

THE POETRY PROJECT NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 119

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\$1.00

SERVING MY TIME TO A TRADE

By Tom Pickard

In 1963, along with thousands of other Tyneside teenagers, I was signing on the dole. We had finished secondary education at the age of fourteen or fifteen, and were headed for the army or cheap labor market.

Most of us were unprepared for the sudden and enforced "leisure" of unemployment. We were sullen and resentful, angry and confused and justifiably so, just as the new young unemployed have even more reason to be. We continually heard cliches: "the world doesn't owe you a living"... "there's plenty of jobs around if you look for them"...and..."you could find a job if you really wanted to." These ideas were and are the official ones and anyone who has had to deal with the Social Security Gestapo will know what I'm talking about. If you're unemployed, it's because you've done something wrong, are a failure, or want to be.

Basil Bunting was working as a sub-editor on the Newcastle Journal. His job was to produce the city page for the paper: a dreary and painful task for a man with Mr. B's vision. His physical sight was deteriorating and he wore glasses thick as a safe-door. Some years previously he had worked for the publishing firm of Thomas Reed and Son, proof-reading bus and train timetables. He lived in a large sparsely furnished house overlooking the River Tyne at Wylam, ten miles west of Newcastle.

Having spent a year and a half in a variety of monotonous jobs-ranging from laboring on a building site to working as a warehouse boy in a Woolworths store, sweeping floors, etc.- I found myself at the age of seventeen unemployed again and with a baby boy from my lady to support. We lived in one small room in a flat shared by three others. I had become increasingly engrossed in poetry and my fellow young socialists both encouraged and mocked my adolescent pretensions, in a comradely sort of way. Local libraries provided mostly a diet of Larkin and the Movement (which we thought was something to do with bowels) and the usual dreary offerings from the Oxcam literary Mafia, which made me despair. There was nothing there to make a young Northern Working Class heart glad: the experience generally so thin as to be almost absent and the language like putty, pliable and mushy or dried, set and cracking. Swinburne smelling of Northumbrian heather and sensual intoxication, sang laughingly in my ear for a while. But I needed models which would help to master the moment. There appeared to be nothing directly and immediately present. Tyneside is not an environment a poet can easily ignore. By some

route I came across the Beat Movement and first got a sniff of the Americans, discovering a punchy, taut and tender language. Following through some of the Beat's major sources I came to e.e. cummings, Whitman and Pound and found even more pleasure there.

Through a newspaper I discovered a small press publisher John Rolph of Scorpion Press, situated in Lowestoft on the east coast. I hitch-hiked to see him. The journey was long and awful as the route veered off the A-1 where lifts were relatively easy to get. But I do remember a happy dawn over flat Norfolk tulip fields. He showed me the large stock of City Lights books which they distributed and gave me a few of the early numbers of *Kulture*. He wasn't too interested in my poems but offered helpful remarks which I probably resented.

