

# POETRY PROJECT

## World Karma Allen Ginsberg



Corbett University  
Allen Ginsberg by Chris Felver

Allen Ginsberg is just back from receiving the Golden Wreath Award from the Struga Evenings International Poetry Festival in Yugoslavia. This prestigious prize was formerly awarded to Neruda and Auden.

China be China, Han Clay armies underground the First Emperor's improvements  
 on burying his armies alive  
 but Ming tombs buried excavator architects  
 & Mao officially buried 20,000,000 in Shit Death & Suicide  
 especially bilingual sophisticated physicists doctors intelligentsia  
 and anybody questioned his Imperial vision of Pure Land future communist afterworld

Russia had Czars & Stalin, everybody got drunk afterward, everyone still whispers on streetcorners

America was always democratic, lawless sheriffs shot Indians, bad men, good men, chinks Jews niggers and each other

Spain always killed bulls & loved blood, matadors & crucifixion

The Jews always complained, quetching about false gods, and erected the biggest false God, Jehovah, in middle of western civilization —

For creating the Judges the Jews are judged that's their world Karma continuing

British always had sense of superiority, class, stiff upper lip, the Queen and fuck you ducky up your bloody 'ole

The French, advanced sense of superiority, stiff back, Algeria is always indissolubly a part of La France.

We will not regret the necessity to kill you or anyone who disagrees  
 They appreciate everything wine women song modern art  
 O la la they're so smart, introduced opium cultivation  
 Indochina will always be an indissoluble addiction to La France, the Bourse

Germans had Kaisers Hitlers, orderly meticulous and rational a bunch of beasts  
 now they want Nuclear arms They're also intelligent They pride themselves on their science  
 their romantic poetry, their Black Forest mysterious full of Solitude in acid rain  
 hi tech civilization First the ovens of Auschwitz now goodbye ancient trees  
 we have to keep up with the vulgar Americans

Italy the trains never ran on time, they got good shoes & the Pope & Mafia  
 but they got good tomatoes and Angelico Beato who'd want to complain in Naples?

India for a thousand years since Allah smashed Buddha statues  
 been a mess no forests desert farmland India's India starv'd near death for centuries

In 200 years America will have a billion people & neon China  
 Computerized students will sleep six abed and hawk their mucus on the morning floor  
 before fighting to get into the shower — much less a piece of soap  
 and half stick of bacon with their petrochemical wheateas & eggs — that's because  
 we had to get back to America, let's stand up tall  
 so we can insult the rest of the world.

More! — The Moslems expansionist monotheists will go Jihad whenever they're able  
 Always their god the best god the only god the only name Allah and  
 die like a dog if you don't believe me! From Morocco to Java  
 heathen dogs and cats go barking and meow after terrific Nobodaddy

in Paradise the Western lands the Heaven Pure Land Garden of Sky  
 other side of eternal Dreamtime I vote for Australian Aborigines!  
 Let them run the world after Hi Tech's annihilated all other species & genetic strains  
 from whale to donkey sperm.

Midnite 12:49,  
December 24, 1984,  
Kumming



Inclusive, not exclusive, our sense of humor balances out the ironies. What has made it so enjoyable and satisfying to work on this magazine is my ongoing determination to engage established and emerging poets, playwrights, fiction writers and critics, plus innovative visual artists and cartoonists to help expand and enhance our collective vision of the world.

This first issue ranges from Robbie McCauley's streetwise testament to her beloved Loisaida neighborhood, to Olga Broumas' lush and complex poetry, to Will Bennett's critique of John Ashbery's "voodoo syntax," to Chris Felver's minimalist head shots from his forthcoming book, *The Poet Exposed*, from Alan Brown's bitchy and hilarious "playlet," to

Laurie Carlos' mysterious *Organdy Falsetto*, to Allen Ginsberg's sweeping trance dance poem, *World Karma*... New writers, interviews, a pull-out calendar of Poetry Project events and workshops — The Poetry Project Newsletter responds to and reflects a multicultural and diverse view of contemporary American literature.

"Venerable" yet accessible, the Poetry Project is celebrating its twentieth anniversary this year. An amazing fact if you stop to consider recent federal funding cutbacks, not to mention ongoing controversies that plague any vital arts organization... The Poetry Project as survivor is something to celebrate, along with its enormous significance as a place to explore the nature of poetry and performance through text, sound, movement, rhythm, and image. After two decades of leadership and in-

novation, the Poetry Project is one of the oldest arts organizations in the country.

Recently, I was driving around in a rented convertible in a beautiful little town in northern New Jersey. I had just accepted the position of Program Coordinator and newsletter editor for the Poetry Project. I was anxious about my new responsibilities, but also excited about the possibilities of the "newsletter." My daughter Paloma was the first to spot the shiny motorcycle as imposing and incongruous in this rural countryside as our flashy, silver Miami tacky car. So was the man with the lived-in face, black leather jacket, and faded blue jeans who slowly climbed off the motorcycle. Was it a Honda? A custom Harley? An elegant but high-strung Moto Guzzi? Could it be a t.v. apparition? Strains of the School of Cool anthem started ringing in my ears... "Walk On The Wild Side"... "LOU!" I shrieked to no one in particular, as we drove off into the New Jersey sunset. "It's Lou Reed!" My daughter giggled, delighted with my silly antics. My ghost might've been real, but only I cared about cosmic connections. The man in the leather jacket stared after us in dismay, then hurried into the safety and anonymity of the Stop & Shop Video Store.

Happy birthday to the legendary Lou, Pattis, Yokos, Kerouacs, Ginsbergs, Lerois, Burroughs, Annes, Teds, and so many others who have haunted, sung, performed, and read at St. Mark's Church... Happy birthday, Poetry Project! And to all those who worked so hard —

Thank you.

Jessica Hagedorn  
Editor



## Eileen Myles Ahead of the Rest

(a stream of consciousness rap on the Poetry Project's 20th birthday)

Ever since I've been working at the Poetry Project, I've been haunted by the specter of its 20th anniversary, which is upon us this September. It reminds me of National Austrian Year in Robert Musil's *Man Without Qualities*. All the characters (well, most of them, I think) made glowingly empty speeches about the beautiful abyss which was upon them, and how it might best be celebrated so that everyone would be moved, yet no one need really notice. WHAT? Poetry is having an anniversary so we should bake her a big cake all year?

I just finished Robert Graves' *Goodbye To All That*, which mostly dealt with trench warfare, but also talked about "being a poet." Being a poet is not like being an artist, Graves thinks, but refers to a whole way of life. In reference to a youthful encounter with T. E. Lawrence, Graves says: "Lawrence envisaged the poet's secret as a technical mastery of words rather than as a particular mode of living and thinking. I had not yet learned enough to be able to dispute this."

I was walking up 12th Street a month or so ago, and I was feeling lousy. This grey-haired man with a ponytail, a camera

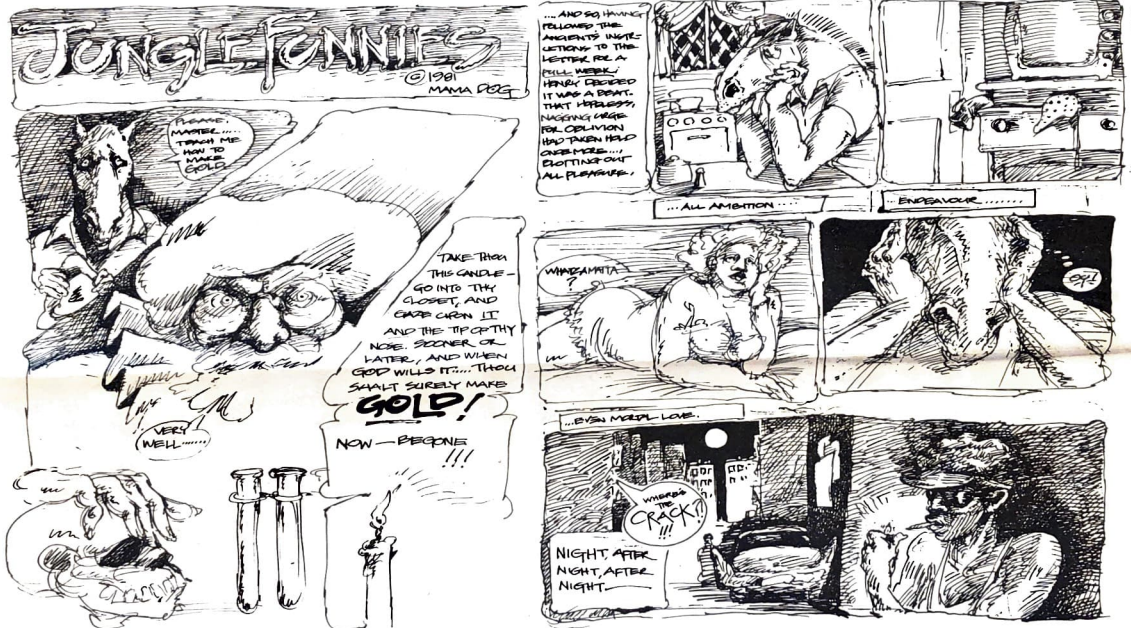
on his arm, and a friend on either side took a double take when I turned on to Avenue A. "Are you an artist?" he shot at me. Stunned, I said, "Uh, no..." I was sure he meant a painter, someone worth photographing. When he passed, I kind of slapped my forehead, like they do in the movies. FOOL! I thought, whipping back around the corner. "I'm a POET!" I yelled, in my own mental replay. Too late, his Rebeks were several blocks gone by now. What a jerk, I thought—I play St. Peter to my own Jesus.

