

OLD, USED, OUT OF PRINT, NEW

Broadway Books in Derry NH
Closed their doors for good
At the end of summer, 2005.
This is an instance where the term
"For good"
May not necessarily apply,
Except where the shareholders of
Borders and Barnes and Noble might be concerned.
A used bookstore closing offers
A casual sadness, as when one
Receives news of a distant relative's death
One barely knows.
They are run by
A particular breed
Peculiar to retail,
That is frustrated business person and literature lover.
Monuments to monuments
In and of themselves,
Marquees boasting
MadisonAveneurotically atypical
Buzzwords and catchphrases –
"Old", "Used", "Out of Print", sometimes even "Banned".
Yet, they are sought out, frequented,
Browse-bent, knockaround, literate layabouts
Using the time they have to kill, by
Finding a title or two in a limboladen,
Near death, tome-ful state, and
In guerilla-retail fashion,
Resurrecting it from the shel-ved, misregarded, volumes of
the dead.

The places I like best are equipped
With big, well broken in easy chairs

Adorning each corner
Hot coffee, tea, and a bottle of
Room temperature port
Lend warmth and flavor to a
Antiquatiously agreeable afternoon.
Amplifying the nuance of novelty, attendant to
Each new/rare book find and self-contained triumph,
Are the tiny notes one sometimes finds,
Inscriptions once individual to
An owner's and collector's non-public discretion.
Here, we may be privy to them
As their books are now done away with humanely, or else
Regifted for profit,
Find a new owner at the end of
A journey's clandestination.
I must have the only
Collected Poems of Emily Dickenson
Inscribed,
"Kasey, I love you From Daniel,
Christmas 1991".
Even if by some bizarre coincidence
Yours also says that, I'm sure
The K in Kasey was not inscribed
With such loving, fresh, caring calligraphication.

However, nothing compares to my greatest find –
Making a semi monthly trip to Broadway Books
I head right to the poetry section
Then to the New Hampshire section
Nobody has brought in anything new.
I graze, lulled by the drone of the proprietor's wife,
Nagging away at the husband about
One thing, that, the other.
When she finally goes out back or leaves altogether, and
Musty serenity fills the vacuum in this highbrow hideaway,
I ask the gentleman, he, foppish,
Oxfordly accented, Hitchcockishly clerical and mysterious,
If he could please notify me when someone
Brings in something by Donald Hall.

He referred me to an antique glass case,
And there it sat.
Literate, warped slightly, illicit, obscure –
A copy of the Gentleman's Alphabet.
Illustrated by Harvey Kornberg,
Dirty Limericks rendered by the great
Man of Letters himself.
I held it in my hands,
Coffee table long and thin, exquisite, out of print,
The top right hand corner
Of the first page read "40.00\$"
The owner, sensing my interest, slyly claimed
"He denies to this day that this book even exists".
That did it, I had to have it.
I talked him down to \$30 because of the slight warp in the
middle.

I looked it up on Ebay
While doing a rough draft of this,
Saw someone selling a copy for \$9.95.
So maybe the joke's on me. Or is it?
Maybe if purchased off of Ebay,
The buyer might save a few dollars.
However, that person will not have
Gotten it reverentially retrieved from out of a glass case and
Been sales pitched as well by a
Nobly bedraggled merchant-class gentleman classicist,
Keeper of this genteel ensconement of enlightenment –
Will not have had the pleasure of
Sippling a styrofoam cup of French roast
In an easy chair, vacant just for them,
For,
A used bookstore,
That repository of repose,
That non-descript novelty-nook
Cloisterous cerebral cranny of commemorativitation,
Each browse undertaken is an act of faith
Without the risk of disappointment
Because even if one doesn't find a book to buy.....

It is the ease of a free time's leisure
An hour spent in the company
Of a collection, rarities and memories
That is like no other
In a place like no other
That is the joy
From Old and Used,
To New, each brand new used bookstore browsing's joy.

- George Jack