

# the poetry project newsletter

Feb./March 1996  
Issue #160 • \$5.00

St. Mark's Church in the Bowery  
131 East 10th St.  
New York, NY 10003



**WHAT'S INSIDE:** Obsessive Love by Hakim Bey • February 14 by Martha King • New Year's Benefit Photos • Poems by Anne Waldman, Elio Schneeman & Mike Topp • Reviews of Amiri Baraka, Simon Pettet, Eileen Myles, The Unbearables, The Norton & Adventures in Lesbian Reading & others.

# contents



Tennessee Rice Dixon

For the past two years, working with Jim Gasperini and Charlie Morrow, created an interactive artwork on CD-ROM "ScruTinny in the Great Round," published by Calliope Media fall of 95'. This multimedia piece is based on an artist's book of the same title created in 1993 in an edition of 22 hand-worked copies. Dixon currently teaches in the MFA computer dept. at New York School for Visual Arts, continues to write, make and exhibit collage works and books.

## FEATURES...

The Poetry Project New Year's Day Reading Photos.....	3
<b>2 Valentine Essays:</b>	
February 14 by Martha King.....	6
Obsessive Love by Hakim Bey.....	10

## POEMS...

Alphabetic Tesseract by Anne Waldman.....	5
Four Poems by Elio Schneeman.....	13
Tapestry by Mike Topp.....	27

## IN EVERY ISSUE...

Submit.....	15
Calendar.....	16
Reviews.....	19
<i>Translucency</i> by Amiri Baraka, <i>New and Selected Poems</i> by William Corbett, <i>Wiggling Wishbone</i> by bart plantenga, <i>MAXFIELD PARRISH</i> by Eileen Myles, <i>Corvus</i> by Anselm Hollo, <i>Selected Poems</i> by Simon Pettet, <i>The Unbearables Anthology</i> , <i>Postmodern American Poetry: A Norton Anthology</i> , <i>The New Fuck You: Adventures in Lesbian Reading</i> .	
Books/Magazines Received.....	28

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**DISTRIBUTION:** Fine Print Inc., 500 Pampa Dr., Austin, TX 78752  
Bernhard DeBoer Inc., 113 East Centre St., Nutley, NJ 07110

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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 for \$20/year. Checks should be made payable to The Poetry Project, St. Mark's Church, 131 East 10th St., NYC, NY 10003. For more information call (212) 674-0910.

The programs and publications of The Poetry Project, Ltd. are made possible, in part, with public funds from the National Endowment of the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs and the Materials for the Arts/New York City Department of Cultural Affairs Department of Sanitation.

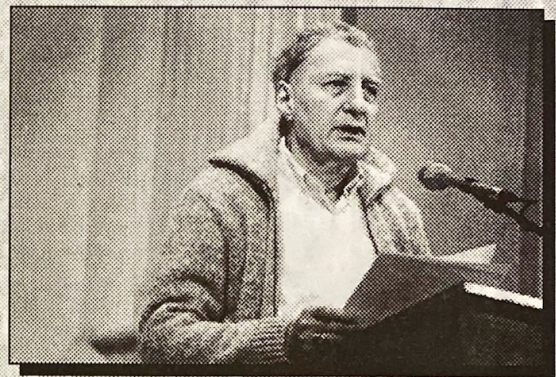
The Poetry Project's programs and publications are also made possible with funds from the Aeroflex Foundation, Axe-Houghton Foundation, Consolidated Edison, the Greenwall Foundation, the Joyce Mertz-Gilmore Foundation, Anonymous Corporations and Foundations, the Foundation for Contemporary Performance Arts, Inc., Warner Brothers Records, the firm of Winthrop, John Sampas for the Estate of Jack Kerouac, Stimson, Putnam and Roberts, Rosemary Carroll, Georgia Delano, Dianne Benson, Lita Hornick, Susan Levin, Larry Lieberman and Peter Pennoyer, Simon Schuchat, members of the Poetry project, and other individual contributors.

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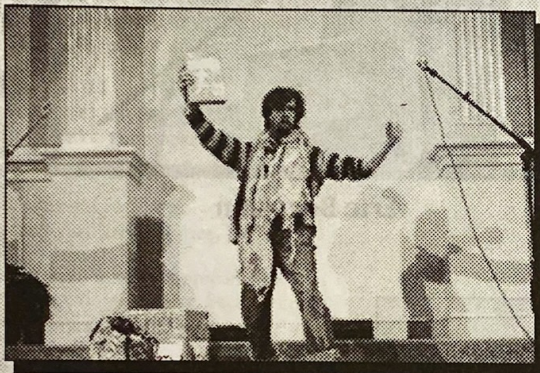
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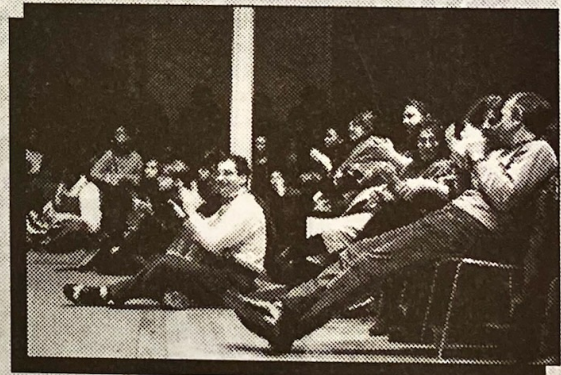
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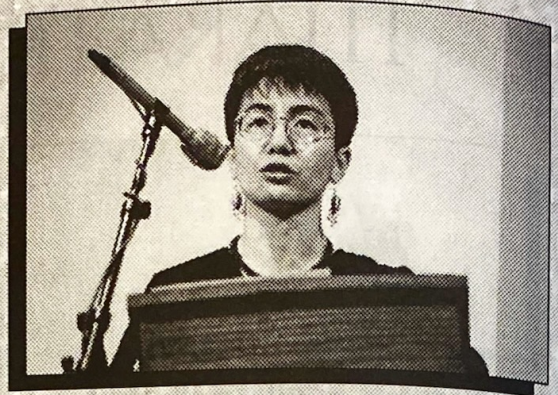


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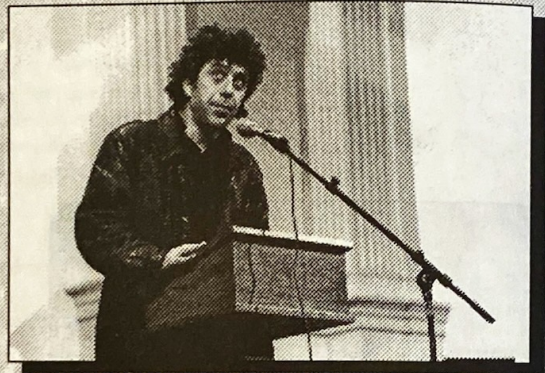
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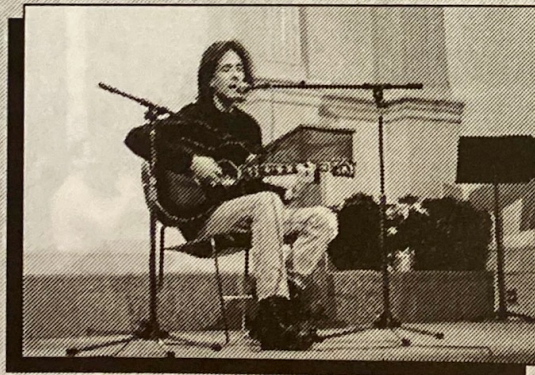
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# ALPHABETIC TESSERAE

for you I have emptied the meaning

Gay mutt, you game it a range, all the letters  
to make alphabet, 26 stars in the sky's sweet noise  
or poem, his last, p. 355, who walks the lettered path  
A is for alphabet, dog it

Much is as bounty, big, beautiful, the blues ("All  
Yr Love in Vain"), eager to be best

Ado much fuss, trouble, excitement, C is for clamour  
or let the demon free

Let D stand at "about" in all directions, a description  
of a boot, lover's body, I said *all directions*,  
words: a description about the house

Trees could be efforts, origin of words: elders,  
elms, evergreen, could be erotic, bend, an entanglement

Lichen is simply a kind of fur

Trouble with *hugs*, sentimental twist but touch the  
word to grasp, grapple, gratify, desire, grates on this  
poet's tongue (mine), fuck instead, "g" string, get down

Alga and come to life the young sun. Care is clear  
a herbal remedy, healthy, get it to the human, Ahhhh

The first person pronoun equals the conjunction "and"  
& includes & includes a kind *intent*

Ground of thallophytes, fun dust: rust, smuts, molds,  
mildews, jittery spore

Keep, "live", kyrie

A liason, don't keep off, don't lift lips away

Each poet-man is clear is a manual labor, an old sun  
making work, it's late, each to his own taste,  
his manner, his mannikin desire, muster courage,  
each to each & breach of musk, more's the plug

Other is no one if I can't feel it  
No one (a hearse), no one (a morgue),  
outré, outer banks, gone beyond gone, notions  
don't fly here, we don't need to read it, no, no

Hoe from *houwan*: cut, hew  
An implement which organizes, Oh! Ouch

It does, it does in a kind of preparation &  
perpetual sleep, dozes, poetry, become cold  
mortar of a pyramid?

Dear, queer, queenly, not in question

Owe is "R" for retribution, *you owe me one*

Another dear has the sum, is sweet too,  
scotched out, *Seeing that sapping I was stunned*

Earth equivalent a kind of terre, terrible,  
treacherous, *Then Ra look down*  
*Think of an entablature of snow,*  
So that we may think in our time  
To a tee, trembling

Terrace is earth, our Ulysses, unanimous,  
goes toward the unique adventure,  
paint me no room at the hotel, *Venus reigns —*  
*unguents*

by  
**ANNE WALDMAN**



Be witness, value  
is money, false views, what Venus risk, love  
is a virgin when it comes, to money, always  
a kind of "V", venom, vying for power

Worship if you dare on Sunday

Coffee is x'd, a Xanthippe

Food? couldn't a poorjoe be? yearn  
how come a vertigo disgrace her  
Poorjoe a boy but you know he a man

Snow: zed, empty, naught, aleatorical,  
the "Z" of our sleep, rest in peace  
*Snow's night's winds on the window rattling ...*

**N.B.**

This exercise in goofy fulfillment of Andrew Schelling's  
Naropa assignment to find the alphabet in Louis Zukofsky's "Gamut".  
"After all there are 26 words..."

**Gamut**

Much ado about trees lichen  
hugs alga and fungus live  
off each other hoe does  
dear owe dear earth terrace  
money sunday coffee poorjoe snow

1978

**A Further Note:**

You might say civilization (cultivation) meets nature in words  
we fuss over, and is named inside them, ascending and descending  
'til we die ordinary (poorjoe) sandwiched fools. And end in weather  
again. Then need to make it a song. Or does it work the other  
way around? "Alphabetic Tesseræ" may be read backwards,  
please do this. Why did I find love & sex for my poem? Because we  
"live off each other." And go the entire range or extent, as of emotion.

"Gamut" was the name used by Guido d'Arezzo for the lowest note  
of his scale. Gamma is connected to Hebrew gimel, akin to gamal or  
camel. And the third letter. How about gam, that woman's shapely leg?  
So *gamma plus ut* which was used as a musical note, taken from  
a medieval song whose phrases began on successive ascending  
major tones: *Utqueant laxis Resonare fibris, Mira gestorum*  
*Famuli tuorum, Solve polluti Labii reatum, Sancte Iohannes.*

Here's the shorter translation:

**Alphabet**

Big clam direct elder fur  
"g" herb I jitter keep  
lip mannikin notes O prep  
queer retreat sap terre un-  
virgin warship x-ed years zip  
\*

Boulder Colorado, snowing

and return to the slick roadway

# February 14

by  
Martha King

February 14

An old encyclopedia I have says Valentine is "the name of a considerable number of saints." My reference dictionary agrees that the two most famous St. Valentines were both martyred in Rome — one a Roman priest and the other a bishop of Terni and not much is known about either. These are old reference books. Both say the Valentines lived (if they lived at all) during the reign of Claudius and died "the same day" (could that mean on the same date?). They were, per sources, buried on the Via Flaminia at different distances from Rome. All the references I have at hand — a 1944 encyclopedia, a desk reference, a history dictionary, a recent unabridged dictionary agree with this one:

"The association of a lovers' festival with St. Valentine seems to arise from the fact that the feast of the saint falls in early spring, and is purely accidental."

In New York, the 14th of February doesn't seem like early spring even in years influenced by El Nino. The *New York Times* of February 14, 1995, had a photograph of two people, bundled into shapelessness against the bitter cold, fishing off Coney Island's Steeplechase Pier.

The only other holiday of equally unknown origin is April Fools' Day. If St. Valentine doesn't seem like much of a saint (I can't think of a church named St. Valentine's), April Fools' Day is even less of a holiday. Except for a tradition of making dumb jokes and screaming "April Fool!" it



April 1. February 14.

Today, February 14, 1995, the *Times* book review concerns the author, Dr. Oliver Sacks, who has fallen in love with his topic and with a woman who exemplifies it. "Disease may help people bring out latent powers" the call-out quote announces. Sacks believes deficits spur the art of adaptation. He loves this art which bends the familiar into novel shapes. The review focuses on a woman whose autism prevents her from experiencing emotions. She has learned to imitate acceptable responses to human interchanges from years of observation and memory training. Sacks has come to love her—which is to say he has written powerfully to convey or possibly to invent a sense of wistfulness which this woman feels at this absence of feeling in her life.

