

Poetry Project

NEWSLETTER



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"Jack Smith" by Gary Sullivan

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Books Received

A mere sampling.

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News and Announcements

The Poetry Project would like to thank all the businesses that donated food for the 28th Annual New Year's Day Marathon Reading: **2nd Ave. Deli, Buttercup Bakery, Cupcake Cafe, Fern Cliff Deli, Hot & Crispy Bakery, Meredith's Bread, La Palapa, Sullivan Street Bakery, Sticky Fingers Bakery, Vaselka Restaurant, Veniero Pasticceria, and Vesuvio Bakery.**

News From Naropa: Archive Goes Digital

Since its founding by Allen Ginsberg and Anne Waldman in 1974, the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics at Naropa University has recorded about 4000 hours of readings, lectures, panels, and other events representing major figures and trends of post World War Two American literary arts. The collection grows by about 100 hours per year.

Our preservation and access project is

now gearing up to transfer the collection to CDs, then to computer files to provide web access in partnership with the National Gallery of the Spoken Word, a consortium of sound archives headquartered at Michigan State University.

Using CDs rather than the current standard archive format—reel-to-reel tape—cuts costs immensely. However, the major funder of audio preservation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, has never funded a digitally-based project. So in addition to demonstrating our worthiness, our application to the NEH must also make a case for digital archiving.

Our argument rests on redundancy—the ability to produce multiple copies of an item in various media rather than banking on one or two copies in a single format; technology—the greater likelihood, in the long term, of being able to find a CD player or computer than a reel machine, also lab tests suggest a

CD may last a century, while tape requires redubbing every 10-20 years with a loss of quality between generations not experienced in digital copying; and cost—initial costs plus having to redo the project every decade or so, and the large storage space required for reels place current practices far beyond the reach of most arts organizations.

Success in our bid for funding may pave the way for other organizations with unique audio collections. It will also mean that we need matching funds. If you are able to help, please make checks payable to Naropa University and mail to the Director of Development, Naropa University, 2130 Arapahoe Avenue, Boulder Colorado 80302. Please note "archive" on the check memo line.

—Steven Taylor, Director, Naropa University Audio Archive Preservation and Access Project

(Cont. on page 30)

Letter

Dear Editor:

I want to thank you for printing Siri Hustvedt's wonderfully perceptive mini-essay on the Events of September 11. They are the words I remember from the October 3 reading.

Sincerely,
Patricia Spears-Jones
Brooklyn

Letter to the Editors re "Siri Husvedt"'s [sic] imitation of Kenny G.:

"No Investigation, No Right to Speak"—Mao Zedong. The dismal "nowhereness" of feigned sentiment passing as understanding should be opposed. Especially from someone posing as an intellectual or "worse" (?),

an artist.

The world must be penetrated, analyzed and understood, and even more importantly, changed. Merely to whimper about the horrors of a world, dominated by imperialism, national oppression, racism, war, fascism, offering not the slightest insight or concrete rationale, offering only their "horror" at it all, is the warped alienation of the liberal blinded by intellectual laziness and comfort corruption.

To use words, without the slightest indication that they are understood, or that any investigation has gone on, merely repeating the courtesan media is the behavior of the trained marionette, or someone practicing to be the "sensitive" middle management mouthpiece for the actual murderers.

Tossing names and places, bereft of clear perception or thoughtful rationale as mis-used "buzzwords" co-signing a non-existent

humanism, reflects the always passive sympathy (one of opportunism's masks) of the career bystander.

Brecht spoke of the *theater of instruction* vs. the *theater of psychology*. One wants to open the mind and expand it to grasp the phenomena of the world, the other merely to titillate with "sadness," "joy," "anxiety," "sensuousness," & c. preaching mostly backwardness couched in sentimental hype.

