

POETRY PROJECT



Marta Simon Associates - Carol Newman

Thomas Young as Elijah and Ben Holt as Malcolm in the New York City Opera production of "X".

The recent premiere of the opera *X: The Life & Times Of Malcolm X* was a historic and joyous occasion. Despite its controversial nature, Beverly Sills and City Opera chose to produce a piece that is contemporary, American, black, and politically relevant. In an age dominated by the 3 R's: Regression, Racism, and Reagan, audiences in New York were nevertheless treated to a rare event within the bastion of white, highbrow culture — an opera that was not safe and sound. "X" is not a museum piece, written for fatcats. The stark, compelling libretto was written by poet Thulani Davis, a Board Member at the Poetry Project; the hypnotic, stirring music was composed by her cousin, wunderkind Anthony Davis. "X" traces the life of Malcolm Little from his turbulent childhood in Lansing, Michigan to his coming of age in a Boston jail. His conversion to Elijah Muhammad's Black Muslim movement leads to his revelatory journey to Mecca and ends with his tragic assassination at the Audubon Ballroom in Harlem, 1965. It is fitting that excerpts from this important new work begin this latest issue of the Poetry Project Newsletter. Issue #124 is filled with other holiday treats: new poems by Victor Hernandez Cruz, Bob Holman, Marilyn Hacker and Richard Elman. Plus, Jane Miller's astute salute to a 20th century Venus, Rita Speilcher's short, sexy fable, Karen Levy's photos and Richard Powell's eerie, serpentine headlines. There are also reviews of remarkable and provocative books, especially Lisa Kennedy's look at AI's brilliant, disturbing new collection of poems, *Sin*. Our regulars are back: MAMA DOG, PPINK EYE ON, and our columnist JOSE, who is confronted with David Byrne's much hyped *True Stories*. Life imitates art. Thanks to our readers for the enthusiastic response to our first issue, #123. Keep those cards and letters coming!

Jessica Hagedorn
Editor

excerpt from the opera *X, The Life & Times of Malcolm X* Thulani Davis

ACT II
Scene I

1946-48. Malcolm broods angrily in jail, left alone by the others. Malcolm's brother Reginald comes to visit him and teach him about Elijah, the Messenger of Allah. Malcolm doubts everything Reginald says. Gradually he comes to a point of initial acceptance of this new idea. Reginald leaves Malcolm in jail as Elijah's voice is heard off-stage. Malcolm spends time studying the Holy Koran and books on black history. He has to begin wearing glasses because of his habit of reading in poor light late at night. He becomes a serious and more hopeful man. Malcolm X is born.

1952. The jail recedes as Malcolm hears, and eventually sees, Elijah. It is as though the word removed the bars. They come face to face. Elijah embraces Malcolm like a son and tells him he has much to learn. He tells him to obey the Law and to spread Allah's word. Malcolm is sent to start temples in the eastern states.

Prisoners

: In the devil's grip:
: the black men mourn:
: the slaver's whip:
: Black men, wake:
: from your living graves:
: before it's too late:

[Reginald comes to visit Malcolm. They sit opposite one another in the day room.]

Reginald

It has been so long.

Malcolm

Longer than you can know.
You don't count time where I've been.

Reginald

You got my letter?
Read what I said?

Malcolm

I just can't understand.
What's the game?

Reginald

I've changed.
I've found a new way.
I'm clean,
starting out new.
I met a man
who showed me the truth.

Malcolm

You talk in riddles
about truth and a man.
Don't try and kid me
when I need a plan.
They're riding me hard,
trying to make me break.
They're ready to nail me
if I make one mistake.

Prisoners

If he makes one mistake

Malcolm

I thought you had a way.

Reginald

Have you ever met a man
who knows all things?

Malcolm [Incredulous]

No, brother.

Reginald

He knows who you are,
where you've been.
He knows your future.

Malcolm

I can't understand

Reginald

Your past was stolen,
taken from you,
your children tortured,
your women taken too.
Black is your skin,
the fate that's in your hands.

Malcolm

Brother, I know no such man.
Is he a god?
I can't understand.

Prisoners

I can't understand.

Reginald

Black is your skin—

Malcolm

I can't understand

Reginald

Who once was king—

Malcolm

Is he a god?

Reginald

You're now a slave

Malcolm

I don't understand
what you say

Reginald

Listen to me
the devil's got you in jail.
The white man left you
judged on a scale.
This man taught me things—
A nation we are,
all of us.

Prisoners

A nation we see.

Malcolm

God does not know me,
the hustlers or players.

On the fast track I see
only winners or losers.

Reginald

This man taught me things

Malcolm

God knows the good ones—
He betrays them.
We're out there alone;
God does not know me.

Reginald

But God is a man
His name is Allah.

Malcolm

We're out there alone.

Reginald

He came to this land.

Malcolm

God does not know me.

Reginald

He told Elijah.

Malcolm

We're out there alone.

Reginald

He told a black man

Malcolm

Who is Elijah?

Reginald

His own divine plan.

Malcolm

How can God be man?
Allah.
What a strange sound.

Men [Chorus]

: Allahu-Akbar:

Reginald

Elijah is the Messenger,
the Messenger of Allah.

Malcolm

Allah. Allah.

Reginald

Say His name again and again.
The rest will come in time.
To say His name is to praise Him. [Exits.]

Malcolm

Allah.
What does it mean
to say His name?

All [Chorus]

ALLAH!

Malcolm

Does He know I steal,
lie and take dope?

All

Allah. Allah.

Malcolm

To say His name
is to praise Him.
Soon I will ask Him
how empty it feels
to be God of an empty man
like me.

Elijah [Slowly appears in the back light]

You are not empty

Chorus

Malcolm!

Look Hear

HELPIII

VOLUNTEERS ARE ALWAYS NEEDED AT THE POETRY PROJECT, FOR MONDAY AND WEDNESDAY NIGHT READINGS, AND SPECIAL EVENTS... INTERNSHIPS ARE AVAILABLE THROUGH URBAN CORPS... VOLUNTEERS ARE SPECIALLY NEEDED FOR THE ANNUAL NEW YEAR'S DAY BENEFIT, JANUARY 1, 1987 FROM 7 PM TO MIDNIGHT. SCHOLARSHIPS TO WORKSHOPS ARE AVAILABLE IN EXCHANGE FOR VOLUNTEER WORK. CONTACT: EILEEN MYLES, JESSICA HAGEDORN AT 674-0910.

Sonia Sanchez, one of the leading Afro American poets, will read and discuss her work at the Jackson-Luxemburg School, 7 East 20th Street, 10th floor, on Wednesday December 10 at 7:00 PM. Admission \$10/\$5 low income. Call (212) 505-0170 for more information... The Chester H.



JUNGLE FUNNIES 1980

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The Poetry Project Newsletter is published bi-monthly, four times a year. Subscription rates are \$7/year for individuals and \$12/year for institutions. Checks should be made payable to The Poetry Project, Inc.

All unsolicited materials will not be returned without a SASE. Address correspondence to: Poetry Project Newsletter, St. Mark's Church, 2nd Ave. & 10th St., NYC, 10003.

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

The Poetry Project receives generous support from these public and private agencies: The New York State Council on the Arts, New York Council for the Humanities, the National Endowment for the Arts, City of New York's Department of Cultural Affairs, the Jerome Foundation, FilmVideo Arts, Inc. for Film Screenings, the Lila Acheson Wallace Fund, the Foundation for Contemporary Performance, the Mobil Foundation, Bydale Foundation, Gramercy Park Foundation, New Hope, Inc., Apple Computer, Inc., Community Affairs Grant of Equipment for National Literary Network. Also, the members of the Poetry Project and individual contributors.

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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 _____

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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.

Patron (\$500): Four passes to all Poetry Project events, a subscription to the Poetry Project Newsletter, a copy of *The World Record*, grateful public acknowledgement, and for this year only, a signed copy of *Allen Ginsberg's Collected Poems*.

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:

(about) *True Stories* by David Byrne
 Viking/Penguin \$15.95 (paper)

"City Of Dreams"

We live in the city of dreams/ We drive on
 the highway of fire/ Should we awake/ And
 find it gone/ Remember this, our favorite
 town...

lyrics by: David Byrne,
 reprinted from *TRUE STORIES*

Dear Jose:

For my birthday, my lover gave me a copy of David Byrne's *True Stories*. Hot, right? We are both so busy we haven't even seen the movie yet—much less, each other. Frankly, since we moved to Manhattan three years ago, the highlight of our romance consists of dinners in overpriced and noisy restaurants, exchanging trendy presents we can't afford (mostly coffee-table books and lizard shoes).