Redemption comes not through Christ's bloody sacrifice but out of a heavenly marriage that reunites Sophia, the passionate and material, with the Soter, the heavenly. Sophia and Soter's children are the guardian angels, one for every human being.

isn't celebrated. But it's one holiday no one will commercialize; lovely thought that, our special April Fool Sale.... The same encyclopedia consulted above suggests that the tradition might have come to England from France where "poisson d'avril" is "the cry of derision that goes up after someone has been sent on a silly errand." "But," the text goes on, "no one can explain 'April fish' any more satisfactorily than they can 'April fool!'"

Today, feminist scholars know to ask straight off, where does a suspect holiday fall in the thirteen-month lunar year? So many days by or for women subsequently became derided and unknown.

6 poetry project newsletter

Valentinus comes just after Valentine in the reference books. Followers of Valentinus were Valentinians. Were Valentines? Valentinus was born somewhere in lower Egypt, educated in Alexandria, and arrived in Rome between 135 and 160 A.D. possibly as a candidate for the bishopric of Rome. Christianity was still a persecuted anti-state movement at that time—Constantine would not be born for almost 150 years, but the church was already established enough for bishop of Rome to be a venerated office. Later Valentinus abandoned the church...one account says because someone else was selected to be bishop. Another source says he never formally renounced Christianity—that it, much later, renounced him.

Books partially lost and reconstructed with later prejudices, books written later, and fragments of books that have survived are the sources of this picture. The whole subject of Gnosticism is clouded with controversies and argument

about the extent or success of many efforts to conceal or distort it. Some sources were written as histories of heresies; thus sarcasm and distaste color the exposition from the start. One source refers to Valentinian sects in Anatolia, which is Turkey, as well as in Italy, so it seems to have been no tiny group. Many powerful missionary mystery cults

ly to assimilate to oneself the divine through external means." My quotation is exact. I think the syntax is remarkable.

The local library offered a little more:

Butler's *Lives of the Saints* (1962 edition) notes that the two Valentines were both martyred under Claudius II, This Claudius, the Goth, brings us more than 200 years later than the Claudius I

tonic principles and conceptions.

One suddenly remembers the vision of Polycarp, dreaming that his pillow is on fire.

In Chaucer, birds begin to pair on February 14, and valentine is an old word according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

On Valentine's Day, 1995, in New York City, the *Times* had a feature story I read

Here are diamonds, champagne, long-stemmed roses; here, charming or silly confections of printed paper and rhyme. Here human lovers, brought together by Cupid, might unite their avarice and greed, their desires for power and surrender, by opening large heart-shaped boxes of brown chocolates wrapped in brilliant satin red; powerfully scented sweets; mountains of lace.

absorbed the Mediterranean world at that time—one changed our calendar from B.C. to A.D.

A belief system erected on "primitive gnosticism" was already flourishing in Egypt when Valentinius was a boy. The mother goddess is at the center of gnostic cosmology. Human nature is conceived of as triple split: the parts are the spiritual, the psychological or psychical, and the physical. Redemption comes not through Christ's bloody sacrifice but out of a heavenly marriage that reunites Sophia, the passionate and material, with the Soter, the heavenly. Sophia and Soter's children are the guardian angels, one for every human being. They, in turn, seek union—sexual union—with the human being they love. This act of love will bring the redemption of reunion—the melding of

thought was meant. Butler's notes a connection to Valentine's Day: Roman boys had a custom of "drawing the names of girls on cards" on February 15, the day of Februata Juno. "Zealous pastors substituted the names of saints in billets given this day." But the 1962 edition says "the connection is doubtful" without explaining why.

Butler's of 1962 presents the two Valentines as two real men, one of whom, the Roman Valentine, was killed in 269. The other, a bishop from Interama, was probably not killed on the same day. It was usual to group similar saints on the same day. *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* (1967) argues that there may have been only one Valentine, the bishop of Interama having been brought to Rome after his arrest. Etc., etc.

carefully, because of its photographs. The one that caught me first was taken in New Zealand in 1954. It shows two young women. One sixteen, the other fifteen. The one on the left, in sensible shoes and dark ankle socks, wears a dark wool coat buttoned to the top and a scarf that I have to call a babushka firmly tied under her chin. The ends are secured inside her coat collar. She steps, keeping her pelvis gripped. She does not stride. Her lips are tight, her eyes averted from the camera. Working class respectability and sexual repression emanate from the forward tilt of her head, her tight shoulders and clenched hands, and the truncated, slightly duck-footed motion of her walk, caught mid-step by the photographer. But she could be beautiful. Her eyes are long and her eyebrows arched straight just above

But she could be beautiful. Her eyes are long and her eyebrows arched straight just above them. Although her face is plump, its contours rise and swell under her eyes, granting her a faintly Asian look so bewitching in the girls of Central Europe.

body and mind, spirit and flesh, the psychic/intuitive and the rational/analytic.

The chief sacrament of the Valentinians (per one source) was sexual union—Sophia with the Soter, the faithful with their angels. And lovers, human lovers, each to each?

Here are diamonds, champagne, long-stemmed roses; here, charming or silly confections of printed paper and rhyme. Here human lovers, brought together by Cupid, might unite their avarice and greed, their desires for power and surrender, by opening large heart-shaped boxes of brown chocolates wrapped in brilliant satin red; powerfully scented sweets; mountains of lace.

This is how my encyclopedia concludes the discussion:

"The lofty spirituality of the Gnostic degenerates over and over again into a distinctly material and sensual attitude, in which all kinds of errors are made actual-

ly. There were also three late Roman emperors named Valentine. None particularly distinguished. Their power might not have been as great as the Bishop of Rome's.

But what about Valentinius, author of *The Gospel of Truth*? All those unions of phoneme and pleroma that give rise to aeons in syzygies...the lowest of which is Sophia, who creates matter, out of which the Demiurge (presumed to be the god of the Old Testament, Jaweh, the unnameable) creates the physical world?

*Colliers* (1972) says the gnostics were active into the 5th century — and discusses the gnostic idea of enlightenment via intuition rather than grace, "an intuition of the mystery of the self."

*The Encyclopedia Britannica* (1980 something), suggests that christian theology was formed and codified as a necessary response to gnostic cults, since they incorporated many christian and neo-pla-

them. Although her face is plump, its contours rise and swell under her eyes, granting her a faintly Asian look so bewitching in the girls of Central Europe. Without her companion one might date the photograph as early 1880s.

The young woman walking next to her wears an expensive light-colored suit over a black scoop-necked jersey. The suit skirt is knee length, full and swingy; the jacket, nipped at the waist, has wide padded shoulders and a bold collar. The top button is undone. This girl wears transparent stockings and shiny leather heels, fastened across the instep with a very slender strap. Her hair is loose and bouncy—and she moves fluidly toward the camera smiling with the easy insincerity of a professional model. One of her hands is also clenched but gently; in fact she may be holding the first girl's hand. The forefinger of her other hand, held casually at her waist, points with iconic

appropriateness to a jacket button at her mid-section. "Me". But the gesture is soft, casual, unintended. Her hand just happens to be there. She is beaming with energetic upper class health; she is mid-twentieth century, and she expects to be noticed. Soon after this photograph was taken she and the girl whose hand she holds were tried and convicted of a brutal murder.

These are the people depicted in a movie called "Heavenly Creatures." An important source for the writer of the movie script were the diaries of older girl, Pauline Yvonne Parker. She is still living, though the newspaper doesn't say where. She and the other—Juliet Marion Hulme—persuaded Pauline's mother to walk with them onto a secluded path in a Christchurch park one sunny Sunday afternoon, where they "repeatedly stuck her on the head with a brick inside a stocking," says the *Times*. They did nothing to cover up the murder. Both young women served five and a half years, the maximum for juveniles, and were released on the condition that they take new names and never see one other again.

Juliet is now well known as Anne Perry, the author of a successful series of Victorian-era mystery novels featuring Police Superintendent Pitt and Inspector Monk. The recent revelation has vastly increased her sales, especially in the U.S. In a current photograph her hair is once again dark and loose. She wears a ribbed vest over a dark shirt—a rumpled "country" look as appropriate and self-assured as she had been forty-one years before. She is still attractive and clear despite the weathering of

her face. She has expressed surprise that this "long past matter" is of any interest to the public.

I look hard into the picture of her face. What mark do I expect to find?

It is February 14. We don't reverse the names of the months to preserve the seasonal relationships of the Northern Hemisphere where August is heat and the scorching away of green and November means darkening days, bare trees, black frosts. Instead, children who grow up in Australia, New Zealand, Argentina, South Africa simply associate month names differently, knowing all the while there is a different world up north. Accommodation to heavenly manners.

Calendar questions are always unresolved melodies. In the west, amalgamated beasts, chimeras, are almost always calendar figures. February 2 is Groundhog Day, but once it was Candlemas, and before that—something about the solstice? May 1 is for communists and labor organizations, but once it was for maypoles and phallic dances. August 1 seems forgotten but once was called Lammas in England. In Scotland it may still be called a Quarter Day, a traditional due date for debts. November 1 is, weakly, "All Saints Day" to justify its more powerful and now cheerfully celebrated eve.

We love the story in which the solution lies hidden in full view—because we know how deeply questionable are each of its essential elements: "story" "solution" "view". ■

*Tibor de Nagy Editions*  
is pleased to announce the publication of

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by James Schuyler & Darragh Park

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— Publishers Weekly

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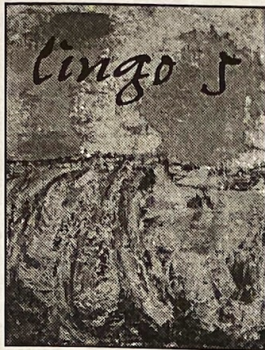
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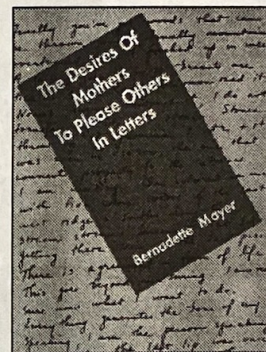
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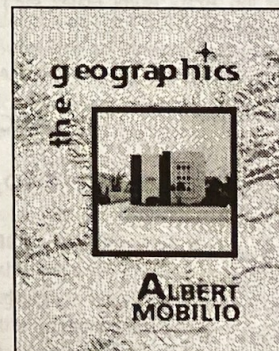
*Haven't wanted to read anything lately, certainly not any of the 500 manuscripts and galleys I get a year. However, I found Solow fascinating. It reminds me of early John Hawkes which is still for me the best Hawkes. The whole dreamscape was especially vivid.* — Jim Harrison  
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By Albert Mobilio

*This impressive first book manages the double ground of a nightmarish surrealism and a dryly perceptive wit. It's as if Humphrey Bogart were taking a good, if final, look at what's called the world. These are poems of a survivor, urbane, intelligent, fact of hope and despair equally. The Geographics is an ultimate detox center for "reality" addicts as thinking becomes the only way out.* — Robert Creeley

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# OBSessIVE LOVE

an introduction by  
**HAKIM  
Bey**

Rough dialectics allows us to indulge an impure taste for history — a dredging operation — bricolage of *suppressed & realized* bricabrac — foolish unsavory outdated practices such as *obsessive love*. Romance is *Roman* only in a terminal sense, in that it was brought back to *Rum* (the Islamic name for Europe & Byzantium) by Crusaders & troubadours. Crazy hopeless passion (*'ishq*) appears first in texts from the orient such as Ibn Hazm's **Ring of the Dove**



(actually a slang term for the neck of a circumcised cock) & in the early **Layla & Majnun** material from Arabistan. The language of this literature was appropriated by the Sufis ('Attar, Ibn 'Arabi, Rumi, Hafez, etc.) thus further eroticizing an already eroticized culture & religion. But if desire pervades the structure & style of Islam, nevertheless it remains a repressed desire. *He who loves but remains chaste & dies of longing, achieves the status of a martyr in the Jihad, i.e. paradise* — or so claims a popular but perhaps spurious Tradition of the Prophet himself. The crackling tension of this paradox galvanizes a new category of emotion into life: romantic love, based on unsatisfied desire, on separation rather than

union...that is, on *longing*. The Hellenistic period (as evoked for instance by Cavafy) supplied the genres for this convention — the romance itself as well as the idyll & the erotic lyric — but Islam set new fire to the old forms with its system of passional subli-

outside the category of mere reproduction. Romance appears therefore as a kind of *gnosis* in which spirit & flesh occupy antithetical positions; also perhaps as a kind of advanced libertinage in which strong emotion is seen as more satisfactory than satisfaction

itself. Viewed as spiritual alchemy the goal of the project would appear to involve the inculcation of *non-ordinary consciousness*. This development reached extreme but still lawful degrees with such Sufis as Ahmad Ghazzali, Awhadoddin Kermani, & Abdol-Rahman Jami, who witnessed the

The Greco-Egypto-Islamic ferment adds a pederastic element to the new style; moreover, the ideal woman of romance is neither wife nor concubine but someone in the forbidden category...

mation. The Greco-Egypto-Islamic ferment adds a pederastic element to the new style; moreover, the ideal woman of romance is neither wife nor concubine but someone in the forbidden category, certainly someone

presence of the beloved in certain beautiful boys, & yet remained (reputedly) chaste. The troubadours said the same of their lady-loves: Dante's **Vita Nuova** represents the extreme example. Christians & Moslems alike

walked a very treacherous precipice with this doctrine of sublime chastity, but the spiritual effects could sometimes prove tremendous, as with Fakhroddin 'Iraqi, or indeed Rumi & Dante themselves. But wasn't it possible to view the question of desire from a tantrik perspective, & admit that union is also a form of supreme enlightenment? Such a position was taken by Ibn 'Arabi, but he insisted on legal marriage or concubinage. And since all homosexuality is forbidden in Islamic Law, a boy-loving Sufi had no such safe category for sensual realization. The jurist Ibn Taimiyya once demanded of such a dervish whether he had done more than simply kiss his beloved. "And what if I did?" replied the rogue. The answer would be "guilty of heresy!" of course, not to mention even lower forms of crime. A similar answer would be given to any troubadour with tantrik (adulterous) tendencies — and perhaps this answer drove some of them into the organized heresy of Catharism.