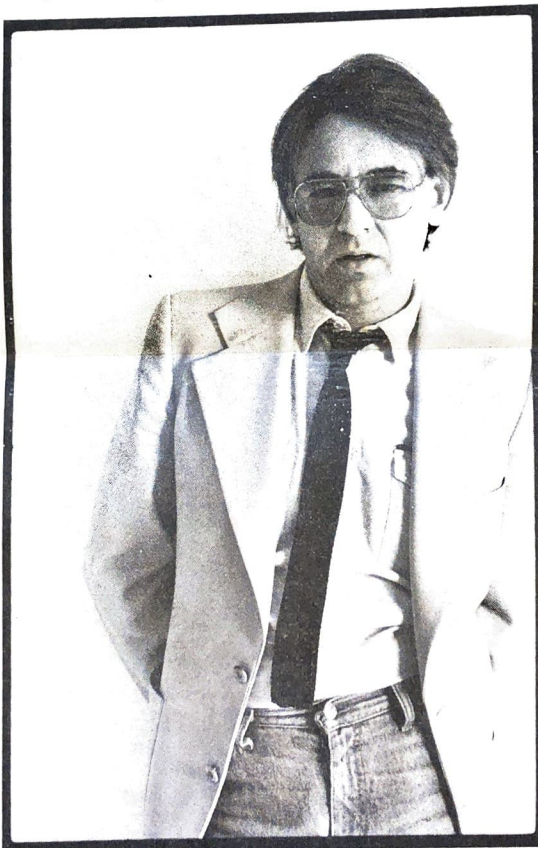
Photo by Sharon Guyrup

Returning home and reading through an issue of *Kulture* I discovered an advertisement for Jargon Press and wrote off immediately to North Carolina and got back a helpful letter from Jonathan Williams saying he'd recently been to Newcastle and had met a number of persons whom we might want to get in touch with. Their addresses were enclosed and Basil Bunting's was amongst them.

We meanwhile were in the process of hiring a medieval tower on the old city walls from Newcastle Corporation. The tower had previously been occupied by the Northumbrian Pipers Association and later by a group of jazz musicians, both of whom had found it too draughty. It is situated in a long dirty dark, black lane which is overhung on the one side by medieval parapets and the other by factories which emit foul and noxious fumes all day. At night the unlit lane is used by prostitutes and phantom shag-

gers. The barbed wire which encircles the factory drainpipes is frequently decorated with used contraceptives and worse. It is not uncommon for the unwary to put their feet in shit. It was a shagger's alley. A decaying city has many potentials.

One Sunday night shortly after receiving Jonathan's letter, I decided to look up Mr. Bunting in the telephone directory, and I gave him a ring from the public box. His Persian wife Sema answered the call, then sent Basil to the phone. Nervously I explained that I was putting together a magazine and wanted some contributions from him. He invited me over, and I caught the next train out. The track runs between Armstrong's Armament Factory and the Tyne, parallel with Scotswood Road, which has given so much to the character of the city. Blackened red brick worker's houses spill



Tom Pickard in London.

down the valley onto the road, two strides from the factory. Mary Bell, the child murderess, was brooding through her dark infancy and Dan Smith was plotting the redevelopment of his fortune. For some, poverty will always be a meal-ticket. The streets, seemingly almost always in shadow or smudged by dirty drizzle, somehow foretold all of this and more. The train ran following the river, and the valley turned suddenly from industrial bleak to multiple-green lush. The river at Wylam is broad and powerful. I found Elm Bank which runs steeply up a hill with Shadingfield at the top of it. The door was opened by a man of sixty-three with a bushy moustache and thick glasses. He took me into the kitchen where I met his Persian wife Sema and her mother, who spoke no English. The kitchen overlooked the Tyne, and their garden, well kept, ran down to the railway line.

They had a small dog and a cat, which was famous in the village for accompanying the Buntings on walks. Their two children, Maria and Thomas, lived with them as did Basil's mother. She was a proud old woman with all her own teeth and a piano in her room. Until her death at ninety-odd she would take unaccompanied trips to Newcastle and back. In her room she had a large collection of books on astrology and told me once she did Yeats' horoscope in Rapallo.

I was given a whiskey and sat at the table while Basil kindly asked me what I was up to. Sema's mother had brought a lot of caviar from Persia, and as neither she nor Sema enjoyed it, Basil and I were given heaps of it on bits of toast. I got the impression there was very little else in the pantry. Sema was a happy, strong, wild-eyed Armenian, who looked a little pale in those cold northern days. We always got on well. I remember a number of visits in which I was pinned to the wall in an Armenian arm-lock and tickled, while Basil laughed coughing into his Senior Service, pleading for my release. Over the caviar sandwich he read me the "Spoils" which I took away to publish.

He approved our plans to open the Morden Tower and offered what help he could give. We did not realize then just what a struggle it would prove to be. I sat happily listening to the "Spoils," understanding only a little of its meaning but enjoying the sounds the words made and the undoubted skill with which they were knitted together. It is difficult to explain the emotion felt at hearing for the first time a great and accomplished work read by its author. I was a virgin and stunned by it. The experience was moving and revealing. His tongue was an instrument and rolled each word around as though it were a piece of sculpture. He talked of Persia, America, and Italy, and of course their poets. When he asked if I wrote poetry myself, I confessed I did but had not taken any to show him, out of shyness. "Well, you must come again, and bring your poems along."

