

THE POETRY PROJECT

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Toto a toto

Holly Hughes

POETRY FOR THE NEXT SOCIETY

(Delivered at the 1989 Poetry Project Symposium, May 5)

Allen Ginsberg

My own aesthetic, basically, is subjective. I wrote a short sort of Art of Poetry in 1986, basic slogans for the way I think:

Ordinary mind includes eternal perceptions. So how do you get to those eternal perceptions? The slogan would be: *observe what's vivid*, and the way of doing that would be to *notice what you notice*, and the way you notice what you notice is to *catch yourself thinking*.

And the question is, how do you know what's vivid? How do you choose what's vivid? And the answer to that, another slogan: Vividness is self-selecting. If it's vivid, it's vivid; otherwise you wouldn't notice it. *If we don't show anyone, we're free to write anything*; that deals with the questions of shame and showing your parents your confessions or your perceptions that are vivid.

There is a further element of subjectivity. Two *molecules clanking against each other require an observer to become scientific data*; so in that sense there is no objective history and *The measuring instrument determines the appearance of the phenomenal world after Einstein*. Thus, *the universe is subjective*. Thus, *Walt Whitman celebrated person*. We, ourselves, are the observer or the measuring instrument, "I," the subject, the person; so, our *Universe is person*:

Inside skull, vast as outside skull. From Chögyam Trungpa to determine what's vivid. *First thought, best thought*;

From Kerouac, *If the mind is shapely the ark will be shapely*, this in terms of spontaneous recognition of our own minds for form.

Maximum information, minimum number of syllables. Syntax condensed, sound as solid, so the poet might — as the rapper — *Savor vowels, appreciate consonants*.

Subject is known by what she sees and Others can measure their vision by what we see.

So the social function of this accumulation of slogans returns to Whitman's measure, Candor, which he hoped would be the standard for future poets and orators. *Candor ends paranoia*.

In 1967 there was a convocation in London. R. D. Laing brought a number of scholars and thinkers together in "The Dialectics of Liberation" and my speech on *Consciousness and*

Practical Action of July 27, 1967 at 3:30 p.m. in the Roundhouse in London contained the following page:

This week I've been impressed more than anything else by Gregory Bateson's talking about the scientific, apocalyptic aspect of the anxiety syndrome we suffer from. His thesis concerned the carbon dioxide layer over the planet. Is there anybody that has not heard of that? R. D. Laing gave a summary and then I checked with Bateson. He said that given the present rate of infusion into the atmosphere of carbon dioxide, the mammalian, human aspect of the planet had a half-life of 10 to 30 years. In that time, the opaque, carbon dioxide layer over the atmosphere which emits heat but doesn't let it bounce out would build up, the temperature rising, in a process that would be irreversible after 30 years. The polar icecaps melt, and the continents inundated with 400 feet of water (this being only one of the threats to the human mammal). Though there was actually a charming, cheerful aspect, Gregory Bateson also being an expert on porpoises. He pointed out that porpoises have a nervous system as complex as ours, their language and brains complicated as well, and most of their language concerns personal relations, that's what porpoises discuss all the time. So if there is 400 feet of water over the continents, it will leave more room for the porpoises. So, ultimately, the universe doesn't need our exhortative yowling for the continuance of its own life, like Porpoise Power.

That was 1967. As Ezra Pound said, it takes a geologic era for an idea to penetrate the public's head, but with the accumulated evidence of our own senses there seems in this last year or two to have precipitated in public consciousness and awareness the fact that our planet itself has AIDS, with a prognosis not much different from AIDS prognosis. Lesions in the surface of the planet: desertification, deforestation, poisoning of garbage dumps; pulmonary ills: of ozone layer depletion, acid rain, greenhouse effect (that Bateson described in great detail in 1967). From a poetic point of view, the four poetic elements, earth, air, fire and water, are tainted. Earth with desertification, industrial poisoning, primarily petrochemical and nuclear. The Air, as you know, has pulmonary problems with the atmosphere. The Water: utrophication of lakes omnipresent in the landmasses, and the soiling of the oceans. And as for Fire: the tainting of the source of energy, both petrochemical and nuclear; our source of fire, or energy, has been, is, questionable, poisonous.

So what we have is a dominance over nature, as everybody's realized, both capitalist and communist, a rape of nature and her subjugation on the part of White Intellectuality, European and American mass production, Hyperrationalization, or what Blake would call the Urizenic element of our intellectuality. Not sweet science but a poisonous science. I've been recently reading W. E. B. DuBois and noted for our own situation one interesting comment he made:

What the black laborer needs is careful personal guidance, group leadership from men with hearts in their bosoms to train them to foresight, carefulness and honesty, nor does it require any fine-spun theories of racial differences to prove the necessity of such group training after the brains of the race have

been knocked out by 250 years of assiduous education and submission, carelessness and stealing. After emancipation it was the plain duty of someone to assume this group leadership and training of the negro laborer. I will not stop here to inquire whose duty it was, whether it was the white, ex-master that had profited by unpaid toil or the Northern philanthropist whose persistence brought on the crisis or the national government whose edict freed the bondsman. I will not stop to ask whose duty it was, but I insist it was the duty of someone to see that these workmen were not left alone and unguided, without capital, without land, without skills, without economic organization, without even the bold protection of law, order and decency. Left in a great land, not to settle down to slow and careful internal development, but destined to be thrown almost immediately into relentless and sharp competition with the best of modern workingmen, under an economic system where every participant is fighting for himself and too often utterly regardless of the rights or welfare of his neighbor.

So, the karmic shadow of the situation that W. E. B. Du Bois wrote about in his beautiful Melvillean prose casts its shade on our own decade: this year's economic crisis in N.Y. schools where there were strikes in the past week. DuBois' *Souls of Black Folk* was published in 1903. The great insight of that book was his statement that the color line was one of the major or the major problem of the 20th Century in America and internationally. He amended that sixty years later in a Preface (1963) — writing:

So perhaps I might end this retrospect simply by saying I still think today, as yesterday, that the color line is a great problem of this century, but today I see more clearly than yesterday that back of the problem of race and color lies a greater problem which both obscures and implements it and that is the fact that so many civilized persons are willing to live in comfort, even if the price of this is the poverty, ignorance and disease of the majority of their fellow men. And that to maintain this privilege men have waged war until today war becomes universal and continuous, and the excuse for this war, largely, continues to be color and race.

I thought that those ideas were perhaps too polemical 20 or 30 years ago, but they seem to make common sense now, to me, more than ever before, and it seems to me, as I said, that the karmic shadow of slavery and serfdom in the American cities is now more and more evident, the playing out of that earlier karma, which I don't think I realized, as a white and intelligent and sensitive, soulful poet interested in alternative cultures and my own gay alternative culture, among others. But it comes to me now as I'm getting older to be more and more a substantial insight than most of us in our dominant culture have acknowledged to ourselves, and I think the problem there, or at least with me, was the fear of recognition of that enormous grief and enormous distortion of our own presumptions and the distortion of history as it was taught to us. The fear that in looking into the pit we will find that the problem is too great for us to resolve.

If my proposition, which I borrowed from Jean-Claude Van Itallie, that the planet itself has AIDS, is anywhere near useful

as a way of thinking about it, or that the four elements have been tainted, we would have to begin to look at the relation between our attack on nature and the dominance of white hyperintellectuality or hyperrationalization or hyperscientism on other cultures. If it is something that is insoluble, we should look at without denial. I have been working with Alcoholics Anonymous concepts lately, because of family problems, and notice that one of the great problems both with AIDS, people dealing with AIDS, and people dealing with addiction, petrochemical or power or alcohol or drugs, has been this element of denial, of unwillingness to look steadily at the problem and acknowledge that it may not be so easy to solve, the turning around of thought. How do you live with AIDS? How do you live with the death of the planet, rather than how do you die with it. That seems to be the turning of the spirit. How do you live? . . . We have the notion of people *living* with AIDS, rather than people *dying* of AIDS, negatively, pessimistically, suffering it out. Some acknowledgement of the problem might help either resolve it or give us a way of cohabiting with our disease. To look at it steadily without hope or fear; and I think that the emergence of Buddhist thought and Buddhist dharma and meditation has been part of that movement in the 20th Century toward the recognition of . . . the conditioning of our consciousness and the need to transcend the forms of thought that we were used to as kids in high school. For your own generation these may be sort of obvious and they are obvious, I think. But I don't know if the grief of our situation, as whites, blacks or people of color, or gays, or women, or Jews or Nuyoricans, I don't think that the grief of that feeling of being left alone, hopeless, has yet been realized. And so I would guess that the poetry of the future would particularize the local evidence of our grief, not programmatically, but as it rises in us spontaneously, in the old tasks of poetry to reflect the consciousness and feelings of the individual — that won't change. I think, however, that given the massive destruction of our environment and the destruction of human trust that we've all experienced just walking the streets of New York, it has not yet been expressed in terms of sincerity of fear and grief, and I think that that would be the task of the poet.

So I want to end with recounting a dream I had, in which I had a long conversation with Henry Kissinger. We met and I said: "The trouble with you is, the very tone of your voice is so heavy and authoritative, that there is this element of intimidation and force and violence in it, so that people are afraid even to argue with you, you seem to know everything. Or the assumption is that you know everything, that you "wrote the book," as you said, on Nuclear Determination and nobody knows any more than you, and so they can't have a conversation with you. And, yes, you may win your point but you win it by force, and as war is an extension of politics or politics is an extension of war, so your very tone of voice, your conversation and your discourse, is an extension of violence. And you can never create peace through violence, it's a contradiction in terms." So he replied, "Well, this insight may be true but I would like to tell you what my secret plan was." And I said, "Well, what was your secret plan?" And he said, "My secret plan was to insure that everybody in the world on reaching the age of two was to be empowered with trust by some parent or adult or authority, and was given response of feeling, trust, and support; this was my

secret plan all along. I was trying to create those conditions." So I said, "Well, geeze, why didn't you say so. I never would have guessed. Why don't you write a little essay about it and I'll write a preface to give it some credibility."

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Delivered at the 1989 Symposium, May 6:
Nicaragua: the Poets' Revolution

Chris Brandt

The shortness of time today precludes an exhaustive examination of why poetry is so closely connected to the development of a revolutionary society in Nicaragua. But I think we can pick up a couple of hints by looking at two poets from the middle part of this century, Joaquín Pasos (1914-1947) and Carlos Martínez Rivas (born 1924). Both are magnificent poets, indeed Pasos is one of the giants of this century, but neither is specifically identified with political revolution. Furthermore, both men's poetic visions are extremely personal and idiosyncratic. Yet both are regarded in Nicaragua as indispensable poets, citizens, historical figures. Both have been collected and reissued since 1979, which, given the shortage of paper and the difficulty of publishing in Nicaragua, says a lot.

Joaquín Pasos was a prodigy. He began writing poems as a child and he was published as an equal by José Coronel Urtecho when he was fourteen. Almost from birth he had phenomenal linguistic powers. No sooner had he learned to write than he began entering sentences in English in his notebooks (he also learned French and German). Coronel says languages were never "foreign" to him; whatever came out of him was simply "Joaquín's language."

He was the youngest member of the group formed in the late twenties around the journal *Vanguardia*, which included Coronel Urtecho, Pablo Antonio Cuadra, and many others. Pasos and all the *vanguardistas* were much influenced by European movements, especially surrealism and dada. But they did not imitate, rather they transformed what they found into something new and Nicaraguan. For example, Pasos and Coronel Urtecho collaborated in the early thirties on a dramatic poem called "La chinfonía burguesa." The pun in the title probably comes from a slang use of the word "chino," meaning "half-breed" and also "coarse" or "rude." The poem is a high-spirited send-up of the bourgeoisie, akin to many European *épatements* of the twenties, and those of Jarry. In that sense, "half-bred" — a European tradition grafted onto their own Nicaraguan purposes. But listen: The big bourgeois don Trombón takes his soul out of his "soul-closet" for inventory:

*Saco mi alma de mi almarío
mi alma de propietario millonario*

y lentamente invento el inventario siguiente...

The rhymes here are one indication of the *Vanguardia's* innovative genius. Pasos wrote that he and Coronel "hunted out our own national art among the fragments of popular poetry that had survived from colonial times." One element they found was the frequent use of internal rhyme and serial rhyme, or the repetition of the same rhyme through a whole verse or poem, and also the use of rhyme to suggest meanings at odds with the apparent significance of the words. This they called "rima chinfónica." And in this sense coarse — they were returning to their rude roots (only partly to shock the bourgeoisie). By the time of his last and greatest poem, "The Warsong of Things," Pasos has added to his repertoire of rhymes — off, near, progressive, and consonantal — and uses them (or refrains from using them) masterfully, indeed symphonically, to weave themes and variations in suggestive layer upon layer.

