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Union of Egoists

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-Kevin I. Slaughter

What is a UnionOfEgoists.com?

This is an informational resource provided by Kevin I. Slaughter of Underworld Amusements and Trevor Blake of OVO, initiated in February and publicly launched April 1st of 2016. The website initially focuses on providing historical, biographical and bibliographical details of a few their favorite Egoist philosophers. It is also integrating the archives of egoist website i-studies.com, the former project of Svein Olav Nyberg, and the EgoistArchives.com project of Dan Davies. Further, it will be home to Der Geist, a Journal of Egoism in print 1845 – 1945. UnionOfEgoists.com will be the best resource for Egoism online.

What is a Union of Egoists?

"We two, the State and I, are enemies. I, the egoist, have not at heart the welfare of this "human society," I sacrifice nothing to it, I only utilize it; but to be able to utilize it completely I transform it rather into my property and my creature; i. e., I annihilate it, and form in its place the Union of Egoists."

– Max Stirner, The Ego and Its Own

What is Egoism?

"Egoism is the claim that the Individual is the measure of all things. In ethics, in epistemology, in aesthetics, in society, the Individual is the best and only arbitrator. Egoism claims social convention, laws, other people, religion, language, time and all other forces outside of the Individual are an impediment to the liberty and existence of the Individual. Such impediments may be tolerated but they have no special standing to the Individual, who may elect to ignore or subvert or destroy them as He can. In egoism the State has no monopoly to take tax or to wage war."

-Trevor Blake, Confessions of a Failed Egoist

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DORA HANSEN: SELECTIONS FROM HER WRITINGS ON WOMEN

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Minus One

No. 33, 1974

CALLS TO BETRAY ME

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1 expatriate patronym),

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& whims of partitives, epithets:

Others call them alls of me;
they don't care ... so do I ...

Wm. Flygare

DORA MARSDEN: SELECTIONS FROM HER WRITINGS ON EGOISM

(Dora Marsden was born in 1882. She had a hard upbringing, but managed to win a scholarship to Manchester University, where she studied under the philosopher Professor Alexander, and gained a BA. degree. She became a suffragette and was imprisoned for her militancy. Finding the suffragette leadership too autocratic, she broke away and founded *The Freewoman* (1912), *The New Freewoman* (1913) and *The Egoist* (1914-1919). Between 1912 and 1914 her thinking was clearly influenced by Max Stirner's *The Ego and His Own* and she developed his approach into some interesting directions. The advent of World War 1, however, turned her towards collectivism. She became a supporter of military conscription - for which she was gleefully twitted by her long-time critic, one Caldwell Harpur, - and she then began the descent into an esoteric form of Christian theism which she expressed in such works as *The Definition of Godhead* and *The Philosophy of Time*. She died on December 13, 1960.

The following extracts are from her egoist period.

S.E.P.)

The Women Movement.

Accurately speaking, there is no 'Women Movement'. 'Woman' is doing nothing - she has, indeed, no existence. A very limited number of individual women are emphasising the fact that the first thing to be taken into account with regard to them is that they are individuals and can not be lumped together into a class, or sex, or 'movement'. They - this small number - regard themselves as neither wives, mothers, spinsters, women, nor men. They are themselves, each cut off from and differing from the rest. What each is and what each requires she proposes to find by looking into her own wants - not 'class' or 'race' wants - which explains her repudiation of 'description by function'. If primarily women are to regard themselves as Woman or the Mother, their satisfactions as individuals would be subordinated to an external authority, the requirements of the development of Woman or Mother as such - empty concepts again. 'Woman as such' - 'Mother as type' has no reality: the subordination of the individual to the 'Interest' (another word for cause) of Motherhood, or the 'Interest of the Race' is the old trick, subjugating the real to the unreal. A woman as a mother takes on the accidental 'mother characteristic' merely by the way, wholly for her own satisfaction. She is so because she wants, not because of any wants of the community, the State, the Race, or any other faked-up authority. The centre of the Universe lies in the desire of the individual, and the Universe for the individual has no meaning apart from their individual satisfactions, a means to an end. The few individual women before mentioned maintain that their only fitting description is that of Individual: Ends-in-themselves. They are Egoists. They are Autocrats, and government in their autocracy is vested in the self which holds the reins in the kingdom of varying wants and desires, and which defines the resultant of these different wants as the Satisfaction of Itself. The intensive satisfaction of Self is for the individual the one goal in life.