It was getting late and time to leave. We shook hands and parted on the doorstep. The dark, dewy night smelt river-rich. I could hear the Tyne taking breath beneath the bridge. While standing on the platform awaiting the train, half drunk, I began to go over the poem:

Man's life so little worth,
do we fear to take or lose it?
No ill companion on a journey, Death
lays his purse on the table and
opens the wine.

In the distance I could see the small lights of the approaching train and the air smelt sweet. Lines from the poems echoed through my head:

Have you seen a falcon swoop
accurate, unforseen
and absolute, between
wind ripples over harvest? Dread
of what's to be, and has been—
were we not better dead?

His wings churn air
to flight.
Feathers alight
with sun, he rises where
dazzle rebuts our stare,
wonder our fright.

I read the poem at home many times, hearing Basil's resonant voice.

By a strange co-incidence which occurred while I was hitch-hiking to Lowestoft, I was given a lift by a young film maker, who was directing documentaries for the National Coal Board. When I told him of our plans to open the Morden Tower, he suggested we invite his friend the poet Pete Brown. He gave me Brown's address and I sent an invitation. Someone in the Arts School, where Richard Hamilton was teaching, designed and silk screened a poster,

The reading attracted a number of younger poets and artists. Afterwards we went to the Downbeat to hear the Allen Price Combo (which later became The Animals) and danced all night.

which I placed in pubs and shop windows throughout the town. Pete Brown arrived a half an hour before the advertised reading, looking like a small bearded bear with its head in a beehive of stinging bees. In fact, he had just fallen sleepily out of a lorry which had given him a lift from London. After two bottles of Newcastle brown ale and a couple of strange looking pills, he became very lively and gave a decent performance. The reading attracted a number of young poets and artists. Afterwards we went to the Downbeat to hear the Allen Price Combo (which later became The Animals) and danced all night.

Basil, a few weeks later, gave the next reading and we had a packed house, maybe seventy people. The audience was mainly young. There were students, grammar school kids, apprentices and the unemployed. We charged less money, or nothing, to those like myself "on the dole." The young people loved him and were attentive. We listened carefully, not always understanding, but hearing. We recognized and respected this sailor come home. He sat by gas-light (we had no electricity then), his safe-door glasses gleaming, and he read, (for the first time in how many years?) to a young audience, who literally sat at his feet (we couldn't afford chairs and besides they took up precious space).

Our ears and hearts were open to the fine mellow instrument of his voice and the authenticity of the

experience it sang of. The sailor had found his fireplace and sang fine tunes to freshly awakened ears. Once more his old songs danced like well-made boats on the ocean. After reading in the Northumberland Arms, Basil introduced me to the "dog's nose," a pint of beer with a gin in it. A few of my friends from the dole crowded around and asked questions. They seemed to be spending more and more time in police-cells for increasingly obscure reasons and recognized in "Villon" (which Basil had read) the voice of experience.

He is as old as the century. And as young. He has spent a lifetime refining and practising his art, seen much of the world, learned to sail, endured eighteen months severe imprisonment for a principle, gained a practical knowledge of the east. The list is long and his stories seemingly inexhaustible.

To this day at his home in Washington, "an intentional slum," the children are always knocking on his door. And he answers it. Children love him. Sometimes I hear Washington intonations dancing in his speech. Children embody and keep the language living as they skip and play their games with it. Who better to hear it? But they must occasionally sound like the birds who:

...sang on my windowsill
and tortured me till I was ill...

We unemployed had a lot of time (though the nagging anxiety about having to "make ends meet" makes severe inroads into what appears to others as unlimited leisure) so on many lunch hours I would meet Basil at the Rose and Crown, which was close to the news-factory, and over a pint of bass he'd go over some recent effort of mine, saying, "Well, you've almost got it there, Tom..." "All that was left of two pages was a line.