Here we have one clue why poetry is so important to Nicaraguans. The U.S.- and European-educated upper class strove to be as little Nicaraguan as possible, but the poets (as often as not from the same class and similarly educated) took seriously the culture of their own country. And they didn't just collect it and display it — they transmuted it into something alive and present, but Nicaraguan, and connected to the great poetic movements of the world. (This also goes far toward explaining why poets like Pound, Octavio Paz, and Mario Vargas Llosa are held in high regard in Nicaragua in spite of their politics. Both poetry and revolution there are so firmly rooted in the local tradition that they need fear no cultural hegemony.)

All his life, Joaquín Pasos was an urban poet, and not only did he not travel, he never even went to the countryside. "Nevertheless," says Ernesto Cardenal, "he knew the Indians better than anyone. He made himself Indian in his poems to reveal to us the inner Indian, the mystery of his being. Two examples: Of the Indian woman who died in the marketplace, he says, 'the doctors / when they opened her stomach / found it empty, full of hunger / of hunger and mystery / ... / Let all these bad people open up her entrails / they won't find a thing. / She had an attack / no one understands. / A bad attack / Carlos.' In the lovely song called simply "Día" he says, 'To make a day so full of roots / one tree sufficed / to soak it with gold and drunken honey / took one bee. / ... / Brown and shining day, reminds me / I must sing.' " Here too Pasos does not imitate Indian songs — he uses his own language, Joaquín's language, to speak the Indian mystery, which he knew in the same almost magical way he knew foreign languages, and which is so different from the European and colonial experience in its ability to grasp the particular and the general at once, without using either one to mean the other. This gift of Pasos's points to another reason for the importance of poets in Nicaragua. They have been the shamans, the bearers of the country's history, and the guardians of places in the language that neither the dictatorship nor the foreign invaders could touch.

One of the great expressions of this idea is in Carlos Martínez Rivas's "Funeral Song for the Death of Joaquín Pasos." "... the flow of beings / attending you in turn, each / with its question / and you were to answer to each a name, / clearly, that

would resonate in their ears / different from any other, you were even to be them / . . . / so never again could you look freely at the world. / A bad business, Joaquín." And a bit later: "To make a poem was to plan the perfect crime. / It was to plot a spotless lie / made truth by force of purity."

Martínez Rivas is a very different sort of poet from Pasos. He is cosmopolitan and intellectual. He's lived in Spain and France. He is a connoisseur and excellent critic of the plastic and visual arts. He says no day passes that he does not think of Charles Baudelaire, but "not as a favorite poet whose work is ready to hand in my library, rather as a dead friend who is lost forever." The language of Martínez Rivas's poems is oblique, dense, highly wrought, difficult. Yet he is acknowledged by the generation that has followed his to have been one of their major influences. His great value is in his extreme consciousness of the uses of poetry: "Even to our cost, in fraud and word / games, we keep on / to perpetuate the threat / to invent the necessity / to keep danger afoot."

Ralph Waldo Emerson, one of our own misprized defenders of literary democracy, said that every word was once a poem. Martínez Rivas quotes approvingly from Leopoldo Lugames's posthumous homage to Rubén Darío (May 22, 1916, Buenos Aires): "The evolution of language begins with poetry. When the poetic expression changes, so does the spiritual orientation begin to modify. And this process is so important because civilization is nothing less than the conjunction of certain inventions, communications, and agreements, whose irreplaceable expression is the word.... To have a well-organized language is the most important thing for a nation. And to have poets who vivify it and organize it progressively, constitutes a phenomenon of the highest civilization."

It is in this sense that Carlos Martínez Rivas has been himself indispensable to the development of Nicaraguan language and sensibility. Consider two short poems, one from an early suite called "Burning Fuse," and the other written for the sixth-anniversary celebration of the victory over Somoza.

NO

*They introduce me to women of good taste
And men of good taste
And the latest marriages in good taste
Perfectly matched decorators living amid
a perfectly miserable and irreproachable good taste.
I am the only one
who has a bad taste
in his mouth.*

Excellent taste, I think.

(c. 1950)

BETTER FOR THEM

*"Greet the sun, spider, don't bear a grudge.
Thank God, o toad, for what you are."*

— Roque Dalton

Better for them they were dead.

*They that cannot delight in their own
singular song (but only suffer it)
— for them, better they'd never been born.*

*To have come from woman's womb
with this sad faculty, this
deadly gift, able to recognize
the exemplary, only to despise it — is to stake out
in Paradise a circle of hell.*

Better for them.

(1986)

Now let us return to our original question. Poetry in Nicaragua is an indispensable part of the revolution, not because it is political — though there are plenty of political poems — but because the Nicaraguan poets have built on the firm foundation of the Nicaraguan national culture and language traditions, and on each other's work, a body of language and art that has become over the past century an integral part of Nicaragua's nationhood. Thus Luis Rocha, poet, Sandinista, delegate to the National Assembly, editor at *El Nuevo Diario*, and winner of the Darío Prize: "Sometimes it is a more political act to write a love poem than to write another paean to the FSLN."

The question we have not yet asked, is the mystery of how a literary art permeated so thoroughly a society that was at times up to three-quarters illiterate. The answer is disarmingly simple: humor. Even Somoza was, according to Cardenal, "one of the few jokester dictators ever. . . . But the Nicaraguan people is also a great joker and defended itself with mockery against the tyrant who mocked the people." (In that way the Nicaraguans resemble no one so much as the Czechs.) Pasos and Martínez Rivas illustrate two facets of this character, the joyful and the bitter. Satires and stories and the brief poems — epigrams, written in the form of jokes — proliferated during the forty-five years of Somoza tyranny. They were short, easy to memorize, and passed, often clandestinely, from person to person throughout the country. Pasos contributed to a series of satirical reviews, along with a raft of other poets of his generation. The most important of these was called *Los Lunes* (Mondays), which appeared Monday mornings and was regularly sold out by noon. Pasos's work on this journal landed him in Somoza's jails twice. (For the poets shared disproportionately in that side of the Nicaraguan experience, and this too earned them the love of the people.) When he died, and they were taking his body to Granada to be buried, a campesino on the highway saw the caravan of automobiles and asked who was passing. A journalist told him, "Joaquín Pasos has died and we're taking him back to Granada." "The one from *Los Lunes!*" exclaimed the man. He was a simple man of the people. No one knew him. They left him standing bowed in grief by the side of the highway.

(all translations from the Spanish by Chris Brandt)

RENDERING THE FUTURE: PETRARCH'S QUESTION

(delivered at the 1989 Symposium, May 5)

Lewis Warsh

One of the favorite maxims of the Renaissance was that in order to move forward you had to take a few steps backward. This visionary preoccupation involved not only a rediscovery of the Greek and Roman classics, but a way of using them, like constellations, as a guide to the future. Not merely studying them, or making them new, but use — and in poetry that meant redefining forms such as the epithalamium, the alba, the pastoral — forms that had drifted to the fringe, or disappeared entirely, during previous centuries. The emphasis on the expression of individual feelings made it possible to aspire to put into words what had previously been unspeakable, to say what had never been said before. The idea that one might intentionally go about expressing one's feelings was a unique endeavor.

With the *dolce stil nuovo* — the "sweet new style" — used by Dante in *La Vita Nuova* and by Petrarch in his series of sonnets to Laura, the old dualities between heaven and hell, good and evil, the idea that all your actions on earth related to your status in the afterlife, are replaced by the single duality between the inside and the outside life (the external and internal worlds) of the poet. The feeling of love was accompanied by the self-consciousness of that feeling. Many of Petrarch's sonnets can be read as attempts to resolve, or articulate, this duality. He chose (purposefully or not), as the source of his inspiration, a person who didn't know he was alive, who refused to be alone with him, who didn't like poetry or respect its power. Possibly Laura didn't even exist and Petrarch was just posing as an unrequited lover, consciously experimenting with his own feelings (it sometimes seems that Petrarch was writing love poems to himself). Possibly Laura was married and had eleven children. (There was a Laura living in Avignon when Petrarch began writing his poems who fits this description.) Possibly he liked her because of her name: *il lauro* — the laurel tree, *l'aura* — the breeze, *l'auro* — gold. Petrarch set out to solve the problem of how to draw a line between subject and object and then took it one step further: how to erase subject and object so that only the line remains. When you cross out both sides of the duality, what do you have?

Petrarch's poems set the standard for love poetry for the next 500 years. Critics of Sydney and Donne often discuss their poems in terms of being for or against the Petrarchan mode. It was only with Byron, who had no interest in writing love poems out of the experience of being spurned, who considered the conquest more inspiring than the rejection, that we have a further redefining of the roles of subject and object. Both Petrarch and Byron took their roles to an extreme, though Petrarch was the first to create a monster out of the capacity to feel, and managed to turn human emotions into a conceptual idea. *Dolendi voluptas* — a certain pleasure in grieving.

Why so much pleasure in pain? he wanted to know, why so much pain in pleasure? — not realizing that by asking the questions he had created a third level of experience that went beyond words. When you cross out both sides of the duality, you have the future.

Sonnet CII

Wherein He Tells The Course of True Love

*If this should not be Love, O God, what shakes me?
If Love it is, what strange, what rich delight!
If Love be kind, why has it fangs to bite?
If cruel, why so sweet the barb that rakes me?
If Love I crave, why this lament that breaks me?
If not, what tears or sighs can mend my plight?
O Death in Life, dear pain, where lies thy might
If I refuse the doom that overtakes me?
If I consent, without a cause I grieve:
So in a tempest do my fortunes heave,
By winds contrary and by waters tost;
So, in a stupor, like a blind man lost
In mischievous error, lured from doubt to doubt,
June freezes, January thaws me out.*

(tr. Joseph Auslander)

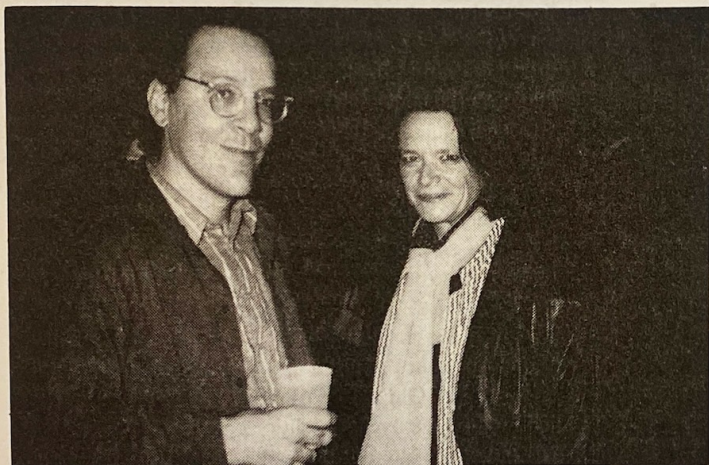
I can't escape the present — this seems to be a fact of being alive. There's no way to move except backwards through memory. I'm not particularly interested in nostalgia or sentimentality, but I do like to travel, if only to explore a sense of continuity that exists outside my own thoughts. I'm the same person who woke at noon twenty years ago after spending the whole night writing, even though the bed I sleep in now is a different bed, the person waking beside me a different person, and even the coffee I drink now tastes different. I can't remember the last time I woke at noon, or later. Some days, I can't figure out how I'm still myself.

When I walk to the post office on East 3rd Street, between Avenues B and C, I see the shadows of my mother and her sisters and brothers who were born on this street, 248 E. 3rd, a tenement that no longer exists; in fact, the post office where I wait on line stands on the very location of the building where they were born. The air thickens with all the subtle layers of time that seem to exist simultaneously — I feel like I'm walking through myself, but it's only a glimpse — and all I can do with these memories, which aren't even mine, is stumble onwards over the edge and into the future.

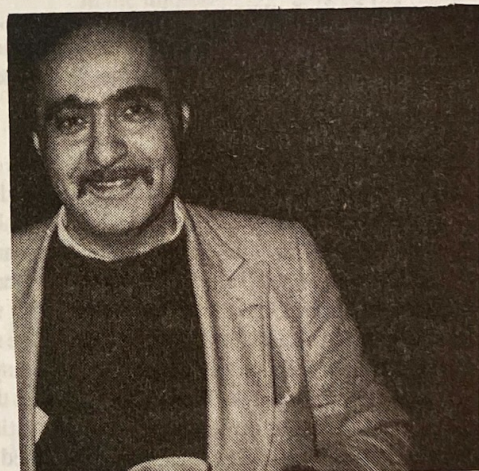
Poetry renders the future by existing on that edge; we live in the present, there's no going back without moving ahead. The experience of meaning which the words of a poem convey is as much a revelation as any dream. There's no language to discuss the future — it's much easier to grab hold of pieces of the past and start from there. But once you have the past, what do you do with it? When meaning defies language, we're left with an intuitive understanding that's akin to our languageless perception of the future. All poems are about endurance — the emotion conveyed a testimony to your continuity as a human being, regardless if everything else around you changes. If there's no endurance, no preservation of feeling, then everything turns into an object, even love is disposable, and the body becomes a machine — what's wrong with me, doctor? The building where my mother was born exists only as a shadow; the present is this post office, and some day that will fade into the dream-life as well. So poetry conveys the sense of the layers of time by linking them to something infinite that exists outside consciousness, beyond whatever I, born in 1304, 40 years younger than Dante, think I can do. If there's no subject/object relationship, if — dear Petrarch — pain and pleasure are intertwined, then there's no past/present/future either.

