

On those rare days when sunlight fills the barns and level light spangles through those window-holes, these plain things cast upon the walls on which they lean thin, eerie shadows—shadows cast by the eponymous fork, rake, spade, and axe.

The working man's tools embody Holden's insistent faith that a sublime and venerable creative vitality may be found in and through everyday life, rather than in isolation or transcendence. Thus, her "Old Lob" speaks through and communes with his laborers—smiths, woodcutters, handymen, and housewives—rather than through the place names and folk tales where Edward Thomas found traces of his Lob. In form and content, these last poems assert that the creative spirit is all-pervasive: instead of struggling for it, we need only look—acutely and patiently—and we will find that we are caught up in inexorable patterns of creativity. Accordingly, "The

births of children" rejects "posturing, pretence, misapprehension, /or just plain trying for effect" in favor of an attitude whose affirmative simplicity concludes the poem on a wholly characteristic note: "Birth's enough."

While she was alive, Molly Holden's poems won for her the Cholmondeley Award (1972), as well as awards from the Arts Council (1970) and the Poetry Book Society. Reviewing *To Make Me Grieve*, Clive James praised her "minutely concentrated observations," and in a review of *Air and Chill Earth* Alan Brownjohn noted how her "quiet diction has a way of sharpening suddenly into a precise, haunting observation that is absolutely right." These are not flashy skills that take the reader by storm; rather, as John Cotton observed, Molly Holden's poems "steadily grow on you." One can expect that her poems will continue to find readers and that they will quietly find the recognition they deserve.

## Anselm Hollo

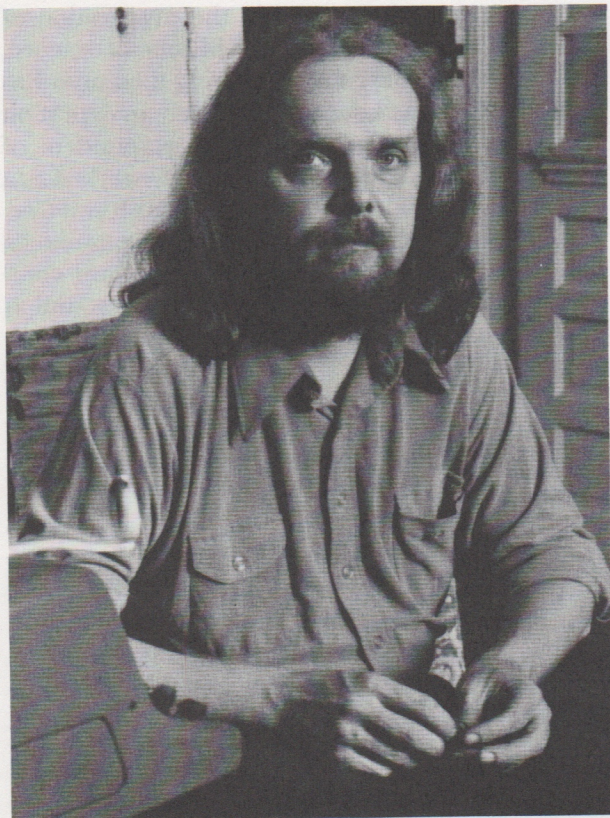
(12 April 1934- )

Kit Robinson

SELECTED BOOKS: *Sateiden Vällillä* (Helsinki: Otava, 1956);  
*St. Texts and Finnpoems* (Worcester & Ventura, Cal.: Migrant Press, 1961);  
*The Minicab War*, by Hollo, Gregory Corso, and Tom Raworth (London: Matrix, 1961);  
*History* (London: Matrix, 1964);  
*It Is a Song* (Birmingham: Migrant, 1965);  
*Faces and Forms* (London: Ambit, 1965);  
*The Claim* (London: Goliard, 1966);  
*Leaf Times* (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1967);  
*The Man in the Tree Top Hat* (London: Turret, 1968);  
*The Coherences* (London: Trigram, 1968);  
*Haiku*, by Hollo, John Esam, and Tom Raworth (London: Trigram, 1968);  
*Maya: Works 1959-1969* (London: Cape Goliard, 1970);  
*America del Norte and Other Peace Herb Poems* (Toronto: Weed/Flower, 1970);  
*Sensation*, A Curriculum of the Soul, no. 27 (Canton, N.Y.: Institute of Further Studies, 1972);  
*Alembic* (London: Trigram, 1972);

*Spring Cleaning Greens, from notebooks, 1967-1973* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Doones, 1973);  
*Some Worlds* (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Elizabeth Press, 1974);  
*Black Book #1* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Creative Writing Program, Bowling Green State University, 1975);  
*Sojourner Microcosms: new & selected poems, 1959-1977* (Berkeley: Blue Wind, 1977);  
*heavy jars* (West Branch, Iowa: Toothpaste Press, 1977);  
*Phantom Pod*, by Hollo, Joe Cardarelli, and Kirby Malone (Baltimore: Pod, 1977);  
*with ruth in mind* (Barrytown, N.Y.: Station Hill, 1979);  
*Finite Continued* (Berkeley: Blue Wind, 1980);  
*no complaints* (West Branch, Iowa: Toothpaste Press, 1983).

