



October/November 1992

Volume #146

Jackson Mac Low

A TRIBUTE TO JOHN CAGE

Bernadette Mayer

HAS NO OPINIONS

Apologies for Defenses of Poetry

VINCENT KATZ ON JAMES MERRILL

STEVE MORAN ON

CHARLES BUKOWSKI

JOHANNA DRUCKER ON

HANNAH WEINER

KENNETH KOCH ON RON PADGETT

Plus Dirt!





NEWSLETTER

Editor: Jordan Davis
 Design: Janet Waegel Design

THE POETRY PROJECT LTD. STAFF

Artistic Director: Ed Friedman
 Program Coordinator: Gillian McCain
 Program Assistant and Monday Night Coordinator: Wanda Phipps
 Sound Technicians: Alina Avila, David Nolan
 Broadcast Consultant: John Fisk
 Lecture Series Coordinator: Cathy Taylor
 Technical Assistant: David Cameron

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Sheila Alson Bobbie Bristol
 Michael Friedman Ted Greenwald
 Steve Hamilton Ken Jordan
 Patricia Spears-Jones Greg Masters
 Bob Rosenthal Hal Willner

FRIENDS COMMITTEE

Rudy Burckhardt May Castleberry
 Paul Cummings Raymond Foye
 Morris Golde Yvonne Jacqueline
 Paul Schmidt

The Poetry Project Newsletter is published four times a year and mailed free of charge to members of and contributors to the Poetry Project. Subscriptions are available to institutions only: \$20/year. Checks should be made payable to The Poetry Project. No unsolicited materials will be returned without a SASE. Address correspondence to the Poetry Project, St Mark's Church, 131 East 10th Street, New York, NY 10003.

The Poetry Project's programs and publications are made possible, in part, with public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Arts. They are also made possible with additional support from the Lila Wallace Reader's Digest Fund, the Rex Foundation, the Foundation for Contemporary Performance Arts, Inc., the Joyce Mertz-Gilmore Foundation, Morgan Guarantee Trust Company of New York, Axe Houghton Foundation, Consolidated Edison, the Kulchur Foundation, the New Hope Foundation, U.S. Lithograph, the Cowles Charitable Trust, the Gramercy Park Foundation, Apple Computer, Inc., Vicki Hudspith & Wallace Turbeville, Ada & Alex Katz, Brooke Alexander, Michael Friedman, Susan & Peter Straub, Arts Forward Fund, members of the Poetry Project, and other individual contributors.

Copyright 1992 Poetry Project. All rights revert to authors upon publication.



10-11 1992

A Celebration of John Cage

By Jackson Mac Low3

Bernadette Mayer: The Colors of Consonance

By Ken Jordan
 In which our heroine sees colors, uses the dictionary and invents the avant-garde.....5

Reviews

Bernadette Mayer Reader, reviewed by Peter Gizzi14
The Complete Poems of Blaise Cendrars trans. by Ron Padgett, reviewed by Kenneth Koch14
The Fast by Hannah Weiner, reviewed by Johanna Drucker15
Selected Poems by James Merrill, reviewed by Vincent Katz15
Pomes All Sizes by Jack Kerouac, reviewed by Tom Clark17
ABC of Influence by Christopher Beach, reviewed by Jonathan Bass...17
The Last Night of the World Poems by Charles Bukowski, reviewed by Steve Moran.....19
Written on the Door.....20

Poems

Gray, Not Purple by Bernadette Mayer7
 House Cap by Bernadette Mayer.....8
 A Desert Rose by Daniel and David Shapiro16
 temporary poem #5 by Wanda Phipps18
 Hey Baby by Maggie Estep21
 Love Scene from "Valley of the Dolls" as a Language Poem by David Trinidad22
 At the Opera by Kenneth Koch23

Dirt9

Publications Received.....10

Calendar12-13

Art: Anna Bialbroda

Fair Game, 1992cover
 Role, 1990.....2
 Fair Game-Quarry12

A Celebration of John Cage

By Jackson Mac Low

■
"More than any other artist of this century, his work has been emancipatory. It has helped countless other artists do and make things they'd never have dared to do or make—even if they'd have thought of them—without the example of his own daring."

John Cage—whose presence, practice, and thought have brought about major changes not only in music but in all areas of contemporary culture, not only in the United States but throughout the world—died of a massive stroke on 12 August 1992, less than a month before what would have been his eightieth birthday: 5 September.

I do not think he would have wanted us solemnly to go into mourning or indeed to make much of a to-do about his death beyond duly noting it and recalling his achievements and his actual presence and way of living. But despite the fact that he "didn't wish to leave any traces," I think he would have been gratified by the sheer length of his *Times* obituary (beginning on page A1, its conclusion occupied most of page D21), while being alternately amused and exasperated by its inaccuracies.

For instance, at one point it has the performer of his 4'33" (1952) "stand silently on the stage," whereas it was written for "any instrument or combination of instruments" and is explicitly "a piece in three movements during all three of which no sounds are intentionally produced" (my emphases; quotes from *John Cage* (New York: Henmar Press Inc., C.F. Peters Corp., 1962), a catalog of his music edited by Robert Dunn). The formality of the work is lost in the *Times's* description: it is crucial that the instrumentalist should silently delineate the beginnings and endings of the movements, as the pianist David Tudor did by soundlessly opening and closing the keyboard cover. (I forebear to comment on their characterizing this maximalist, even in the headlines as "a minimalist composer"!)

Mr. Cage, possibly more than any other modern artist, faithfully carried on what the poet and critic Harold Rosenberg called "the tradition of the new." In all the arts he 'practiced'—music, poetry, theater, and visual arts—he continually devised new ways of working with the materials of the arts as well as "nonartistic" materials, and new relations between performers and composers. If something had been done before,

he did it very differently or did altogether otherwise.

But when he was influenced by a fellow artist—often one substantially affected by his own work and artistic/philosophical principles—he readily and generously acknowledged the fact. Thus, of his silent 4'33" he wrote, referring to the empty canvases Robert Rauschenberg had previously exhibited:

*To Whom It May Concern:
The white paintings came
first, my silent piece
came later.*

Silence, 98

And of his work in asyntactical poetry after 1967, he wrote: "My work in this field is tardy. It follows the poetry of Jackson Mac Low and Clark Coolidge . . ." (*M: Writings '67-'72*, xi). And in his introduction to "James Joyce, Marcel Duchamp, Erik Satie: an Alphabet" (1982) he wrote: "The title of this lecture is a reference to the poetry of Jackson Mac Low which I have enjoyed for at least twenty-five years." This despite the fact that I'd never have written (beginning in 1954) the poetry to which he refers had he not provided compelling examples and inspiration in his music composed by non-intentional procedures from 1951 on and in his conversation.

It is well known that Mr. Cage's work in the arts was strongly influenced by Asian philosophy and religion. The Hindu musical theory according to which one of the nine "permanent emotions" is expressed and resolved to tranquility in each composition or performance influenced his musical work in the 1940s, notably the *Sonatas and Interludes* for prepared piano (1946-48).

Then in about 1950 he discovered the *I*

Ching ("Book of Changes," a basic Chinese classic), and Zen and Kegon Buddhism through Dr. Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki's books and later his classes at Columbia University, which he both attended in the middle and late 50s. The *I Ching* taught him the importance of asking questions rather than giving answers; and Buddhism, which radically de-emphasizes the ego, viewing it as an illusory formation, moved him to seek ways of making music that freed him from his intentions and tastes, allowing sounds to be perceived for their own sake—with "bare attention." The *I Ching*, Buddhism, and many personal experiences led to his composing by chance operations and other nonintentional procedures and to making compositions indeterminate of performance and sometimes even of score. As he wrote in "How the Piano Came to Be Prepared" (originally a foreword for Richard Bunker's *The Well-Prepared Piano* (1973); revised version by Mr. Cage, 1979):

The prepared piano, impressions I had from the work of artist friends, study of Zen Buddhism, rambling in forests and fields looking for mushrooms, all led me to the enjoyment of things as they come, as they happen, rather than as they are possessed or kept or forced to be.

And so my work since the early 'fifties has been increasingly indeterminate . . .

in Empty Words: Writings '73-'78

Among North American and European thinkers, Henry David Thoreau, Arnold Schoenberg, Gertrude Stein, James Joyce, Marcel Duchamp, Erik Satie, Merce Cunningham, Henry Cowell, M.C. Richards, Morton Feldman, Buckminster

Fuller, Norman O. Brown, Marshall McLuhan, George Herbert Mead, and Ludwig Wittgenstein were especially important to him. Note that several of these, though artists, are included as *thinkers*: all art that interested Mr. Cage had a powerful conceptual component as well as being both precise and playful.

Mr. Cage's deepest and longest lasting relationship was with the dancer and choreographer Merce Cunningham, whom he met in 1938. During more than a half-century of artistic collaboration, in which Mr. Cunningham revolutionized dance as Mr. Cage exploded the horizons of music, they completely changed the relation between sound and movement in dance productions. And through their lasting personal relationship they sustained each other through afflictions and difficulties and shared the happiness of making and presenting their works. Their enduring partnership provided a continuing inspiration not only to their friends but to many who scarcely knew them.

But this isn't an obituary. It's a celebration. It's an act of thanksgiving to John Cage, to his inventor father and mother, and to Arnold Schoenberg, Marcel Duchamp, Merce Cunningham, and the others who helped him become the person who did what he did and made what he made. More than any other artist of this century, his work has been *emancipatory*. It has helped countless other artists do and make things they'd never have dared to do or make—even if they'd have thought of them—without the example of his own daring. And beyond the arts, it has helped sustain the vision of a free society, of peaceful anarchism, which we shared.

UNITED ARTISTS BOOKS

***ECHOLALIA* by George Tysh**

New poems. 75 pages. \$7.00. ISBN: 0-935992-17-0.

***THE FAST* by Hannah Weiner**

A journal. 43 pages. \$6.00. ISBN: 0-935992-24-3.

***ALONG THE RAILS* by Elio Schneeman**

New poems. 71 pages. \$6.00. ISBN: 0-935992-14.

Other books available from United Artists include *Personal Effects* by Charlotte Carter, \$6.00. *Love Uncut* by Bill Kushner, \$6.00. *Blue Mosque* by Anne Waldman, \$6.00. *The Sonnets* by Ted Berrigan, \$5.00. *Information From The Surface of Venus* by Lewis Warsh, \$6.00. *Smoking In The Twilight Bar* by Barbara Henning, \$5.00.

Complete catalog available on request.
Box 2616 / Peter Stuyvesant Station / New York, N. Y. / 10009

ACM

Poetry, Fiction,
Interviews, Essays,
Reviews, Literaria
by Allen Ginsberg,
Wanda Coleman,
Diane Wakoski,
Charles Bukowski,
Michael McClure,
more more more
more more more

ACM

ANOTHER CHICAGO MAGAZINE

ACM

"Consistently exciting and valuable."
San Francisco Review of Books

"Beautifully designed and
clearly edited . . . a stimulating
blend of poetry, fiction,
photographs, cartoons, and
reviews . . . Recommended."
Choice Magazine

Ask for ACM at your local bookstore or send us
\$5.00 for a sample copy and we'll pay the postage.
Distributed to the trade by Ingram Periodicals.
Bookslinger, Cornucopia. Another Chicago Press.
Box 11223, Chicago, IL 60611.