But let me get back to my original STORY. My lover is a graphic designer, and I am a conceptual poet. My favorite band happens to be The Talking Heads. I adore David Byrne's skinny frame, and quirky, on-the-mark lyrics. He's everything I want to be: deadpan, rock n'roll, yet so adult. I wish I could wear baggy suits with futuristic shoulder-pads. I wish I could wear avocado green, and tennessee cowboy hats perched on my head without feeling like a fool. I wish I had the sense to comb *The National Inquirer* and *The Star* for new ideas. I wish I was blessed with a unique American vision. Does it exist, or is it all just beef stew and tuna melts?

My lover is embittered and upset. He claims I'm a spoiled brat, too jaded to appreciate anything. "You call yourself a conceptual poet," he sneers, with tears in his eyes. "You can't even READ your birthday present!" I've been struck dumb and speechless ever since. My lover has moved to an undisclosed location. David Byrne's book sits on my formula table, the only real furniture in my rathole apartment. Glossy and new, bursting with text, bright pictures, sketches, and explanations, it sits... and sits. I flip pages, promising to read Dave's words of wisdom. BUT I JUST CAN'T. What's happened to me? Am I overreacting to all the recent hype? Book? Movie? Record? *Vanity Fair*? All *TRUE STORIES*, all flat, Texas landscape, all the same? Is it because I'm from Seattle? Is my lover ever coming back? Am I an art phony? Should I get a real job, train as an investment banker and pay off all my debts?

Anxiously,
 Pratt Parsons
 7th & A

My dear young man,

Your letter breaks my heart. You show all the classic symptoms of the 80's sickness known as rock n'roll dumbness: what can liberate, can also stagnate. What saves you from walking the streets a fashion victim zombie of bad manners and selfish absorption is that very dread you describe and feel: ominous, dark, and hungry. It is a warning you should heed.

Let me tell you a TRUE STORY which happened to me just the other day. I was strolling on 11th Street near 6th Avenue, dreaming about a little girl I know named P-Funk, who loves to read Mao's little red book upside down. Suddenly, my daydream was interrupted by the sight of two young men walking ahead of me, sporting identical, white blond crewcuts and stark, all-black garb. You know this look all too well by now, I'm sure. But the boys pulled it off with a certain flair and wit, Marilyn Monroe's knowing smile a painted icon encrusted with fake jewels on the backs of their jackets. Their lilted, smug voices sailed through the air towards me. "I didn't really like it... Did you?"

"No."
 "That other guy's done it before. What's his name. Chinese or something."
 "Pike."
 "Yeah."
 "He's been at The Whitney, you know—"
 "Oh... really?"

A first note of wonder and respect, at the mention of the venerable Whitney, before the twins laugh and drift away.

These are bad times, my friend. Beef stew, tuna melts, glazed eyes, and crack hysteria. Take a deep breath. Wait six months. Forget everything you know about this book and this man. Someday, you should read Dave's burning book upside down. Someday, you might even enjoy it.

ADIOS,
 Jose

P.S. Nobody I know has seen his movie either.



Worlds of wonder: close-up of two *M.A.D.* books by Douglas Beube.

Douglas Beube

PPINK EYE first met book artist Douglas Beube (pronounced BEE-YOUB) up in New Hampshire, where Beube gave an informal demonstration of the art of "making book." He showed a group of enthralled artists a dazzling array of his work: scroll books that unravel at the slightest touch, his offset paperback *Manhattan Street Romance*, which combines Beube's black and white photos and text to tell a modern love story, and his glittering, gorgeous *M.A.D.* books. *M.A.D.* stands for "Matches" "Ashes" "Dust"—treasure boxes of miniature objects, sacred icons and clues. *M.A.D.* is surely Beube's piece de resistance, his personal interpretations of love, death, and nuclear disaster, in three distinct sections. Intrigued, *PPINK EYE* later attended a lecture Beube gave at Parsons. His lectures are also performances. Beube crumpled newspaper, turned off lights, showed slides of his organic *Seed Sprout* books, then played us a spooky tape of ambient sounds and music he calls "Electronic Voodoo." His works are witty and give fresh insight to the book as object, that "flat container of ideas" so many of us writers take for granted. *PPINK EYE* was compelled to interview the Canadian-born Beube, whose latest show about nuclear fallout, *Business As Usual*, was curated by Lucy Lippard at *Printed Matter*.



Day I

Define book art for us.

Rather than having art that was expressly for galleries or wall space, book art began as an alternative presentation around the 60's and 60's. Artists started working with the medium not so much to mediate their photographs, paintings, or drawings, but to mediate the book itself—that is, the relationship of the concept, the binding, the pages and structure of the book. So the sequencing of the whole book from page to page began very much to become an expression within itself, and an object in itself.

Why do you think visual artists chose 'the book' as their medium?

Visual artists have exploited most of the major media—radio, t.v., sculpture, journals, etc., but the book itself has always been held as a venerable container which disseminates information. Because book art could be very inexpensive, we could undermine the fact that art had to be expensive. We could go into a store, pay \$3.00 for instance, and get all this information.

In this country, book art was popularized by Ed Ruscha and Dieter Roth, a.k.a. ROT. But there were also the Surrealists in the '20's and '30's, the DADA artists.

Ironically, a lot of book art has now evolved into very expensive art objects.

You're absolutely right. I've worked in both ways with temporal, organic books like the *Seed Sprout* books which are meant to decay and don't last very long, and in offset books like my *Manhattan Street Romance* which sold for \$10. But there are also many one-of-a-kind books, like *M.A.D.*, which are three dimensional and sculptural in nature. These may sell for as much as \$10,000. They are not an alternative to wall art.

I am not interested in completely circumventing the museum. I am definitely interested in process, in exploring all aspects of 'book,' whether it's a conceptual book without any pages as we know them.

Can packaging get in the way of text? For example, we were at *Writers & Books* in Rochester recently, and the book *French Fries* was available in the bookstore. It's a beautiful book by Warren Lehrer & Dennis Bernstein, produced at the Visual Studies Workshop. Sapphoody, it's a play which takes place in a fast food restaurant with characters signified by the color of their text. The person with me complained she found books like *French Fries* pretty, but impossible to read...

It's our training. If we are used to looking at things from left to right, what happens when we change that line, and it's no longer vertical but at an angle? We experience this when we tie our shoes, or go up in an airplane. We're not 'reading' in that sense, but our horizon line does change. We just don't take note of it. We are constantly adjusting in our own minds to what we are used to.

We must learn to engage with reading in a different way. We learn a new vocabulary. Warren and Dennis' book *French Fries* I've read in terms of visuals, but also for the characters in the play. Orange, for example, might be the waitress, and Pink the guy cleaning up. There is some consistency, with each character represented by a different color text. Once again, 'reading' this type of book also means stretching us.

Compare a writer of text to a book artist.

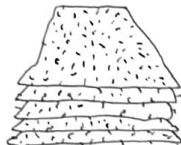
A book artist not only writes text but also explores the means by which text appears on the page: its color, its relationship visually and spatially to other text. It's a very different endeavor. If a writer is really interested in books, he or she will also be interested in the type, cover, binding, etc. But then, the writer may not be really concerned with how that same book holds in the hands. Although the book may feel more or less comfortable, the writer isn't necessarily interested in its physical structure.

To a book artist, the book is an entity in itself. It may not contain any words, but it's a novel. I'm thinking of a European woman named Wasja Lavater who's taken Cinderella and transformed it into a visual story, using abstract color and graphics. You 'read' the story in a new way.

No words at all.
 Right.



Day III



Day II

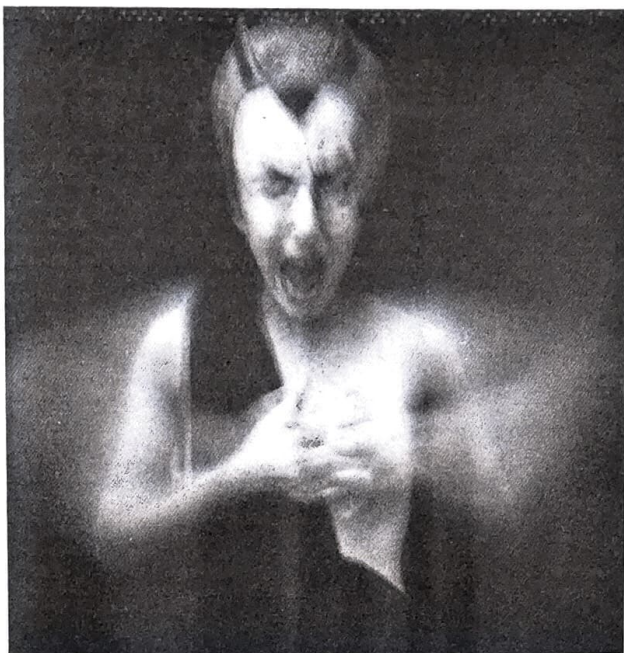
Jones Foundation National Poetry Competition 1987.