RECORDING: *The Coherences*, Stream Records, 1969.



Anselm Hollo (photograph © 1980 by David Abrams)

- OTHER: Allen Ginsberg, *Kaddish*, translated into German by Hollo (Wiesbaden: Limes, 1962); Yevgeny Yevtushenko, Andrei Voznesensky, and Semyon Kirsanov, *Red Cats*, translated by Hollo (San Francisco: City Lights, 1962); Paul Klee, *Some Poems*, translated by Hollo (Suffolk: Scorpion, 1962; San Francisco: City Lights, 1963); *Jazz Poems*, edited by Hollo (London: Vista, 1963); Gregory Corso, *In der Fluchtigen Hand der Zeit*, translated into German by Hollo (Wiesbaden: Limes, 1963); Ginsberg, *Huuto ja Muita Runoja*, translated into Finnish by Hollo (Turku, Finland: Tajo, 1963); Ginsberg, *Kuolema van Gogh'n Korvalle*, translated into Finnish by Hollo (Turku, Finland: Tajo, 1963); *Negro Verse*, edited by Hollo (London: Vista, 1964); Voznesensky, *Selected Poems*, translated by Hollo (New York: Grove, 1964); *Word from the North: New Poetry from Finland*, edited and translated by Hollo (Blackburn, Lancashire: Screeches Press, 1965); Bertolt Brecht, *Jungle of Cities*, translated by Hollo (New York: Grove, 1966); Lars Gorling, *491*, translated by Hollo (New York: Grove, 1966); John Lennon, *Hispanjalainen Jakovainaa*, translated into Finnish by Hollo (Helsinki: Otava, 1966); Pentti Saarikoski, *Helsinki: Selected Poems*, translated by Hollo (London: Rapp & Whiting/Chicago: Swallow Books, 1967); Paavo Haavikko, *Selected Poems*, translated by Hollo (London: Cape Goliard, 1968; New York: Grossman, 1968); Tuomas Anhava, *In the Dark, Move Slowly*, translated by Hollo (London: Cape Goliard, 1969); William Carlos Williams, *Paterson*, translated into German by Hollo and Josephine Clare (Stuttgart & Darmstadt: Goverts Verlag, 1970); *Thrymskviða*, translated into English from Old Icelandic by Hollo and Sid Berger (Iowa City: Stone Wall Press, 1970); Aleksandr Blok, *The Twelve and Other Poems*, translated by Hollo (Lexington, Ken.: Gnomon Press, 1971); Tomaz Salamun, *Turbines: Twenty One Poems*, translated from the Slovene by Hollo and Elliot Anderson (Iowa City: Windhover Press, 1973); Jean Genet, *Querelle*, translated by Hollo (New York: Grove, 1974); Franz Innerhofer, *Beautiful Days*, translated from the German by Hollo (New York: Urizen Books, 1977); François Truffaut, *Small Change*, translated by Hollo (New York: Grove, 1977); Tillman Moser, *Apprenticeship on the Couch*, translated from the German by Hollo (New York: Urizen Books, 1977); *Modern Swedish Poetry in Translation*, edited by Hollo and Gunnar Harding, translated by Hollo (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1979); Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Industrialized Traveller*, translated by Hollo (New York: Urizen Books, 1979); Rosa Luxemburg, *Letters to Friends*, translated from the German by Hollo (London: Pluto Press, 1979); Saarikoski, *Poems 1958-1980*, translated by Hollo (West Branch, Iowa: Toothpaste Press, 1983).

Anselm Hollo, ubiquitous, versatile cross-pollinator of literature to and from the English-speaking world, describes himself as "post-war poet shot forward in time by friends." His friendships in Britain and America have spanned several genera-

tions of writers. His contribution is a rare wit, rigorous clarity of music and vision, and moral judgment quite free of unctuous religiosity. His work expresses a strong fellow feeling with poets of distant times and places, with the oppressed, and with the myriad forms of living, feeling beings: the animal kingdom, especially the mammals, and even plants, whose sensitivity, like the poet's, is made manifest tropically. Hollo's tropes tend likewise toward the light, though dark zones lurk and, in places, do engulf the writing. Primarily, though, his work traces the emergence of consciousness from sleep, dream, or doubt, into clarity and presence of mind, humor, and affirmation of change, which is the universe in process.

Anselm Paul Alexis Hollo was born in Helsinki, Finland. His father, J. A. Hollo, was professor of philosophy and theory of education at the University of Helsinki and chancellor of the School of Social Sciences. At home in fourteen languages, he was a linguist, scholar, and the translator of numerous classics of world literature into Finnish, including works by Cervantes, Dostoevski, and Henry and William James. Anselm's mother, Iris, née Walden, of Latvian and German ancestry, was a music teacher, writer, and translator. Between home and school, Anselm grew up with Finnish, German, English, Swedish, French, and Latin.