(*The New Freewoman*, Vol. 1, No.1. June 15, 1913)

Freedom.

What have we in mind when we say Freedom? We detect three elements: two notions and an atmosphere. There is the notion of a force, and a notion of a barrier which the force breaks through. A 'breaking

through' is the single complex which is the 'getting free'. A definite action, therefore, with a positive beginning and a definable end: limited in time and complete in its operation. There exists nothing in this which explains the vague unending thing called 'freedom'. To 'get free' apparently is not freedom which is something which carries on an independent existence on its own account. This separate existence is the atmosphere. Freedom therefore is made up of loose association with the two notions which coalesce into the action of getting free, plus an atmosphere. The action is the individual affair: the thing which must be done for oneself and permits of no vicariousness. The other, i.e., the atmosphere, is the part which one creates for others. This atmosphere is an interesting study: examined, it reveals itself, half swoon, half thrill. It is the essence of sensation, the food of the voluptuary. The thrill is the memory, the aroma of far-off fair deeds; the swoon is the suspension of intellect which allows vague association to make these deeds appear, in part, as one's own. Deeds, mark you: definite things. Now we can ask the question: What is the relationship of the simple, normal, definable life-process of over-coming specific resistances which we call getting free to the vague, symbolic, indefinable thing called Freedom. The second is a blatant exploitation of the first. The first is an individual affair which must be operated in one's own person and which once done is over. The second is not an action: it is a worked-up atmosphere, secured by culling special nose-gays of 'free-ings' - the most notable deeds of the most notable persons by preference - bunching them together and inhaling their decaying sweetness with exactly the same type of pleasure as that which the drug-taker and the drunkard get out of their vices. As tippling is the vicious exploitation of the normal quenching of thirst so the following after 'Freedom' is the vicious exploitation of the normal activity of working oneself free of difficulties.

When, therefore, a person 'dies for the cause of women's freedom' the effect of such a death is to give a crowd of degenerate orgiasts a new sensation. The motive may be - a motive arrived at by a tragically mistaken process of reasoning - the belief that thereby others can be freed. Such is a tragic delusion. There is only one person concerned in the freeing of individuals and that is the person who wears and feels and resents the shackles. Shackles must be burst off: if they are cut away from outside, they will immediately reform, as those whose cause is 'our poor sisters' and 'poor brothers' will find. The prostitution and the poverty problems will be solved when the prostitute refuses to be prostituted and the poor refuse to be poor. Flogging the prostitute, or railing at the exploiter is idle, for the defect is not primarily in these. (Ibid.)

The Worker.

None dare tell the 'worker' the blunt truth, that his leanness blights the landscape and that he is responsible. The tales of leanness' woes are told to the discredit of the fat, but they recoil in truth to the discredit of the lean. It is the last resort of the downtrodden to seek comfort in the relating thereof. There is only one thing the downtrodden with retained dignity can do, and that is to Get Up. And there is only one thing for the lean, and that is, to get fat, get property: and it is the one thing they will not do. The efforts to dodge the responsibility of self-defence, self-appropriation, to assume the mastership of their own persons, is the unmistakeable mark of the lean. The first conscious

effort of mind in any prospective change of circumstances is to look for the chain and collar and the next great Someone to whom they may belong, serve, work for. If not the slave-owner, then the employer (employer - someone who keeps him busy); if not the individual employer, then the State; if not these, then the Commune or the Trade Union or the Trade Guild: an 'employed person', worker, for ever. Let reproaches be directed where cause lies - and then they may bear fruit. As Mr. Tillett (a trade union leader of that time - Ed.) might have remembered when he called upon the Deity to perform a task which he could have done for himself had he cared, what a man wants doing, he will do himself. And what is true in relation to the deity is true in relation to fat men. The fat man is just as likely to endow lean scolders as is the Almighty - not at all. He is satisfied in the knowledge that they can achieve their own endowment as he and his achieved theirs, by taking from yielding hands.

(Ibid)

Anarchism, Archism and the State.

