

LETTERS

Following are some excerpts from recent letters we've received over the past few months, about issues 55 and 56 NYQ.

Some of these letters are filled with praise for NYQ, but some other letters contain some real brickbats—according to some readers, NYQ publishes too many poems using dirty words, sexual situations. As we indicated in previous editorials, we see this whole obscenity issue as beating a dead horse—especially as so many of the poems we publish in NYQ are a *cri de coeur*, impassioned outcries from the heart. So the only relevant question always is and always will be, whether a particular poem is well written or not.

We do take our reader feedback seriously, and we hope you continue to let us know what you think of the poems we publish in THE NEW YORK QUARTERLY.

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The first letter is from Todd Moore in Albuquerque, New Mexico:

NYQ 55 hit the top for me. Bukowski was right when he sd it was the best mag in the country. & speaking of Bukowski, his poems really set the whole thing off. 'hunk of rock' was my favorite. loved the line 'nina was the hardest of them / all.' also loved the last line where nina's ass is blazing in the lamplight. for me, this is Bukowski at his absolute best.

other poems that did it for me were Lifshin's—this stuff she's dealing w/now is white hot—the holocaust is something that goes right to the edge—& the one by Bill Shields—in fact, enjoyed the hell out of the entire issue. Blehert's right on the mark abt the idea that the poet is the last free man and/or woman on the face of the earth.

the way i see it you are doing something that is absolutely unique in a poetry magazine—you are publishing poets who aren't afraid to take risks w/subjects or language & we don't have enough of that today. the big mags like APR & Kenyon & the Chicago Review & on & on are cranking out the same tired old tamely surreal meditative YOU poem that has nothing to do w/me & after reading one of those pieces

i feel like i have to take a jack knife to scrape the shit off the bottom of my shoe. it's poetry w/no heart, no guts, no drive, no desire, no passion, no soul. people don't shit in these poems. people don't bleed in these poems. people don't jack off in these poems. people don't fuck in these poems. or if they do sometimes fuck, there's no wet spot on the sheets, no cum dribbling down the leg. if i ever wanted anything in a poem, i want to be slammed up against the wall & then thrown down the steps. i want life & i want death in a poem & i want the shaggy haired hooker straightening her black nylons on a buick's bumper. i want the dead man in the alley w/the corpse smell shitting out of his asshole. i want a poem to be a molotov cocktail. i want it to blow me to hell & gone.

& NYQ does that again and again.