Finland is an old country, but Anselm Hollo grew up in a young state. Until 1917 Finland had been a colony of either Sweden or Russia. Hence, there was a heavy emphasis on nationalism and modernism in the newly independent bourgeois democracy. The young Anselm, born into international literacy, rejected the limitations of the aspiring Finnish state. He aligned himself with his working-class public schoolmates, wore drape suits and Cuban heels, and idolized American saxophonist Lester Young and songwriter Hank Williams. In 1951, at age seventeen, Anselm went to high school in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, on an American Field Service exchange scholarship. That summer, at Camp Rising Sun, in Rhinebeck, New York, he met David Ball of Brooklyn, who was to become a close friend and fellow poet. Their correspondence began as a debate over the relative merits of Wallace Stevens and William Carlos Williams. Upon his return, Anselm studied sciences for one year at Helsinki University, and subsequently, modern languages and literature at the University of Helsinki and at the University of Tübingen, West Germany.

Self-supporting from the age of twenty, he worked from 1954 through 1958 as a private secretary to Professor Paul Walden, his mother's father,

in Tübingen, assisting him in the preparation of papers dealing with the early history of science, especially chemistry, and translating these into English. Walden was a dynamic lecturer, an expert on Paracelsus and alchemy, and a correspondent of Carl Jung. During this time Hollo also worked as a translator and a book reviewer for Finnish and German newspapers and periodicals, as a commercial correspondent for a Finnish lumber export company and a musicians' employment agency, and as interpreter for the United Nations Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna. He traveled and stayed for long stretches in Sweden, Germany, Austria, and Spain. On 23 December 1957, in Vienna, he married Josephine Wirkus, an actress and poet whose pen name is Josephine Clare.

In 1958, Anselm and Josie Hollo moved to London, where he joined the British Broadcasting Corporation's European Radio Services. He stayed with the BBC until 1966, acting as news reader, commentator, translator, book and film reviewer, art critic, interviewer, producer, and program coordinator. He refers to this period in a recent poem, "frail old house in sweet briar patch" (*no complaints*, 1983):

as for the news, it's still punched in & out  
by obedient punks     i know, i was one  
for almost a decade

In London his circle of friends and acquaintances included poets Michael Horowitz, Gael Turnbull, Roy Fisher, Christopher Logue, Bob Cobbing, Tom Raworth, and Stevie Smith, as well as actress Glenda Jackson, novelist Alexander Trocchi, and musician Bert Jansch. While he was active on the writing scene, and began to publish his first small books, most of his time was taken up with his work for the BBC and with his family. His son, Hannes, and daughters, Kaarina and Tamsin, were born during these years. The joys and cares of domestic life are the subjects of many of his early poems.

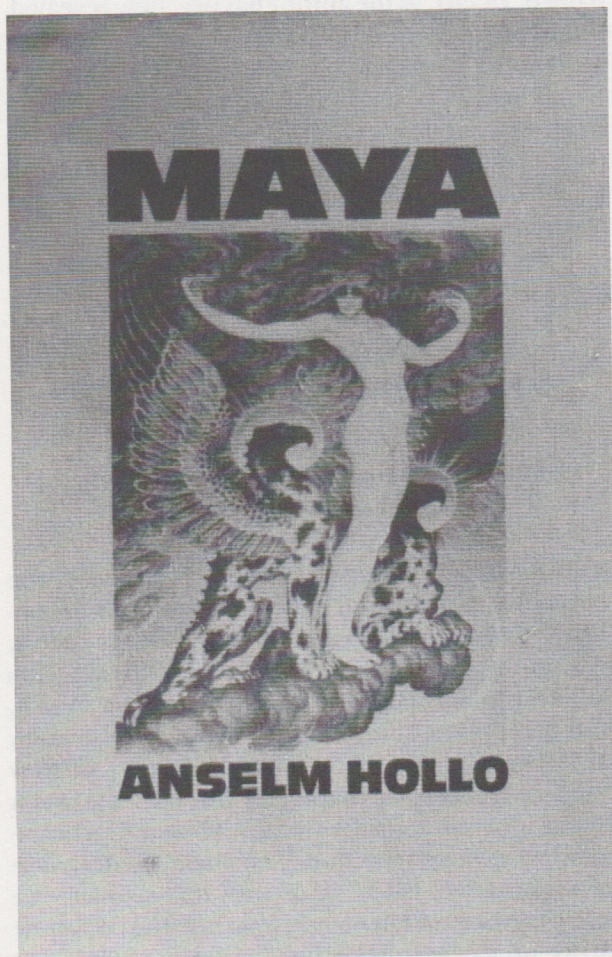
It was during this time also that he began his career as a translator of poetry. His book of translations from the Russian of contemporary poets Yevgeny Yevtushenko, Andrei Voznesensky, and Semyon Kirsanov was commissioned by Lawrence Ferlinghetti for City Lights Books, and Allen Ginsberg contributed the title, *Red Cats* (1962). Ferlinghetti also reprinted Hollo's translations of the poems of Paul Klee, originally published by a British small press. Subsequently, Grove Press in New York commissioned translations of Voznesensky,

Brecht's fascinating early play *Jungle of Cities*, and Swedish novelist Lars Gorling's *491*.

