

# Bookstore Reading, Telegraph Ave, Berkeley

*by* Jerry Ratch

There's someone in the audience who is immolating himself  
Cutting his own leg over and over with a pen knife  
And groaning: "*Oh God, oh God*"

And all I can think from up at the podium is  
*This guy must absolutely hate these poems*

I'm reading from *Puppet X*, the first time in public  
My long 60 page  
Admittedly somewhat depressing  
But very funny (if you give it a chance)  
Book-length series of poems

*This guy must be ready to retch*  
*Right in the bookstore*  
*He hates it so much*  
This is all I can think

I am mortified  
I didn't think it was  
That bad

This is Berkeley, mind you, 1973, Telegraph Ave  
Anything can happen, as the war in Viet Nam  
Keeps raging on  
And our brains are getting  
Taken away on stretchers  
Every day

