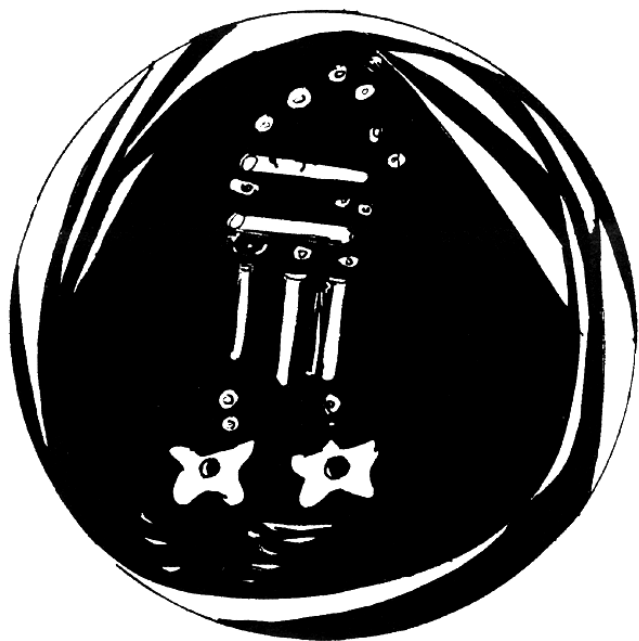


# ABRAXAS 44/45



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*A young poet from Cleveland, Ohio . . .*

It is a great pleasure to open this issue, marking the return of *Abraxas*, with the previously unpublished long poem “WILD horses” by d.a.levy. Thanks go to Russell Salamon for providing the manuscript and for rescuing the poem as levy was about to throw it away. Salamon dates this poem from early 1964, following levy’s 1963 trip to Mexico, and suggests that some of the desert imagery of the poem springs from that trip.

The poem is composed of twenty-three ten-line stanzas. There are a number of indicated cuts, marked “out,” which Salamon affirms are levy’s. I’ve recently completed a study of the ten different extant drafts of levy’s “cleveland undercovers,” a long poem written at roughly the same time, and it has left me wary of considering marked mss. copy as definitive testament to the poetic work. Some lines cut from “cleveland undercovers” in the heavily marked-up early drafts thankfully reappear in subsequent versions and in the final published version of the poem. We are presenting the whole of the typescript version, and have signaled the indicated cuts with brackets, respecting the poet’s indications, but also preserving his original design of twenty-three ten-line stanzas. We do so with the understanding that poets are not always the best editors of their own work. We also wish to honor levy’s philosophy of encouraging young, “amateur” poets by publishing their work in the face of the demand for perfection on the part of the art-establishment elite.

Please note that we have left the final bracket unclosed: “out” appears in the left margin of the second-to-last stanza of the poem, and there is no other indication. Salamon believes this refers to the entire page, and that the last two stanzas appearing on page eight should both be cut, ending the poem with the line “sleeping.”

In contrast to many of his later poems, in “WILD horses” levy capitalizes and punctuates the sentences that straddle the twenty-three stanzas. The rendering of certain words all in capitals and the elision of the apostrophe indicating the possessive found in this poem are recognizable markers of levy’s mature poetic-typographic style.

Following the poem is a “color list,” also composed by levy in 1964 and given by him to Russell Salamon, with the proposal that they “paint the city.” This resonates strongly with the repeated line in “cleveland undercovers”: “i have a city to cover with lines.” The list provides a palette of the color lexicon of “WILD horses.” We have reproduced, as much as possible within the limitations of our smaller format, the typographic vagaries of levy’s color list, originally typed on two letter-sized sheets.

In both the poem and the list we have corrected a few obvious misspellings (both manuscripts also generally indicate spelling corrections) \_ as distinct from typographic nuance, idiosyncratic spelling and the occasional undecide-able word \_ allowing ambiguities to stand. I am unwilling, for example, to tinker with the mis-typed “LAMF” (which levy had marked “out”): should it be “LAND”? “LAMA?” \_ the latter possibility is interesting.

. . . The end of the pier  
 The dedicated winos  
 The passive pearl-grey water  
 the greek catholic church  
 bell ringing [LAMF ]

Words added to the typescripts by hand are given in italics.

Where the color list appears to break into columns, some of the word associations suggest that the poet typed across rather than down, continuing the general typographic design above and below:

coffee                    champagne                  cork  
 chestnut                  auburn                      russet  
 . . . . .  
 lapis lazuli              emerald . . . .

Hopefully, Alan Horvath of Kirpan Press will add a facsimile of these mss. pages to his marvelous *Random Sightings* series of reprints of rare and lesser-known levy work! (see page 120 for more information on levy publications).

– *Ingrid Swanberg*

February 2006