"What shall I do with it?"

"Oh keep it hanging around...until just the right place for it turns up..."

Only one line out of two pages. I was horrified, and it happened often. Over a period I got small complete poems chiselled out of the slag. He would patiently look at a typed page for a while, a cigarette in his mouth (I muttered nervous explanations which he didn't listen to), blow the smoke with great force out of his nostrils, and take a pencil faintly round a few chosen lines.

"Try that. It's not what you wanted to say, but it makes a poem," or "Take this line from here and try it at the end..."

"But what I wanted to say was..."

And he kindly: "Oh well, what the hell. It's not important to the poem."

This piece has been edited down from a longer piece which appeared in PAIDEUMA Magazine. Tom Pickard has a new book coming out this spring & is hard at work on a television history of British Labor for the BBC.



BATTLE STATIONS!

Your elected Senators and Representatives are the people who decide how much money will be given to the Endowment in fiscal year 1987. You elected them, and believe it or not they listen to you, because they want to get reelected. What they listen to is concrete support in the form of letters. Congressmen count the letters they get in favor of or in opposition to legislation. We are writing to the members of the House and Senate sub-committees that will decide how much money is given to the arts in America in 1987. Join us. Help us persuade them to oppose the present severe cuts in the Endowment's budget. Help us make them understand that poets and artists are important to America.

Here's how to do it. Cut the letter below out of the Newsletter and Xerox off 24 copies. Address one copy to each of the Congressmen on the list and sign each copy with your name and address. Get yourself 24 envelopes.

Address an envelope to each of the Senators and Congressmen on the list. Put a 22¢ stamp on each envelope and the signed copy of the letter into the right envelope. Mail them. Then address the remaining three envelopes to three friends or relatives you can rely on, preferably in different parts of the country. Send them a copy of this page and ask them to help, by following the same procedure.

That's all folks. It's a chain letter! It's Postal Art! It's an investment in Democracy in action, just like in the sixth grade. What'll it cost? A little over four bucks and some citizen time. And don't be misled by bourgeois bohemianism into thinking it won't work either. You weren't born yesterday. You've seen Jimmy Stewart and Gary Cooper in action. In your heart of hearts, you know it works. And you'll feel great after you do it, too. We did.

The National Endowment for the Arts is under attack at many levels, and its funding is seriously threatened in the appropriations bill for next year. The Endowment is important to all Americans, and especially to the writers and artists it supports in many different ways, both directly and indirectly. Right now the Endowment needs our support to prevent crippling budget cuts that will affect all of us who love poetry and believe in it. We are a group of concerned poets and writers, and we are asking you to join us.

Here

are the names of the Senate Appropriations Committee (sub-committee on Interior & Related Agencies)

Ralph S. Regula (Ohio)
Joseph M. McDade (Pennsylvania)
Tom Loeffler (Texas)

Sidney R. Yates (Illinois)
John P. Murtha (Pennsylvania)
Norman D. Bicks (Washington)
Edward P. Boland (Massachusetts)
Les AuCoin (Oregon)
Tom Beville (Alabama)

Letters to Senators should be headed: Dear Senator _____, & letters to Representatives should be headed Dear Mr. or Ms. _____.

*Note

that the House & Senate have different Zip Codes.

Dear

I am writing to you as a member of the Appropriations sub-committee on Interior and related agencies, in regard to the Interior Bill for 1987 and the appropriation for the National Endowment for the Arts contained in it. Present projections for the Endowment for 1987 are extremely low, and I want to urge your support in increasing the amount to at least the levels for 1986.

As a concerned citizen, I want to make you aware of the importance of the National Endowment for the Arts in the cultural life of America. The Endowment stimulates the private sector to support arts in America; its guidance in development and support assure that the most varied voices in the arts are represented nationwide. And the arts need that economic advantage in order to pursue their work & view-art that results from those convictions, and the ways to deepen the human spirit in us all.

