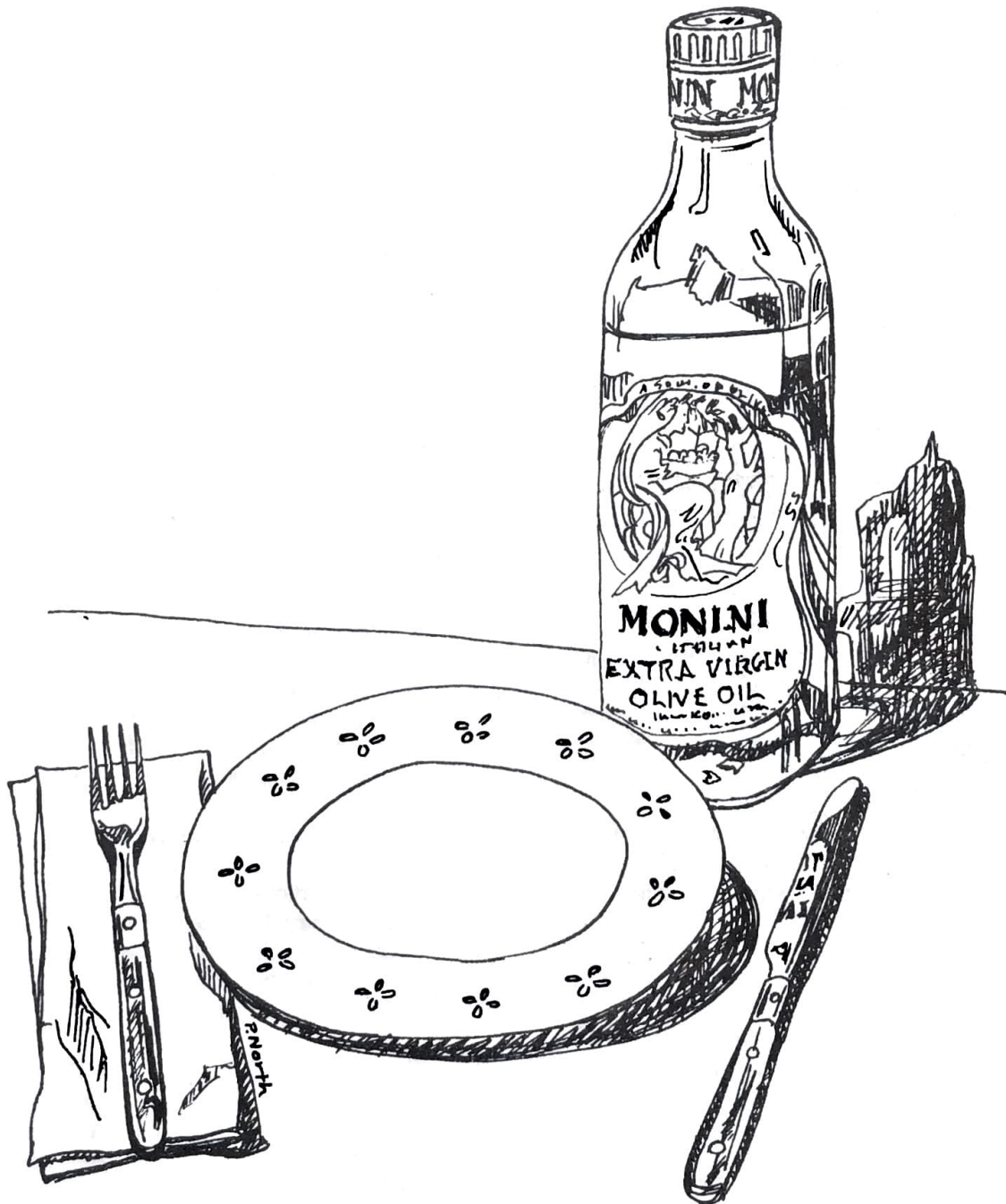


The Poetry Project

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INTERVIEW: BILL BERKSON by Ted Greenwald

What does it feel like to be a poet in the "post-modern" era?

I think that the era is two-ply. Poetry exists on thin paper. Personally, in one's late forties - a poet continuing after some time - in a period where poetry as an item doesn't seem to be going anywhere, as a public item - I wonder what it must be like for a twenty-year-old, or twenty-eight-year-old coming into it, what with this void. A few years ago Ron Padgett said, "We'll see who has the courage to continue." About the same time I thought Ron was right, I noticed those I was in touch with were really enjoying it. All the business (publication, etc.) had to take care of itself or be ignored for a while.

What does love have to do with it?

You've got to ask Bernadette Mayer questions like that!!

That's really a two-ply question. There's a lot of museless poetry, which has nothing to do with any "love" ethos. Unless you can identify an eleventh or twelfth muse which is the muse of theory which we haven't heard from yet.

There's the "love" that grows from fascination with writing. The rest is like the poetry of private life - doesn't seem to have very much pressure in it right now.

What are some of the differences between visual artists and poets?

Most visual artists nowadays consider themselves public actors. Few of the poets of our age have found any consistent access to that role, or necessarily even wanted it.

Why didn't they want it?

Because it seemed to require convertible meanings: What you actually wrote, to be taken publicly, would have to be continually paraphrased.

Visual artists are behind in literature. They tend to read Top 40's "serious" literature. They didn't catch the Sixties-Seventies-Eighties wave of poetry. There's no mixed community of poets and visual artists anymore. They're not interested in one another right now - except for the few poets

who are still writing art criticism.

There seems to be a difference in mental set. The visual artists don't read the right books.

Do you think poetry will ever develop an economy?

Poetry has an economy: of energy. It may be doing nothing more now than seeping into the general culture. Strictly speaking in economic terms - poetry and the life of the poet are out of it.

Why has the media characterized everything but poetry as "poetic"?

Well, "poetic" means soft. In media, "poetic" means soft-focus and harmless, euphemistic. That has nothing to do with the poetics of the best writing in America for the last thirty years, which has been characterized by a hard, factual surface - not vague, "poetic" at all. In art criticism, "poetic" now is what was called "lyrical" in the Fifties. And it usually triggers an uneducated use of the word *ambiguous* (which means *uncertain*, not *multiple meanings*).

Do you have any sense of what direction poetry will take as we enter the twenty-first century?

No. Really, no.

What's your favorite movie of the 80's?

After *Blue Velvet*, *Three Men and a Cradle*.

Who does the dishes?

Tom Selleck does the dishes. In my house everybody does the dishes. And the dishes get done. There's a certain time in family life when you decide whether or not the dishes get done.

Where do you place your work in today's poetry?

The hard part of this question is where do I place today's poetry. Because I see less of other people's work. There isn't the little magazine and small press dissemination that there was ten years ago. That's an economic fact.

Not energy?

The forty-and-over poets don't have the time and the money to continue. And the younger poets haven't picked up the obligation. The only way I have of "placing" my poetry is in relation to what I know I'm doing and in relation to my ideals.

Which ideals?

They're complicated. They have to do with surface. A poetry whose surface is factual and inclusive and has zing. But that description is just a set of words that I keep alongside whatever it is that turns out to be the next poem. I don't necessarily expect that ideals and practice will match up.

What advice would you give to a young writer coming on the scene today?

I wouldn't. I never got any advice from anybody. I got examples - and from time to time somebody tells me to do more, rather than less. And that's always useful.

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from *Retana's Name*

* *

A spring rain gift
and so when walking nothing leaps forward
to pierce the heart
the lawns lie as open territories across which
residents stare out at the world
a dead space between the community and the self
no forbidding tangle of brush, nothing obscure
just flat space ornamented by little landscaping
cliches

arborvide and a few swords of iris
the renunciation of ardor
entering into a private life, a private body
the concept of sin and transgression
strange and far away
everything leaning back dull and listless
refusing to hold one here
to go or stay all indifferent now

* *

You have a long telephone conversation with A
that is you don't but you do in mind
in turn the actual
that is you keep in mind the conversation
you would have had
the horror of seeing yourself
the daughter of chaos swept away

* *

We were given tea to drink
and expected to sit in the dark and wait
aiming all our hopes toward the first light of day
which at this time of year is fearfully instilled
the women, passersby...comets and we drift
in their wake
our rent pays only for the ground on which we
stand
and is extracted from the exertions of our limbs

which grow in spite of chains and defy correction
solar flares reach us on the framework on a wing
and the carefully constructed ghost of freedom
dangles overhead

we feel the chest grow with exercise
and the distance grow as we run in place
our being grows reasonable with its former
intelligence
and the heart sinks into a bizarre voyeurism
auditioning the senses
into the bodily arena of world events
July, the heart had no longing to leave home ever
again
at home in its prison
covered with the baggage of ritual exercise
surrounded and holding on

* *

to free me from obsession
then I would work all day
but as it neared four o'clock
I became depressed and at five
I could scarcely breathe
leaving the substantial routine
I could have defined myself but for necessity
feeding the children and putting them to
bed
and then at nine
there was nothing left to be
and so to bed to wake again at six
I would think of those who were working
in factories

When I could look out the door
and see the projects across the hill
before going underground
the trees were bare
but now are green
I see only various shades of green from here
the ivy clinging to the casement
lily-of-the-valley just beyond
rain if it's raining
the wind if it blows
I have no use for happiness
only the strength to endure
I cut some flowers
for my mother when she visits me

