harris and Ted, "Love Song." This book is a must read for anyone who wants to know what was going on in the 70's and early 80's with poetry in the East Village. I was sitting in Quantum Leap reading the poems, and when I finished, I felt like weeping. Sometimes when life is good, you suffer a lot afterwards.

Go to this website for more information:

<http://www.accenteditions.com/>

Here are a couple of Harris's poems:

Under Halley's Sky

The world's a dangerous place
you take your chances every time you do anything
& even when you don't

you are fragile
as your life

driving is scary
& taking the train

About Me

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& living next to a nuclear power plant

& having gasoline trucks go through your neighborhood
& working in districts subject to terrorism
or sabotage (depending how you look at it)

walking downstairs
stepping off a curb

strange sex

ordinary sex

eating in a restaurant

eating out of cans

jogging

being a zen buddhist

sleeping in earthquake zone

living under nuclear umbrella

being on planet which may be hit by asteroid

being in suspicious universe which
may collapse at any time or burst

these activities could all be hazardous to your
health & the surgeon general has recommended against
engaging in any of them

unless you smoke substantial numbers of cigarettes
barf regularly
clean up your act
straighten up
run it up the flag pole
& see how it blows

the wind cries any number of names
on a mild
autumn night

trees
riffled
by breeze

leaves
gilded
with light

[below this poem, the sweetest photo of Susan Cataldo.]

Abstract Depressionism

among aristocrats
the large banking houses
perfected the concept
of the oblique hit-man

they called it
noblesse disoblige

it's one of the few lessons
we can learn today from
the spurious collection of data
we call so blithely
History

History also teaches us that
language changes constantly
women remain gracefully
beautiful
men
continue to be
brutal
it does not explain when that started
or why

[Beside this is a beautiful photograph of young Anne Waldman]

Labels: **"One More Beat", Accent Editions, Barbara Henning, Harris Schiff, Poetry, St. Marks Poetry Project, Ted Berrigan, The East Village**

posted by Barbara Henning @ 6:04 PM



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