In the long run, it is the voices of our artists as well as our statesmen that will record and preserve American civilization, as they have recorded and preserved the civilizations of the past. And the rest of the world judges America as a nation that produces poems as well as guns.

The writers and artists of this country are a fundamental part of America. They deserve our support. As a citizen, taxpayer and a voter I urge you to support increased funding for the National Endowment for the Arts.

Sincerely yours,

Here

are the names of the House Appropriations Committee (sub-committee on Interior & Related Agencies)

James A. McClure (Idaho)
Ted Stevens (Alaska)
Paul Laxalt (Utah)
Jake Garn (Utah)
Thad Cochran (Mississippi)
Mark Andrews (North Dakota)
Warren Rudman (New Hampshire)
Lowell P. Weicker, Jr. (Connecticut)

Robert C. Byrd (Virginia)
J. Bennett Johnston (Louisiana)
Patrick J. Leahy (Vermont)
Dennis DeConcini (Arizona)
Quentin N. Burdick (North Dakota)
Dale Bumpers (Arkansas)
Ernest F. Hollings (South Carolina)

Here's how to address the envelopes:

to SENATORS: The Honorable _____
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

to REPRESENTATIVES: The Honorable _____
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

FEBRUARY'S

poetry

Special Events

**12 ART AUCTION
TO BENEFIT
THE POETRY PROJECT**
8:30 PM

PREVIEWS
February 6-9 noon to 6 PM
141 Wooster Street

**22 SATURDAY EVENING
PLAY SERIES**
Host Elinor Nauen 8 PM \$4

Dropsy by John Kaplan

Monday Evening

PERFORMANCE/POETRY
Host Richard Elovich 8 PM \$4

- 3 Open Reading
- 10 Frank Maya & R. Weis
- 17 Films by Franco Maraini & Maryette Charlton
Poetry by John Johnson
- 24 Paul Langland, Rosemary Moore
& Michael Stiller

Wednesday Evening

READINGS
Hosts Eileen Myles & Patricia Jones 8 PM \$4

- 5 Andrei Codrescu & Haoui Montagu
- 19 Andy Clausen & Allen Ginsberg
- 26 Charles Bernstein

Workshops

READING WORKSHOP
7, 14, 21, 28 Bob Rosenthal 7PM Tue. Free

POETRY WORKSHOP
10, 17, 24, 31 Susie Timmons 7PM Fri. Free

ADVANCED WORKSHOP
4, 11, 18, 25 Alice Notley 12:30PM Sat. Free

**THE POETRY
PROJECT**
AT
ST MARK'S CHURCH 2 AVE & 10 ST
NEW YORK
CITY 10003
212.674.0910

The Poetry Project receives generous support from these public and private agencies: The New York State Council on the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, City of New York's Department of Cultural Affairs, Film/Video Arts, Inc. for film screenings, the Lila Acheson Wallace Fund, the Foundation for Contemporary Performance, the Mobil Foundation, Bydale Foundation, and the Gramercy Park Foundation. Also, the members of the Poetry Project and individual contributors.

This Month's Events



Illustration by Denise Barberi

February 2: Hungarian Performance Artists Laszlo Revesz & Andras Borocz will present "FLEA" a piece employing action painting, as well as other works on paper.

February 3: **OPEN READING**

February 5: **Andrei Codrescu & Haoui Montaug.** Andrei Codrescu is a poet & cultural commentator for National Public Radio. His most recent book is *Comrade Past & Mr. Present* (Coffeeshouse Press.) He is editor of *Exquisite Corpse: A Monthly of Books and Ideas.* He is the recipient of a General Electric Award for Poetry. Haoui Montaug is a poet, doorman at the Palladium, New York's largest club and the fabulous M.C. of our New Year's Benefit.