The Colors of Consonance

BERNADETTE MAYER TALKS ABOUT HER NEW BOOK, HER HISTORY, WORKSHOPS, DICTIONARIES, SEX, POLITICS, AND SEEING COLORS

With Ken Jordan

Reviewing *The Bernadette Mayer Reader* in the San Francisco Chronicle, Tom Clark called the author a "semi-deity," a description which likely rings true. The publication of the *Reader* provided an excuse to sit with the semi-deity, drink a few beers, turn on the tape recorder and ask questions. Let's pick up at the point when she told me, with total sincerity, that she is not an opinionated person.

■

Ken Jordan: You're not an opinionated person?

Bernadette Mayer: This is my new stance.

Ken: Since when?

Bernadette: This summer. But I'm assuming I never was. Or I'm hoping.

Ken: How did you come to this startling realization?

Bernadette: I think it's just sensible not to be. But I said this to someone recently and he said, But we like your opinions! (laughs) Of course, I don't mean about everything. It just doesn't make sense to have opinions about poetry to me anymore. What is the necessity of an opinion?

Ken: Even about [name of prize-winning poet]?

Bernadette: Uh-oh! We're poet-bashing now. (laughs)

Ken: What was the last really exciting experience you had when reading? I mean extreme, powerful experience, like when you discovered Gertrude Stein?

Bernadette: Well, that doesn't happen so much anymore. Does it? Reading Gerard Rizza's poems.

Ken: When did you first read Stein?

Bernadette: I know that in 1965 I hadn't read Gertrude Stein. I hadn't even heard of her. This is the funny old story where I was taking Bill Berkson's poetry workshop at the

New School. I was a matriculating undergraduate. The government was paying me to go to school, and that was the only reason I was there, because at that point in time they had a thing for orphans where if you stayed in school they paid you \$99 a month, which was my rent! So even though I had a nine-to-five job — just like you (*with venom*) — I went to school at night. And I had to do it quick because the money ran out when you were 21, 22. Anyway, I gave Bill some writing at one point in that class, and he commented that I was reading too much Gertrude Stein. And I had never read her and never heard of her! So I guess it was shortly after that that I started reading her work.

Ken: Why do you think he said that about your work?

Bernadette: Because I was writing funny things. I am remembering that I am becoming... you know. I was using a lot of gerunds.

Ken: What was the first Stein you remember reading?

Bernadette: I think one of the first things was *Tender Buttons*, and *Lectures in America*. And then I read *The Making of Americans* shortly after that, which was amazing. I was reading a lot of huge books at the time. The year previous to my returning to school I read all the books that I'd never read but that I wanted to read at that point. All of James Joyce's writing, and the *Cantos*, William Carlos Williams... all the men! That's all I knew. I spent a year reading all those books because I realized I'd never learned anything in school, except for a little Greek and Latin, and I had one wonderful English teacher, Sister Immaculata, in high school. I learned about poetry from her.

Ken: When you read Stein, did you think Bill Berkson was right?

Bernadette: Yeah, I did. And I was thrilled that there was this writer existing in the world. I started imitating her as much as I possibly could. For a long time I did that, I would write blatant imitations and give them to Bill. One of them is called "Portrait of Mable Dodging the Village Curé". I was really happy that he had that knowledge. He was very sophisticated; he was 26 at the time.

Ken: So how did you get to "Corn" from here? You once told me that when you were younger "Corn" was your greatest hit.

THE READER DEFIES TIME

Bernadette: Does “Story” come in the book before “Corn”? It does? You know that’s wrong.

Ken: Chronologically?

Bernadette: Yeah. It’s funny that I did that. It doesn’t give a date for “Story?” Gee, what a conniver I am secretly unconsciously being. I guess I wanted “Story” to begin the book. See, the section called Early Poems includes poems that go for a number of years, some of which were written after “Sto-

PHOTO: MARIE WARSH



ry.” But “Corn” was written when I was 19, although most of those strange... language poems? (*laughs*) No. Erase that. Don’t say language poems.... They were written when I was 19, that year I was reading all the Joyce. So it’s before Gertrude Stein. “Francois Villon Follows the Thin Lion” and all those works were written before that.

Ken: Really? But you dedicated that poem to Bill Berkson...

Bernadette: Yeah, but only after the fact. See, a lot of the dedications I put in the book... I figured if I’m going to have this beautiful book that spans a period of time, I want to put a lot of dedications into it. That poem in particular was never published before this book, but it was written in Bill’s workshop. Bill had given us an assignment to somehow explain to us what distortion is in poetry. I don’t remember what his explanation of what it is was, but as soon as he said the word... He actually asked me in class, and I was very shy and didn’t like to answer questions (*laughs*)... and he made me say what I thought distortion in poetry was, and I said it could be using a lot of very thin letters or using a lot of very fat letters. You know? So then I wrote the poem “Francois Villon” because it has a lot of *i*’s and *l*’s in it, but they are also mixed up with a lot of *o*’s, and the word “oolfoos” has all those *o*’s in it. So the fat letters are really standing out against the thin letters. Right? So it was really inspired by this question, and that’s why it’s dedicated to him.

Ken: This was still before reading Stein?

Bernadette: Well, it’s hard to know. I think I took his class twice.

Ken: What about “Yellow-Orange”? (*quoting:*) “my jig was a sage ear”.

Bernadette: Yeah. That was definitely written before I was back in school. It would be interesting to make a pile of the back-in-school poems as opposed to the not-in-school poems, which are probably a lot wilder, in some sense. But at that point in time I was just studying language — when I wasn’t reading — as if it were that the letters were objects, and I was beginning to realize that I saw each letter as a particular color, with consistent colors for every letter of the alphabet, and that I had always done this. I never really *knew* before that I had always done this.

Ken: What colors were which letters?

Bernadette: I’ve drawn the alphabet in all its colors for people, like *A* is red, *B* is pink, *D* is black, *C*... I skipped *C*? *C* is sort of yellow, tannish yellow. *E* is green, *F* is bluish gray, *G* is brown... and it just goes on! I came to realize that I had been doing this since I was a child, but I never thought everybody didn’t do this. Realizing it was just a matter of talking to people and finding that that didn’t happen to them.

Ken: And that led you to think more about letters as objects...

Bernadette: And shapes. Each word being a particular vision in terms of its shapes and colors. So I was interested in words like “oolfoos,” and words like “Salmagundi,” and funny words like that. But I wasn’t interested in them for their absence of meaning. I was interested in them as if they were sculptures, physical objects.

Ken: I know it’s strange to reconstruct it like this, but what were you thinking when you were writing poems like “Corn” and “Pope John,” when so few people were writing in that way.

Bernadette: How did it work? Well, I’d constantly be reading a dictionary while I was writing, and looking at etymologies. So all those things were going on together with the physical aspects of the words and the colors of the letters. It was really like making abstract sculptures or something like that. I mean there was a part of me at that point in time that didn’t think I could write a great love poem. I didn’t know how to do it.

Ken: Did you try?

LOST LOVE POEM & HISTORY

Bernadette: I don’t think I ever really did. Though when I was even younger, when I was 17, I used to try to write poems about the situation in my household, all the fighting

that was taking place between my grandfather and the people who shared my house. So they were more literal kinds of poems, and they're in *Ceremony Latin*, at least the ones I would ever dare show the world. But I didn't think I was a good enough writer, or a knowledgeable enough person, to write about these big, major things. Of course I wanted to write about death too, given my history.

Ken: Your history? (*points to the tape recorder as audience*)

Bernadette: ... of my parents dying when I was so young. They were both dead by the time I was 14, and then my uncle who became my guardian died when I was 17. So it was like a real barrage of death. And I couldn't write about it at all. I mean I guess the normal impulse for someone would be then to write about all those things, right? But I just knew that I didn't have the talent or the skills to do it.

Ken: So "Corn"...

Bernadette: That's a real dictionary poem. "Corn is small hard seed" comes right out of my dictionary! And then you start wandering a little further up or down in the dictionary from looking up the word "corn", you see the little Corn Islands and things like that. And that's all it is. And I was making up things, like "Corn from Delft/Is good for Elves." But that's somehow etymologically related to some of the surrounding words.

Ken: Did you think about possible readers at all?

Bernadette: Probably not. I mean, I was just practicing. I was apprenticing myself to poetry, I wasn't really thinking about people reading it.

Ken: In the early poems you just wrote down facts you could know with certainty, dictionary definitions, simple fantasy, stuff like that, and you stayed away from writing about more ambiguous emotional experience. How did you walk into writing about your own personal experience?

Bernadette: There's actually a very factual answer to that question.... That's true, but it wasn't a matter of choice that I didn't write about those other things, really. *Memory* is the ultimate factual book, right? It's all data. I don't get into emotions in *Memory*, really. There wasn't time to keep these journals every day, and to shoot a roll of film as well, and then doing regular things like having a job and eating and sleeping and stuff like that. But after I wrote that book something happened, and I realized that I had gotten on the edge, you know, and I went to see a psychiatrist. And it was through him, actually, that I started writing the other books like *Studying Hunger*. That was written all during the time I was seeing this psychiatrist. He bought me two journals so he

could always have one and I could always have one to write in between our sessions. That way he could read what I'd written since the last time we saw each other. I hate this word, but I think he was facilitating *Studying Hunger*. *Memory* was then being published as a book when I was seeing him, and he wrote the little introduction to it, David Rubinfine.

I couldn't have written *Studying Hunger* if I hadn't been working with him, I don't think, because I really thought I was an insane person, I was still experiencing such strong responses to my parents' deaths, and stuff like that. And sometimes it would be so overwhelming that I couldn't... what couldn't I do? In the end there was nothing I couldn't do, but I couldn't perceive myself as a sane human being. Or whatever. And I always realized that I had been treated weirdly by the people that I knew, or as if I was odd. You know, I said odd things, or ... I was convinced that I was crazy. And he convinced me that I was not. And in the meanwhile we summoned up all these ghosts. I chose the form for *Studying Hunger* after seeing him for a while.

Ken: What kind of therapy was it?

IT WAS FREUDIAN ANALYSIS!

Bernadette: It was Freudian psychoanalysis! And it was free! He was a friend of my great lover Ed Bowes, they knew each other through the movie business. I said I could pay him 10 dollars a session, or 20 dollars. I tried to up the figure as much as possible, but I didn't have any money at the time. Never did, did I? Finally he said, that's ridiculous, accepting 10 dollars from you would be meaningless to me, and probably difficult for you, so let's just do it for free. I saw him for five years.

Ken: It was also in the early '70s that you led the infamous workshop at St. Marks which had much to do with the development of the notorious "language" movement.

Bernadette: That workshop started in 1971 and it lasted for 4 years, until '75, and I encountered the people who'd eventually start the language school around '72. Charles Bernstein, Peter Seaton, Nick Piombino, Bruce Andrews, and some others were in that workshop. It was the first workshop I ever gave at St. Marks, and I was terrified of teaching. I was only 26 and didn't think I could teach anything, or conduct a workshop either, so I did a tremendous amount of over-preparing, if there is such a thing. I gave two workshops: one about the Dadaists, and one about Wittgenstein. Then there were people coming to the workshop saying, shouting at me from the back of the room, What does *Wittgenstein* have to do with poetry?

