

THE POETRY PROJECT NEWSLETTER

No. 15

1 May 1974

Bill Mac Kay, editor  
St. Mark's Church, 2nd Avenue  
& Tenth St., New York 10003

The ghost of Peter Stuyvesant was hard-pressed to find a place to rest his weary peg-leg. With a capacity crowd clustered in St. Mark's, William Burroughs & John Giorno took control April 24, a thousand friendly ears welcoming every reverberation.

No one was disappointed. Living legend Burroughs, seated behind a tandem of microphones, jacket, vest, tie, impeccable, inscrutable, deadpan, then a sudden possession of tongues. "He do the police in voices." Giorno, laser beam Buddhist that he is, accelerated briskly through "Suicide Sutra". A delight, an embodied smile.

Meanwhile, the brethren quietly gathered \$542.18 to finance future expeditions.

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Wednesday show-and-tell continues at the Church. The May Day program features a rare visit from Californian Joanne Kyger. That same evening, Tony Towle promises to unlock his mysterious attaché case & reveal The Perfect Poem. The following week (May 8), soon-not-to-be-unknown Rebecca Brown & Simon Schuchat will lead the festivities. Then, on the 15th, perennial show-stealers Joe Brainard & Patti Smith will strut their stuff. Adrienne Rich, just named co-winner of the National Book Award poetry prize, is slated to read May 22.

Readings begin at 8:30. (P.S. Through the kind cooperation of the American & National Leagues, the schedule at Shea Stadium seldom conflicts with our own.)

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The Poetry Project hotline is 674-0910. Requests, questions, ransom demands will be dealt with Monday 10-5, Wednesday 2-5.

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Editor Mary Carey has been squirrelling away mss. for the first issue of Cholla, slated for late summer or early fall. Submissions to 155 No. Main Street, Tucson, Arizona 85701.

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Tractor 5 is interesting, attractive, tiny enough to be carried to work in your lunchbox. Table of content appearances are made by Stephen Leggett, Alain Bosquet, Jack Hirshman, Dirk Kortz and editor Barbara Szerlip, to name a few. Highlighting this issue are Hirshman's translations of Pablo Neruda's last poems. One dollar at bookstores or from 1900 Eddy, Apt. 13, San Francisco, California 94115.

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Whiz kids Steve Carey & Jim Brodey gathering material for the inaugural issue of Reach for the Sky. Only long works (6-10 pp.) will be accepted. "Also: there must be a photograph or two accompanying the manuscripts. It cannot be a photobooth job or in color, and must be either of the poet(s) or by the poet(s)." Deadline for issue one of this kinky extravaganza is June 1, with Labor Day the target date for publication.

Among the already-committed are Lewis MacAdams, Mona Di Vinci, Joe Ceravolo, two new L.A. novelists Joel Kertzman & Deane Romano, and a galaxy of friends and popular favorites including Clark Coolidge and cowboy-artist Boyd Elder.

Mss. should be sent to Brodey at 8000 Honey Drive, Laurel Canyon, Hollywood, California 90046. (Village gossip has it that 8000 Honey Drive is the house Cecil B. DeMille built for his mistresses.)

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Speaking of Cecil B. DeMille, editor Bill Zavatsky promises that Roy Rogers, three years in the making, featuring over a hundred poets of all nations, a cover in four colors by Hannah Wilke, will be out any day now. The magazine contains dozens of typographical errors or, to be precise, Zavatsky's collection of these inspired blunders. Another product of this hyperactive editorial imagination is Sun, a 120-page magazine graced by a Rudy Burckhardt photo-cover. Works by Philip Lopate, Carter Ratcliff, and Zavatsky's own translation of a complete Robert Desnos book are just a few of the offerings. Roy Rogers costs \$2.00 and Sun, \$1.25. At quality bookshops or from the editor at 456 Riverside Dr., N.Y.C. 10027. Slip the money under the door.

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The spring Gay Sunshine dazzles with an interview with William Burroughs, a long suppressed erotic poem by W.H. Auden, a review of John Giorno's Cancer in My Left Ball, drawings by Joe Brainard, and poems, poems, poems. Still only sixty cents. Write P.O. Box 40397, San Francisco, California 94140.

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Readings at the West End Bar (113th & Broadway) continue under the able stewardship of Mark Weiss. On the agenda are an open reading (May 5); John Silber & Bill Zavatsky (May 12); Aaron Fogel & Susan Sherman (May 19); a special stay-at-home Memorial Day observance (May 26); and John Love & Joachim Neugroschel (June 2). Two p.m.

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If you live in the New York area, you can wake up to some rhythm, occasionally pitch, and sometimes words. "How Music Works" is aired every other Saturday at 10 a.m. (May 4, 18, etc.) on WBAI, 99.5 f.m. Produced by Philip Corner. Participants also include Regina Beck, Carol Weber, Richard Hayman, and invited guests.