Romantic love in the West received energies from neoplatonism, just as in the Islamic world; & romance provided an acceptable (still orthodox) means of compromise between Christian morality & the rediscovered eroticism of antiquity. Even so the balancing act was precarious: Pico della Mirandola & the pagan Boticelli ended up in the arms of Savonarola. A secretive minority of Renaissance nobles, churchmen & artists

Romantic love in the West received energies from neoplatonism, just as in the Islamic world; & romance provided an acceptable (still orthodox) means of compromise between Christian morality & the rediscovered eroticism of antiquity.

opted out altogether in favor of clandestine paganism; the *Hyperotomachia* of Poliphilo, or the Garden of Monsters at Bomarzo, bear witness to the existence of this tantrik sect. But for most platonizers, the idea of a love based on longing alone served orthodox & allegorical ends, in which the material beloved can only be a distant shadow of the Real (as exemplified by such as St. Theresa & St. John of the Cross), & can only be loved according to a chivalrous, chaste & penitential code. The whole point of Malory's

**Morte d'Arthur** is that Lancelot fails to achieve the chivalric ideal by loving Guinnevere in the flesh rather than only in the spirit.

The emergence of capitalism exercises a strange effect on romance. I can only express it with an absurd fantasy: it's as if the Beloved becomes the perfect commodity, always desired, always paid for, but never really enjoyed. The self-denial of romance harmonizes neatly with the self-denial of capitalism. Capital demands scarcity, both of production & of erotic pleasure, rather than limit its requirements simply to morality or chastity. Religion forbids sexuality, thus investing denial with glamour; capital withdraws sexuality, infusing it with despair. Romance now leads to the Wertherian suicide, Byron's disgust, the chastity of the dandies. In this sense, romance will become the perfect two-dimensional

obsession of the popular song & the advertisement, serving as the utopian trance within the infinite reproduction of the commodity.

In response to this situation, modern times have offered two judgments of romance, apparently opposed, which relate to our present hermeneutic. One, the Surrealistic *amour fou*, clearly belongs to the romantic tradition, but proposes a radical solution to the paradox of desire by combining the idea of sublimation with the tantrik perspective. In opposing the scarcity

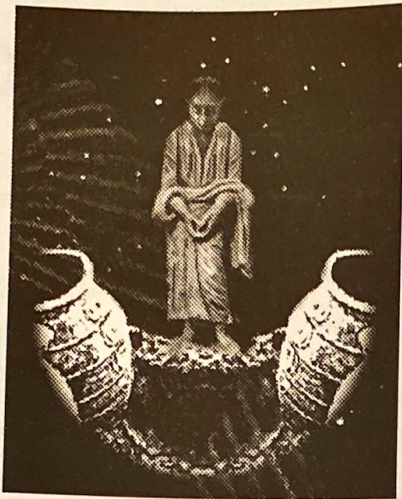
The emergence of capitalism exercises a strange effect on romance. I can only express it with an absurd fantasy: it's as if the Beloved becomes the perfect commodity, always desired, always paid for, but never really enjoyed.

(or *emotional plague* as Reich called it) of capitalism, Surrealism proposed a transgressive excess of the most obsessive desire & the most sensual realization. What the romance of Nezami or Malory had separated (longing and union), the Surrealists proposed to re-combine. The effect was meant to be explosive, literally revolutionary.

The second point of view relevant here was also revolutionary, but classical rather than romantic. The anarchist-individualist John Henry Mackay despaired of romantic love, which he could only see as tainted with the social forms of ownership & alienation. The romantic lover longs to possess or to be possessed by the beloved. If marriage is simply legal prostitution (the usual anarchist analysis), Mackay found that love itself had become a commodity-form. Romantic love is a sickness of the ego & its relationship to property; in opposition Mackay proposed erotic friendship, free of property relations, based on generosity rather than longing & withdrawal (i.e., scarcity): a love between equal self-rulers.

Although Mackay & the Surrealists seem opposed, there does exist a point at which they meet: the sovereignty of love. Moreover, both reject the platonic heritage of hopeless longing, which is now seen as merely self-destructive — perhaps a measure of the debt owed by both the anarchists & the Surrealists to Nietzsche. Mackay demands an Apollonian eros, the Surrealists of course opt for Dionysius, obsessive, dangerous. But both are in revolt against romance.

Nowadays both these solutions to the problem of romance seem still open, still possible. The atmosphere may feel yet more polluted with degraded images of desire than in the days of Mackay & Breton, but there appear to have been no *qualitative* changes in the relations between love & too-late capitalism since then. I admit to a philosophical preference for Mackay's position because I have been unable to sublimate desire in a context of hopeless obsession without falling into misery; whereas *happiness* (Mackay's



Intense longing constitutes a distinct mystical state, which only needs a trace of religion to crystallize as full-blown neoplatonic ecstasy...we romantics should recall that happiness also possesses an element completely unrelated to any tepid bourgeois coziness or vapid cowardice.

goal) seems to arise from a giving-up of all false chivalry & self-denying dandyism in favor of more pagan & convivial modes of love. Still, it must be admitted that both *separation* & *union* are *non-ordinary states of consciousness*. Intense longing constitutes a distinct *mystical state*, which only needs a trace of religion to crystallize as full-blown neoplatonic ecstasy. But we romantics should recall that happiness also possesses an element com-

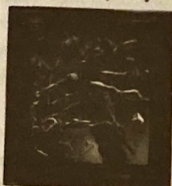
pletely unrelated to any tepid bourgeois coziness or vapid cowardice. Happiness expresses a festal & even an insurrectionary aspect which gives it (paradoxically) its own romantic aura. Perhaps we can imagine a synthesis of Mackay & Breton — surely an *umbrella & a sewing machine on an operating table* — & construct a utopia based on generosity as well as obsession (once again the temptation arises to attempt a conflation of Nietzsche

with Charles Fourier & his *Personal Attraction...*); but in fact, I have dreamed this (I remember it suddenly, as if it were literally a dream) — & it has taken on a tantalizing reality, & filtered into my life — in certain Temporary Autonomous Zones — an impossible time & space ... and on this brief hint, all my theory is based. ■

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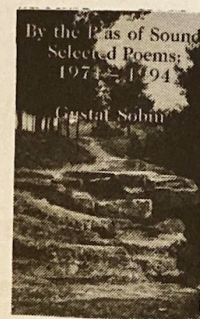
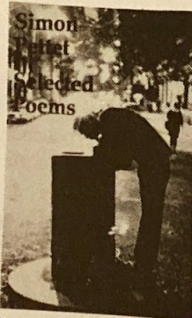


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# Four poems by Elio Schneeman

## Dreaming of Ruin

There's a tiny  
purple flower

half asleep  
in the back of my mind,

an opening in clouds  
where the head goes

on red and green wings  
dreaming of ruins

to meet you  
my daemon, my delight

## January 28th

9 a.m. wake up,  
call in sick  
I'm not  
really  
It's just  
such a beautiful day  
to stay in bed  
and talk on the phone  
(rain outside  
and heavy winds)  
I went out  
for a walk in it,  
my umbrella  
ruined in a second,  
wind blowing  
needles  
of discarded  
Christmas trees

## Winter Dress

I love this fleeting clarity  
that shoots up  
like a flower  
from a steam grate,  
sends messages  
shivering in the afternoon

Memory weaves  
the vacant air,  
the earth  
sighs under duress,

Slips into  
her secret winter dress

## Disconsolate Angels

I've watched so many evenings  
trickle away  
from this shrinking room...

The white package  
lying in the street  
whispers its lying song,

But I know  
the solution  
is not in the solution,

But in air  
where the wind resumes  
its furious song,

And the muttering  
of disconsolate angels  
is heard in the cacophony of the night.

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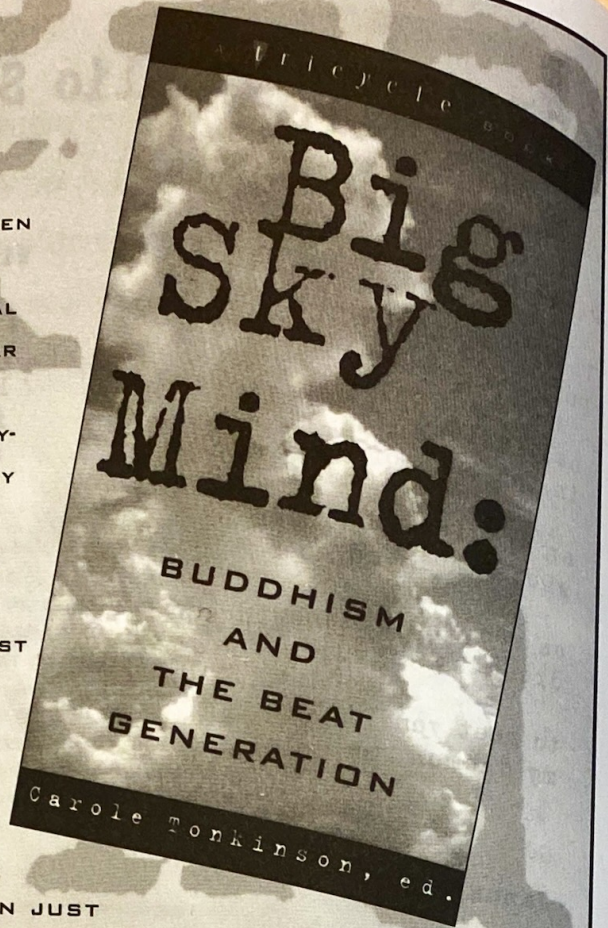
—MICHAEL HERR, AUTHOR OF DISPATCHES

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# submit...

**The Poetry Project Newsletter** is interested in what you are reading. For a later issue of the Newsletter, please send us a list of your favorite reading so far this year. Entries should be no less than three titles, and no more than ten. If you feel the need to rank them, do so. If not, not. Send your recent reading lists to **Mitch Highfill, The Poetry Project Newsletter, St. Mark's Church in the Bowery, 131 East 10th Street, New York, N.Y., 10003.**

**The Vermont Studio Center** offers six 2-week Writing Studio Sessions in fiction, creative nonfiction and poetry during February, March and April. Each is limited to 12 writers. All-inclusive fees are \$1200 per 2-week session, and \$1400 per 4-week writing residency. Financial assistance of up to 50% of these fees is available. Applications are accepted year-round. **For information, write: Vermont Studio Center, P.O. Box 613NW, Johnson, VT, 05656; or call (802) 635-2727.**

**A Gathering of the Tribes Magazine** announces a Poetry Contest! Entries should be typed

and copy edited, one page in length (no word limit), accompanied by SASE and a \$5.00 entry fee. **The deadline is April 1, 1996.**

Congratulations to our own **Edwin Torres** for receiving a \$25000 grant from the Foundation for Contemporary Performance Arts!! Other recipients included Irene Hultman, Joan Jonas, Mary Jane Leach and Bernadette Mayer.

**The New Hasty Papers** is accepting submissions of poetry, fiction, plays, film scripts, musical scores, political essays, criticism, artworks, and photographs. Length and subject are not restricted. The editor, Alfred Leslie, says the first issue will appear in August of 1996. Please include SASE. **Send submissions to Alfred Leslie, The New Hasty Papers, 313 East 6th Street, New York, N.Y., 10003.**

**The Loft (Pratt Community Center)** is offering a National Prize in Fiction and Poetry. Two winners (one in each genre) will receive a \$1000 cash prize, and the winning entries will be published in the **Michigan Quarterly Review**. Entries may include up to three poems or a complete story of no more than 20 pages. Entry fee is \$10.00. Include SASE. **The deadline is March 1, 1996. Send entries to: National Prize in Poetry and Fiction, The Loft, Pratt Community Center, 66 Malcom Ave., SE, Minneapolis, MN 55414.**

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# the poetry project

## FEBRUARY

### 2 Poems for the New Millennium: Volume I

An evening celebrating the publication of this mega anthology hosted by co-editor, Pierre Joris featuring Jackson MacLow, Charles Bernstein, Armand Schwerner, Eliot Weinberger, Cecilia Vicuña and many others! [10:30 pm]

### 5 Open Reading, sign-up at 7:30 pm [8 pm]

#### 7 Paul Auster & Peter Straub

Poet, translator and prose writer, Paul Auster, is the author of several collections of poetry and criticism as well as 8 novels including *Leviathan* and *Mr. Verrigo*. In 1995 Auster collaborated with director Wayne Wang to produce two feature films: "Smoke" and "Blue in the Face." Peter Straub is the author of many best-selling novels including *Ghost Story*, *Koko*, *The Throat* and most recently, *The Hellfire Club*.