The silent porches under the overhanging eaves
and the pigeons sailing down to roost
the wib-wibbing of their wings as they flutter to a
stop
symbol of departure and return
a handful of cedar berries fallen in the storm
not given but married to the mocking cries of fate
thirty thousand a year spent
pedaling over the countryside
coasting out of the silent hills into the city streets
all at once in the noonday traffic

* *

Scenes from the pose

from the temple of today
the decoration of its outer walls
 the confluence of circumstance included
 a visit to the temple by the royal pair
 and their court in state limousines
in the tower
the figure raised its arms, flexed, etc.
all in time to music
but was still called nonpracticing
invisible, the moisture lay in the gardens
behind the pleasant prospect however
lies a rather fragile assumption
that the figure will not rise much
 above the level of consciousness
to the somewhat more realistic, high-demand
 scenario
though it still has some rather disturbing capacities
 it could easily play the role

I would say
that they are walking to the door
through a dependability
 that stands open for them
they walk freely
within or without
not led by individual compulsion but drive by...
the farther he runs from his office
the greater the burden of responsibility
taking personal progress for world improvement
the man is quite obese, a lined face
a suit and tie and in spite of the frown
and deep circled eyes
a vague smile
 now hands in pockets
 the family dog sitting before the man

the remnant of owl wood
 soft vinyl upholstered seats
and then the burnt wax smell of an extinguished
 fire

* *

Spring, fall
the inability to acquire power
the park has its concurrent paths
the attendant watches over them
ask me if I was there
and I will tell you it was there we met
he stood aloof, his shoulder lifted
 the salute
the vision meets itself in mid-air

The well-polished heels of the three
clicked soundly on the white marble floor of the
 lobby
and they took the elevator to the third floor
it was Friday before Labor Day
upstairs in the offices
secretaries and officers stood waiting with concern
their world was suddenly under attack
the bifurcation was most obvious to the few

who understood the environment

* *

The earth keeps turning of course
and the sea rises up along the esplanade
until you have been there yourself
feeling foolish sitting on the benches along the
 arcade
as the tide pours in first in benign little riffs
then rising straight up and rolling the tourist
 back against the walls
a mystic voice calls out
 and the voices of children
whom the troupes were looking for
 in the heart of...
to endanger and destroy
the remnants of these
have they all been handed over to the officers
the precipice overlooking the sea
 and the hills undulating away from the
shore

* *

A life worth living
a day with no races
sunset came and went
and the sounds of the band at the yacht club
drew the little boats ashore
the party faded slowly and the singer
was last seen drifting out of the bay
beauty will be conclusive
 but not so in the land of soon to come
arguing that the hostages were doomed from the
 start
nothing on earth can bring them out of the dead
 sleep
the significance of these autumn incidents
paying for the pose
it is and ought to be a pleasure
and that which is absent
 he doesn't even want to know or say
the facts
 the zones of terror
to put the fires out
don't be surprised after the houses burn
others will be built
 they give their word on that
Zones del Rio...wouldn't want anything cheap
we are not against anything
but why should our place here be taken by...
why should the whole world be having fun
 while a few suffer
the families formed a square on the tarmac
standing with bowed head
like fine grains of salt
 the wind does not know which way
 to distribute them
supposing some acts have been done
 only you don't know
would you expect me to tell that those incidents
were ours
this scene outside the gates

A REPORT ON CREATION 21 ON NOTO-JIMA

Anyhow, it can't be spring, it's too hot
I can't run on with you any longer
the body laid out on a stretcher on top of a cement
trough
surrounded by a colonel and agents and several
journalists and soldiers
the day lives for a hundred years
the colonel's dogs and every member of the family

* *

I mustn't say another word
because the very act of living seems to be
too stupid for words

but why outside the dream doesn't the face dissolve
in the open air

it rains and the rain freezes on our coat
our cuffs
are stiff with ice

and why

it happens to those who love
something over and above
what they are able to comprehend
someone involved with beauty
wakes at five

to pour from a bottle luminous skin
moist smiles around the porcelain teeth
if one would wake in the middle of the

night

and find such absence from the sleeping
face
and beneath the gown no body there
night brings her to destruction
beauty dismantled in the dark

she floats unlovely on an island universe
she dreams beyond the gates of paradise
of harridans who dive
toward independence and death
of the father who drives

the conjugal arguments through the night
while the child nervously counts the infinite
the numerals spiral into the night
into an autobiography and emerge beyond the
clouds

the only constant is the rain
which precipitates the childish dreams
and sends them back to earth
if you don't believe
they will nevertheless drench you in your
sleep

Those islands are inaccessible now
when discomfort gnaws on me at night
and pins me by the hair

—Rebecca Wright

On August 21, 22, and 23rd a spectacular cultural event unfolded in a rather remote and extremely beautiful spot off a lush peninsula in a sheltered bay in the Sea of Japan. This was Creation 21, held on Noto-Jima, an island embraced on three sides by the Noto Peninsula and located somewhat diagonally and west of Tokyo, on the island of Honshu. In my journal I have written:

Now about 3:30p.m., Friday, Aug. 21st, we are traveling by bus with Kanazawa City on our right, sea as far as far is to our left. We drive along the water for a bit and then head inland with Kanazawa on our left....There are thirteen Korean poets and us. Met Ron (Bayes), his friend John (Brown) & Geoffrey (O'Brien) along with the others at the airport. A busload of poets.

We are taken to the Sun Kagaya Hotel ("Sun" as in the intense sun of a summer sky; "Kaga" is the old name of the region; "ya" means "hut," "shop," or "inn.") where we are greeted by Kobayashi Yoshiko, the energetic Director of this amazing gathering, and welcomed by Hasegawa Ryusei for the second time, as he had met our plane at Narita Airport a few days earlier. Hasegawa is the inventor of Creation 21. (As the festival progresses it will become clear that a great many very dedicated people have given many hours of time and endless support to this event, but it is clear that Kobayashi and Hasegawa have made it happen.)

Sun Kagaya Hotel is the most exquisite inn I have ever had the pleasure to pass a night in. A new building designed with the traditional Japanese esthetic in mind. Smooth wooden halls and soft straw tatami mats that smell like sweet hay. After we entered our room through two sets of sliding paper doors, after we sank down on abundant cushions, after we gazed at the elegant scroll flowing down the length of the wall, after the splendid lacquered table was brought in, we slid open what seemed to be the inside wall of the room and found ourselves staring at a lovely Japanese woman in a traditional, bright, festive kimono seated on a round platform in the middle of a huge pool, playing the *koto*. The hotel, it seems, was built on a kind of round, so that all the rooms become balconies opening onto the central area—which is a vast, clear, shallowish pool filled with multi-colored carp, and lined on the bottom with thousands of perfect-oval black stones.

That evening all the participants of Creation 21 and its organizers and supporters took part in a most generous feast and reception in a large banquet room at the hotel. Enthusiastic speeches of thanks and expectation were given. The food was beyond compare. Poets and performers had a chance to meet and chat. Kobayashi Yoshiko regularly hosts a poetry program on a local radio station. The next morning following breakfast she and Hiroaki Sato and I went to a private room in the hotel, and after putting together a little plug for Creation 21, went live over the telephone. Kobayashi-San talked about the Festival that would be happening that evening. I read a poem and Hiroaki translated.

Shortly thereafter we poets all boarded a bus and visited the site of the festival. In a small cove a large wooden platform floated gently, connected to the beach by a 15-foot ramp; this was the stage. Technicians scurried about setting up the sound and lighting systems (both were excellent during the festival), tents were being erected for refreshments, folding chairs were being set up on the shore as in a Fellini movie and tarps were being spread on the sand, for people to sit in and on. Activity everywhere. The area was gorgeous, lush and green, but it seemed a remote place for a Poetry/Performance event. Would there be an audience, we wondered?

That evening, when we arrived with our poems in our hands, lights of several hues drifted across the stage which was bobbing lightly; a huge audience had gathered (transported by chartered bus), announcements were being made over a clear, well-balanced sound system, the sea was lapping considerably on the beach and all was festive. On each side of the stage, in the sea, a tall, conical pyre had been constructed of dry brush. Slightly behind the stage and to the right, one of those mythical rocks, with hair of wild grasses and trees, rose out of the sea, and was lit by a single spotlight. The ramp led from the shore to the stage, where last-minute details were being ironed out.

Then Creation 21 began. The first performance featured a noble group of male dancers in Samurai-style dress. They did a traditional kind of warrior dance. Dressed in dark colors with boxed shoulders and pantlegs, they appeared on the semi-lit stage with the sea behind them, in a great staccato stamping. I'm not sure how many poets and performers presented their work, one knockout followed another. Thirteen poets from Korea read. Their works were translated into Japanese by the Japanese poets. I can't understand Korean, and my Japanese wasn't sufficient to translate the poems into English for myself. But my ears fell in love with the voices and the different sounds each poet made when reading his or her own work.