Ken: When the young language folks were in the workshop, what

Gray, Not Purple

peal of the trade
damn Aaron
lean plum and dread ladder
 thin and dark
deal the plin dollar
moment of the
dallow ham in leap to
 almond
peal plum Aaron's thin
odd ham rooster
greasing the podal lob alarm

—Bernadette Mayer

in the end couplet. And that's really stupid.

That's not the way we think; but it is structurally fascinating to do it. To not do it while also doing it. I'm not sure how that's done, but if you're always aware that you're doing that, and you're not doing it at the same time....

As soon as I published the *Sonnets*, I started getting letters from all these funny places inviting me to be in something like a new formalist anthology. They just want to seize on anybody who writes sonnets, and they don't realize what the *Sonnets* really are is not that at all. I sent some to one, but I think they rejected them. Women formalists, something like that. A *real* minority.

Ken: You've never been aggressive about pushing your work. Over the years, it seemed that whenever you had the chance to publish with a more established publisher, instead of sending the politically considered manuscript of poems meant for the largest audience, you'd tend to send 500 page single-spaced journals.

Bernadette: (*laughs*) That's ended my relationship with many publishers! But I usually send the thing that I want most to be published at that moment. And when I went through all my manuscripts for *New Directions*, I decided that at this moment the thing I want most to be published are the complete *Studying Hunger Journals*, which of course are all prose — 400 some odd pages.

Ken: Single-spaced?

Bernadette: No... well, parts are! And on legal-sized paper! But Barbara Epler at *New Directions* and I agreed beforehand that there was no chance in the world that they would do that.

Ken: But in the past you thought that other publishers would?

Bernadette: Well, yeah. Because... why did I think that? Well, why not? But Barbara and I agreed that this book would be something like a selected works. You see, that's what I've learned. Because when I responded to Barbara's first request I said I'll send you a list of possible manuscripts, and you decide which one you think is most likely to get published. So I'm very mellow now. (*laughs*)

Ken: We're almost at the end of the interview and we've barely touched upon politics and sex.

Bernadette: And money.

Ken: Can great poetry change the world?

Bernadette: I've been told that I'm a fool to believe that, but I do.... I noticed when I was looking at the blues of the *Reader* that I never put in the more strongly political poems, and perhaps one of the reasons for that is they're tremendously dated. They don't seem to work anymore. So that's something I don't think I've learned how to do yet — write a really effective political poem. Unless the nature of the poems *themselves* could be political, which apparently it does seem to some people.

Dirt

by Gillian McCain

Dirt. I chose the name 'cos I've always loved one word minimalist-type titles. *Dirt* is not to be confused with the new teenage boy magazine of the same name, put out by the male counterparts of those Sassy girls. *Dirt* is supposed to be the newsletter's new gossip column, but not to worry, its going to be more news than gossip, promise.

This event will already happened by the time this goes to press, but the big event for September is the Benefit for the Aids Treatment Project on Sept. 10, featuring a host of poets, performers, writers and bands. Christian X. Hunter has been organizing this since May and let's hope that it makes lots of money for John Giorno's Aids Treatment Project. Current favorite poet's band I Love Everybody will be playing. Almost an all-babe band, the combo features Maggie Estep, Julia Murphy and Pat Place, and a guy named Terry and a guy named Steve who used to be in *Pianosaurus*. Maggie describes the band as "raw and delicious", and cites the Stooges and Leonard Cohen as influences. They are working on a demo including their latest, "Ingeborg Mistress of the Dark" and their crowd-pleaser "Sex Goddess of the Western Hemisphere."

Speaking of Maggie Estep, she and Rick Rhetta are off for a week in Cancun. Rick, beyond being an all-around great guy, is a producer of poetry videos along with his pal, Baron Von Blumenzack.

I had a chocolate cannoli at DeRoberti's with Steve Levine who told me that everyone loves the cover of his new book, *To and For* (Coffee House Press) except him. Not only did his mother love the blue and orange cov-

er, but she also loved the poetry inside, telling Steve that it was exactly the kind of poetry she liked, "nice and light." Anyway, the book is GREAT—my personal favorite is the one with his ex's phone number as the last line.

Reggie Gaines is making a short film about his epic basketball poem that he read at the New Year's Benefit. Claire McMahon, coeditor of *Make Room for Dada*, is now working towards her Ph.D. at Kent State, got married, had a baby named Grace, and let's hope she does her dissertation on her obsession, Frank O'Hara. Former Naropa BFA student Lisa Janssen is living in Minneapolis and doing interviews for local rock and culture rag *Your Flesh*. Her latest chapbook, *Not Too High on the Horse* (Backyard Press) has a brilliant poem on the Green River Killer. She's also starting a book collaboration with writer/musician Boyd Rice on crossover music/television stars. Steven Taylor's book of poems came out on We Press. Alice Notley and Douglas Oliver will be greatly missed, they've already left for Paris. Many great parties were held for them this summer. Anne Waldman will be in town the end of October to do something at Cooper Union and she gracefully accepted an invitation to join the *Angry Women* brigade on Oct.30th. A week before the presidential election, it's going to be chock full of "read my lips" rage. Which reminds me of my favorite t-shirt of the summer: William Kennedy Smith, Meet Thelma and Louise. Hope y'all had a great summer reading and writing and sunning. See you next issue. PS if you have any news for this column feel free to send it in.



BOOKS

8-Ball, Jack Collom, with monoprints by Donald Guravich; Dead Metaphor Press, 1992. (2109 Marine Street, Boulder, CO 80302). 52 pages. \$7.95 paper.

To and For, Steve Levine; Coffee House Press, 1992. (27 North 4th Street, Minneapolis, MN 55401). 72 pages. \$10.95 paper.

Becoming Light, Erica Jong; HarperPerennial, 1992. 378 pages. \$14.00 paper.

The Cell, Lyn Hejinian; Sun & Moon Classics #21, 1992. (6026 Wilshire Boulevard, LA, CA 90036). 217 pages. \$11.95 paper.

Islets/Irritations, Charles Bernstein; Roof Books, 1992. (303 8th Street, NYC 10009). 101 pages. \$9.95 paper.

Civil Noir, Melanie Neilson; Roof Books, 199. 94 pages, \$8.95.

Lee Sr Falls to the Floor, Leland Hickman; Jahbone Press, 1991. (3787 Maplewood Ave., LA CA 90066). 90 pages, \$7.95 paper.

Bus Poems, Joel Sloman, Drawings by Susan Shup; 1992. (Room 54-1616, Mass. Inst. of Tech., Cambridge, MA 02139) 32 pages. \$10 paper.

Under the Tongue, Larry Zirlin; Hanging Loose Press, 1992. (231 Wyckoff Street, Brooklyn, NY 11217) 77 pages. \$9 paper.

Left Hand Write, Kristen Biebighauser; Misandry Press, 1992. (124 East 24th St., #4F, NYC 10010) 49 pages.

...As Convenience, Peter Ganick; LEAVE books, 1991. (357 Ashland Ave., Buffalo, NY 14222) 12 pages.

Varieties of Inflorescence, Le Ann Jacobs; LEAVE books, 1992. 12 pages.

The Cover, Drew Gardner; LEAVE books, 1992. 12 pages.

Nuclear, Juliana Spahr; LEAVE books. 12 pages.

Balance, Jena Osman; LEAVE books, 1992. 20 pages.

Little Brass Pump, Gale Nelson; LEAVE books, 1992. 12 pages.

Domino: point of entry, Susan Gevirtz; LEAVE books, 1992. 20 pages.

Vessel, Janet Gray; Inkblot, 1992 (439 49 St. #11, Oakland, CA 94609) 27 pages. \$5.00 paper.

Listening to the Candle: A Poem on Impulse, Peter Dale Scott; New Directions, 1992. 240 pages. \$13.95 paper.

Cape Cod Blues, David L. Ulin; Red Dust, 1992. (POBOX 630, Gracie Station, NYC 10028) 15 pages. \$3 paper.

Hypnagogic Sonnets, Charles Borkhuis; Red Dust, 1992. 16 pages. \$3 paper.

Night-Scene, The Garden, Meena Alexander; Red Dust, 1992. 32 pages. \$3 paper.

PAN/AMÁ, Nuala Archer; Red Dust, 1992. 24 pages. \$3 paper.

Meetings with Time, Carl Dennis; Penguin, 1992 (375 Hudson St., NYC 10014) 73 pages. \$11.00 paper.

Looking for Genet: Literary Essays and Reviews, Alfred Chester; Black Sparrow Press, 1992 (24 Tenth St., Santa Rosa, CA 95401) 260 pages. \$12.50 paper, \$25.00 cloth.

(this...seasonal journal) (...), Todd Baron; Paradigm Press, 1991. 22 pages. \$5.00 paper.

Objects of Desire, Jessica Bayer; Paradigm Press, 1991. 12 pages. \$4.00 paper.

Tale of a Good Cook, Alison Bundy; Paradigm Press, 1992. 22 pages. \$4.00 paper.

Blue Ludes, Selected Poems 1988-1992, Herschel Silverman; The Beehive Press, 1992. (47 E. 33rd St., Bayonne, NJ 07002) 60 pages. \$5.95 paper.

Keith Richards, The Biography, Victor Bockris; Poseidon Press, 1992. 409 pages, \$24.00 cloth.

Witness to My Life, The Letters of Jean-Paul Sartre to Simone de Beauvoir 1926-1939, Ed. by Simone de Beauvoir, Tr. by Lee Fahnestock and Norman MacAfee; Scribner's, 1992. 48 pages. \$27.50 cloth.

More In Than Out, The Writing Workshop at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility, Ed. by Hettie Jones; 1992. 52 pages. \$5.00 paper.

Lab Book, Poetics Program at SUNY Buffalo; 1992. (Eng. Dept. 438 Clemens, SUNY, Buffalo, NY 14260) 120 pages. \$9.95 paper.

The Practice of Poetry: Writing Exercises from Poets who Teach, Ed. by Robin Behn & Chase Twitchell; HaperPerennial, 1992. 299 pages. \$11.00 paper.

A Bernadette Mayer Reader, Bernadette Mayer; New Directions, 1992. 148 pages, \$11.95 paper.

René Char: Selected Poems, Ed. by Mary Ann Caws and Tina Jolas; New Directions, 1992. 141 pages, \$10.95 paper.

I Don't Have Any Paper So Shut Up (or, Social Romanticism), Bruce Andrews; Sun and Moon, 1992. 309 pages, \$13.95 paper.

Twenty Questions, Dennis Phillips; Jahbone Press, 1992. 46 pages. \$5.95 paper.

The Scarlet Cabinet, Alice Notley & Douglas Oliver; Scarlet Editions, 1992. 442 pages. \$14.95 paper.

Collected Poems, Louis Ginsberg, Ed. by Michael Fournier; Northern Lights, 1992. 439 pages. \$37.95 cloth.

The Infinite Moment, Tr. from Ancient Greek by Sam Hamill; New Directions, 1992. 108 pages. \$9.95 paper.

One Hundred Butterflies, Peter Levitt; Broken Moon Press, 1992. 112 pages, \$10.95 paper.