#### 12 Gina Bonati & Julianna Leucking

Gina Bonati began performing and publishing in 1988 through various New York City venues including ABC No Rio. She is the author of two books of poetry *The Weight of A Place* and *Resurrection*. Julianna Leucking writes and performs character monologues and devises collaborations with other artists. Her recording projects include two recently released CDs: "DreamCumGoDown" and "Big Broad."

#### 14 Valentine's Day Reading

Over 40 poets and performers including Bernadette Mayer, Elena Alexander, Hal Sirowitz, Ted Greenwald, Linda Yablonsky, Todd Colby, Joan Jonas, Brenda Coultas, Julie Patton, Evert Eden, Judith Ren-Lay and Melanie Nielson swap stories, cherished and churlish, regarding matters of the heart. [7pm, \$10, \$7 for Poetry Project Members]

## MARCH

### 4 Open Reading, sign-up at 7:30 pm [8 pm]

#### 6 Sophie Cabot Black & Vijay Seshadri

Sophie Cabot Black's poems have appeared in *The Atlantic*, *Bomb*, and the *American Poetry Review*, among other journals. Her first collection of poetry, *The Misunderstanding of Nature*, received the Norma Farber Book Award from the Poetry Society of America. *Wild Kingdom*, Vijay Seshadri's debut collection of poems, was described as "full of musical light and dark wit...challenging and heart-breaking," by poet Eavan Boland. Seshadri's work has appeared in the *Threepenny Review*, the *New Yorker*, *AGNI* and elsewhere.

#### 11 Matt Cook & Jill Rapaport

Matt Cook is a performer and poet whose work is featured on the *Nuyo Records CD, Grand Slam* and he will appear in the upcoming PBS film *The United States of Poetry*. Essayist, poet and playwright, Jill Rapaport, is a recipient of a New York Foundation for the Arts fellowship. Most recently, her poetry has appeared in *The Unbearables*, an anthology from the "Unbearable Beatniks of Life" published by Autonomedia.

#### 13 Heart of the Breath: A Celebration of Jim Brodey's Selected Poems

An evening of readings from *Selected Poems of Jim Brodey*, published by Hard Press. Featuring the collection's editor Clark Coolidge with Michael Gizzi, John Godfrey, David Shapiro, Susan Cataldo, Ron Padgett, Charles North, Eileen Myles and John Godfrey.

#### 18 David Michael Nixon & Victove

Writing between American Folk and Magical Realism, David Michael Nixon is the author of 3 collections; *You See Me In The Trees*, *Blue Water Line Blues* and *Hunting the World*. Victove is the curator and host of the *Alterknit Theater readings at The Knitting Factory* as well as the director of a cable poetry program in Newark. New Jersey Victove has written three books of poetry: *DJ. Soliloquy*, *Tributes*, and *Contributions*.



**19 Valery Oisteanu & Ron Price**

Poet, collagist, journalist and art critic, Valery Oisteanu has written extensively on Dadaism and Surrealism. His most recent collection of poetry is entitled *Temporary Immortality*. Ron Price is the co-founder of The Free Peoples Poetry Workshop and the author of *Surviving Brothers* and the forthcoming *The Physicality of Poetry*, an interview with Etheridge Knight.

**21 Albert Mobilio & Gustaf Sobin**

Albert Mobilio is a frequent contributor to numerous magazines including *The Village Voice Literary Supplement*, *Newsday*, and *Lingua Franca*. His poems have appeared in such journals as *Grand Street*, *lingo*, *Talisman* and *Hambone*. He is the author of *Bendable Siege* and *The Geographics*. In 1995 Gustaf Sobin published two books of poetry, *Breaths' Burials* and *By The Bias of Sound: Selected Poems 1974-1994*. He has just completed a collection of essays on archeological vestige in Provence and Languedoc.

**26 Elena Alexander & John Wright**

Elena Alexander is the curator of the "Mad Alex Presents" and "Devotional: Writers' Retrospectives" reading programs at Biblio's Bookstore/Cafe. Alexander recently collaborated with photographer Denise Adler on *Parallel Spell: 7 Pictures/7 Poems*. Celtic scholar and translator of Gaelic poetry, John Wright is the author of several books of poetry including *Bookstore Cowboys* and *fennid*. His work has recently appeared in *Bombay Gin* and *The Earth Prayers*.

**28 Cornelius Eady & Patricia Spears Jones**

Cornelius Eady is the author of five collections of poetry including the Pulitzer Prize nominated *The Gathering of My Name*, as well as *You Don't Miss Your Water* and *The Autobiography Of A Jukebox*. His work has appeared in numerous journals and anthologies and was recently featured on National Public Radio's "Morning Edition." Patricia Spears Jones is the author of several books of poetry including *Home Girls* and *Bessie Smith for Beginners*. David Henderson described Jones' most recent collection, *The Weather That Kills*, as "so straightforward as to bewilder."

**All events at 8 pm, \$6 admission, unless otherwise noted.  
Schedule subject to change)**

**20 Jordan Davis & Leslie Scalopino**

Jordan Davis served as editor of The Poetry Project Newsletter from 1992-94. His work has appeared in *lingo* and *Hanging Loose* magazines. Davis is also the author of *A Little Gold Book*. Teacher, poet, essayist and critic, Leslie Scalopino is the author of numerous books including, most recently, *Objects in the Terrifying Tense/Longing from Taking Place*, *Goya's LA*, *a play* and *Defoe*. She has two collections forthcoming *The Front Matter: Dead Souls* and *Selected Writings*.

**25 Steve Cannon & Indigo**

Steve Cannon is a writer, publisher and the Director of an art and culture organization on the Lower East Side known as the Gathering of the Tribes. An original member of the Umбра Poets, Cannon, continues to shake up the downtown literary scene. Indigo is a Greek and Latin student at Hunter College and the founder of the writer's group *Left-Handed Poets*.

**27 Josephine Foo & Joseph Torra**

Josephine Foo's first collection entitled *Endou: poems, prose and a little beagle story* was described as "a thrill to read," by Jamaica Kincaid. Foo's poems have appeared in many journals including *The Asian Pacific American Journal* and *Kalliope*. Her essays have been included in the *Amerasia Journal* and in *The Best American Essays 1995*. Editor and publisher of *lift* magazine, Joseph Torra is the author of two collections of poetry *domino sessions* and most recently *Keep Watching the Sky*. Torra's work has appeared in journals including *Agni*, *Talisman* and *Notus*.

**29 New York City Poetry Talks: An Evening of Readings**

This program will feature readings by poets in conjunction with the New York City Poetry Talks: *A Convergence Of Questions*, held at New York University March 29-31. Hosted by Robert Fitterman and Stacy Doris, the conference will bring together a wide range of poets who have first published in this decade. [10:30 pm]

The Poetry Project is located at St. Mark's Church in the Bowery • 131 East 10th St., New York, NY 10003  
All events \$6, beginning at 8 pm unless otherwise noted. Programs subject to change. For information (212) 674-0910.

# Writing Workshops at the Poetry Project

## Poetry & Writing Workshop

Taught by David Henderson • Tuesdays at 7 PM

For beginners to veterans, preferably with manuscripts in mind. With an emphasis on new writing on a weekly basis and on previous work only as it relates to the overall concept of the formulation of a manuscript. Not just limited to poets. Prose writers, fiction, non-fiction writers, letter and journal writers and artists in other disciplines are welcome. The emphasis is on the poetry that exists in all writing, in all art, in all endeavor.

David Henderson is the author of the best selling biography of Jimi Hendrix entitled *Scuse Me While I Kiss The Sky*. His Books of poems include *De Mayor of Harlem* and *The Low East*.

## Alchemical Marriage: The Possibilities of Poetry, Performance, and Collaboration

Taught by Wanda Phipps • Fridays at 7 PM

We will explore the interdependent and transformative qualities of collaborative poetry and performance. By using simple awareness and documentation of dalliness, writing becomes the process of recognizing the randomly falling turns of the universe as the only trustworthy syntax. This workshop will include in-class writing experiments, collaborations, journal keeping, guest artists and field trips. Musicians, dancers, singers, visual artists and poets interested in writing and collaborating are welcome.

Wanda Phipps is a writer/performer/translator/dramaturg. Her poems have appeared in over thirty journals, including *Transfer*, *Exquisite Corpse*, *Oblek*, and *The Unbearables Anthology*. She has received a NY Foundation for the Arts Poetry Fellowship. Wanda is a founding member and dramaturg of Yara Arts Group at LaMama.

## Poetry Workshop

Taught by Maureen Owen • Saturdays at 12 PM

Each session will focus on one poet's works. The workshop will read poems aloud and participants will discuss the works. If the poet used a particular poetic form, we will look at that and other examples of the form. Then using our reading/discussion as inspiration, we will have a "free writing" period. The assignment for the week will incorporate material from the free writing and is to be written inspired by the poet we have studied that session or poetic form we have been discussing. Each week participants will read their own assignment poem and entertain comments.

Maureen Owen is the author of eight books of poetry including, *Zombie Notes*, *Amelia Earhart*, *Imaginary Income* and *Untapped Maps*. She edited Telephone Books and *Telephone* magazine through thirty titles of the press and nineteen issues of the magazine.

Workshops cost \$150 which includes membership in The Poetry Project. This fee is good for one year and includes: the option of taking other workshops at no additional cost; free admission to most Poetry Project readings and events; and a subscription to *The Poetry Project Newsletter*. Participants may register in person at the Project office or via mail (The Poetry Project, 131 East 10th St., NYC 10003).

## WORLD #51

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Tim Dlugos, Michael Gizzi,  
Robert Hershon, Laird Hunt,  
Janice Johnson, Gary Lenhart,  
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The Poetry Project would like to express great appreciation to all of the volunteers who helped make the 22nd Annual New Year's Day Marathon Reading such a success: Dominick Arbolay, Eric Asch, Jenny Beck, Beth Borrus, Shannon Brady, Debby Branch, Lisa Brannan, Bridget Brehen, Donna Brook, Jeff Butler, David Cameron, Donna Cartelli, Lisa Colby, Todd Colby, Margery Cortez, Donald Davis, Jordan Davis, Jon de-Vries, Alison Dorfman, Joe Elliot, Nicole Elyse, Merry Fortune, David Greenberg, Pamela Grossman, Edith Harari, Marcella Harb, Bob Hershon, Heather Higgins, Mitch Highfill, Christian X. Hunter, Ken Jordan, Eliot Katz, Shannon Ketch, David Kirchenbaum, Lee Klein, Carolyn Koebel, Buddy Kold, Lori Landes, Brendan Lorber, Kim Lyons, Joe Mangini, Shelly Marlow, Greg Masters, Sophia Mayer, Rebecca Moore, Marc Nasdor, Elinor Nauen, Jonathon Osofsky, Denise Pappas, Carolyn Peyser, Wanda Phipps, Jill Rapaport, Diana Rickard, Angel Rombose, Bob Rosenthal, Douglas Rothschild, Joel Schlemowitz, Mickey Sigal, Rani Singh, Sparrow, Sharon Strange, Mary Sullivan, Edwin Torres, Virlana Tkacz, David Vogen, Vanessa Weiman, Smitty Weygant, Majja Wilder, Robert Wyrod and Cathy Zadoretzky.

We would also like to thank the following vendors for their generous donations of baked goods on New Year's Day: 9th Street Bread Basket, Amy's Bread, Black Forest Pastry, Dapolito Bakery, Jon Vie Pasteries, Let Them Eat Cake Ltd., Marquet Patisserie, Mary Bakery, Pamela's Bake Shop, Scot Paris Fine Desserts, Taylor's, Veniero's, Veselka, Whole Earth Bakery.



# reviews

**Transbluency: The Selected Poems of Amiri Baraka/LeRoi Jones (1961 - 1995)**, Marsilio Publishers (New York, 1995); 267 pages, \$17.95.

Amiri Baraka is one of a handful of contemporary American poets with an international reputation. He is also one of the few American poets recognizable to American non-readers of poetry and one of the few contemporary American poets to have a major impact on the cultural and social life of America.

Although he has been the subject of at least six book-length studies and one documentary film, there had been no available comprehensive collection of Baraka's poetry since the 1979 edition of **The Selected Poems** went out of print in the early 1980's. The recent publication of **Transbluency: The Selected Poems of Amiri Baraka/LeRoi Jones (1961-1995)** is a welcome and significant addition to the current cannon. Combined with the selection of poetry found in 1991's **The LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka Reader** (edited by William J. Harris), the contemporary reader can finally get a full sense of Baraka's remarkable career as a poet.

*MY POETRY is whatever I think I am. (Can I be light and weightless as a sail?? Heavy and clunking like 8 black boots.) I CAN BE ANYTHING I CAN. I make poetry with what I feel is useful & can be saved out of all the garbage of our lives. What I see, am touched by (CAN HEAR) ... wives, gardens, jobs, cement yards where cats pee, all my interminable artifacts ... ALL are a poetry, and nothing moves (with any grace) pried apart from these things. There can not be closet poetry. Unless the closet be wide as God's eye.*

— *How You Sound?*, from **New American Poetry** (1959)

*My writing reflects my own growth and expansion, and at the same time the society in which I have existed throughout this longish confrontation. Whether it is politics, music, literature, or the origins of language, there is a historical and time/place/condition reference that will always try to explain exactly why I was both how and for what.*

— Preface, **The LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka Reader** (1991)

**Transbluency** was put together by the Los Angeles poet, and former editor of *Invisible City* magazine, Paul Vangelisti. Commissioned by Marsilio Publishers, Vangelisti put together the selection of poems included in this volume — with the exception of one early poem removed from the manuscript by the poet.