To deprecate the Chinese Cultural Revolution with various kinds of Colonialism, Fascism, National Oppression is not even a polished application to enter the ranks of the internationally financed intellectual call persons. The ugliest denouement, is when our informationless hurt person admits that the only difference between all the pain and ugliness and horror and murder he name-drops and the WTC is "it happened

(Cont. on page 6)

from "A Swarm of Bees in the High Court"

by Tonya Foster

Part 1

1.
as always there is
the black robe, the platt-platt of
a robust gavel.

as always, there is
is/was. What will be is
just peripheral

2.
this is how grief will
enter a body—water
into water goes

this is how grief will
be corrupted—loud talk of
its middle hour.

4.
Urban widows wear
your habits well, your mourning
is just pudding-proof

Urban widows wear
your mourning secrets, like a
tongue in a closed mouth

6.
"What is an urban
tomato?" asks the focused
Rice. Cause for concern.

7.
inconsolable
places—our peninsular
regrets—just fingers

8.
"I want to be like
Mike," says we, want to wear his
skilled skin on my feet

I want to be like
Mike, says we, just as long as
I can take him off

9.
steel comes in many
shapes and sizes, like bodies of
sound, of flesh, into

steel comes in many
forms: baking, driving, cutting,
building, resolve, death.

10.

A bullet ain't got
no name, no neck, no notions
of right, time, or left

A bullet ain't got
no address, no love, no need
for satisfaction

bullets can cover
a page, train an eye—look! can
pepper a body

bullets can cover
a page, train an eye—look! "Be
ready," says the Bush

Part II

1.

Bounce-bounce goes the ball
on painted concrete. Target
the hoop with instinct

Bounce-bounce goes the ball
Hand-ground-hand. Till the concrete
with motion and sound.

2.

If your ball's a bomb,
Hand-eye, hand-eye, button
Depend on lines of light

If your ball's a bomb,
Justice is triangulation
Without much eye strain.

3.

In the lit-air above
and on broken concrete—un
poetic pigeons

In the lit-air above
pigeons wheel and hover, a
form in flight, not flight

tennis shoe pigeons
bounce, bend the cautious boughs—eat
wind with toothless mouths

tennis shoe pigeons
of our nature, mark now by then,
know "them" by profiles

4.

We understand light
Within a form. The sand, or
Water whipping it.

We understand light

We say because of what we
Say: "flash," "blaze," "blind"

5.

Kim takes a comb, parts
His hair, his story, into
Sections on the stoop

Kim takes a comb, parts
(some MTV exec writes
"her legs slash vulva")

7.

Objects will not grieve
Bodies, skin isn't grieving
just what lives in it

Objects will not grieve
Ideas are just the skins in which
we live until we don't

(Cont. from page 3)

down the street." It indicates that too many of our "intellectuals and artists" are ripe to become the Lord Haw Haws of Bushwackery.

Amiri Baraka
Newark, NJ

Siri Hustvedt replies:

After reading Mr. Baraka's splanetic letter about the short piece I wrote for the Poetry Project after the attack on the World Trade Center, I understood that he is right on one point: he and I are in fundamental disagreement, not only about politics, but about the nature of the world itself. He is wrong about what I know and don't know, however. I did not toss off names and places without knowledge of why I was mentioning them. My reading of history has led me to conclude that crimes against human beings have been committed under the banners of myriad ideologies, both religious and political, and that what ideological zealots share is a belief that they own the truth. I am not so lucky. I know that I am not in possession of absolute truth, and I know that the small truths I have discovered in my life were not found either in manifestos or religious

tracts.

Mr. Baraka seems to think that because my beliefs don't tally with his, I must be in league with both the mass media and the present government in Washington, but the truth is I have long opposed much of American policy abroad and am nauseated by the media's coverage of almost everything. I am not in the business of justifying American abuses at home or in other countries anymore than I am in the business of justifying the Cultural Revolution in China. I have no idea where Mr. Baraka has gotten his information about the Cultural Revolution, but my reading of innumerable personal accounts of the events that took place during that period, as well as the many conversations I had with people in China during the weeks I spent there in 1986 left me sickened and appalled. I doubt that even Mr. Baraka is ideologically pure enough to have survived that political moment without a grueling self-criticism session. Indeed, had he been allowed to remain alive as an artist and intellectual, he would most likely have found himself shipped off to the countryside without much to eat and nothing to read but the Chairman's little red book.

