

# JIM CARROLL

Ted Berrigan

Jim Carroll has to be the biggest thing arriving in heroic culture right now. "How does it feel to be a famous poet?" "It feels..." No, no more. It's beginning to feel famous? & half the population is under 25. The poems for the singing voice that pour from radios and record players, are turning kids on, and turning them on to poems for the talking voice, too. There are so many fresh and exciting and amazingly talented poets under 25 now, and what a pleasure they are! Thanks, beatniks! Thanks, Beatles!, and thanks, Bobby Dylan! Or at least I think thanks.

Jim Carroll is beautiful. He says, "I was forewarned about the clocks falling on me, so all I felt was 8 colors as my wrist watch flew into the sky's check. Watches are very symbolic of security? they remind me of Frank O'Hara. Frank O'Hara reminds me of many wonderful things, as does the vanilla light..."

He's 20 years old, stands 6'3", and has a body like Nurcyev (or would have been Nurcyev Clint Eastwood). Across a party, or a poetry-reading one sees above a black swath of leather, Jim Carroll's brilliant-red Prince Valiant cut quietly nodding.

He is saying, "My family lives in Inwood. My father owned an Irish bar, and I went to lots of Catholic schools, until this queer basketball scout Mike Tittleberger got me a combined scholastic/athletic scholarship to Trinity." (Among other famous alumni of Trinity may be listed Humphrey, Truman Capote, Billy Berkson, and Aram Saroyan.)

"I'm also, impressed by the various pets everyone is concealing under their clothing."

Jim Carroll first appeared in my life as a huge white paw hung purposefully from the near end of a long brown corduroy arm. It was late one Wednesday evening, in front of Gem's Spa, the corner at 2nd Avenue & St. Mark's Place, in the Spring of 1967. A slight grey rectangle blocked my further view. I stopped short, although none of this is the least bit unusual at Gem's Spa. But the giant who materialized behind the hand certainly was unusual. It seemed to be saying, Pay attention, and I did so. "I'm Jim Carroll," the giant said and became a very interesting person. "I've just had this book of poems published, and I'd like to give you a copy to read." "I'd love to read it," I said. (That's what I always say.) So, I took the small pamphlet of Jim Carroll's poems home to read. The Outside cover read: ORGANIC TRAINS, below which

Poems by Jim Carroll. Inside, on the back of the outside cover, there was a brief note, handwritten. It said: "Please reply, I'd like to show you more." And then: "Fuck the spelling in this book—it was printed in New Jersey."

ORGANIC TRAINS is a tremendous experience. Most of the poems in it were written when Jim was 14, 15 and 16. I've never seen anything like it. I can say Rimbaud, but that doesn't bring in how American Jim Carroll is, and a critic might, and probably would, say, O'Hara; but Frank O'Hara never wrote anywhere near this well until well into his 20's. The poems in the book are new, and they are now (still). If there is to be another "New American Poetry", and there is, as the fine dust settles over the "New American Poetry 1945-60", Jim Carroll is the first truly new American poet. His imagination is as natural to him as the evidence of his senses, and, in fact, its light transforms that always slightly belated information directly back into right now; no greater pleasure!

Anne Waldman, who should know, says, "Jim is a born star. He's so tall and beautiful, and he probably knows a lot. I love the way he talks."

"I could listen to him for days."

"You're in a house. It's a good house. Babies breathe in this h'Go to the mirror. Comb my hair down straight. Put on The Velvet Underground... Put on my silver ring... everything fine... Check to see how much is left... Giant beds with everyone I know. No sex."

"One is not searching for blind significance, only for a shelter from thousands of inverted footprints, which are those of many erotics in deep gorges of wonderfully green humidity..."

"There is an 'enjoyable fabric' which slips beneath me every time I pass by warmth..."

"but everything has worked out fine, not like the weather, which is dark as a laundry closet in a very 'cheap' hotel."

"On a day like this, I feel like I'm indoors," says Ron, walking to the subway.

"Jim's poems really move me—it's as if Jim were right there, taking your hand—"We'll explore this place together..."

"What can you say," Anne Waldman said. "To be in two places at once gives you a real buzz. 'A little buzz' as Jim would say."

"Right now I'll settle for you, with your bra unhooked



(under a tree) on the Staten Island ferry.")