You can't have a trinity without a reconciliation.
Nothing grows old if it exists outside time.

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Bruce Andrews and Anne Waldman



Murat Nemet-Nejat



Philip Whalen



Larry Fagin, Joe Brainard, and Ted Greenwald

Poetry for the Next Society: Design for Continuing Investigation

(Delivered at 1989 Symposium, May 7)

Erica Hunt

I wrote a little something, but I'll also talk. Poetry for the Next Society is a phrase with ambition, soaked with multiple readings. Presentations during the symposium were as various as the writers, literary communities and cultures converging in the extended Lower East Side. There is no singular future any more than there is consensus on the past or present. The measure of poetic thinking's relation to the next society is determined by what is most alive for us now, even as we bend down to pick up the pieces.

I too thought about this sort of multivalence of poetry for the next society. It seemed to me that depending on the way that you wanted to read it, it could be a prescriptive, that is, poetry as we see it to bring about the next society, or as we want to be seen by the next society. It seemed to me that some of the speakers were apologetic, that poetry for the next society entailed somehow asking for forgiving what we have somehow been participants in in the present. It seemed to me that poetry for the next society could also be read as a kind of utopian concatenation of present particulars, of present practices of writing. And it was in the utopian sense, in the sense of transformative, that is, poetry as transformation, as activity between reader and writer and audience and performer that I took "poetry for the next society."

I guess I wasn't interested so much in the phrase or in the notion of poet as legislator but poet as participant on all levels, that is if we agree that social life is organized not only through our actions, but also through our texts. So that means abandoning some notions of the individual poet, marginalized writing isolated in a room for a small audience . . . I mean it really challenges that notion, that if poetry "is" for the next society in the sense of transformation, that is, producing change and having active being in the world, then it means that we have to think of ourselves as multiple and as participating not only as writers but as citizens. So that when I listened to the earlier panels, I listened especially carefully to the way speakers suggested that we get from here to there.

In the panel "Rendering the Future" speakers took on the task of enlarging the present. What I heard there were descriptions of a kind of microfuturism, a profound attention to the present in order to rescue daily life from silence, and how we might take that method to anticipate and articulate the future. The other thing I heard was a portrayal of skirmishes within the patrilineal web of literature, by that I mean the sort of slaying of the father and the father before that and in that sense I guess poetry is timeless. It's also in a way motionless. I also heard the articulation of a kind of science fiction, skimming along the vectors of individual desire. Once again, desire is an important component in producing change. It is a motivator, it's what makes you want to move. And so. But nonetheless, I wanted to

hear more how we could ground the practicing in some social body however we define it, be it literary community or be it social movement. I was left with a sense from that panel of the imagination sort of on an incline, trying to get up the incline — and as individuals, then, we are basically trying to confront some of the inertia that hinders us from change; and when I say us I mean the society. So, again, when I hear poetry for the next society, I hear us invoking some kind of social change.

On another panel, "Language and Television", literature took the form, was defined, it seemed to me as canon, and as reading practice spreads now, radioactively, through TV, the contagion of the "beautiful", "the true", "the complex", "the shapely", buttressed by correlatives, exalted or pathetic. I mean at some point or another there was a description (I haven't seen this series) [*Voices & Visions*, a television series on poets shown on PBS - Ed.] but there was a description of images accompanying various poems, and pastels were the colors of Emily Dickinson, and these other images were the actions for Whitman. The sense that I got from this was that, well, all of a sudden we had fallen into a kind of clichéd use of allusion and simile and pathetic fallacies of the nineteenth century. To depend entirely on TV's role in making the future is to walk directly into the corporate body, an oilslick, refuting its sponsored lyricism. Another slope, this time slippery, littered with junkabilia and product endorsements. And who's the audience? How are they addressed and engaged? And for what? as the familiar catechism of contemporary Marxism goes. In TV, that well of babble, signifying proceeds by threat, what will happen if you leave out the fabric softener or don't call home enough, is as much the language-content as the American Playhouse drama or the poetry that entreats us to poetic thinking, that is, of discrete difference.

On Friday night we heard four lectures on a theme of Poetry for the Next Society. Of the four, the lectures by Houston Baker and Marjorie Perloff engaged me the most. Houston Baker, using the church to preach, saw the theme of the symposium as a call to testify and prophecy, getting from here to there, beginning with the sharpened street voices of Doug E. Fresh and Public Enemy, he preached the OT (the Oral Tradition, the Old Testament, the Old Time Religion) refigured as Rap, or as he parsed it for us, recovered auditions of all peoples. I have to admit that I was attracted to this version of poetry for the next society because it seemed to me to function as very productive metaphor, generative metaphor of what I hear in the summer courtyards of my urban village. As a reality, however, I know that it is also an instrument, it's a march, the beat is a march, it's a march delivered to the masses. It's alternately heroized or demonized by the culture industry with which it frequently intersects. It is at once the most vital part of the oral tradition while at the same time, with its heavy accent on male contest, I find it also atrophied, somehow partial. But I agreed with much of what Baker had to say, which is that Rap is melancholia in revolt. And it's going toward heterogeneity, new uses for the past, difference and the space for opposition.

Marjorie Perloff's talk [see the Oct.-Nov. 1989 *Newsletter*] painted a contemporary predicament where we no longer own the word modernity, where the people living in the present no

longer own the word modernity and instead it seems to have . . . largely the Right has captured that word quite well. Recently there was an article in the *Nation* by George Black (not the journalist) but he was describing a phenomenon in England where Margaret Thatcher has basically been able to discredit socialism as a kind of antiquated system that can't work and that modernity consists of accepting scarcity and accepting conformity, that these are the new conditions under which we must live. This is what's possible, and if you can't make it, well. . . it's a kind of social Darwinism but it's basically got a new face. It seems to me that Marjorie's description of the new formalism is a kind of literary Thatcherism, in which you basically reduce literature to its slenderist and most linear kinds of expression and you privilege it, you say that that's the thing that's going to survive. So I found that information enlightening because I hadn't actually been attending to this. And I also found that her strategy of resuscitating Wittgenstein, who is a personal favorite of mine, as a philosopher of the performative, or present tense seen not as a way of adding seasoning or local color to the literature but as a way, or a part of that desire, to make the poem an event, the thing that happens, once again between reader and writer, audience and performer, an event that produces change.

Poetry for the next society is for me the trans-national, exploding once again the myth of monoculture, the hypostatized origin of a single fountain, a single referent, a typical register, an atomized body, a single blueprint for the future. It proposed contiguous projects of deeply considered difference and congruence, it proposed cultures in which we have multiple memberships, and those memberships permit us to be both subjects and objects of our own history, text and situations.

I think I'll close with a little anecdote. It's one I've told before. There was a visiting trade unionist from South Africa, a Black trade unionist, who was here for quite a while and was touring various organizations, people in movements or people involved in movement work; he visited not only the labor unions, locked-out locals, the Hormel lockout in Minneapolis — he visited the farmers who were protesting farm foreclosures, he visited folks in Pittsburgh who were trying to get industry going again, he visited folks in the South who were working on voter participation. And after he had been here awhile and he had seen quite a bit, he was due to go back; but it turned out that while he was here a state of emergency had been declared in South Africa and his family was visited by the police as well as by other state security forces and they had gone to the house, and they were clearly looking for him, and we urged him not to go back because he would definitely be seized and put in prison — at this point they were detaining a lot of activists. And he said, well I have to go back because I have no portfolio. In other words, if I stay here I have to have a particular mission, so I have to go back. And we said, you can't go back because it's a state of emergency. And he replied, well it's always been a state of emergency for as long as I've lived.

The story is important to me because it raises the threshold of the urgent. That is, in some ways we're not there yet, to the point where we can really accurately project what the next society is. I think that there are certain signs that we are getting

close. I take heart from looking at the news this week, when the first five stories are about demonstrations. I think that that raises the threshold of the urgent, where we can see in those demonstrations and in the coming together and strengthening of movements, we see where the poetry for the next society will take place. I think it's instructive that the poetry that informs many of the writers that have been part of this symposium, and certainly myself, happened some time ago, but they do inform and make poetry live, those movements, and so I would refer back to the student movements of the sixties, the African-American liberation struggles of the sixties in the South, I would refer us to the antiwar movement, I would refer us to the anti-imperialist movement where people didn't write poetry as instruments of those movements, but what they did was that they brought about a widespread consciousness that we could do things differently, and that there might be different logics about social life and about culture and so it's to the student movements and to the movements of peoples toward their own liberations that I think we find how poetry will be for the next society.

* * *

MEDIAN

In the middle of the street
you stand still buttons up
in the middle
clearly waiting

meddling
necessarily vague
winter
when buckets empty
transversing the middle

a treasured memory
tosses, turns
not apart from the window
where face deflects
the measure of glass

truck slams on brakes
minute blast
somewhere in the farthest lane
erasing there
to there

assembling what
you made
in the middle of
revising
what habit-forming does
driving hand-over-hand
attending to the diagram
backwards walking, waving
in the middle
of the street

A Reading

There was a big Poetry Reading
at The Church last night. Laurie
Harris was there
who suggested I write this poem.
And now she's in it.
Laurie Harris is
at my mercy now — I can say
"Boa constrictors emerged from her mouth"
but
that would not be in this poem's style.
So I'll say she read well.

I ended the reading, near 3.
Bernadette Mayer and I sang "Imagine"
then hugged.

She said "This is for
Jackie Curtis who would sing this
every year" and I said "God bless."

I thought "This is too long a hug —
I have a girlfriend"

but my girlfriend
was asleep and anyway you can
have both a long hug and a
girlfriend — if it's the right hug and
girlfriend.

Sharon Mesmer introduced
herself to Dorothy Friedman: "Mesmer.
Like the hypnotist. I always say that."
Tom Savage read an Epithalamion about
a young couple marrying for a green card.
"That's the first Green Card poem I
know of" he told me later.
The chili in the back room was
undercooked, but spicy.

Sheila told me "our talk on Friday
changed my life" (We'd talked 4 hours,
by phone, while I tried to put out
my new magazine, but the xerox
machine jammed.

Actually the machine started flashing
L3 L3 L3 L3 L3 L3
and I'll be damned if I know what *that*
means.)

A lot of people said "And then her
head was found on top of the fire
hydrant. Happy New Year"

because the first line was the
last line of their poem and the
second was their sentiment.

I spent a lot of time watching Taylor
Mead. I noticed he laughed at all
the condom jokes.

This being the Eighties, there were
numerous condom jokes.

The homeless were surprisingly
nearly absent from the poems.

Perhaps being homeless they may
not find shelter even in poems.

— Sparrow

Revelations

After the Year of Mirrors
and after the cadenzas,
after the century plant

blooms like a death wish, at dawn,
the red sky arched like a cape
of the matador who stands

upright behind the seen world,
after the thresholds of ecstasy
open and then close:

black train, that infinity
always off in the background,
a straight line leading nowhere

which is a town that looks like
the town you grew up in, still
as a barber shop, Sunday

afternoon, red brick facade
vanishing the moment you touch it —
after that, then what?

— Jonah Winter

CHINESE DUMPLINGS

300,000,000 tablespoons shortening
1,500,000,000 cups all-purpose flour
2,000,000,000 teaspoons baking soda
750,000,000 teaspoons salt
750,000,000 cups milk

Cut shortening into flour, baking soda
and salt until mixture resembles fine
crumbs. Stir in milk. Drop dough by
spoonfuls onto hot meat or vegetables
in boiling stew (do not drop directly
into liquid). Cook uncovered 10 minutes.
Cover and cook about 10 minutes longer.
Makes 800,000,000 to 1,000,000,000
DUMPLINGS.

-- Mike Topp

Kidding on the Square

Who made my life a metaphor, pulled in, puffed out like the earth? I came out of my face all wrong, gone staring into society. Stark. I waited for attenuation. My head came to a point or steeple. I didn't dig the world too much, maybe I'd go somewhere else. Worm vision entering brain-apple. But no way out of everyday way. Even if the sludge is ambrosia we are mired in it. I study my own case, body as collateral. The foot that heard, the arm too short to see, performing half an act. Like an ant I travel along the barrier, a wall rising to the stars. I met the body with no one in it. I felt the tremendous effort it was making to cooperate. Like a great un/noun, no face of its own, but whose? Empty under the tape. Dedicated to the release from suffering. We must walk all night through endless common physical dross. The distant presence, the distance present.