February 10: **Frank Maya & R. Weis**

February 12: **ART AUCTION**
The Poetry Project will hold a benefit auction in the main sanctuary. Over 100 works on paper will be auctioned, including works by Sandro Chia, Elizabeth Murray, Louise Bourgeois, Leon Golub, Keith Haring, David Wojnarowicz & others. The work can be previewed Noon to 6 from Thursday, February 6 thru Sunday, February 9 at 141 Wooster Street. Thanks to space generously donated by the DIA Foundation. All proceeds will go to the Poetry Project at St. Mark's Church which is celebrating its 20th anniversary in 1986. In 1985-86 the Project received major cuts in government funding. We hope to restore some of it by asking visual artists and collectors to lend a hand to our cause in this important year.

February 17: **Films by Franco Marini & Maryette Charlton**
Plus Poetry by John Johnson.

February 19: **Andy Clausen & Allen Ginsberg.** Andy Clausen, futurist & practitioner of Zaum was born in a Belgian bomb shelter & raised in Oakland, California. Author of *Iron Curtain Of Love* (Lonashot), Austin Texas, *Austin Texas (Place Of Herons)* & *Extreme Unction* (Litmus). His poems have appeared in *New Directions*, *City Lights*, & *The New York Quarterly*. Allen Ginsberg is America's preeminent poet. His *Collected Poems* (Random House) was poetry's publishing event of last year. This year he continues to do what he does best, chronicle the life & times of America in poetry.

COMMUNITY MEETING Saturday, February 22, 1986 from Noon till 2PM.
PURPOSE: Election of new Community Members to the Poetry Project's Board of Directors. Community Members with a real desire to contribute to the Present & the Future of the Poetry Project should send self-nominations to the Project's Office by February 19th, 1986. Polls will close at 2PM. Call the Project Office for further details.

February 22: **Saturday Evening Play Series.** "Dropsy" by John Kaplan.

February 24: **Paul Langland, Rosemary Moore & Michael Stiller.**

February 26: **Charles Bernstein.** Charles Bernstein is the author of several books including *Resistance* (Awede Press, 1983) & *The Occurrence of Tune* (Segue Books, 1981) and the forthcoming *The Sophist* (Sun & Moon Press). Recipient of a Guggenheim in poetry, he currently coordinates the Talk Series at the Poetry Project.

Reading Workshop with Bob Rosenthal on Tuesdays at 7PM. Free.

Poetry Workshop with Susie Timmons on Fridays at 7PM. Free.

Advanced Workshop with Alice Notley on Saturdays at 12:30PM. Free

Big Scream Magazine is now accepting submissions for its summer issue. SASE to Big Scream/2782 Dixie/Grandville, Michigan 49418.

ALL PROGRAMS BEGIN AT 8PM.

James Ruggia, Editor

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A Visit To The City Of Cheeses by Margaret Johnson. A true and beautiful hunger for the language of far geographies combined to the sumptuousness of quotidian lists. Burning Deck/Providence, Rhode Island. \$4.00.

The Mistress Of Laughter by Lola Baidel. Klitrose Books/#33 Care of P.O./211 West 108th St/ N.Y., N.Y. 10025. 48 Pages.

Divination By The Lion Moon by Arthur Byron. P.O. Box 99352/San Francisco, California 94109.

Distinctive Belt by Michael Friedman. Wit ala Padgett; from The new Mary House Publishers/31 Strong Place/Brooklyn, New York 11231. 32 Pages, \$5.00.

This Light Will Spread by Paul Mariah. A soul somehow at war wanders poetry's crueler shores. The streets herein are mean but mystical. Poorly designed and in need of an editor, too many of these pages don't land, but duck when they do. Manroot/Box 982/South San Francisco, California 94080. 189 Pages.

Mohawk Trail by Beth Brant. Firebrand Books/Ithaca, New York 14850. 94 Pages, \$6.95.

1933 Was A Bad Year & The Road To Los Angeles; two separate books by John Fante. L.A. \$10.00 & 1933 is \$8.50. Black Sparrow Press/P.O. Box 3993/Santa Barbara, California 93130.

Two Novels by Philip Whalen. "...too few readers know the power of Whalen's prose, its ironies and perceptions, its consummate articulation..." says Robert Creeley. 250 Pages, \$9.95.