Once, when we were walking in Julian's Billiard Parlor Jim said to me, "When I was about nine years old man, I realized that the real thing was not only to do what you were doing totally great, but to look totally great while you were doing it!" Basketball, he meant. Jim Carroll has been an all-star athlete since he was seven years old. He pitched a no-hitter in Biddy League baseball, and was All-American in Biddy League Basketball. At Trinity (High School), Jim was three times All-City as a high scoring guard on the basketball team. "How did you get into poetry?" I asked. "Well, by the time I got to Trinity the straight Jock trip had begun to wear a little thin," Jim said. "I still had as much charge, but I simply began getting off into new directions, like pills, sex, drugs, booze and The New American Poetry. I had been keeping my basketball diaries since I was 12; and so when I got turned on to poetry at Trinity, writing it just came naturally. I read Howl first, I guess. Then Frank."

"I still love to play ball," Jim says. And evidently Jim Carroll still can play ball. The Rhinelander Newspaper, for March 13th, 1970, reports: "The Rhinelander Seniors played their best game of the season yesterday against the bearded werdo's jackets-off team of poets and painters. It was strictly no competition. The only player the

Rhinelander's couldn't handle was the guy in bleached dungarees and a blue beret. His name is Jim Carroll, and he was High School All City a few years back. His favorite shot was a left-handed double-pump jump shot. It surprised everyone at the end of the game when he took his beret off, and long sweaty flaming red hair fell to his shoulders."

I guess what I like about Jim Carroll's writing, all of it, the poems, and the Diaries, is just about the same as what I get to like off of Jim. It's that, given alternatives, Jim Carroll does what he feels like. And he isn't necessarily packing alternatives. The rest of what I like is easily seen. It's in the poems in The World, The Paris Review, The World Anthology, and ORGC TRAINS. You'll get to see it in LIVING IN THE MOVIES, a book of poems due out in the Fall from Cape-Goliard; and in the big selection from his remarkable work, THE BASKETBALL DIARIES, to appear in the next issue of The Paris Review (no.49).

Plus, "Class." Jim Carroll has "class." It seems to radiate from within, just naturally, and Bill Berkson recently wrote that Jim Carroll, with his naturally casual tough classical grace, seems to be making sweetness once again a possibility in poetry. It's true. His presence makes something new clear; that poetry is now, here, and everywhere, not just "there."

## FROM THE BASKETBALL DIARY

Winter, 1965

We just got into town for the very spectacular National High School All Star Basketball Game. The town by the way is Washington D.C. I got stuck in the same car as Mike Tittleberger, a queer scout from Marquette, and the fuck kept playing with my hair all the way down. We stopped at three different Howard Johnson's on the rout but I'm still plenty hungry. This team looks in pretty sad shape; Larry Newbold was supposed to meet us at the corner of 116th and Lenox but he never showed up. This doesn't bother me too much because now I'll be the starting guard. Mike asks me if I want to be his room mate for \$15 a night and I probably would have been until Joe Slapstick, the coach, told Mike to fuck off to another motel. Instead I got stuck with shithead Bobby Bellum, a real jockstrap who came down in a station wagon with his whole family. He hates me but he took me as a room mate because his father won't let him sleep with a spade and I'm the only other white man.

In the evening we're supposed to watch very spectacular films of last year's game but fuck that. Corky Ball, this real light skinned spade, and I climb out of his window to get laid in the dark section of town. Ball's a great player. I once saw him take a silver dollar from the top of the backboard and he's only

6'5". He's also a great guy and he had me fixed up with this very fine spade chick. She said she like my long hair so I told her I write poems too. She asked me if I knew Allen Ginsberg, I told her everybody in N.Y. knew Allen Ginsberg. Not too bright Corky thought Allen was another queer jew basketball scout like Mike Tittleberger. It was a great lay. We didn't make it back to our rooms until about midnight and Joe Slapstick was waiting around for our asses. He told us we couldn't even get dressed for the game 2 nights from now. Bullshit. We both knew we would be starting. There just wasn't enough guys on the team to kick us off. Who was giving a shit about the game anyway? I had plenty of dope and that great little black ass downtown. Slapstick told us to take a shower and nod off. We had two joints each in the shower and went back to my room. Corky beat the ass of Bobby Bellum for squeaking to the coach that we were late. I read "Music" by Frank O'Hara and began thinking about the Plaza Hotel. That poem always reminds me of the Plaza Hotel. After very poor breakfast Joe Slapstick calls aside Corky and me and lets us know he is giving us another chance and we would be starting in the game anyway. Mike Tittleberger comes in and plays with my ear and tells me all about the man I'll be guarding on the next night. The man I'm guarding happens to be Art Baylor, a cousin of Elgin Baylor who happens to be my favorite player. Mike says the guy drives a lot and I should keep one leg in his crotch just before he starts to drive. Mike demonstrates and rubs his knee against my balls.