* * *

Talk about the impossibility of talking about the untellable. Look at it come down, my view limited only by eyes. No shades, shadows in a dream. The "virtual" dimension cuts through the rift between the seen and the unseen. Silence and inertia. Why do only the dead know this? A line running under your *neath*, appearing later in bright light *on* you. The end of the line began at birth, the numinous atmosphere around a cave. You came out half-baked, a split balloon with no surfactant. Live and earn, it'll be over before you know it. But collapse is something other than perishing. I fell in the street, I had angst, I couldn't rotate. My eye was completely terrorized, thought slammed against its bony casement. No blood, just red. Ether became solid. I called in sick. One of these days I'll step out in front of something, I'm gone, my mind on another spot. Obladee, land of beautiful wasted chicks and hustlers, feet black with putrefaction. But light shines out of the darkest shadows, go for the blue one. Until then you'll want to sidestep the shades, stay out of tall buildings or stay only so long. Save your own neck from tracheotomy tubes, sardine can top of head rolled back, then give to community chest. Deep breathing economy. That's all for now, but keep breathing and touching your remains. I remain, yr friend, Skeletor, Lord of Destruction.

* * *

The moving finger writes. Just read it, don't pretend it means anything. We also move from left to right, she left to write leaving right in the middle of conversation. I try to keep the person I'm with on personal. Do not confuse this with a dating service or party line even. "Recognize all friends and companions as illusion." The cat spat and fled. The finger points to a spot on the ceiling it is trying to apply to words, a world. Words and worlds are molds for matter, but here there's neither mold nor matter. No matter, a green blip, you cross the entire field of vision to stand motionless staring into an empty hole. Can't draw upon what was just said or done. Drumroll. The moving finger writes and having written washes my socks. At midnight you turn into yourself, electrical impulses, but it's only me, *io sol uno*, the mean little kid, a talented exponent of death, incessantly driven like an arab to embellish what he perceives as insufficient, a *horror vacui*. Wow. Wow in action is no concept. I have a pronoun problem, it comes to me through a speaker. A chord I could live in. Know yourself knowing this, he's a great bunch of guys. Follow the finger around the blackboard. Restore/destroy.

* * *

I love my eggs boiled with picante. I feel I'm encircling Dante. In the Ninth Circle fries my legs and your eyes, like a tableau of life in Ypsilanti, Michigan. Charles the Poet's off the air, no more laughter after all. A means of remaking the real. Wheel. "What the fellas in the turbans speak I don't know, but it sounds like warm shit being stirred by wooden spoons." What kind of work do you do, you people who feel no pain. It would be pleasant to have no intestines and no glands. We live in a combination warehouse-daycare center, stone and shadow as co-equals. The main action takes place in the corner, home of the royal companion. Coffee so strong it gets caught in your hair. Telephone as contraceptive, ringing off the hook. Vain search to raise love to the level of a fable. Piccolo mondo antico. Jack Spider spat in the corner. The eye of the background sees through your speech, the ear with its caves, in a clouded bowl or pool. Down in the melancholy hole, dead men tell good tales, kidding on the square. Flipping through generations of leaves, scattered heaps. Bring me a leaf from the sea. Ask the unconscious for a useful dream. The answer is a scratchy sound in the middle of sleep, everyone's a listener. Zoot lives on as a singing head, beamed up to paradiso. The pen is an elegant key, but the door doesn't come around for a long time. My words are only the ashes of my art, the art of the thought without words. The page becomes black-faced.

Rappoetry with the PANIC*DJ, Plattsburgh, New York

The Clinton County Council on the Arts' brochure warned, "GET READY FOR A RAP ATTACK!...Friday, February 24, 1989 — Hawkins Hall, Plattsburgh, NY...Poetry, parody, vaudeville, and rock and roll with Bob Holman, the PANIC*DJ!" Holman has performed his poetry in the U.S., Central America, and Europe, directed twenty plays and published five books. Vito Ricci, a contemporary composer whose latest hit is *Music From Memory*, mans the guitar and synthesizes accompaniment.

DJ Holman is Panicked; frantic to find and play the impossible album. And it's not just vinyl discs he's grabbing. Costumes, a cassette deck, the sound equipment, Vito's music, the stage, even his own memorized poems seem to have holes in the center for Holman to fling down on his turntable and hear what they rap out. Holman's brand of "rappoetry," and his vaudevillian act, force us to pay attention by producing the feeling that it's too strange and dangerous to do otherwise.

The performance format broadens the references available to the audience. As Vito Ricci said, "We range from de Sade, to Willy Nelson, to LL Cool J." But that's just the music. Then there's the poetry with hints of Ginsberg, Dorn, and the Dada poets. A victory for Bob and Vito, but what most troubles the audience, is that there are so many potential references that reference itself is forced to collapse. And then it's you, "Crazy Bob," and Vito the string plucker lost in *The Impossible Rap*:

*It's impossible
But undeniable
It's ubiquitous
Don't hold me liable
It's always behind you
When you turn around
Just out of sight
Just underground....*

Holman dons a sportcoat of question marks to become PANIC*DJ. This is a rap attack, and as PANIC*DJ tells us in this poem, "...the other thought's gonna get you."

Vito provides the waves of rest if you're not ready yet. Ricci's music is a relief, a geography of sound grounding PANIC's radio antenna. Vito is the eyebrows and jawbone of the gig. He's PANIC's valium, his voice has the gut feeling that roots Bob's content. When Ricci sings a love song, *Placebo*, with lyrics by Ann Rower, the audience sighs: here was a curb of sidewalk we could sit on to rest. But even Rower's lyrics didn't let us forget that the traffic wasn't stopping while we lounged in Vito's melody. *Placebo* would have been a chance to put on my ol' rock and roll vinyl earmuffs, if not for the fact that they'd just been shattered to smithereens by PANIC's tune, **ROCK 'N' ROLL MYTHOLOGY**:

*Gotta Rock 'n' Roll Mythology
Gotta total apocalypse pathology*

*Got the most Post-Hysterical Poetry
& if it's not comin' at you
Then it's breezed on by...*

*Got the heavy-duty political intent
Got the worm farm free-form diamond
noodle content...*

And if your favorite rock and roll stars hadn't shown by then, most of them arrived on stage for Holman's repeating lines, "Hey listen to me, hey listen to me, hey listen to me, hey listen to me," and a bit later, "...and everything I said it, I said it 'cause I read it..."

Holman also raps on the door of SWEAT&SEX&POLITICS! and raps 'em to the floor. This is Bob's song for the sweat of the tongue, sex of the word, and the freedom to rap:

*When you realize it's a pack of lies
Been dealt from the bottom then there's no surprise
You can pick it up, you can put it down
You can sell it from a pushcart all over town...*

Rap it up, spit it out...

*Thought is made in the mouth
You don't think of it
Until you rap it out
You gotta raprap
Till everything gets said
You gotta raprap
Are you living in your head?
Pondering Wandering
Floundering Aroundering
Communicate! Reciprocate!
Conversate! Don't Hesitate!
"In the beginning was the...Rap!"*

I'll confess it's not so easy to accept the life jacket of rap from a PANIC'd DJ. This is a man who just sang:

*I usta eat my share of dog food
usta chew on the old milky bone...*

*Last night I finished The Power of Positive Drinking
I'm sure it's cowboy heaven that's calling...*

Holman's waiting for *Cowboy Heaven* and in the very next song he's urging us to sell rap like corndogs as an antidote for the 1988 presidential elections!

I sensed the audience was suffering battle fatigue. I myself was checking the exit signs when the lights lowered to focus on an un-panicked Bob Holman who sat down on the edge of the stage to read his "Poemas Nicaragüeses," including a translation of José Coronel Urtecho's poem, *Ode to Rubén Darío*, the signal poem of the Vanguardia movement in Nicaragua, the generation following Darío. Bob tells us, "This is the part my critics like best." Holman begins to talk about his trip to Nicaragua, and I finally got the chance to imagine the Hero

Poet I came to see. There he was, Bob Holman in Nicaragua reading to Nicaraguans. I got to play American Dream, helping the needy by sending Bob down again in my head. I was safe, these poems weren't about ME, and just as my eyes and ears began to fine-tune my Hero Poet in the Nicaraguan scenery, the lights slammed on, and Bob and Vito kicked into the "Designer Yuppie Fuck Music" of their song, *Cellular Phone*:

*Tiffany nightlights
Dior sheets
Lay out my Perry Ellis socks...*

*I'm never at home
I'm never alone
I'm on the cellular phone
With you....*

My imagined Hero Poet had been rap-attacked by flesh-and-blood Bob singing about socks!

Performance poetry has a power the podium reading doesn't. The audience must continually consider the potential of the poet actually doing what he's reading. If you think you're hearing a metaphor, it just might be the script. We didn't have to watch Cowboy Bob eat dog food or Yuppie Bob lay out designer socks, but we did have to consider them as potential gestures of a single PANIC*DJ!

And just what do designer socks have to do with Nicaragua? And who voted for Bush anyway? Did they eat dog food? I was experiencing the arrival of what I can only call, "The Other Thought."

Meanwhile, Bob was busy wrapping himself up in the microphone cord. A gesture that revealed his love-wrestle with the serpentine sound system. For Bob, the sound equipment was just another awkward prop. Bob looked at the microphone like a beagle would look at a talking bone. He didn't come to show us a mastery over sound equipment, and so suggest Stage Performance as the way to spiritual, social, and economic freedom. The only "tool" Bob came to sell us was our own tongues.

We'd been listening to a DJ in his transmission station, not Bob Holman in his kitchen. Then Bob sings a song accompanied by his brother, Stu. No parody, no vaudeville, no panic, almost no syntactical lances of paradox, except — Stu couldn't be there. He lives in Kentucky. But that's OK, because Bob brought Stu on stage in his ghetto blaster, which he shifts to his shoulder for a cassette duet. It appears that Bob needs two heads to have a heart. This was my favorite part of the performance:

*I'd rather be crazy than stupid
(So how come I'm crazy for you?)*

(Chorus)

*If you're crazy, you're crazy
You've just gone round the bend
But when you're stupid you just keep on
Bendin' in the wind*

*Lovin' you is as dumb now
As when things just begun
I may be crazy for you now
But I'm just stupid in the end.*

Bob and Vito make Stupid inhabitable and Crazy an everyday delight. Holman makes the movable foot dance, stumble, run, and punt. His "rapoetry" doesn't grow on you — it collapses, leaving you to deal with "The Other Thought."

If you enjoy poetry of relaxing imagery that gets you out of your city life and gives you an arts-official artifice to take home for your private idea-land idolatry, don't go see Bob. That's just what he's attacking. But, if you want to see a poet who'll wear a hat of pasta noodles to sing his parody of Yuppie Rastafarians, entitled *Pasta Mon*, or catch a man actually *singing* a poem that confronts *The Meaning of Meaning* with the thought-provoking first line, "I don't have any idea," then go see Bob Holman and hear the blues go cobalt.

— Jeffery Cochran

*

KING KONG

The great ape emerges from the mist.
He is not the same size. The director loses
no time: Places everyone, roll it!
He has no time for anything that does not directly
advance the plot, no stunned sputtering — but, but
that was a pterodactyl and pterodactyls are extinct!

The great ape is never the same size. Who is?
Sometimes he is as tall as a skyscraper, sometimes
he is just tall enough to play center for Ithaca College.
It depends on his mood and who's doing the looking.
At the Cooper-Hewitt, we saw the basic King Kong
model and it was only a foot high. The curator
should be horse-whipped.

Those icy Sunday afternoons
when you didn't expect to get dressed at all
and you wander out to a museum and walk around New
York

and stop for a drink here and there and walk around
and don't go home for scrambled eggs but end up
drinking good wine with God knows who
and time is being whiled away soothingly
until something huge falls on you from a tall building
and you look up stunned and bleeding —
the fighter planes like hornets in the searchlights

— Robert Hershon

comma

period

Aquarius

my name's Yoshi, an Aquarius of Japanese birth
don' know why I'm crawling through the streets of Hell's kitchen
filled with the smells of piss and shit

not wearing the handsome suits, not selling the cars
far from buying the stocks and bonds
mumbling in my mouth. .the word.

Like in the beginning of John's Gospel
— in the beginning was the word. .then we all got fucked up.

you know. the piss smell, the ghost subways, the hunger streets biting men
and the brothers and sisters asking quarters, collecting cans
selling drugs, cracks and all.

i mumble my words, man
to reverse the universe back to its original serenity.
i mumble my words, the poesy

"yeah bro', wanna buy some coke?" — let there be light, man. i answer.
"sir, spare me a quarter?" — let there be light, buddy. i say.
"baby, wanna date?" "Is there any LIGHT?!!" i wonder.

coming back to the Village, the hare-krishnas passing by
i mumble my own mantra, made up from the sacred verse and lots of
four-letter words.

— Yoshi Yamamoto

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Monday, January 1, 1990, 7 pm
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Tickets may be purchased at Poetry Project events or by mail (checks and money orders only, if purchased through the mail). **Telephone reservations will not be accepted.**

WEDNESDAY NIGHTS

December

6 Paul Auster is the author of six books including *Moon Palace*. He was the editor of *The Random House book of 20th Century French Poetry*. He teaches fiction and translation at Princeton. **Paul Violi** is the author of *Likewise*, his fifth collection of poetry. *The American Book Review* wrote of his work: "Violi's poetry is pure pleasure."

