



Staten Island Advance

Like father, like son (sometimes)

Accomplished writers Earl and Allan Coleman pen new book of poems

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By **MICHAEL J. FRESSOLA**
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STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. — With 110 years of writing between them, both 91-year-old Earl M. Coleman and his son Allan Douglass Coleman, 63, could hang up their vocabularies, their thematic talismans, their epiphanies and perplexities. Who would dare accuse either of them of retiring prematurely?

They clearly feel that there's work to be done still. They are now published (Villa Florentine Press) in a palindrome edition, "Like Father Like Son: New and Selected Poems, Earl M. Coleman" and, on the other side, upside down, "Like Father Like Son: New and Selected Poems, Allan Douglass Coleman."

They're inviting comparison, which might be constructive or painful. Fortunately, they are separate, but different and equal. More or less. Both are accomplished. Both have earned a living and found a cause.

Earl Coleman established two post-war publishing houses, Plenum and Da Capo. Both are still in business. He's been published practically forever. Esquire ran a short story of his 60 years ago. In the past 25 years, he's had 300 poems and three dozen short stories in print.

Allan Coleman, a longtime North Shore resident and a founding member of Sepoy Rebellion, a spoken word/performance ensemble, has been writing on cultural topics (as A.D. Coleman) for 40 years. He enjoys international renown, particularly for his writing on photography. His busman's holiday in "creative" writing started in the late 1980s.

Earl has the longer reach, naturally. How long? Silent movies.

I clung moistly to my mother's hand. I had no words/

to dry her tears, fend off her fears for Tinkerbell

Fast forward 85 years or so. He's thinking about the obvious in "Polish."

Everything must pay Time's wage. But/

while we're dying let us flaunt our rare/

and innate grace and glory in its face. There.

Both men have a healthy interest in physical love, but they're so plainspoken that little of it's quotable here.

A.D. is stingier with words, more astringent than his father. In "Out of Here," he's weighing in on the endgame so bluntly he turns economy into bravado.

You have it all wrong

You think you will stop

while the others go on.

Here is what happens:

You just continue,

the rest disappear.

The 200-page book represents just a sampler for both writers. Visit www.nearbycafe.com for A.D. Once there, click "Literature & Writing" and find the "Stubborn Pine" link. That's Earl's site.

For a hilarious inner-city Jewish take on family obligations and duplicity — the story may remind you of Grace Paley — read "Big C, little c," Earl's tour de force about a lackluster son who redeems himself. Keep tissues handy.

Michael J. Fressola is the Advance arts editor. He may be reached at fressola@siadvance.com.