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Kenward Elmslie's mind-bending & fanciful City Junket disappears after only two more performances at the New York Cultural Center, 2 Columbus Circle. The all-star cast includes Clarice Rivers, Brooke Alderson, John Ashbery, Joe Brainard, Peter Schjeldahl, Irma Hurley Towle, Anne Waldman, and Elmslie himself. John Bennett handles sound production. Visuals created by Diane Molinari, & Larry Rivers. Golly, kids, you can't miss this one. May 2 & May 9. Contribution, \$2.50.

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The April 25th Rolling Stone showcases a full-page poem, "Lines for My Autobiography", by Aran Saroyan.

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Congratulations to the new CAPS fellows! A complete updated enlarged authorized list of winners follows:

Poetry- Americo Casiano, Siv Cedering Fox, John Giorno, Barbara A. Holland, Zeorapetse Kgositsela, Galway Kinnell, Eloise Loftin, David Shapiro, Terry Stokes, and Tony Towle.

Playwrights- Kenneth Brown, Anne Burr, Richard Foreman, Adrienne Kennedy, Crispin Lorangeira, Miguel Pinero, John Stoltenberg, Ron Tavel, Robert Wilson, Susan Yankowitz.

Fiction-Bill Anidon, Manuel Baretto, Carol Berge, George Cain, E.L. Doctorow, Paule Marshall, Hugh Nissenson, and, of course, Louise Rose.

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A LETTER TO THE NEW YORK SCHOOL

Point Arena, California  
March 15, 1974

Dear Friends:

I am writing this from the remote distance of Point Arena, California, and in a way the geography speaks for itself. If I was once among you, and I sometimes wonder if I ever really was, I no longer am, and it is out of a confusion of impulses toward you, individually and en masse, that I write you now. In the past several years I've gone through the changes of marriage, fatherhood, and moving out of the city, and in the process I have not only lost touch with many of you as friends, but I have also undergone a change in relation to the work you have done and continue to do, as represented in many of the periodicals which I receive as token, I guess, of our association.

What I have to say is simple, but I think it is true. I feel that the work that is being done right now by many of you who are my contemporaries is of a high quality in almost every dimension but one. Perhaps two- at least two words come to mind, but perhaps the two words are one. The two words I am thinking of are honesty and sincerity. It seems to me that these are the two qualities most subject to abuse in the work of The New York School. I realize immediately of course that my very mention of these two words constitutes an abuse of the esthetic with which you have now so completely identified yourselves, but I do so without really fearing the risk involved. To be considered a crackpot or a cornball by The New York School would only place me with the mass of human kind in the eye of its esthetic, and I don't mind the association at all. I only hope I'm truly worthy of it. At the age of thirty, the whole question of uniqueness becomes a little absurd - if one is alive, at this age, one is almost inescapably among one's brothers and sisters, dependent on them for help in one form or another, in simply getting through.

The point is the work I am referring to was simply not written for human kind. It is like a machine constructed with absolutely no purpose in mind for it and immediately released on the world at large as if it were the gift of the ages, all rewards in itself, etc. The periodicals are bounding into the mailboxes, one after another, and there now seem to be at least three distinguishable generations at work (my own contemporaries the middle one) and yet I find it harder and harder to see the point of it all.

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Even here, in this remote location, in the midst of trying to work out the purchase of some land for us to live on - we are now a family of four - I received one periodical and one book in the mail today and even before I looked through them, I knew I was the recipient of yet another exercise in utter irrelevance. As one who once considered himself in the vanguard of writing as writing, it is difficult for me to describe my feelings when confronted by a new generation of writers who are dedicated not to an exploration of any particular literary dimension I can identify beyond a snotty tone of voice. I know this is not something I myself ever had in mind.

Beyond that, there are a number of other identifiable trends, which I would characterize briefly as - 1) Poems that prove how smart I am 2) Poems that prove what a master of rhetoric I am 3) Poems that prove I am a dope addict, and 4) Poems that just generally prove how hard I am to understand in any way. These are the substance of most of the periodicals I receive in the mail, and at this stage of my life it is an act of total selflessness for me to even riffle their pages, so offensive are they to my own effort and my own dream.

I am a writer because I desire to communicate with my fellow man and woman and child and writing is one avenue open to me to do this. As I experience more of life, my own respect for it grows, and it is impossible for me to regard it, and anyone else within it, as the subject or object of any kind of literary exercise. It is an experience that is bigger and more profound than any telling turn of phrase, or immaculate run-on sentence. It is, quite simply, real. Not brilliant, not arcane, not sarcastic - but alive, and in just being alive more meaning than we could ever hope to fathom. The most we could hope for, I believe, is an honest and sincere and uncomplicated accounting of our own individual experiences, as members of this miracle of being alive in time.

