

BULL TONGUE by Byron Coley & Thurston Moore from Arthur No. 4

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Literary and poetry journals have been having an interesting resurgence the last few years with a whole new breed of young(ish) writers taking fresh editorial steps into publishing. What distinguishes a lot of them is either their reference towards historically hep models from the 60s/70s like Angel Hair (edited by Anne Waldman and Lewis Warsh), United Artists (edited by Lewis Warsh and Bernadette Mayer), The World (edited by Anne Waldman and a host of guest editors), Fuck/You (edited by Ed Sanders of the Fugs), Artists' Workshop Press (edited by John Sinclair, manager of MC5) or a total disregard for said history. The latter usually results in impenetrable anarchy (which is only sometimes inviting) and/or a contents page devoted exclusively to unknown writers (ditto).

Tight from Bennington College in Vermont is all its name implies (the first issue employs the motto "It's almost a noun"). The format is somewhat similar to Richard Hell's infamous late 90s poetry anthology Cuz (which only saw 3 issues)—small, perfect-bound wraps with a fine balance betwixt recognizable greats like Tom Clark, Theodore Enslin, Amy Gerstler, Jackson Mac Low and Pierre Joris and a host of newer cats like Anselm Berrigan, Elaine Walters McFerron and April Bernard. The first two installments have been cool reads with a nice non-plussed rock/roll aesthetic.

Most lit journals have limited life-spans due to editors realizing they've spent all their time and money with no return, balance or feedback. But karmic glory resounds as their ephemeral epiphanies connote a history of radical expression breathing life into language. But regardless of such kozmik pleasures, a lack of coin can surely nail a lit journal dead. Skanky Possum, out of Austin, Texas, has just published a remarkable seventh issue with great poems by, again, well-versed scribes like Tom Clark, Duncan McNaughton and Sotere Torregian and new bloods Julie Reed, Ethel Rackin etc. The editors are the husband-wife poets Dale Smith and Hoa Nguyen. Dale has been involved with poetic journal publishing for some time with the legendary Mike and Dale's Younger Poets series (Mike being poet Michael Price of S.F., CA.)—a somewhat precursor in style to Skanky Possum. Within the Mike and Dale's pages were startling and economic works by poet giants Anselm Hollo, Ted Berrigan and Clark Coolidge. Also part of this S.F. gang were poet/editor Kevin Opstedal of Blue Press publishing the like-minded Blue Books anthologies along with striking work by Lewis Macadams (himself a critically lauded radical poet from the late '60s/early '70s) and Noel Black who ran Old

Gold Press. Noel now lives in Colorado Springs and publishes the Angry Dog Press issuing a series of tiny efforts called Angry Dog Midget Editions. #10 in this midget edition series is our aforementioned pal Richard Hell with a slight and excited tome entitled 2-D Beckoning.

The creative punk rock mind from whence pioneers like Hell et al spring continues to burn within these contemporary texts—they are living extensions of the omfug underground. The poets Gerard Malanga, Piero Heliczer, Lou Reed and Angus Maclise still infuse rock n roll w/ a mystic yet earthly/urban intelligence w/ their work from the 60s—it continues to kick the ass of any mersh slobbo decree. Punk rock emanated from this sex-mind artist life—the Velvet Underground, Andy Warhol's Factory, Jonas Mekas and George Maciunas' fluxus film/performance world, Ed Sanders' Peace Eye bookstore (and that's just the East Coast. John Sinclair's Artists Workshop in Ann Arbor, MI., Wallace Berman's art and literature Semina journal in L.A. etc. etc).—it all begat punk as a rock n roll form to annihilate its antipathy towards whatever creeped out vibe hippie had taken on. We've all surely come to terms with this now and we all, hippies, punks, poets and high schoolers alike are ready to kick fucking George DIPSHIT Bush's dick out of D.C. like NOW.

Got a savagely pleasant set of new releases from Thin Wrist Recordings, an outfit whose aesthetic stance veers toward nicely pressed/presented LPs in editions of 500. This latest batch includes Brighter Summer Day by Burning Star Core, a really fine debut LP by a combo from the Kentucky/Ohio underground DMZ. One side has skin-destroying violin drone-dynamics, amped the hell up, and run through shards of electronic hell-dither. The other side is synth/key-based form-whackery that sounds like an out-of-control toad carnival taking place in yr brain. Next is Open City's sophomore effort, L.A. We Revise Your Neglect. Based in L.A., this trio (two guitars + drums) combine howls and clanks into a sweet slop of semi-aggressive free rock improvisation. Then there's Fast Talks by The Curtains, a San Francisco trio with connections to the most beloved Deerhoof. Instrumental, and gently overlaid with Magic Band rhythm jewelry, these guys produce smoke most delightful for sniffing.