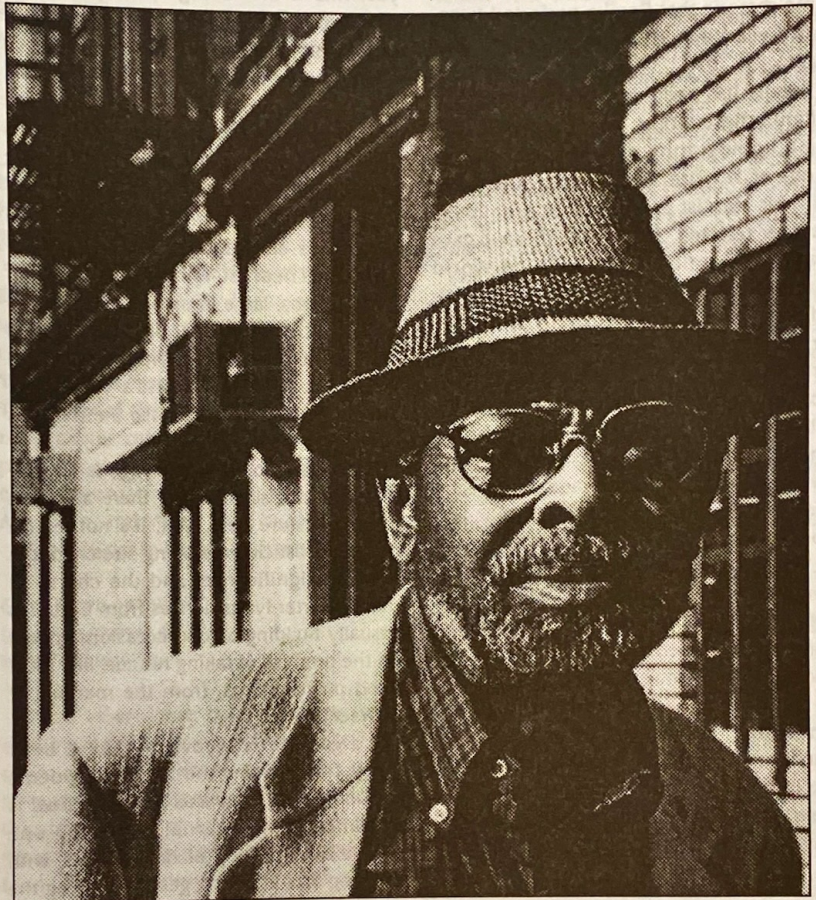
It is worth noting the outside editor's hand as Baraka's own selection in the 1979 edition of **The Selected Poems** was negatively influenced by heavy-duty Maoist politics, and featured many poems understandable only to those deep inside the anti-Revisionist Maoist worlds. Only a handful of poems from that period are represented in this volume.

Vangelisti, however, has chosen to

include nearly all of Baraka's first two volumes, **Preface To A Twenty Volume Suicide Note** and **The Dead Lecturer**, with these poems constituting over 40% of the contents of **The Selected Poems**. Some detractors (like Gilbert Sorrentino in his NY Times Book Review of the 1979 **Selected**) suggest that Baraka "threw away" his talent after **The Dead Lecturer** for the career of a political activist/provocateur. A closer reading of these poems suggest a tension between Baraka's centrality in New York's downtown cultural scene and his centrality among a new community of African-American artists and writers.

*may a lost god damballah, rest or save us  
against the murders we intend  
against his lost white children  
black dada nihilismus*

Baraka's Black Nationalist period (1965-1974) marks his rise as an important political leader through his Congress of Afrikan People and as a powerful force within the Black Arts Movement. The cover of his book of poems **Black Magic** (1969), with its depiction of a white,



blond-haired, blue-eyed voodoo doll riddled with huge hat pins, is stark evidence of the extremes that his poetry of the period would take. Although his poem *Black People* (not included by Vangelisti) has been introduced in two separate court trials as evidence of the poet's violent character (this is unprecedented in American jurisprudence), many of these poems have a tenderness and introspection found nowhere else in his work:

*Those days I rose through the smoke of chilling Saturdays hiding my eyes from the shine boys, my mouth and my flesh from their sisters. I walked quickly and always alone watching the cheap city like I thought it would swell and explode, and only my crooked breath could put it together again.*

Baraka has been a Marxist since 1974 and is, undoubtedly, America's best known Communist. There is a certain irony in this, as the narrow Black Nationalism he denounced as a "form of fascism" (in the NY Times in 1974) is again a potent political force; with the more extreme elements of the movement castigating Jews and whites using the same rhetoric that Baraka perfected twenty-five years ago in his poems, essays and plays.

Baraka has been courageous enough to critique these works in his essays and in his autobiography and not to suppress them or rewrite them — as Auden did with his Marxist poems whose sentiments he later rejected. His Maoist rhetoric gave way to an embrace of a Third World Internationalist Marxism that has generated such wonderful long poems as *Reggae or Not!* and *In the Tradition*. Kamau Braithwaite and Jay Wright are the only contemporary English-language poets who write from such an equally broad and internationalist scope. And like these two poets, Baraka uses a radical and complex prosody to enact his very public and social poetry.

**Transbluency:** "A blue fog you can almost see through" — from a Duke Ellington 1946 composition. An apt title for a book of poems by a poet who, in the words of Ishmael Reed, "is always a nuance ahead of everyone else." **Transbluency** also serves as a superbly functioning example of Duke Ellington's definition of the creative process: "You have to find a way of saying it without saying it."

— Joel Lewis

**New & Selected Poems by William Corbett**, Zoland Books (Cambridge, 1995); 246 pages, \$18.75.

**New & Selected** simply because irrepressible. Because overt and elegant. Because memorial and remedial. There's no need to explain. If we go by the signs, William Corbett's is as true a name as any for the poet of our day.

*There is another world and it is here too.* According to which, good poems would be signposts pointing neither in nor out, but both ways simultaneously, maybe even whirring like crazy, as a singer from another time said of the weathervane. Gists of otherness are jolts to perception that keep us alert and on the move, unless we insist on seeing Vanity and Mortality as disparate outposts within the borders of Consciousness. The pleasures of just looking which Corbett has inscribed take note of mind too, but it is momentary, mercurial intelligence; agile all the way.

*I kid myself, I know, but/it's my pleasure to believe/so harmless a false thing/the broken off instant before/I give up the air's embrace...* There is an almost psychic punctiliousness to much of the gusto, and yes, this is one charge poetry will still deliver on, if you let it. As with any of the momentary phenomena, attention is all it takes. In effect, it is a shift of attention, the drift of mind which determines the line, before metrics and other set patterns get in the way. His signatures are wrought in plain style: run-on sentences with disjunctive glides and ellipses, offset with slight blips of erratic yet secure punctuation. The nearest template for any of these poems, large or small, is improvisation, as the best of them stack up to become accomplished fragments right before our eyes. The world's vernacular. The music happens, because the music is what happens.

Each job of on-going salvage is impressive, and not surprisingly, there are hints of epic gesture here. Still, it's not as if a classic yardstick were being stretched to a broader significance, and the charm of many shorter lyrics derives from Corbett's casually building a solid occasional poem on the premise of taking his cue, like most good postmoderns, from the margins of distraction.

It's good to rediscover, if you've been away from them, the two long poems included here. *Columbus Square Journal* is a grand collage journal, spanning one year exactly, a map of daily rushes, with running lists and lyric gasps sounding the

extended reaches of an all-American New England. *Runaway Pond* is more streamlined, a single unreeling exposure, like a day's full dose of sun. By either procedure he registers a full sweep of dodges and jump-cuts to get you past a random, exacting dailiness to where a rainbow might be expected. No ideas but in things was good advice from the doctor. Except the tears here, exclaims another maker from a longer way back. Picking up both reminders only to start fresh is Corbett's tried and patient triumph.

The book succeeds because each poem in it attests to a redemption. By words, no less, and though it's by a *tyranny of tiny words* that poems reach us, the best to keep us *enchanted/until we long for what we have*.

—Vyt Bakaitis

### Wiggling Wishbone: Stories of Pata-



**Sexual Speculation** by bart plantenga, Autonomedia (Brooklyn, 1995); 157 pages, \$7.

*A Dutchman is a lusty, fat, two-legged cheeseworm*, quoth an unknown seventeenth century Englishman of his Channel rival. Twentieth century ambient techno-Dutchman bart plantenga exposes those imperial mudslingers in *Beat the Dutch Now!*, part of his premier prose collection, **Wiggling Wishbone**, at the same time demonstrating why they don't call it the *nether-lands* for nothing: a *dutchman's shower* is the act of urinating on oneself; a *dutch priest* is a bartender' a *dutch handshake* is masturbation; a *dutch oven* is created when one farts in bed then lifts the blankets; and *dutch by injection* denotes a woman living with a foreigner.

In similar fashion, the list of images in *Psycho-Geo-Cato Travels* creates an effect as breathtaking as the chance meeting of *The Wild Boys* and the Sears catalogue in a speculum sanctorum:

Russians infiltrate the Berlin Zoo. Herr H. eats enjoyable lunch of grey vegetable gruel with his 2 secretaries & cook. He tries to disguise the lameness in his arms, his stooped back and the morphological fact that he had become the crumbling embodiment of his own Reich — the despair of death in the guise of composure. And note bart's disclaimer: This is not a short story and should not be judged as one.

For that matter, neither is *The GG-1 Series of Model Poses*, but rather, like the two aforementioned, is a meta-catalogue of clandestine government goings-on, featuring Joan, the 1983 B&G Queen in the State Department, and Lois, the Silk-Stocking Siren of some 40 Foreign Policy Trade Agreement Films. Submitted for your eruditional titillation, Joan and Lois wear Ralph Lauren's new pret-a-porter copies of antique American chains and shackles worn by actual Chattanooga slaves. Also available are 15 spanking poses utilizing the very effective yet very safe open-hand technique...

Another such catalogue (over half the pieces here are, or contain lists; perhaps the list should be considered "Dutch fiction") is *The Beer Mystic's Contemporary Cocktails*. Have you tried, for instance, *The Amourexix*, concocted of Ex-Lax, bee pollen, Slim Fast, Amaretto and high-fiber bran? Or the potentially lethal *Slamdance Skateboard*? Twenty-four packets of sugar ignite the latent power of 12 ounces each of Budweiser, Rolling Rock, Midnight Dragon, Black Label, Meister Brau and Colt 45. (Wait a minute — no Crazy Horse??)

*The Suppression of Mirth* is, in my opinion, the best piece in the collection, a half-spurious, half-curious investigation striving to answer the question, *Does anyone remember laughter?* Herein, bart's usual high-tension verbal prestidigitation is grounded in fictitious facts:

The notion of a guffaw gaggle of 'anti-social low life scum' has been sharpened by the Lament Lobby, which insists laughter is prurient, like 'spent spiritual effluvia,' & umbilically attached to the sex organs. Thus restraint is a means for accumulating spiritual power.

The less interesting end of the spectrum of work here is "Forensic Science Verifies Auto-Erotica," wherein bart's message is a little muddled by the medium:

The mangled transport vehicle wrecks were installed at strategic points around the city to help re-invest the general populace with a certain fervor. Periodic shopping squalls and localized consumption frenzies, though, seemed to be the sole instincts revitalized by our Collision Dolmen Proposal.

The personae makes too many assumptions too quickly. And who is speaking anyway? A fervor for what? Who is the "our"? And maybe it's me, but the associative visual leap from *mangled transport vehicle wrecks* (already too wordy) to neolithic stone structures is interesting in theory but seems too easy of a mark here. Then again there's the collaboration with Black Sifichi, *Wet Dreams of the Pope*, which, in its exquisite precision of intent and image, reads like a dream of ice skating on frozen lace.

So why should you spend your money and time on this little book? Because, as E. M. Cioran hath said (in *Tears and Saints*), "Wisdom has been Holland's curse, and it has taken it right out of history."

— Sharon Mesmer

**MAXFIELD PARRISH: Early & New Poems** by Eileen Myles, Black Sparrow Press (Black Rosa, 1995); 229pages, \$13.50.

**MAXFIELD PARRISH: Early & New Poems** by Eileen Myles opens with a collection of new poems followed by selections from *Sappho's Boat* (1982), *A Fresh Young Voice From the Plains* (1981), and *The Irony of the Leash* (1978). Spanning most of her career, **MAXFIELD PARRISH** presents a wide range of work written over twenty tumultuous years in American, and Myles' own, history.

The title poem begins with the lines:

*Often I turn on people  
in rather strange &  
inexplicable ways.*

Had I taken these opening words as a warning, I might have prepared myself for the journey I was about to be taken on—through neighborhoods of my childhood; through storms of adolescent drunkenness; through long nights of hunger for food and love; through scenes of some-



Eileen Myles

times tender, sometimes excruciatingly violent sex; through graduations, night shifts, funerals. Though she sometimes adopts the attitude of the child, sometimes of the presidential candidate, Eileen Myles never abandons her powers of description. The richly detailed worlds she portrays in her poems appeal to the senses, summoning physical images which in turn stir the emotions—and beware—in rather strange and inexplicable ways.