In the 80's, when money is sexy and art is money, we are talking about the celibate of the art world, the hermit. Am I whining on the Poetry Project's 20th year? Who cares if the

hermit has a party?

I would like to begin this debate, rather than end it—being Austrian enough at least to know when to shut up. We are postponing the Poetry Project 20th Anniversary Conference until May 6-10, 1987. We are open to suggestions for this event—panels, readings, performances, and talks which would occur during the conference. And of course, your contributions are more than welcome...

(Eileen Myles is Artistic Director of the Poetry Project. Her collection of poems, *Sappho's Boat*, was published by Little Caesar Press.)



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Interested advertisers contact **Jessica, Deborah** or **Tim** at 674-0910.

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### CELEBRATE OUR 20TH ANNIVERSARY!

Yes, I want to be a member of the Poetry Project, Inc.

\_\_\_\$50: Full Member, 1 Year \_\_\_\$75: 2 Year Membership \_\_\_\$150: Sponsor \_\_\_\$300: Benefactor  
\_\_\_\$500: Patron \_\_\_\$1000: Lifetime Member \_\_\_\$25: Supporting Member

No, I do not wish to be a member at this time, but here is my gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
All contributions are tax-deductible. Please make all checks payable to the Poetry Project, Inc.

**One Year Membership (\$50):** A season pass to all Poetry Project events—including the 20th Anniversary Symposium, all readings and performances, "talks" on poetics, writing workshops, and the New Year's Day Marathon Reading. Plus, a year's subscription to the **Poetry Project Newsletter!**

**Two Year Membership (\$75):** All of the above for two full years...at a savings of \$25.

**Sponsor (\$150):** Two passes to all Poetry Project events, a one-year subscription to the **Poetry Project Newsletter**, and a free copy of *The World Record*, an amazing two-record set of historic readings at The Poetry Project from 1969 to 1980.

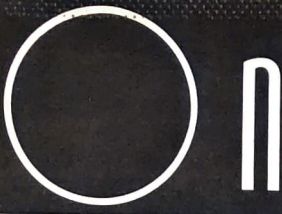
**Benefactor (\$300):** Four passes to all Poetry Project events, a subscription to the **Poetry Project Newsletter**, a copy of *The World Record*, and grateful public acknowledgement.

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**Lifetime Membership (\$1000):** All of the above benefits and gifts, and grateful public acknowledgement.

**Special Supporting Membership (\$25):** A subscription to the **Poetry Project Newsletter** and free admission to the New Year's Day Marathon Reading celebrating 20 years of poetry at St. Mark's Church.





## Ask Jose

Dear Jose:

I recently moved to the lower lower East Side, and desperately need your advice and consolation. I borrowed money to buy my studio coop, and as soon as I unpacked, my problems began. The super's disappeared, and the new guy the Board hired calls himself a "performance poet." He's never around when you need him.

Last night, my walls were literally sweating—moisture was seeping everywhere, and tiny mushrooms were sprouting where the plaster on my ceiling was peeling off. I went to see my neighbor upstairs, who handed me a stethoscope and told me to "listen." What the hell was I supposed to be listening for? Of course, that's exactly what I mean. When I'm handed a stethoscope and told to listen to walls, I don't ask questions.

Which brings me to my other problem. I'm well-read, and I have excellent taste in shoes. I still haven't met Mr. Right. Does he exist? My friends accuse me of being too picky, or "unrealistic," or arrogant. They even call me a "neo virgin" to my face! who are they to talk? I try, I really do. My friends should spend a couple of hours with these guys I meet!!! We go to movies, we go to concerts, we go to poetry readings, we eat dinner...The guys are smart, they look okay, they try hard—but nothing seems to click for me. After one of these long earnest evenings, they all start looking like marmosets.

I can't help it. I want a baby. I want to be sick with love. I want reassurance. I blame myself for everything. Am I wrong? Am I ordinary? What should I do?

Daria Sitwell-Stafford  
Avenue C

Daria dear,

Do you mean coop or co-op? There is a difference. I suggest you complain to your co-op board about that incompetent poet-super of yours, and call a plumber immediately!

By the way, how do you like my little neighborhood? Are you a lawyer, curator, fashion designer, or videographer? Do you run a gallery? Is it non-profit and alternative, funded by NYSICA? Or are you bony and cool like steel, in business strictly for profit?

As far as your love life goes, I truly sympathize. There's nothing left for you to do but turn your dilemma into art. Have you considered writing poems or minimalist short stories? If you want my frank opinion, you ain't missing much. Love is a great high, for the first few weeks. Then it becomes like an old apartment. You walk by, you look up, you shake your head. You wonder how you could've lived there so long.

Babies are a separate issue, a subject I tend to avoid because I get sentimental.

Adios,  
JOSE

(Editor's note: Jose gets around. Problems with love? Real estate? Employment? Problems with your skin, your bones, your art? Just write JOSE, c/o PPINK, The Poetry Project, Inc., St. Mark's Church, 2nd Avenue & 10th St., NYC 10003.)



photo: Robert Flynn

## ... Richard Elovich, Curator of the "Monday Night Performance Series"

This year, Richard plans a series of panels beginning in December, composed of writers, performance artists, curators, administrators, and critics... The topic is the state of downtown performance art, and if you think that's opening a big can of worms...

Richard stresses the idea of text-oriented performance because of the Poetry Project's history as a writer's space... "A lot of clubs in the East Village have closed," he says, "so the Monday Night Series offers a venue for developing new works and works-in-progress..." Elovich encourages more artists to work collaboratively.

In October, he plans an evening of provocative programming... Post Patrick Downey, scheduled on the same bill with DanceNoise and the band 3 Teens Kill 4 No Motive... The band was originally formed by visual artists and poet David Wojnarowicz... The interarts connections are endless.

### PPINK wants to know: How to draw in younger poets and emerging writers?

Richard sometimes draws readers through the numerous workshops at the Poetry Project, and through the "Open Reading Series," which will be held on one particular Monday of every month, beginning in November. Performance is an open arena, according to Richard Elovich. "If you want to take a step from the written page—it's performing, and all that performing implies." He's quick to add, however: "I'm not encouraging people to put on costumes or do high kicks—I'm talking about the responsibility of engaging an audience...Poetry comes, after all, from an oral tradition."

HEAR, HERE.

I'm looking for plays for the St. Mark's Theater Reading series. They can be any length, style or structure, the sence this is poets theater, they should have a concern for language (at least!). I can promise you a reading with (mostly) professional actors; more extensive productions are possible — it's up to you. Send scripts to: Elinor Nauen, c/o The Poetry Project, 10th St. & 2nd Ave., NYC 10003.

CONGRATULATIONS! ON THE BIRTH OF A SON, NICOLAS FABIAN, BORN 7/22/86 TO FORMER NEWSLETTER EDITOR JAMES RUGGIA AND HIS WIFE, SHARON.

## TOMMY TWOHEAD

© 1986 BY JOHN KENNY





# A VIOLENT SONG: Women Poets From Central America

by Zoe Anglesey

"They say that over there, / in a songless place / where there are many mansions, / in that absent place, / where nothing seems to be the matter, / lives a wicked man / named Mr. Reagan. / Once I saw his picture in the paper. / What a hideous man he is with gizzards / that wobble like a death-rattle. / Chicken-head Reagan is what we call him here, / but in private, we like to call him shithead..."

Excerpt from a poem by Bernadine Guevara Corvera, Age 16, living in a refugee camp in Honduras. Translated by Susan Matoba and Gina Caruso.