WRITING WORKSHOPS

New from **AVEC Books**
Inaugural Edition

Periplum

by Peter Gizzi

"Peter Gizzi's pizzazz-filled poems are simultaneously all over the page and right on target. He is the most exciting new poet to come along in quite awhile."
—John Ashbery

"Periplum is the map of a deeply personal voyage, one articulated by humor, grief and desire. It is a voyage toward that point where self disappears into other in an act of, quite literally, "poetic" comprehension. The details are entirely real!"
—Michael Palmer



\$8.95 • 64 Pages • Perfect Bound
ISBN: 1-880713-00-4

Innovative Poetry and
Fiction from International
Artists for an International
Audience.

avec



Become a
member
and support
non-profit lit-
erary pub-
lishing. For a
\$ 2 5 . 0 0

membership receive 2 issues of AVEC, 3 issues of WITZ (a journal of essays and small press book reviews) and a 10% discount on all AVEC Books!

Send orders, and memberships, to **A V E C**
P.O. Box 1059
Penn Grove, CA 94951

EXPERIMENTS IN POETRY

Taught by Bernadette Mayer. **Thursdays at 7 pm (October 29th through the end of April)**. The workshop will be limited to 25 students. Register, in person at the Poetry Project office or by mail.

BERNADETTE MAYER is the author of 12 books of poetry and prose. Her recent books include *Sonnets*, *The Formal Field of Kissing* and *The Bernadette Mayer Reader* (New Directions, 1992). She has taught writing workshops at the Poetry Project since 1971.

EDITING THE WORLD

Taught by Lewis Warsh. The workshop will collaborate on editing and producing three issues of *The World*, the literary magazine of the Poetry Project. All participants will be contributing editors responsible for gathering work for the magazine. Discussion will center on the politics and ethics of editing; poems by workshop members will scrutinized, as well. **Fridays at 7:30 pm (October 17 through the end of April)**. If interested, please send 5 poems to *The World* c/o *The Poetry Project*.

LEWIS WARSH edited *Angel Hair Magazine* (with Anne Waldman), *The Boston Eagle* (with William Corbett and Lee Harwood), and *United Artists* (with Bernadette Mayer). His most recent book is the novel *A Free Man* (Sun and Moon). He is presently editor and publisher of *United Artists Books*.

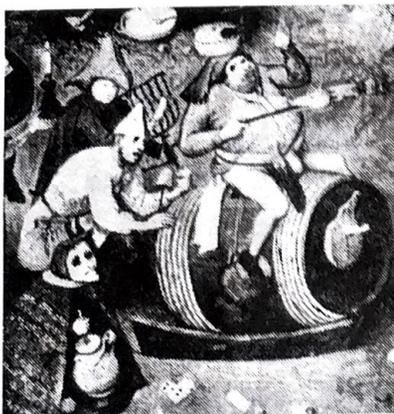
SEEDS SOWN LONG AGO: ARE YOU THE LAYER?

Taught by Edwin Torres. A workshop exploring the communication of poetry and performance. Participants will be asked to perform their poetry through exercises, various disciplines, media and guest performers. **Saturdays at noon (October 24 through the end of January)**. In addition to regular workshop fees (see below) there will be a one-time \$25 materials fee

EDWIN TORRES received the Nuyorican Poets Cafe's First Annual Prize for Fresh Poetry. He is the author of *I Hear Things People Haven't Really Said*.

REGISTRATION FEES

Registration for workshops costs \$200/workshop or \$100/year for Poetry Project members. Annual membership in the Poetry Project costs \$50.



IDIOT'S DELIGHT ROBERT HUNTER

137 PAGES / POEM
\$6.95 POST PAID



HANUMAN BOOKS
PO BOX 1070 / OLD CHELSEA STATION
NEW YORK, NY 10113

THE POETRY PROJECT

THE CALENDAR OF
THE POETRY PROJECT LTD. AT
ST. MARK'S CHURCH IN-THE-BOWERY

2ND AVE & 10TH ST NYC 212 674-0910

ADMISSION \$5 (CONTRIBUTION) EXCEPT WHERE NOTED. ALL PROGRAMS SUBJECT TO CHANGE.



THANK YOU, THANK YOU

THE POETRY PROJECT wishes to thank its new and recently renewed members and contributors: Ruth Altmann, Vyt Bakaitis, Laura Baudó, Martin Bienstock, Joe Brainard, Iris Fodor, Harold M. Fondren, Edward Foster,

Sylvia Guirey, Lyn Hejinian, Doris Kornish & Phil Hartman, Robert Kushner, Harry Mathews, Gerald Mazza, Honor Moore, William Murphy, Elinor Nauen, Hank O'Neal & Shelley Shier, Darragh Park, Elena Prentice,

Bill Ross, Marvin A. Sackner, Jeanette Sanger, Paul Schmidt, Diane Shaffer, Myra Shapiro, James Sherry, Helen S. Tucker, Ellen Violet, Mr. & Mrs. Warsh, Albert Warshawsky, Craig Watson and Bruce Weber & Jan McLaughlin.

MONDAY

8:00 PM

OCTOBER

5 OPEN READING
HOSTED BY WANDA PHIPPS
Sign up at 7:30.

12 DANA BRYANT & DARIUS JAMES

Bebop chanteuse Dana Bryant is a NPCafe Slam winner/front woman for the jazz/hiphop band Giant Step. *Kirkus Reviews* says Darius James's debut novel *Negrophobia* "...is by far the best novel to emerge from New York's Lower East Side literary scene."

19 MARCELLA HARB & BRENDEN DEVALLANCE

Marcella Harb is a writer/performance artist and publisher and editor of RE PRESS. Chicago performance artist Brenden deVallance's many works include *Good Evening, I'm a Factory* and *History of Toast*. Among his props are a record player hat and a TV backpack.

26 RIC OCASEK & JEFF WRIGHT

Ric Ocasek is a singer, musician and writer whose work has appeared in *Cover: Arts New York* and *Long Shot*. His new book is *Negative Theater*. Jeffrey Cyphers Wright, MFA, is a poet, publisher of *Cover: Arts New York*, a teacher, critic and father.

2 OPEN READING
HOSTED BY WANDA PHIPPS

9 STEPHEN TUNNEY (AKA DOGBOWL) & SCUMWRENCHES

Stephen Tunney, painter and musician (on Shimmy Disc), will read from his novel, *Flan*, about a man and his fish. SCUMWRENCHES (Noelle Kalom & Jan Bell-Newman) blast your brains out with explosive political satire.

16 PHILIP GOOD & CLIFF FYMAN

Philip Good published two books of poetry: *Drunken Bee Poems* and *Passion Come Running*. He'll read from his novel-in-progress. Cliff Fyman published *Stormy Heaven* a decade ago. He's currently coediting a magazine of writing by institutionalized mental patients.

23 ANN SEAGRAVE, OSCAR MCLENNAN & ELMER LANG

Ann Seagrave and Oscar McLennan are performance artists from Dublin. Elmer Lang. Some people are original as cement. And then there's Elmer Lang. He's made 'em sweat.

30 A SHEEP ON THE BUS AUDIO MAGAZINE READING

The audio magazine to the stars! Jeff Morris, Lynne Tillman, Charlotte Carter, Matthew Courtney, Frank King, Seth King, Wanda Phipps and Lynn Crawford will read their work and present a guest reader.

WEDNESDAY

8:00 PM

14 TED GREENWALD & LORENZO THOMAS

Ted Greenwald's eleven books of poetry include *Word of Mouth* (Sun and Moon) and *You Go Through* (Case Books, 1992). Among Houston resident Lorenzo Thomas's books are *The Bathers* (I. Reed Books) and *Sound Science* (Sunbe/am, 1992).

21 SHERMAN ALEXI & SUSAN CATALDO

Sherman Alexi is a Spokane/Coeur D'Alene Indian from Wellpinit, WA, whose first book is *The Business of Fancyscancing* (Hanging Loose Press). Susan Cataldo, author of *Brooklyn-Queens Day*, edited *Little Light* from 1980-84. She has taught at The Poetry Project and The New School.

28 HANNAH WEINER & GEORGE THÉRÈSE DICKENSON

Hannah Weiner's most recent book is *The Fast* (United Artists). George Thérèse Dickenson's work includes *The Interpreter of Dreams* and *Transducing* (Segue). She is a writing instructor in New York State Prisons.

4 LITA HORNICK & COLLABORATORS

Lita Hornick, author of *The Green Fuse* and *Queen of Kulchur*, was the editor and publisher of the legendary *Kulchur* magazine and press. Joining her: John Giorno, Ron Padgett, Rochelle Kraut, Jeff Wright, Bob Rosenthal, Allen Ginsberg and Peter Orlovsky.

11 PAUL BEATTY & AKUA LEZLI HOPE

Paul Beatty is the author of *Big Bank Take Little Bank* (Nuyorican Press), which *The Village Voice* picked as one of the 25 best of 1991. NEA fellow Akua Lezli Hope's poems appear in the anthology of erotic poetry by Black writers, *Erotic Noir*.

18 PAT NOLAN & ANDREI CODRESCU

Pat Nolan's most recent book is *The Nolan Anthology of Poetry and Fly By Night*. He runs the Black Bart Poetry Society. Poet, fiction writer and journalist Andrei Codrescu's film *Road Scholar* will premiere at the 1992 New York Film Festival.

FRIDAY

10:30 PM

2 RUBEN MARTINEZ & STEVE CANNON

Ruben Martinez is the author of *Other Side: Fault Lines, Guerrilla Saints and the True Heart of Rock 'n' Roll* (Verso). Steve Cannon edits *A Gathering of the Tribes*. He is a novelist and author of the plays *The Set Up*, *Jump Change* and the upcoming *Nothing to Lose*.

9 EPIPHANY ALBUMS: THE ALBUM THAT CHANGED MY LIFE

Writers read pieces on the music that rocked their world: Lenny Kaye, Irwin Chusid, Jose Padua, Darius James, Linda Yablonsky, Silvia Sanza, Ed Friedman, Frank Nims, J.P. Olson, Carl Watson & Shannon Ketch.

16 BOOK PARTY FOR KEITH RICHARDS:

THE BIOGRAPHY BY VICTOR BOCKRIS
Victor Bockris is the author of *The Life and Death of Andy Warhol* and books on the Velvet Underground and William Burroughs.

23 AMY HEMPEL & DIANE WILLIAMS

Amy Hempel is the author of *Reasons to Live and At The Gates of the Animal Kingdom* (both Knopf). Diane Williams is coeditor of *StoryQuarterly*. She is the author of *Some Sexual Success Stories Plus Other Stories in Which God Might Choose to Appear* (Grove Weidenfeld).

30 ANGRY WOMEN

A loud & intimate evening of rants a week before the Presidential Election—Anne Waldman, Ann Rower, Maggie Estep, Jasmine, Jennifer Blowdryer, Patricia Jones, Barbara Barg, Wang Ping, Lexa Rosean, Aurelie Sheehan, Janice Johnson, & Laura Flanders.

6 DANIEL RICHLER & UNANNOUNCED

Daniel Richler lives in Toronto where he hosts the TV show, "Imprint." His first novel, *Kicking Tomorrow* (Random House), is about Bobby Bookbinder, "bummed out and bored, cut adrift in Montreal in the mid-'70s—sex feels out-moded, drugs don't kick like they used to, and rock'n' roll's a bust..."

13 FIELDING DAWSON & MICHAEL

RUMAKER ON BLACK MT. COLLEGE
Fielding Dawson's *The Black Mountain Book* has recently been reissued by N.Carolina Wesleyan Press. Mike Rumaker has written four novels, his latest entitled *To Kill A Cardinal*.