As for proximity to the events of

September 11, I confess that losing people close to me affects me more deeply than the loss of strangers. This doesn't mean that I believe that the senseless death of any person anywhere should go unmourned or unaddressed. It is simply an acknowledgment of ordinary human feeling.

A last quibble: if Mr. Baraka wanted his quotation from Mao be taken seriously, he might have done the minimal "investigation" necessary to spell my name correctly in his letter and further, to discover that I am, in fact, a "she" and not a "he."

New from Singing Horse Press:

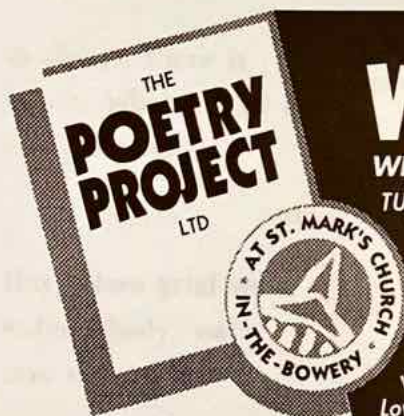
Lewis Warsh

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WRITING WORKSHOPS

WRITING WORKSHOP - Juliana Spahr

TUESDAYS AT 7 PM: 10 SESSIONS BEGIN FEBRUARY 19TH

This is a writing workshop in the most literal sense. We will meet weekly to write together. Each week, the class will focus on different improvisational, expansive, and experimental methods for generating new writing and for extending tired writing habits. As we do this, we will ask, how do we best engage directly with the unedited quality of what's going on around us and incorporate this into writing? Then we will talk about how to bring what we've written into our more crafted work. Juliana Spahr is the author of *Fuck You-Aloha-I Love You* (Wesleyan) and *Response* (Sun & Moon) and a co-editor of the journal *Chain*.

POETRY WORKSHOP - Frank Lima

FRIDAYS AT 7 PM: 10 SESSIONS BEGIN FEBRUARY 22ND

Expand poetic consciousness. Write in the world of the ordinary—when it appears there is no inspiration. The workshop will explore: forms such as the ode, sestina, and sonnet; abstract poetry, i.e. where meaning and content are found in language textures and landscapes; and approaches to vigorous editing. There will be regular writing assignments and readings from O'Hara, Koch, Berrigan, Ashbery, Ponge, Vallejo, Neruda, Senghor, and others. Frank Lima's books of poems include *Beatitudes* (Hard Press), and *Inventory: New and Selected Poems*.

POETRY WORKSHOP - Todd Colby

SATURDAYS AT 12 PM: 10 SESSIONS BEGIN FEBRUARY 23RD

The workshop will arrive at the poem from several directions through the use of experiments that will "open our eyes to the bright beam of words and wordplay." In-class writing is on the agenda, as well as direct observations of phenomena and spontaneous outpourings of pure group genius. Todd Colby is the author of *Riot in the Charm Factory: New and Selected Work* (Soft Skull Press, 2000), and the editor of *Heights of the Marvelous: A New York Anthology* (St. Martin's Press, 2000).

A Troublesome Spring

(Excerpt from *Edward Dorn: A World of Difference*)

by Tom Clark

II. *A Troublesome Spring* (1947/1962)

1. The Story of Morton Draker (Competitive Plots)

Morton had always had a difficult time doing anything with an inner sureness. I suppose it is true he never did, and never shall. There were long ruminating days during the summer, on the farms in Illinois....

Among the most interesting and telling of Dorn's several unpublished early prose works is a lightly-fictionalized autobiographical sketch of some 6000 words concerning his uneasy coming-of-age—and discovery of a world of difference—in the period around the end of and just after World War II. A determinedly if incompletely distanced portrait of the artist as self-exiled prairie son, the sketch deals with a tenuous life-passage otherwise absent from Dorn's writings.

