

# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## Jack Grapes: "Balancing the Books"

Jack Grapes · Wednesday, November 28th, 2012

Jack Grapes is an award-winning poet, playwright, actor, teacher, and the editor and publisher of *ONTHEBUS*, one of the top literary journals in the country. This poem is from Jack's new book, *The Naked Eye*.

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### Balancing the Books

What was I going to find in *Dark Laughter* by Sherwood Anderson?  
 Though it seems like yesterday I read *Winesburg, Ohio* back in college.  
 But I was just as taken by *Dark Laughter*, his tenth book and fifth novel.  
 There was something poetic about Anderson's writing, something  
 oddly quaint that I knew, even at 21, couldn't last.  
 Today I was searching my bookcase,  
 looking for a particular sentence  
 to help me realize the possibilities of language,  
 something besides James Joyce or William Faulkner.  
 Eventually, I found the sentence, but before I did,  
 I came across—perhaps I was using it as a bookmark—  
 a check for \$12, dated June 20, 1967.  
 Now I'm not into all that new age stuff,  
 but today is June 20th.  
 Oh, and before I forget, here's the sentence:  
 "There was a deep well within every man and woman,  
 and when Life came in at the door of the house,  
 that was the body."  
 I'm still not sure what Anderson meant by that.  
 A distrust of formal verbalization, perhaps;  
 or a particular theory of human nature;  
 maybe just the discursiveness  
 of associational psychology.  
 Who knows?  
 Does anybody still read Sherwood Anderson?  
 Probably not, unless it's *Winesburg, Ohio*.  
 Poor Sherwood.  
 Poor check, used as a bookmark in a book

nobody reads anymore.  
Old words on a piece of paper,  
hardly worth the paper they're printed on.  
But I'm glad I found those words.  
Reading them again after almost fifty years  
was better than cashing that check.  
Sherwood was still alive in my hands.  
I had done him that service, brought him back,  
brought his words back,  
words he may have written late at night,  
or in the early morning, or at his desk  
while it rained throughout the afternoon.  
When we read the words  
of a writer after they've died,  
do we wake them from their peaceful sleep?  
And is the waking a reminder  
they once lived on this earth,  
even though now that life has become a dream.  
Would Sherwood even want to be wakened?  
And what about that check for \$12, from Jerry Jacobs?  
How long did he worry over that uncashed check?  
Maybe he still accounts for it,  
subtracting \$12 from his monthly balance.  
It's June 20th, and somewhere in the world  
Jerry's balancing his checkbook,  
waiting for me to cash the check,  
his expectation waking me  
from my own dream of a life  
moving forward  
one sentence at a time.

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