The passage below from one of her early poems connects, through the image of lilacs, a memory of a child's expression of love with a surprising emotional response:

*...they used to line the trees on the street  
where I lived. Children in spring bringing  
home big  
armfuls, marching up twilit spring nights  
carrying  
purple lilacs home to mothers waiting on  
screened porches.  
Nineteenth century flower book says Lilac—  
Purple,  
first emotions of love. Surprised me, I  
expected  
death, something melancholic and fading.*

Love for these children was as simple as an armful of flowers. But as the narrator remembers the image, she recalls an emotion of melancholy.

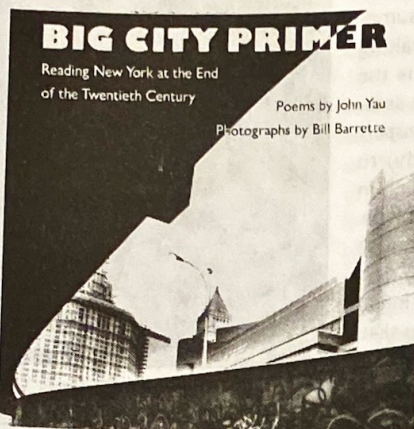
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*But I grew up where lilacs were free,  
didn't everyone?*

In her New York of the present, things are not so simple.

The association between love and death appears elsewhere in this volume. The following passage from one of her new poems illustrates:

*Deep in  
the night  
with thousands  
of lovers  
the sucking  
snapping  
reeling  
flesh  
deep in  
the cavity  
of endless  
night across  
mounds  
of bodies  
I peer over  
is it  
love or  
war.*

The image of bodies lies in some undetermined place between love and war. As in the passage about lilacs, the image serves to mediate between the two opposing concepts, giving the reader a way to experience both simultaneously.

There is so much so well expressed in **MAXFIELD PARRISH**—I've torn a few more lines out of context to give you an idea of the breadth of this poet's imagination. Even removed from their contexts these passages send a reader reeling, remembering events, dreams, visions, smells; things one is pleased to remember and things one would rather forget.

*What can I tell you about  
sadness, the shapes  
you find beneath it,  
how you run from  
it in your sleep,  
bolting awake*  
from **MAXFIELD PARRISH**

*But  
what to do with  
your head  
in my lap  
while the  
world speeds  
by. What  
to call  
this stillness  
in a mission  
but love.*  
from **MAXFIELD PARRISH**

When  
I read  
books I  
think of  
my cunt. If it's  
about love  
of God, the  
hotter I  
get.

from MAXFIELD PARRISH

Who did I think the  
poet was. A talking dog. Who felt her lips  
with her finger-  
tips and wrote that down.

from MAXFIELD PARRISH

I sit on the  
orange boat-bench  
thinking what a fucked up reason for  
suicide that would be,  
just living up to some cop's anticipation.  
Ha! I chuckle,  
my kind of death

and I head downstairs  
where the scum are allowed to  
smoke, the windows thick  
with grime, the smell of  
decades of sour-mouthed  
smokers and I smoke.

from Sappho's Boat

I danced  
Slow once with my lover  
And another high school dance  
Collapsed inside my head.  
That's the beauty of a lesbian.  
Each one of us undoes history  
A little bit & that's alot.  
Do you know we are the new  
Nation? do you know we are  
The Anti-Christ?

from Sappho's Boat

You see that the poet covers a good  
deal of ground on this thoroughly enjoy-  
able ride. The poetry is like a river  
through the woods—but allow me my  
own words of warning: don't vainly mis-  
take this river for a solid road, unless of  
course you can walk on water. Or you  
might end up over your head.

if I'm really vain I could propose to jump  
back into the pool,  
just like it was a room, just like I'm not a  
stupid feather  
on some immense wing. Love's taught me a  
loneliness I never imagined.

from Sappho's Boat

—Tracy Blackmer

**Corvus.** Poems by Anselm Hollo, Coffee  
House Press (Minneapolis, 1995), \$11.95

It has been more than 30 years since  
City Lights published **Red Cats**, transla-  
tions of *three Russian poets of the*  
*so-called Soviet 'Thaw* by a young Finnish  
translator living in London. The copy I pur-  
chased in college falls open to Kirsanov's  
lines, *What? Is not love/enough?/to raze/all*  
*the barriers/strangling/our roads?*

About one-third of the way through  
**Corvus**, a more weary questioner asks,  
*Was there a time when thou, too, wert an*  
*optimist./Falling about in fits of pseudo-*  
*mystical glee?* Well, back when I suffered  
the delusion that progress implied  
improvement, I imagined a future peopled  
with characters resembling Anselm  
Hollo—citizens of the world with nimble  
wits and generous sympathies, who  
betrayed the limits of their national origin  
only through accents formed by nursery  
rhymes and past loves. Now that we seem  
to be progressing headlong into a new  
feudalism, I appreciate even more Hollo's  
cosmopolitan art.

Yes, it's easy after a certain age to  
become an elegiac poet: *when you met*  
*him he was a man/now he is a postage*  
*stamp.* Though lovely valentines to his  
wife assure us of Hollo's domestic bliss,  
his friends disappear one by one, and  
soon it seems a stampede. **Corvus**  
includes poignant verses in *memoriam*  
Hollo's deceased older sister Irina Hollo,  
Joe Cardarelli, Piero Heliczer, Jack Clarke,  
Ted Berrigan, and even Mr. Zoaire, the  
household cat who died in 1994 at the  
age of 20 years.

*as we grow older our nervous systems*  
*decelerate*  
*many thoughts return marked insufficient*  
*postage . . .*

But what lively ghosts float through  
**Corvus** ! I have written elsewhere of my  
enthusiasm for the sonnet sequence  
(*Lines from Ted: An Ars Poetica*) Hollo con-  
structed from lectures delivered by  
Berrigan at Naropa in 1982. Here it is  
accompanied by five other sonnet  
sequences in the section *Not a Form at All*  
*But a State of Mind*. The sonnets include  
lines borrowed from Clarke, Heliczer,  
Gunnar Harding, Edwin Denby, and oth-  
ers. Astounding lines from Piero Heliczer  
return throughout the book. And there is  
the companionable shade of Hollo's  
"favorite Cynic," Diogenes the Dog—who  
invented the word cosmopolitan and,

according to the Grey Fox edition of Guy  
Davenport's translations, lived *with a pack*  
*of stray gods(sic)*. To Diogenes is attrib-  
uted the motto, *I have come to debase the*  
*coinage*, which Davenport interprets to  
mean that the philosopher's business is to  
*assay custom and convention and sort the*  
*counterfeit from the solid currency*.

Hollo's epigrammatic talents obscure  
distinctions between the business of  
philosopher and poet, but not between  
counterfeit and solid currency. Though his  
foremost concerns are poetic, nothing is  
off-limits to Hollo's poems—not fierce  
encounters between raccoons and cats,  
not King Sooper's *destroyer-sized grocery*  
*store*, not waking next to a loved one, not  
the siege of Sarajevo. The note may be  
elegiac, but Hollo remains an experimen-  
talist. That is, instead of leaping to conclu-  
sions, he stays alive to *momentitos of bliss*,  
and does not essay to prescribe the future  
nor any one else's present—which makes  
him perfect foil to that *ideological mega-*  
*gang*, the fundamentalists.

**NOTE FOUND ON MEDITATOR**  
*war bonnets horsemen a waving forest of*  
*lances*

*a lovely sight*  
*if you don't care for what they're attack-*  
*ing*  
*it's John Wayne they're attacking OK no*  
*problem*

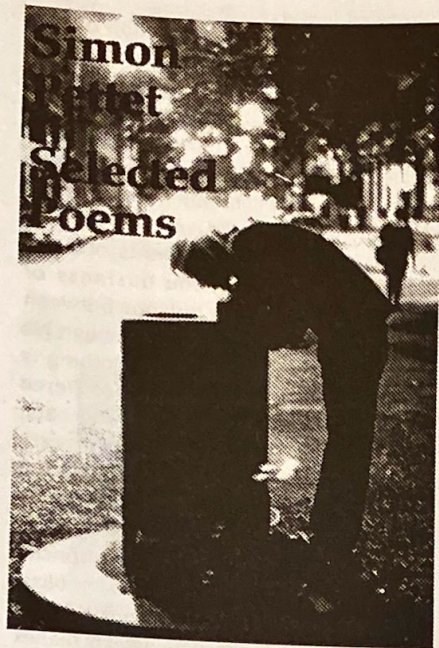
*beauty*  
*knows no ideologically correct routines*  
*beauty knows nothing at all*  
*that's why she asks all these questions*

The eight pages of notes at the back of  
this book are a great bonus. Even when  
read by themselves, they delight, pro-  
claiming the same impossible harmony of  
reason and wildness that characterize the  
poems. **Corvus** concludes with an injunc-  
tion from the assayer of convention and  
*follower of Lingo Rapture to always treat*  
*language like a dangerous toy*. Thank stray  
gods for these sound measures.

—Gary Lenhart

**Selected Poems** by Simon Pettet, Talisman  
House (Jersey City, 1995); 110 pages, \$9.95.

The dimensions of "Post-Modern" poet-  
ry shift continuously. From the long  
poems of the 60's and 70's to the lan-  
guage-centered writing that came to dom-  
inate the 80's, that writing which has



garnered the most critical attention has either been gargantuan or extremely fragmented, or both. Those who insist on "post-modernism" as any particular "type" of poetry are limiting their own pleasure at best. In fact, I've often wondered if we are not all still "modernists," not feeling comfortable with such labels as "post-" anything. In any case, the short lyric has apparently fallen by the wayside in the contemporary poet's rush to be "major."

While reams of paper are bound in ever more complex tomes of ambition and abstraction, the timeless pleasures of the lyric reside in old anthologies and dusty library shelves. This is what many now believe. Not everyone. Not me. I've been reading Simon Pettet's poems for years. Like many other readers of his work, I've been waiting for this collection. The wait has been worth it, because here are poems of such clarity and modesty that one is taken aback (at first);

*The Sentence*

*It is as though he were telling us  
That this small space  
Contains the pattern for  
All eternity.*

There is an almost "oriental" glow to this poem, in the sense that while saying so little, so much gets said. But Pettet is no philosopher-saint — he is the lover:

*First of May, everything  
Conjugates the verb "to love" (amo)*

*Here are the roses  
I am not in the middle of speaking  
of anything else.*

Or again:

*Poem*

*When you permit me to see  
With lucidity my anger  
Know that it shines straight  
Into your dark forest*

*Cutting through the inadequacies  
With which we clothe ourselves  
Like brambles So illuminating  
That private place like some good soldier  
That we call our heart.*

In short, Simon Pettet is the lyric poet on the block right now.

There are dreams and breakfasts and albas and prayers and spells in this book. New York City and its ghosts glide over the surfaces of the poem. Metaphysical concerns are brought down to earth in the language of subjectivity, which can be so much more honest than science. There just isn't anybody else writing poems like these. They contain so much mystery, while presenting such lucid surfaces to the reader. Pettet observes the phenomena around him with clear eyes and a keen ear; he exercises a dry wit, which makes these poems so enjoyable. But in order to write these poems, the poet must have a bottomless heart — and there lies Pettet's secret. However polished or deliberately rough these poems appear to be, they are true. Universals come from such particulars.

*The mathematics of bird song  
Has eluded me until the present  
Laconic cable messages  
Speeding over the wires.*

Indeed.

— ed.

**Unbearables**, edited by Unbearables: Ron Kolm, bart plantenga (sic), Peter Lamborn Wilson and Mike Golden, Autonomedia (Brooklyn, 1995): 288 pages. \$12.

*Soon a rash of Virgin Mary shootings began....Government officials were quick to point out that this fad was merely an aspect of eager consumption, and could be*

*absorbed into the healthy economic pyramid which fed the myth of the free market while at the same time consolidating power and enslaving the masses. Thus the competition escalated as it strove for innovation.*  
—Carl Watson/On Killing Scrim

The writers who form the core group of the Unbearables are a humane, active, heady, productive, innovative tribe. Apart from the gratifying labor of love aspect inherent in pure creation, many are functioning without even a dull glint of approaching monetary gain or media ridden glory. Another attractive attitude they possess that may be a by-product of this previous thought is that the Unbearables have managed to maintain their artistic integrity and a definitive voice without being mindfully exclusionary.

*He said "That train was slow as shit!" and I wondered about the truth of that expression. After all doesn't it depend on the efficiency of your digestive system?*  
—Wanda Phipps/Rose Window Prosettes

Of course often this is not too difficult. Those of us who have persevered know how fast many so-called artists drop their beloved art when they get so much as a whiff of how much work is actually involved, and are faced with the reality that the typical artist will see about as much fame and as many bucks as Van Gogh did when he was still alive. I see the Unbearables as somewhat of a commune of thriving artists who produce quality work against the odds.

*I do believe in miracles; they occur when I'm in a state of grace, acting on the intuitive level, fielding thoughts out of the wind that reason has no language for. Along with an*

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old deck of cards, so worn that the linen shows through the faces, miracles are my legacy.

—Judy Nylon/Doll's Eyes

If the collection could be described by one unifying aesthetic it would have to be its aware, intelligent, blackly humorous outsider voice. It is the voice of the outsider presiding throughout, attesting to the failure of—lots.

Now, enthralled by oppressive thoughts that come sudden, perfect and inevitable, I can comfortably anticipate extraordinary pain the likes of which the man in the street will never know. This certainty becomes the very archetype of my psyche's precise annihilation. I am a being truly transformed by the purity of complete mediocrity.