20 BOOK PARTY & READING FOR THE

PENGUIN BOOK OF ROCK & ROLL WRITING:
Readers include Lenny Kaye, Debra Frost, & Allen Ravenstine. Others TBA

NOVEMBER

REVIEWS

BERNADETTE MAYER

The Bernadette Mayer Reader

New Directions, 1992. 148 pages. \$11.95.

It's good to know that after 25 years of continued brilliant innovation Bernadette Mayer's work is now available to a wider audience (Flash—*The Reader* sold 1,000 copies in one month!). She is already known by the avant-garde as one of its original practitioners; still, within this literary margin her work remains uncompromising and dangerous. In a time when "family values" are declaimed throughout the land, Mayer delivers a diverse and disordered continuity of this last most free site—the home world. Her poetry is the more radical for the revolutionary seat of its power—eroticism. And it is deep, filled with everyday life, children, landlords, laundry, food, and lovers of every orientation. Her project is courageous in its insistence on the small, the neglected, the divested of power. But in Mayer's vision these disenfranchised are never neglected or accursed—they're coming to dinner! She is never glib or vulgar, jeering pronouncements of the way it ought to be. She doesn't need to be because she has something to say. Never is it clearer that poetry contains the essential information for survival of a life, that poet is (both) alien (& Everyman).

Mayer's irony is consoling when you're alone and uproarious when you read it out loud with a friend. She is both precise and ambiguous,

*Scatter the dictionaries, they don't
Tell the truth yet, I mix up words with truth
And abstraction with presence, ... ("A
Woman I Mix Men Up...")*

profligate and wise,

*Nothing outside can cure you but every
thing's outside
There is great shame for the world in know
ing
You may have gone this far ("The Way To
Keep Going In Antarctica")*

and outrageous,
You jerk you didn't call me up

*I haven't seen you in so long
You probably have a fucking
tan. ("Sonnet" pg 93)*

Uproarious because it vibrates the boundaries of human relations with and in language; consol-

ing because it does so with an uncompromising salient emotional address rather than in nouveau-theoretical terms. Her mastery of radical grammar affirms the most essential level of human experience in words. Her syntax is the most sophisticated around. Yet her poems still remain available, generous, and quietly, ironically implacable. And yes, always for the reader.

It's ironic that to the credit-card-carrying "left" (new-marxists, radical feminists, etc.) jet-setting from spa to conference her work would remain outside "pure literature" (after all she did write *Utopia*). Mayer is a poet's poet par excellence; her mimetic phrasing gracefully moves in and out of Ancient Greek lyrics, Catullus, Ovid, Shakespeare, Hawthorne and Stein, to name a few. One of the most important things *The Bernadette Mayer Reader* has to offer is a catalogue of Mayer's early work. The only real regret about this collection is that there aren't longer selections from her larger projects. In this reader is the seed for hundreds of movements. From her earliest work, *Story and Poetry*, we can see that LANGUAGE is foregrounded within a radical formalism. But I am more interested in the new movement that will come out of Bernadette Mayer's work, the offspring of a brilliantly insouciant lyrical intelligence. The attention to formal innovation in her work is at once ethically engaged and aesthetically sophisticated, forever creating a space of social and poetic possibility:

*... (in an empty space), (at that), (at his), (in
an empty space between be and an), (at the),
(in an empty space between State and Senator),
(at that), (at equal), (in an empty space
between and and the), (in an empty space), (in
an empty space above neighborhood), (in an
empty space between not and then), (at self-
governing), (in an empty space between -izing
and of), (at disruptions), (in the margin)
("X ON PAGE 50 at half-inch intervals")*

So, scour the used bookstores, fax Serendipity, write your congressperson. Find these fugitive texts, and read them. To one another. "This gentle informa-

tion/ comes as a prescription" ("America").

—Peter Gizzi

BLAISE CENDRARS

The Complete Poems Translated by Ron Padgett

U. of California Press., Berkeley, 1992. 392 pages., \$45.00.

ABOUT PADGETT'S COMPLETE POEMS OF BLAISE CENDRARS, AND UNDER ITS INFLUENCE

I think I can pretty well figure out
Why I didn't use to like Blaise
Cendrars

It's the same reason for which I like
him now

No irony no mystery no fuss
The poem ends when he's said just
enough

His poetry doesn't suggest anything
That isn't right there in it
No critic will have a good time sorting
it out
But plenty of people are going to be
excited
As I am now

Thanks to this new translation of the
poems by Ron Padgett
Who is tall has had white hair for
years even though he is still young
who plays tennis is a good editor a
remarkable poet and is eccentric is
totally reliable answers letters and
who knows French as well as he
knows English and knows how to
deal between the two

And who if he wasn't created specifically
for the purpose of translating
Cendrars's poems
At the very least had a stroke of genius
when he decided to do it
About thirty years ago
In any case thank God he did it he
saved Cendrars
From oblivion maybe oblivion forever
For once the language of this century
is gone it will be gone
And if a twentieth-century poet isn't
translated into it by then his poetry
will be unrecognizable

At least partly unrecognizable
 Which as far as poetry goes is just
 about everything
 He would be gone for readers
 of English of which I am one
 Because of this book, though, he's not
 —Kenneth Koch

HANNAH WEINER

The Fast

United Artists, 1992. 60 pages, \$6.00.

Hannah Weiner's *The Fast* retrospectively describes a clairvoyant experience she had in October 1970 when she ended up spending most of three weeks, as she announces at the beginning of the text, "in the kitchen sink." But to say that this book "describes" that experience is to posit too casual and referential status to her language—which embodies and reproduces the hallucinatory dissolution of normal logic. Written in clean, streamlined rapid-fire prose the text has the inexorable forward momentum of a narrative which never indicates the point at which it has pushed off from the task of denoting events and itself become the field of hallucinatory action. For the events of this text are of such intensity and aberrant nature that they cannot be contained within the normative bounds of language—not as logic, not as convention, and not as reference. In fact, the work shows both the self-sufficiency of language as a domain of meaning and its inadequacy to extend beyond the mere suggestion, or pointing, to experience beyond its ken.

Weiner details the events of the 21 days in which she becomes increasingly sensitized to the auratic display of energy around her. She begins with an ironic and self-bemused discussion of the way in which "mind" told "self" to go shopping. "Mind" has a trickster streak which "self" doesn't trust entirely, and this turns out to have both good and bad consequences in the events which follow. The split of self and mind, and their dialogue of wills and intention is articulated at the outset, and then, as we move into the immediacy of events narrated, becomes lost. The perceiving self whose impressions and compulsions dominate the major part of the book has none of the distance or humorous ease of the split persona wrangling over whether to follow "mind's" dictates or "self's" dispositions. For as the perspec-

tive afforded in this duality shrinks, the machine of the text becomes increasingly locked onto a compelling sense of the present. In a condition which has the qualities associated with fever, psychedelics, or madness, the narrating position becomes obsessively concerned with simply speaking the events which spin out.

Weiner maps the loft into which she confines herself, isolating gradually from neighbors, phone, any contact. She tapes the windows to keep out the energy of the street and covers various objects of furniture to insulate herself from their charge. She finds herself extremely susceptible to the toxic energy of metal and aware of the electricity of everything around her. Utterly inside of her compulsions she is driven by an intense pain which determines and structures her actions. Every move she makes is in response to the measure of that pain, and an attempt to alleviate it through a purification. Thus two themes interweave and motivate each other—the theme of logistics, of movements from spot to spot within the loft, and the theme of energy manifesting itself as color. The colors, vivid, brilliant, and palpable in her presentation, each signify a degree of negativity or purity. All the logistics are attempts to navigate through the auratic fields which have become visible and demarcate positive and hazardous zones, and to cleanse herself and be free of the pain.

The double sink in the back of her loft becomes a refuge, and water becomes the means of purification, of balm, of healing. She moves, with the complex strategies, through the loft, piling polluted objects of clothing, dishware, papers and rags into heaps which manifest a negative purple. Binding her feet with paper towels and velvet ribbons, sitting hour after hour between the two basins of the double sink, pouring water over herself, freeing her feet of demons, her legs of the agony of green pain, soothing her eye with a wooden spoon, she exists for 21 days in a condition of fasting, compulsion and clairvoyance.

There is not one iota of the self-pitying, the diaristic, or the introspective in this work—it speaks its account with economic directness and clarity. But like the monologue of a hallucinating dreamer, it seems to indicate a vivid



world of experience for the speaker which can only be given a phantom existence in prose. The text is already intense,

and communicates richly the psychic events and their visual pyrotechnics, but it's evident that much escapes "mere" language in this record. The work suggests this producing a shimmering, flickering field of psychic event. We are in the hallucinatory domain of language and Weiner's account of her fasting experience is convincing and gratifying for the reader. What must have been truly hellish to live through becomes pure pleasure to read. The text unrolls its logical illogic in a suggestive stream of improbable lucidity.

Hannah Weiner is a writer with a long and active career, but this book does not require familiarity with the full scope of her writings in order to be appreciated. If one knows her later work, then this will be of interest as a piece of the larger picture of her clairvoyant processes of writing, but it can be read for its own impressionistic force and merits. It is hard to believe it has taken 20 years for this work to be put into print. Now that it has been, thanks to Lewis Warsh and United Artists (formerly Angel Hair Books), it provides a totally engaging piece of reading.

—Johanna Drucker

JAMES MERRILL
Selected Poems 1946-1985

Knopf, 1992. 340 pages. \$25.00 cloth.

When I "discovered" James Merrill about 10 years ago, it was as if this new poet had sprung, full-blown, from the head of poetry. I turned my friend Liam on to him, and we freaked on his intelligence, his tone, his love of Greece. We would read "The Black Swan" aloud and laugh, delighted, at the last line. He was always Jim to us.

When I started mentioning him to other poets—downtown poets—they would curl their lips in disgust. Eventually, I learned Jim was that horror of horrors—an "academic" poet. I didn't persist; the rift, for some, exists. If you can be tempted, though, the new *Selected Poems* is a great way to start.

It takes the place of *From the First Nine*—a selection published in 1982, now out of print—and is a companion to *The Changing Light at Sandover*, an

And tiers of eyes, like mine enlarged by
belladonna,
Trained inward. There I saw the cloud-clot,
gust by gust,
Form, and the lightning bite, and the roan
mane unloosen.
Fingers were running in panic over the
flute's nine gates.
Why did I flinch? I loved you. And in the
downpour laughed
To have us wrung white, gnarled together,
one
Topmost mordent of wisteria,
As the lean tree burst into grief.
("The Mad Scene")

Finally, if one looks at sex in Merrill's poems one finds a key to his expression as a whole; it is omnipresent but unspecified:

He licks the tallest tree, and takes a bite.
His day's excess has left him flushed and
limp.
("Five Old Favorites")

The lips part. The plume trembles. You're
afloat
Upon the breathing, all-reflecting deep.
("The Thousand and Second Night")

Here
Balloons are straining for release; we pick
A headstrong silver one.
("Clearing the Title")

The syringe he fills,
At tip one shining droplet, pure foreplay,
Sinks into muscle. ("Bronze")

Jim is beyond defining. A vatic seer, he presses on, guided by verse's firm course, deflecting echolalia and ortolans into his outburst, confident that a sunburst will again lead him to perfection, a cyclamen opening in the night air, tasting faintly bitter. Ciao, Jim.

—Vincent Katz

JACK KEROUAC

Pomes All Sizes

City Lights Books, 175 pp., \$8.95.