It is a wise editor who knows the name of his paper's creed. It appears that we are not to be counted among the wise. At all events, one who is perhaps the best-known living exponent of anarchism (Benj. Tucker - Ed.) and hitherto an unwearied friend of The Egoist has informed us we are not anarchist. We are rather "egoist and archist", that "combination which has already figured largely in the world's history." The first thing to be said anent that is, that if it is so we must manage to put up with it. If to be an archist is to be what we are, then we prefer archism to anarchism which presumably would necessitate our being something different. There is nothing in a name once one has grasped the thing it stands for. It is only when there is doubt as to the latter that it becomes possible for names to play conjuring tricks. It is therefore more because the mist of vagueness hangs over the connotation of both archism and anarchism than because we are greatly concerned as to which label we are known by that we find it worth while to discriminate in the matter.

The issue of course turns upon the point as to whether in anarchism, which is a negative term, one's attention fixes upon the absence of a State establishment, that is the absence of one particular view of order supported by armed force with acquiescence as to its continued supremacy held by allowing it a favoured position as to defence in the community among whom it is established; or the absence of every kind of order supported by armed force and maintained by the consent of the community, but the presence of that kind of order which obtains when each member of a community agrees to want only the kind of order which will not interfere with the kind of order likely to be wanted by individuals who compose the rest of the community. (We do our very utmost to state the second position as accurately as possible, but that it is very difficult to do so, those who profess it know well from their apparently interminable debates on this very subject of definition among themselves). The first half is what we should call anarchism and represents one half of that egoistic anarchism which The Egoist maintains against all comers. The second, which is that of our correspondent, as far as we can define it, has in our opinion no claims at all that are not embedded in a hundred confusions as to the label of anarchism. We should call it rather a sort of clerico-libertarian-archism, and this without any desire maliciously to "call names". It

represents a more subtle, more tyrannical power of repression than any the world as yet has known, its only distinction being that the policeman, judge and executioner are ever on the spot, a trinity of repression that has a spy to boot, i.e., "conscience", the sense of "duty". Conscience, more powerful than armies, "doth make cowards of us all". Conscience takes the ego in charge and but rarely fails to throttle the life out of him. Therefore as compared with the power of egoistic repression the ego comes up against in an ordinary "State", that which it meets in the shape of Conscience is infinitely more oppressive and searching. The archism which is expressed in the armies, courts, gowns and wigs, jailers, hangmen and whatnot, is but light and superficial as compared with our clerico-libertarian friends.

If therefore to be anarchistic is to hope for and strive after the abolition of the State as by the force of governors and submissiveness of governed together compounded, as a term with (one may hope) only a temporary significance, then we are it. If, on the other hand, it is to stand for "liberty", "respect for the liberty of others" and vague ideas of this nature, we incline to think the term would be most appropriately treated if it were abandoned to become the plaything of cranks and discussionists. For it will be found that such persons mean, as far as their elementary muddleheadedness permits them to mean anything, to substitute for the obvious repressive agency represented by arms and the State, the subtle and far more perniciously repressive agency of Conscience with its windy words and ideas. The sum total of the matter amounts to this: we are all archists, we believe in rule. The question which divides us is: Whose rule shall say it is? The reply is a matter of frankness or discretion. Whichever we select by name, in actual fact it remains our own rule: our view of which "order" should prevail modified by a knowledge of our own fears and weaknesses. If we say: "Let the State, i.e., the persons who are dominant at the present time, rule," it is because alongside the State's onslaught by all its weapons of force, it provides some degree of safety under cover of which the timorous find shelter; and in their little run, rule themselves. For which consideration they are prepared to "respect" the purely arbitrary conventions of statutory law, "crimes" and "criminals" - terms without meaning outside the circle of the respectful ones' timidities.

If in addition to fearing physical violence and consequently to accepting the State, men are submitted to the brow-beating of education, and are more than ordinarily timid, it is in response to a personal desire of their own souls that they put themselves mentally under the control of a system of words, the reaction of the weight of which system is felt in consciousness as Conscience. It is the pull of a set of "allowed" claims which are called duties, the disallowing of which claims are Sin. But the "archism" is there all the same. The readiness to accept the weight of "sin" and "duty" is merely the outcome of an unreadiness - a dislike for self-responsibility. And the clerico-libertarians, let them call themselves by what name they will, possess in reality this kind of temper. They will not openly confess an approval of the will to satisfy the wants of the "selfish" self. They will allow the self to "rule" but it must first change itself. Like Eucken's man which is more than "a man", the libertarian's self must be a self with the universe tacked on: and the "claims" of the universe must be attended to first. Now when we say we believe the satisfaction of individual wants is the only "authority" we "respect" we mean the wants of the ordinary person Tom, Dick, or Sue.