\$1000 first prize, \$500 second prize, \$250 third prize, \$50 honorable mentions. Judges: Albert Goldfarb, Michael Ryan, Diane Wakoski. For more information and entry form, send SASE to The Chester H. Jones Foundation, P.O. Box 43033, Cleveland OH 44141. Closing date for entries: March 15, 1987... *Langston Hughes: The Dream Keeper*, a film about the noted poet and writer, has been completed. The 56 minute film for television, which director *St. Clair Bourne* describes as "a narrative performance documentary," covers new ground in American literary and political history by portraying Hughes' career against the times in which he lived and worked. The production was filmed in the U.S., Dakar, Senegal and Paris, France and features such prominent literary figures as *James Baldwin*, *Amiri Baraka*, *Gwendolyn Brooks*, and poet-president *Leopold Senghor* of Senegal. Part of the "Voices & Visions" series being produced by the New York Center For Visual History, *Langston Hughes: The Dream Keeper* will be telecast over the national PBS network. For more information, contact Allan Barnett (212) 673-8070... *The American Poetry Association* will award a \$1000 Grand Prize to the best entry in their poetry contest. All poets are welcome. Entry deadline: December 31, 1986. Poems are judged on originality and interest, not just technical skills. Poets should send one poem of no more than twenty lines, typed, with name and address on top of the page to: The American Poetry Association, Dept. CN-19, 250-A Potrero St., Box 8403, Santa Cruz, CA 95081-8403. Phone (408) 429-1122 for more information.

Community Elections:

Two members of the Project Office's Board of Directors are elected to the Board by the community. If you would like to serve in this capacity and qualify as a "community member" by your identity as a reader, performer, volunteer, workshop participant, paying member or member of the Friends Committee, you are eligible for self-nomination. Self-nominations must be received by the Project Office by December 10, 1986. Elections will take place on December 13th, 1986, 10 AM. Michael Schoinick is the departing board member whose seat must be filled. Community Board members serve for three years.

Erata: Robble McCauley's photograph which appeared on page 9 of *Poetry Project* #123 was taken by Wendy Workman.



Kevin Levy

Faithful to the limits of language, it is not unusual in Ai's poems for flesh to slip from its moorings, sliding off its bones into a gulf of dreamy language. Her poems are better suited for depicting injuries to flesh and its movement toward death. Perhaps the only way talkative consciousness can experience the shock of violence is to lapse into a dream, a kind of substitute experience. Allowing itself its metaphors is the only way language doesn't grind to a halt, or worse, feign a nonexistent authority.

The way Ai's words move between the ordinary and the horrible foreshadows the way mundane objects are transformed into weapons or the trappings of our daily lives become signs of cruelty. "The Prisoner" is a poem about the relationship between a prisoner and a torturer who calls himself "Our Father." In the poem, the tool of interrogation is borrowed from the quotidian and ultimately returns to it. The prisoner describes the ritualized scenario of torture where glass from a shattered bottle is transformed by a cruel ingenuity that we as a species are capable of:

[Our Father says]
 "I know you think you're innocent,
 but you aren't.
 Everyone is guilty."
 He slaps me, then pushes one side of my
 face
 toward the green glass.
 I've been stung by a swarm of bees,
 I'm eight. I'm running for the pond
 on my uncle Oscar's farm.
 Oscar, I cry. Our Father sighs deeply...

That daily currency, language, slips back and forth between the hair-raising and the calm. With this knowledge of the fluidity of abuse and language, life can never be the same placid fiction. The relationship between knowledge and sin continues.

Even more than "The Prisoner," "The Good Shepherd," a monologue of the Atlanta child-murderer pursues the relationship between the familiar and horrific. The child-murderer has one eye to the immediate task at hand: the disposal of a young body into the river, and the other to the small pleasure of a cup of hot chocolate and the hopes of a new wool coat.

...Lord I need a new coat, ^{no}
 not polyester, but wool
 new and pure
 like the little lamb
 I killed tonight.
 With my right hand
 the same hand that hits
 with such force,
 I push myself up gently.
 I know what I'd like—
 some hot cocoa by the heater.

Ai's poems create their own kind of trauma within the confines of a familiar syntax. Perhaps this is why I have been fundamentally unsettled by her poems. Her personas make her something of an anonymous assailant who rends the fabric of our readerly safety.

Reading this collection of poems, don't be surprised if you feel as if I did—edgy, even harmed. Our victimization is temporary; we should be thankful for the privileged moment. Through her poems, Ai disrupts one of our own most contrived fictions: that violence and sin are somehow different than daily life. The shock of her poems is not in what we come to understand of violence, but to what extent we lose the ordinary, now stained and emblematic of anger and hurt.

An aspiring philosopher, LISA KENNEDY works at a shelter for homeless women and children and makes a living at THE VILLAGE VOICE.

O ORIGINAL SIN

In her review, Lisa Kennedy sheds some light on Ai's darkest fables yet, almost scaring herself to death...



"I know you think
 you are innocent
 but you aren't.
 Everyone is guilty."

(from *The Prisoner*)

SIN by Ai
 (Houghton Mifflin)
 \$13.95 hardbound
 \$5.95 paper

Sex And Death

Ovals
 by George Tysh
 In Camera Press

by Patricia Jones

The most telling evasion in *Sin* is not that of one of the many characters Ai gives voice to, but Ai's. In Japanese, her name means "love." Phonetically, it mimics that dogged assertion of self, the one that situates each of us in relation to the other: I.

Surprisingly, both love and Ai are absent from her poems. This complex dodging, not so much of love but of the personal voice, is her craft. It is a voice she clearly does not want confused with her use of the first person, which in *Sin* is triumphal.

Sin is a collection of well-wrought poems; each poem the drifting, reminiscing, talking non-cure of a character. Some we are familiar with through historical hearsay—John and Robert Kennedy, Joe McCarthy, Salome, the poet James Wright.

While reading these persona poems, a discomfort arose that stayed with me the length of the book and back. The erasure of Ai by Ai is formidable. Her rendering of her characters' thoughts is so seamless that in initial readings the poems negate the question of the poet. The poems certainly do not place her in the world for us the way she situates her speakers in her poems.

The poems mark the space between presence and absence. While what is absent is Ai's voice, there is always irony: Ai is still able to impart a

particular and terrifying wisdom. Her focus is not on language's relationship to the poet, but on its relationship to violence.

So it is violence—often abrupt, almost always relentless because it is so thematic—that makes itself at home in Ai's poetry. Ai is witness to every new atrocity, every enduring pain explored in *Sin*. In this discordant sphere, her absencing herself from the poems is necessary. Abuse becomes a theme, not through a complex self-analysis or pop psychology, but with a virtuosic use of ordinary and simple vernacular.

Ai exposes the historical, that overly revered fiction, as being rooted in the everyday, too. Here she continues a course she began in her second book of poems, *Killing Floor*, where the speakers of the poems are also players in history.

I never won anything, I said.
 I lost time and lovers, years,
 but you, purple mountains,
 you amber waves of grain, belong to me
 as much as I do to you.
 She sighed,
 the hand played,
 the skin fell away from her bones.
 (from *More: For James Wright*)

Few poems begins with as startling lines as these from "I and You": "How far up your ass does it go?...Deluxe worlds, parting lips, hated/smile..." George Tysh takes on erotic tension, rage, lust, nostalgia, and the family in *Ovals*, his new collection of lyric and prose poems. At the core of these often graphic poems is a combination of sexual anxiety and political terror. "Who has been recognized, against odds, in the/familiar sequence of: turn, eyes meet, eyes turn away..." (Fever)

It's hot on the streets of Paris, so hot "The ghost of Sade pays a visit to the Hotel Moderne." (1964) It is so hot even eyebrows become a fetish. Paris as metaphor for forbidden pleasure is not new, of course. Tysh brings an innocent, yet sophisticated sensibility—heedless always the anticipation of those pleasures. Later in the poem "1964," de Sade demands resurrection; one wonders at the many justines he would find, if they weren't booked up.