"Blood" and "death" are possibly the two most used words in poetry by women in Central America. The reason for this, in brief, is past and present: in Guatemala, there have been a half million deaths since the U.S.-C.I.A. coup in 1954, plus a million displaced from Maya lands because of massacres and "counterinsurgency operations" in the 1980's. In El Salvador, there are 70,000 dead and the countryside outside the capital is a daily dumping ground for U.S. bombs. Honduras has over seven U.S. military bases with tens of thousands of U.S. personnel.

The poets are the first to call this U.S. presence an "occupation." In other words, the Big Stick is as bloody as ever. The struggle for peace continues. The poetry does not ignore this history.

In the Spring of 1987, Granite Press will publish a bilingual anthology entitled *Central American Women's Poetry For Peace*. The concept for this anthology grew out of a question I raised at the close of the Central American Writers' Conference held in San Jose, Costa Rica in August, 1985: "What should be done for Central America in the United States?" Repeatedly, the answer was: "Promote peace."

Publisher Be Gates and I see the anthology and associated poetry readings as acts of solidarity with women who have little means of having their voices heard in the United States. Unlike Latin American writing, writing from Central America has not been translated and published here. Within the last ten years, anthologies of women's poetry have been published in Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Panama, but only in small editions that seldom circulate beyond each country's borders.

Some of the poets chosen for the Granite Press anthology have over twenty books to their credit. Quite a number are prize-winning poets. Most of the poets have more than one unpublished manuscript since recent poetry has little chance of being published with Central America impoverished by indebtedness and The War. Being bilingual, the Granite Press anthology will be read not only in Central American countries, but by Spanish-speaking people in the United States.

I met poets early this year in El Salvador, Panama, Costa Rica, and Nicaragua, and on previous trips in 1985 and 1983, when I went to Honduras and Guatemala. I have been gathering poetry by Central Americans since I lived in Guatemala in 1968. When the time came to publish announcements seeking submissions, it was quite easy, with help from poet friends.

Staying within the framework of letting Central Americans speak for themselves, each country's section of poetry will be preceded by an essay written by a woman, establishing a context for the poetry that follows. Poets will be introduced by a short literary biography and a photograph. For those poets who wish to remain anonymous, or who may suffer endangerment because of a photograph, Jean Marie Simon, Susan Meiselas, and Marilyn Anderson will contribute photos indicating a moment of life in these countries. Margaret Randall's photographs of several Nicaraguan poets will also be included.

There are over fifty poets and the same number of translators. Among the translators are Maureen Ahern, Magda Blogin, Suzanne Jill Levine, Ellen Watson, Janine Pommy Vega, Kathleen Weaver, and Elinor Randall.

The majority of translators for this anthology are poets themselves, including Carolyn Forché, Sharon Doubiago, Denise Levertov, Jessica Hagedorn, Susan Sherman, Anne Waldman, Carolyn Wright, Patricia Goedicke, and C.D. Wright. I trust their powers to get the strict meaning of a poem to the level of poetry in English. Poets recreate the visceral, the tropes, the magic in language, and accept having to identify and compose with the elements that make poetry. These poet/translators are committed to language in its inclusive forms. For example, they will not translate "hombres" as "men" unless the word means that. If it means "people," they will find a way to express this minus gendered, archaic vocabulary.

Two Guatemalan poets sent messages separate from their submissions: "It is difficult to try and write today in this country, anything—because we've all been through it, we're sick with fear..." And the other: "We have very dangerous repression here. I'm afraid to answer all your questions. I'm afraid I'll be killed..."

Luz Mendez de la Vega does not ignore the outcome of her country's repression: "Anonymous corpse/ among the thousands/ gunned down in Guatemala. / I will hold your face/ inside my rage that erupts. / I will cradle your image/ with my violent song. / I will close your eyes/ and bring together your lips/ with my two soft hands..."

Poets from El Salvador, Nicaragua, Panama and Costa Rica will participate in a benefit for the anthology sponsored by the Poetry Project at St. Mark's Church on November 14. Granite Press will present poets from the anthology in a special reading in conjunction with the Latin American Book Fair held May 1-3 in 1987. In the Fall of '87, a national tour of yet another group of poets from the anthology is being planned.

Given the literary climate in some quarters here in the United States, there may be the stock reaction against the poets in *Central American Women's Poetry For Peace* because of their rhetoric and unabashed assertiveness to integrate the political reality of their countries into their poems. If their revelations are not taken into account, the purpose of this anthology will be overlooked.

ZOE ANGLESEY from the Pacific Northwest living in New York, has made frequent trips to Central America since 1968. Her translations have appeared in Poetry East, Fiction International, In Our Hearts and Minds (Empty Bowl, 1986), Rattle Moon. Recent poems are in Electrum, The New England Review, Heresies, Ploughshares and Open Places anthology edited by Carolyn Forché. Her book is Something More Than Force... (Adastra, 1983). She has translated books of poems by Roberto Sosa (Honduras), Ruben Vela and Etelvina Astrada (Argentina), Carmen Varianjo (Costa Rica). Her unpublished manuscripts are Climate of Deep Waters, Is It Dangerous and Central To America.

## Poems From The Erotic Left

Ana Maria Rodas  
(translated by Zoe Anglesey)

I know  
I'm not going to be anything but  
a guerrilla of love.  
I'm placed somewhere  
within the erotic left.  
Shooting bullet after bullet  
against the system.  
Wasting strength and time  
preaching an old-hat gospel.  
I am going to end up like that otro loco  
the one caught  
at the end of his hope in the Bolivian Sierras.  
But since my struggle  
isn't useful politically to men  
they will never publish my diary  
nor set up production for popular consumption  
posters  
and pins with my portrait.

How you must be laughing now  
about the things I've said  
my candor  
my passion  
my anger.  
At the dreams that for me  
meant everything  
and they only filled your need  
to fill up empty space and time  
in your madman's schedule.

Poets are famous  
for utilizing soft words.  
For speaking about love, about melancholy,  
about blue skies, the vague horizon.  
Or I am not a poet  
or I put my colleagues on the spot.  
What a shame I'm not ashamed of what I say.

Revolutionary: tonight  
I will not be in your bed.  
Don't be surprised with love's subversion  
by that old master.

You are so cocky about how correct you are  
and so worried about social problems.  
Two-faced you overlook  
that in your house  
you trace to the t  
the role model from the best of tyrants.

### Poetry Invitational

Art and the Vietnam Era: The Politics of Memory will be the theme of the 1987 Steinman Arts Festival sponsored by St. Lawrence University, Canton, New York. As part of its activities the festival invites Veterans and civilians who served in Vietnam to submit poetry dealing with the Vietnam experience, written during or subsequent to serving.

Three selected poets will be invited to read their work on the St. Lawrence University campus during the festival. Accepted entries will be published in a festival catalogue. Honorariums will be awarded to the three invited poets.

Conditions for acceptance:

- Materials submitted cannot be returned
- By submitting material the writer is automatically granting permission for possible printing or publishing by the festival
- Postmarked no later than December 1, 1986
- Signed statement verifying that one did serve in Vietnam

Work will be juried by a committee of Vietnam Veterans.

Submissions should be sent to:

Tom and Nellie Coakley  
Dept. of Economics  
St. Lawrence University  
Canton, New York 13617

## Launderette Dorothy Barnhouse

The boy is eating potato chips. He sticks his tongue out at the girl and she laughs. Her teeth have lots of space between them, but her lips curl nice. Her cheekbones rise a little. She kisses the boy, cracks her gum. They're waiting for their laundry to dry. The boy is jiggling his leg rapidly up and down. His heel skims the floor. The girl's eyes go all over the launderette, flickering restless like blue flames.

Two children look up at the boy and the girl, monitor the mood, follow as best they can. They say yuck at the ugly potato chips, and, fingers in mouths, cast their big eyes down in shyness at the kiss.

The girl bumps a cigarette from the boy. Reaches deep into his front pants pocket for the lighter. Takes her time there. He widens his chest with a breath, raises his eyebrows, holds the girl's gaze for a moment.

The girl licks a red sweatshirt from one of the children, wraps it around the boy's neck, pulls him closer. The boy pretends the tiny garment has attacked him. He cries aargh, rolls his eyes, struggles free, trips over one of the children who is crouched, watching, beneath his legs. The child cries, is offended, and cries some more.

The dryer opens in the middle of the cycle. The contents spill to the floor. Two teddy bears also spill, heavy and beige on top of the fluffy bright clothing. The boy points and laughs. The girl swears, brings her cigarette to her mouth. Her hand hovers, barely waiting through the drag before she pulls the butt away and drops it. The filter is red from her lips, a darker red than the top of her pointed shoe that steps on the smoldering end. Same step that she urges to move toward the dryer. "Help me, asshole," she says.