Most people may not know it, but Peter Brotzmann was first known as a visual artist. He was an associate of the fluxus community, and indeed, the original edition of one of his FMP sets included shards of a balloon used in a piece by the great Korean flux-master, Nam June Paik. This all comes together in a set of two card decks that Brotzmann recently assembled for a show of his paintings in Sweden. Comprised of two games, Signs and Images (Konstmuseum Ystad), these decks propose that you take a group of musicians out into the woods, shuffle the cards, and perform improvisations based on their symbology. This would be fun to do. But the cards are nice just to look at, too. And are a very attractive example of the flux-multiple concept as well. Really boss—all the way around.

Boston's Abunai seem to have broken up some time in the last few months, but their passing has not gone un-noted, at least in Australia, from whence hails their apparent swansong, the Two Brothers MLP (Camera Lucinda). This record revolves around two versions of the Childe Ballad, "Two Brothers." And neither of them is handled in what you'd call a particularly delicate fashion. With a few friends along, adding flutes and more vocals to the band's basic kraut-psych-space-pop dynamism, things get pretty gone here. And the punky live take of "Lord Hampton" (an Abunai

original in the Childe style) is equally cool. It may not prove the existence of an actual folk/punk/psych hybrid, but it sounds good anyway.

Kinski, from Seattle, have run through some of the same scene troughs as Abunai, but their version of contemporary non-merch prog is pretty different. And on their third album, *Airs Above Your Station* (CD on Sub Pop; 2LP on Strange Attractors Audio House), they really kinda coalesce. Largely instrumental, they build their songs slowly, like the bands of the Texas Space Rock scene. But where those guys usually keep their loud and soft stuff separate, Kinski are into allowing the soft stuff to transform itself into the loud stuff. This makes for long tracks, but they really weasel their way into your brain. The guitars move like sloops through the thick air, bumping again and again into your forehead before they burst in a rainbow of fire.

Because there's not really much in the way of alternative newspaperage out where we live, the first exposure we got to Tony Millionaire's Maakies comic strip was via *The House at Maakies Corner* (Fantagraphics). This oddly proportioned hardcover is quite nice. If you don't know the strip, well, visually it's a weird cross between Dame Darcy, the Dutch clear line school, the Katzenjammer Kids and Shari Flenniken. Textually, the strip has to do w/ savagery, drunkenness, crows, monkeys, and plenty of other good stuff. Good one!

Pengo are from upstate New York, and for some reason we usually think of them as being associated w/ a somewhat brutal form of post-industrial free-form noise-hunch and/or bass-heavy ass-rumblage. And yeah, they still do that, but on this new LP, *A Nervous Splendor* (Haoma Recordings) they visit all kindsa other space, as well. There's good avant-psych formulating, passages of free-jazz honk, answering machine messages, mock ethnological field recording, even semi-folk-swabbage in a vein that would appeal to fans of the Sun City Girls. That all these shenanigans emanate from inside a great cover design, swiped from the BYG Actuel series, is only icing on an already rich cake.

Mike Watt, the bard of San Pedro, is a person who should be well known to everyone. With the Reactionaries, Minutemen, FIREHOSE, Dos and various other aggregations, Watt has been churning through the constellations of prole art heaven since the late '70s. Now he has a book out, and it's great. *Spiels of a Minutemen* (L'oe de Cravan) collects Watt's Minutemen-era lyrics, and also his tour diary from the first time the Minutemen hit Europe (w/ Black Flag). This stuff is great. Watt's lyrics are wonderful—telegraphic spurts of sheer genius. There're also essays by Richard Meltzer, Joe Carducci and Bull Tongue's own Mr. Moore, plus repros of Pettibon art (and one Joe Baiza illo editorially mistaken as Pettibon)utilized by the band, and a nice historical overview by Mike. All packed in a fine silkscreened cover (by Montreal artist, Simon Bosse)—you'll have a hard time finding better value for money this shopping cycle.

Newest batch of archival punk LPs are out on the Italian Rave Up label and they're as raging and obscure as usual. *The Violators' Gun Control* collects a batch of crude demos and live tracks, recorded by this Denver band in '79/80 (I think). The material isn't exactly outstanding, but it's solid, raw garage punk in the melodic, but rough post-Heartbreakers style that guys who liked pop but didn't want to admit it used to play. *The Products' Fast Music* was recorded in san Diego late '80/early '81. By the sound you'd have probably called it a couple years earlier, but the notes indicate that the scene

was a bit behind the eight ball there. The tracks here are from an unreleased album. They're very riff-oriented and snotty in a real pleasantly garagey way. But it sounds really '78, if you know what I mean. There're lotsa semi-obvious Brit rips, but they're used with a certain native charm. The Transplants' Vegetable Stew captures a full set of demo and live material by a Boston band I'd never even heard of before. Friends of the great La Peste (whose Roger Tripp guests on a few tracks), the Transplants have a great, raw garage punk sound with few frills and fantastically ornery lyrics. This, to me, is the gem of the bunch. The Foreign Objects were also from Massachusetts, and their LP, Violent World is a beautifully apt depiction of their reality. Firmly operating in the Dictators/Gizmos/Rattlers tradition, these guys puke up great TV-obsessed garage rock with the best of them. The final LP in this suite is Contrast Disorder by the Doubt. This Irish band plays in the Good Vibrations tradition—fast, down-slammed punk-pop with short songs, slapped drums and heavy hook action. The album contains their sole single and other demos from '81. And would be a nice addition to any serious punk collection, as would all of these.