13 Sandra María Esteves is a Puerto Rican Latina writing in English. She is the author of two collections of poems, *Tropical Rain: A Bilingual Downpour* and *Yarba Buena*. She is the director of the African Caribbean Poetry Theater. **Cecilia Vicuña** was born in Santiago de Chile and has lived and worked in New York City since 1980. Among her collections of poetry are *Precario/Precarious*.

20 James Purdy is the author of numerous novels, plays, short stories and poems, most recently, the novel *Garments the Living Wear*. Dame Edith Sitwell wrote of his work in 1962: "Purdy will come to be recognized as one of the greatest living writers of fiction in our language." **John Perrault** is an art critic who writes regularly for *The Village Voice*. A book of stories, *Hotel Death and Other Tales* was published in 1989.

January

3 Sheila Alson's poetry has been published in *Cheap Review*, *Gandahbba* and *Pome*, among other magazines. Her books of poetry include *Notes on the Olympus Refrigerator*. **Laurie Harris** is the author of *Border Story*. A new collection, *The Nina Poems* is forthcoming. **Yan Li** moved to the U.S. from Beijing in 1985. He was a founding member of the avant-garde artists' coalition Star Star. He is the editor of *First Line*, a Chinese Language magazine.

10 Actress and poet Magaly Alabau emigrated to the U.S. from Cuba in 1967. Her books include *The Daily Last Rites*. **Agueda Pizarro** is the author of ten books of poetry including *Annulaluna*. She is the co-editor of Ediciones Embalage. **Giannina Braschi** was born in Puerto Rico and now resides in New York. She is the author of four books of poetry including *El Imperio de los Suenos*.

17 Dennis Phillips' third book of poetry, *A World*, was published 1989. He was the Book Review Editor for *Sulfur*, 1981-84. **Michael Scholnick's** books of poetry include *Perfume*. He has written articles for *Transfer* and *New Directions Anthology* and an introductory catalog essay for *Alex Katz: From the Early '60s* (Robert Miller Gallery).

24 Art Lange's books of poetry include *Needles at Midnight*. He edited *Brilliant Corners*, a magazine of the Arts. He lives in Chicago, where he writes music criticism. **Ann Kim** is the author of *18 Poems*. Her work is included in the forthcoming anthology *Out of the World*, edited by Anne Waldman.

31 Isaac Goldemberg, a Peruvian poet and novelist, has lived in New York since 1965. He is the author of two novels which have been translated into English. **David Unger** was born in Guatamala City. He is the author of *Neither Caterpillar nor Butterfly*. With Isaac Goldemberg he is the co-director of the Latin American Writers Institute at CUNY.

MONDAY NIGHTS

December

4 Open Reading

11 Mary Angeline has recent work in *Talisman*, *Notus*, and *Avec*. She will be reading from an unpublished manuscript, *Metals in the Work*. **Virginia Hooper** is the co-editor of *American Letters & Commentary*, and has been published in *Central Park*, *Sulfur*, *New American Writing*, and *Epoch*.

18 Tony Lecours joins us from San Francisco where he works as a nurse to AIDS patients. He has published poetry in the *National Poetry Magazine of the Lower East Side*. **Annie Lanzillotto** is from Yonkers, and teaches poetry at Sing-Sing. **Esther Amy Fischer** started howling as a small babe in Westchester and now resides in San Francisco, performing her ecstatic primal poetics at *Intersection for the Arts*, *Artist's Television Access* and *Poetry Above Paradise*.

January

8 Open Reading

15 Liz Belile is from Austin, Texas and just completed her Master of Fine Arts at the Naropa Institute. Her work has been published by *Inkblot Press* and in Rock 'n' Roll mags *Flying Horse* and *Your Flesh*. **Stephen Ielpi** is the lead singer and lyricist for *False Prophets*.

22 Andrea Hollowell is a graduate student in English at the University of California, Berkeley. Her poems have been published in *Lucy & Jimmy's House of K*, *American Quarterly of Literature*, *Oblong* and *Mirage*. **Melanie Nielson** is the co-editor of *Big Allis*, co-coordinator of the Ear Inn reading series and has had recent work in *Sink*.

29 Floating Concrete Octopus: Miekal And & Liz Was, Directors of Xexoxial Endarchy, are the publishers of many visual/verbal books, cassettes of experimental music, videos, and most recently, interactive and hypermedia for the Macintosh computer.



Hooley & Hughes

CHAW TING

THE POETRY

St. Mark's Church
New York, NY 10003

PROJECT

2nd Ave. & 10th St.
(212) 674-0910

December

- 4 Open Reading
- 6 Paul Auster & Paul Violi
- 11 Mary Angeline & Virginia Hooper
- 13 Sandra María Esteves & Cecilia Vicuña
- 18 Tony Lecours, Annie Lanzillotto & Esther Amy Fischer
- 20 James Purdy & John Perrault

Lecture Series:

- 17 Juan Sanchez & Marina Gutiérrez
(See following page for details)

January

- 3 Sheila Alson, Laurie Harris & Yan Li
- 8 Open Reading
- 10 Magaly Alabau, Agueda Pizarro & Giannina Braschi
- 15 Liz Belile & Stephen Ielpi
- 17 Dennis Phillips & Michael Scholnick
- 22 Andrea Hollowell & Melanie Nielson
- 24 Art Lange & Ann Kim
- 29 Miekal And & Liz Was
- 31 Isaac Goldemberg & David Unger

Lecture Series:

- 21 Douglas Oliver: "Poetic Stresses and Their Consequences"
(See following page for details.)

Annual New Year's Day Reading
(See following page.)

Events begin at 8 pm unless otherwise noted; admission by contribution of \$5. Programs subject to change.

LECTURE SERIES

December

December 17th, 7pm: Two emerging artists, **Juan Sanchez** and **Marina Gutiérrez**, will show slides of their paintings and photography and discuss issues pertinent to their work, including the investigation of cultural identity, representation, and the issue of time in narrative sequences.

Marina Gutiérrez, a painter and mixed media artist, had work in "Committed to Print" at MoMA in 1988. In 1989, her mixed media work was included in the exhibition "Autobiography in Her Own Image" at Intar Gallery. The Public Art Fund commissioned her for its ongoing project, "Messages to the Public". Her work is in two traveling exhibitions, "The Rosenberg Era Project" and "Contemporary Women Drawers," which both showed in New York at C.W. Post College.

Juan Sanchez, a painter and photographer, has exhibited his work in exhibitions internationally. His work was included in exhibitions in New York recently at the Exit Art gallery and the Alternative Museum. He has organized the exhibitions "Ritual & Rhythms: Visual Forces for Survival" at the Kenkeleba House Gallery and "Beyond Aesthetics: Art of Necessity by Artists of Conscience" at the Henry Street Settlement. His mural dedicated to Louis Armstrong is located on 107th Street, in Queens.

January

January 21st, 7pm: Douglas Oliver's talk, "Poetic Stresses and their Consequences," will set out to redefine the key terms in poetic music. Douglas Oliver has conducted experiments in which he has put electrodes on people's throats and made recordings of pitch. From this work comes his his new book *Poetry and Narrative in Performance*, a new literary theory in which the occurrence of sound in a poem is related strictly for its overall artistic form. Douglas Oliver says: "The ideas can be simply and entertainingly illustrated with examples from The Blues, and may introduce poets to details of their craft of unsuspected importance."

Douglas Oliver's books of poetry include *Kind*. A new collection of poems, *Selected Poetry and Fiction: Three Variations on the theme of Harm* is forthcoming from Palladin London. *Poetry and Narrative in Performance* was published in October by St. Martin's Press.

NEW YEAR'S DAY READING

THE POETRY PROJECT'S 16TH ANNUAL New Year's Day Marathon Reading Beginning 7 pm

More than 100 poets and performers including: Allen Ginsberg, John Cage, Maureen Owen, Spalding Gray, Robbie McCauley, Richard Hell, Jim Carroll, the Microscopic Quintet, Miguel Algarín, Taylor Mead, Kimberly Lyons, Pedro Pietri, Kimiko Hahn, Vicki Hudspith, Elaine Equi, Jerome Sala, Tony Towle, Lee Ann Brown, Yan Li, Jackson Mac Low, Ed Friedman, Laurie Carlos, Lewis Warsh, Paul Violi, Mark Russell, Bob Holman, Rudy Burckhardt, Steven Hall, the False Prophets, Charles Moulton and many more.

Refreshments available. Tickets \$10 if purchased by December 23rd (makes a great holiday gift!) \$15 at the door. Tickets may be purchased at Poetry Project events or by mail (checks and money orders *only* if purchased through the mail). Seating on a first-come first-served basis.

WRITING WORKSHOPS

"Autobiography, Prose & the Short Story," **Thursdays at 7 pm (October 19th through the end of January)**. Workshop leader Susan Cataldo will focus on quality, editing, the use of journals and autobiographical material in prose writing and the resolution of the short story.

SUSAN CATALDO, poet, prose writer and photographer, is the author of *Brooklyn-Queen's Day* and is the editor of *Little Light Magazine*.

"Minimalist Poetics" **Fridays at 7 pm (October 20th through the end of January)**. Taught by Elaine Equi. Zukofsky says that "condensation is half of composition." This workshop will focus on the short form, from haiku and aphorisms to fragments and the analytic lyric. Compression and subtraction will be explored as ways of composing.

ELAINE EQUI is the author of four books of poetry including *Accessories* (The Figures, 1989). *Views Without Rooms* (Hanuman Books) has just been published, and *Surface Tension* (Coffee House Press) is forthcoming.

"Poetry Writing" (conducted in Spanish) **Saturdays at Noon (October 21st through the end of January)**. Led by Carmen Valle.

CARMEN VALLE, a poet and scholar of Latin American poetry, leads a poetry workshop in Spanish. Emphasis will be on writing exercises, journals, and in-class discussion of the work of Neruda, Vallejo, Sabines and other 20th-century poets.

BOOK REVIEWS

Last and Lost Poems, Delmore Schwartz; edited by Robert Phillips. New Directions, 1989. 134 pages. \$9.95.

This book continues what its editor calls a "rescue mission": retrieving the uncollected and unpublished poems of Delmore Schwartz, and at the same time resuscitating Schwartz's literary stock, which has not exactly been soaring of late. To an original version of this book, issued ten years ago, Phillips now adds 16 recently discovered poems, as well as a selection from Schwartz's ill-fated early-1940s stab at a master opus in verse, "Genesis," out of print for nearly four decades.

A Freudian reading of the Jewish identity struggle as seen through Biblical, personal, and world history, the never-completed "Genesis," we're able to see from this fragment, is full of fine lines but also excessively rhetorical, diffuse, euphonic and longwinded. While it was in progress, the poet excitedly predicted his epic would "last as long as the Pyramids." Its failure signaled the beginning of the end for his poetry.

Last and Lost Poems charts Schwartz's declension from the awesome poet he was in his early twenties — the most prodigiously gifted, as well as the most advanced in terms of career, of a generation that included his friends John Berryman and Robert Lowell — to the writer of windy, exhilarated doggerel we find in the late poems here ("O the brio, & presto, & allegro...so furious: so joyous: so spontaneous").

"All dreams come true." By the time he wrote that line (from "Genesis"), Schwartz, an overachiever who spent his adulthood overcoming the insecurity of a Depression childhood in a middle-class, Jewish, immigrant family, had already grasped a large share of his own dreams. Those dreams were all along conditioned by Hollywood movies (or, as Schwartz lovingly termed them in his journals, "moon pictures"). He never got over his romance with Hollywood's star-images and the Narcissus-like quality of film watching; the "flashback of the cinema, / fadeout, dissolve, return" fascinated him as a kind of imitation of consciousness, a fable of real life.

The above quotes from "Genesis" are echoed in other early "lost" pieces. The two finest poems in this book are taut, brilliant mementoes of the Baudelairean Schwartz style of 1937 titled "Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer," and "You, My Photographer." Both register sensitive, ironic recognition of the coming role of visual media, especially film, in American life. "I looked toward the movie, the common dream," Schwartz begins the first of these poems.

He had an uncanny way with first lines and titles. A recycled Yeats line he chose as the title of his 1938 debut collection, *In Dreams Begin Responsibilities*, proved prophetic. With Wallace Stevens's *Harmonium*, the book still ranks as one of the two most accomplished first volumes of poetry ever written in

this country. Upon its publication, Schwartz was appointed by critics in the major reviews as poetic spokesman of an entire uncertain, disillusioned East Coast intellectual generation. Irving Howe called him "the poet of the historical moment."

His effort to remain so drove him into a fury to keep current; he quoted the latest German philosophers in "Genesis," and in another "rescued" early work here, vowed earnestly to "follow thought and what the world announces." It was an effort that led him into the narrow confines of a mainstream writing and teaching career, and ended in competitiveness, disappointment, alcoholism, chemical abuse, paranoia, manic depression, and a too-early dissolution of skills. To anyone familiar with that disturbing emblem which was Schwartz's life, the euphoric organ music of his last poems is likely to sound painfully hollow, the racket of a mind coming apart at the peaks of what the poet once called his "manic-depressive roller-coaster."