The work was produced during the cold spring of 1962 in the converted shed of an Idaho ranch where the writer was dwelling with his wife and three children. The surviving draft appears to represent a start on an autobiographical novel that would remain unwritten beyond a single completed chapter (Dorn's typescript is followed by another few handwritten pages that may have been intended as a prelude to further action). The draft he left behind among his papers when he departed America in 1965 was later recovered and preserved by his stepson and loyal archivist Fred Buck. It bears the handwritten title "a troublesome spring for a young man," with the final four words incompletely effaced.

Dorn submitted a draft of "A Troublesome Spring" to Scribners for their 1962 *Short Story* competition, a

widely respected annual showcase of new fiction talent. Along with the autobiographical sketch he included a piece on his Seattle waterfront wanderings (later published under the title "1ST Avenue"). It was not Dorn's first attempt at the Scribners prize. He'd started shooting for it two years earlier, when invited by Robert Creeley's editor at Scribners, Donald Hutter, to submit a manuscript. On his initial try Dorn had sent three pieces from Santa Fe, including "Notes About Working and Waiting Around" and his tender lyric portrait of "the slender Beauty" of New Mexico, from a novel in progress.

The autobiographical sketch fared no better at Scribners than Dorn's earlier entries. Donald Hutter would later report to Creeley—as Dorn's informal representative—that while he'd found signs of promise in the "very direct, alive fragments of ramblings along the Seattle waterfront," he saw little commercial hope for Dorn's accompanying "longer, more 'rounded' narrative dealing with a cross country runner"—i.e., "A Troublesome Spring." Through Creeley, Hutter then asked for a look at Dorn's novel of life and work in the Skagit Valley, *The Rites of Passage*. In its turn that "more 'rounded' narrative," too, was turned down. Similar failures greeted the same Dorn material at Grove Press and William Morrow, where *Evergreen Review* editor and anthologist Donald Allen was promoting it. The cold hard facts of Dorn's negative marketing prospects, as they became clear, could not but have represented to him a return of the old social gap, original source of his estrangement. As for his autobiographical project, he was left to lament with Blake "the desolate Market where none come to buy." For whatever reason or reasons, he abandoned "A

Troublesome Spring."

The main action of the piece takes place in 1947, during the spring and summer of the alter-ego protagonist's final year of high school in a "small obscure town" on the Illinois prairie. "15 years ago is a short time," Dorn's narrator declares, stating the mode and motive of the work in its opening paragraph: "Still, almost any meandering of time back will give a difference to a reality, as it is remembered."

The story line of Dorn's autobiographical sketch involves his hero, Morton Draker, in parallel competitive plots. In each of these plots the youth is aided by his natural gifts and by a certain measure of stubborn determination, but impeded and finally overcome by a disabling social deficiency. The concentration on issues of class and status suggests Dorn intended to project social disqualification as a critical thematic concern in telling his early life. Here he attempts to account for and reckon with a determining disadvantaged condition perhaps best summed up in the epithet "embarrassing," reiterated at key moments.

Dorn involves his hero in twin competitions, parallel avenues of struggle that appear to converge in a common objective: the young man strives to become the best 440-yard runner in his rural secondary-school conference, and to attain the social prize represented by the favors of the most widely coveted unmarried girl in town (not coincidentally, she is also among the wealthiest). Both efforts culminate during the troubled spring of his final high-school year in stinging, humiliating defeat. While Dorn relates these matters in a dry, matter-of-fact manner, doing his best to retain a storyteller's objectivity, the subtextual tensions created by the autobiographical purposes of the piece contribute much of its urgency. The writer is belatedly toting up the psychic toll of his own tenuous, trial-and-error-riddled emergence into adult life.

