

Pub poets perform on demand Sweaty poetry write-off

by **BTHill**

Streams of Consciousness from the middle of the very first Grawood Poetry Sweatshop, Tuesday, September 27.

I see lots of poets sitting nervous but pretty. I know some of these people. They told me and I told some of them to come tonight. I know some other people here. They came to eat and drink. I don't know the rest. Alex Gigeroff, programme director and general campus rat, introduces the rules, bla, bla, bla . . . a page from thesauraus, bla bla, bla . . . 30 minutes, bla, bla, bla . . . Go!

We started and everyone's talking at my table. "Maxine", "Ziggy", "Frances Malone" and "Boots" (that's me). A bit tense. We're at a small table and this ain't bridge. No little sandwiches with the crusts cut off. Julie is the first to break away and hit the rug. I hit the jackpot. Near the middle of my thesaurus page I find "see circumscription, limit, subjection, retention, punishment, dissuasion." I go for dissuasion, lots of sweat, beer, "Ziggy" hits the floor and my food arrives — a Chimo burger I designed myself, sauerkraut, Cajun sauce, fresh mushrooms and fries. Thanks.

The woman at the next table takes over while I eat. She writes, "The woman at the next table comments on how gross my meal looks and I guess I have to admit it does look pretty bad . . . I pounce my burger anyhow. Yet another woman shrieks as she is "thrown" into a writer's block . . . "I can't read the rest through the Cajun sauce, improvise.

Finished. The burger, the poem. Still got half a beer left, sweat is pouring. I wish for naked. (Poetry, eh?)

Soon. It's over. 30 minutes up. I'm hot but clothed.

Some comments. (We're waiting for Maxine Tynes to adjudicate) . . .

Humbug

above us

coats,

The sky is black and blue - a

The three of us,

potential flurry of snow hovering

We huddle, in our thick winter

Standing on our own corner.

far away from the howl

and the hullabaloo of downtown.

In this city of humans

we can hum together, with

no one to hear under the

huge hug of

the sky.

"Worst piece of trash I ever wrote." (a sure winner)

"We all should have been more drunk." (kids these days)

"My ribs are sore from lying on the carpet." (Julie)

"Hey, things are looking up, Terry's buying rounds." (me again)

Best poet in the house is serving beer. I recognize him from the English department. Oops, better get a lid on these barfly sentiments.

Finally. The top ten, "Bud Egg", "King King", "Fish", "Wilson the Sheep", "Kathy" (she left earlier), "Dino", "Edward Noon", "Boot" — say what! me? I walk up, shaking, read, shark. read. shake to finish. I'm shaking while "Ann Smith" talks through her poem. I'm calmer but that's not a word. Last call . . . "Jim" (she left too). Alex fills in.

Okay. Maxine is checking out the winners, top three. I want the money; the Bukowski persona is edging me off my stool. More beer.

Unspoken God walks into the bar

And saunters over to the counter

Orders a bitters

What luck!

I have a million questions to ask And Im in need of a good healing, too.

My God, It's gotten complex. How does anyone arrive At a peaceful resolution Even with themselves?

But God has a perfect plan He could sterilize us all And make us perfect too.

Instead, he's only speaking in Hebrew

And my questions remain Unspoken.

by Andre Norbonne ("Dino")

habit of non-birth at the abbey abbey . . abeo a beowulf in the background? perhaps amongst the others. hear their stories, kept short to get it all on the stones - rid of fear or other silly sentimental details. count the headstones buried deep, he doesn't feel Meorot Hall quaking is the wind, buffetted by the monster's whims. kindly Dane, dead now but so young count the headstones. in the land, below your heart behind your eyes. you had sinned; had you revealed to all the men in black behind the curtain (Hail Mary mother of God, Hail Mary . . .) or did God leave your soul behind to be eaten with the rest by the worms. or had you sinned yet? count the headstones and they are small stones to commemorate small lives. few have names for few were named. abbey - abba father please; wish that i could do something anything, that you would take me back. count the headstones i am lost, i am found i am six feet underground i am tossed, i am torn i am dead and yet unborn. dig in with both hands - and pull out a little life . . .

by Roy MacLean ("Wilson the Sheep")

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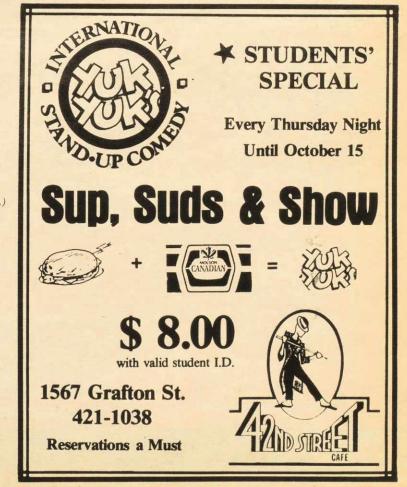
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by Heather Adams ("Kathy")