Another interesting selection of stuff came by way of WhiteWalls, a press in Chicago that has been putting out good shit for a while. Helen Mirra's small hardcover, Names & Poems is the documentation of a piece she did, in which people were supposed to write their name on a small card and put it into a box if they wanted her to write them a poem. She would write short (generally two word) ones based on their names. And they're all here: fast, funny and good. She provides a little glossary in the back, too, to prove that she's not making up as many words as you think she is. Another fave from this stash is a trade paperback called Hotel Terminus by Stephen Lapthisophon. This is something like a set of essays, done with collaged pictures, about violence, loneliness, art, fascism and much else. The pictures (and some text as well) are lifted from films, magazines, books, and assembled in a way that suggest a variety of narratives. It can also just be perused as a visual experience, but the more you look at it, and start to notice patterns, the more interested you become in decoding its essence. The index in the back is very useful in this, but let's just say it's quite worthy of yr detective efforts.

Dan Melchior sorta gives off a veddy Brit vibe, due to the fact that his best known collaborators are people from Medway scene, such as Bill Childish and Holly Golightly. But he has been expatriated to New York for a while now, so let's call him a New Yorker. That said, he has two new albums that are pretty swank. This Is Not the Medway Sound (SmartGuy Records) is nicely crude, home-recorded urban blues in a distinctive Hangman Recs stylee. Regardless of the LP's title, the music has the twang and snarl of Childish's solo work, and is great. The new record w/ his band, Dan Melchior's Broke Revue, is called Bitternbess ,Rage, Spite and Scorn (In the Red), and is a full-bore garage punk version of his grunty solo work. Using purloined punk mega-riffs, and crazy '60s studio touches (like handclaps, for fucksakes), Melchior and band really rip the shit up. This is blasting thug menace at its most bracing.

Nicest music 'zine this time is probably Sound Collector #8, which is put together by somebody at Arthur, but we only met him once and don't remember what he looks like. Anyway—the mag is great. Includes everything from a nice intro to Eric Dolphy, to a good interview on the films of Richard Meltzer, the low-down on Chuck Warner's Hyped 2 Death series, an illustrated memoir of Rock &

Roll Camp for Girls, Susan Archie (who designs those Revenant Records sets), Stephen Basho-Junghans, Iron & Wine, and on and on. As a general guide to interesting non-mainstream culture it's a winner. And they put all the ads in the back, just before the CD, so you don't have to worry about visual clanging! A no-goddamn-ads-at-all treat is Teen Star '69 (Magick Markur Publications). Assembled, probably, by Eddie Flowers, this is a xeroxed compendium of odd music pics from '69, interspersed with commentary, a few nudie shots, and generally strange crawlspace vibes. It's a great evocation of the year I first did acid, and has a genuinely pan-generic grasp of the era's wide potential. Sweet!

While we generally shy away from CDs, an especially good one just showed up from a young Japanese band called LSD March. Due to all the brouhaha lately about the Naked Rallizes (a legendary Japanese psych band begun in the '60s), we figured that you ought to know about these guys, who come from Himeji, and a scene that is lorded over by ex-Rallizes bassist, Hiroshi. LSD March's self-titled CD (ADS) is a pretty amazing gush of mostly instrumental sludge-psych-heaviosity in a Rallizes/High Rise direction, and is totally recommended.

Just about the time you feel like you have a fairly good handle on, say, the Japanese underground scene, along comes something like the debut issue of Improvised Music from Japan (Japan Improv) to make you shut up and sit down. A fully bilingual magazine designed to append the work that its editor, Yoshiyuki Suzuki, does on his similarly vibed website, IMFJ is a treasury of amazing information. There are interviews, overviews, and CD reviews, filled w/ arcane information on the known (Phew, Otomo Yoshide, etc.) plus lots of stuff on people you've probably never heard of, but who you'll want to investigate once you've discovered them via the text & CD here. It is a massive, beautiful effort, highly recommended to anyone w/ even the mildest interest in the Japanese avant garde.

The latest LP by the No Neck Blues band, Ever Borneo (Seres) is quite different from their more recent, rockoidist work. Vocals are at a minimum and there are long swallows of key/percussion interchange very much in the combo's classic mode. The sessions for this album were recorded over the course of a couple years (or so it has been said), but it all holds together like a wonderfully fragmentary leap into the gizzard of a very large chicken. The way it grinds is really nice, and there are Robbie Basho-like moments that will make you feel like you've died and gone somewhere.