Though he loses crucial races to certain particularly defined rivals, and the girl to another, unidentified rival (who eventually marries her), it is Morton's class-fate, rather than any individual or individuals, that seems to blame for all his losses. In the case of the protracted, problematic love relationship, a disabling mutual incomprehension between the youthful principals, Morton and Pat, is traced by Dorn to the dramatic disparity in their families' socioeconomic status. While Morton's mother and stepfather are caught in a bitter struggle to keep the family above the rural poverty line, Pat's father, a merchant, operates a respected and successful local business—a "monopoly in town.... An important thing to own in a farm commu-

nity. And with it went the self-assurance that goes with a monopoly." (In Dorn's text, the girl's father owns the only hardware store in town, whereas the father of her real-life prototype, Phyllis Sprinkle, had in fact owned Villa Grove's only Rexall pharmacy.) Pat herself, with that golden self-assurance in her blood and in her air, reduces the socially maladroit Morton to awkward confusion with her first smile: an unexpected hero's trophy proffered upon him toward the end of his sixteenth summer in the privileged precinct of her "monopolist" father's place of business, marking the beginning of the courtship with an unsettling augury of things to come ("He was so nervous and flattered he forgot what he had come in for, something for his step-father"). Later on as well a class-related confident assurance seems to typify the girl's behavior, at least in Morton's mind. Stunned at first by her evident willingness "to be his steady girlfriend, even though she was very pretty and the daughter of the most important man in town," as time goes by the

The cold hard facts of Dorn's negative marketing prospects, as they became clear, could not but have represented to him a return of the old social gap, original source of his estrangement.

earnest, self-doubting youth comes to distrust this inexplicable favoring, and grows worried he's actually being toyed with—used by Pat to spite a pack of her well-heeled suitors, who would presumably be impressed by her ability to claim anything she desires as her own: "that she could have had as a companion the son of a dentist was certain, but it [i.e. going steady with Morton] was her way of saying she was too ambitious to put up with the best the town had to offer, and thus made her independence clear." (By specifying the competition as "son of a dentist... the best the town had to offer," Dorn privately referred to Gordon Taylor, the closest male friend of his early years.)

Pat's outward appearance of social assurance is the thing that distinguishes and empowers her. Morton himself, disadvantaged by a specific deficit in family social position—direct result of a dire lack of money or property—is possessed of no such protective veneer. At critical social moments he is afflicted by a disabling habit of betraying himself. Making himself over for other people, he loses himself, slipping out of touch with his own insistent, nagging reality. A reader winces along with him when the girl's curious gaze falls upon the exposing commodity signs of his poverty: the contents of the Draker family's grocery bag. "She saw a

box of Ritz crackers and mentioned she liked them. He was very embarrassed although he didn't say so. They were a luxury for his family, something they shouldn't even have had. He couldn't get the thought out of his head."

We make out in this episode as in many of the revealing incidentals of "A Troublesome Spring" an initial structure of shaming, giving us cause to further read Dorn's shy distances as self-recovering withdrawals from the constraints and embarrassments of the social—that "World of iron thorns" of which he wrote in an early poem ("Like a Message on Sunday"), in which the humiliations of his class situation accumulate and intermingle to create complex thickets of pain. The small obscure town on the banks of the Embarras comes into focus at key moments in Dorn's autobiographical text as a theater of ritual trial in which the hero's bouts with secret guilts and shames represent at once the perils imposed in the course of his persistent aspiration and the proof of his unworthiness for the prize. How could a poor farm boy like Morton ever truly qualify to take possession of this elusive girl, object of the whole town's desiring gaze, most precious commodity in a community built on farm futures, material goal of what we see to be an impossible idealistic quest?

For many years he would dream of this girl. He loved her very much the first time he saw her in the store. She had large brown eyes and a nice way of laughing. And a wonderful quick way of looking away when you looked at her. But he could never afterward remember her voice. When he later became really close to her he loved her no more than he had that first time. Because then the whole pre-occupation was how to hold her, how to one day be great and successful, although he never knew it was success that seemed to be demanded, but it was a sense of some mean[s] to hold them together always.

Morton's pursuit of the middle-class entry credential, the socially-determined, legitimizing "means" to securing the approval of others, traps him in an anxious repeating cycle, his touchingly futile upward-mobile efforts followed inevitably by awkward, painful falls from grace. In effect he is running to keep up, all through this story; the "means" remain just out of his reach. Dorn's detailing of the ambitious youth's near-misses recalls the earnest futility of Dreiser's heroes. Morton makes a bid to gain the girl's respect by his athletic feats, scoring "several early triumphs on the track"; she is discouragingly "not impressed." He toils at his books in order to earn senior-year academic honors; she takes him to task for having been so lazy earlier. The cheap yellow carnation corsage he buys her for the spring prom wilts before he gets it to her door, and when they hit the dance floor he's embarrassed to

note that "all around them there were girls wearing more substantial orchids."

