

Gallup, Dick
SHINY PENCILS AT THE EDGE OF THINGS
Coffeehouse Press (176 pp.)
\$14.95
February 2001
ISBN 1-56689-106-X

The author of six other books, Gallup is a member of the so-called second generation of the so-called New York School of poets. He grew up in Tulsa and lives in San Francisco. The publication of this collection of poems was supported in part by a grant provided by the Minnesota State Arts Board, the National Endowment for the Arts, and other foundations, but at least Gallup is not among those poets “turned into pigs by Capitalism.” In the previous volume, *Plumbing the Depth of Folly*, the author apparently did not plumb enough and, thanks to the public’s largesse, he has returned to root even deeper. It is possible he may even have come out on the other side. How else is one to explain such versifying as the following? “The love of morning is nothing but love, ravelled-sleeve love, jew love, prick love!” Or, the poet asks, “How many pens are there in a horse? Standing, I believe.” (*Answer*: One too many, namely, the one his keepers let him have.) But wait. There’s more. We’re only on the second page. It does get better, though, once you’ve closed the book. Meanwhile, the reader is expected to endure page after page of aleatoric gobbledegook, phrases piled up like debris, words chosen for any reason but their ability to hang together and make a modicum of sense to anyone but the poet and those going along with the gag. Gallup has given rise to a new style of writing called *stream of unconsciousness*. It is doubtful even he has any idea what he’s doing, but he keeps doing it. In “christmas poem” he announces, “Today I call you Lady Santa/ From your firm green breasts/ Spring Christmas Tree nipples! Lady Santa!”

Shiny Pencils... is infuriatingly dull in every sense of the word.