The boy goes to buy some soda. Asks the girl for money, says "beep beep" as he steps around her to the door. The two children flutter after him, littered papers on a windy street. When the boy returns he hands the girl a soda. Sticks the bottle between her legs where her tight jeans are very tight. She slaps his hand, scolds him with his name. Says it slow, like it's a dare or else a question. He grins and calls her fatso.

DOROTHY BARNHOUSE is a short story writer currently enrolled in Columbia University's MFA program.



# ON HER OWN: An Interview With Publisher Nancy Bereano of Firebrand Press

by Deborah Artman

I call this the counting problem. I count. It started back in school with a course in Feminist Literary Criticism. I had one Eureka! day where I went home and stared at my much-prized collection of poetry and fiction. I began to count the women. I panicked. Where were they? I looked at tables of contents in books with titles like *Contemporary American Poetry*, *Great American Fiction*—you know the story. That moment when your concept of your personal taste and literary vision shatters.

You count how many women writers are reviewed in the Sunday Times Book Review. How many women writers are in bookstore windows, bestseller lists, giving readings. Never enough.

Sound familiar? Well, there's good news.

Nancy Bereano, former Editor of the Feminist Series at Crossing Press, is making her mark with her own publishing company—Firebrand Books.

"I've always wanted to expand the definition of what's possible within a feminist and lesbian press," Bereano says. "Firebrand is committed to publishing quality titles in a variety of genres that offer positive images, and I don't always mean nice images, but tangible positive images of the ways women can be in the world."

With 11 titles on its list after 18 months, "variety of genres" means just that. Firebrand has an open submission policy and Bereano will consider poetry, fiction, detective stories, science fiction, "accessible theory," courtroom drama, "maybe somebody will do an interesting biography, who knows?"

More good news: "I like to publish a lot of women of color," Bereano says.

We unearthed some recent Firebrand books from the Great File here at St. Mark's—*Living As A Lesbian*, an uneven but worthwhile collection of poems by the popular Cheryl Clarke, and *Tender Warriors*, a novel by Rachel Guido deVries (this one I didn't read).

Firebrand publishes a "Sparks Pamphlet Series," too. The first in the series is the handy *Words to the Wise: a writer's guide to feminist and lesbian periodicals and publishers* by Andrea Fleck Clardy which was a surprise hit at a recent National Women's Studies Conference.

"I'm particularly eager to get my hands on *The Sun Is Not Merciful*, a book of short stories by Native American writer Anna Lee Walters, winner of a 1985 American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation.

"I'm not sure Anna Lee would even call herself a feminist," Bereano tells me, "we've never talked about that. But I think there's a lot of information in that book for a feminist and lesbian community about questions of survival, loyalty, flexibility and tradition—which she deals with in a contemporary tribal setting.

The tricky question, then—how does Bereano define feminist and lesbian writing?"

"It gets harder and harder for me to define it, although it gets easier and easier for me to feel when it's right," she says. "I think the issues are very complex.

"The longer I've been a political person and learning through the work that I've been doing, the more I understand that the lines are not easily drawn.

"What I like most about an open submission policy is that it enables me to see what's being written and to not preclude judgement. I'll consider any idea that somebody has."

Even books by men?

"Well, that's been asked and it's been asked in very specific terms by gay men who I've approached for funding. They've said, 'If you're not going to publish men, why should we give you money?'"

"I have a response to that which is that gay men need feminism in order to survive. Whether or not they know that they need it, I know that they need it.

"No, I would not publish a manuscript by a man. My feeling is that there are many places that men can go to have their work done and that there are relatively few places that women can go."

At a time when we hear of more and more small presses closing down or selling their souls to commercialism, Firebrand, Bereano's first solo venture, seems too good to be true. Funded primarily by private sources (with a little help from NYSCA), the press puts out 6 titles a year and Bereano feels no pressure to publish anything she doesn't love.

"I'm financially responsible for the company and that is very anxiety producing," she says, "but I like not having somebody looking over my shoulder. I don't spend nearly as much time worrying about mistakes and consequently, I feel a lot more alive."

What to look forward to? In September—*Getting Home Alive* by Rosario Morales and Aurora Levins Morales—a mother-daughter team who are "Puerto Rican, American, Jewish, lefties, feminists and excellent writers with different perspectives on a lot of the same issues."

Also in the Fall, *Dykes To Watch Out For*, a cartoon book by the "very keen" observer Alison Bechdel whose work has appeared in *WomanNews*, *Off Our Backs* and *Gay Community*

News.

Next Spring, keep your eyes peeled for *Shoulders*, "a terrific 'beach' book with good sex" from Texan writer Georgia Cottrell.

And down the line—Bereano plans to do a wall calendar called "Spirited Women" with photographs and quotes by women.

I'm particular to the Firebrand buttons that say: "Every society honors its live conformists and its dead troublemakers" and "I write just like a woman."

That's 11 titles and counting.

## Revolutions Kimiko Hahn

for Patricia

Forbidden to learn Chinese  
the women wrote in the language  
of their islands  
and so Japanese  
became the currency of high aesthetics  
for centuries  
as did the female persona: the pine  
the longing. This is the truth.

(We can rise above those needles.)

The red silk from my grandmother  
amazes me. Think of the peasant  
immigrating from rice fields  
to black volcanic soil. The black beaches.  
The children black  
in this sunlight  
against the parent's will or aspirations.

(Anywhere else  
girls of mixed marriages would be prostitutes or courtesans.)

I want those words  
that gave women de facto power,  
those religious evocations: dreams so potent  
"she became pregnant" or "men killed"  
or "the mistress died in pain."  
I connect to that century  
as after breath is knocked out  
we suck it back in.

The words the men stole after all  
to write about a daughter's death  
or their own (soft) thigh  
belongs to us—to me—  
though translation is a border  
we look over or into;  
sometimes a familiar noise  
("elegant confusion"). But can *meaning*  
travel  
the way capital moves  
like oil in the Alaskan pipeline  
or in tankers in the Strait of Hormuz?  
Can those sounds move like that?  
Yes. But we don't understand.

But we don't know  
what it means to speak freely  
even to ourselves. Patricia,  
fertility is not the antithesis of virility.  
I can't help it.

If I could translate the culture  
women cultivate  
I would admit to plum  
and plumb.

*I always begin with a season.  
Like: snow and plums in the wooden bowl  
make me love him. How  
I warm one in my fist  
then lick it until the skin  
grows so tender it bursts  
beneath my breathing.  
The yellow is brilliant.  
The snow is warm.*

Some of our lessons issue from song  
because there are never enough  
older sisters

especially from the South via Detroit

where we look for a model  
with the desperation of a root—

where a bride is a state—

where *heat lightning* is pronounced:  
lie down on my breast  
so your tongue and teeth reach my tit  
and I can—

where yes—

I didn't learn the diction from the Classics  
but rather transistor radios, Confidence  
in my body also. After years—

the confidence that gives and gives  
and is not afraid to take either.

Exploring the words means plunging down  
not skimming across  
or watching whitecaps however loudly.  
Not balking at fear even:  
the walls are filled with sounds,  
the windows, with sorrow.

Revolution for example is the soft  
exact orbit of planet, moon, seed.  
Also seizing the means of production  
for our class.

Where does that come from?  
*It all begins with women*, she said.

Like the warp and woof of cloth.

And how there's no "free verse" so we'll search  
for the subtle structures: the poetic closure,  
the seven kinds of ambiguity, etc.

*Not tonight dear.*

How it's not so sad really  
for a husband or a wife  
to come alone.

Komachi's reputation came from legend:  
the 99th time a lover visited her door  
(the night before she would let him enter)  
he died.

*That's the breaks.*

In a patriarchy is such cruelty cruelty  
or survival? Is  
the father to blame for ugly daughters, too?  
for the unruly ones?

Come sit by the radiator and open window.  
When the baby hiccupped inside her  
her whole body shook.

After birth is not a time or reform  
it belongs to a separation we turn towards.

KIMIKO HAHN has been published in numerous literary journals  
and the anthologies, *Breaking Silence* and *Arts Against Apartheid*.  
At present she is editing a poetry anthology of Asian American  
women for *Asian Women United*, and received a 1986 N.E.A.  
fellowship.



SEPT  
OCT



Diane DiPrima by Chris Felver

NOV

28  
SUN

**3rd Annual AMES Literary Benefit**  
—Salvadoran Woman's Association

Featuring Women Writers From The Lower East Side...suggested donation: \$5. For details and information, call 673-8204. Co-sponsored by The Poetry Project.