Many of the Japanese poets (and some of the Korean) gave quite elaborate performances. One, Izaki Toshiko, who had a very impressive, dramatic voice, read her piece from a long scroll that she unrolled as she read, while a Buddhist monk chanted beside her on the stage. The shock of white scroll, the monk chanting, her strong, lyrical tone, the bluish stage, created a feeling of unearthliness, of being transported somewhere else. Many of the poets read to drums or other music, or read alternate lines with another poet. Sugiura Minako read a gorgeous long poem about a school of fish; Hidaka Teru did a collaborative work with the East Indian dancer, Shakti. Hirayama Isao sung local folksongs, as did another group, The Society for Preserving Nanao Madara ("local folksongs"); and Hasegawa Kiyoshi, a blind singer with shoulder-length black hair & dark glasses did a generous set with some fancy guitar playing. Hasegawa Ryusei, who some of us had been fortunate enough to hear read in New York almost exactly two years before, thundered his mighty verse with his usual mysterious calm. There was a *samisen* player of the Tsugaru school, and a group of Korean veil dancers who could create fogs and mists with their veils. Besides myself, two other American poets read. Ronald Bayes (from North Carolina) and Geoffrey O'Brien (from New York). Hiroaki Sato, who had organized the American contingent, read translations of each of our poems prior to our reading them in English. The energy was high.

At some point toward the end of the event, and during one of the two dances Shakti did, the standing pyres of brush were lit and blazed up in unforeseeable wildness. It was a starry night and coal-black on the island. Spectacular. Walking back to the *minshuku* ("inn") where we were staying, Geoffrey turned in the quiet and thanked Hiro(aki) for inviting him, saying he had never been involved in anything so wonderful. I felt the same — I think we all did.

The morning of the 23rd, Sunday, we all assembled at a final group meeting in the Town Hall. Tables had been arranged to form one huge oval. The Mayor, who is an enthusiastic supporter of Creation 21, and cultural events in general, spoke. Then a spokesperson from each segment or group of poets said a few words. Contributors, workers, supporters, directors, all were thanked, and several people had suggestions for next year's festival.

It was such a pleasure to be at this gathering and see everyone again before we all returned to our various homes and countries. It seemed an example of that same caring energy, personal respect, and intense art that had been maintained throughout the three days of Creation 21. It was as Edwin Denby might have said had he been there: "....a continuous

rhythm....the exhilarating sense of....rhythm that only the projection of a complete movement — stress and nonstress — can begin to create.”

—Maureen Owen

REVIEWS

MY MOTHER, LIFE: *Where the Weather Suits My Clothes*, John Godfrey; Z Press, Calais, VT 05648. 32pp. \$6.

I too dislike prose poems. But John Godfrey's little book of them, which isn't so little, is original, continually surprises, and gets away with a lot, sometimes in dazzling fashion: it's an inspiring book. Godfrey is as *contrary* as they come; decorum in its myriad costumes is simply out the window. Tones, attitudes, perspectives, images are corralled, rather than shaped, into poems. The question of clutter—can poems evince *horror vacui*? — comes up again and again, only to be vaporized by the success of what's going on. Everything that gives English-language prose poetry a bad name, especially waterings-down from the French, is nowhere to be seen.

The patron saint, as in Godfrey's only slightly narrower poem-poems, seems to be Frank O'Hara: the elegant, nervy, extravagant O'Hara. Say the Mayakovsky side (ed. Rimbaud). Godfrey has something of Mayakovsky's largeness of persona, vibrating to everything under the sun, disaffected, combative, sentimental, vulnerable, street-wise brash, philosophical, rapturous. The poems are lyrical but also very complicated, and often surprisingly moving amid their teeming confusion. And they do cover a lot of ground. The titles are *some* help in getting bearings: "Yankee Green," "Corpus Oration," "My Mother, Life," "The Blessed Virgin is a '10'," "Wee-Wee." Side by side with a lot that belongs to the body, and the outside world in which it moves (often but not always on New York City streets) are sweeping statements sometimes of a quasi-philosophical nature. A female figure, to take only one example, can be a lover, a Muse, someone hanging out on the street, or a sheer indescribable:

She came as a falling star to the lakes. She the lithesome virgin not to be turned into a tree, she who would never dress like a penguin. An original want-not, she believed in philosophy, but she called it faith. And so her talk entered my lungs and came out as a call to the innumerable vessels that are the wives of time.

("My Mother, Life")

I don't know about you, but that's the way I prefer my hymns to Intellectual Beauty.

Did I say elegant? "*Wounded, sainted, and unchaste. And that was only my hostess.*" It's tempting, I realize, to consider Godfrey a poet's poet in the best sense — but only if you consider Groucho Marx a comedian's comedian. Godfrey concocts poems which are distinctly American for all their knowledge of other poetries, and which speed along as a certain kind of poetry has sped along in America since, say, the early '50s, Godfrey's own idiom being a paratactic jazz (neo-neo-bop?) with nothing cool about it, a kind of elegant staccato. But there's not much that won't stand up to close inspection too. Not that every remark is meaningful, or even "meaningful"; but as far as the poem is concerned it doesn't matter. Statements whizz by, together with images, in a narrative that clearly makes sense to the poet who keeps convincing the reader that that's all that's required.

The freshest thing, perhaps, about the whole enterprise is that *genuine* invention, intellect, humor, feeling, love of language are transformed into poetry — and it is, even in prose — which doesn't turn around and betray any of them. Say François Villon, Groucho Marx and the Enlightenment having not one but a series of chance encounters (as Rosemary Clooney and Alban Berg would appear to be doing in one of the pieces). Which isn't to say that Godfrey hasn't read Hart Crane and Baudelaire too, or for that matter Allen Ginsberg, Jim Brodey, and Raymond Chandler. And he's listened to a lot of jazz.

—Charles North

ARE THEY DISORDERED? ARE THERE IDEAS? *Disordered Ideas*, Tom Clark; Black Sparrow Press, 1987; 202pp. \$9 paper, \$17.50 cloth.

I found *Neil Young* in the Phoenix Bookstore two years ago; it had lines like

*You can't be 20 on Sugar Mountain
and
23. capitalism among insects*

and became an immediate Tom Clark fan. Since then I've followed his career, mostly back from the present and thanks to the library: *Stones; Air; and John's Heart*, and on up to the 1985 *Late Returns: A Memoir of Ted Berrigan*, which I wish was nine times longer.

Tom started very Uptown; his poems all seemed to

end with the word "light," as serious poems should. Then he met Berrigan and began putting reviews of Captain Beefheart albums in his books, and cartoons about marijuana. Tom Clark is always *fun* (though not necessarily funny). He has a central poetic quality of Continually Beginning.

Now I've read *Disordered Ideas*, a third Greatest Hits selection, and I'm wondering where he went wrong. "You ran out of steam here," Berrigan wrote next to the 5th line of one of my poems; "You gave up here," at the 8th. So has Tom in some of his; say, in "Bitter Pursuit":

*When Pascal's sister said, Blaise
just studies ways
to be pissed on
by the rest of the human race
she was missing
the sense in which one
who anticipates
the impossibility of slaking
his thirst for spirit
without also taking in
a mouthful of acid
comes at last to express
the whole truth
about a universe
reduced to
a single sour grape*

But the fluency! The taste! Is it the similar packaging—neo-punk cover and thick pages—that makes him seem like a wholewheat Charles Bukowski? There's a dangerous point where a poet can make goodlooking poems that don't say anything. And he's a reactionary! Or at least a grouse. Computers are making us soulless, he says, and yuppies eat too much tortellini. (Talk about biting the hand that nourishes! Who does he think is going to buy this book for 9 bucks, longshoremen?)

At two points he rallies: "Five Poems After Brecht" which has thicker lines: *Californians need to learn irony the way we need to unlearn it*; and "Angelology," the last section (of 7) in the book. Clark really *understands* angels:

Artaud and the Angel After Mexico

*He went to Mexico
He came back changed
He got off
the steamboat Mexique
at Saint-Nazaire
walked into
the Café du Dôme
still holding his valise
and began to retell
his adventures in the mountains*

*He seemed
extremely altered
prophetic
a little uneasy
exalted
and strange*

*His angel
just sat there
over the pernod
and shook her
pretty head*

*He wrote up his trip
for the papers
and spent the payment
on a rest cure
He kicked
his heroin
and cocaine
habits He said
"I've got to clear my head"
He was ready
to begin
a great voyage
but he soon learned
that without drugs
he was so lucid
that his brain
became a silver chainsaw
into which his spine
was being fed*

*That's the thing
about a clear head
his angel told him*

Read this book to find out about angels.

— Sparrow

Thirsting for Peace in a Raging Century: Selected Poems 1961-1985, Edward Sanders; Coffee House Press, Minneapolis, 1987. 248pp. \$9.95 paper.

The appearance of a comprehensive selection of Edward Sanders' poetry is a welcome opportunity to review the career of one of America's best-known/least read poets. It's *not* that Sanders lacks an audience, it's simply that much of his work has only been available in briefly seen mimeo pamphlets and poorly distributed small press editions. For many poetry readers, Sanders is the author of such scatological classics as "Elm Fuck Poem" or his great poem of the Viet-Nam era, "The V.F.W. Crawling Contest". The range found inside this

volume will surprise many.

*The leaves from
the wet black sugar maples
hang down in the icy fog—
just a few—
the color of blanched-out butterscotch

above the weed-spiked snow.*

The above sample is the opening of “Hymn to Maple Syrup,” a beautiful text which celebrates life in Woodstock, N.Y. (where Sanders has resided for many years) while functioning as an instruction manual on the art of sap-harvesting. Sanders is unashamed of his populism and has outlined his poetics in two volumes: *Investigative Poetry* and *The Z-D Generation*. For Sanders, like his mentor Charles Olson, history is simply “what happens”; for poetry to go forward, the poem “has to begin a voyage into description of historical reality.”