—Sharon Mesmer/Eleusis

The outsider voice is brazen, a celebration of the humanity of that failure (of lots) and of the commonness of destruction and love, and of course good old fashioned destructive love. The voice of the certifiable outsider is one I always imagined present in acute levels in all writers and artists, at one time. Evidence of the white wash is on the best seller list. Higher education and greed have possibly formed a new disease. Maybe some genius with a Nobel Prize hankering could combine prozac, methadone and AZT. Get rich. Call it a cure and a day.

Clint had a problem understanding duality and paradox. He needed considerable help with contemporary concepts. The way of everybody's fathers had already died out with the dinosaurs. One could no longer embed the reality of others inside oneself, could no longer sell one's product to those with whom one was not equal but peripheral. Capital, in fact, was terminal, and this above all was the downfall of men like Clint, who had made a lot of money in his day not necessarily even believing he was entitled to it.

—Jill Rapaport/clintexc.393 in *pdsk two*, 2.93 (Excerpt from "The Clint Series").

A sidebar penned by editor Jim Feast runs down the right margin at the beginning of each story. The sidebar serves as connective tissue for the stories and includes the name of each author as you come to that author's story. The collection also includes distinctive graphics. I caught my mother thumbing through the book. I

advised her not to look at it and told her it would just disturb her. She inevitably asked why. "Because they're artists," I said while possibly still asleep, "and they write what they want."

*I didn't want to make her beg, she was lonely, cold, old, sick. It was her last wish, or so I thought. I got closer to her and then put my hand on her flank. It was bony. The skin was dry and thin, not velvety, or silky or satiny or even burlappy. It was like fabric but fabric from another planet.*

—Anne Rower/The Last Bikini Wax

I am often struck by the powerlessness of artists. I am just as often struck by the powerful intimacies that result from their powers of observation and their openness. Art only works if you know god doesn't exist but continue to search anyway, aware of and grateful for the futility.

—Merry Fortune

**Postmodern American Poetry: A Norton Anthology**, ed. Paul Hoover, Norton (New York, 1994); 701 pages, \$19.95.

**Slangy Clairvoyance: A Commentary on Postmodern American Poetry**

**Prefatory Note:**

Each of the following passages are hinged on a particular form. What unifies these passages is not a singular vision of poetics nor an attempt to derive from the poems some identity in the postmodern, but rather a desire to make the poems speak to each other, in a common language. This language I have conjured up as a form of commentary, attempting to think through the poem, to persuade the poem to speak discursively. Rather than writing outside the poem or above it, each passage divides and collects elements of a particular poem in order to reconstruct the poetics of the poem in tension with my own, occasionally idiosyncratic inquiries into poetics. That these poems are postmodern stems from their inclusion in a recent anthology, Paul Hoover's **Postmodern American Poetry**, the reading of which inspired my slangy commentary.

**Charles Olson's Librarian**  
(“The Librarian,” Charles Olson)

As a writer I view all of language and especially written texts as my world, the great cosmos of myth. Only to wake up one day and find that all of this, this great library, generative field of my mind itself, that my universe is controlled by the local dealer in books and manuscripts. No that's not it, these things are not for sale, he won't let go of them, I can't make them my own, but he'll let me borrow them: he's the Librarian. No that's not it he's my wife's lover, though he has a girl of his own, he's the intimate of the woman in my parent's bedroom, — though what intimacy can such a boy know? It's unbelievable! No, that's not it, he's no boy, he's the Librarian — and he's made a party for me, he has arranged for me to make a public appearance, to stand in front of everyone and show them what I've got. Not only that but it occurs to me it's not really a library but a fort, a barn, a fish-house, a wharf and there aren't books there but people, fighting, a gang beating up some poor kid, — cops! I run away. I hide in the dark. I cross the bridge. I am on the headland now, I am on the highway, heading home. But it isn't there now. It occurs to me, I am caught in a dream, the landscape of poetry, that Big Man is my librarian — but who is Frank Moore?

**Barbara Guest's Studio**  
(“River Road Studio,” Barbara Guest)

A place of quiet solitude, of separation from the noises of the earth, away from the reality of the highway and building and the rushing up and down of the world — the poet retreats from the everyday demands of contingency and enters into a place from which she can observe and record the metamorphosis of the world. Here, in the writer's studio, the blanket turns into a word, colors turn into language, the window, rain, a bicycle, the absolute, become natural — for like music, say, a string quartet listened to on a gray afternoon, poetry may become as real as the sky, or bricks. This is the strength of poetry, that as it gropes toward the blackness of the absolute it lingers, turns over the edge and becomes something else. Like the artist, the poet transforms matter, organizes words into a new reality, replaces gray for black, sky for sky. Like a builder, the poet makes a picture out of bricks in the rain, carefully. Like a ribbon twisted into a web, a poem loops out into music, hesitates, turns, proffering a window into primary babble. Sound

composed of signs rushing into a blur of leaves, this is not meant to give a complete picture of the world of the poet, this is only a sketch, words on paper, leaves.

### Ceravalo's Realism

("New Realism," Joseph Ceravolo)

Many poets begin with the perception that the world is a transparent medium for poetry: the light of the world has no particular substance as rods might, to live or to die is an approaching moment which does not stick. In such an essentialist poetics the song of the world moves through the mouth, preserving the real, heaven's dream, in the wetness of the voice much as the S in Summer. Form this world, with your mouth, — and yet once the air has fallen from the mouth a limit is reached, a sort of death of the essential. This is the limit of the real, curse that sticks on everything like a rumor to real events. And between two limits the song is a rumor, *flatus vocis*, the voice overheard from coyotes or the wind, magnified by its fall from an earth of greater significance. Like mud, then, poetry whirls about the real, disseminating willy-nilly what does not stick. In poetry we stab at what is fleeting, make light into rods, perhaps they are lightening rods, and the wind make into a song, make living and dying into an approach like that of an animal's cry. Perhaps it is an animal, dying. We make an illusion, just for such death of the word at the moment it falls from the mouth. And this is what there is between us. Realism's virile dream preserves the peculiar light one summer.

*\*flatus vocis*, vocal wind, is the term used by Roscelin (c. 1090), the ultraminalist, to describe the nature of a universal (what is the real for the realists) as the breathing of a word.

### Welish Disappearing

("Crossing Disappearing Behind Them," Marjorie Welish)

Memorized at first glance, a feeling becomes original, revolutionary in event. This is an effect of poetry. Much as the street becomes original thought imitating the street, much as a turn and ruin become lived experience (Erlebnis in disproportion to Erfahrung, in a slangy clairvoyance), much as the common practice of language diverging from intent. In one technique of reading the reader voyages across the poem, arriving independently at three strangers. The author is a stranger. You become strange as I become strange, like the sky, necessary rain, the intention of dusk flung across several minds, who are you? reflected in the poem. Who am I, reflected in this strange but common vista, thrown half-truth arriving at a tree, its petals bending as the author disappears —? Where is the subject, empty space of shadow, shrill coalescence speaking in words of moon, and half-truth of moonlight, its circumstantial silhouette? And raincoat? the accidental raincoat which is not outmoded, not obsolete or derivative but altogether vinyl and necessary? remembering, it is raining in the poem, and remembering the sky goes behind the poem, disappears. Speaking in words, the coalescence of life into intent is expressed, morally and persuasively. The poem makes strange what occurs by passing by crossing paths, as time or language in time disappearing. Crossing independently into vastness the poem flies open out onto the real, flung growth of minds.

—Garrett Kalleborg

\*Barbara Guest's Studio has previously appeared in *WHATEVER*.

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**The New Fuck You: Adventures in Lesbian Reading.** Edited by Eileen Myles & Liz Kotz, (New York, 1995); 312 pages, \$8.00.

The title makes me think of Ed Sander's *A Magazine of The Arts*. So I thought what kind of Fuck is this? Maybe it's a friendly one. I found **The New Fuck You: Adventures in Lesbian Reading** to be a very interesting collection in many ways. The work here is more experimental, wider ranging in it's aesthetic than most anthologies I've read, straight or queer, even though most of the prose works here cover the usual ground of coming out/family conflict stories. There are insider stories that stand alone as well as answer themselves, such as the work of new narrative writers: Dodi/Kevin/Laurie/ Camile/Lisa/Robert. Many lively works of poetry/prose by the new and the established are nestled in here. Many I'm sure to have overlooked, but I'll give you the work I noted. You'll just have to read this reader for yourselves.

Sapphires is always interesting, in her *Norland*, Michael Jackson speaks and it's not camp, it's a real desire to understand the consequences of racism, child abuse and fame; *I wrap myself in a sparkling white glove./ A hand I reach out that touches no one, / velvet of his balls, / hard round of his chest/ the early years to Barry/ about where all the money went/ I'm vacant now, a channel.*

Holly Hughes *Clit Notes* is heartbreaking. She goes home to visit her father on his deathbed. He can't forgive her for

wrecking his chance for a "normal life," the only thing he's ever wanted, *What did we ever do to you? Something must have happened to you. Look at yourself, just look at yourself. You're never going to have a normal life, I hope you know that. What was it? What happened to you? What went wrong? I take my father's questions seriously. I promise I will tell what has made me abandon any hope of ever having A Normal Life. I'll tell him. At least, as much as I remember.*

The lyricism and mystery of gender make *A Fiction of Masculinity* by Millie Wilson, standout, *She was not built for a false situation. She was a looming rowdy, a prize package and a tower of conceit. The degree of her excitement was not a thing to outlaw her. She objected strenuously to being thought beyond the pale. She let out a breath of ecstasy and spread black diamonds on white paper. She was the richest playgirl who ever came down like a wolf on the fold.*

Other noted work includes: Carmelita Tropicana's campy *Speech at the L.U.S.T.*, *Conference* and Laurie Weeks' sensual/cyber landscape entitled *Barium Swallow*.

This is a fine collection. We need more pussy-centered text in our world.

Actually, we need a pussy-centric universe.

I'm ready for **Further Adventures in Lesbian Writing**.

—Brenda Coultas

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## Tapestry

Sometimes I think that my life is like a tapestry, being woven by God and history on an enchanted loom. And then I think, "Hey, how much is this thing going to cost?"

Mike Topp

## BOOKS RECEIVED

John Allman, **Inhabited World: New and Selected Poems 1970 - 1995**, Wallace Stevens Society Press (Potsdam, 1995); 157 pages, \$14.95.

*The cud/of a violent cosmos/spewed into the eventual/coolness of a peony's interior*

Ralph Angel, **Neither World**, Miami University Press (Oxford, 1995); 94 pages, \$9.95.

*Each step/a shock of joy.*

Antler, **Your Great-Great Grandfather's Puberty Boners: Four Poems**, Permeable Press (San Francisco, 1995); 8 pages.

*I didn't read Nietzsche for nothing.*

Antler, **Subterranean Rivulet**, Falling Tree Press (Moravia, 1996); 27 pages.

*The shit of mice and voles/contains fungus from truffles they ate...*

Star Black, **Double Time**, Groundwater Press (Hudson, 1995); 63 pages, \$10.00.

A collection of long sestina-based poems which generally address relationships and landscape. Interesting technique employed in the form, passionate voice.

Steven Boulais, Jeanette Johnson, Michael C.W. Johnson, Tony Ried, Steven Valentine, eds., **Under Dawn's Eye: Poems From the Street**, Miller Freeman Publications (San Francisco, 1995); 96 pages.

This anthology comes from the Episcopal Community Services Skills Center in San Francisco. Strong, deeply felt poetry by Tony Jo, Elijah Blue, Lydia Viser, Decio Rosa Silva, and others. Recommended.

Charles Bukowski, **Living On Luck: Selected Letters 1960's - 1970's, Volume 2**, Black Sparrow Press (Santa Rosa, 1995); 283 pages, \$15.00.

If 38 books by Bukowski are not enough for you, here's another (yawn).

Tom Clark, **Like Real People**, Black Sparrow Press (Santa Rosa, 1995); 240 pages, \$13.50.

Nice large selection of recent poetry by one of the most consistently

inventive poets around. These poems move through biography, criticism and nostalgia like wind through city street in February. Fast, intelligent and funny (sometimes bitter), Tom Clark keeps writing these poems. Remarkable. Recommended.

Jeffrey Conway, **Blood Poisoning**, Cold Calm Press (New York, 1995); 28 pages, \$7.00.

*I'm having sex with a man I've never/met before in a room with two single/beds when Elizabeth Taylor stumbles in/drunken. The man tells me to hide under/one of the beds, so I do. Liz plops/down on the mattress I'm under and it sags,/pressing against my back. She giggles/then passes out.*

Bill Costley, **Siciliconia**, The Beehive Press (Bayonne, 1995); 23 pages, \$4.00.

Poems inspired by first visit to California, which is a very big and various place.

Steven Dalachinsky, **People, Places**, The Beehive Press (Bayonne, 1995); 44 pages, \$6.00.

This collection is really two books — **People** and then **Places**. The People part is mainly a collection of poems about painters and jazz musicians and Kerouac. The Places part is about Japan, Austria, Switzerland, France and Woodstock. The jazz poems are ok, but most of this work is a bit too sentimental for my taste.

Michael DeCapite, **Travel Notes**, Price of A Drink Press (San Francisco, 1995); 28 pages, \$5.00.

A slim volume by one of the best prose writers around. An easy pleasure to read. Highly Recommended.

Stephen Dobyns, **Common Carnage**, Penguin (New York, 1996); 135 pages, \$12.95.

*More sex, more books, more cake, more murder —*

Robert Gluck, **Margery Kempe**, High Risk Books (London, 1995); 162 pages, \$11.99.