Not what after much argument someone persuades them to want: which finally they will agree they do but will still look as though they don't, but vulgar simple satisfactions according to taste -- a tub for Diogenes; a continent for Napoleon; control of a Trust for Rockefeller; all that I desire for me: if we can get them. Our wants are entirely matters of taste, and our tastes are bounded by our comprehension and awareness. We may be fools and gross beasts but nothing is gained by putting us to intellectual strain: making us attitudinizing hypocrites. Our illness is that we are dull-witted and stupid without the power which feels things. Then give the penetrative power its chance to grow, wriggle and strain itself into comprehension; when it can, it will; and when it can is soon enough. The exact tale of the wriggling and straining when it has found a voice is what one means by being "true" and "honest".

So "egoist and anarchist" let it be. There is -- or so we imagine so -- a sarcastic ring in our correspondents comment, "a combination that has already figured largely in the world's history." The sarcasm is unfortunately wasted. If the combination has figured largely, it is apparent at least that it is one which will "work": and that is -- according to the pragmatists -- mainly what matters. The appeal which would have us turn a cold eye on the evidence as to what things succeed in the world wears thin at length. The time has arrived (it is we who say it) when worldly evidence as to what motives do actually work the springs of men's actions should be impartially examined. The evidence is a "cultural" community would no doubt be distasteful, but it is almost sure to be useful. The evidence might be treated, should we say, distastefully but honestly as an analyst might treat sewage. In the process one might arrive at the reason why the libertarian, humanitarian, idealist cure-alls won't go down: the reason why they won't and the knowledge of what will. It will become clear that by their present hope those that have nothing are deceiving themselves: and that those who know how things are got are quite willing that they should remain deceived.

"The World is a bundle of hay,
Mankind are the asses who pull."

Byron knew so much more of the nature of "temper" than the author of "Das Kapital"! It is not on account of the machine-system, nor the "surplus value" it supposedly creates, that things are as they are, but because some men are reluctant or unable to pull. They have in fact a hundred reasons for not pulling: it is illegal, or immoral, forbidden by conscience, God and the Church: it is theft and heaven knows what else: therefore because they can't or won't, "Stop the pulling!" That is the socialist, communist and (in the main) the anarchist solution of "poverty". The bundle must be respected: not grabbed at without warrant, because, say the theorists, by right it is "the property of all". Whereupon the few "respectless" ones divide up the lot between them. The sooner the poor become "archists" therefore the better.

(The Egoist, March 3, 1914)

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NOTICE

If you are labelled egoist by collectivists, but would like to show that individual anarchists can associate more effectively and retain their liberty then contact: Association Max Stirner du Quebec, C.P. 95, Stn Place d'Arnes, Montreal, P.Q. H2Y 3E9, Canada.

AN AUTOPSY OF THE FRENCH ANARCHIST MOVEMENT

Pierre Jouventin

1. The Identity of the Corpse.

Living in an overpopulated and technocratic world one is forced to quit the anarchist dream of universal fraternity and to look reality in the face.

But, first, what was the anarchist phenomenon? The French anarchist movement, in the strict sense of the term, existed from 1880 up to the outbreak of World War I. It was primarily a product of economic conditions (industrialization), but the death of the monarchy and the preceding history of ideas (encyclopedists, Hegelianism, positivism, anti-statism, nihilism) also played their parts. If one follows its evolution from the start one sees that, beginning with an individualism more or less consistent and varied (Godwin, Stirner, Proudhon, Warren), anarchism little by little slid towards socialism (Bakunin, Kropotkin), a process stimulated by its competition with Marxism. World War I made this fatal evolution evident by transforming the tenors of collectivism into belligerents. But it had not been long in its short history before the anarchist movement had found itself constantly faced with the problem of means and ends. Not finding any means of action and propaganda in accord with their principles militant libertarians fell into the trap of terrorism which provided not so much a "summing up" as an unconscious form of suicide for both militants and movement.