But it is not the eroticized history of the Old World that most captivates Tysh. It's the erotic heat of the American plains. Tysh is great with interiors—inside the car, the train, the living room—as seen in one of his most important lyric poems, "Origin of

the Family." Enthralled, he writes: "...replacing lamps mostly/wheels pronounce the vowels/lake me back take me back/streets recall them child/steps drawn over marble/inherit moan of tracks." To be reborn in metal, that childhood of tracks: such swift geography, pitiless psychology.

In the longer poem, "White Light/White Heat," Tysh responds to deeper, invisible interiors: "It has a mind of its own/pleasure mixed with vagina colada/not for everyone senior, the vampire/counts his hits, losses, irons his/flag." The clash of words "vagina colada" and the enraged tone "not for everyone senior" simulates a deep terror, the power dynamic of bedroom as battlefield, illumination as another plane of darkness. This is a world made familiar by painters such as George Grosz, one supposedly foreign to the Great Plains. Tysh reminds us that passion, erotic or otherwise, is no stranger to the American psyche. The quiet, treelined streets of midwestern America have as much erotic history as the boulevards of "gay Paroo."

Not all of Tysh's efforts pay off. There are poems that seem created only for the most erudite and obsessive among us; the poems would respond in

mode. And yet, *Ovals* has so much to admire in it: here are poems that illuminate desire, asking difficult questions about sexuality and seduction. Poems permeate with a real curiosity and criticism of the power dynamics in the bedroom and battle field. Tysh's poems attempt to center the world, reflecting newer forms of attraction, and even hope.

Tysh is fearless in his quest for understanding the sexual taboos of modern life. He is unafraid to shout his anger or stroke tenderly. He gets as shameless as Jackie Wilson writing on the floor begging for one more chance: "I am kissing you and kissing you/I don't know who you are," says Tysh in the poem, "Helpless." This desire to pursue the Great Unknowable, or the Other, is one of the more positive aspects of Tysh's work. American poetry has lately been cleansed to the point of neopuritanism. *Ovals* is most refreshing for its abundant aims in language: to get back to the deepest well of sensibility and proclaim it anew.

PATRICIA JONES is the author of *Mythologizing Always* and a former Program Coordinator of the Poetry Project. She is currently working on a book about Beate Smith.

Limu Picking

The Hawaii Review -18
University of Hawaii
at Manoa,
Dept. of English
1733 Danaghho Road
Honolulu, HI 96822
\$3

by Kimiko Hahn

He then took out a pink, tupperware container filled with a dark-greenish brown seaweed dipped in a vinegar and shoyu sauce. The seaweed was fine, and like thick hairs. It smelled of salt water and vinegar. With a pair of chopsticks he put a generous portion of seaweed on both plates. "Picked 'em mahself," he said.

"Wheah?"

"Kailua side."

"Haven't done that in years..."

"Limu picking. Das one art dat stays with you forever."

I knew I was hungry when I picked up this journal: for something good, faintly familiar, faintly different. The editors of the *Hawaii Review* were smart to open with Cedric Yamanaka's "What the Ironwood Whispered," a short story at the turning

point (high school graduation) of two working class kids; the underside of the tourist industry's dazzle becomes real with tangible details and poignant reminders of that period in our lives when everything seemed rushing to an end and a beginning. Moreover here is solid prose.

The HR could easily be a showcase for Hawaiian work. Indeed these are writers not so much neglected but unknown. If the editors chose to make the journal this showcase they would certainly have rich work from which to choose: written in English or pidgin-English, mixtures of Hawaiian, Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Portuguese, South East Asian, Anglo—even Puerto Rican. In these pages we find Juliet Kono, Reuben Tam, Tony Quagliano. Check out Michael McPerson's "The Alien Lounge," capsulizing a bit of the islands the way *Repoman* distills the West Coast. Turn to one of my favorite writers from the islands, Eric Chock. His two poems on fishing come from two different emotional perspectives on the relationship between man and fish.

Yet it is to the credit of the editors that the HR combines writers from the mainland with the locals. Sure we then see a few of the usual, less-

inspiring names, but more importantly some less familiar ones. M.A. Farrell from N.C. via Florida has three taut pieces; likewise Frank Stewart's narrative poems and William Pitt Root's short story, "Clearing the Nest." Glenn Masuchika's short story, "Nagasaki," borders on being sentimental yet is so horrifying that I had a hard time "washing it off."

I also commend the editors on the two reviews of Hawaiian writers by outsiders. They both do the job: I want the books. (Perhaps HR could develop some nonacademic criticism along side its reviews.)

The few weaknesses, several saccharine poems, are minor disappointments. In fact I look forward to seeing more recent issues. In fact I not only recommend people read HR but also submit work to it. I think most writers would find it exciting to be included with these strong and (for us) unusual voices. I believe we need each other.

"Wha?"

"Ass what I going do. I going wait foah you da da (catfish) pond."

KIMIKO HAHN is coordinating the Basement Workshop Reading Series and is currently editing a poetry anthology of Asian American women for Asian Women United.

THE PINK LIST: Noteworthy publications received

James Laughlin (editor) *New Directions in Prose & Poetry 1936 New Directions Books*

Robert Grenier *Phantom Anthems \$6.50 (paper) O Books*

Diane Wakoski *The Rings Of Saturn \$9 (paper) \$17.50 (cloth) Black Sparrow Press*

Richard Allen *The Way Out At Last & Other Poems \$7.95 (paper) \$15.95 (cloth) Hale & Iremonger Press*

Dick Higgins *Poems Plain & Fancy \$7.95 (paper) Station Hill Press*

David Byrne *True Stories \$15.95 (paper) Viking/Penguin*

Ann Charters *Beats & Company: Portrait Of A Literary Generation \$29.95 (hardcover) Doubleday*

Charles Henri Ford *Emblems of Arachne \$7.50 (paper) \$75 (boards fine, limited edition) Catchword Papers Press*

Peter Chermes *Condensed Book \$5.95 (paper) Benzene Editions*

Georges Bataille *Eroticism: Death & Sensuality \$10.95 (paper) City Lights Books*

Love Poems From Spain & Spanish America translators: Perry Hlgman w/ Chris Jacox \$7.95 (paper) City Lights Books

Magazines:

Hellon Nine: *The Journal Of Women's Arts & Letters (Special Multicultural Issue) \$10*

P.O. Box 22412, Kansas City, MO 64113

Dissociated Press (a literary mag) editor: Tara Marlowe \$2.95, 584 Castro St. #332, San

Francisco, CA 94114

The Americas (formerly Revista Chicano-Riquena) Spring 1986, A Review of Hispanic Literature & Art of the USA, editors: Julian Olivares & Jose Saldiva, (subscription rates offered; single issues \$5.) The Americas Review, University of Houston, University Park, Houston TX 77004

The American Voice editor: Frederick Smock \$3.50, Heyburn Bldg., Suite 1215, Broadway at 4th Ave., Louisville KY 40202

Open Magazine Issue Two \$2, Suite 21, 215 North Ave. West, Westfield NJ 07090

The Mississippi Review "These Young People Today, Writers Under 35" Vol. 14, #3 \$5. Southern Station, Box 5144, Hattiesburg, MS 39406

SMALL PRESS ADDRESS:

Black Sparrow Press, 24 Tenth St., Santa Rosa, CA 95401

Station Hill Press, Barrytown, NY 12507

City Lights Books, 261 Columbus Ave., San Francisco, CA 94133

Benzene Editions, P.O. Box 383, NYC 10014

O Books, 5729 Clover Dr., Oakland CA 94618

New Directions, 80 Eighth Ave., NYC 10011



Copper Canyon

■ Carolyn Kizer

THE NEARNESS OF YOU

The Nearness of You, Carolyn Kizer's "poems for men," is a companion volume to her *Mermmaids in the Basement*, and her first book since receiving the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1985. These poems are alternately funny, serious, grieving, and always colored by the poet's renowned *joie de vivre*. Cloth, \$15.00 Paper, \$9.00

■ Pablo Neruda

WINTER GARDEN

Translated by William O'Daly

Near the end of his long, prolific career, the late Nobel Poet embraced solitude as a major positive force, and nature as an undeniable regeneration. In this, one of his last suites, Neruda saw humanity struggling vainly against great natural forces and addressed his responsibilities as a poet concluding a life's work. [Bilingual] Cloth, \$15.00 Paper, \$8.00

■ Maurya Simon

THE ENCHANTED ROOM

Maurya Simon's first book of poems is a remarkably cohesive yet wide-ranging suite that displays a finely tuned sense of craft and a mind alert to many traditions. Her poems are structurally and thematically diverse, yet she remains rooted in this world — accessible, limpid, vibrant. Paper, \$9.00

POST OFFICE BOX 271, PORT TOWNSEND, WASHINGTON 98368

NEW POETRY from BLACK SPARROW

Clayton Eshleman • THE NAME ENCANYONED RIVER

Selected Poems 1960-1985

Paper: \$12.50 Hardcover: \$20.00

Eshleman's most recent work indicates a potential for profundity and shows that he has laid the groundwork for creating a memorable body of work. — *Los Angeles Times*

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Edited by Raymond Foye

Foreword by Allen Ginsberg

Paper: \$12.50 Hardcover: \$20.00

This book collects all the major work of a poet whose personal reticence, intricate lyricism and elegance of style has set him apart from all other writers of his time.