I don't wish to speak for anyone here but myself, although it seems to me that much of what I have learned has been the knowledge of others before me and contemporary with me. As a writer today, my goal is simple. I want to keep myself in the best physical shape I can, to develop my stamina in writing, so that I can make the most of whatever small talent I possess to tell the truth of my life as long as I live it. Just as it pleases me to give a gift to someone of anything I have made or done in sincerity, I believe it pleases life itself to live it as long and as hard, and as humbly, as one can.

I am sending this to you, in care of Bill MacKay's Poetry Project Newsletter of St. Mark's Church in New York, perhaps the single outlet that will reach the greatest cross-section of you, in the hopes that it will be printed. I wish you all health and happiness, and I say goodbye to you, at least for a while.

Love,  
Aram (Sarkoyan)

Named for the author of Septimus Felver, Nathaniel Hawthorne College, in Antrim, New Hampshire, seems to have an abiding interest in the arts. Lewis MacAdams, James Tate, and Anne Waldman have read there already this school year, and Joanne Kyger is scheduled for early May.

Just out, The World 29 consists of "Reviews, commentary, interviews, etc.", with the emphasis on the "etc." Honestly, some of the contents are indescribable, teeming with enough idea images to keep a Bronx street gang mesmerized for a week.

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Among the cast of thousands are Fielding Dawson, Allen Ginsberg, Sotère Torregian, Britt Wilkie, Clark Coolidge, Ted Berrigan, Philip Whalen, Kathy Acker, Ron Padgett, Lorenzo Thomas, Alice Notley, Jane DeLynn, John Giorno, Peter Stamos, Michael Brownstein, and Charles North. Cover by Philip Guston. Vanishing quickly from bookstores, or c/o The Project. One dollar & fifty. Editor Anne Waldman deserves a week in the Bahamas for this one.

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Industrious Barbara Baracks edited, printed, and is now distributing the second issue of Big Deal. It was worth the trouble; an interesting, offbeat issue. Contributors answer to the names Jackson MacLow, Bernadette Mayer, Clark Coolidge, Michael Lally, Kathy Acker, Peter Stamos, Raymond DiPalma, Larry Eigner, among others. A dollar fifty at soda stores or from the editor at 299 Riverside Drive, Apt. 2A, New York, N.Y. 10025.

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Everyone should read Robert Bly's booklet Point Reyes Poems (Mudra: Half Moon Bay, \$1.50), distributed by Book People, 2940 Seventh Street, Berkeley, California 94710.

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The Fall/Winter number of Parnassus: Poetry in Review boasts 250 pages of commentary, ranging from personal appreciations to scholarly hatchet-jobs. Under glass this issue are Ammons, Creeley, Bukowski, Rich, Merwin, Cavafry, Sexton, dozens more. Worth \$3.50 at friendly book-venders, or from 216 W. 89, New York, N.Y. 10024.

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Joan Mitchell's show at the Whitney is the very picture of confident, unrestrained energy. Giant, sublime triptychs alternate with splashy, utterly powerful abstract landscapes. Articulations visible until May 5. Go.

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Larry Fagin writes poetry as if he's being charged by the word. His Rhymes of a Jerk, spare, witty, a comfort to the infirm, tops the Kulchur Foundation list. Still in print, too, are Carter Ratcliff's pleasing Fever Coast, Paul Violi's In Baltic Circles, accomplished, underrated, not to mention books by Rochelle Owens, John Giorno, Joe Brainard, Kenneth Koch, Kenward Elmslie, John Perreault, David Antin, Anne Waldman and Charles Henri Ford. All titles, \$3.00@. Orders & inquiries to 261 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016.

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Traces of Charles Olson keep appearing. The latest is Additional Prose (Four Seasons, \$3.00), meticulously edited & notated by George Butterick. It includes not only the classic "Proprioception" and "A Bibliography on America", but sixteen less accessible notes & essays. Distributed by Book People. Obviously, you can't keep a big man down.

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Eight Dime Novels (Dover, \$3.50), edited by E.F. Bleiler, is probably the greatest book ever written.

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Workshops at the Poetry Project are free & weekly, conducted by John Godfrey (Monday, 7:00 p.m.), Bernadette Mayer (Tuesday, 8:00 p.m.) and Lewis Warsh (Thursday, 8:30 p.m.).

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The Monday night performances conducted by Ed Friedman continue to be orgies of the mind. This month's agenda begins with an open reading, May 6, then features Terry Reilly & Tony Mascatello (May 13), the elusive Liz Lerman & Hannah Wiener (May 20), and Dante Murray (May 27). 8:15 p.m. in the Parrish Hall.