By 1910 the history of anarchism had come to an end, at least in France. There took place a break up of forces. The more reformist went into syndicalism or Russian communism. The more "spontaneous" went into what one might call the French anarchist individualist movement which culminated in the Bonnot Gang episode. The rest dispersed into an infinity of tendencies: birth-control, co-operation, education, naturism, etc. There remained a few fossilized survivors who continued to pontificate, to exclude innovators - and each other. In two backward countries - the Ukraine and Spain - sudden dawns took place which were quickly eclipsed by contact with reality. They served at the same time to demonstrate to those who were not blind that collectives cannot function without authority (re-appearance of government: armies, police, summary executions, etc.) and that it is not sufficient, as anarcho-communists still believe, to leave everything to good will.

2. The Proof of Death.

One can prove that the French anarchist movement is dead

- by the continual reduction of the number of journals
- by the age of the militants, most of whom are over fifty (there are some adolescents, seduced by the past, who are passing through)

- by the absence of social action (anarchists play an infinitesimal part today in proletarian struggles) and of individual activity (no theoretician of any importance since the death of E. Armand)

- by the weakness, the sectarianism and the heterogeneity of the groups of militants.

Daniel Guérin recently tried to effect a synthesis between anarchism and Marxism which showed the degeneration of the anarchist

movement and the liberalization of Marxism. But the attempt came too late, scared away both parties, brought no solution and revealed a misunderstanding of the fundamentals of both systems which are antagonistic.

E. Armand was no innovator. He soon grasped the fact that he could not affect the masses and adopted a position of withdrawal in the face of the modern world. He was a man of the past, as his poetry showed.

At this point, I must make clear that there has never been an anarchist individualist movement which has brought under "one hat" such differing personalities as Warren, Stirner, Thoreau, Palante, Zo D'Axa, etc. Contrary to the opinions of such historians as Jean Maitron, who only know anarchism as a workers' movement, I would say there has been a mutualist movement in France (Proudhon) and in America (Warren, etc.), an individualist philosopher (Nietzsche), six completely different anarchist individualists (Thoreau, Tucker, Stirner, Zo D'Axa, Palante, Godwin), and a French movement which may be called "individualist" (Libertad, Paraf-Javal). Armand can be included in the last although his theories were very personal and more individualist. Anarchist individualism is a question of individuals, not of movements...

C.A. Bontenos is someone who would like to be an iconoclast like his precursors, but has not their talents. He praises a type of anarchist who is so well adapted to contemporary society that his acts would be difficult to distinguish from those of habitual bourgeois if it were not for his justifications...

As for those leftists who have tried to infuse new blood into revolutionary anarchism, they are so diverse and so incoherent that their analysis would lead us to give them an importance they are far from deserving.

More attractive are the anarchistic attempts of regionalists and ecologists. Unfortunately, they are easily diverted from their subversive ends to the profit of the authorities who make them into folklore and defence of the environment. The first amuses the public and occupies their attention. The second calls for a great future in the limitation of individual rights and the extension of the powers of "security".

The Cause of Death.

It is clear that on a social level anarchism is purely utopian and that is no consolation despite the attempted justifications by modern sophists. All societies, whatever their ideology, demand a strong authority. And this is stronger the more populous and complex they are as is the case with industrial and post-industrial societies.

This was understood by the realists of yesterday - e.g. fascists like Mussolini (who was inspired by the syndicalist Georges Sorel) and Marxists like Lenin and Trotsky. And it is understood by the realists of today - e.g. capitalist technocrats and Maoist communists.

This was not understood by most idealists who, having once taken refuge in the libertarian mystique, now take refuge in Hindu mysticism (Zen or evangelical), in drugs, in vegetarianism.

Eulogy of the Dead.

If one surveys history one sees that the anarchist movement was no more than a particularly brilliant episode in what we call the libertarian spirit, that refusal of all the alienations which fetter the individual in his struggle for autonomy and expression. Its history mingled with that of rebels, techniques and ideas: Lao Tzu, Diogenes-the-Cynic, christian heresies, the humanists of the Renaissance, the many revolts of slaves, peasants and workers (the anarchist movement can be seen not as a revolutionary movement, but rather as a re-actionary movement, aspiring to give to the worker, citizen and man the dignity lost in modern societies). And lastly the students. The libertarian spirit represents a constant of human beings in their less animal aspect.