Diane Wakoski • THE RINGS OF SATURN

Paper: \$9.00 Hardcover: \$17.50

Wakoski's poetic astronomy here comprises a kind of star plot's manual, pointing a course beyond the loved but fleeting material world.

Charles Bukowski • YOU GET SO ALONE AT TIMES THAT IT JUST MAKES SENSE

Paper: \$12.50 Hardcover: \$20.00

Charles Bukowski's poetry casts a hard eye on human aspirations and relationships, at the same time it valorizes even the lowest of human lives.



BLACK SPARROW PRESS
24 Tenth Street
Santa Rosa, CA 95401

THE POETRY PROJECT

WEDNESDAY NIGHT READING & LECTURE SERIES

DEC

3

Bob Hershon & Murat Nemet-Nejat

Bob Hershon's most recent book is *How To Ride On The Woodlawn Express* (Sun, 1986). He is co-editor of *Hanging Loose Press* and *Hanging Loose* magazine, and also executive director of the Print Center, Inc. Murat Nemet-Nejat is a Turkish poet and translator, whose work has appeared in *The Penguin Book Of Turkish Verse*. He is administrative coordinator of The Committee for International Poetry.

10

Maggie Paley & Ted Castle

Maggie Paley is the author of *Bad Manners* (Clarkson Potter), a controversial first novel influenced by Clare Boothe Luce's 1936 play, "The Women." Ted Castle is the author of *Anticipation* (Bruce McPherson, 1985), a novel which explores mind and memory in the 1960's.

17

Marilyn Hacker & Cheryl Clarke

Marilyn Hacker is the highly acclaimed author of *Love, Death, & The Changing Of The Seasons*, a "novel" in sonnets just published from Arbor House. Cheryl Clarke's most recent book of poems is *Living As A Lesbian* (Firebrand Books). She is a member of the editorial collective of *Conditions* magazine.



Jackie Shee

Dore Ann McAdams

JAN

THURS

1

**Annual New Year's Day Marathon Benefit!!!
7 P.M. \$10. Special guest stars!**

with Allen Ginsberg, Anne Waldman, David Cale, Nicky Paraiso & Mary Shultz, Robbie McCauley & Ed Montgomery, Holly Hughes, and many more...

7

Alice Notley & Robert Grenier

Alice Notley's most recent book of poems is *Parts Of A Wedding* (Unimproved Editions Press). Other books include *Margaret & Dusty* (Coffee House, 1985), *How Spring Comes* (Toothpaste, 1981), and *Sorrento* (Sherwood, 1984). Robert Grenier's most recent book of poems is *Phantom Anthems* (O Books, 1986).

14

Will Bennett & Hannah Weiner

Will Bennett is the author of *Zero* (Telephone Books, 1984) and the upcoming *Sun, Moon, & Stars* (Benzene Editions). Hannah Weiner is the author of 12 books of poems, most recently *Written In/The Zero One* (Victoria, Australia: Post Neo, 1985).

21

Bob Holman & Roberto Bedoya

Bob Holman is the author of *Bicentennial Suicide* (with Bob Rosenthal), *Tear To Open* (Power Mad), and the forthcoming *Panic* DJ. He is a former Program Coordinator at the Poetry Project. Roberto Bedoya is the Literary Director of the Intersection in San Francisco, and the author of *Picas* (e.g. Press).

28

**Victor Hernandez Cruz "Geography Of The Trinity Corona:
Sources Of The Caribbean Culture And Its Universal
Transportation."**

Victor Hernandez Cruz is the renowned author of several books of poems, among them: *Snaps, Mainland, Tropicalization*, and the recent *Bilingual Wholes* from Momo's Press. (FREE)

24

"A Good Man Is Hard To Find" a dramatization of Flannery O'Connor's short story by Nathaniel Graham Nesmith; directed by Julian Neil.

25

SAT & SUN



Richard Foreman

Walter Bello

THE POETRY PROJECT

MONDAY NIGHT PERFORMANCE SERIES

WORKSHOPS

1 Iris Rose & James Siena Perform "Tailspin"
Maggie Siena & Kim X Perform "Twins"

8 State Of The Art: A Town Meeting To Discuss Performance Art
Speakers include: Eric Bogosian, Stephanie Skura, Fred Holland, Lucy Sexton, Catherine Bush, and George Bartheleff.

15 Cynthia Fraley Performs
Douglas Sadownick Reads
Curtis Oetjen & Company Perform (with Ching Gonzalez, Randy Miles, and others)

22 S K Dunn & Jim Neu Present "Buffalo Dreams"

29 Open Readings

5 Richard Foreman Reads From His Work
Frank Conversano Performs

12 Open Readings

19 Jackie Shue Performs
Michael Friedman Reads His Poetry
Katie O'Looney Performs With Poet Rick McKay

26 Stuart Sherman Performs
Marshall Reese & Nora Ligorano

Susie Timmons
"Advanced Poetry" Workshop,
Tuesday eves. 7 PM (Ongoing)
Susie Timmons' book of poems, *Hog Wild* was published by Frontward Books... With Bob Holman & Sara Miles, she was a founder of the New York Poetry Calendar.

Study the greats to learn their tricks! Enlightening class discussion - invigorating assignments - experiments with attitude development and dissolution!

(This workshop is made possible by Poets & Writers, Inc. through funds which it has received from the NYSCA literature program.)

Jaime Manrique
"Fiction & Prose" Workshop
Friday eves. 7 PM (ends Dec. 19)

Jaime Manrique's acclaimed novel, *Columbian Gold: A Novel Of Power And Corruption* (Clarkson Potter) has been translated into several languages and optioned for the movies by "Kiss Of The Spiderwoman" director Hector Babenco. Fluent in many languages, Jaime Manrique has also written opera librettos, musical adaptations for the theater, and original screenplays.

In the "Fiction & Prose" workshop, students will be required to read masterpieces of short fiction, analyze character development, plot, and theme, as well as receive individual feedback on their own work.

Laurie Carlos
"Performance Poetry" Workshop
Saturdays, noon, through January
Jan. 31, Presentation Piece
by Workshop Members Free

An actress, writer, director, singer, Laurie Carlos is the author of *NonSectorian Conversations With The Dead* and the recent *Organdy Falsetto*. An original cast member of the Broadway and PBS' versions of *For Colored Girls... Ms. Carlos has designed this workshop to meet the needs of both writers and performers.*

Workshop members will work with text in developing performance skills. Using material created in class, students will collaborate on a piece directed by Ms. Carlos.

Bernadette Mayer
"Poetry" Workshop
Begins Friday, Jan. 9, 7 PM

Former Artistic Director of the Poetry Project, Bernadette Mayer is the author of numerous books of poetry, including: *Mutual Aid* (Mademoiselle de la Mole Press, 1985), *Utopia* (United Artists, 1983), and *Midwinter Day* (Turtle Island Foundation, 1982). She is the recipient of several grants and awards, and is a prolific and active editor, teacher, publisher, and performer as well.

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

Steve & Mark



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

Winter is a world of great writers.

The Poetry Center of the 92nd Street Y has been the gathering place of international writers since 1939.

And fittingly enough, our 1986-87 Season offers you the opportunity to hear a world of great poets, playwrights, screenwriters and novelists, many of whom are yours to hear for the first time.

Join us for these exciting Monday evenings at 8:00.

DEC. Verse Plays by

1 JAMES MERRILL & WILLIAM ALFRED

Merrill's *The Image Maker* (NY Premiere) performed by Mr. Merrill and actors Peter Hooten and Mary Bomba with puppets.

Alfred's *Nothing Doing*, a new verse play.
Single Tickets: \$8

8 LINDA HUNT reads EMILY DICKINSON

In honor of the centenary of Dickinson's death, Ms. Hunt, best known for her Academy Award-winning performance in *The Year of Living Dangerously*, reads the celebrated poet's work.