Sanders’ Selected Poems is a praxeography [ed. note: reviewer’s word, combining “praxis” and “geography”] of his theories. His line, befitting his career as a member of the *Fugs*, sings under the most potentially prosaic circumstances:

*A rose curved obliquely on the stalk of the hammer
The Lower East Side
was the strongest socialist zone
in the United States
for the first twenty years
of this century.*

(“Yiddish-Speaking Socialists of the Lower East Side”)

In Sanders’ poetry we find a brilliant confluence of three strategies of the New American Poetry: the “tough” lyrical stance associated with Ted Berrigan and Paul Blackburn, Allen Ginsberg’s visionary incantations, and Charles Olson’s dream of the poem as only limited by the edges of a page. Add to this a wide-open mind that ranges from Egyptian hieroglyphics (“Each word a/flash pod correspondent”) to the life of Henri Matisse (“The scissors were his scepter”). The end result is one of the clearest and most *necessary* bodies of work still being written today. It is a political poetry that has survived the ravages of a decades’ worth of permission for despair and pessimism and can still proclaim (to borrow from the *Fug*’s reunion album) “Refuse to be Burnt Out”.

Although better known as a chronicler of our recent times through his novels, his brilliant reportage on the Manson Family, and, of course, as a live performer accompanied by a phalanx of self-invented instruments, it is Sanders’ practice as a

poet that informs all these other impulses. Twenty-three years ago, Charles Olson noted that “Ed Sanders’ language advances in a direction of production which probably isn’t even guessed at;”. And, with his volume of Selected Poems as evidence, the same statement still holds up as fact today. A rich lode, full of wisdom & humor, fulfilling the root definition of amusement: “to please the muses.”

—Joel Lewis

***The Teachers & Writers Handbook of Poetic Forms*, edited by Ron Padgett; Teachers & Writers Collaborative, 5 Union Square West, New York, NY 10003. 1987. 230 pages. \$17.95 hardcover, \$10.95 paper.**

Poetry handbooks are a wide open genre. The more influential have included crossbreeds: manuals, guides, studies, like Pound’s *ABC of Reading*, Zukofsky’s *A Test of Poetry*; and Kenneth Koch’s more recent guides for teaching poetry [the latter available from this same publisher], books full of news about the way poems could be written, and illuminating examples that make them prize anthologies. *The Teachers & Writers Handbook of Poetic Forms* has the same adventurous approach, free of academic weight and verbiage. Primarily for novices, it has plenty of surprises for specialists as well. The definitions not only inform, they often provoke and inspire.

“Form,” of course, remains a tantalizingly equivocal term, and this book stretches it far and wide to cover devices, style, genre, and technique. Such generosity makes for interesting inclusions (Should *Rap Poetry* have appeared under Oxymoron or Doggerel?) and curious exclusions (Narrative, for one; and Dramatic Monologue, and Dialogue are mentioned briefly under other categories). There are 75 categories in all, most with unfamiliar examples, supplied by 19 poets who bring their own insights and lively biases to each. (The entry for *Projective Verse* is especially appreciative and lucid.) Given the limitations of size and intent, the handbook is a small wonder, and draws on the same resources found in the best of contemporary poetry.

—Paul Violi

* * *

The following is an excerpt from the Handbook’s entry for *Bout Rimés* (French for “end rhymes”): *A bout-rimés poem is created by one person’s making up a list of rhymed words and giving it to another person, who in turn writes the lines that*

end with those rhymes, in the same order in which they were given. Here is the example presented:

Getting burnt, evaporated, bleached, or tanned
By the sun ain't no way to jump.
I'd rather plop in shadow, be fanned
By some geisha girl, and lay around like a proverbial lump.

I'm not that hot for so-called good reading;
I just crave a cool drink on a bluegreen lawn.
I mean, don't let me be misleading:
Where I'm at is sorta like the center of a yawn.

You now, excitement's like being a yoyo—
I don't wanna beat the subject to death,
And it isn't that repetition ain't no no-no,
But the last thing I hope to be is out of breath.

So let somebody else go lost-generate all over
France,
Or fly to the moon, discover Africa, some damn
hotshot smartypants.

—Jack Collom

***And The Word*, Cid Corman; Coffee House Press, Minneapolis, 1987; 133pp. \$8.95.**

This book saved my life. In the midst of a suicidal depression, I came upon the masterful longer poem entitled "No Consolation" and the spell of beckoning Hades was broken. That is not to say that these poems are "classical," or academic in any way. Far from it. An equation that might be used to describe them is Williams + Creeley = Corman. He would seem to combine the wisdom, breadth, and breath of later William Carlos Williams and the short stanzas of Creeley; plus the punch of Oriental verse at its best, and the result is entrancing.

It goes without saying that these poems speak best for themselves. If space permitted, I would quote all of "No Consolation" which fortunately for me at the time I read it but unfortunately for the context of this review, it is four pages long, so an excerpt must suffice. Here, then, is the third page entire.

— Tom Savage

*with your own
terrible algebra.*

*Don't melt in-
to the u-
niverse—*

*but be as
solid and*

*dense and
fixed*

*as you can.
Sorrow comes
in great crests*

*and it rolls
over us
and almost*

*smothers us—
yet leaves us
on the spot*

*and we know
that if it
is strong we*

*are stronger:
it passes—
we remain.*

* * *

-COLD, COLD RAIN -

I have given you all
and now I am nothing.
Two dollars and twenty-seven cents.
More hollow than a well
wrought urn, more empty
than the widow's arms.
More empty than an old drive-in
outside Pineville, West Virginia.

No more do the trains
nuzzle my hands
smelling Mayakovsky on them.

Nor do the stars,
those nails in the sky,
pump light through my palms.

The East River holds its black breath
as tower clocks yellow
and ivory keys beg us to follow.

A silver decanter guarded
the velvet, plush and buttoned.
We stood in the green chamber,
ghosts of ourselves, lit wraiths.

Like punk in the grate
not everyone thought us so hot -
but we refused to die out.

And we were green, greener than life.

—Jeff Wright

MONDAY NIGHTS

FEBRUARY

- 1 Open Reading
- 8 LYNN MCGEE's work has appeared in a number of small magazines. She's a graduate writing student at Columbia, and an editorial board member for *Columbia: A Magazine of Poetry and Prose*. TOM KOHNE is heartened by Philip Larkin's example of growing old with rancor as his helpmate, by the bitter intransigence that kept him apart, unloveable, constricted and angry. Tom is active in the Jaycees.
- 15 JEFF WRIGHT is the author of five books including *All in All* (Gull Books, 1986). He is also the editor of the arts weekly, *Cover*, and taught a writing workshop at the Project this past fall. WANDA PHIPPS is the editor of *Kindred* magazine. Her first book, *Another Tragic Figure* is due from E.G. Books.
- 22 DEBORAH HUMPHRIES lives in Newark and is a social worker. She's at work on a series of poetic monologues called *Conventional Wisdom*. ANIQUE TAYLOR is the author of *Poems* (Unimproved editions). She's an artist and works as a professional clown.
- 29 MITCH HIGHFILL is an editor of Prospect Books. He is the author of *No Precautions* (Next Century, 1984). LYNN BEHRENDT edited *Lines* pamphlets. She has been published in *Sulfur* and elsewhere and is the author of *The Moon as Chance* (Text 13, 1981).

MARCH

- 7 OPEN READING
- 14 DEBORAH PINTONELLI, 29, has been a co-editor of both *B City* and *Letter eX*, at the center of a fertile Chicago poetry scene. Her book *Meat and Memory* was just published by The Erie Street Press. FRANK GREEN is a 30 year old writer from Cleveland now living in New York, who's been published in *Telephone*, *Benzene*, and elsewhere, and has a chapbook, *Thin Air*, out from Proteus Press in Toronto.
- 21 SUSIE TIMMONS wrote *Hog Wild* (Frontward Books, 1979) and has taught writing workshops at The Poetry Project. SHEILA ALSON lives in Brooklyn and is the author of *Fertility in the Desert* (Stoneboat, 1985) and *Notes on the Olympus Refrigerator*, a book published in Alice Notley's Poetry Project workshop and which Sheila has now rewritten as a play.
- 28 ALICE NOTLEY founded and edited the literary magazine *Chicago* and has taught poetry workshops at Naropa Institute, The Poetry Project, the University of Nottingham (England) and many other places. Her play, *Anne's White Glove*, was commissioned and performed by New York's Eye & Ear Theater in 1985. Her books include *Margaret and Dusty*, and *Songs for the Unborn Second Baby*.

VALENTINE'S DAY READING

An evening of love poems read by David Abel, Alien Comic, Sheila Alson, Charlotte Carter, Abigail Child, Alan Davies, Barbara Einzig, Ted Greenwald, Steven Hall, Laurie Harris, Yuki Hartman, Bob Holman, Helena Hughes, Rochelle Kraut, Bill Kushner, Jeanne Lance, Gary Lenhart, Gerard Malanga, Patrick McGrath, Stephen Paul Miller, Rosemarie Moore, Charles North, Simon Pettet, James Ruggia, Paul Schmidt, Michael Scholnick, Armand Schwerner, James Sherry, Mary Stermbach, Lynn Tillman, Carmen Valle, Paul Violi, Tom Weigel, Jeff Wright and more. Begins at 7 PM. Contribution: \$10. Members: \$7.