These years also saw the publication of Hollo's translations of Allen Ginsberg and Gregory Corso into German, and of Ginsberg into Finnish.

In London, Hollo's wit and generous good spirits brought many writers together. He edited a small anthology of poems by writers active on the London scene. Entitled *Jazz Poems* (1963), it proposes a poetry written primarily to be read aloud and heard live in a public space.

In his note to *Sojourner Microcosms*, Hollo says, "more and more i begin to see it all as one continuous poem. . . ." His first book of verse in English was *St. Texts and Finnpoems* (1961). There followed a succession of small editions, including *History* (1964), *& It Is a Song* (1965), *The Man in the Tree Top Hat* (1968), and *The Coherences* (1968). Many of the poems in these and other small publications were reprinted in *Maya: Works 1959-1969* (1970).



Dust jacket for Hollo's 1970 volume of poems written during the years 1959-1969. Most of this book was republished in Hollo's 1977 collection, *Sojourner Microcosms*.

Most of *Maya* was again reprinted, along with work from subsequent small books, in *Sojourner Microcosms: new & selected poems, 1959-1977* (1977). The small books are well and handsomely made by some of the best British and American small presses. Some, *The Coherences* for instance, may be read as unified, serial works. While for the most part, each of Hollo's poems stands on its own; yet, as variously collected, the sum of them speaks as a concerted whole. Hollo comments: "Each poem, if and when it works, is a singular, at times even 'unique' formal, emotional, intellectual entity, posing no problems to the poet beyond those contained in itself. The sources are the poet's life—and that includes his reading, his given 'place' at any given 'time,' his awareness of all animate and inanimate objects (and subjects) around him."

In Hollo's poetry alienation and affirmation alternate at a high frequency. Hollo registers his love for all forms of life, plant and animal. He condemns the rape of the earth and the death of the mind brought on by exploitative technologies. The poems are moral teachings, their subjects, honor, pride, tenderness, and the play of elements in memory, sense, and words. His philosophical models are to be found in Alfred North Whitehead and Ludwig Wittgenstein; their precepts, reality as process, truth as style. The form of the poetry is the form of speech and notation. The plainness and concision are ethical, as in Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, and Robert Creeley. In "the claim," he speaks of a Provençal poet as "fellow/concisionist." The style of spoken discourse in the work is the style of a time and of places in which Anselm Hollo has lived and worked, a way of speaking that can be instantly recognized, by any who have lived in that time, as a common parlance. The materials of his poems are parts of the living language. He has known many written languages, but his chief poetic investigations have been into the word as it is spoken in postwar British and American life. The microcosm of language that takes place in speech is the trace of a way of life.

*& It Is a Song* is a set of lyric poems celebrating the solitude of the writer and the community of lovers and of family. Tributes are paid to a variety of "contemporaries" in the Poundian sense, including Guillaume Apollinaire, Pythagoras, Henry Miller, Edvard Munch, Marquis de Sade, Antonin Artaud, Giorgio de Chirico, Patrice Lumumba, and Francis Picabia, as well as Gael Turnbull, Josephine Hollo, and Tom Raworth. A host of emblematic animals also appears. One poem, "Well it has Been a Pleasure England," is a high-spirited appreciation of the

congeniality the poet has found among his English friends. The momentum of the poem, running on syntactically from line to line, is mimetic to what is described, a crowd of partygoers heading down the stairs, until

No one noticed they must've  
 Been going on down for at  
 Least a month and well  
   below  
   street-  
   level

Thus the poem picks up energy along an experiential vector and exceeds it. The realization of this generative excess is an occasion of delight.

Another poem, "& I Heard a Man, Telling the Sky," discloses the survival skill of an itinerant internationalist in postwar Europe. That secret is affability, a proven defense against the threats and intrusions of "customs officials, policemen, presidents, ministers, headwaiters & whores." The poem ends with a bit of black humor:

Yes I have spoken so softly & smiled so much  
 My face has fallen away  
 .....  
 My eyes are fathomless caverns of admiration  
 & flowers sprout  
 from my upturned nostrils of bone.