8

**Diane DiPrima & Audre Lorde**

Diane DiPrima is the author of *Revolutionary Letters, Loba, Dinners and Nightmares, and Selected Poems, 1956-76*. Audre Lorde's most recent book is *Our Dead Behind Us*, published by W.W. Norton. A self-described "troublemaker, black lesbian feminist," she is professor of English at Hunter College.

15

**A Reading in Celebration of Frank O'Hara**

Friends, fans, family, followers, and fanatics gather to celebrate the work of Frank O'Hara, whose tragic death coincided with the founding of the Poetry Project and whose work has perhaps been more influential than any other poet in the history of this organization. Suggested donation \$7.

22

**James Laughlin & Rosmarie Waldrop**

Legendary publisher of *New Directions*, whose *Selected Poems, 1935-85* was just published by City Lights, James Laughlin will grace the Poetry Project podium for the first time. Rosmarie Waldrop is a renowned translator, publisher of *Burning Deck Press*, educator at Brown University, and author of *Streets Enough To Welcome Snow*, published by Station Hill.

29

**Paul Hoover on "The Reader's Egotism"**

The first lecturer in this year's Talk Series, Paul Hoover is the author of *Idea*, forthcoming from *The Figures*, and *Nervous Songs*, published by L'Epervier Press. FREE.

5

**Elinor Nauen & Johnny Stanton**

Elinor Nauen edits romantic fiction, coordinates the *Play Series* at *St. Mark's*, and is the glitzy author of *Cars*. Johnny Stanton is the author of *Mangled Hands*, from *Sun & Moon Press*. He co-authored *Our Version of Heaven*, a play, with Bob Rosenthal.

12

**Bobby Byrd & Howard Hart**

From El Paso, Texas, Bobby Byrd is the author of *Pomegranates*, published by *Tamarisk*, and *Here*, from *North Atlantic*. Considered a "jazz poet," Howard Hart's *Selected Poems, Six Sets, 1951-83* was published last year to much acclaim. He hails from San Francisco.

14

**Benefit for the Central American Women's Anthology**  
Granite Press

Suggested donation: \$5. 7 PM. M.C.s: Luisa Valenzuela & Grace Paley. Co-sponsored by The Poetry Project.

F R I

19

**Rose Lesniak & Emily XYZ**

Rose Lesniak is the author of *Throwing Spitzballs at the Nuns*, published by *Toothpaste Press*. She is the matrix of *OUT THERE Productions*, which produces poetry videos. Poet & performance artist Emily XYZ's recording of "Who Shot Sadat" spured on near riots at numerous East Village clubs.



Audre Lorde



Lisa Jones & Rodeo Caldonis

All readings & talks begin at 8 PM.

Suggested donation: \$5.00

Programs subject to change. For more information, call 674-0910.

Artistic Director for The Poetry Project: Eileen Myles

Program Coordinator: Jessica Hagedorn

Monday Night Performance Series Coordinator: Richard Elovich



3 Teens Kill 4 No Motive



**6** Ethyl Eichelberger Presents  
Lola Montes

**13** Tim Pratt  
Laurie Harris  
Peter Cherches

**20** Anne Seagrave  
Patrick Downey  
3 Teens Kill 4 No Motive

**27** Lenora Champagne "Fractured Juliet"  
Ain Gordon

**3** Open Readings

**10** Steve & Mark (Steve Buscemi and  
Mark Boone, Jr.)  
Yoshiko Chuma shows film:  
"The School of Hard Knocks"

**17** Dennis Cooper  
reads from a new novel

**24** Lisa Jones "Combination Skin"  
(with Alva Rogers and others)  
Laurie Carlos "Organdy Falsetto"  
(with Robbie McCauley  
and others)



Laurie Carlos

Photo: Miki Wright

**Susie Timmons**  
"Advanced Poetry" Workshop  
Tuesday eves. 7PM begins October 14

Susie Timmons was a founder of the New York Poetry Calendar along with Bob Holman and Sara Miles...her book of poems, *Hog Wild*, was published by Frontward Books...she edited and published BINGO magazine, and edited the 39th issue of THE WORLD for the Poetry Project...her poems have been published in numerous magazines and anthologies.

**Jaime Manrique**  
"Bilingual Fiction & Prose" Workshop  
Friday eves. 7PM begins October 17

Jaime Manrique was born in Colombia, South America...his first book of poems received Colombia's National Poetry Award...and his widely-acclaimed novel, *Colombian Gold: A Novel Of Power And Corruption*, was published by Clarkson N. Potter and Avon Books...optioned for the movies by "Kiss Of The Spiderwoman" director Hector Babenco, and translated into several languages.

**Laurie Carlos**  
"Performance Poetry" Workshop  
Saturday noon begins October 18

Laurie Carlos: actress, writer, director, and singer, her most recent performance piece "Nonsectarian Conversations With The Dead" was produced at the New Federal Theater...co-wrote songs and sang with Jessica Hagedorn's Gangster Choir Band...was original member of the Broadway and PBS cast of Ntozake Shange's "For Colored Girls..." and taught an ongoing Performance Poetry workshop with Jessica Hagedorn for three years at Basement Workshop...her latest piece, "Organdy Falsetto" will be performed in November at the Poetry Project. Her workshop is designed to meet the needs of both writers and performers...get the writers on their feet, performing...and performers on their asses. writing!



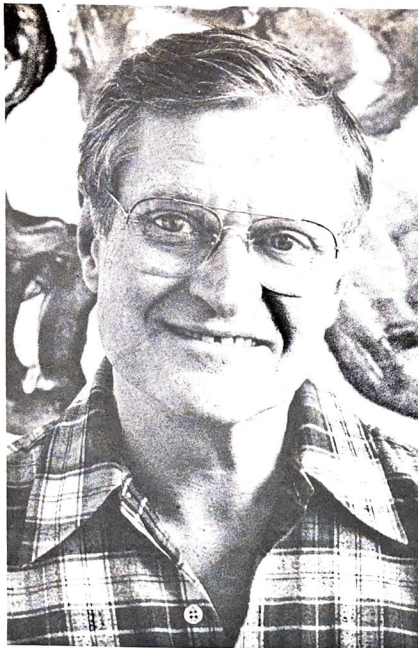
Lenora Champagne

Photo: Doreen Ann McAdams

THE POETRY  
PROJECT  
AT  
ST MARK'S  
CHURCH

All workshops run at least 8 weeks. \$50 registration fee includes membership privileges and admission to Poetry Project events and all workshops for the year. For more information, call 674-0910.





John Ashbery by Chris Falver

# John Ashbery's LANDSCAPE

A review of *Selected Poems* by John Ashbery, Viking, 349 pages, \$22.95

by Will Bennett

*"But no one found the secret of the one whose unquiet eye never left the white window frame, and, in the curtains billowed by his nervous breathing, the one who came there only to see and not be seen."*

from *The Sound Of The Sea* by Pierre Reverdy, translated by Susan Plunkett

John Ashbery has a magic window. For Ashbery, what's seen has the greatest importance. Other senses are less useful, seeming special effects. This reliance on sight is neither a challenge nor a limitation, not strategy but his primary mode of personal experience. What one sees is thick with meaning, perspective ordered in importance.

This is vision at its most absolute. The landscape is everywhere, a quantum altered by average observation. City, country, rooms, memory. It's ubiquitous, often egregious, always undeniable. Yet we've all read poems in which the scene was ignored in favor of less tangible music, those more readily grasped mental abstracts protected by their nature from distinct qualification. An easier job, surely, to go straight to the heart of the heart, prattling blindly and unaware of the faceless earth and anonymous actors which move upon it. Much tougher—yet so much richer—to perceive the meaning locked in the splendor of reflected light, the world we see. Like the man in "The Painter": "Sitting between the sea and the buildings/ He enjoyed painting the sea's portrait." Transitory to the point of vanishing, the waves of the sea are nonetheless there to be seen and have their meaning unlocked by one who is willing to be patient, to experience the moments of confluence between elements of the natural world and its human inhabitants.

Ashbery is such a poet of confluences. The world seen through his window is a place where meaning can arise from nature's seeming randomness, sometimes bursting upon recognition, as in "Some Trees":

*"... you and I  
Are suddenly what the trees try  
To tell us we are:  
That their being merely there  
Means something: that soon  
We may touch, love, explain." (p. 19)*

At other times, Ashbery's gift for divining the world's secret meanings occurs gently, as in "Summer":

*"For the time being the shadow is ample  
and hardly seen, divided among the twigs of a tree,  
The trees of a forest, just as life is divided up  
Between you and me, and among all the others out there.*

*And the thinning-out phase follows  
The period of reflection. And suddenly, to be dying  
Is not a little or mean or cheap thing..." (p. 90)*

These intimations of coherence in the landscape, as Ashbery reveals them, are magnified—or obscured—by the human presence; the "you" and "we" left unnamed in his poems. Ashbery's viewpoint, while usually contemplative, is almost never solitary. His discoveries of the landscape are made *en partie*. Why not? We always have our friends, neighbors, lovers, company with which we view the scene. And Ashbery shrewdly uses these presences to clarify or occlude the landscape. The voices of others sometimes work as camouflage, injected by an apparently random ear.