14.1.74

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SOME LAST WORDS

Domenico Pastorello

I have published 5000 copies of a text on sexuality by Dr. Carpentier in order to be able to send it to ten different countries where there are esperantists. I am always ready to send a free copy if requested. (1)

This text has been distributed among the female students of the Belfort Lyceum. It has been read in the school by the philosophy instructor, Prof. Nicole Mercier, who was acquitted by the court after it was judged "not hurtful to morality".

Very near to my end at 87 years of age, it is my last effort for sexual liberty so that I can be at peace in the centuries to come.

Any battle won towards freedom of thought is an invitation to continue. The court at Padova in Italy has acquitted the two authors of "The Sexes in the Catholic Confessionary" declaring that article 402 of the Italian Penal Code, which condemns offences against the Church, is against the Italian Constitution. I was condemned under this article in June, 1969, to one month's imprisonment.

The evolution of individual rights has progressed, the victims of past barbarities are now rehabilitated, and are proud to have been bearers of a better future.

Many other things of importance are changing without any great noise.

To Sid Parker in England, pioneer of a better valuation of human rights, a grateful salute from a soldier very near to his end.

18.11.1973

(1) Write to: D.Pastorello, 13270 Fos sur Mer, France.

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ADVERTISEMENT

The Revisionist Press, G.P.O. Box 2009, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11202, U.S.A. is willing to consider manuscripts (typed) on Stirner, Mackay, individualist anarchism, etc. from readers of Minus One.

REVIEWS

(Bibliografia dell'anarchismo. Compiled by Leonardo Bettini. CP Editrice, Florence. 1972. 429pp. £4.00)

A record of Italian language periodicals and single issues from 1872 to 1971. The Forward mentions that further volumes will list periodicals, books and pamphlets in French, Spanish, and English.

For his single-handed labour Bettini deserves praise.

The vast majority of papers listed are of the anarchist-communist/socialist order.

Like most bibliographies that I have read, the works and names that interest me most are the works and names that receive the lesser coverage. Enzo Martucci, who published a brilliantly composed, lively and most stimulating paper (Each copy as unique as its title) from 1965 to 1970, receives a mere mention (page 414)

Other individualist anarchist papers listed by Bettini fare better. On page 291 he writes of "Gli Scamiciati", 1920-21. A continuation of a paper that appeared in 1913-14. Among the contributors was Renzo Novatore.

On page 187 he writes of a) "Il Novatore Anarchico" (The Anarchist Innovator) and b) "Il Novatore Individualista 1906. Both were edited by Massimo Rocca ("Libero Tancredi") who Bettini describes as expressing "an exasperating and paradoxical individualism" (As he gives no instances it is difficult to know how valid an assessment this is) "not a sparse equivocation that attempts to sell out the 'delinquent who defies the rigours of the law and the censure of the numified.....to live and satisfy, at least for the day, his tendencies and his needs'." Also as "adding a systematic theorizing on violence and a refutation of anti-militarism, on the pretext that 'a war today is more deadly for the bourgeois than the worker, and is an occasion for the revolution.'"

On page 292 he writes of "Nichilismo", edited by Giuseppe Invernizzi, which appeared from April 1920 to March 1921: "Articles abstract and literary in content mostly given to the enunciation of the 'nihilist' principles and expressing the particular conception of individualism that was found in Stirner and Nietzsche, their most efficient singers."

A useful work, but £4.00 for a paperback is very expensive.

Stephen Marletta

(The Wind's Not Cold, It's Invisible. A selection of poetry and prose from Ian Restron and J.K. Sowerby. No price. Obtainable from 150 Shorrock Lane, Blackburn, Lancs. BB2 4TT)

Both poetry and prose bear all the marks of adolescence, yet a promise of what could be if enough rigour is brought to their future work by the two young authors. The best part is the preface which is called "Antimanifesto" and reads "1. We are not a movement. We have no collective ideals in philosophy or politics. We have no collectively made restriction on our individuals works. 2. We have no antiliterary pretensions. 3. Neither we, nor our literary works, are part of a revolutionary current" and so on, concluding "The two of us are rebels: we rebel against each other."

S.E.P.