The introductory poem to *The Coherences* restates this theme, this time on the model of Latin American peripatetic poet Cesar Vallejo, whose secret survival skill is located in poetry itself. The plight of the displaced writer, made marginal by a society to whom his vision may be seen as a threat, is further explored in "the empress hotel poems," a chronicle in six parts of a solitary experience in a rented room near Earl's Court in London. The self-referential literalism of the opening lines, "just get up/and sit down again," recalls the similarly humorous stylistics of Frank O'Hara and Ted Berigan. But the immediate apparition of the Irish laborer, looking for work, introduces a broad social aspect to the problem of *what to do* addressed in the poem. The next two sections treat Hollo's self-identity as a professional writer—the burden of translation as a means of employment ("they don't learn/you earn") and an ironic account of the gentility normally accorded the professional writer ("Burroughs Hollo Saarikoski Ball/we are Mrs Hardy's/nice writing gentlemen"). But in the fourth section the poet's possibly subversive state of

mind is revealed. Looking outside to describe the urban landscape ("white smoke from Battersea Power Station"), he switches the room light on and off repeatedly in an expression of his internal process, the binary yes/no of the mind's alternating current, which, seen from outside, might appear a bit suspicious ("they'll suspect/a Chinese spy"). This paranoid perception gives way to a positively playful transformation of the outer landscape ("ha. Battersea Beast on its back/pushing vapor puffs thru the soles of its feet/for fun"). In section five, the isolated poet draws on inner voices for companionship and variation, in a lyric of praise to self's multiplicity ("the long haired beings that dance thru my mind") until all consciousness of self, and mind, dissolves into pure voice, conjuring. The last section is a return to the reality of social norms, surveillance, and enforcement. The poet is visited by "2 men in grey suits" who have come to look for contraband. The specific object of their search is not named. In fact, as the author has privately revealed, these plain-clothes policemen were looking for guns (and probably had the wrong room), but found instead "one of those big knives that you can strap to your leg. . . ." But by inference it is the poet's very state of mind which is criminal ("what would they say/if they found what I have/in the other poem").

In 1966, Anselm Hollo left the BBC, a departure characterized in this poem:

#### AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL BROADCASTING CORPORATION

eight years behind a microphone—blip—  
 then bid farewell to normalspeak

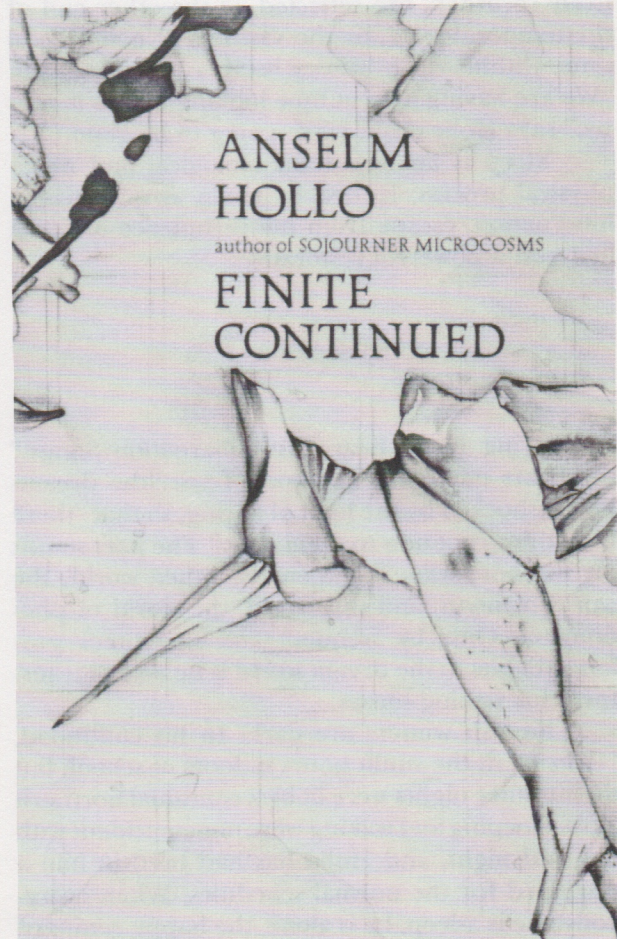
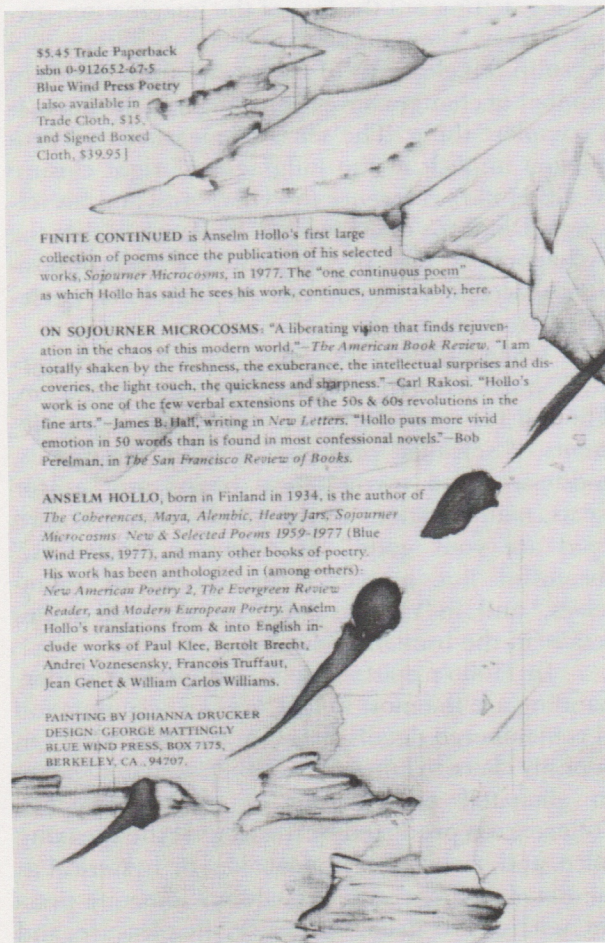
This move represented a decisive rejection of the normative discourse of official culture and the beginning of a war, waged in the pages of his poetry, against the codes of the capitalists and their agents in government. Hollo moved to the Isle of Wight, and then, in the summer of 1967, on the invitation of Robert Creeley, to the State University of New York at Buffalo. A chapter in the life of Anselm Hollo, one of considerable professional achievement, thus drew to a close. The poem, "buffalo-isle of wight power cable" ends with this couplet: "he had won the race but no one was cheering/slowly he drove up to the starting line." Anselm Hollo's new life, in America, would be an adventure in the de-centered, proliferating world of unofficial culture then beginning to thrive.