Elsewhere, the effect is one of engaging goofiness, as in "Farm Implements and Rutabagas In a Landscape," or in the half-eager, half-disgruntled lordliness of tourists in "The Skaters" (only two sections, one annoyingly truncated, are reproduced in this book). People, whether appearing as quoted voices or as referents, function as ironic counterpoints to Ashbery's own lush observations.

People and their statements and maneuvers are not by a long stretch the only tactic used to monitor and sometimes chill the heat of recognition generated by the profound character of so much of what Ashbery sees out there. Single words, parenthetical phrases, exclamations and the interjection of slangy clashing statements drawn from the daily grind all serve to create a voodoo syntax that wisely distances both Ashbery and the reader.

It is the proper job of any volume of "selected poems" to reveal both through the author's choices of poems from past collections and the panoramic view of the author's career that a one-volume amalgam provides—the changing concerns and trends of the writer and his/her art. Ashbery's *Selected Poems* is no exception. We see, for one thing, that in recent years this chilly conversational

tone of voice has become increasingly important to him, while there's always been a note of teasing cynicism in his work, the note has become a flippant *leitmotif*. In earlier work, Ashbery's linguistic ice cubes were used as a levelling tactic, a ploy that grew out of his terrifyingly agile use of poetic forms and sand-in-the-face syntax. The flinty honed wit that gleams through earlier poems like "A Boy," "Our Youth," or "Faust" derived from pushing the mechanics of language to defiant tolerances rather than the simple iciness of vision of some of his more recent work. An often rending witfulness shines through those early poems, imbuing a daunting prospect with quirky humanity.

*"... And coffee grounds,  
And the wonder of hands, and the wonder of the day  
When the child discovers her first dead hand.*

*Do you know it? Hasn't she  
Observed you too? Haven't you been observed to her?  
My, haven't the flowers been? Is the evil  
In it? What window? What did you say there?*

*Heh? Eh? Our youth is dead.  
From the minute we discover it with eyes closed  
Advancing into mountain light.  
Ouch... You will never have that young boy..."*  
—from *Our Youth*, p. 37

But an edgy bitterness has crept into the content of the newer poems, a reining-in of feeling in order to "remain a sane, yet sophisticated person." There's a kind of self-deprecating backhand to the emotions in these later poems that can leave the syntactical pyrotechnics sounding hollow:

*"We have the looks you want:  
The gonzo (musculature seemingly wired to the stars);  
Colors like lead, khaki and pomegranate; things you  
Put in your hair, with the whole panoply of the past:  
Landscape embroidery, complete sets of this and that.  
It's bankruptcy, the human haul,  
The shining bulging nets lifted out of the sea, and always a few refugees  
Dropping back into the no-longer-mirthful kingdom..."*  
—from *Purists Will Object*, p. 310

Here, landscape is mere embroidery, the "human haul" is bankrupt, and life is cheap. Many of these later poems present a scene where death is the new "twist" and life is something to be broken out of, the carapace of last year's fashion. Neat, stylish, knowing and self-referential, these poems survey a landscape grayed by a wily yet undefined disappointment.

Seeing the view from John Ashbery's window like this, all at once, and through the lens of poems he's chosen is both an exhilarating and melancholy experience. Exhilarating, because in a few lines he can vivify the earth's surface, pack it with meaning and portent. Melancholy, because his vision seems to be darkening—not with any blood-simple emotion like hatred, rage, or remorse—but with a hardened ennui.

*"But it is the same thing we are all seeing,  
Our world. Go after it,  
Go get it boy, says the man holding the stick.  
Eat, says the hunger, and we plunge blindly in again,  
Into the chamber behind the thought.  
We can hear it, even think it, but can't get disentangled  
from our brains.*

*Here, I am holding the winning ticket. Over here.  
But it is all the same color again, as though the climate  
Dyed everything the same color. It's more practical,  
Yet the landscape, those billboards, age as rapidly as before."*  
—from *Tone Poem*, p. 274

Will Bennett's third book of poems, *Zero*, was published in 1984 by Telephone Books. Forthcoming books include *Sun, Moon, and Stars* and *Poems From The Terminal Hotel*. He will read at the Poetry Project later this season.



Noteworthy publications reviewed:

- Al Sin Houghton *Mifflin*  
 John Weiners Selected Poems *Black Sparrow Press*  
 Robert Gluck Jack The Modernist *SeaHorse Press*  
 Edwin Denby The Complete Poems *Random House*  
 Roamane Waldrop Streets Enough To Welcome Snow *Station Hill Press*  
 Sonia Sanchez Homegirls & Handgrenades *Thunder's Mouth Press*  
 Joroslav Seifert Selected Poetry *Macmillan*  
 Odysseas Elytis Selected Poems: What I Love (translated by Olga Broumas) *Copper Canyon*  
 Olga Broumas & Jane Miller Black Holes, Black Stockings *Wesleyan*  
 Joan Larkin A Long Sound *Granite Press*  
 Vikram Seth The Golden Gate *Random House*  
 Michael McClure Specks *Talonbooks*  
 Chester Himes If He Hollers Let Him Go *Thunder's Mouth Press*  
 Franz Kamin Scribble Death *Station Hill Press*  
 Cheryl Clarke Living As A Lesbian *Firebrand Books*  
 Cliff Ross, Editor A Dream Made of Stems: A Bilingual Anthology of Nicaraguan Poetry *CO-Press*  
 Michael Mayo, Editor Practising Angels: A Contemporary Anthology of San Francisco Bay Area Poetry *Salsmograph Publications*  
 Ron Silliman, Editor In The American Tree: Language Realism Poetry *National Poetry Foundation*  
 Elaine Equi The Corners of the Mouth *Iridesence Press*  
 Ray Gonzalez From The Restless Roots *Arte Publico Press*  
**Plus!**  
 A whole bunch of booklets from e.g. *Press*, including: *Picas* by Roberto Bedoya, *Prison Go* by Michael Nelson, and *Impressions of Africa: Variations For Raymond Roussel* by Ellen Zweig, *B City Press*, *Gornie Deanovich, 619 W. Surf St., Chicago, Ill. 60657*, *Long Shot, Vol. 4, Elliot Katz & Danny Shot, Editors; Box 456, New Brunswick, NJ 08903; Acts: A Journal of New Writing, David Levi Strauss, Editor; 514 Guerrero Street, San Francisco, Calif. 94110*.

SMALL PRESS ADDRESS

- Firebrand Books, 141 The Commons, Ithaca, NY 14850  
 Thunder's Mouth Press, Box 780, New York, NY 10025  
 Copper Canyon Press, PO Box 271, Port Townsend, WA 98368  
 Granite Press, Box 7, Penabscot, Maine 04476  
 National Poetry Foundation, 305 EM Building, University of Maine, Orono, Maine 04469  
 Arte Publico Press, University of Houston, University Park, Houston, TX 77004  
 Iridesence Press, PO Box 3556, Culver City, CA 90231  
 Black Sparrow Press, Box 3993, Santa Barbara, CA 93130  
 Station Hill Press, Barrytown, NY 12507  
 e.g. *Press*, exempli gratia, Box 3458, Berkeley, CA 94703  
 Talonbooks, 201/1019 East Cordova St., Vancouver, British Columbia V6A 1M8 Canada  
 Salsmograph Publications, Box 882664, San Francisco, CA 94188

Fashions of the Times Alan M. Brown

Lights up on a small Greenwich Village living room. MAX is on the telephone. JOHNNY is standing in front of the mirror, modeling his new yukata—a cotton kimono.

MAX: [speaking into phone] Of course he's your boyfriend. You can call him a boyfriend, it's been almost two weeks. That constitutes a major relationship. But what I want to know is... [looks over at Johnny, to him:] The left side goes over the right. [back to phone:] ...when do you start getting into the bad stuff? The bad stuff! You know... [to Johnny:] No. Bell it down further, on your hips.

JOHNNY: [to his reflection] Wow, I look Japanese. I swear I look just like a big Jap, don't I?