Single Tickets: \$10

15 WALLACE SHAWN & CHRISTOPHER DURANG

Two Obie Award-winning playwrights.
Shawn: *Aunt Dan and Lemon*
Durang: *Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All*
Single Tickets: \$8

JAN. 5 IAN FRAZIER & VERONICA GENG

Two contemporary humorists.
Frazier: Staff writer, *The New Yorker*; author of *Dating Your Mom*.
Geng: Fiction editor, *The New Yorker*; *Partners*, 29 satirical pieces about contemporary American life.
Single Tickets: \$8

JAN. 12 BUCHI EMICHETA

This Nigerian's seven novels have established her as one of Africa's most important voices. Her most recent books are *Double Yoke* and *The Rape of Shavi*.
Single Tickets: \$8

JAN. 19 ANTHONY HECHT

Pulitzer Prize-winning poet, *The Hard Hours*, and a co-recipient of the Bollingen Prize.
Single Tickets: \$8

JAN. 26 DARYL HINE & ALFRED CORN

Hine: *Academic Festival Overtures*, an autobiographical verse narrative dealing with a single year of the author's adolescence in British Columbia.
Corn: *Notes from a Child of Paradise* and a forthcoming volume of essays.
Single Tickets: \$6

Coming Attractions: Yours Sincerely: Three Evenings of Letters (18th, 19th and 20th Century), Arthur Miller, Salman Rushdie, Parker Huang, Keri Hulme, John Guare and Stephen Sondheim.

Tickets available at the 92nd Street Y Box Office, 1395 Lexington Ave. Or call Y-CHARGE at (212) 996-1100.



The 92nd Street Y is an agency of UJA-Federation.

Deborah Artman Insomniac

Her First American by Lore Segal, *Fawcett Crest*, \$3.95 (paper)

The Beggar Maid by Alice Munro, *King Penguin*, \$4.95 (paper)

One Way Or Another by Peter Cameron, *Harper & Row*, \$15.95 (cloth)

The Bone People by Keri Hulme, *Penguin*, \$7.95 (paper)

Stealing The Language by Alicia Suskin Ostriker, *Beacon Press*, \$19.95 (cloth)

Nobody ever asks me what books are on my night table. (Night table? How about a milkcrate?) So to make up for lost time, here are my picks for the year.

By far my favorite is Lore Segal's *Her First American*. If you haven't read this novel, buy it and experience the intelligent world of Segal who deftly portrays a complicated friendship between Ilka Weissnix, a 21 year old Jewish woman who spent her childhood running from Hitler, and Carter Bayoux, a middle-aged black intellectual on the skids. The book is set in New York in the early '50's, which often feels not very different from the New York of the '80's.

Segal is not afraid of anything here. Her characters are smart, they think, they make mistakes. They tell good jokes, too. *Her First American* is about Ilka's loss of innocence and Carter's unwillingness to die gracefully. It's also about the mysteries of language—the private language of dreams, the lost language of the old world, the clear shared sound of pain.

Read it, if only to learn how blacks and Jews can be together from a more knowing source than *New York* magazine. Will someone make the movie please?

Another delicious discovery this year was Alice Munro. I know everyone is jumping up and down about *The Progress of Love*, but for vintage Munro check out *The Beggar Maid*, a startling collection of short stories that read like a novel. One story, "Simon's Luck," contains what for me is the most piercing passage of fiction I've read in a long time, where Munro's character Rose describes the long perilous minutes before the fall. A woman simply finds herself waiting in a house for a man to arrive. She can feel her self begin to be defined by another, the thrill of it, and the dread. Just when I was knowing my own fragile boundaries, Rose packs it all up and drives as many miles away as she can.

Munro has one of the best ears in the business. How she is able to pick a word, a line, or a phrase and build a story around it is true and evocative enough to conjure up any reader's personal history. I wanted to eat this book.

Was this the year for the short story or what? In the world of present tense fiction, my vote goes to Peter Cameron's *One Way Or Another*. The stories collected here inspire and comfort. Cameron's women are real people! His men are whole! And his voice as either speaks with equal authority, always retaining a perfect sense of timing, an ability to capture moments precisely.

What I appreciated most was the honest sexuality of Cameron's characters—gay, straight, married, living together or alone—I believed they were real. I see them on the street every day. Try this book to see how spare prose can hit home and not abandon you there.

On the flip side of style is the strangest (and fattest) book I read this year—*The Bone People* by New Zealander Keri Hulme. An absorbing page-turner that's good for long subway rides and nights of procrastination, *The Bone People* is both terribly freeing and deeply disturbing. Almost accidentally, from Hulme's rich, image-laden prose a story emerges about a fiercely solitary woman who finds her self-imposed exile slipping away because of an angry, bruised and speechless boy. This book turns your morals into dice and I like the shake up.

And for any woman writer feeling temporarily disconnected and for any man who wants to know better, pick up *Stealing The Language* to regain your footing and your place in time, and to once again reestablish what makes up our literary canon. (Literary canon!) Anyway, *Stealing The Language* is a very readable overview of American women's poetry with a focus on the work of contemporary poets, including Carolyn Forché, Audre Lorde, Anne Waldman, Anne Sexton, Muriel Rukeyser, June Jordan and Sharon Olds.

Okay, I may finally be tired. The milkcrate needs a fresh stack, and Erdrich's *The Beet Queen*, Carter's *Saints and Strangers* and Spanidou's *God's Snake* are still mysteries to me.

P.S. To tell you the truth, I couldn't go near any book entitled *The Good Mother*.

DEBORAH ARTMAN, Associate Editor of the Poetry Project Newsletter, will be reading her own work at The Bar Inn on December 20th.

It's Miller Time Victor Hernandez Cruz

I work for the C.I.A.
They pay me with cocaine and white Miami lapel sports jackets free tickets to San Juan where I make contact with a certain bank official at the Chase Manhattan Condado branch

My contact a guy named Pete asks if I know other accents within the Spanish *Can you sound Salvadorian?* They give me pamphlets and also send me pornographic magazines if I want a stereo or a VCR they know a place I can get them at half-price they told me there is a waiter

that works at Bruno's who can get me any gadget

The last assignment I had was to contact the Public Relations Division of a beer company because for U.S. Hispanics it was Miller Time—I contacted this brewery a certain Miguel Gone sa less invited me to lunch I met him at La Fuente at his suggestion with him was a Camden New Jersey Cuban who was going through town enroute to Los Angeles the lunch was on them

Senor Gone sa less had a wallet full of plastic he had more plastic than Woolworth's they mentioned that the beer company wanted to sponsor salsa dance within the Latin

Davis, X

Nor are you lost. Elijah

Malcolm! Chorus

You're Malcolm, cold and just, no fear of loss. Elijah

Malcolm! Chorus

You are not empty nor are you lost. Elijah

Allah. Allah. From Africa like me A God black men will praise. I can say His name. Malcolm

Allah. Allah. Reginald & Chorus

You are not empty, but full enough to cry aloud. Elijah

Allah! Allah! Chorus

I hear the shudders of slavers. Malcolm

Your rage He will claim. Elijah

Allah! Chorus

The sound that shakes the walls. Malcolm

Malcolm! Elijah

It bangs against the cells, A name without fear. Malcolm

Who have you been? Elijah

A power gathers I can hear. To say His name is to praise Him! Allah! Malcolm

[Malcolm leaves prison, and comes to meet Elijah.] Elijah

Malcolm, who have you been? Malcolm, from where do you come? Elijah

Why are you so thirsty and worn? Who would you be? Malcolm

I came from a desert of pain and remorse, from slavery, exile, from jail's brute force. Elijah

Who would you be? Malcolm

I would just be a man who knows right from wrong, who knows the past was stolen away. Elijah

A life we see. A reason to be. But who will you be? Malcolm

My name means nothing. Elijah

An "X" you must claim. Malcolm

My name means I was a slave. Elijah

An "X" you must claim for what was lost—your African name, an ocean crossed. An "X" will stand until God returns to speak a name that will be yours. Come, Malcolm X, let me teach you. Allah-Akbar Allah is the greatest. Let me teach you. Chorus

An "X" will stand for what was lost. An "X" will stand until God returns. Allah-Akbar. As Salazar-Akbar, Peace be unto you. Malcolm

Wa-Alaikum-Salaam and unto you be peace. Elijah

We join all others who love Allah. All [Chorus]

We seek Freedom, Justice, Equality. But to know these things You must know history. And you must know

[Elijah shows Malcolm how to pray in the manner of the Nation of Islam during the early 1950s, standing, as opposed to kneeling, facing East, palms out.]

