

fault is that? My brain? The education system? eckhoff? Let's blame eckhoff – yeah, damn you eckhoff!!! Some pages, (especially Malone's Unifon) are more of an interesting challenge at deciphering code. This book can be 'read,' or flipped through, in about 20 minutes, but it's worth revisiting. A feast for the eyes (and mind?), this collection includes a 12-page rope alphabet, MC Escher-like phonic art, poems and comics with made-up words ("chub chab choob" – anyone? anyone?), the aforementioned companion piece comic, and more. Me? I'm thinking about taking up Esperanto again. (Mitch Adams)

World Ball Notebook

by Sesshu Foster, \$13.95, 95 pgs,
City Lights Books,
citylights.com

World Ball Notebook is a series of reminiscences that come together as an embryonic whole. It's a book artfully structured to evoke the world weary, cynical, but still somehow optimistic view of East L.A.'s Sesshu Foster. This isn't the sweeping canvass of his previous novel, the masterful *Atomik Aztex*, it is, instead, a book of quiet, weirdly hilarious, yet searing moments. Mixing poetry, prose, memory and music, Foster evokes an exhausted, depleted America full of people looking for the next scene, justifying their self obsessions ("the way i fight back against it all is by maintaining a totally organic vegetarian diet") and driving "the freeways as if hounded by wordless, mindless fury." But this isn't a book about the big picture. It's a slowly stitched together collection of small incidents that gradually start to seem more defiant than random, more funny than futile. "When officer lilly of the beehive state says there is a strong smell of alcohol, I'm going to search your vehicle, you translate this to mean, I refuse however to recall the frogs flattened on this highway of a summer, I must live in this present." (Hal Niedzviecki)

Winners Have Yet To Be Announced

by Ed Pavlic, \$18.95, 183 pgs,
University of Georgia Press, ugapress.org

Donny Hathaway, an American soul singer, had a velvet voice with guts, part soaring bird, part automobile. Between 1969 and 1979 he made nine records and numerous radio-hits, including "Someday We'll All Be Free" which has been covered by just

about everyone including Alicia Keys. Some said Hathaway would be the next Stevie Wonder and the comparison wasn't off-key; both had cherubic faces, slinky piano fingers, and material that brought on goose bumps. Only unlike Wonder, whose blindness is said to have accentuated his gifts, Hathaway's schizophrenia took him down at the height of his career. At 33 he jumped out of his New York City hotel room window, an apparent suicide.

Winners Have Yet To Be Announced, subtitled "A Song for Donny Hathaway," is a meditation on and elegy for Donny Hathaway's life and music, captured in the prose poem form. Ed Pavlic shapes the fragments of primary sources – interview transcripts, medical and school records, and photographs – into a kind of imagined oral history, tinged with the magical cadence of Hathaway's voice. Many sections read like an audio cassette tape hat has been cut up and spliced back together to create discordant sounds. Conversations flit in and out like sounds from a briefly opened window; sketchily identified figures opine and then disappear. Yet, the formal disorganization of *Winners Have Yet To Be Announced* mirrors the poem's content, which tenderly circles the how of Hathaway's short life, and the disintegration of his communication with the outside world. Pavlic is tender with his subject and never treats Hathaway as a victim of circumstance or illness. Instead, he is a graceful guide through the uncharted territory of Hathaway's last days, a place between sanity and genius that we cannot fully understand.

Winners Have Yet To Be Announced is a beautiful, dreamy and challenging collection. The language is by turns rich and luminescent, as if one is flying through clouds that briefly open up to brilliant bursts of daylight. It is a must read for people interested in the relationship between poetic form and content, and the great soul singer who died too young. (Lauren Kirshner)

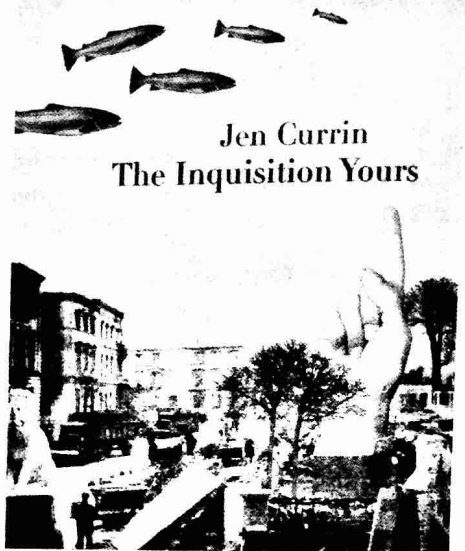
The Inquisition Yours

by Jen Currin, \$16.95, 111 pgs,
Coach House Books, chbooks.com

In one poem, Currin writes "I learned metaphor before speech." That I can believe. Other reviewers (and assorted poetry lovers) may use words like deep, mysterious and surreal, but I say indecipherable. I've read the first poem, "Sock Martyrs," numerous times. I

generally lose my focus at least twice, so I furrow my brow in concentration, read it all in one go, and come away with ... nothing.

"Used to be there was – god/with a big g./Now countless songbirds/whenever the mirror is mentioned." What mirror?! That stanza started off quite profound ... and what the hell are the songbirds supposed to represent?



I know, I know – poetry is an art of subtlety, nuance, an explorative dalliance with words – but I like concrete images (also, I'm a big fan of the em dash). This is, often, too abstract. Having said that, there are powerful themes here: war, family, death and much more ('much more' being a lot of the stuff I may have missed). "Patriarch" is a powerful title, it has a striking end, it's a feminist/humanist manifesto in verse – but it ends with "My friend said she'd been 'spiritually busy' – then danced away," which seems weak. "Being Young Professionals" is a bittersweet look at artistic, youthful endeavours and the harsh reality of growing up. It is also the only poem I could relate to. I really liked "Drone" and many more of the anti-war poems/images, but they seemed to lack that crucial ... punch? There are all these lines and images that work and are so well done, but I'm lost or bored on the whole. Definitely a lot to be enjoyed and much to be taken away, however, I would not recommend this to anyone who didn't already love poetry. For the rest of us, it's just too much work.

A final quotation I rather enjoyed: "My good foot in hell/Television in place of food...Eating the stale history/written indifferently/I kiss the tyrant's statue and fall to my knees." (Mitch Adams)