From 1968 through 1972, Hollo taught in the creative writing program of the University of Iowa. His influence as a writer and teacher was strongly felt both in and outside the official programs of the Writers' Workshop. In addition to teaching literature, performance, and translation, he was active in off-campus readings and publications. His sharp wit and playful, critical mind inspired a generation of young writers to set out on its own quite various paths. A look at the current small-press American poetry scene will reveal a surprising number of Hollo's former students and friends.

From 1973 through 1978, Hollo taught at a succession of schools, in places including Bowling Green, Ohio (1972-1973), Geneva, New York (1973-1975), and Baltimore, Maryland (1975-1977). He and his wife separated in 1974. He was writer-in-residence at Southwest State University, Marshall, Minnesota, in 1977-1978, and at Sweet Briar College, Sweet Briar, Virginia, from 1978 until 1981. In 1981 he moved to San Francisco to teach at the New College of California, and in 1983,

he returned to Baltimore. His books during this period include *Sensation* (1972), published by the Institute of Further Studies in the series outlined by Charles Olson's "A Curriculum of the Soul," *heavy jars* (1977), *with ruth in mind* (1979), *Finite Continued* (1980), and *no complaints* (1983).

The epigraph to *Sensation*, from Aristotle's *De Anima*, states, "sensation is the process of receiving into oneself, by means of the sense organs, the forms of things." While the book is as much about generation as it is about sensation, the two concepts are not unrelated, as the forms of things are taken in and passed on from one generation to the next. References are made to the poet's father and mother, his grandfather, his younger self, poet friends and forebears, his son, the son of fellow poet Ted Berrigan (named Anselm), and St. Anselm, first Archbishop of Canterbury—all players in the sensational fields of "mother maya." *Sensation* is that into which the world passes; it is, in that sense, a trace of energy. That *maya*, the veil of illusion, figures so frequently in this sequence, indicates the



Covers for Hollo's 1980 book, extending what he calls the "one continuous poem" of his work

level at which Hollo locates the world of sensation. Fleeting, transitory impressions are the measure of one kind of time, the time of daily experience, and often the time measured in the writing of these poems. The miniature dramas of sensation are played out, against eternal, mythic time wherein differences imposed by history collapse in the instantaneous identifications with people and places of other times. Whether in memory or writing, knowledge is a kind of transparency or tissue, like sensation, through which we perceive the world. *Sensation* proves to be a meditation on time, in which the minutest instances of cognition evoke mythic extrahistorical time and the land itself is seen as "the features of god."

The improvisational nature of Anselm Hollo's work is clearly set forth by interjections of reference to events, mental and physical, occurring simultaneous to the writing, which are then incorporated as terms in the argument or lines in the song. The time sense in the poems is both micro- and macro-cosmic. The moment-to-moment changes, attentively recorded, are reflected, at the other end of the temporal scale, by the vastness of geophysical time, within which history itself is but an instant. "We are having a great time looking at it as it goes by," says Hollo. "But we're going to be gone."

Sleep is an important biological and metaphysical process, lauded by Hollo as mammalian hibernation, escape from the turbulence of social life, and a powerful restorative:

we must sleep  
if we are not to find ourselves  
helplessly strange

In "Spring Fever Bear Post-Hibernation Songs," the bears emerge, still woozy, from "the dream-hole," shocked by the light of spring, so that "there is no thing/not new to them now." The poet stands on the borderline between the other world, the world of myth, and this world, the world of phenomena. Only by frequent and sometimes prolonged visits to the dream world is he able to transform his waking senses.

