

19july71

Threat

The writer as a poet

The message appears to be at least imitative of a type of poetry now current which seems to this observer (no poet) to be a fusion of the stream-of-consciousness technique, where you throw everything in as it enters your head, often festooned ~~in~~ with all sorts of ~~xxxxxxxx~~ allusions, including classical and semi-classical, together with words used simply for their phonetic or alliterative value.

A sample quoted in the attached clipping from the April, 1971, KPFA Folio presents what appears to be regarded as some kind of a classic example in the minds of devotees of this kind of poetry.

graphic work and expert printing make picking up a copy of *Source* very much akin to the experience of being confronted by a fifty-pound box of chocolate candy. With one exception. The experience is as thought-provoking as it is pleasurable. *Source* appears twice annually and the subscription rate is \$13.00 per year (from 2101 22nd Street, Sacramento, CA 95818). Note: 7/8 being a double issue is priced at \$13.00. Anyone wishing to see my copy is invited to come down to KPFA and look it over.

Also news is the appearance of *Space* by Clark Coolidge (Harper & Row) with a most unusual cover by Jasper Johns. Coolidge's series of 17 one-hour programs, *Words*, was produced for weekly broadcasts over KPFA in late 1969 and featured American writers in the text-sound field. Most of these were of the so-called New York School, and Harper & Row has also released three books by other writers of this non-group concurrently with the Coolidge volume. The titles and writers are (1) *Air* by Tom Clark, (2) *The Poetry Room* by Lewis MacAdams, and (3) *Where I Hang My Hat* by Dick Gallup. All are in paper and hard-bound editions.

Coolidge's work may be characterized as a post-Stein treatment of the English language with an emphasis on the numerous qualities which words possess apart from their actual meaning. It may seem ironic then that the first page after the title contains the dictionary definition of the word "Space." But a careful look at the statement in dictionary jargon reveals many of the concerns which occupy Coolidge's other work: the abbreviated word, the segmented word (one of Coolidge's earlier books is titled *Ing*), sonorous sequences with words which clash and ding each other, single letters left to fend for themselves among full-blown words, double nouns where an adjective and a noun are expected, and most especially, plain ordinary words exhibited on the page surrounded by lots of fresh space.

Granted, none of this is so very original or new of itself. It is rather the complete command of materials and the infinite combinations of them which impress the reader. In addition, it reveals a careful process of continual selective reexamination by the author, for these pieces are so virtuosic, random as they might first appear, that one feels that they are the selected jewels from among great volumes of experiments in form.

From the first of four parts of the book, very baroque in style by comparison with the remaining sections and typical of Coolidge's early writings, comes this excerpt from *Soda Gong*:

box of surinam toad glass hill
pastiche bartender a live teeth
tepid tones - brine

Typical of the less agitated, sparser third section is *tapes*.

tapes

no and mangrove

gas-trim-mari-ky

obsidian

douse

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Threat

Chou Mein -- addenda

Re yr 7/16/71 to Rothstein, mein does refer to wheat flour and the things made from it. As I explained earlier, it is a perverted spelling and pronunciation of the Chinese word mien, which in Cantonese comes out min or meen or somewhere between.

To cut through a century of confusion which has accumulated, let's go back to the beginning. The dish introduced to early Californians by Chinese coolies (almost all of whom came from Canton) was not chow mein, or scrambled noodles garnished with bits of meat and vegetables, but chop suey.

Chop suey is the Cantonese rendering of the Mandarin ~~ts'a sui~~ ts'a sui. Ts'a means ~~miscellaneous~~ miscellaneous, sui means cut up in small bits. ~~I checked this with a~~ I checked this with a 20-year scholar of Chinese who is working on his doctorate, who ~~in turn checked with a Cantonese.~~ The Cantonese said the term has the connotation of garbage. This conforms with the folk tale about the Chinese laborers forced to feed some tough 49ers and presenting them with their own leftovers as a subtle insult.

Chop Suey, however, regardless of what the Chinese had in mind, came to mean almost any dish of Chinese food made up of bits of various things.

Enter ch'ao mien, which in Cantonese is pronounced ~~chow min or chow meen~~ chow min or chow meen. The min or meen ~~appears to have been converted to mein by Americans or Chinese trying to spell for Americans.~~

This means noodles scrambled with meat and/or vegetables, and is a respectable home Chinese dish. It is also one that can be quickly prepared, if necessary with leftovers if fresh noodles are available. What appears to have happened is a situation where chop suey and chow mein came to mean practically the same thing. Chow mein, as it usually is served in restaurants in this country, more often than not has noodles in it, and so does chop suey. Both are popular in hole-in-the-wall restaurants where many longhaired and other impoverished types often eat. The confusion between the two, chop suey and chow mein, now appears to be almost universal, and I suggest that the writer of the message could have had either in mind when he used the expression ~~a~~ chou mein, if indeed ~~he~~ knew there was any difference.

Mein, as I noted above, is a perversion of min or meen in Cantonese, or of mien in Mandarin. Basically it means any type of commonly used flour, therefore most often wheat flour. But by extension it has a broader meaning very close ~~to~~ to the Italian word pasta; the proper term for noodles is mien t'iao, or flour strips or strings. bread is mien pao, or flour package. Mien t'iao is commonly shortened to mien in speaking ~~noodles~~ of noodles. If a Chinese wants to distinguish wheat flour from all others he says mai-tze-mien, or wheat flour. But usually he just refers to flour as mien, and uses exactly the same word for ~~noodles~~ noodles if they're made from wheat flour. HE knows the difference. Let the barbarian wallow in his own ignorance.

None of the above mitigates in any way my feeling that the use of chou mein is intended to suggest a mess of scrambled leftovers. In fact it is strengthened if anything by the suggestion by the Cantonese that chop suey connotes garbage, for as I say the writer may not know there is any difference between chop suey and chow mein in this country.

I suggested earlier that this invoking of an image of scrambled leftovers could refer to the Warren Report, and that it also could refer to the body of myth, half-truth and outright fiction which has grown up around the Chappaquiddick incident. Certainly that whole affair qualifies as a ball and chain locked on EMK, and if this is granted the reference to chip log certainly suggests the girl thrown over the side. It follows that if EMK is toying with the idea of challenging either official myth he is in for trouble .