They gave me a bag with 3 thousand dollars in it it was my responsibility to see this through the Cuban guy tapped me on the shoulder and said

Don't have any of the mixed drinks The bartenders at the dance are working for us The chemical people are experimenting the effects of a liquid Just drink the beer

The festive event went off successfully even a full moon was in the sky next week the CIA is flying me back to the Caribbean where I will assist in staging one of the strangest events in recent history

According to the description in my orders we are going to pull off a mock rising of land from beneath the Caribbean which the media will quickly identify as lost Atlantis

Armageddon comes. I carry its word. All [Chorus]

Freedom, justice freedom: Equality: Allah-Akbar: Allah-Akbar: Freedom, justice, freedom: Equality, freedom, justice: Freedom, equality: Malcolm

Dark is our history, A flame is our prophecy, Allah's Messenger carries His word. Elijah

We have been blind, the white man's tool. For four hundred years, we've been made his fools. He laughs at us who once were kings. He has us beg and call him boss, then he gives us his God to keep us downtrod. We've sunk so low we can't let him go. Malcolm

We've sunk so low, We can set our lives free. Malcolm and Elijah

Let our eyes see We can set our lives free. Malcolm

I wanted to fight— Elijah

You did not know how. It's your time now. [Embraces him] Spread His word! All

: Allah-Akbar.

Thulani Davis is the author of a collection of poems, PLAYING THE CHANGES from Wesleyan Press, and is a staff writer for *The Village Voice*. The opera "X" premiered at City Center in September, for which Ms. Davis wrote the acclaimed libretto and Anthony Davis composed the memorable score.

Meeting Vera Rita Speicher

Vera isn't sorry for straightening her hair and that's a direct quote. She arrives late. Suppose there isn't enough for Vera, suppose she has to go home? Vera spoked her hair in front, buzzed the sides, grew the back into a tail, cellophaned it cherry and magenta. She leans the night into me, but indoors she's civilized.

Vera leans the night into me and says "umummm," like there's more time, "umummm I'd like to kiss you hello but I don't even know you."

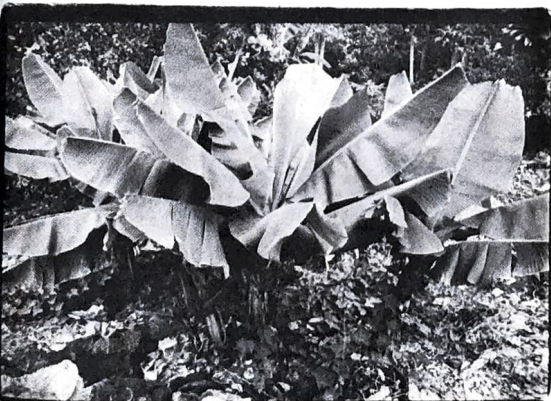
Vera has a few good lines we share out back. She takes my hand. In the dark I can't tell if it's

Continued ▶

Circular buildings made of crystals are being constructed somewhere in Texas they will be part of the spectacle which will have the world spellbound simultaneous with this event the Marines will invade from bases in Puerto Rico the countries of Nicaragua El Salvador and Guatemala it will be the month of Salza in San Francisco an astounding mystical event in the Caribbean the price of cocaine coming through Miami will go down everybody party and celestial circuits jammed with junk and information

In a daze the world is free for Miller Time.

VICTOR HERNANDEZ CRUZ is the renowned author of SNAPS, MAINLAND, and the recent BILINGUAL WHOLES, from Momo's Press. Now living in the Bay Area, he will rap/poeticize at the Poetry Project's Talk Series in January.



community bring in the top commercial names and that while this dance was going on they wanted to pass a petition against U.S. involvement in Central America they showed me the petition which had a place for the name and address of the signers a great list to have and spread around all government agencies

swollen or just bigger than her left. Her pants are slit with color, her sweater black. Vera doesn't lie, she omits transitions. I think she means it when she says "don't count on an afterlife, fuck me now."

Vera tells the bartender "if you're having that kind of trouble go to the future and look back." He looks at me like I'm responsible. "I just met her," I say. "Camels," Vera says. He reaches under the bar and comes up with cigarettes. Vera laughs, "I mean cosmic camels." Vera's allergic to what the world's become.

On stage when Vera plays she works as a virgin. She holds the mike stand at arms length then leans her torso toward it. "Fourteen and on my way out of town," she says, lifting her horn. The crowd's temporarily in love with Vera but by the time she notices it turns.

Vera's friends call her Very. The waitress brings mixed drinks. Everybody smokes cigarettes. I sit next to Vera and say "I've never seen somebody do that." She tells me "you can do it to any instrument with holes."

Vera imagines a twenty-four hour sympathetic listener and after breakfast we borrow bikes. Through the dunes she's satisfied, even on the hills, humming. On the last rise we see the blue Atlantic. I'm wearing Vera's white shirt and taking nothing for granted. An audience of tourists stare at Vera with her sash as we walk past them toward the wild beach, hand in hand.

After she unfolds the blanket Vera suggests we swim but the water is too cold so we lie on the blanket. When I ask what she's thinking about she says "the nature of public parks in a democracy." I touch her face, neck, belly, slide two fingers under her bikini. At water's edge Vera notices two women with matched scarves. She says that implies the existence of a threesome. Vera raises her hips and asks for more fingers.

When the thermos breaks Vera suggests we respond to corporate negligence personally. Refuse the bill. When hounded say no, change address, hair color, wear black leather in the sun.

It's time to go. Vera invites me to her next gig. We unlock the bikes. "Lick your fingers and hold me," she says, "rub the sleep from your eyes."

RITA SPEICHER is a founder and director of Freeland, a fine arts intensive for women artists, in Provincetown, MA. She is completing a manuscript, *Healing Arts After Hours*, from which this story is taken.

Four Sonnets Marilyn Hacker

1.
It's not that I'm inimical to sleaze.
I most fondly remember getting it on
with her, crammed standing in an airplane john,
airsprayed, spottlit, jeans bunched below our knees,
or, in the Fiat under some chestnut trees,
in full view of the lunchbound *routiers*
with her. Girl, I would have you any way
or where, except that infidelity's
the kind of bad taste that leaves a bad taste
worse than the mousebreath of a hangerover.
I want you so much I can taste it, but
that's not the taste I want, though it means wast-
ing precocious spring waiting on hold, in rut,
for clean time to be your low-minded lover.

2.
O little one, this longing is the pits.
I'm horny as a timber wolf in heat.
Three times a night I tangle up the sheet.
I seem to flirt with everything with tits:
Karyn at lunch who knows I think she's cute;
my ex the D.A. on the Sex Crimes Squad;
Iva's gnarled canny New Hampshire god-
mother who was my Saturday night date.
I'm trying to take things one at a time,
situps at bedtime, less coffee, less meat,
more showers till a remedy appears.
Since there's already quite enough Sex Crime,
I think I ought to be kept off the street:
What are you doing for the next five years?

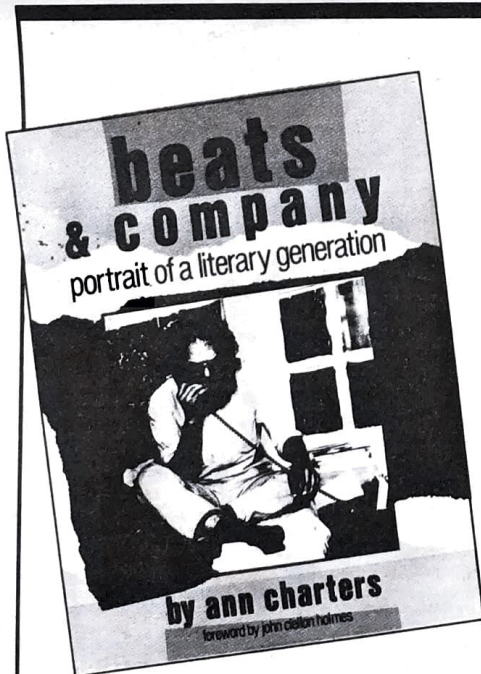
3.
Well, damn, it's a relief to be a slut
after so long of "Man delights not me
nor woman neither," that I honestly
wondered if I'd outgrown it. Chocolate
or wine, a cashmere scarf, a cigarette
had more to do with sensuality
than what's between my belly and my butt
that yearns toward you now unabashedly.
I'd love to grip your head between my thighs
while yours tense toward your moment on my ears,
but I'll still be thankful for this surprise
if things turn out entirely otherwise
and we're bar buddies who, in a few years,
will giggle about this after two beers.