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On Tuesday, May 14, Clark Coolidge will lecture Bernadette Mayer's workshop on "The Speliological Maintains." So there!

Donnie Brooke Alderson will speak on stand-up comedy, Friday, May 24, in the workshop room. 8:30 p.m.

Allan Kaplan is responsible for the mercurial The English Military Cemetery. A bill & a half at Eighth Street Bookshop, or from Geronimo Books, 126 Washington Place, N.Y.C.

Spellbinding Clark Coolidge will be centerstage at Paula Cooper Gallery, Friday the 17, 8:30 the time.

A Scottish newspaper account of Anne Waldman's visit to the U.K. alludes to her "Bowery accent". Anne claims it was strep throat.

Philip Guston's show earned rave reviews in Boston.

Immediately Surrounding by Lewis Warsh, with cover + frontispiece by George Schmeenan, is available today from Other Books, South Lancaster, Mass. 01561. Two dollars.

On May 19, Ho Chi Minh's birthday, Bernadette Mayer will read at the Philadelphia YMHA at 8 p.m. Ms. Mayer's own birthday is May 12.

We are proud to print:

ALLEN GINSBERG'S  
ACCEPTANCE SPEECH (DELIVERED BY  
PETER ORLOVSKY) FOR THE  
NATIONAL BOOK AWARD IN  
POETRY:

6:00 P.M., April 16, 1974

Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center

The Poem book Fall of America is time capsule of personal national consciousness during American war-decay recorded 1965 to 1971. It includes one prophetic fragment, written on Speakers Platform of May 9, 1970 Washington D C Peace Protest Mobilization:

White sunshine on sweating skulls  
Washington's Monument pyramided high granite clouds  
over a soul mass, children screaming in their brains on  
quiet grass  
(black man strapped hanging in blue denims from an earth  
cross) -

Soul brightness under blue sky  
Assembled before White House filled with mustached Ger-  
mans

& police buttons, army telephones, CIA Buzzers, FBI bugs  
Secret Service walkie-talkies, Intercom squawkers to Narco  
Fuzz & Florida Mafia Real Estate Speculators.

One hundred thousand bodies naked before an Iron Robot  
Nixon's brain Presidential cranium case spying thru binoc-  
ulars

from the Paranoia Smog Factory's East Wing.

Book here honored with public prize, best proclaim further prophetic foreboding that our United States is now the "Fabled damned of nations" foretold by Walt Whitman a hundred years ago. The materialist brutality we have forced on ourselves & world is irrevocably visible in dictatorships our government has established thru South and Central America, including deliberate wreckage of Chilean democracy. From Greece to Persia we have established police states, and throughout Indochina wreaked criminal mass murder on millions, subsidized opium dealing, destroyed land itself, imposed military tyranny both openly & secretly in Cambodia, Vietnam, & Thailand.

Our "Defense of the free world" is an aggressive hypocrisy that has damaged the very planet's chance of survival. Now we have spent thousands of billions on offensive War in decades, and half the world is starving for food. The reckoning has come now for America. 100 Billion goes to the War Department this year out of 300 Billion Budget. Our militarization has become so topheavy that there is no turning back from Military Tyranny. Police agencies have become so vast-- National Security Agency alone the largest police bureaucracy in America yet its activities are almost unknown to all of us-- that there is no turning back from computerized police state control of America.

Watergate is a froth on the swamp: impeachment of a <sup>lying</sup> President does not remove the hundred Billion power of the Military nor the secret billion power of the police state apparatus. Any President who would try to curb power of the Military-police would be ruined or murdered.

So I take this occasion of publicity to call out the Fact: our military has practiced subversion of popular will abroad and can do so here if challenged, create situations of Chaos, take over the Nation by Military Coup, and proclaim itself Guardian over public order. And our vast police networks can, as they have in last decade, enforce that will on public and poet alike.

We have all contributed to this debacle with our aggression and self-righteousness, including myself. There is no longer any hope for the Salvation of America proclaimed by Jack Kerouac and others of our Beat Generation, aware and howling, weeping and singing Kaddish for the nation decades ago, "rejected yet confessing out the soul". All we have to work from now is the vast empty quiet space of our own Consciousness. AH! AH! AH!

4/17/74

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**A wedding!**

Peter Schjeldahl & Donnie Brooke Alderson will be married in St. Mark's Church this Sunday, May 5, at 3 p.m. Rev. David Garcia will perform the ceremony. Our every best wish!

**THE POETRY PROJECT**  
St. Mark's Church  
Second-Ave. & Tenth St.  
NY, NY 10003

TO

*Phil Whalen*

C/O Zen Center

300 Page Street

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF



**FIRST CLASS MAIL**