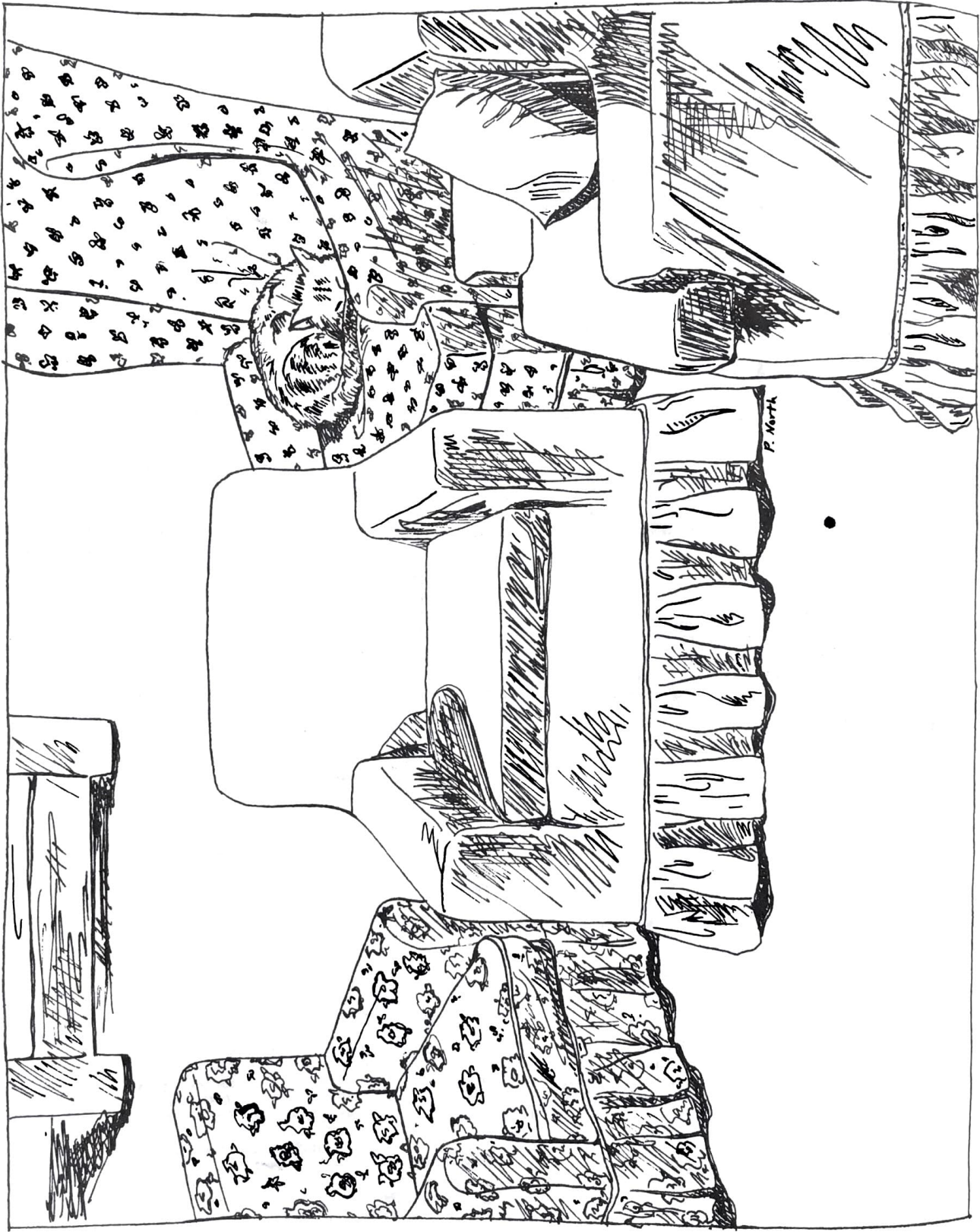
WEDNESDAY NIGHTS

FEBRUARY

- 1 OPEN READING
- 3 JESSICA HAGEDORN is the author of the award-winning *Pet Food & Tropical Apparitions*. Her most recent work is *Teentown*, a performance collaboration with Laurie Carlos and Robbie McCauley. SOICHI FURUTA's collections of poems include *Snow Falls Inside Out* and *to breathe*. He has translated *Cape Jasmine and Pomegranates* (*Free Meter Haiku of Ippekiro*) and Takamura Kotaro's *Chieko's Sky* into English.
- 10 JEROME ROTHENBERG is the author of over forty books of poetry including *Poems for the Game of Silence*; *Poland/1931*, and *New Selected Poems* (all from New Directions). JACKSON MAC LOW's innovation and invention of poetic forms and "methods" of composition have provided inspiration for younger experimenters. His recent books include *Representative Works and Pieces 'o Six*.
- 17 JAMES SHERRY is the editor of Roof Books and the director of the Segue Foundation. His books include *Popular Fiction* and *The Word I like White Paint Considered*. NICK PIOMBINO's *Poems* will be published by Sun and Moon Press this spring. His essays and poems have appeared in, among other places, *Sulfur*, *Sink* and *Temblor*.
- 24 LEWIS WARSH's books of poetry and fiction include *The Surface of Venus* (*Poems 1976-1982*), *Agnes and Sally*, *The Corset* and *A Free Man*. He is the former co-editor of *United Artists* and *Angel Hair* magazines. JANINE POMMY VEGA's *Poems to Fernando* was published by City Lights Books in 1968. Forthcoming this year are *Aves Salvajes del Corazon* and *Drunk on a Glacier, Talking to Flies*.

MARCH

- 2 STEVE CAREY is the author of *20 Poems* (Unfinished Editions, 1987) and *AP* (Archipelago Books, 1984). JOE CARDARELLI's books of poetry include *From the Maine Book*, *Milano Manifesto* and *Phantom Pod* (with Anselm Hollo & Kirby Malone). He is currently head of the English Department at Maryland Institute College of Art.
- 9 LYNNE DREYER is the author of *The White Museum* and *Step Work*. She was recently the Writer in Residence at New Langton Arts in San Francisco. KIMBERLY LYONS is the Program Coordinator and Lecture Series Coordinator of The Poetry Project. Her book, *Strategies*, was published by Prospect Books.
- 16 BILL BERKSON is the author of 14 collections of poems including, most recently, *Lush Life* and *Serenade* (with drawings by Joe Brainard, BLT Books). He is the former editor/publisher of *Big Sky* magazine and books. ROBERTO ECHAVARREN's most recent book is *Animalaccio*. He is a major translator of John Ashbery and Wallace Stevens into Spanish.
- 23 DOUGLAS OLIVER's *Kind* (*Collected Poems*) was issued in 1987. His book on the acoustics of poetic music, *Poetry and Narrative in Performance*, is forthcoming from MacMillan. CHRISTOPHER MIDDLETON's nine books of poems include *Serpentine* and *Two Horse Wagon Going By*.
- 30 JUAN FELIPE HERRERA's *Facegames* won the Before Columbus American Book Award for poetry. He is the Writer in Residence at Soledad Prison. LORNA SMEDMAN is the author of *Dangers of Reading*. Recent poems have appeared in *Transfer* magazine.



The Poetry Project

St. Mark's Church
Second Ave. & Tenth St.



The Poetry Project

St. Mark's Church Second Ave. & Tenth St.
New York, New York 10003 (212) 674-0910

FEBRUARY

- 1 Open Reading
- 3 Jessica Hagedorn & Soichi Furuta
- 8 Lynn McGee & Tom Koehne
- 10 Jerome Rothenberg & Jackson Mac Low
- 15 Jeff Wright & Wanda Phipps
- 17 James Sherry & Nick Piombino
- 22 Deborah Humphries & Anique Taylor
- 24 Lewis Warsh & Janine Pommy Vega
- 29 Mitch Highfill & Lynn Behrendt

Theater Series

- 5/6 Sandie Castle's *What The Shadow Knows*
at the Universal Bellows Theater, 43 Second Ave. (between 2nd & 3rd St.) in Manhattan

Lecture Series

- 7 Clifton Josephs: *Dub: The Poetics & The Politics.*

Special Event

- 14 VALENTINE'S DAY READING: an evening of love poems by Kenneth Koch, Ted Greenwald, Charlotte Carter, Paul Violi, Gerard Malanga, Yuki Hartman, Helena Hughes, Charles North and more. Admission by Contribution of \$10.

MARCH

- 2 Steve Carey & Joe Cardarelli
- 7 Open Reading
- 9 Lynne Dreyer & Kimberly Lyons
- 14 Deborah Pintonelli & Frank Green
- 16 Bill Berkson & Roberto Echavarren
- 21 Susie Timmons & Sheila Alson
- 23 Douglas Oliver & Christopher Middleton
- 28 Alice Notley
- 30 Juan Felipe Herrera & Lorna Smedman

Lecture Series

- 6 Elizabeth Murray & Rob Storrs: *More Than You Know: How the Critic Writes and How the Painter Responds.*

Theater Series

- 19/20 *Brides.* by Harry Kondoleon.
at the Universal Bellows Theater, 43 Second Ave. (between 2nd & 3rd St.) in Manhattan

All events begin at 8 pm, admission by contribution of \$5 except where noted. Programs subject to change.

THEATER SERIES

February 5th and 6th at 8 pm: SANDIE CASTLE's *What The Shadow Knows*, directed by Meyer Baron and performed by The Pleasant Living Players.