After Mike has demonstrated on every player on team, someone discovers that Luther Green, a center from Clinton, has incredible amounts of very up pills. We all go to practice stoned. I hit incredible amounts of jump shots in practice and assure myself a starting spot in the game. I practiced passing off because I figured I'd be a playmaker if nothing else. Dean Meminger hurt his leg and is out for the whole tournament. I read in the Washington newspaper a story about me entitled "Beatnik Basketball Player" telling all about my shoulder, length hair and my strange hobbies off the court. What the fuck is this all about. I get great urge to nod out despite the pills. I'm about to go into the room when Joe Slapstick stops me and tells me that I should run the offense because Ball is too dumb. Bellum and his old man are in the room as I get there. They're probably talking about the story in today's paper. I'm sure he hates the idea of a creep like me starting in the game. Bullshit, I sweated my nuts off for that spot so he can go fuck himself.

#### THE MAN WHO LIES by Griselda Steiner

THE MAN WHO LIES, which played at the Evergreen Theatre as a part of the Grove Press International Film Festival, is an exquisite black and white film which should not be missed if it is shown again in New York. The film was conceived for its star, Jean-Louis Trintignant (who won the Best Actor Award of the 1969 Berlin Film Festival). Writer-director Alain Robbe-Grillet is France's foremost author of the "new novel". He has published nine books, including *The Voyeur*, *Jealousy*, and *la Maison de Rendezvous*, and is famous for his film. LAST YEAR AT MARIENBAD

THE MAN WHO LIES takes place in a small village in Czechoslovakia, during the resistance to the German occupation of the Second World War. Jean-Louis Trintignant is neatly dressed in the midst of a forest surrounded by the German Army. The army, equipped with hunting dogs, appears to be running after him, and he appears to be pursued; At this moment Trintignant speaks, "My name is Boris Varisa." He hangs desperately to this name, until, later in the film, he leans on a gravestone on which it is written. A shot is fired and Tri-

tignant falls to the ground. A tree is cut through by a saw, and descends to the earth. A brilliant light streams into the clearing, Trintignant awakens and brushes dust from his suit with a brisk gesture which he repeats throughout the film. Has Trintignant been killed and risen from the dead? Is the piercing noise the sound of a bullet fired into Trintignant's heart or the crash of the tree?

Robbe-Grillet creates a high level of emotional suspense in his audience by building up sequences to which one expects some rational conclusion. Instead, he alleviates the suspense by a distraction which builds up another anticipation. As if overlapping the links of a chain, he enslaves us in the enigma which is the essence of experience. The audience, like Trintignant, is continually disappointed. As Trintignant's anguish increases, we are kept from boredom as we begin to identify less with his hopeless quest, and more with the sheer lust of his effort.

After his ordeal in the forest, Trintignant walks to the village and goes to a cafe where he overhears the story he is about to tell. He claims that he is a friend of Jean, who is the town's hero of the resistance and enters the life of the friends and family he has left behind. He tries to

persuade the people he meets that Jean was not a hero, but in fact a traitor. He visits Jean's chateaux which has become the home of Jean's wife, his sister and their servant. The three beautiful women live in a narcissistic world organized in a ritual of blind man's bluff, around a man who exists only in the presence of his photograph. Trintignant seduces the women by telling each a story he believes he wants to hear. As he wanders about the village, he continually walks amidst a series of walls, corridors, doors, and alcoves. Grillet has created a labyrinth in which one must find one's way without displacing the walls.

Trintignant's character resembles that of the modern author, as he seeks to create a communicable form. He reinacts the drama of Don Giovanni of the 18th Century, who was the first man to have chosen his word against the word of God. If man creates his own truth through his word and there is no truth exterior to man, then Trintignant cannot lie, because there is no truth. He is a man who needs to be believed. His voice, and that of Jean are the same, although Jean is played by a different actor on the screen: Trintignant's word is the word of seduction. His search is to find a

mate with whom mutual world of that mate need of his psychic se Jean. Through indistinguishabl against the soun- Grillet taped a Pirandello play i France and play the applause ; completed a ver Grillet has expr for Pirandello enced by the p Character's in Author."

Grillet has n yet timely pol As our governr frightening Facism, the diltor-Hero faces individual role: increasingly th political impli simplest acts. committed to t activist left, we in a position of long as the quie everyday life i the townspeop ferent to Triti they are to the who have inva Alain Robbe-G the drama of irregardless of sought commit quest.