The Only Piano Player In La Paz by Robert Peterson. Black Dog Press/P.O. Box 12131/Capitola, California 95010.

My City Flies By by Cheryl Fish. Afternoons and early evenings flee the mind towards a lyric freedom whose feet throb 9 to 5. exempli gratia/P.O. Box 3458/Berkeley, California 94703. \$2.50, 20 Pages.

How To Ride On The Woodlawn Express by Bob Hershon. Weeping glees & laughing sorrows, a humorous book & yet reverent. SUN/347 West 39th Street/ New York, New York 10018.

River Styx #18 on Anti-Poetry. Nicanor Para: "The man he imagined/lives in a mansion he imagined." Jordan, Rothenberg, Kamenetz, Clampett, and Cortazar's poem "Companion" which gives a little Patrick Henry to El Salvador. A very memorable issue. Quincy Troupe/1925 Seventh Avenue #4,7L/N.Y., N.Y. 10026.

Hambone #5 contains among other things Leslie Scalapino's *Wind Series*, "it was during the war so it wouldn't have done any/good to show anger." 132 Clinton St/Santa Cruz, California 95062. 159 Pages, \$6.00.

Bob Kaufman 1925-1986

From his mouth he hurls chunks of raw soul.
He separated the sea of polluted sounds
And led the blues into the Promised Land.

from Solitudes Crowded With Loneliness

"He was a poetic innovator for 30 years. He never got the credit he deserved. A great, great loss."

Amiri Baraka

"North Beach will lack one great spirit. But they treat their poets like shit anyway. People never respected Kaufman, poets did. People thought he was scrambled. No fucking way! He was lucid & pure. He died because he abided by the rules of St. Francis in San Francisco."

Gregory Corso

2/5/86

**Andrei Codrescu &
Haoui Montaug**

Seeing Out of the Sub

for Alice

How do you see out of a sub?
 I feel like I'm inside a sub, you say.
 I feel like I'm inside a sub too.
 The iron blimp in the Cabildo,
 the confederate sub, possibly
 the first sub consisting only
 of a large iron body with a propeller
 and a blind mariner inside her
 hoping to ram a ship from underneath.
 The mariner's hopes were the end of him.
 Maybe it's best not to see out of a sub.
 Maybe it's better to have a party.
 Jonah's had room for millions.
 The metaphor, I mean.
 Maybe what we're inside of is a metaphor.
 For the middle-class, for instance.
 The middle-class is most like a sub:
 Squeezed from below and squashed from above.
 Despised by poets just like a shark or a sub.
 I think what we need is a pun:
 remember the Chinese sub on the only
 sleazy street left in Baton Rouge?
 How we sought it out and delighted in its urban
 cheapness? Its meat-filled blandness with lettuce
 and the window where nobody sat?
 That was a good place to look out of
 because nobody cared what you were looking at.
 The Chinese were busy eating their own product
 when they weren't making more.
 Our product, interest, and an interesting world,
 comes about with looking like that
 out of the window of a cheap sub shop.
 The raw material is looking and looking.
 It's no good being blind in a sub.
 It's good watching from the sub shop.
 The metaphor must yield to the pun.

by Andrei Codrescu

Film premieres are well attended
 as long as a friend had something to do with it
 seeing their images preserved in celluloid
 adding credence to their claims

by Haoui Montaug

2/19/86

Andy Clausen & Allen Ginsberg

by Charles Bernstein

Untitled

Tonight I'm an income tax refund
 already spent
 a face moleculed with tears
 unshed
 walking out after the seventh race
 wet ten dollar tickets
 in a puddle
 a man ready to leave town
 obviously redifying his self
 telling himself-my rented roof of time
 is just that
 our piano just another
 piece of furniture

by Andy Clausen

2/26/86

Charles Bernstein

Verdi and Postmodernism

She walks in beauty like the swans
 that on a summer day do swarm
 & crawls as deftly as a spoon
 & spills & sprawls & booms.

These moments make a monument
 then fall upon a broken calm
 they fly into more quenchless rages
 than Louis Quatorze or Napoleon.