4.
Didn't Sappho say her guts clutched up like this?
Before a face suddenly numinous
her eyes watered, knees melted. Did she lactate
again, milk brought down by a girl's kiss?
Its documented torrents are unloosed
by what contemporarily produced
not the wish, but the need to consume, in us,
one pint of Maalox, one of Kaopectate.
My eyes and groin are permanently swollen,
I'm alternately brilliant and witless,
and sleepless—bed is just a spot to roll in.
Although I'd dream my jeans touching your breast
sweetheart, it isn't lust, it's all the rest
of what I want with you that scares me shitless.

MARILYN HACKER'S most recent book of poems is *LOVE, DEATH, & THE CHANGING OF THE SEASONS* (Arbor House) which she describes as a "novel in sonnets." She will be reading December 17 at The Poetry Project with Cheryl Clarke.

Walking Through The Valley Of The Shadow Barbara Barg

If I didn't write I'd never be
able to eat my words like now I'd like
to eat a few but still I do
believe in some things.
The damn blindness, I hate it.
I can see back there well enough now
like seeing a street a week after crossing.
Yow. Life is pain.
The murky steps enroute to pernicious clarity.
Ow. I hate the way this feels.
My brain gets hollow, sinks
through my soggy heart.
I hate the ways I behaved when I knew it was
over.
I meant to be better than rage.
I didn't mean to be cruel because I never like
cruel
but I couldn't be cool
when the other suddenly treats me like the enemy
and I didn't know we were at war.
I like a fool feel
having cared for his heart in his weak season



BEATS & COMPANY

Portrait of a Literary Generation
Ann Charters
Foreword by John Clellon Holmes

Ann Charters established her reputation as an author with the critically acclaimed *Kerouac* ("the best factual life of Jack Kerouac that will probably ever be written"—*Newsday*). But Ann had other talents as well—she photographed the life and times of the Beat Generation. Now, for the first time, more than 100 of her photographs have been collected in a pictorial testament to that legendary group of writers and poets. From a unique insider's point of view—most of her subjects are close friends—Charters documents thirty years in the extraordinary lives of such figures as Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, and William Burroughs. They are seen at readings, parties, in their homes, and with family and friends. Many of these portraits have never before been published, while others are already regarded as classics. Filled with anecdotes and reminiscences, as well as excerpts from several of the subjects' works, *BEATS & COMPANY* is an affectionate, poignant glimpse at one of the most important literary and cultural movements in twentieth century American history.

A Connecticut resident, writer/photographer **Ann Charters** teaches at the University of Connecticut.



The U.N. will devote x billion to the continent of Africa.
 (Small Wonder Auto Focus Color Video Camera, \$699.95).
 The West, of which we are a signature, will pay over a third. (High density floppy diskettes, price?)
 At the simplest level of function, our culture is about the best fitting jeans. Concord grapes and MacIntosh label underwear. If a single person can love another, in as much as the world

as a day trip is nearly over (it's half past 10), theoretically anyone can shower and bike to the beach in the morning. I still feel for the tourist committed to under-consciousness. In my blue frame, an airplane and gull glide, no different in size. In an earlier life, I could prefabricate love like houses in my mind, slump back and concrete. Dismantle and reconstruct, void to a new location. Tonight (microsoft), marigold flaps like a skin of moon. Tenderness, yes, even passion. But to trust someone again (in stretch fibers) will test how we are alone.

JANE MILLER has been awarded an N.E.A. fellowship, and has taught at the Writers Workshop in Iowa City and at The Writer's Community in New York. Her most recent book is *BLACK HOLES, BLACK STOCKINGS*, co-authored with Olga Brouman. These poems are from her new manuscript, *AMERICAN ODALISQUE*.

After Richard Elman

The last drops of wine are sweetest,
 Russians say, as fall flowers
 brighten the oncoming chill.
 In middle age he married well.
 The honey of her mouth,
 sweet aftertastes.

Richard Elman's highly acclaimed works include *TAXI DRIVER* and *COCKTAILS AT SOMOZA'S*. He is a Professor of writing at the State University of New York at Stonybrook.

while he couldn't give mine time to gather strength.
 Perhaps the knives and forks of mental health will feed me my pain in pieces I can digest. Pain.
 The whole goddamn planet is lousy with fucking pain—I said that before when I was justifying celebrations. And I still believe in celebrations. Us gangly humans need them since there is no justice. Just us, walking around in space, keeping the focus on ourselves.

BARBARA BARG is the author of *Obeying The Chemicals* (Hard Press). She is a former member of the Poetry Project Board of Directors, and currently is in charge of radio continuity for *Poetry International*, the radio magazine produced by The Committee For International Poetry.

Venus de Milo Jane Miller

I last felt this unthoughtful at age twelve. It's cold for June, no wind, low tide, no moon. I'm flat on the deck in a sweater on a towel. Oysters on the half-shell, eh? A glass of wine, eh? Foghorns, stars, about as much outer space as a week-end.
 It's the promised land after the faded dream. Now that we have learned to fly, using portable butane-fired blasts, when I wear black and my hair is full, I can see my soul on the patio, tired necklaces of lit coals in a barbeque by the bay. And I won't until I think of something great to do.

Like children grow, things change in spurts. (The old charm bracelet sells for \$115). Pandas appear on the new club ties at Polo/Ralph Lauren.
 Who lives on what for a year?



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For further information: Rolly Kent, Tucson Writers' Conference, Tucson Public Library, PO Box 27470, Tucson, Arizona 85726.

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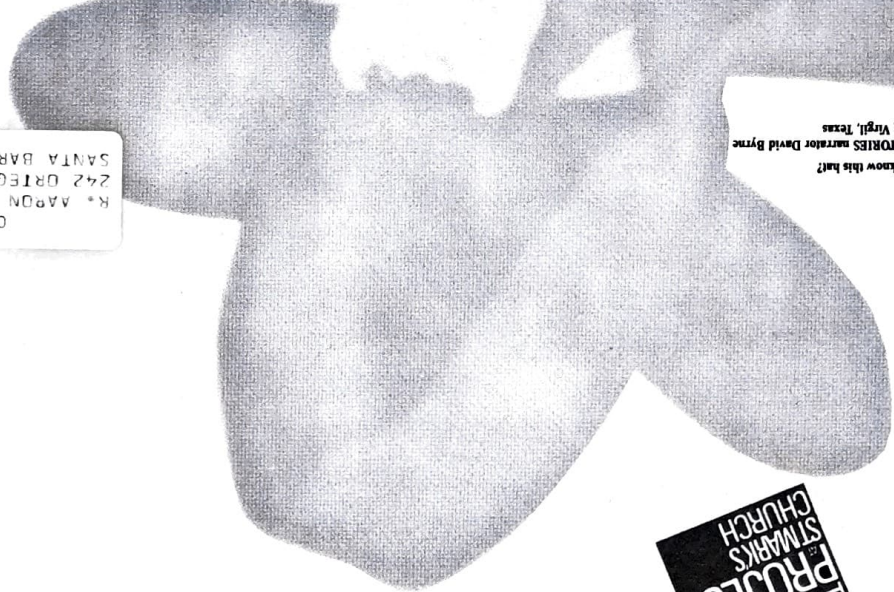
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The Collect Call Of The Wild
Bob Holman

Here it is, just where you said
It would be. Your mind is quiet
& your shoes, well, they seem to be going
Somewhere. The road, the road, as was once
Said, or twice, is where we go on. Where

Everything is acceptable, the blame more
Than most. Gray hair, cigarettes, tightening
Pants. To be gored by age is not exactly sexy,
But it's not to be denied. Not anymore.
Not any less, either, as the sun earnestly plies

The window dressing. A vocabulary, not the secret
Of life, that's all. If it taxes your spirit,
Some kind of government must be flowering. Blood
Is one example, the example of constancy, readiness
& effulgence. Another is lit up like Reno, popped

Champagne & caviar on a paper plate. What does
Doesn't last, & what is lost will probably
Transform even if it's found. That's the problem,
That the idea of the thing won't stand still,
A doggie finding its spot. Which name is Spot.

Of course the pay phone rings in the crowded lunch,
With no one caring the slightest for its emergency.
Too many crackers in the soup, the glass is greasy,
Yet we rest easy. It's the company, I'd guess.
That we finally have accepted knowing each other this way,
& that's the way we find ourselves, little by little, by & large.

Draw Heat
Rick Powell



Celebrated author of PANIC* DJ. SWEAT & SEX & POLITICS and BICENTEN-
NIAL SUICIDE, Bob Holman is also co-host of the wacky and subversive "Dou-
ble Talk Show" with Pedro Pietri.