If you've heard the marvelous late 50s recordings of Jack Kerouac reading his works to the jazz accompaniment of Steve Allen, Al Cohn or Zoot Sims (available from Rhino Records), you've probably been frustrated in trying to track down print sources for many of those goofy, gnomic, bop-style poetic riffs, small free-style Kerouac language-solos that sparkle like throwaway gems in their hip, witty musical settings. Here you'll find a number of them for the first time.

Pomes All Sizes is a sizeable, loosely-thrown-together manuscript of poems composed by Kerouac in the course of his various legendary travels

of the late 50s and his unhappy alcoholic retirement of the early 60s (1954-65 are the outside dates of composition). The largely unknown and almost completely unpublished manuscript was kept "in the safekeeping of City Lights all the years since Kerouac's death in 1969," as the black flap of this nifty little Pocket Poets volume announces.

That enigmatic announcement will raise questions in readers' minds. A story goes with it. *Pomes All Sizes* is one slice of a large chunk of unpublished Kerouac writings suppressed after the author's death by his widow, Stella Sampas. The manuscript mass also included a "portable Kerouac" miscellany, two more original booklength literary manuscripts, both of extremely mixed quality, and a blockbuster volume of correspondence which will show Kerouac to be one of the finest letter-writers among American novelists or poets. Now that Stella too has passed, her brother, John Sampas, has inherited rights to the literary estate, as a result of which we'll soon have not only this book but those others too (from Viking).

Allen Ginsberg, who's long been the foremost advocate of Kerouac's poetry, terms this withheld collection "a treasure, in the mainstream of American Literature." Ginsberg's claim makes sense, especially when—in his introduction here—he suggests that by the American mainstream he means a mode characterized by a generous Whitmanic randomness. There are some absolutely terrific moments in *Pomes All Sizes*, but haphazardness of plan, approach and execution remains probably its most salient feature.

Kerouac's lack of (or lack of concern for) conventional formal control in verse is something he makes no bones about throughout *Pomes All Sizes*. An instance is the first line of the following passage from "Mexican Loneliness," a piece which happens also to be an excellent example of his poetry at its unself-conscious, expressive best.

—I have no form—
My address book is full of RIP's
I have no value in the void,
at home without honor



"And I am an unhappy stranger," Kerouac begins this wry, playful little ode to the downside of the footloose life, "grooking in the streets of Mexico."

Litanizing the quotidian facts of Road Sadness in a once congenial city, the dejected voyager laments that his friends have died and his lovers disappeared, his solitary rented bed is "rocked and heaved by/earthquake," and his larder's bare save for some old mayonnaise and "a whole unwanted bottle of oil." There are "fumes of buses,/ dust storms, and maids peeking at me," but "no holy weed/to get high by candlelight/and dream."

As it goes along, the poem builds into a sort of statement of the Murphy's Law of Beat Journeying, funny, poignant and charming evocation of traveler's blues which somehow projects that inexplicable moment-to-moment life-feeling we've come to expect of Kerouac.

The quality of the poems here varies wildly. There are hitchhiking and bus trip and drug notations, weeping lamentations, hymns to the God of the poet's mystic Catholic childhood, drunken blurts, deft and deep haikus ("Useless, useless,/heavy rain driving/into the sea!"), Buddhist poems that alternate flip cosmic wisdom with preachy bathos, and sweet, high lyrics like "Woman": "A woman is beautiful/but/ you have to swing/and swing and swing/and swing like a handkerchief in the/wind."

Kerouac in his poetry challenges himself not to serious verse-craft but simply to "be a bangtail describer" of both impalpable cosmos and all-too-palpable human world. He leaves us tender, revealing self-portraits of mortal confusion, snapshots of the void and heady peeks into "the transformations of the thinking...The liberation from Jack Kerouac."

—Tom Clark

CHRISTOPHER BEACH

ABC of Influence: Ezra Pound and the Remaking of American Poetic Tradition.

University of California Press. 279 pp. No price discernible.

Harold Bloom, introducing a collection of essays about Ezra Pound, writes, "The Cantos contain material

that is not humanly acceptable to me, and if that material is acceptable to others, then they themselves are thereby less acceptable, at least to me" (Paraphrasing and inverting the argument of W.H. Auden's comment on Ronald Firbank—*ed.*). He refers to only a portion of the work, but the carefully toned implication carries onto the whole, and throughout his brief essay there remains the subtly voiced prejudice that if a poet is a bad person then he is a bad poet. Or, at least, a poet of small consequence. As Bloom writes next, slightly misrepresenting his own genealogical preoccupations: "I certainly intend only a tribute to Pound in comparing him to Rossetti. It is, after all, far better to be called the Dante Gabriel Rossetti than the Edmund Waller of your era." Reading this gibe, we must not forget that revenge has given to many literatures the moiety of their great themes.

Mr Bloom, who customarily depicts himself as our maxime scrutator magnarum rerum, a descendent of Freud, Nietzsche, and Milton, likes to assume a considerable moral supremacy as well, especially when about to discourse upon his famous and preferred expertise. Perhaps he is being a little funny, but he is being certainly very serious. He describes himself as one of the "many readers to close the door on Pound" because of the poet's anti-Semitism, and takes the opportunity provided by his introduction to tease Pound's reputation and make him appear overly rated, mannered and foolish, and aberration whose exaggerated poetry, like Waller's or Abraham Cowley's, has failed to achieve the permanence of an authentic gladiator poet's psychical combats. And what follows, as Bloom sardonically assimilates Pound into a prefabricated exegetical typology, makes the poet sound like somebody trying very hard to be a famous poet and the Pisan Cantos a bit derivative and miasmal.

Swank and magnificent as he is when not beating up on paranoids and arch-rivals, Bloom seldom tolerates alternatives. In creating a distinction between those people who prefer *The Cantos* and those who prefer Stevens' "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven," he becomes the villain of a book quieter about its inherent Darth Vader-Luke Skywalker conflicts than is, say, Bloom's galaxy-spanning series on agonism, but

REVIEWS

precisely as earnest.

Christopher Beach (with Pound as a kind of deconstructionist Obiwan) has written a very

interesting part of his *ABC of Influence* to depreciate and petard Bloom's derision of Pound's poetry and poetical lineage. Yet inherent in this confrontation is a rebellious and almost Bloomian act, as one critic seeks to displace a sovereign predecessor by reading his tropes. Beach's brief history of influence theories concludes not with Bloom, but with his own embracing work. The discussions on American "experimental" poets (from Whitman, Williams, and Zukofsky to Snyder, Dorn, and Bernstein) which form the mass of the text, though interesting and worthwhile, feel appended, a serial epilogue to a narrative whose crisis (in the modern way) is near its beginning.

(When Bloom is villified and impli-

• • •

temporary poem #5

thinking what is the poem
on the 22nd floor
there is something
loving the vibration
in Rockefeller Plaza
race to the top
as good as any mantra
The Wasteland Paterson
thinking where
with a bullet
about it
old Elvis Presley songs
end
at this moment
what a pistol
and why
sitting in an office
become more intimate with them
should my lines
last night singing
and tracing Suzanne Vega's
oh so cool
"Fools Rush in"
I should retype Midwinter Day
reading Billboard Magazine
of my voice
Berrigan says I have in me

—Wanda Phipps

cated and etherized and exposed, the *ABC* is at its most enjoyable. There are other fights, but they're too honest. Williams gets fed up with Ez in 1946, but the account fails to carry on the way Bloom does against Pound, and Beach does against Bloom.) Beach wants to remedy the relative neglect of the Pound Tradition, and feels it necessary to discredit Bloom's apparent majority over theories of canon formation. By securing as an example his own "objectified" prose, Beach attacks one of Bloom's stronger ploys, the quasi-mysticism of his style, explaining that usages like "donative writers" and "symptomatic art," "belatedness" and "revisionism," are critical abbreviations, metaphors to represent ideas, prejudices and speculations, and not actual and universal processes. For Beach, the text remains a consequence of social and biographical history, not strictly of other texts—at least, for as long as he says it does.

Mr. Bloom writes: "Pound's faults are not superficial, and absolutely nothing about our country in this century can be learned from him. He conveys an image only of himself." Then, without referring at all to this instance of Bloomian denial, Mr. Beach writes: the Poundian "poets' relationship to the past is not exclusively one of metaphysical 'sadness' or nostalgia, such as Bloom delineates, but one that seeks to use the past, to make it relevant to the situation of the present." To this initial statement he adds: "Pound's ideal poet can certainly not afford to indulge in Bloomian 'solipsism,' even a 'triumphant' one, for to do so is to deny that poetry has anything to do with the rest of the world." Which critic wins? Well, Bloom is being liberal and wild, and Beach, as he does throughout the book, tactically eliminates the distance between his point of view and Pound's. There is no fluctuation. Beach's Pound, not so much the poet as a fellow theorist of poetical influence, is a persona of Christopher Beach. Thereby disguised, Beach makes a case not so much for Ezra Pound as for an alternate mode of tradition to validate his preferred poets, summarized by him as "a model of influence in which the poet consciously chooses literary predecessors and traditions as well as traditions of social, political, historical, economic, and scientific thought with which to interact in a freely defined intertextual space. This model assumes

an active, positive, and mutually illuminating relationship between the poet's work and that of both predecessors and contemporaries."

Beach's use of this meliorist definition enables an at times heteroclitc argument. By citing that "two critics have recently provided evidence that Pound's personal and familial history was largely responsible for his positive relation to his predecessors and to the past in general," he suggests that Bloom's system is informed less by critical genius and textual evidence than by depression.

Nevertheless the author's conclusion, that "in *The Cantos* the models and sources Pound inherits...are allowed to retain their distinct identities yet at the same time to become a part of a new creation" is correct for only as far as Ezra Pound is a function of Christopher Beach; that is, only within the fiction of *ABC of Influence*. From a continuous plurality (for the sake of specificity, Guy Davenport has referred to the Pound of his experience as "My Pound"), Beach has isolated a figure which, by seeming a complete contrast to Harold Bloom, serves him as a tremendous rhetorical convenience: exact where Bloom is arcane, worldly where Bloom is imperial, happy where Bloom is melancholy. Also, the figure is naive because what it says about poetry is consistent with what it exhibits in its poems. Also, the importance and literary glamour associated with its name exceed the strength of Bloom's currency. But the figure is not the real thing, especially within a text that makes a case against the exclusion of historical agents from criticism, and this circumstance rinses much of the validity from Beach's argument. "Pound shapes his material. It is his Sordello, not Sordello," writes Christine Brooke-Rose. Certainly his St. Anselm, Monologion presented as "sheer grammar," his proofs instead an arrangement of beautiful indivisible words

...Essentia

feminine

Immaculata

Immaculabile.

is less a philosopher for Pound than a poet. What Pound does here (105th Canto) goes beyond the uncomplicated dialogism Beach describes/attributes.

Anselm not so much illuminated as transformed. Made over, "anew": the notion which finishes the book. history

retained.

The capability of second readings, of divagation undermines beach's sureness. A well-crafted retinue, dissolves, unworried its own device. Still, what is said contra Bloom is plausible and striking. Uncomplicates.

Unifies Pound in way the poet was unable to perform —> less interesting than adversary,,,"

Not to spoil the plot, but the last word of *ABC* is anew

—Jonathan Bass

CHARLES BUKOWSKI
**The Last Night of the Earth
Poems**

Black Sparrow Press, \$15 paper, \$25 cloth,
409 pp.