SANDIE CASTLE, a.k.a. the "Gorilla Dutchess of Baltimore" is also the author of a collection of poems, *The Catholics Are Coming*.

March 19th and 20th at 8 pm: *Brides* by HARRY KONDOLEON.

Brides was first produced in Stockbridge, Massachusetts in 1980 by the Lenox Art Center Music-Theater Performing Group. HARRY KONDOLEON's most recent play will soon be produced at The Public Theater in New York.

PLEASE NOTE: Theater Series events are presented at the Universal Bellows Theater, 43 Second Ave. (between 2nd & 3rd St.) in Manhattan.

LECTURE SERIES

February 7th at 8 pm: *Dub: The Poetics & Politics* by CLIFTON JOSEPHS. A discussion about and performance of Dub Poetry.

Antigua-born poet CLIFTON JOSEPHS is a founding member of *De Dub Poets*, a performance group working with reggae-influenced rap poetry. Josephs is the author of *Metropolitan Blues (Domestic Bliss)*, and *Transmissions*, a record album by *De Dub Poets*, is forthcoming.

March 6th at 8 pm: *More Than You Know*: painter ELIZABETH MURRAY and critic ROBERT STORRS talk about how the critic writes and how the painter responds. Slides will be shown of Murray's work.

ELIZABETH MURRAY's work has been exhibited in New York and internationally at The Paula Cooper Gallery. "Elizabeth Murray: Paintings and Drawings" is currently touring major museums in the U.S. and will be on view at The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York April 21-June 26, 1988. ROBERT STORRS is the author of *Guston*. He has published widely in art journals. "Realm of the Senses," an article on the work of Francesco Clemente was the cover story for "Art in America," November 1987.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

The Poetry Project is pleased to announce two new and ongoing publications: CUZ, edited by Richard Hell, a Monday Night Series magazine, for sale at readings; and PROJECT PAPERS, writings by Wednesday Night readers, and critical & historical articles encapsulating major trends and directions in contemporary poetry—available free at Wednesday readings; back issues are available at \$1 each.

WORKSHOPS

"Poetry and Prose" taught by Bernadette Mayer. Tuesdays at 7 pm (ongoing through May). A study of etymologies, subjects, objects, long forms, eloquence, mythologies, field guides, dreamwork, schools and hermetism. General training for the perception and communication of the whole and its parts. Athletic Aesthetics.

BERNADETTE MAYER is a former Director of the Poetry Project. Her books include *Mutual Aid (Mademoiselle de la Mole Press)*, *Utopia (United Artists)* and *Midwinter Day (Turtle Island Foundation)*.

"Prose Fiction and Poetry" taught by Charlotte Carter. Fridays at 7 pm (ongoing through May). A prose workshop encompassing straight-ahead narrative as well as other forms of writing not confined by traditional of "the story." An ongoing focus on the larger work, novels in progress, collections, etc.

CHARLOTTE CARTER is the author of *Sheltered Life (Angel Hair)*. She has studied with Paul Bowles in Morocco. A CAPS grant recipient, she is presently at work on a novel.

"Writing & Looking" taught by John Yau. Saturdays at 12 pm. Poetry, art, and criticism: what are their capabilities? Their limitations? The workshop will go on field trips to museums and galleries, write poems, reviews and journals, and attempt to arrive at an understanding of the relationship between words, art and the nature of meaning.

JOHN YAU is a poet and art critic. His books of poetry include *Broken Off by the Music and Corpse and Mirror*. He has published reviews and essays in *Artforum*, *Art in America*, and other art magazines, and has written monographs and catalogue essays on Jane Freilicher, Malcolm Morley, Rackstraw Downes, Roger Brown, and David True, among others.

\$50 registration fee includes membership privileges and admission to all regularly scheduled events.

NEWSLETTER

The Poetry Project Newsletter, edited by Tony Towle, will be published bi-monthly, November through June. News of Project events, essays, poems, vital information, letters, gossip, and reviews. The Newsletter will be sent free to all members of the Poetry Project. Subscriptions available only to institutions, @\$20/yr.

Drawing for cover and calendar for Feb./March issue by Paula North.

LETTER RECEIVED

August 22, 1987

Dear friends:

On May 26, 1986 I walked into my friend Leon's home expecting to see the table set for dinner and my friend at work in the kitchen. Instead, I found chaos. Leon, himself, was at his computer, "pounding" the keyboard like a man possessed.

We spent that evening talking about Annie, the woman who had driven Leon to distraction, and about the poem he was producing as fast as he could type. He was "purging himself" Leon said. He had to "get it out" or it would make him crazy.

I read a few of the scraps on the floor and felt in awe. A physicist by training, and an international businessman by vocation, Leon was producing love poetry as powerful and virile as he is himself. I said, "Leon, I want to publish this. I can relate to it, and others should be given the same opportunity."

So now *you* have it. An epic love poem that is as crude, powerful and brilliant as its author. Have a look, and if you also enjoy it you may share it with your readers.

Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,

(signed)

Richard Ray Solem

Enclosure: Annie

*7910 Woodmont Avenue, Suite 1302
Bethesda, Maryland 20814*

Announcements

If you're looking to market your little magazine or small press publications, write to CCLM (Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines) for their nationwide (plus one in the U.K.) "List of Small Press Distributors," at 666 Broadway, New York, NY 10012-2301 (212-614-6551).

The Naropa Institute is offering an M.F.A. Program in Writing & Poetics. For complete information, write to the Director of Admissions, The Naropa Institute, 3130 Arapahoe Ave., Boulder, CO 80302 (303-444-0202).

Carol Shields, who had been working on a new novel in France and Portugal, arrived back home in Winnipeg last September 4th.

To Whom it May Concern: I am interested in collaborating on a project for music and text. Presently I'm an Assistant Professor of Music at

Suffolk County Community College, and Dowling College. I compose for both voice and instruments in both sacred and secular forms.

Ronald Armanini, 27 Swallow Lane,
Levittown NY 11756/516-731-6405.

Congratulations to the Saint Mark's Bookshop on its tenth anniversary.

"Art in the Nuclear Age: An Exploration" is a writing competition for fiction, poetry, personal essay, and drama on the subject of "Nuclear Issues" held by Muhlenberg College. First, Second, and Third prizes will be \$500, \$300, and \$200 respectively. Submissions, which should include a SASE should be sent to Dr. L. Johnson, Dept. of English, Muhlenberg College, Allentown, PA 18104. Deadline is March 1. There will be public readings and other festivities in conjunction with the awards ceremonies.

Books Received

Amen. Yehuda Amichai, with an introduction by Ted Hughes; Milkweed Editions, Minneapolis, 1987. \$7.95 paper. Poems by "Israel's best-known living poet", translated from the Hebrew by the author and Ted Hughes.

After the Garden. Doris Jean Austin; New American Library, 1987. \$24.50. A novel of a black woman's experiences in the urban North in the '40s and '50s.

The Movie: "Barfly", Charles Bukowski; Black Sparrow Press, 1987. \$10 paper, \$20 cloth (\$30, signed). The screenplay for the motion picture (with photos) starring Mickey Rourke and Faye Dunaway.

The Western Lands, William S. Burroughs; Viking, 1987. \$18.95. A new novel by one of our modern masters. This is the second in a projected series of seven books (beginning with *Queer*, in 1985) to be published by Viking.

Kerouac's Last Word: Jack Kerouac in Escapade, Tom Clark; Water Row Press (PO Box 438) Sudbury, MA 01776, 1987. \$10. paper. An essay on Kerouac's columns for *Escapade* magazine; includes three articles by Kerouac.

Monsieur Teste in America, Andrei Codrescu; Coffee House Press, Minneapolis, 1987. \$9.95 paper. Two novellas and six short stories.

Heavy Daughter Blues, Poems & Stories 1968-1986, Wanda Coleman; Black Sparrow Press, 1987. \$9. paper, \$20 cloth. This is the third book from "a freelance writer and former welfare mother from Los Angeles."

Over All The Obscene Boundaries, Lawrence Ferlinghetti; New Directions, New York. \$5.95. paper. "European Poems & Transitions".

Notes preceding trust, Kathleen Fraser; The Lapis Press, Santa Monica, 1987. \$9.50. With beautiful cover art by painter Sam Francis (who is also the person behind the series of handsome poetry books currently being published by this press).

The True Bride, Amy Gerstler; The Lapis Press, Santa Monica, 1986. \$18. With an introduction by Tom Clark.

The Bone Ring, Donald Hall; Story Line Press (325 Ocean View Ave.), Santa Cruz, CA 95062, 1987. \$8 paper. A play in verse in one act, recapturing the poet's childhood on his grandparents' farm in New Hampshire.

Pattern Poetry, Guide to an Unknown Literature, Dick Higgins; State University of New York Press (State Univ. Plaza) Albany, NY 12246, 1987. \$19.95 paper, \$39.50 cloth. An erudite historical study of this virtually universal but presently ignored art; Higgins documents and classifies more than 2,000 works created before 1900, with illustrations of each genre of pattern poem.

Certain Weathers, Tobey Hiller; Oyez, Berkeley, Calif., 1987. \$5.95 paper.

Rock and Hawk, A Selection of Shorter Poems, Robinson Jeffers. Edited by Robert Hass. Random House, New York, 1987. \$19.95. The most complete collection of the poet's work now available, aside from the *Selected Poems* of 1938.

On the Edge, Kenneth Koch; Penguin Books, 1986. \$8.95 paper. "He continues to serve his comic muse with a brilliance that has made him an American original." - *Newsweek*.