That "tone and chant of rapture, supreme and surpassing all," which the poet strains mightily to hear in a late and lengthy effusion titled "Overture," in truth sounds only once in the later selections in this book — in a series of translations done in the early 1960s. Restrained from his free-verse flights by the disciplines of translation, Schwartz produced inspired versions of two Paul Valéry poems: "To Helen," and a passage from "The Graveyard by the Sea." These do indeed manage the elusive, ecstatic note Delmore was always willing to consume himself to hit: "Time itself sparkles, to dream and to know are one..."

— Tom Clark

*

Zigzag

West 3rd Street:
On a window ledge
An empty bottle of
Wild Irish Rose
And a set of false teeth

East 13th Street:
Standing next to his empty bottle,
a soigné señor
Whose sense of decorum
Has him piss
Into a paper bag,
Which, of course,
Leaks

West 23rd Street:
An amputee
Swigging Irish Rose,
Bumper sticker
On back of wheelchair:
Drive Sober —
Save Lives

— M. LaBare

The Year of the Olive Oil, Charles North; Hanging Loose Press, 1989. 75 pages. \$8 paper.

On rare occasions you can tell a book by its cover. A long time ago at the Gotham Book Mart a book with a fine landscape drawing on the cover (by Jane Freilicher) caught my eye. I'd never heard of the poet, but somehow this promised something out of the ordinary. It was *Elizabethan & Nova Scotian Music*, Charles North's 1974 *Adventures in Poetry* mimeo. I took the book home (\$2.50 wasn't much of a risk even then) and near the beginning (in a poem called "To the Book") I read this:

*Open poetry died with Whitman.
Closed poetry died with Yeats.
Natural poetry was born and died with Lorca
and Clare, also with France's Jean de Meun.*

I was hooked. I knew this guy knew something I didn't — something none of the other poets I knew knew either. I also saw that this was something he somehow kept to himself, even as he offered it with open hands. So it was the true poetic mystery. And then this poetry was very funny, but with a sombre undercurrent of the kind that runs through the gaiety of Mozart. (Music, incidentally, provides nearly as important a source of reference for North as poetry; painting, his wife's art, is more ornamentally present.) It was very urbane, but only because it couldn't help it; in other words, the point never seemed to be a determinate rhetorical effect on a determinate sort of reader, but rather an effort at thinking through, in a highly self-critical but unself-regarding sort of way, the considerable problem of what a poem might possibly be able to be or do or say or mean, given the poet's extreme consciousness of everything that poems had already been or done or said or meant, a deep tenderness for all that and its beautiful availability, and a rather embarrassed sense of the consequent inauthenticity of almost anything one might come up with in the face of it.

My motto for Charles North's poetry might be: You can't step into the same sentence twice. Poetry is that elusive entity generated by the effort to stave off the departure of poetry, which has already taken place. Somehow North manages to fix this necessarily transient quality without violating its mercenary nature, and he does so precisely by concentrating on the essential paradox of what he's doing rather than by trying to evade it. Am I making myself at all clear? Possibly not, but the fact remains that a North poem is either an order that accrues confusions or a confusion that breeds order, or both. He may be able to negotiate the attendant uncertainties with perfect aplomb, but the imperfect reader need suffer no guilt, I hope, about feeling edgily close to slipping off the track. I'd love to know how North manages to keep such beautifully mobile balance as everything keeps turning into something else, as in the first poem in his new book, *The Year of the Olive Oil*, which I will quote here in its entirety because that's where the surprise of it coolly lodges:

Sunrise With Sea Monster

*Well, we either do it or we don't, as the pigeon said to
the loaf of bread
doubling as the sky, that is, unaffectedly rocky and clay
gray, the color of rocks
bordering but not reflecting oceans and in particular the
one that finds its way here
every so often, though not right now; a function of light
and surface qualities
such as polish, facet, regularity of design,
implied or announced mineral content, the ability to stand
still in a storm,
and those qualities that enter surface and suffuse it, or
melt suddenly
into the next door apartment building, swept down into the
back garden tow,
like transitions whether in writing or in music that aren't
really transitional
so that cadence is a matter, ordinarily, of being stunned
rather than construed,
but no diminishment, as in "fancy" and "open fifths" and
"environmental sweepstakes"*

— no period. Do I really need to point out the many felicities of perception, phrasing, or self-reflexive structure here, or the perfect attention to each detail and the equally perfect indifference with which the poet is willing to bend or squeeze it into something else? North writes poems the way George Ohr made pots. Like many of North's best poems, and not just as a nod to modernist convention but also for reasons I've tried to explain already, "Sunrise With Sea Monster" is *by the way* a sort of ars poetica. "The ability to stand still in a storm" is of course the balance I was just talking about, and the poem shows us just what an active and open quality that stillness must be — nothing rigid about it; it's more like my idea of some canny diplomat talking his way out of a war thanks to the immense amount of information, bluff, flexibility, and concentration at his disposal. That's what you might call the ethics of North's poetry, which like any diplomat he doesn't make too much of though it's always there, so neither will I. The technique lies in what the poem calls "transitions that aren't really transitional," which I take to be something like the constantly wandering tonalities of late Romantic music without the attendant melodrama. What's particularly important, I think, is how all that transition doesn't have to lead to any kind of resolution, but rather to a suspension of odd particulars, of which the poem has so many up its sleeve that it can afford to just let a few dangle there like funny prizes at the bottom of a Crackerjacks box. North shows us how those surprising particulars get that way in "Lineups II," which continues the series begun in *Leap Year* (1978), North's only major collection between *Elizabethan and Nova Scotian Music* and now. The idea is apparently simple: baseball lineups as a total system of categorization, capable of encoding any closed system of information. For instance:

Pun ss
Paradox lf
Metaphor cf
Simile rf
Hyperbole 1b
Metonymy 3b
Irony c
Understatement 2b
Zeugma p

or, more subtly:

Williams ss
Hornsby cf
DiMaggio 1b
Ruth c
Mays 3b
Boggs rf
Aaron 2b
Sisler lf
Cobb p

What this implies is that any sort of information, any register of experience can be crossbred with any other in a way that is at once perfectly accurate and absolutely arbitrary (and that the effects of this are only magnified when one order of information is processed through itself, as in the second example). Under this circumstance virtuosity may be the poet's greatest responsibility, but its price is an awareness of the interchangeability of the highest flight of the imagination with the lowest wisecrack — but also vice-versa. The "they" in the lines I am about to quote (from "Little Cape Cod Landscape") are the Poets (in the sense of those illustrious ghosts one intends to join by writing poems) only at my arbitrary disposition but Charles North is certainly of their company:

Their roses were all talk, but they managed to accomplish their goal in spite of their questionable condition.

There is a lot more to be said about these poems, but they will be so much read and re-read and so much will, I feel certain, be said about them, that I feel slightly absolved. I just wanted to start the ball rolling.

— Barry Schwabsky

* * *

DESCRIBING AN ARC

It's the wind blowing down a straight stretch of road on a cool, dry night

clinging to the earth's curve

— Fleming Meeks

VELAZQUEZ

After he had reached the age of fifty, Velázquez no longer painted anything concrete and precise. He drifted through the material world, penetrating it, as the air and the dusk. In the shimmering of the shadows, he caught unawares the nuances of color which he transformed into the invisible heart of his symphony of silence. . . His only experience of the world was those mysterious copulations which united the forms and tones with a secret but inevitable movement, which no convulsion or cataclysm could ever interrupt or impede. Space reigned supreme. . . It was as if some tenuous radiation gliding over the surfaces imbued itself of their visible emanations, modelling them and endowing them with form, carrying elsewhere a perfume, like an echo, which would thus be dispersed like an imponderable dusk, over all the surrounding planes. . . The world he lived in was sad. A degenerate king, inbred infantas, idiots, dwarfs, cripples, deformed clowns clothed as princes, whose only job was to laugh at themselves and amuse those lifeless outlaws who were trapped by etiquette, conspiracy, lies, and inextricably bound to the confessional by guilt. Outside the gates, the auto-da-fé, and silence. . . or sadness or any of the signs of gloom and cruelty of this crippled infancy. Velázquez is the painter of the evening, of the plains, of the silence, even when he paints in broad daylight, even when he paints in a closed room, even while hunting and war thrashes around him. Spanish painters never went outside except at those times in the day when the air was radiant, when everything was burnished by the sun. They discoursed only with the evening. (*Metropolitan Museum of Art, until January 7th*)

— Elie Faure

*

NEW YORK CITY'S PURPLE WEATHER

In New York City's purple weather
 The light hits the side of buildings
 I go my way, with a pen in my pocket
 As I operate on my interior
 To pause for a moment, at the edge
 Of a major discovery
 To light a pale cigarette
 I like the simple things
 My hands on your hips
 As the sun goes down
 To paint the city a violent red.

— Elio Schneeman

*

My writing must bring discomfort to fools since it is aggressive, witty and unrelenting.

— Ronald Firbank (1886-1926)
 (epigraph from *Firbankiana*, Hanuman Books)

Who Whispered Near Me, Killarney Clary; Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 66 pages. \$14.95 cloth.

I know very little about Killarney Clary beyond the fact that this slender first book's 54 startling, unsettling prose poems — at once offhand and evocatively compelling, oblique and eerily familiar, intimate and mysteriously elusive — vault her into some rarified company. Baudelaire and Rimbaud come to mind, Pierre Reverdy, Max Jacob. To my way of thinking no writer in English has ever done more breathtaking things with the prose-poem form than this unheralded newcomer from, of all unlikely places, Pasadena.

The immediate locations in *Who Whispered Near Me* are as mundane as everyday American middle-class existence: the beaches, freeways, business offices and residential streets of that vast "Inland Empire" cradled between Southern California's ocean and mountains, desert and shore. But in Clary's hands this setting, otherwise routine as any television series backdrop, becomes a dreamscape of improbable urgency, its tight commuter lanes and landlocked suburban driveways transformed into evanescent meditative spaces, ephemeral locales of desire and longing, yearning and sadness, aching grief and a detachment discovered beyond thoughts of death in "a way to let go of senses."

Memorized static perspectives give way to a world of moving, buoyant surfaces, animated by "swells of kelp, of cloud, of leaves in the new wind from Palm Springs, or ochre dust on the dry edge of idleness." Through cleansed vision Clary glimpses a personal history rendered as freshly as some newly discovered natural process: "I floated the way a heart floats in the body, the way life is buoyed by the blood without difficulty or rest."

If there is dislocation, distortion and displacement in this vision, there is also a surprising closeness of contact. This is a writer whose direct, confidential emotional address constantly shocks, challenges and engages. "Confidant, do we place our trust here, deep in the heart of trouble?" Clary invites us into an intimate world peopled by friends, familiars, loved ones living and dead, whose common names — Sarah, Mary Lou, Helen, Kathleen, Anne, Billy, Ralph — are inscribed like mysterious landmarks. Keeping few secrets, she nevertheless resists being pinned down by her revelations into predictability. Hers is a story thread never quite completed. "I will tell you everything, but now, habitually, I am leaving."

The result is a constant reminding of just how variable and volatile are the actual unfoldings of feeling, once exposed in their genuine light. Perpetually in quest of "solutions," Clary is at the same time resigned to their unattainability. "I talk all day about escrow and interest. I drive a long way home and each time I start out feeling one way and arrive feeling the opposite. Resolutions are worthless in this swamp." "Nothing ends, nothing takes us back, forgives, repairs." The unexpected response is the only thing truly expectable from one page to the next of this book. Clary's greatest strength as a writer is a generous openness of spirit. That sympathetic receptiveness to

experience, to a domain of process and plenitude whose "fortune opens [a] surface which is, after all, beauty," reflects an uncanny ability to go out of self and into the other, an identifying capacity allowing unique penetration of person, thing and place without disturbance of natural clarities. Removing distances between writer and reader, subject and object, Killarney Clary returns us to that realm of the "ordinary, spectacular" in which we've always lived without recognizing it.

"Out there in the calm, exposed, I might look back toward home. Everything, everyone is out of place, moving or turning again, able to see both sides of any argument. And I am there. Onshore, a woman sweeps her toddler off to the parking lot for reasons weak and distant to me; but I understand — some discomfort or foreboding, fatigue from blowing sand or the glare, or maybe tired joy. I drift away from the determined ones on solid ground. And I am there."

— Tom Clark

* *

Bushwick and Menahan: The Center of All Beauty

for Charles North

On Bushwick Avenue I had a slingshot so strong
I could hit the Broadway el trains two blocks away
And better yet, from the rooftop I could
slam a marble into the top of an honest sedan
six floors below Pong/swerve/fury/and bafflement —
No doubt about that impact

But mostly I lay on my bed dreaming
I could make time stop — everyone else frozen
still, only me walking arrogant through
banks and girls' bathrooms Being invisible
took me to the same places and
finally led me to write poems in America
the same wild stunts, the same silence

-- Robert Hershon

*

INSIDE THE EMPIRE

You push past the vague feeling of melancholy
When evening falls you wonder where the day went
Inside office doors. Everyone is on a holiday, it seems,
Except you. The lights are lit up
Inside the empire as you climb the subway steps,
Chasing the long tailed skirts
In the half-drenched streets. You are not dreaming
The tall ominous facades of buildings, nor
The various bodies which press into the hurried mass of air
That is your life, to be shoved
Gently into the future.