Dorn occasionally represented himself in conversation as having been a high-school track star, but in this unselfsparing autobiographical account it is his failures down the stretch that preoccupy him. Morton Draker's lack of self-assurance haunts him even on the cinder track, causing him to wilt at decisive moments in the presence of more substantial "orchids." In one race during a meet in the neighboring town of Newman, he semi-deliberately "holds back," putting out only a halfhearted effort in a tacit gesture of concession to a particularly "cock sure" competitor. The rival, Anderson, is known for his social-sexual prowess. He "had been around... had a reputation with the girls not only those who live[d] in N[ewman] but those in the surrounding towns too, which is no small accomplishment because those towns are terrible in their clannishness, their restrictions." In the wake of this galling if partially self-inflicted defeat, humiliated loser Morton revisits the rival's town to exact a pathetic symbolic revenge by pilfering turnips from a farmer's patch, a further compulsive self-shaming. "It made the boy a little ashamed when he thought of going to Anderson's town and committing such a petty and unimportant theft. It punctuated in his own mind his ineffectuality."

The comically inept sexual self-education of Dorn's young alter-ego hero reminds us of the autobiographical chapter "The Early Days" from *The Rites of Passage*, in which the farm boy's first solitary fumbings with the instinctive and imposed meanings of the body are darkly, if matter-of-factly, recounted. Here in "A Troublesome Spring" Dorn's inventory of Morton Draker's early sexual history begins with school days and yields a single bathetic incident: a study-hall proposition that somewhat to Morton's surprise wins the girl's consent, but leads, after a trepidated stroll through the willows by the river, to balking embarrassment in the patriarchal shadows of a barn doorway and terminal loss of nerve ("he hesitated not knowing what exactly to do beyond the major idea he maintained in his head"). Notwithstanding his sexual unknowingness, however, Morton is far from incapable of loving. His love for Pat, we are told, inflicts a "certain sharpness of feeling," and is felt keenly for years beyond the end of the relationship. Though acute, the feeling is largely idealized. Physically, Morton's love for Pat remains to the end "unrequited," or at least unsummated, the closest call coming two years into the courtship, when front-porch necking results in Morton's inadvertently soaking the girl's dress with an uncalculated ejaculation. Dorn treats the incident as an embarrassing and confusing *faux pas*, an ironic reverse fulfillment that leaves the innocent young couple in anxious dismay: "She cried and wondered if she

(Cont. on page 11)



New from The Owl Press



Zoop
prose poems by
Carol Szamatowicz

"Carol Szamatowicz uses the prose poem as a medium of total inclusiveness. Zoop is a riveting book!!"

—Lewis Warsh



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Each chapbook: \$4 • Jensen/Daniels chapbooks can be ordered from SPD: 1-510-524-1668

(Cont. from page 9)

would become pregnant, Morton assured her it was impossible but thinking about it more and more wasn't sure."

For all Morton's earnest but unsure amatory striving, ultimately the frustrating relationship, with its long history of mutually yearning youthful inexpressiveness, simply evaporates, as he and Pat finish school and the girl goes off to college.

But that spring was the last of their love. To the end unrequited and painful to the extent that they [Dorn first typed *he*, then by hand amended it to *they*] wanted to really love no matter how uneasily. This spring they were both to graduate. Usually they dated on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights. And of course saw each other during the week at school. But for most of all of every day Pat was in the thoughts of Morton. He had to learn from a friend that she was going away to school in Western Illinois. The last day he saw her was after school had ended, he was walking up town with a friend past the tennis courts by the community building, he had a book of hers and asked his friend to go over to her house and give it to her. He waited by the courts. When his friend returned and they had continued their walk toward town he asked how she was, hardly wanting to hear the reply, and hardly hearing it. He had nearly given up hope of ever seeing her again. It was intensely true to him that his entire body choked up at the fear of losing her, of never again holding her in his arms and talking intimately with her as they used to do.