Needles at Midnight, Art Lange; Z Press, Calais, Vermont, 1986. \$4. paper. A thirteen-poem gem.

Before Recollection, Ann Lauterbach; Princeton University Press, 1987. (No price mentioned) *These poems are concerned with...the creation of intense, present experiences that occur "before recollection."*

River of Red Wine and Other Poems, Jack Micheline; Water Row Press, Sudbury, Mass., 1986. \$6.95., paper. A reprint of a 1958 work of which Jack Kerouac said: "...These sweet lines revive the poetry of open hope in America..."

New Directions 51, An International Anthology of Prose & Poetry; New Directions, New York, 1987. The publishers annual anthology. Includes recently discovered poems by Delmore Schwartz, a comic play by Ezra Pound, and a story from 1930 by H.D., written while she was making a film with Paul Robeson.

The Collected Poems of Octavio Paz, 1957-1987; Edited and translated (primarily) by Eliot Weinberger. Nearly 200 poems by the great Mexican poet, more than half of which have heretofore not appeared in English. The original Spanish is *en face* to the translations.

The Poet Exposed, Photographic Portraits by Christopher Felver. Includes a Prologue by Gary Snyder and a Foreword by Robert Creeley; Alfred Van Der

Marck Editions (1133 Broadway), New York, NY 10010. \$26.95. 101 portraits of poets, from John Ashbery and Amiri Baraka to Anne Waldman and Philip Whalen, and just about everybody in between. Probably the only books that get remaindered quicker than poetry books are photography books; pick this collector's item up before it disappears.

New & Selected Poems, Alice Ryerson; Spoon River Poetry Press (PO Box 1443) Peoria, Ill., 1987. \$11.95 cloth. ...the most significant value is Ryerson's wry humanity, her ability to view herself and her world with understanding and humor...

A Very Good Land to Fall With (Scenes from the Life of an American Jew, Volume 3), John Sanford; Black Sparrow Press, 1987. (No price mentioned) The third of a trilogy tracing the author's life from his birth in 1904 through the Second World War.

What she could not name, Nancy Shiffren; La Jolla Poets Press (PO Box 8638) La Jolla, CA 92038, 1987. \$6.95 paper. "Nancy Shiffren's courageous poems/labor/songs move, tax, rage and finally, exhalt. Hear her. Heed her." - Wanda Coleman.

The Reproduction of Profiles, Rosemarie Waldrop; New Directions, 1987. \$9.95 paper, \$19.95 cloth. "The subtlety of this wit, the generous humor of its insistent clarity...all add up to a singular new work by a very exceptional poet." - Robert Creeley.

Eight Men, Richard Wright; Thunder's Mouth Press, 1987. \$9.95 paper. Powerful stories by the author of the classic, *Native Son*.



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Oversight

The Newsletter was (properly) rebuked with the following, from Gregory Kolovakos, Director of the Literature Program of the New York State Council on the Arts:

"As a translator and a member of the PEN Translation Committee, I'm writing to criticize the Newsletter's dropping the names of translators in the listing of books received..."

Not mentioning the translators in our listing of new books in the last issue was carelessness and not a statement of policy. The two books in question were Ernesto Cardenal's *From Nicaragua with Love* (City Lights), the translator of which was Jonathan Cohen; and *Farewell to the Sea*, by Reinaldo Arenas (Viking), translated by Andrew Hurley.

MEET THE BEATS !



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Magazines Received

A View from The Loft, Volume 10, Number 4, Nov. 1987. (2301 Franklin Ave. East, Minneapolis, MN 55406) \$1. The publication of The Loft, the membership-based literary center for the Upper Midwest.

AWP Newsletter, Nov./Dec. 1987 (Old Dominion Univ., Norfolk, VA 23529-0079) No price mentioned. Includes an article on the late Howard Moss.

Belles Lettres, A Review of Books by Women, Nov./Dec., 1987. (PO Box 987, Arlington, VA 22216) \$2.75. Includes reviews of and essays on Marianne Moore, H.D., Willa Cather, and Emily Dickinson as well as contemporary women writers.

Bellowing Ark, Volume 3, No. 6. Nov./Dec. 1987. (PO Box 45637, Seattle, WA 98145) \$2.

Conjunctions, Bi-Annual Volumes of New Writing. Bradford Morrow, Editor. (33 W. 9th St., NYC 10011) \$8. "Conjunctions flatters its readers by the assumption that they have not only intelligence but some acquaintance with the traditions of more than one literature." - James Laughlin

Contact III, A Poetry Review, Winter 1987 (PO Box 451, Bowling Green Sta., NYC 10004) \$6. Includes reviews of Jerome Rothenberg, Nicanor Parra, and Robert Duncan.

Cover, *Arts New York*. \$1. The lively newspaper-format monthly, edited by Jeff Wright.

Diarist's Journal, No. 1, Jan. 1988. (102 W. Water St., Lansford, PA 18232) \$2. A new monthly magazine for, by, and about diarists. An interesting notion.

Electrum, No. 39, Fall/Winter 1987. (Medina Press, 2222 Silk Tree Dr., Tustin, CA 92680-7129). \$3. Includes interview with Manazar Gamboa, and works by Zoe Anglesey and Lyn Lifshin.

Gallery Works, No. 7. Edited by Peter Holland and Jeanne Lance. (25 Carlin St., Norwalk, CT 06851) \$5. Includes work by Patrick McGrath, Alan Davies, Mitch Highfill, Rosemarie Waldrop, and Nick Piombino.

Gandhabba, No 5. Edited by Tom Savage (c/o Savage, 622 E. 11th St., NYC 10009) \$3.50. Includes work by Alice Notley, Vincent Katz, Allen Ginsberg, Bill Kushner, Rose Lesniak, Susan Cataldo, and Jim Brodey.

Giants Play Well in the Drizzle...., No. 17, Dec. 1987 (326-A Fourth St., Brooklyn, NY 11215) Price not

listed. Edited by Martha King. A nice little 4-pager.

New Romantic Poets, from Jeff Wright's Workshop at Saint Mark's Church. Contact Jeff Wright, at 340 East 11th St., NYC 10003.

o-blek, A Journal of Language Arts. No. 1, The Garlic Press, New York. Edited by Peter Gizzi and Connell McGrath. \$7. Includes poems by Keith Waldrop and Clark Coolidge.

Pig Iron, No. 14, Special Humor Anthology (PO Box 237, Youngstown, OH 44501) \$6.95. Some very funny things in this; worth the price of admission.

Poetics Journal, Number 7. Edited by Barrett Watten and Lyn Hejinian. (Correspondence: B. Watten, 1731 Stuart St., Berkeley, CA 94703). \$7. This issue is devoted to writings on Postmodernism by, among others, Bill Berkson, Kathy Acker, and Ron Silliman.

Poetry Flash (PO Box 4172, Berkeley, CA 94704), Number 177. Free. "The Bay Area's Poetry Review & Literary Calendar".

Rolling Stock, #14, 1987 "If It Moves, Print It" is their motto. Jennifer Dunbar Dorn, Editor. (347 Reedwood Dr., Nashville, TN 37217). \$2.50. Includes work by Jessica Hagedorn.

Shiny, No 3. (129 Second Avenue, Ste 17, NYC 10003). \$2.50. Includes prose by Dennis Cooper, poetry by Ron Padgett, Joe Brainard, Brad Gooch, and some wonderful photographs taken by Allen Ginsberg.

The 11th St. Ruse, Vol 1, No 1 1/2, 1987. (Write: Lucid, 322 E. 11th St., Apt. 10, NYC 10003) No price mentioned, but thanks is given to Dante Alighieri for typesetting.

Transfer, No. 1, Fall 1987. Edited by Gary Lenhart (248 West 105th St., New York, NY 10025) \$5. Includes work by Michael Scholnick, Steve Levine, Phillip Lopate, Greg Masters, and an interview with Ted Berrigan.

Tremblor, Contemporary Poets, No. 6. (Leland Hickman, 4624 Cahuenga Blvd. #307, N. Hollywood, CA 91602) \$7.50. Includes work by Susan Howe, Bob Perelman, Diane Ward, Marjorie Perloff, David C. D. Gansz, and Barbara Guest.

Witness, Vol. 1, No. 3. (31000 N'western H' way, Ste 100, Farmington Hills, MI 48018). \$5. "Writings from Prison", guest-edited by Fielding Dawson.



From the left: Kenneth Koch, Anne Waldman, Jerome Rothenberg, Allen Ginsberg, Ed Sanders. Photo by Vivian Selbo.

The History/Pre-History of The Poetry Project¹

I want to welcome you all as the moderator of this session, although I don't think that moderation (in the sense of the safe or middle position) is what this quasi-institution has been (or should be) about. Chronologically—in terms of age—I'm in the middle position between Koch & Ginsberg (as my almost elders) and Sanders & Waldman (as my juniors). So much for chronology. I think we're otherwise in it together.

But the key word is *pre-history*. It is a knockout word & we're of course free to take it any way we want. I'll make a couple of suggestions (my five-minute presentation written down this morning) & pass them along.