— Elio Schneeman

House (Blown Apart), David Shapiro; The Overlook Press (Lewis Hollow Road, Woodstock, NY). 89 pages. \$9.95.

It seems quite appropriate that the root of the word *house* is beyond the precise elucidation of the editors of the *Oxford English Dictionary*. It is an odd, albeit useful, word, conjuring multiple emotions and multiple pictures on our image tracks. There is the neuter image of the "house upon the hill" as well as the collectivity inferred by the House of David (both the biblical confederation and the legendary barnstorming baseball team of bearded near-Mennonites) and the financial House of Rothschild. And adding to the five pages of *OED* citations, we have acquired two new definitions of the word in the last few years, both originating from the slang of black youth. First there is "house music," the music of the moment currently heard in dance clubs. And perhaps following from that is the phrase "to house someone," to absolutely defeat someone — as if a house fell down on him. However, in the main, *house* signifies a social space — a physical area or a psychic one dedicated to a specific purpose or function.

The same multiplicities of meaning apply to David Shapiro's *House (Blown Apart)*. It is a worthy successor to his 1983 breakthrough volume *To An Idea*, where Shapiro's verbal fireworks became tempered with more sober, darker, undertones. What house is being blown apart? Is it the American house? Perhaps the reference relates to architecture (a constant theme throughout the volume). Or is it Martin Heidegger's *House of Being* that is in peril — which is language itself:

*What's all this talk about snow for
Apollo sits on the house with Cassandra thinking
We could not all be Scotch-taped together
Though we tried, language knew we tried
The piano knows we tried
The linden tree knows as much*
(from "House (II)")

In his study of John Ashbery's poetry, Shapiro declared that "... poetry can no longer rely on simple releasing speech, but must rely on the most complex *rewriting* of speech." In *House (Blown Apart)* the reader finds him/herself at the parkway exit ramp called "shattered speech," following behind small foreign cars driven by Messrs Jabes, Celan, and Blanchot. As the discourses clash and meld in Shapiro's work (often sending the reader to the warm confines of *Benet's Readers Encyclopedia* for safety), the tragic nature of his work becomes clearer, as in his moving "A Prayer":

*On earth and heaven: two truncated rhomboids
Give us this day, give us one day, give it
Like water and also give us water
Snow, music, and house I one avoid, as one avoids
certain words, and they are words.*

"To be a poet," says Jacques Derrida, "is to know how to leave speech. To let it speak alone, which it can do only in its written form." The rapid shifts of Shapiro's poetry negate the expect-

tation of the narrator as gondolier of the poem. And Shapiro's youthful career as a classical violinist has left its trace in his consideration of poetry as room in a House of Music:

*It hits the hill.
It is black lightning.
It tries the geometric tower and rebounds.
It detests it, the shifty shifter.*
(from "Crooked Lightning")

Repetition is a favorite device of Shapiro's, the source work often being the text of an Italian phrase book and, perhaps, the structure of many Hebrew liturgic prayers (Shapiro's grandfather was a cantor). Conversely, many of Shapiro's poems reflect the subtle pleasure in serial composition; that is, the listener's inability to anticipate the resolution of the piece. A near-forgotten statement by Ashbery (which appeared in the anthology *A Controversy of Poetry*) stands in well as an explanation of Shapiro's process:

What I like about music is its ability of being convincing, of carrying an argument through successfully to the finish, though the terms of this argument remain unknown quantities. What remains is the structure, the architecture of the argument, scene or story. I would like to do this in poetry.

Shapiro's poetry invests itself within the economy of the sensuous (which is the realm of music) rather than the economy of the subject. Roland Barthes defines the pleasure of the text as being "value shifted to the sumptuous rank of the signifier" and in Shapiro's work we find a text that falls midway between the text of *jouissance* (bliss, but in Barthes' system the emphasis is centered on the word's sexual connotation): a work that unsettles the reader and creates a crisis in regard to one's cultural assumptions and the text of pleasure: the text which emerges easily to grant euphoria and contentment to the reader and works within the cultural codes. There always remains in Shapiro's texts the ghosts of the tradition lurking about — traces of narrative, traces of ideology, and traces of traditional forms:

*Blindness and blindness and Narcissus
reclines bluely beside the lake
which steadily does not reflect him
And Echo was bones.*
(from "Which Word")

For Shapiro, the economy of the sensuous is made visible to the reader in the surface texture of the poem.

Unlike the Marxist-influenced poetry of the Language Writing School, David Shapiro includes a slot for pleasure within his aesthetics. Although Shapiro's work has been criticized for glibness and self-indulgence, for this reader it is a close cousin to the work of that most surreal of surrealists, Benjamin Péret, in its insistent affirmation that pleasure must not be deferred until that day after the end of history. Frank O'Hara's comment "In a capitalist country fun is everything" is often taken as a glib remark by a notoriously unserious poet, but in its glibness is much insight — that any future social project arises out of

desire rather than impoverishment. The artist in contemporary society, at his or her best, offers a glimmer of the utopian project in which individuals are allowed to fulfill their collective destinies as *homo ludens*, and not as spokes on the wheel of hierarchy and domination.

The great discursive leaps that dominate *House (Blown Apart)* reflect an almost Lacanian insistence upon the non-representational status of language and the unreliable and interchangeable nature of the signifier and signified. But Shapiro chooses not to "theatricalize absence" (to borrow Charles Bernstein's characterization of the Deconstructionist project, but to make amulets from his poems:

*And in ordinary happiness, I open the dictionary.
The words remain, but the guards are gone for help.
give me a last line, you who are far away.
In times of pain, I open the dictionary.*

(from "To a Muse")

The realism of *House (Blown Apart)* is akin to the "realism" of Arnold Schoenberg's serial pieces, which were rejected by the mainstream classical audience not because they were so "ahead" of their time, but because they were too much a part of the anxiety-ridden years between the World Wars. An eclipse is merely an exercise in geometry and shadows. *House (Blown Apart)* is a document and documentary of a mind moving through the strange moments that construct and typify these times.

— Joel Lewis

*

A RAT ON A WINTER'S NIGHT

Get up —
there's a rat in the hall, she said.
A rat? I struggled awake.
It's a rat — or a dog, she said.
A rat or a dog! Now I was awake
and searching for a weapon, although
I didn't know what I would do with one.
Am I somebody who would beat a rat to death
with a shoe, with an art book, with my hands?
I inched into the hallway and at once
I saw the silhouette in the moonlight.
Was it a dog, a dwarf? My stomach growled
and flopped. Then it came clear for what it was,
a large black plastic trash bag, half-filled
with the old bills and flyers and rough drafts
and invitations to events of no interest whatsoever
that always threaten to fill my rooms,
so I gave the mad foaming beast a kick
and returned to bed, in my heart a hero
who greets calamity and triumph with the same
uncomprehending half-smile and, under the mountain
of covers, I raised her flannel nightgown.
But for her, it was always the same —
everywhere, rats and dogs. . . .

-- Robert Hershon

Before Creation, Joseph Donahue; Central Park Editions, 1989. 78 pages. \$5 paper.

The Greek word *ekstasis* originally meant "standing elsewhere"; Rimbaud's famous "Je est un autre" expresses in cooler more modern terms a similar rapture. Divided into four sections, the poems ranging in length from one to thirteen pages and ranging in terms of title and theme from "Lenny Bruce" to "God's Blossom," Joseph Donahue's first book of poems, *Before Creation*, partakes of that same detached but rapturous experience. This collection, long overdue — at least for all those who have been appreciating the growth of Donahue's work for quite some time now in journals like *Hambone* and *Acts* — is equally impressive for the number of nuanced modes of composition employed within it. There are poems with imagist proclivities ("Here and There" is a major accomplishment in the poetry of perception): poems rooted in history ("Purple Ritual"): poems that play with pop culture: surreal poems: and, finally, metaphysical poems ("Desire stands out) that border on a poetics of ecstasy. This last impulse — the metaphysical — is the strongest of all and catches up all the others in its heat, creating lush, many-layered atmospheres in which perception, history, and dream are all allowed to commingle, and New York City can become both Eden and Hell.

A long poem like "Desire" comes bejeweled with "the shuttle of syllables through white light," "a cycle of fire purifying your Past," allusions to St. John of the Cross, glimpses of The Other Shore, and a "voluptuous schism revitalizing all thought." The title of the book is drawn from "Desire" as well:

*and you discover that paralysis is part of the voyage
those twilight Sunday afternoons when phone rates are
down*

*reconstructing daylight as night deepens.
Music cleansed of lament and
lutes and loved ones locked in earth as*

*from vast regions
facts bespeak an altered emptiness
and you sense a desire behind desire and to taste that*

*would be to know
the beauty God knew
the moment before Creation*

*when meanings mirrored
the need which evinced them.*

("Desire" p. 77)

This distance from the "I" — the kind of distance that rather than dismissing subjectivity, tends to illumine it — is often achieved less speculatively, by reaching into the materials of experience and drawing out a similar metaphysical texture:

*In blue sea and fiery sky
as seen from a fisherman's bar.*

*Pale green liqueur against violet striations.
Water reflecting the sky reflecting the sun.*

*Thought and desire,
horizon of fire.*

The lovers begin to deceive each other.

(“Here and There” p. 37)

Sometimes, as we know, the landscape seems to achieve a partial dislocation from itself, and in that dislocation, sensation intensifies, in the direction of either terror or beauty. I know of very few poets who can cause that dislocation as consistently as this one does, or navigate such regions of darkness and light as smoothly.

— Leonard Schwartz

After We Lost Our Way, David Mura; The National Poetry Series (selected by Gerald Stern), Dutton. 82 pages. \$7.95.

Third-generation Japanese-American writer David Mura's disparate cultural roots are the source of much generative tension in his notable first book of poems, *After We Lost Our Way*.

Mura's Asian background absorbs him, both as literal “familial inheritance” — in poems about the struggles of his immigrant grandparents, inmates of a World War II relocation camp, and of his *nisei* father, a G.I. in the Philippines during the war — and as sympathetic affinity. In a search for “one true word beyond / betrayal,” he takes up as subjects the vast legions of the historically betrayed: the *hibakushas* (atomic bomb survivors), the Japanese-American “relocation” victims of the Second World War, and the post-Vietnam waves of refugees to America from Southeast Asia. The long shadow of racism and imperialist aggression lays heavy across these pages.

Yet as a *sansei* who grew up and still lives in the Midwest, Mura is never able to view the Asian/American interface without seeing things from both sides at once. Nor, as a male raised in and thoroughly suffused with the effects of the white man's patriarchal culture, is he able to deny a troubling psychic identification with the aggressor as well as the victim in history. A poem about pornography called “The Bookstore” is a chilling document of male sexual addiction.

The theme of “libidinous desire for dominance” is taken up again elsewhere, most memorably in the course of a deceptively casual meditation on the poet's thorny relations with his wife's Yankee antecedents. A poem whose long, sinuous lines unfold not only a tale of external-world events but the ceaseless narrative of inner history, “Grandfather-in-Law” moves by surprising leaps of insight from bitterly observed cultural irony and controlled anger through agonized self-examination to final forgiveness, arriving at an unexpected yet beautifully earned embracing of contraries in which both wounded self and WASP in-laws find sympathy and acknowledgment.

This serious, gifted young writer's crazyquilt of influences is well symbolized by the 16th-century Japanese patchwork coat he's chosen to adorn the jacket of his book. There are traces of the American mainstream poetic modes (Wright, Levine, Dickey) in which he was obviously educated, but these are by no means definitive or limiting. Though long isolated (except in imagination) from his Eastern Pacific Rim genetic sources, Mura seems to return to them in his hauntingly open endings. These poems don't so much close, as hang in space on held pauses of thought: the effect is a ghostly evanescence of feeling, not unreminiscent of the stillness of haiku, Issa's infinite world of dew.

Mura's eclecticism gives the work layering and dimension. His poetic experiments with narrative voice, setting, and magic realism show the imprint less of other poets than of prose artists like Faulkner, Woolf, Duras, Márquez. His ironic attention to history points back to extensive European philosophical influences — Benjamin, Adorno, Canetti, Barthes. And in a sequence on the life of the persecuted Italian artist-genius Pier Paolo Pasolini, he applies up-to-date techniques of psychological biography to construct a parable of “individual grief” in a “self-consumed time.”

Mura's reverberating theme is the cruelty and irony of history, the endless repetition of its mocking, insistent metaphors. His poetry offers a curing of all that pain through hope captured in fleeting but redemptive images of harmony in creation.

— Tom Clark

*

SAMMY

Zuckerman played Shylock
in his candy store in Yonkers
but his son's monkey face
turned blue when we came shopping.
We leaned against the case
until it creaked;
we drawled our orders,
changed our minds,
dropped our change
and mimicked Sammy who
was furious from birth.
When Sammy shouted
we all ran out.