In the disappointed aftermath of love's troublesome spring Morton again is driven to indirect expression of his sense of defeat. With some companions, he sets a series of fires in abandoned buildings around town. (These destroyed structures remained landmarks of vacancy and absence for Dorn as late as 1968, when in "Driving Across the Prairie" the returning son is driven through Villa Grove, "past some places which are not there now because in our youth we burnt them down.") Though Dorn's hero "passively" masterminds the gang of "amateur arsonists" — "he didn't exactly direct the event but when they had shown signs of backing out he urged them on" — he escapes retribution even as his accomplices are apprehended. Though "grilled for days [by] the sheriff," they decline to implicate him, out of pity "because his parents were so poor and wouldn't have been able to pay the fine." At the level of the law, "Morton got off scot free." Unpunished but guilty, the boy observes the penitent "conversion" of his co-perpetrators to his own Methodist congregation. Though he boasts a perfect attendance record at the church youth league, he too senses there is a debt to be paid, and is forced to quail alongside them under the baleful "cocked eye" of a stern "new preacher." The latter figure is drawn on Dorn's powerful memory-image of the dour Reverend Aldridge, he of the grim burden, "It's not okay, and it's not going to be okay." But the right-

eous judgment of the severe congregational reformer, instead of relieving troubled conscience, only exacerbates its pains for the boy. Here the fable within the sketch disperses Dorn's authorial persona into past and present projections, as judged and as judge. One recalls his comment around this time to Olson that he couldn't help gazing upon his own surroundings with "a cocked eye."

Morton Draker's difficult season of coming to age reaches its bitter nadir in a scene of confrontation with his stepfather. Dorn here indicates another major stress point in the psychic rift system that threatens to fracture his hero's identity into so many ill-fitting pieces, churchgoer / juvenile delinquent, would-be lover / ineffectual loser, loyal ("good") son / ungrateful, rebellious ("bad") son. Long masked by his shy, diffident, somewhat dreamy manner, Morton's inner tensions finally "come out" into the open in this passage of the sketch. The blowup ensues when, driven by lovesick distraction to stray overnight from home, Morton is accused of asserting a wayward "independence," and receives a dressing-down from the angry stepfather. The tender trigger of the boy's self-questioning, his sensitive not-yet-manhood, becomes the point of attack.

This spring has been a turmoil inside Morton, going and coming from school and many evenings not returning but staying in town with a friend rather than go home to the bitter resentment of his folks, who are busy with their own lives but who think Morton demands too much independence. His step-father one morning stopped Morton in the garden. He was standing with the hoe in his hand. Why don't you ever think of your mother he said, why do you stay away without letting us know, you're not a man yet, not by a long shot, and if you think you are I'll let you have it with this hoe. It was too much for Morton. But all the shame he felt for neglecting his parents, for staying away days at a time, came out in the bitter feelings of don't I take care of myself, and what do you care anyway, what does anyone care about me.... Morton was afraid he was lost.

At this stage of impasse hints of a struggle over the hero's mother hang in the air, but remain unresolved, and the eighteen-year-old's momentary exposure of carefully concealed feeling only renders him more ashamed, conflicted and isolated than ever. For the troubled young man the losing battle over manhood with his stepfather represents the original unequal competition.

.....

Poet Tom Clark has written biographies of Kerouac, Berrigan, Olson and Creeley. *Edward Dorn: A World of Difference* will be published by North Atlantic Books in March 2002.