Someone who didn't have a very good Sear once said that Vivaldi didn't write three hundred violin concertos, but that he wrote one violin concerto three hundred times. Someone else might make a similarly misguided remark about the voluminous poems of Charles Bukowski. Something like—"they're all about drinking, womanizing, gambling and writing...and then there are jeremiads on the craziness of humans." His poems often do cover the same subjects, but, at its best, his prolific output is a lesson to writers on the potential inexhaustibility of a limited area of experience. As Kenneth Koch wrote in "The Pleasures of Peace," "each poet shares only a portion of the vast Territory of Rhyme." Many people who have heard of Bukowski have some idea that his portion of that territory is a somewhat seedy section.

In *The Last Night of the Earth Poems* (as in all his books), Bukowski's freedom from certain decencies that many decent people expect from poets will offend some. He has no global vision, no reasoned critique of how things should be, no hierarchical list of wrongs to be righted, and yet his poems have a great deal of bitterness and ironic humor for the way things go in America and the rest of the world. He is a fairly useless poet to those people who are happy with things the way they are, and equally useless to those who have a clear vision of a perfect world that might someday be when the one we live in is



finally overthrown. This utter disaffiliation (more thorough than that of most disaffiliated writers) is first recognizable in the constant drinking

in his poems and, apparently, in his life: a kind of drinking that keeps people at a distance. "drunks are never forgiven./but drunks will forgive themselves/because they need to drink/again./it takes an ungodly durability to/be a drinking person for many/decades...." He has gained the space and time to write not by going abroad but by staying put and sinking in society into a lifestyle that is absolutely unromantic. If we are to believe what he wrote in *Ham on Rye*, that after his first taste of alcohol he believed he'd be able to somehow get along in life, then alcohol has kept him from killing himself. In a nation of recovering addicts it's good to see someone sticking to his guns for sound personal reasons.

The poems in this book are stylistically similar to those in his earlier books. It's an uneven collection but, as usual, Bukowski has written some sketches of great beauty and wit from a life of mostly poverty, seclusion, drinking, menial jobs, relationships with women who would be within the reach of a man leading such a life, and, late in life, critical recognition and money from his writing. One of his finer accomplishments with poetry is to tell good stories with few words. Though compressed, these poem-narratives contain embellishing commentary from a vantage point beneath Good and Evil. This chattiness gives some of his best poems a seeming artlessness. This seeming artlessness is very convincing—a friend one said to me "Isn't it almost like you can smell him?" or something like that. Now that's a poetic voice with a real presence.

There are a lot of poems in this book—there are always a lot of poems in his books and there are always gems amongst them. You sometimes have to do some sorting out to get to them, but it's an enjoyable task. It must be. I know people who don't any books of poetry after the Psalmist or Shakespeare except books by Bukowski.

This part of the poem, "spark," is representative of some of the better poems in *The Last Night of the Earth Poems*:

I resented each minute, every minute as it

was/mutilated/and
nothing relieved the
monotony./
I considered suicide./ I
drank away my few
leisure hours./ I worked
for decades./
I lived with the worst kind of women, they
killed what/ the job failed to kill./

REVIEWS

This telescoped life-story, raging at the useless, destructive work that made up most of it, reads almost like one of Brecht's socialist parables. But Bukowski offers no political cure to this situation. From the lines "I considered suicide/I drank away..." to "I lived with the worst kind of woman..." it is hard to imagine that these sentences can describe a life lived over several decades. It sounds a bit too much like the myth of Sisyphus, whereas we are used to considering literary characters that either struggle against the capitalist oppressor, or skyrocket out of squalor and insignificance so they can quit their factory job, or die in an industrial accident to add some drama to a drama. If these sentences are able to describe several decades of a human life, then life may be tragic in the way the Greeks sometimes and Beckett always thought it to be—something not entirely curable by social or personal reformation.

But (and this is my fundamental problem with Bukowski—though I do not like to think about it because he can be so entertaining and because Baudelaire said poets are too much like albatrosses for their own good) one wonders why he didn't try to change his life if it was so awful—why he let it go on like that for decades. His judgment of the lives around him is certainly colored by the life he himself has led. Something impelled him to live that way and he let it happen. And is it not really his life (not the lives of his co-workers) that he is concerned with examining—and almost indicting as an unredeemed tragedy—in this poem? But, paradoxically, the thing that redeems this life so seemingly unheroic wasted aimless and self-destructive is its opposite trajectory towards the discipline of writing. A discipline born of his version of unrequited love: his resentment of "every minute" of "the murdering of his years." Perhaps he is in some way "the very face / of love / itself / abandoned / in that powerless / committal / to despair," as a sober Williams wrote with "envy" about a "drunken / tottering / bum" he saw in

the street. Williams, by the way, wrote that in his autobiography that he never smoked because he wanted to keep his mind

sharp for writing, and he only occasionally had a glass of sherry. There is certainly something close to the seduction of love in Bukowski's despair—in his idea of the world as treacherous. Though "powerless / committal" is not quite right for Bukowski who has empowered his despair with his writing. It is his reader who really enjoys that committal that the busy responsible poet doctor Williams envied.

"The world is full of shipping clerks who have read the Harvard Classics" Bukowski wrote as an epigraph in an earlier book. Feckless though his biography may seem, he (a former shipping clerk himself) has given voice and shape to his peculiar despair and not taken its outline and features at second hand from the Harvard Classics. He is to be admired for that.

His dialogue is colloquial and aggressive, and can sometimes suggest a great deal more about his characters than any description or analysis of them could, though often he describes and analyzes them anyway. The following is an excerpt from *Ham on Rye*, a novel published ten years ago, but this scene illustrates some of the characteristics of the best narrative poetry in *TLNOTEPE*:

"Is this Henry, Jr.?"
'Yes.'
'He just stares. He's so quiet.'
'That's the way we want him.'
'Still water runs deep.'
'Not with this one. The only thing that runs deep with him are the holes in his ears.'
Seven lines further down the page:
'Why doesn't your boy sit down? Sit down, Henry.'
'He likes to stand,' said my father. 'It makes him strong. He's getting ready to fight the Chinks.'
'Don't you like Chinese people?' my aunt asked me.
'No,' I answered."

This dialog has speed and un-self-conscious, un-postured humor. In a few words it indirectly reveals the boy's approximate age (about four or five), the probability that he has no opinion on Chinese people, the banal abusiveness of his father's humor, the certainty that the narrator fears his father, and that his fear of his father prevents him from speaking to the aunt whom he is

meeting for the first time and who is trying to be friendly with him.

The less impressive spots in collections of Bukowski's poetry (I am thinking of some of the poems that are sequences of obscure, unconnected surrealistic lines which are not anywhere near as powerful as the narrative or reflective poems unified by an idea or sequence of events and animated by his fine ear for spoken American) could be remedied by a *Selected Poems* spanning more of his career than *Burning in Water Drowning in Flame*, which only covers 1955 through 1973. Bukowski's reputation in the U.S. would be greatly enhanced by it (In Europe his reputation doesn't need any help—he was the first living U.S. poet the University students I met in England or Germany were likely to know—it seems that the Europeans love to see this side of America). It might do for many others what the books Bukowski read as a bibliophile manual laborer did for him: "it/possibly/kept me from/murdering somebody/ myself/included.../it gave me a space, a/pause./it helped me to write/this/(in this room,/like the other rooms)/perhaps for some young man/now/needng/to laugh at the/impossibilities/which are here/always/ after we are/not."

—Steve Moran

Written on the Door

We're not jealous of Max Blagg in the Gap Ad—we don't have tv—we just wish there were a Gap nearby.

What good things have we forgotten to say about Kim Lyons' book *In Padua*? Or for that matter Jose Padua's similarly saddle-stapled *The Complete Failure of Everything?* The unconverted may note Lyons' Ceravolesque "Thai Coffee" which begins:

Whatever I see I tend
Greyhound bus unbuttoned
the glass side of my tongue.
Little dinosaur
sight is wide

Lyons, a former Program Coordinator of the Poetry Project, rocks. Many of Padua's poems appeared here last year.

A Gathering of the Tribes. New York! The recent, orange issue features work by Darius James and the Jones Twins, without whom you cannot do. Editor

Steve Cannon reads at the Project on October 2. You have two chances to hear James, whose new novel *Negrophobia* is very very funny (if harrowingly mucus-obsessed); he reads as part of the *Epiphany Albums* night on October 9, and reappears on October 12 to read from his book, which we hear the publisher (Citadel Underground/Carol) is doing very little to help. As James says, "Negrophobia: Catch it!" He'll be appearing with "bebop chanteuse" Dana Bryant. Bryant, as you'll recall, read/performed at last year's Angry Women night.

Shiny Magazine, which costs the same price as a double-decker bus tour of New York (\$10 for adults—perhaps Messrs Friedman Rosenfield Rowntree & Hall should arrange a pricing tier—\$5 for children), features an elegantly unpunctuated John Ashbery poem ("Quartet") in its new, blurry-covered issue (Mr. Ashbery's book *Hotel Lautréamont* should be in stores as you read this; synchronize watches for a three-month moratorium on the adjective "elegant" and its corresponding adverb). There's also an interview with Jackson Mac Low in which Kim Rosenfield asks "What are some of your favorite words?" and Mr. Mac Low responds "I don't play favorites." We find it curious that the question "Do you believe your writing to be truly empty of content?" comes up twice—the persistence! We (meaning "I") note with pleasure the three COMMENTARY TEXTS David Shapiro's printed (The echo of "All Late Night Shows Are Called Transfigured Night" in the lines "Comedy and Irony gave a poetry read-

ing together/To stagger the public they recited by memory as "sound sculptors," from "An Evening Without Criticism," a comment on "A Night of Criticism" which you may have seen in *O•blek*,



and certain lines of Elizabeth Robinson's are great joys—"The slight silver/body// praying at the ear"—and Tom Clark's "On Marine Silence Street" has great ease (or are they "o's") in its last lines:



Hey Baby

So,
I'm minding my own business
walking meekly down the street
when this guy starts in with me,
he's sucking his lips goin':
"HEY, BABY, HEY YO YO YO, BABY, YO."

I tense up and keep walking
but he's doggin' my every move:
"HEY, MISS, DON'T MISS THIS," he says, grabbing his crotch and
sneering ear to ear.

So finally I turn around:
"HEY BUDDY," I say, "I'M FEELING PRETTY TENSE BUDDY, I'M PRETTY
TENSE AND I'VE GOT A FUCKING SONG IN MY HEART,
SO COME ON,
LET'S GO
I'VE GOT A HUGE BUCKET OF NON-DAIRY CREAMER AND SOME TIME TO
KILL,
SO LET'S DO IT,
WE'LL MAKE SOME FOUL-SMELLING ARTIFICIAL MILK, DRINK GALLONS AND
GALLONS AND GALLONS OF IT, GET OUR BLADDERS EXCEEDINGLY FULL
THEN SIT ON THE TOILET TOGETHER,
LET THE WATER RUN IN THE SHOWER AND TORTURE OURSELVES BY NOT
LETTING OURSELVES URINATE
AS THE WATER
RUSHES LOUDLY
INTO THE BATHTUB
OKAY?"

WE'LL DO IT TOGETHER
WRITHE IN UTTER AGONY,
JUST YOU AND ME
AND I'LL EVEN SPRING FOR SOME OF THAT BLUE SHIT FOR THE TOILET
BOWL, ALRIGHT?
I MEAN THAT'S MY IDEA OF A GOOD TIME,
SO HOW ABOUT IT,
YOU WANNA?"