As it might relate to the circumstances immediately leading to The Poetry Project at St. Mark's Church in-the-Bowery, I find myself the only one here who was part of the original/founding committee of the Saint Mark's readings circa 1965 & 1966 that preceded the Poetry Project as such. The dominant figure in that proto-Project was Paul Blackburn, who was not only a magnificent & influential poet but a tireless organizer of readings (at the Caffe Borgia, at the Tenth Street Coffee Shop, at the Deux Megots and Le Metro, at Saint Mark's Church, and after Saint Mark's at Doctor Generosity's and other venues north & south in Manhattan). Those early Saint Mark's readings (after a pitched battle broke things up at Le Metro around the corner) were done without funds and set up the pattern of Monday & Wednesday readings that has remained in place thereafter. Among the other committee members—if I remember right—were Carol Bergé, Allen Plantz, Carol Rubenstein, and Diane Wakoski. Ted Berrigan was invited too but couldn't yet make it.

¹Delivered as the opening remarks to "The History/Pre-History of The Poetry Project" panel discussion at the Poetry Project's 20th Year Symposium, May 6-10, 1987. The other panelists were Allen Ginsberg, Anne Waldman, Kenneth Koch and Ed Sanders.

It was in 1967 that those looser & unfunded readings became The Poetry Project, and as such the Project developed (particularly under Anne Waldman's directorship) into the closest thing we have to an ongoing, venerable center for poetry, run by poets & open foremost to the full range of visionary, revolutionary, language-centered, spirit-centered arts that poets have both invented & discovered in the newest & oldest possibilities of our human (& animal) natures. In that sense the pre-history is more than local, more than only of-this-place. It is what Ezra Pound called a vortex—The Poetry Project vortex: a point of concentration for accumulated human energies: past & present shaped by the place of its occurrence and the needs & yearnings of its participants. "All experience rushes into this vortex," Pound wrote in 1914. "All the energized past, all the past that is living and worthy to live. ALL MOMENTUM ..., instinct charging the PLACID, NON-ENERGIZED FUTURE. . . . All the past that is vital, all the past that is capable of living into the future, is present in the vortex, now." The Poetry Project as a vortex has drawn its energies from surrounding New York & the larger world, as also from each of us who has worked within it. The works & movements of poets & artists in the twentieth century created many new vortexes/configurations, many pasts & presents/energies old & new. The Poetry Project vortex circa 1967—to which I was witness—included Beat poets, New York School poets, San Francisco poets, Black Mountain poets, Deep Image poets, Midwest and Southwest regionals, Fluxus poets, Umbra poets, & so on. And from then on: African-American poets, Latino poets, feminist poets, Indian poets, Language poets, anti-Language poets, sound poets, silent poets, mumbling poets; even—in this usually most generous of vortexes—academic poets.

But the pre-history goes even further.

Gertrude Stein is of The Poetry Project vortex and has been from the start.

So are Pound & Williams and Wallace Stevens.

The Dada fathers are not forgotten here, & there is a lingering resonance of old Surrealists once in exile in New York.

Koch's New York School—transmitted through Berrigan, Padgett, Waldman, & others—brought in the energies of (American) painters from Abstract Expressionism to Pop to present manifesters.

Performance poetry & art grew naturally from the readings & were foregrounded some years ago through Ed Friedman's kindly efforts.

But PRE-HISTORY: this is something older still. Beyond Romantic and Metaphysical ghosts it summons up Provençal poets who came in early with Paul Blackburn; Chinese poets, the work of Pound but also Mac Low's and Cage's mining of the I Ching as a guide to poetry; Sumerian poets via Olson and Schwerner; Egyptian poets via Ed Sanders; American Indian shaman poets; Mayan and Aztec poets; ancient Hebrew poets; Sufi poets; and whole lineages & traditions of Buddhist poets—all of these are part of what we are.

It is a history/pre-history of poetry reaching back into paleolithic times: our true pre-history as human beings: in a configuration that has surfaced elsewhere—to be sure—but nowhere more tenaciously than here, more continuously than here. It is in these ways that The Poetry Project, now more than ever, is a dependable haven for a tradition of poem-making whose loss would incredibly diminish us. It is very much about pre-history and history, because it is very much about a present in which (Ezra Pound again) "all ages are contemporaneous in the mind."

--Jerome Rothenberg

Questionnaire

Our readers are invited to answer some or all of the following questions, and make suggestions on changing/improving the Newsletter, on the front and back of this page—which can then be torn out and sent back to us, with the understanding that we might print your remarks in future issues. If possible, please return by the end of February.

Describe where you write:

Describe your audience/readers:

Do you think there is such a thing as "regional" poetry?:

What does the term "school" imply, when used for a group of writers?:

What effect has "performance" had on poetry in, say, the last 20 years?:

Define "Semiotics":

What is of particular interest to you in your writing at present?:

Other questions/topics of interest to you:

Suggestions for the Newsletter

Name (printed) _____ Signature _____

From Past Issues...

No. 6 1 May 1973 (Ron Padgett, Ed.):

Gripe of the Month: that neither James Schuyler's "The Crystal Lithium" (Random House) nor John Ashbery's "Three Poems" (Viking) were even nominated for the National Book Award in Poetry.

*

No. 11 1 Jan 1974 (Bill MacKay, Ed.):

The Poetry Project is in crying need of funds.

*

No. 13 1 March 1974 (B. MacKay, Ed.):

At this very moment, Larry Fagin is in his wretched hovel typing frantically, spending the last vestige of his sanity as he attempts to meet a March 30 publication date for *Adventures in Poetry* #11.

*

No. 20 1 Dec. 1974 (B. MacKay, Ed.):

Dammit, send some reviews.

*

No. 128 Feb./Mar. 1988 (T. Towle, Ed.):

Ditto.

*

No. 21 1 Jan. 1975 (B. MacKay, Ed.):

Lewis Warsh (who has a Massachusetts license) was stopped in Soho for lack of an inspection sticker. The constabulary made a few phone calls & also the cryptic remark, "I have an erection in the sky for Massachusetts." Lewis sped away.

Ed Friedman wants, needs a place in the sun, an apartment, to rent, to share, with a long lease, at least a year, \$100-150, in Soho or the West Village, or the East Village, or anywhere but the Bronx.

* *

Cool Lightning (Tucson)

Inside this broken bulb
shards stand up as mountains
and, every so often, a filament
in the night glows jaggedly
as though a fingernail rips apart
this ozone-laden sky. Thunder
beyond the Catalinas rocks the Interstates,
plunders the long bare silence of the desert,
and the broken bulb we live in
glows and then fades and glows again.
The night is a soft powder
or iron filings falling down
on the Saguaros.

—Richard Elman

Spanish House

arc of stucco
techo de tejas
and strange, the dog
called Matyr
pacing on it

and a baby's giggle
rolls out from the plaza
enters the kitchen
a trill, the flap
of shutters

and strange
the steam of ghosts,
dead horses and pigs
that once trod
the ground floor

—Tamra Plotnick

* *

Last Will and Testament

*I have nothing, I owe a great deal, and the rest I
leave to the poor.*

--François Rabelais

* *

Thanks

We would like to thank the following people for their help with the Newsletter and with our mailings in general:

Lee Ann Brown, Mitch Highfill, Rochelle Kraut,
Sheila Lanham, Greg Masters, Bernadette Mayer,
and Marc Nasdor.

* *

ERRATUM

The title of the last play in the group entitled *Meetings in Mexico*, by Kenneth Koch, and published in our last issue (Dec./Jan.) was inadvertently left out. Toward the bottom of page 3, after the dialogue of "COOK" the title of the last play in the series, THE LOST MOMENT should have appeared.

THE POETRY PROJECT NEWSLETTER IS MAILED TO THE MEMBERS OF AND CONTRIBUTORS TO THE POETRY PROJECT.

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 Kimberly Lyons, Program Coordinator
 Richard Hell, Monday Night Series Coordinator
 Tony Towle, Newsletter Editor
 Elinor Nauen, Play Series Coordinator
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No unsolicited materials will be returned without a SASE. Address correspondence to The Poetry Project, St. Mark's Church, 2nd Ave. & 10th St., NYC 10003.

Interested advertisers contact Kimberly Lyons, Lynn McGee or Tim Pratt at (212) 674-0910.

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Yes I wish to become a member of The Poetry Project. Here is my tax deductible membership gift:

\$50 \$75 \$100 \$200 \$500 \$1000

No, I do not wish to join at this time but here is my tax-deductible contribution of \$_____.

(For your gift of \$20 or more you'll receive a year's subscription to The Poetry Project Newsletter.)

Name _____

Address _____

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Choice of The World Record or Dance Writings if your gift is \$100 or more (please specify): _____

All gifts are tax deductible to the full extent allowed by law. Please make all checks payable to The Poetry Project.

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\$50 FREE admission for a year to all regularly scheduled Poetry Project events! PLUS discounts on admission to the 1988 Poetry Project Symposium and the Poets Theater Festival. PLUS a year's subscription to The Poetry Project Newsletter!

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\$100 ALL of the \$75 membership benefits. PLUS your choice of free gift: Dance Writings, the collection of criticism by poet and dance critic, Edwin Denby or The World Record, a two-record set of historic readings at The Poetry Project by some of the greatest writers of our time.

\$250 FREE admission for a year *for two* to all Poetry Project events INCLUDING The 1988 Symposium.

\$500 FREE admission for a year *for yourself and two others* to all Poetry Project events INCLUDING The 1988 Symposium; and grateful public acknowledgement.

\$1000 Lifetime admission for *two* to all regularly-scheduled Poetry Project events; and grateful public acknowledgement.

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