Finnish winters are dark. In his childhood, Hollo spent the sunlit hours indoors at school, but the summer nights were lit by a continual northern glow. Sleeping and waking were noncoincident with day and night, and Hollo has had bred in him a disregard for the normal schedules. When everybody else is asleep, he is alone, the happy genius of his household, writing thought, attentive to sound

in words, taking, in a sense, the measure of the world from a still point, and stating the case for all of it, as completely and as simply as he can.

The spaces between words are openings through which the poet moves. That spaces between objects, words, and loved ones are necessary to the logic of their relations, and that these relations are continually subject to change, charges those spaces with significance. It is not the significance of dogma, but an attention to that which is the case, states of affairs, felt as joy and pain.

The mutability of the universe and the inability of language to fix process by law, is a source, for Hollo, of laughter. The laughter of Anselm Hollo is disruptive, signifying a rupture in the fabric by which language seeks to contain the truth. It begins as an explosion, a breaking off of discourse, and expands to engulf thought. It resounds from somewhere beyond the limits of language.

In his verse Hollo mocks the impulse to control absolutely, in states and in persons, himself included. Yet he exercises strong control over his writing, letting out the line of the imagination, giving it play, then tugging back in to gather and regroup the elements of the poem, until the right number of changes have been rung and the poem is a complete thing. The sense of measure and proportion implicit in the judgment of right closure recalls Hollo's reference to Pythagoras, and his follower, Diodoros of Aspendos. Hollo notes that the Pythagoreans "took part in politics, & their opposition to accepted religion caused them to be persecuted from existence. . . ."

Hollo's own work, more spirited than spiritual, holds church and state in equal suspicion. Though his poems are populated with many elements of so-called primitive religion, these gods, goddesses, and mythological beasts are, as for Keats, manifestations of the psyche: "your known dead are your gods," he writes in "instances," "beautiful but inaccurate/metaphors of themselves," and, in "curious data," he adds, "all deities reside/in the human breast."

In Hollo's epistemology, snippets of understanding are the most we get, and an accumulation of remembered details are as much truth as we can honestly claim to know. This belief does not lead to an alienated presentation of pure fragments. Coherence is produced by the tone of the speaking voice, and, as bizarre, improbable, or hysterical as the details may get, there is always someone present, telling. The need, the desire, the pleasure, and the difficulty of telling constitute another theme. It

is the function of the "heavy jars." Sometimes those jars fall and break, spilling their contents irretrievably, because they are heavy. When words cannot contain all that needs to be told, we are reduced to timeworn commonplace verities, tearful and laughable.

Another current running through the poems is rage—at the stupidity and greed of the powers that be, at the difficulties of love, and at himself when, out of control, the poet has become impossible to live with, a "monster." In "The Anima Abstract," Hollo analyzes monstrosity as "hysteria in the male, /seeing red . . . /a senseless, negative outburst." And in *Finite Continued* he warns those who might take him too lightly:

if you think my poems  
make "an unpretentious  
friend  
easy to live with  
day after day"  
.....  
come see the monster

The monster mask recurs in various forms and is often paired with "she" in a kind of Beauty and Beast motif. There are other times when the poet dons the mask of "visiting god." This figure often reverses itself to read "dog"—a character the poet regards with brotherly affection. By these cyclical shifts of identity, one could draw an emotional graph over the poems. In this sense they are the measure of a life.

*Sojourner Microcosms* ends with a vision of poetry as a voyage of discovery:

there was nothing at all around us  
but water when with saint brendan in his coracle  
we proceeded across the happily gentle atlantic  
subtracting the days we spent at sea  
from the days reckoned; & then, one morning

The narrative of the possible early exploration of North America by the seafaring Irish monks is a parallel to Anselm Hollo's own voyage westward. The form of counting days resembles the process of daily poetic notation, and the mid-sentence ending represents, in refusing to grant closure to the work, an anticipatory openness to incalculable possibility.