If I could make one wish I might
 overturn a state, destroy a kite
 but with no wishes still I gripe
 complaint's a Godly-given right.

Face to Face

Face to face
 with silent grace
 Take your place
 in the old rat race

by Allen Ginsberg

Naropa Summer Institute 1986

4th Annual Writing Program

June 22-July 19

- Robert Creeley**
- William S. Burroughs**
- Allen Ginsberg**
- Joanne Kyger**
- Alice Notley**
- Anne Waldman**
- Jim Carroll**
- Ed Sanders**
- Steven Taylor**
- Mei Mei Berssenbrugge**
- Joy Harjo**
- Clark Coolidge**
- Jack Collom**
- and others**

*A month-long intensive
 where faculty and students
 come together to study,
 exchange ideas,
 mix informally,
 and refine writing
 and performance skills.*

For full program information and summer catalog, please contact Naropa Summer Institute, Dept. PPN, 2130 Arapahoe Avenue, Boulder, CO 80302 or call 303-444-0202.

Neutral Movies,

ZERO

by Will Bennett

Telephone Books

\$4.00

Ceilinged Rooms

Zero. A count down ends. For Will Bennett, take-offs bring clues, and journeys are full of attempts. As Bennett says, "The rage is to leave town," or country for that matter, but either way, the details of moving always overwhelm. In today's increasingly repressive society, one is constantly aware of freedom and illusions of it. No matter where one runs to, eventually one returns to the neutrality of the self.

Nod is a neutral movie
daringly illustrated in vanishing ink
A rapidly souring ultimate privacy
A kiss to myself, a nod to myself, yes (from "Nod")

Nod's energy is restrained. The solitude of the self watching its own public persona be ignored in restaurants. "I wave my arm like someone drowning; achieve a motion as a statue might, by innuendo." If the drowning man suffers from frustration, he may at least be amused by the assurance that "no one starves here."

Bennett likes to leave us lingering, between destinations and states of mind. Let it all sink in. He conjures up titles like "Beekeeper Festival" and "Biloxi, Mississippi," but he needs no map to find out where he is. Here in New York on Christmas;

The world is at rock bottom &
so at peace. Every night is not like this
half sparse light & half part of a larger
being, a friend...Spanish on Avenue A, just a light
boatripe from Second, where lights go out
& on & grey takes over..." (from "Map Country")

At times, a sense of peace comes, as one peers out on the world, alone but never without memories of the others hovering on the brink of the next move:

There is a star tonight & she is far away & I
hope she's in love, I am. Windows shut &
& hide the hammering
inside, I want to yell Love! but what then?"
(from "Present Company")

Many of Bennett's sojourns include the presence of animals, movies and drugs; like many of us, he's been taught escape as survival, and he wants to see beyond the concrete, to a land in that territory we spy and half believe on the silver screen. "Orson Welles was the first to make a movie where the rooms had ceilings one can see." (from "Coke")

So stay awake thinking of movie images. Tell yourself what you must, ask that love save you. Bennett wraps himself in the comfort that is found when words rub rough elbows, filling up the blank spaces with short, crisp glimpses. Ironically,

life tends to imitate art and Bennett takes stock of it:

our love falls apart we
helplessly watch a disaster
movie rollercoaster kills 2 people
a little too real so
much time spent on that which flickers & dies...
(from "So Long Love Falls")

We are forced into letting technology mesh with nature; fears of total isolation and dehumanization surface in our faces. In Bennett's poems, it all comes down to zero anyhow, starting over, lifting off. "Deaths are all the same size. Bird or man, the earth's sand, strained so ineffectually." (from "Tyrone In Andalusia")

And in the title poem, Bennett says "we" are falling, perhaps through space, through the ages, into timelessness. "We, the noble gasses, empty ourselves into gravity." Exiting the atmosphere, like the space shuttle meeting the sea, where "deep water's occipital dance of particles colored darker." The lucid quality of Bennett's poems evoke a silent trembling that I find rewarding.

By Cheryl Fish

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