He wept at the door
of his father's candy store
and wiped away the spittle from his face.

— Frank Lennon

*

MULES

BOB: When did you come to bed?
 KEN: You know. You were there.
 BOB: I was?
 KEN: When did you fall asleep?
 BOB: I never sleep.
 KEN: You were out cold.
 BOB: You hit me.
 KEN: Sure I hit you. You don't remember?
 BOB: Something about my lilies. Out there alone in the dark. Then suddenly a flash on your hand.
 KEN: My ring.
 BOB: In the lamplight!
 KEN: Starlight!
 BOB: Was there a moon last night?
 KEN: You don't remember?
 BOB: All I remember are the lilies, the flash, and Aunt Sally's voice like a clogged drain.
 KEN: Sally carried you upstairs.
 ROSE: Have you seen my nail scissors?
 BOB: I was using them to prune my lilies.
 ROSE: You son of a bitch.
 KEN: I told you never to touch anything of hers.
 BOB: She's crazy!
 KEN: That's the very reason, as you well know.
 BOB: I don't *know* anything.
 ROSE: Cut the epistemology and find those nail scissors before I scratch your eyes out.
 BOB: No way.
 KEN: Get 'em Bob. She means it, you know.
 AUNT SALLY: Anybody seen my copper wire?
 BOB: I used it to tie up my lilies.
 ROSE: After he pruned them with my nail scissors.
 JULIE: Does anyone know where my artist's equipment went?
 BOB: I borrowed your white to touch up a few petals.
 JULIE: How do you expect me to become the greatest Missouri artist since Fielding Dawson without my white?
 KEN: Who's Fielding Dawson?
 JULIE: Who's Fielding Dawson? What a simp. He's only the most outstanding neurotic painter-writer who ever hailed from these parts.
 AUNT SALLY: Painter-writer! No such animal.
 JULIE: I wouldn't expect you to understand. All you do is carry around your husband's ashes in a shirt box.
 AUNT SALLY: Candy box! By the way, has anyone seen it lately?
 BOB: I, uh, used a handful to freshen up my lily plot.
 (Aunt S. leaps at Bob's throat but is tripped by Ken with his crutch.)
 KEN: Courtesy of the fairy cripple.
 BOB: Thanks, love.

KEN: Not at all. I'd push my own mother down the stairs for you.
 ROSE: Just like Richard Widmark, huh?
 BOB: Who's Richard Widmark?

— Clark Coolidge & Larry Fagin

* *

Underdone

Without fear
 the breeze of heaven
 entered my house:
 I asked her, when
 will you become a ball of fire?
 I want to burn my heart and soul
 to ashes.

I am shivering all over
 the walls totter.
 It is so terribly cold that
 the blood freezes
 in the stems of the hair.

The beams on the ceiling shrink
 like eyes of an opium addict. Look —
 that cat hiding in the corner,
 her staring eyes
 dirty grey clouds
 do not rain sparks of fire
 do not blossom any more.
 The black cat looks around
 for a shelter in a dark house.
 It is so utterly cold
 the heart and head are frozen.
 Tell me,
 when will you become
 a ball of fire?

The breeze of heaven said,
 my each particle
 carries searing redness
 like blood in the veins.
 Hold me tight.
 If you squeeze
 you will see fire dripping,
 take a handful, put it in your mouth
 and swallow, you will see
 I am that golden arrow
 which when it strikes the throat
 becomes a ball of fire:
 you don't know how to burn.

— Shamsur Rahman Faruqi

(translated from the Urdu by Gopi Chand Narang
 and David Paul Douglas)

Below is the Newsletter's third annual Questionnaire. Please complete and return to the Poetry Project, with the understanding that we may print your answers in future issues.

Is content more important in your work, or style?

What's the transition that poetry is going through at the present moment?

What relation does your work have to the visual arts?

What relation does your work have to music?

What's outside your window right now?

To whom in your work, besides yourself, do you generally speak?

How do you feel about revision?

What are your favorite literary devices?

What was the best writing/advice you ever saw in a fortune cookie?

How is poetry different from writing?

Describe your style in five words or less.

Feel free to make comments of a general nature in this space.

Name: _____

(please print)

Books Received

Black Mesa Poems, Jimmy Santiago Baca; New Directions, 1989. 144 pages. \$8.95 paper.

Senses of Responsibility, Charles Bernstein; Paradigm Press, Providence, RI, 1989. Unpaginated. \$4. paper.

Empathy, Mei-Mei Berssenbrugge; Station Hill Press, Barrytown, NY, 1989. 76 pages. \$9.95 paper.

Perpetua, Olga Broumas; Copper Canyon Press, Port Townsend, WA, 1989. 112 pages. \$9.00 paper.

Mindfield (New & Selected Poems), Gregory Corso; Thunder's Mouth Press, New York, 1989. 190 pages. \$12.95 paper, \$24.95 cloth.

Idols, Dennis Cooper; Amethyst Press, New York, 1989. 88 pages. \$8.95 paper.

Surface Tension, Elaine Equi; Coffee House Press, Minneapolis, 1989. 61 pages. \$8.95 paper.

Novices: A Study of Poetic Apprenticeship, Clayton Eshleman; The Arundel Press, Los Angeles, 1989. 80 pages. \$20 cloth, \$12.95 paper.

Turn Left in Order to Go Right, Norman Fischer; O Books, Oakland, CA. 92 pages. No date or price. The author is a Zen priest.

The Volcanoes from Puebla, Kenneth Gangemi; Marion Boyars, Boston & London, 1989. 182 pages. \$9.95 paper.

The Sourlands, Jana Harris; Ontario Review Press (distributed by George Braziller, 1989. 70 pages. \$9.95 paper.

A Bibliography of the King's Book, Susan Howe; Paradigm Press, 1989. Unpaginated. \$13 cloth, \$30 signed.

Hanuman Books: New titles in their inimitable 2 1/2-by-4-inch format (published by Raymond Foye and Francesco Clemente. Hanuman Books, PO Box 1070, Old Chelsea Station, NYC 10113: 212-645-1840): *Mindfield*, Gregory Corso (not to be confused with the Collected Poems version listed elsewhere in this section); *The Lie of the Truth and Other Parables from The Way of Liberation*, René Daumal (philosophy); *Views Without Rooms*, Elaine Equi; *Firbankiana* (Memoirs on Ronald Firbank by various authors); *Oriental Metaphysica*, René Guénon (philosophy); *1969*, Eileen Myles (prose); *God With Revolver*, Rene Ricard.

Becoming a Poet: Elizabeth Bishop with Marianne Moore and Robert Lowell, David Kalstone (Robert Hemenway, Ed.); Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1989. 290 pps. \$22.50 cloth. *Creatures of Habit and Creatures of Change: Essays on*

Art, Literature and Society 1914-1956, Wyndham Lewis, with illustrations by the author; edited by Paul Edwards; Black Sparrow, 1989. \$15 paper, \$25 cloth.

Adventures on the Isle of Adolescence, La Loca; City Lights (Pocket Poets Series No. 46), 1989. 118 pages. \$5.95 paper.

Khurbn & Other Poems, Jerome Rothenberg; New Directions, 1989. 128 pages. \$19.95 cloth, \$9.95 paper.

The Dreadful Swimmers, Lydia Tomkiw; Wide Skirt Press, Fartown, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, England, 1989 (Distributed in the United States by Buzzerama, PO Box 14257, Chicago, IL 60614). 36 pages. \$5.00 paper.

Helping The Dreamer (New & Selected Poems 1966-1988), Anne Waldman; Coffee House Press, 1989. 245 pages. \$9.95 paper.

Announcements

HOW(ever) will be guest-edited during the coming year (Volume VI, Nos. 1-4) by Meredith Stricker and Myung Mi Kim (temporarily replacing Kathleen Fraser). They are looking for poetry, "informal commentary on modernist women writers or brief responses to current books of poetry falling within the modernist/innovative tradition. Address of the new editors: 1171 E. Jefferson, Iowa City, IA 52245.

Eyes in All Heads, a 47-minute performing arts video by Anne Waldman is available from Phoebus Productions, PO Box 17295, Boulder, CO 80308-7295. VHS @ \$21.95; S-VHS @ \$34.95; audio cassettes @ \$7.95 (prices are inclusive of postage and tax).

The American Poetry Association, of 250A Potrero St. (PO Box 1803), Santa Cruz, California 95061-1803 announces that over \$11,000 in prizes will be awarded to 152 winners in their worldwide poetry contest. The grand prize is \$1,000 and the first prize \$500. Other prizes include cash awards and *publication* [these and the ensuing italics are ours]. "Winners in our contests come from *all sorts of backgrounds*, so I urge everyone who writes poetry to enter this contest," says Robert Nelson, publisher for the Association. "*New and undiscovered poets are just the ones we are looking for*, so we can help them gain *greater public recognition*."

Poets may enter the contest by sending up to 6 poems, each no more than 20 lines, in "English" only, to the address above, by December 31st. Each poem is considered for publication in the American Poetry Anthology, *a leading collection of contemporary verse*. The American Poetry Association was founded in 1981 and has run 32 contests and awarded \$145,000 in prizes to [only] 3,040 winning poets[!!]

Magazines Received

A New batch of diverse treats from Ann & Ken Mikolowski's *The Alternative Press* (new address: 1207 Henry, Ann Arbor, MI 48104): postcards, broadsides, bumper stickers, etc., etc., which the editors hand-print themselves; you never know exactly what you're going to get. Two issues, or rather, "issues": \$15.

Brief, Number Five (Jim Hydock, Ed., PO Box 33, Canyon, CA 94516). Includes James Broughton, Joel Lewis, Elizabeth Robinson, and Bernadette Mayer. No price listed.

Columbus, Winter 1989. The Literary Magazine of Trinity School (101 W. 91st St., NYC 10024). People who will still be young at the turn of the century are still writing poetry.

Conjunctions: 14. Bi-annual review published by Macmillan. 285 pages. \$9.95. Includes interview with Salman Rushdie, and work by Patrick McGrath, Robert Coover, John Hawkes, Kathy Acker, Walter Abish, Charles Bernstein, Robert Creeley, Barbara Guest, etc.

Contact/II Nos. 53/54/55. 90 pages. \$6.00 Interview with Gregory Corso, and much more.

Giants Play Well in the Drizzle (Martha King, Ed., 326A 4th St., Brooklyn, NY 11215), September 1989. Packed with diverse poetry, as always.

In This Corner (A Monthly Magazine of Fiction, Art & Attitude), Vol. 1, No. 8. \$2.50 (PO Box 17341, Denver, CO 80217). Includes work by Bobbie Louise Hawkins, Fielding Dawson, Douglas Oliver, and drawings by Alice Codrescu.

The Ledge, Vol 2, No. 1 (Timothy Monaghan, Ed., 64-65 Cooper Ave., Glendale, NY 11385). Includes Bob Holman.

Ottotole, Number 3 (Michael Amnasan, 460 14th St., #4, San Francisco, CA 94103). 256 pages. \$6. Includes work by Richard Kostelanetz, Norman Fischer, David Sternbach, Abigail Child, Johanna Drucker, et al.

Pome #3 (Mary Sullivan, Ed., PO Box 523, Inwood Sta., 90 Vermilyea St., NYC 10034, for submissions). Includes Alice Notley, Lee Ann Brown, Anselm Hollo, Eileen Myles, Elaine Equi, Jackson Mac Low, among others.

Raddle Moon #7 (Susan Clark, Ed., 9060 Ardmore Drive, Sidney, BC, Canada V8L 3S1) 108 pages. \$5.00 Includes work by Stephen Rodefer, and Ray DiPalma.

The Underground Forest #6. Spanish/English, 16" x 5 1/2" format. (21 Forest Avenue, Portland, ME 04101). 48 pages. \$3. Includes work by Kofi Natambu, Lew Welch, Carlos Martínez Rivas, and Walter Benjamin.

Washington Review, Vol. XV, number 3 (PO 50132, Wash. DC 20004). Includes article on Robert Mapplethorpe.

The Poetics Program



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The Program is dedicated to the critical study, closely integrated with creative practice, of fundamental questions about the nature of poetry and the social context from which it arises.

Besides the general education in poetry and politics, the program aims to provide the student poets with the means to develop not only their own "voice" (or voices) but *their own aesthetics and politics of poetry*.

At the heart of the New College Poetics program is a respect for diversity in all areas of poetic pursuit. This includes the rich cultural diversity of

the San Francisco Bay Area and the country at large, which the new program attempts to embody in its curriculum, its faculty, and its student body.

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Bob Holman, Pedro Pietri
Tuli Kupferberg & The Fuxxons
R. Weiss, Cortland Jessup
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All Readings at 3:00. The Brecht Forum is located at 79 Leonard Street between Church and Broadway. For further information call (212) 941-0332. These readings are possible in whole or in part through donations from Poets & Writers, Inc. and the New York State Council on the Arts.

Childhood Is Not Safe Congress Study Warns

"This is now a problem of national scope," said George Miller, Democrat of California