MAX: There are no big Japs. [into phone:] Come on, you know this happiness will never last. When do you get into the really bad stuff, the very basis of relationships? [Doorbell rings] The fights. The recriminations. [To Johnny:] Will you buzz her in? [into phone:] The tears. The pain. The late night drinking. [Johnny exits to hallway] Oh, come on, surely you don't think that this time will be different. Haven't you learned by now, there's no such thing as different. [Voices offstage] It's all patterns. Patterns! That's what life and love is all about. RE-PETITION! It's an endless cycle of misery. [Johnny and MARGO enter. She is in tears.] Listen. I gotta go. I've got company. Call me, OK? I'll call you. Late. Later. Will you be home? Well, send him into the living room or something. Bye. [He hangs up, turns to Margo, who is carrying dozens of wrapped packages and is crying. Johnny, still in his yukata, is hovering over her] Margo?

MARGO: Pardon me. I'm sorry. [She puts her bags and boxes down on the floor and walks over to the corner] I just have to weep for a few minutes.

JOHNNY: Margo?

MAX: Hey, go ahead. Go right ahead. Cry. It's fine.

JOHNNY: Max! You see those tights she's wearing?

MAX: Yeah? [Margo turns around and looks at them]

JOHNNY: I love those tights. You got those at Agnes B., right? [Margo, still crying, nods] Oh god, they look so fabulous on you. You have such great legs, you know. You should wear them with just a shirt, pulled up high like this [demonstrates with his yukata], with a belt!

MAX: Does anyone want some tea? Coffee? Red wine?

JOHNNY: I know what you're thinking. You're thinking, "Johnny, I can't go outside dressed like this. I'd feel naked." [Margo nods] But you'd look incredible in the thing. You know what I'm saying?

Daylight. The Song & Dance of Dealers and Junkies and Cops. DOPE DEALERS sing. JUNKIES crawl, skip, do long scratches & let out sounds. They want relief. They are traffic. The COPS with helmets & weapons all over them call out directing the traffic. Sirens ring. Cars beep horns.

DEALERS: Bacalao! Bacalao!  
 Bajando! Bajando!

JUNKIES: Do you know where it's at?  
 Smack? Crack? Beeswax?  
 Can I get some re lax?

DEALERS: Tato bien! Tato bien!

COPS: Move it. Move!  
 Move it along!

JUNKIES: Honey Money Sunny Fun  
 If I could just get one & one  
 Two four six on a dime  
 Cool out Break down make some  
 time. Do you know where  
 it's at? Smack? Crack?  
 Beeswax? Can I get some  
 re lax? Get me some. Fix.  
 Tricks. Good mix.  
 Tickle Nickel Tres bag.  
 Bones gone Methadone Ice  
 Cream cone Sweet candy  
 If I could get one tres  
 nickel dime good time  
 cool out break through  
 come around shoot up  
 get down need some weed  
 yerba buena wanna  
 one & one loose joints!  
 I wanna get high. So high!  
 I wanna get bye bye high.

SAMSON: You got some pastelillos?

JUNKIES: Que?

SAMSON: Pastelillos! Like the grandmother sells on the street. Pastelillos w/corn inside or meat or catfish. Or bacalao. The food. Salt fish. Cook all day. Something to eat my brother. Feed the body. Ah! the things people put in their minds. Pooh! The things people do now to get up, trying to stay up. Better put something in your feet too.

SONIA: [at window] Sammie! Smell the cornbread! Celestine made cornbread! She put two eggs in. Some pastry flour... whole wheat... w/the white flour & cornmeal, then the milk, baking powder & sprinkle brown sugar in it, quarter cup of oil. Mix it from the middle & let it rest.

SAMSON: O yeah. I smell it. O, Mommie. I can't wait. When it gonna be ready, Sonia? I can't wait too long. I'll die thinking about it. Crispy. Is it crispy? I know it is. The way Celestine bakes there's always a crust. Come, mommie. Ummm. Butter.

Loisaida Text Robbie McCauley  
 (Some parts of a performance.)



CELESTINE enters w/ two pans of cornbread, and a stick of butter. SAMSON produces a knife and gets the first slice.

SONIA: [Enters w/a tin can shaking it.] Come get some cornbread! Good cornbread! Homemade cornbread 50 cents a slice w/good butter. Hot from the oven!

The DEALERS and JUNKIES line up, buy cornbread, and give it ritual gestures of appreciation. They lean into the nodding street.

ROBBIE McCAULEY actor, writer and performance artist is co-founder of Sedition Ensemble, a musical performance group for which she has written plays. The History of the Universe According to Those Who've Had to Live It, and Loisaida War Party, McCauley's performance piece. Family War Stories (a work in progress) will be presented at the New Federal Theatre Oct 24-26. She is a 1986 recipient of a Jerome Foundation grant. McCauley is a resident of Loisaida.



MARGO: The Martian and I just broke up.

MAX: No!

JOHNNY: What! When?

MARGO: This afternoon. He's fallen in love with this filmmaker in East Berlin. He's going to marry her so that she can come to the States. *(She is sobbing heavily)* So I went out and spent a fortune.

MAX: *(picking up a Tower Records bag)* What did you buy?

MARGO: I got the new Aretha.

JOHNNY: With high heels.

MARGO: What?

JOHNNY: You should be wearing really, really high heels with those tights. Spikes.

MARGO: *(wiping away her tears, becoming interested)* What color?

JOHNNY: What color? What color? Hmm. Black. Shiny black. No. Not black. Emerald green. Yes! Yes!

MAX: Records are more important than love. They last. You can put them on anytime. You can make tapes of them and give them to your friends.

MARGO: But I really cared about him. We had a good relationship. This was the first, honest, healthy relationship I'd had since my divorce.

MAX: You can return records if they're defective.

JOHNNY: What we're going for here is Ava Gardner. Ava Gardner in "The Barefoot Contessa."

MARGO: What?

MAX: Forget the Martian. You don't need him. It's Christmas.

JOHNNY: Picture yourself walking down the street in Spain. Matadors are falling at your feet. Swooning. Oh! Magic! It's pure magic! *(He does an impersonation of Ava Gardner's walk)*

MAX: I'll spend Christmas with you. We can buy each other funny little plastic things that wind up and roll around the floor. We don't have to spend much money. Little things that are cheap but clever. And fun. We'll have fun. We can wrap everything really nice. We can get different colored chalk. And water pistols that are shaped like lizards.

MARGO: *(bursting into tears again)* Oh, I'm sorry. I took a valium. Is that alright? I called my therapist. He said to do whatever would make me feel better.

JOHNNY: Liz Taylor in "Butterfield Eight." Oh god, remember her in that slip? That white, tight slip? The way she leaned back, just one shoulder raised like this. *(He "does" Liz)* You know what I'm saying? you see what I'm getting at? Glamour!

MARGO: I need to go shopping.

MAX: Hey, the valium is fine. Whatever makes you feel better. I took some valium last night. And a sleeping pill. And beer. I thought, Why should I be sitting here all alone feeling shitty?

JOHNNY: *(lowering the shoulder of his yukata, posing)* Lauren Bacall. In "To Have and Have Not." Oh lordy, lordy. What a woman.

MARGO: *(gathering up her packages)* I need to go shopping. Right now. I have to buy things. I need to spend money. Lots of money.

MAX: But you just lost your job. You have no money. Stay here. I'll make you some tea. I'll cook you dinner. Johnny? *(Johnny is lost in his own world and doesn't respond. Max exits)*

JOHNNY: Just a simple shirt, but pulled in tight at the waist. And shoulder pads. Nothing too aggressive. But it slides over the hips like... Oh... Oh my... *(He falls to the floor in spasms of ecstasy. Margo, in a valium haze, loses her balance and drops her packages on top of him. Max returns with a bottle of wine and glasses, begins to pour and spills wine all over everybody.)*

MAX: Oh shit.

JOHNNY: Oh god... Silk stockings with seams. Perfectly straight. No jewelry at all except, except for some outrageous earrings. Can you see it? You're in Italy. Roma. A tight leather jacket that goes down to here. And it ties. No buttons. Just a really colorful sash...

MARGO: I have to buy presents. For Jerry. And for my mother. My father. For Wendy and Ed and for Ilene and for all of the people at the office...

MAX: But you were fired... *(he exits again)*

MARGO: And for the checkout ladies at the A&P. And the man at the dry cleaners. And for the Chinese restaurant delivery boy... *(Max returns, his arms filled with piles of food)*

JOHNNY: Her hair swept back off of her forehead *(He's practically having an orgasm)*. Subtle violet eyeliner. The slightest touch of rough...