*Finite Continued* continues the pattern of short, often funny entries, commentary in part on philosophy and politics. The philosophical entries include this paraphrase from Novalis:

philosophia: the love of sophy: really  
homesickness—the desire  
to be at home  
everywhere,

and this anti-Kantian critique,

space is not  
the a priori condition  
for all visual knowledge

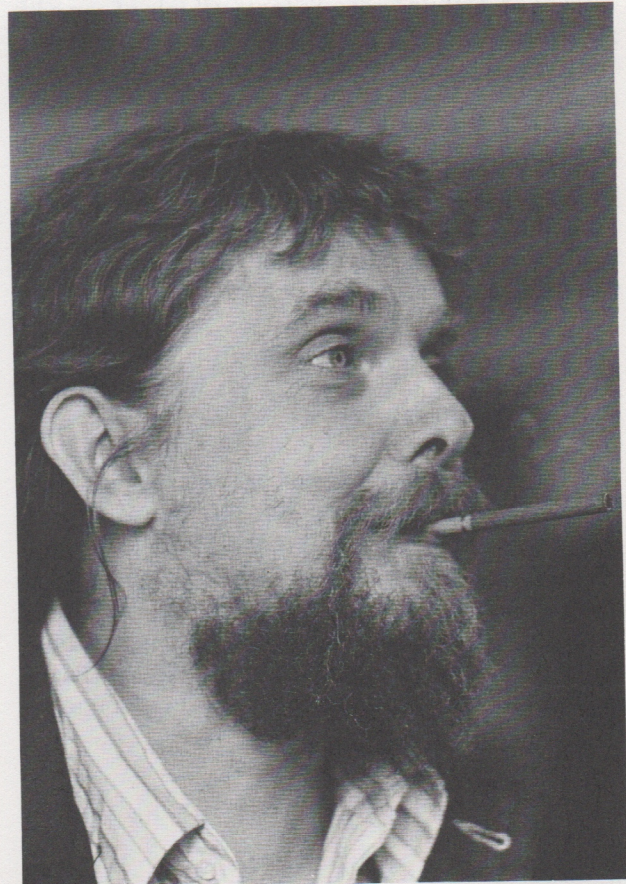
how to drink out of an empty glass.

The poet also turns a cold eye on the organs of the bourgeois democratic social order:

to make a living  
here it seems you  
have to be a  
capitalist sympathizer

\*

no no that's not  
the federales



Anselm Hollo (photograph © 1984 by Layle Silbert)



that's  
the liberales

bureau-lovers

The political joke here turns on what sounds like (but is not) that trade by which the poet has been of service to nations, and found gainful employment: translation.

*with ruth in mind*, a long poem in sections, records vibrations in the aftershock of a love affair.

time travel back again      hopelessly stranger  
tremulous listener  
heart embedded in cliffside  
sea lions bark at it      hungry & curious

many friends quite crazy  
plant on table trembling  
many-talk-in-head      my name

This is a visionary poem in a mythic style, with some Gothic depictions of the goddess. In a passage reminiscent of Arthur Cravan's fantastic tale of sex with a giant caterpillar, the goddess appears as an insect, "moving the hind wings wheel-like in evident enjoyment." The landscape she inhabits is dark, old, elemental. The vision of her splendor is an event in the life of the tribe: "the people came out staring & pointing/their whispers rising like surf all about her." But Hollo has practiced the visionary evocation of the goddess from the beginning. In "the coherences" he records,

a sound as out of three hundred  
as she approached      Rolling Stones

Hollo's commissioned translations into English include works from the German of Georg Buchner, Rainer Maria Gerhardt, and Rosa Luxemburg; the French of Jean Genet, François Truffaut, and Jean-Paul de Dadelsen; the Russian of Aleksandr Blok; the Swedish of Gunnar Harding; the Finnish of poets Pentti Saarikoski, Paavo Haavikko, and Tuomas Anhava; and the Yugosla-

vian of Tomaz Salamun. In 1970, with Josephine Clare, he translated William Carlos Williams's *Pater-son* into German. These translations, Hollo says, "I have felt, still feel, to be a part of the process of my own writing."

Anselm Hollo has a deep, sonorous voice that carries extremely well. In "The Walden Variations," dedicated to Robert Creeley, he traces this trait back to his years of living with his German grandfather, "deaf alchemist: loud grandson." As a reader, he has a keen ear for the rhythm and sonances of the line. The improvisational tunefulness of his verses, as well as the emotional surges and downdrafts, are beautifully brought to life in performance.

Anselm Hollo identifies himself as a poet with the collective expression of the life of the people, in this and in all times. His poems bear witness to tribal delight, rites of passage, birth and death, sex and the dance. Sometimes they take forms close to those of Native American oral literature or draw on mythology, including the Kalevala and the Ragnarok, ancient Scandinavian sagas. His interest in folk traditions extends to present-day popular fiction, the genres of fantasy, science fiction, comedy of manners. Thus, raised amid Western classics, and growing up in opposition to the pervasive, earnest anguish of postwar European existential malaise, he has come to a wider, more generous use of writing. At the same time, in his own work, he carries on the by-now classic tradition of the modern, the legacy of William Carlos Williams and Ezra Pound.

The global perspective and the sense of collective companionship which have sustained Anselm Hollo in his travels grew out of his early experience in wartime Europe, as evidenced in "helsinki, 1940," from *heavy jars*. Its evocation of experience in a bomb shelter is crucially apt for today.

blankets, & wooden beams, & crackling radios &  
chatter

it was better than heaven, it was  
being safe in the earth, surrounded by many

all of whom really felt like living