

THE KING, THE PRINCE, THE POET
for Michael McClure (October 20, 1932-May 4, 2020)
by Jack Foley

The prince is dead.
Defender of whales.
It didn't seem possible.
The great one
Who read his work at
The most famous of all
San Francisco readings
Six Gallery, 1955.
The one who voiced his poems
To the marvelous melodies
Of Ray Manzarek,
From whom Janis Joplin
Stole a song,
The one who told me,
"People who wear black
Are in mourning for themselves."
The king is dead.
The one who survived
Everything
And lived to sing of it,
The one who spoke
Chaucer in the original
So that people might know
Where our language came from.
The king, the prince, the poet
Who rose from Wichita
And embodied San Francisco
Who called to the birds near his home
Who answered.
"We were making," he told me,
"The myth of ourselves."
He survived so much
It seemed likely
That Death would make an exception
In his case
(No, he did not have Coronavirus!)
But this wonderful man
Is gone from us.
His Angel weeps.
Her name is Amy
And she will forever be
His love, his partner

Though there was another
Who loved him too.
Dear Angel, whose wings
Will have to fly in a different way
To find him now.
I loved them both
And learned from them.
She survives to build a world
Around herself in which
Michael forever is
And isn't
While she goes on.
May she fly, as she always has,
With sweet, compassionate dignity.
May her delicate hands
Build figures (embodiments) that live forever
As Michael's words
Will live forever.
*There is a world
That does not die.*
The Muses
Weep.

*

ELEGY

The animals are clamoring
The deer
The hawks circling
The squirrels
All the inhabitants of the zoo
The lions in the San Francisco Zoo
They are all making noises
The monkeys howl
Dogs and cats in the streets
The incredible coyotes
Strolling in the city
The fish
The whales
Even the tiny things, the ants, the bugs, mosquitos
Everything
Even the living trees
That bend to the wind
Near the water
The ocean the sand

The monkeys
They are all muttering or crying
Or howling outright
And the animals that are people
The "mammal nation"--
All these creatures know
They clamor they "complain" (in the old sense)
That the poet McClure is gone
Though they cannot
 tell you where