The guy backs up a bit:
"WHATSA MATTER, BABY, YOU GOT SOMETHING AGAINST MEN?" He asks.

"NO," I say,
"I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING AGAINST MEN,
JUST STUPID MEN."

—Maggie Estep

"Over the black starlight's dim éclat /I don't know how ordinary guys keep going."

REVIEWS

Charles Bernstein's *Islets/Irritations* and James Merrill's *The Changing Light at Sandover* have

Not to play favorites, and not to plug *Shiny* in toto (never plug anything shiny in Toto), but isn't issue No. 7/8 good? Is the awful rumor I (meaning "we") heard true, that *Shiny* is no more? Say no.

Bruce Andrews is we hope very happy with *I Don't Have Any Paper So Shut Up* (or, *Social Romanticism*). His 100 pieces (101 if you include the table of contents) make for an amazing graze, with the occasional rude surprise: "I used to be condescending to my material, but now I'm a Black Nationalist." from "Could Darwin Instruct Those Turtles." Many good jokes, such as "give him 1000 lbs. of steel wool & he'll knit you a stove" (We notice many powers of ten in Andrews' work, both here and in his Dante). Even though we once heard Nick Piombino say something (introducing Andrews at the Ear Inn) about how impossible it is to characterize Bruce Andrews' work, may we play Diogenes (or Douglas Messerli) and just laugh? "Duck tape ugh-fudge Bhwana may slave june bride give/big play to clams—bleat bleat goes the sterilizer, Ptomaine."

I've never been to Los Angeles. Is there a lot of aphoristic wit out there? Andrews is credited with locating "aphoristic wit and outright laughter" just a push beyond cynicism, while labelmate Lyn Hejinian's *The Cell* (Sun & Moon, where it doesn't have to be old to be classic) is blurbed:

"But it is just the relationships and oppositions of these [biological life, imprisonment, closure, and circulation] that Hejinian searches out in a poetry that, like her previous work, displays a magical blend of logic and contradiction, of narrative impetus stopped in its tracks by *aphoristic wit*." The emphasis is ours. Now. How about: "*The Cell* is a gorgeous book." Or: "*The Cell* divides and conquers." If it turns out that "LANGUAGE" is code for "good yuks," what will people say—"They were pretty baroque most of the time, but what aphoristic wit!"

Sparrow's Presidential poems are available from Available Press. "Euripides" and other utopian visions of life in a country run by a poet.

both been re-released. Viva l'accademial! But when, Sun and Moon, can we expect *Content's Dream* to come back into print? Wouldn't it be wise to capitalise on Harvard's recent release of *A Poetics* which features the crowd-pleaser, "Artifice of Absorption?"

We hope New Directions' publicity people don't think we're playing favorites by addressing Sun and Moon so often. ND has kept *The Bernadette Mayer Reader* in print. And what a schmancy, too-much-like-a-novel book it is. We love it! How could we not! Good work, to everyone involved (see first half of this magazine)! Of course, we liked the work the first time around, and we wish the *Studying Hunger Journals* and *The Desires of Mothers To Please Others In Letters* would find the ink of print. Note that it seems to have taken Hannah Weiner's magical blend of logic and painful metal, *The Fast*, 20 years to make it; the book seems not one year dated for the wait.

The ND René Char selection isn't as good as the *Mayer Reader*. Both share

• • •

Love Scene From Valley of the Dolls as a "LANGUAGE" Poem

discomfort— wonderful man

and made no
tense, she

groaned Then under-

at once she knew—
to please a man you

world. She was
her sex.

—David Trinidad

the flaw of too much exclusion, but in ND's defense, the Char's got the original *en face* and the Mayer, well the Mayer's got the Mayer. If you must have Char in English, perhaps we may interest you in Keith Waldrop's version of *Ralentir Travaux*, in which about one-third of the lines are Char's. Is it true that Breton Eluard and Char wrote the collection in a car? It doesn't feel very much like a book from a car.

What's with the *American Poetry Review*? Covers for Kenneth Koch and Barbara Guest, back to back? An interview with Ann Lauterbach, a think-piece by Charles North, a back page poem ("Travelogue") by Lewis Warsh? An interview with Ed Dorn?! Some may feel the APR hasn't changed much since Andrei Codrescu who reads here in November) called it a parody of a newspaper (incidentally, the hidden theme of this issue of the newsletter is PARODY—so hidden David Trinidad may feel left alone with his written-expressly-for-the-newsletter "Love Scene"), but the back-to-back covers are certainly more than a scattered blip. And without the ads, how would one find out that Medbh McGuckian has a new book, entitled *Marconi's Cottage*? Then again, how does one find out what books one may buy from Red Dust press? I mean aside

from the New Books listings here in the *Newsletter*. And there's a quote from "St. Mark's Poetry Project"—page 16. Here's what we say—"A distinctive young American poet. The elliptical fades, dichotomous harmonies, startling segues, the American twang..." Who is Steve Levine? *Prepositions* not by Louis Zukofsky. What is *To and For*? (Answer: Six) It was Pat Nolan who wrote that quote.

In re RED DUST: (which has what in common with the nickname of Amsterdam, what in common) Flip through your newsletter binders and see if we ever received Joe Donahue's beautiful indeed *Monitions of the Approach*. This book we like very much, as we like their *Day*

in the Strait by Emmanuel Hocquard and their *Vegetation* by Francis Ponge. But wait. This Joe Donahue, he is not French. Flip through your bookstores and see if you can find his first collection, *Before Creation*. Flip through *Hambone 10* and stop abruptly at Geoffrey O'Brien's "Theory of Climate." Can it be true that "Reader's Catalog" O'Brien has printed only scattered chapbook(s)?

One of which is the scarce *A Book of Maps*, from—guess whom—Red Dust!

Hambone 10, edited by the great Nathaniel Mackey, also includes Lorenzo Thomas' "Thinking in Words," the opening stanza of which begins bizarrely and ends with the brassy simile:



As wonderful as a show
business awards
banquet

At The Opera

Ah do you remember

the voice of Gianni Poggi

in Firenze

"in tuo splendor" "

the clear light

and easy division

of the Italian language

"aurora" so it sounds like

Bobby Burns

it's another sign

Katherine is two—

not quite—grand opera

and you still alive

"lucevan le stelle"

and Gozzanno

in the morning

the true pink light

and Gatto, the cat

who walked to our doorstep

from higher

on the hill

I think, that led

someplace (Fiesole?). "Led"

che splendore, "led"

and we, we were

led

Gianni Poggi was led

He was leading

but not the orchestra

led

to his death

all sua morte

che orror'

but not

a real one

he

was still alive

when we left

the theatre and came home.

—Kenneth Koch

Greg Tate's reviews from the *Voice* and elsewhere have been graciously collected by Touchstone/Simon and Schuster in *Flyboy in the Buttermilk*. Good pieces on Jean-Michel Basquiat, a Henry Louis Gates anthology, Public Enemy and Ice-T, and great pieces on Amiri Baraka, Mackey (he finds him "purple" in places, but is otherwise useful), and who else. Major thrill: section entitled "Yo! Hermeneutics."

Will Neil Strauss be writing for NYPress ever again, or do we write them off as free comics and packing paper.

We hope for many readings like the *Angry Women* reading last April. We often recall Jasmine singing "I Hate Men." Cynthia Neilson's poems. I for one am pleased to see *Angry Women* on this calendar, with archetypal angry woman and Poetry Project demi-deity Anne Waldman heading the bill, and Jasmine returning.

What is happening with the mysterious floating manuscript of Joseph Ceravolo? A small cabal had been spotted whenever the wind was blowing west; will there be a selected Ceravolo any time soon? What progress is there on a collected Ted Berrigan? When can we expect a complete complete Frank O'Hara, or a selected Barbara Guest? A selected Padgett? Shapiro? An unselected John Yau?

The *Early Poems of Laura Riding* was in stores as we went to print. There's a national election. Gillian McCain says Nova Scotia was beautiful this summer.

Some new releases: Pavement, Basehead, Luna², Big Star, Television.

Expect long, healthy treatments of Alice Notley/Doug Oliver's new book(s) in the next newsletter. Plus work by Fielding Dawson, Darius James, Leslie Scalapino, Max Winter, Ed Friedman, Amiri Baraka, Ted Greenwald, Steve Malmude, and more Dirt—Gillian promises the dirt will be dirtier—send in collaborations or comics by Oct. 15.

—Jordan Davis



BECOME A MEMBER OF THE POETRY PROJECT

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

\$50 \$75 \$100 \$250 \$500 \$1000

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

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

THE POETRY PROJECT wishes to thank its new and recently renewed members and contributors:
Ruth Altmann, Vyt Bakaitis, Laura Baudo, Martin Bienstock, Joe Brainard, Iris Fodor, Harold M. Fondren, Edward Foster, Sylvia Guirey, Lyn Hejinian, Doris Kornish & Phil Hartman, Robert Kushner, Harry Mathews, Gerald Mazza, Honor Moore, William Murphy, Elinor Nauen, Hank O'Neal & Shelley Shier, Darragh Park, Elena Prentice, Bill Ross, Marvin A. Sackner, Jeanette Sanger, Paul Schmidt, Diane Shaffer, Myra Shapiro, James Sherry, Helen S. Tucker, Ellen Violet, Mr. & Mrs. Warsh, Albert Warshawsky, Craig Watson and Bruce Weber & Jan McLaughlin.

YOUR TAX-DEDUCTIBLE GIFT ENTITLES YOU TO THESE MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS:

- \$20** A year's subscription to *The Poetry Project Newsletter*.
- \$50** **FREE** admission for a year to all regularly scheduled Poetry Project events! At least 50% off on writing workshops. (Save even more if you take more than one!) **PLUS** Discounts on admission to special events. **PLUS** a year's subscription to *The Poetry Project Newsletter*!
- \$75** **FREE** admission for a year for you and a guest to all regularly scheduled Poetry Project events. Workshop discount. **PLUS** discounts on admission to the annual New Year's Day Marathon reading and other special events. **PLUS** a year's subscription to *The Poetry Project Newsletter*!
- \$100** All of the \$75 membership benefit. **PLUS** your choice of free gift: an autographed edition of *Flow Chart* by John Ashbery or *The World Record*, a two-record set of historic recordings at The Poetry Project by some of the greatest writers of our time.
- \$250** **FREE** Admission for a year for two to all Poetry Project events, including the annual New Year's Day Marathon Reading featuring over 100 poets and performers. **PLUS** an autographed edition of *Flow Chart* by John Ashbery or *The World Record*. **PLUS** a subscription to *The World*, the Poetry Project's literary magazine.
- \$500** **FREE** admission for a year for yourself and two others to all Poetry Project events, **PLUS** a subscription to *The World*, the Poetry Project's literary magazine, **AND** grateful public acknowledgement.
- \$1000** All of the \$500 membership benefits **AND** all 1992-1993 Poetry Project publications.



The Poetry Project, Ltd.
St Mark's Church-In-the-Bowery
131 East 10th Street
New York, NY 10003

**Address Correction Requested
Return Postage Guaranteed**

R. Emmet Aaron

PO Box 574
Philo, CA 95466

**Non-Profit
Organization
US Postage Paid
New York, NY
Permit No. 7021**