Two narratives woven together: that of Margery Kempe & Jesus. Fascinating and innovative fiction by Gluck (no stranger to innovation). Highly Recommended.

Eamon Grennan, **so it goes**, Graywolf Press (St. Paul, 1995); 85 pages, \$14.00.

Conservative, but well-crafted poems — descriptive without being exhaustive. Not bad.

Jessica Grim, **Locale**, Potes and Poets Press (Elmwood, 1995); 86 pages, \$10.00.

Elegant poems which speak to the analytic side of the mind, in the open ended post-language sentences Grim has mastered. Highly Recommended.

Barbara Guest & Anne Dunn, **Stripped Tales**, Kelsey St. Press (Berkeley, 1995); 43 pages, \$14.00.

Remarkable collaboration between the crystal-clear Barbara Guest and her long-time friend, the artist Anne Dunn. Luminous poems and gorgeous drawings and prints, offered on fine paper in a limited edition. Very Highly Recommended.

Sam Hamill, ed., **The Erotic Spirit**, Shambhala (Boston, 1996); 199 pages, \$18.00.

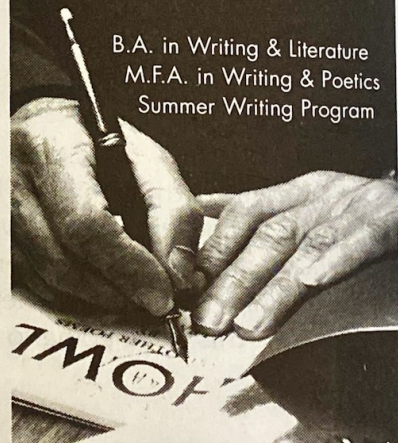
Beautiful anthology of love and longing, including works by Sappho.

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Catullus, Li Po, Rumi, Petrarch, Kabir, Sor Juana, Keats, Dickinson, Lorca, Kelly, Creeley, Broumas and Levertov. This would make a wonderful gift for a loved one. Recommended.

Patricia Hampl, ed., **Burning Bright: An Anthology of Sacred Poetry**, Ballantine Books (New York, 1995); 178 pages, \$20.00.

Mystical poems from Rumi, Chuang Tzu, Attar, St. Francis, John Donne, George Herbert, Henry Vaughan, St. John of the Cross, Hafiz, Clare of Assisi, Rilke, Celan, John Clare, James Wright, Wallace Stevens, WH Auden, Marina Tsvetaeva, Allen Ginsberg and others. Recommended.

R. Cole Heinowitz, **Daily Chimera**, Incommunicado Press (San Diego, 1995); 122 pages, \$12.00.

Jack Collom says, "Get in on the ground floor, get this book!" — and he's right. Highly Recommended.

Bob Hicok, **The Legend of Light**, University of Wisconsin Press (Madison, 1995); 79 pages, \$10.95.

*We who were speeding now inch toward fate.*

Laird Hunt, **Fragments for Radio**, Rodent Press (Boulder, 1995); 60, pages.

*My back is covered with birds.*

P. Inman, **VEL**, O Books (San Francisco, 1995); 61 pages, \$8.00.

Textbook L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetry. Very formal as experimentation goes, but funny enough to overwhelm theory, and sharp enough to relieve incomprehension. Recommended.

Kenneth Koch, **One Train**, Alfred A. Knopf (New York, 1995); 74 pages, \$20.00.

Especially for the long poems *Io* and *A Time Zone*, this book is essential reading for Koch fans everywhere, and what a great way to enter his work if you've never read it before. Highly Recommended.

Tom Konyres, **Sleepwalking Among the Camels: New & Selected Poems**, The Muse's Company (Montreal, 1995); 131 pages.

*To die my hair and live again.*

Eric La Prada, **Study After Hokusai: Signatures**, The Beehive Press (Bayonne, 1995); 26 pages, \$4.00.

This collection of studies after various painters is both ambitious and (often enough) satisfying. I particularly enjoyed the Renoir poem.

Francis Ponge, **The Nature of Things**, translated by Lee Fahnestock, Red Dust Books (New York, 1995); 52 pages, \$6.95.

Lovely prose poems. This book is considered by many to be the "key-stone" of his work. Aptly translated but presented in a rather lifeless design. Still, Highly Recommended.

Janet Mason, **When I Was Straight**, Insight To Riot Press (Philadelphia, 1995); 35 pages, \$7.00.

*The cathedral of my cunt is a real cunt-nundrum.*

Pierre Martory, **The Landscape Is Behind The Door**, transl. John Ashbery, Sheep Meadow Press (Riverdale-On-Hudson, 1995); 113 pages, \$12.95.

Distinctive poetry by a poet who is barely translated into English at all. Ashbery's versions are startling in their quiet way, as must be the originals. Recommended.

Ben Mazur, **White Cities**, Barbara Matteau Editions (Cambridge, 1995); 53 pages, \$10.00.

*I have got new shoes of foal, dressed up just like Robert Lowell!*

Duncan McNaughton, **Valparaiso**, Listening Chamber (Berkeley, 1995); 132 pages, \$10.00.

Haunting collection of poems that take place in New Orleans, chock full of blues and jazz, spells and Spanish, dream and waking language. Highly Recommended.

Pat Mora, **Agua Santa: Holy Water**, Beacon Press (Boston, 1995); 129 pages, \$17.95.

Mora writes advice from an Aztec Goddess. Her poems have a distinctive Mexican flavor, but it is in her spells and her letter to Frida Kahlo that she secures a place for herself above the fray of ordinary poetics. Highly Recommended.

Frederick Morgan, **Poems for Paula**, Story Line Press (Brownsville, 1995); 69 pages, \$8.00.

Gentle lyric poems with great feeling and restraint (Eliot would've loved this book).

Judith Morley, **Miss Laughinghouse & the Reluctant Mystic: The Collected Poems**, Black Thistle Press (New York, 1995); 169 pages, \$12.00.

*Time magazine announces/God is dead./Of course; I killed him.*

Alice Notley, **The Descent of Alette**, Penguin (New York, 1996); 151 pages, \$12.95.

This amazing narrative poem finally appears as a book. Although my first experience of this work was hearing Alice read from it at the Ear Inn, it is a very different experience to see it on the page. It is one of the most brilliant and odd works to come around in many moons. Visionary and radical, this is a must for all serious readers of contemporary poetry. Highly Recommended.

Rochelle Owens, **Rubbed Stones, Poems From 1960 - 1992**, Texture Press (Norman, 1995); 86 pages, \$8.00.

This selection from Owens' work covers 32 years of experimental writing, letting it all hang out in a way few younger poets have the nerve to do. Fine poetry, but sloppy printing and design work by the press. Oh well, it's worth it anyway. Highly Recommended.

Jaime Sabines, **Pieces of Shadows**, trans. W.S. Merwin, Marsilio Publishers (New York, 1995); 205 pages, \$12.00.

This selected poems of the eminent Mexican poet is long overdue and well worth buying. The work is rich in myth and understatement. The translation by Merwin is lovely. Highly Recommended.

Sonia Sanchez, **Wounded in the House of a Friend**, Beacon Press (Boston, 1995); 94 pages, \$15.00.

Sonia Sanchez just gets better and better every book. Tender and fierce at the same time, Sanchez maps out new territories of the soul in this collection. Very Highly Recommended.

Miranda Seymour, **Robert Graves: Life On the Edge**, Henry Holt & Co. (New York, 1995); 524 pages, \$37.50.  
Luscious biography of Graves, with steamy gossip and a thorough index. Highly Recommended.

Gustaf Sobin, **By the Bias of Sound: Selected Poems 1974 - 1994**, New Directions (New York, 1995); 169 pages, \$13.95.

Delicate lyric poetry by the only expatriot poet anybody reads over here.

Cole Swenson, **numen**, Burning Deck (Providence, 1995); 78 pages, \$8.00.  
*a v of geeseldestroys glass*

Henry Vaughan, **The Complete Poems**, Penguin (New York, 1976 - 1995); 718 pages, \$14.95.

This 17th Century Welsh poet is most well known for his religious poetry, which is quite beautiful. But Vaughan's works include many hermetic and "scientific" poems as well. He also translated Boethius' **Consolation of Philosophy**, some of which is included herein. Certainly not everyone's cup of tea, but worth a spin. Recommended.

Noelle Vial, **Promiscuous Winds**, Story Line Press (Brownsville, 1995); 105 pages, \$10.95.  
As in hot air.

Keith Waldrop, **The Locality Principle**, Avec Books (Penn Grove, 1995); 110 pages, \$9.95.

Strong prose poems with metaphysical overtones; *not the ordinary/physical/light inasmuch as/they generally see/best in the dark*

Michael S. Weaver, **Timber and Prayer: The Indian Pond Poems**, University of Pittsburgh Press (Pittsburgh, 1995); 124 pages, \$15.95.

Progressive in their message, these poems are a bit conservative in their style. Nevertheless, some fine lyric poems are here.

Mac Wellman, **The Land Beyond the Forest: Dracula and Swoop**, Sun & Moon Press (Los Angeles, 1995); 110 pages, \$12.95.

Two remarkable plays set in the Transylvanian mode. Recommended.

Bruce Whiteman, **Visible Stars: New & Selected Poems**, The Muse's Company (Montreal, 1995); 115 pages. Mostly prose poems coming from all directions — botany, physics, music, sex and history. Worth a read.

## MAGAZINES RECEIVED

**AGNI, NO. 42**, Fall-Winter 1995 (Boston, 1995); Biannual. 243 pages, \$8.95.

Features poetry by Albert Goldbarth, Eugenio Montale, Harvey Shapiro & Michael Benedikt. Nice review of Wieners by Joe Torre and an essay on Joe Brainard by William Corbett. Recommended.

**AMERICAN BOOK REVIEW, VOL. 17, NO. 2**, Dec. '95 - Jan. '96 (New York, 1995); Bimonthly. 32 pages, \$4.00.

Interesting section on Cyber-literature, reviewing several such products. Recommended.

**THE AMERICAN POETRY REVIEW, VOL. 24, NO. 6**, Nov./Dec. 1995 (Philadelphia, 1995); Bimonthly. 60 pages, \$3.50.

Poems by Ralph Angel, Julia Alvarez, Tom Clark, Elizabeth Spires, Eamon Grennan, Sharon Olds, Richard Cecil, Judith Berke, Fleda Brown Jackson, Jorie Graham, Charles Tomlinson, Mark Cox & Stanley Plumley. Reviews of Kenneth Koch, Langston Hughes & Edgar Allan Poe.

**ANEMONE**, Fall Equinox, 1995 (Chester, 1995); 24 pages.

Features Jamey Jones, Mark Senkus, Bridgett Jensen, Robert Chute, George Angell & others.

**ARSHILE, NO. 4**, Fall 1995 (Los Angeles, 1995); Biannual. 133 pages, \$10.00.

Features John Asbery, Gillian McCain, Mark Salerno, Barbara Guest, Aaron Shurin, Laura Moriarty, Kenneth Koch, Amiri Baraka, Yoko Ono & Richard Kostelanetz. Highly Recommended.

**AUSTIN WRITER, VOL. 15, NO. 11**, November 1995 (Austin, 1995); Monthly. 12 pages.

This issue features Jerome Parker, Marvin Kimbrough, Floyd A.

Freeman, Lana Castle & Marcelle Kasprovicz.

**AVEC, NO. 10**, Fall-Winter 1995 (Penn Grove, 1995); Biannual. 185 pages, \$8.50.

Features work by Susan Smith Nash, Peter Gizzi, Cole Swenson, Laura Moriarty, Ann Lauterbach, Keith Waldrop, David Bromige, Sianne Ngai, Nick Piombino, Douglas Messerli, Charles Bernstein & others. Highly Recommended.

**BEET, NO. 12**, Fall 1995 (Brooklyn, 1995); 40 pages, \$3.00.

Features Bonny Finberg, Deacon Lunchbox, Edward Mycue, Sparrow, Mike Golden, Tsaurah Litzky, Mike Topp & others. Loads of fun. Recommended.

**THE BLAH LOCATION**, October 1995 (Detroit, 1995); 12 pages.

Features Karl Wenclas, Patrick McGowan, Max Sitting, Arthur Salon, K. Hodge & N.H.

**BOO, NO. 5**, (Vancouver, 1995); 16 pages.

Reviews of dance, theatre, art & literature, largely from the Vancouver area. Entertaining.

**CONJUNCTIONS, NO. 25**: The New American Theatre, ed. by John Guare, Fall 1995 (Annandale, 1995); Biannual. 351 pages, \$12.00.

Amazing issue with new plays by Amy Freed, Arthur Kopit, Ellen McLaughlin, Joyce Carol Oates, Suzan-Lori Parkes, Paula Vogel, Wendy Wasserstein, Mac Wellman & others. Highly Recommended.

**CRAZY HORSE, NO. 49**, Winter 1995 (Little Rock, 1995); Biannual. 125 pages, \$5.00.

Featuring works by Michael S. Harper, Martha Ronk, Martin Espada, Cortney Davies & others.

**DUSTY DOG REVIEWS, NO. 25**, Fall-Winter 1995 (Mill Valley, 1995); Triquarterly. 16 pages, \$3.00.

Reviews of small-press chapbooks. Recommended.

**FRICTION, NO. 9**, Fall 1995 (Boulder, 1995); Biannual. 52 pages, \$5.98.

Featuring Andy Clausen, Ira Cohen, Jim Cohn, Jack Collom, Darrin Daniel,