MAX: Please stay. We can plan Christmas. We'll go ice-skating at Rockefeller Center. *(he's spilling wine and food all over them: cheese, fruit, raw spaghetti, vegetables, etc.)* I'll

## Eros Olga Broumas

On Death's face all religion darts  
like pins on the head of a clit  
and from that ground draw their defiance.  
The nuclear menace can silence us

if we are atheists or lead us to think so  
but here's Death, at least, behind our shoulder standing  
as the sine qua non of the nightingale's  
ability to thrill us past midnight

willingly on a South facing slope.  
Atheists plead insomnia.

We reach past sunlight to its savor,  
mid-night recreation of noon like helium lift,

mid-belly, luminous, melon fresh  
phosphorescent explosion like its satellite  
counterpart in some phase in the skies, in tune,  
full face to its provider of heat.

Therapy, healing, the active  
state of peace roots in summer, and harvest,  
war's opposite, in heat begins its ontogeny.  
Fucking, the slice of my head

with ears nose eyes graphically disappears  
and the universe, most often in its guise  
as Provincetown bay and sky, rushes in  
bounded to the East by Wellfleet harbor,

to the South by a horizon I extend by heart  
in contradiction to the compass east of Greece,  
to the West by town lights on a thin breakwater  
easing the Atlantic's roil to our door,

and behind the North where the pallid souled  
lie coast to coast with their paper hope  
while the rest do the sequin  
beads where the body flows, spill,

effloresces in the face of and because of  
what we do not know, won't know, can't know  
and would rather our eyes melt down  
our face, our mass

irradiate in instant vapor,  
water to steam to universe,  
our shadow implanted on the molten rock,  
than know. We fuck

while oranges absorb their deadly ration,  
our wheat is withdrawn from our markets,  
the Pershings carry their sixty madmen  
like clone Persephones half a year beneath

the sea, mad men joggling the drab  
green bays of the submerged bullet  
in drab green, their drab meal  
microwave silent in their gut, earphones

plugged to their pillow, also green,  
on drab bunks, generous  
coffin sized shelves from which the meat is long  
due recalled and most of them

just past eighteen. While the chickens  
are bred without claws or beaks for easy packing,  
the bluefish, striped bass and perch  
come up cancerous, while the President

eats the last hormone free meat,  
while the Holland tunnel smells sweeter  
than Paris in summer and emission controls  
are still being repealed,

while thank god the Dutch young  
push their antidote for apartheid, only a word  
like a song badly needed around which the lips  
of the heart with their hunger can suck

*vrijheid, vrijheid*

and the new Rainbow Warrior leaves their harbor  
for the antipodes of defeat.  
If I just have ten days I will fiddle.  
One hundred years is as short.

Swell my strings, thump my drums, faith,  
like orgasm, is problematic in the mind  
having no currency to bank. Its current  
must be seized to be.

When I'm risen, suddenly  
past my brood of errands and their constant talk  
like that of children a mother learns  
out of love part time to ignore,

beer, bread, holy beard of an organ  
that shrinks and grows psychedelic as Alice  
in Steinian wonderland.  
Even grammar sprouted tongues eager for that face.

Tender cows, holy buttons.  
Gertrude the dervish in a field of words

encoding the dogma: strategies  
for prolonging pleasure are the faith

of oxygen fucking the lungs of life.  
As for me, I believe the explicit is its own shield.  
The godless sex metaphors  
while the brain again dary are

to dally among the miracles.  
Why else be given astounding organs.  
Why else given jungles where the improbable  
not only grows rampant and awesome but provides

a good percentage of the globe's oxygen besides.  
Amazon basin. The text of sex,  
word for word and by heart,  
divined, enacted

in the antechamber of the soul so kindly  
also provided me is my guide and prayer.  
When my skull lifts and the sky  
fills in I'm found.

*OLGA BROUMAS lives in Provincetown and teaches at FREEHAND. Her most recent books are Black Holes, Black Stockings, co-authored with Jane Miller, and What I Love. Selected Translations of Odysseus Bytiss. She is currently at work on his essays.*

## Darling Deborah Artman

Darling, my brute  
your lips are famous  
weapons.

A wonderful sigh  
let loose in anyone's  
ear might bring them  
to their knees.

You fine blond thing.

I never breathed a word of this to anyone.

Your hands are thieves.  
Even now, they stun me.

And my body betrayed me.  
And you didn't come back.

*DEBORAH ARTMAN's poems and prose can be found in upcoming issues of Ironwood, Cottonwood and Appearance. Currently, she is developing a performance piece, I Catch Her Mid-Swing.*

cook. I'll cook. We can have turkey. Sweet potatoes. Or fish. Would you rather fish? It's not traditional, but it doesn't matter to me. Really. I don't care. Soft shell crabs...

MARGO: And for the people on the streets. It's Christmas. I must buy presents for the people on the streets. The cab drivers. The bus drivers...

MAX: Oh, please stay.

JOHNNY: Black taffeta... (Lights down. End of play.)

ALAN M. BROWN's fiction appears in the recent New Directions Anthology. He is completing his first novel with a working title, *Blue Moon*. He lives in New York City, where his plays have been showcased at Equity Library Theatre, Circle Repertory Co. and other theatres.

## excerpt from An Organdy Falsetto Laurie Carlos

(LYRIC is the lead singer an alto while TONNETT is the lead voice. CRY is a soprano and EDDIE is the idle singer of dreams.)

(If everyone can be seated in white chairs on the stage, it could be interesting. With white dresses and bowls of fruit. All these people are women. The only man carries a large radio of course. He provides the music.)

TONNETT: Versions of the story.

EDDIE: Forced entry and dry socks.

TONNETT: You got any real black and white stuff?

LYRIC: I lied for a long time to keep myself secret as if the new day would come in clean. Every late possibility drags in with a clever smile.

TONNETT: Did you start out a vision or are these the facts?

CRY: Muddy Waters died the same day as Balensheeeeeeen...

LYRIC: Turn the TV on. Turn on the news. Let's see the face of the real world.

TONNETT: Have a banana Eddie.

CRY: Lean

EDDIE: There is a beat you know and I am there already.

TONNETT: Eddie some fruit?

LYRIC: Offer him what belongs to you. What I know gives him no rights. Offer him what belongs to you.

TONNETT: A serious period.

CRY: Red dust is too easy to spot in the dark. Are we really gonna have a party?

LYRIC: I found some spit on my chin dry from laughing in the dirty face of shame.

EDDIE: Are we really going to have a party?

CRY: MONGONGO

TONNETT: Another form please. No red lights, no backward steps. Nothing classic.

EDDIE: A new vision your ass and mine.

TONNETT: As we see this is not going to stop here.

CRY: He was found fucking by some broad who could be his mother.

EDDIE: With all them lips you could be singing.

LYRIC: Is the electric bill paid?

EDDIE: I am standing here safe in this lean. And like all women you won't focus on the line. We could all be in love. But you got to talk about the past. Hey so she was there with her ass out in my bed? So what? Can she sing?

CRY: My friend and I played Marty & Millie. She was the kind of beauty that made black people proud. Invited to all the parties. Her nylon dresses did not come from Klein's. She was my ticket to the punch bowl. A pass to gatherings of West Indian boys dancing to Belafonte. She used my unpopular points of view to give her more focus. She was my man. My steady thought til I was eleven when someone told us kissing like that was wrong and tragic.

TONNETT: Every man since has looked just like her. Legitimate enough to kiss you.

CRY: I've used every man for the same purpose.

TONNETT: Have some fruit Eddie.

AURIE CARLOS is teaching an 8 week Performance Poetry workshop at the Poetry Project beginning October 18th. A brilliant actress, writer and director, her performance piece *Nonsectarian Conversations With the Dead* was recently produced at the New Federal Theatre. *Organdy Falsetto* will be produced at St. Mark's November 24.

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Top L to R: Galway Kinnell, Anna Waldman, and Ed Dorn. Bottom L to R: Robert Creeley, Michael McCauley, and in memoriam, Bob Kaufman 1925-1986.

CHRIS FELVER'S photographs of contemporary American writers will appear in the forthcoming book, *The Poet Exposed*, to be published by Alfred Van Der Merck, late fall, 1986. Felver favors a straightforward, no-nonsense, almost neutral approach to his subjects, allowing only occasionally a smile to break through. Arranged opposite hand written excerpts of poems chosen by each writer, Felver's black and white portraits gaze out with a curious blend of self-containment and restraint. Most recently Felver's photos illustrated Lawrence Ferlinghetti's poetic journal, *Seven Days in Nicaragua Libre*. Now Felver's headshots, including some of the Poetry Project's influential forces and handy spirits are previewed in this first issue of the Poetry Project Newsletter.

— The Editor

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