From The Book of Jon

by Eleni Sikelianos

Introductory Note: I set out to write this family history for very personal reasons, but I am having trouble knowing what they are. One hopes to exorcise a few skeletons, perhaps, but that is paltry compensation for the monumental emotional voyage undertaken; more, one hopes to make sense of a handful of fragmentary lives, to lend harmony to the overwhelming chaos that is a family and its stories. This story embraces morphine and heroin addicts, refugees, Ionian counts, one of the richest families in the U.S. who exhausted their fortune attempting to revive the ancient Greek theatre, Lithuanian Jews, a half dozen musicians, a painter, several poets, a lesbian, opium-runners, waitresses, a burlesque dancer named Melena the Leopard Girl (my maternal grandmother) and a dwarf (one of her five husbands), all landed, eventually, on the coasts of our American homeland. It begins in lands and times we do not know—on Irish isles, on the amber plains of Anatolia, under the golden light of Attica, with ship-farers and wags—and snakes through the early reaches of recorded history on this continent, runs through Bohemian America, and crashes right into the average story of all those happy hippie plans gone awry.

I see the lines of our ancestors laid out in filaments looping here and there, bifurcating, disappearing; there are breaks in the thread and dead-ends into the dark where this or that sister took a boat from Greece and was lost forever from the fold; men and women who found each other or for reasons of circumstance were thrust into each others' arms, radiating out along the great line in pairs; for however much they loved each other or other sexes or lived apart, always in this long arrow stretching back to our first humans hunting in the bush somewhere on a far continent in an unfathomable time, it was and is a man and a woman, two-by-two, each representing a small electrical hyphen of human intelligence and endeavor illuminating the path that leads to me sitting here—; men and women, each with bright eyes, loving each other in the dark before the advent of writing; or a brief encounter, maybe forced, that led to the continuation of a line; these packets of genes waiting in each, and that uncontrollable animal urge toward making things—love, babies; the ranks moving forward and forward, branching, fucking, splitting, until they reach the edges of history; and forward, farther, till they hit the periphery of family lore.

[The entire text functions in conjunction with photographs. This particular excerpt is a series of short "chapters" (not in sequence, and separated by asterisks for our purposes here) from a section on my father, Jon Sikelianos.]

* * *

Deaths/Funerals

The Albuquerque Tribune

SIKELIANOS—Jon Peter Steven Sikelianos, son of Glafkos and Marion Sikelianos, musician extraordinaire and tree doctor, died Thursday, January 6, in Albuquerque. Born in New York, Jon grew up in an unorthodox family in a whirl of places, including Cape Cod, Santa Barbara, and Lausanne, Switzerland, and with a variety of cats and dogs and birds, including Cooniebally and Shag. Fisherman, boat builder, lover of animals, seer of ghosts, pocket knife collector, cigarette lighter thief, eater of unpaid-for peaches at Landmark, oatmeal maker, good cook, teller of dog stories (among which were the Purple Dog and the mischievous Tufely and Drakely), hand-carved cane-maker, singer of many children's songs, Jon was able to play just about any musical instrument he put his hand to. His tools of choice were guitar and piano, but he also played banjo and chainsaw. In his 20s, Jon learned the art of tree climbing, and became an expert tree surgeon, who specialized in climbing 100-foot tall eucalyptus. His sense of balance was perfected to a graceful performance rigged somewhere high above the skyline. Koala-like, coatimondi-like, Kodiak-bear-like, gorilla-like, Jon could often be found raiding the refrigerator in the middle of

the night, or snapping his toes, reading one of his hundred-per-week-quota books on the porch, despite taped-together glasses and a column of ash building on the end of his cigarette. Jon worked at several zoos, from which he gathered many tales about Boufa the Russian bear, and from which he would sometimes bring home animals, such as Suzy the chimpanzee, to visit. Christmas presents he gave his children include Jimi Hendrix's "The Cry of Love," zebra finches, a red '78 of Leadbelly singing "All the Children Get So Happy on a Christmas Day," panda figurines, and a Tonka crane. He gave three of his children their first guitars. Over the course of his life, Jon had many plans, which included: becoming a book-seller, collecting precious woods to build violins, becoming an expert frog-catcher, and chronicling all the creeks he'd ever known, beginning with the San Ysidro. Some of Jon's favorite songs included "Good Night Irene," "Freight Train" and "Takes a Lot to Laugh, Takes a Train to Cry." In sandwich hugs, he usually played the part of the bread.

* * *

Date Unknown

The snow is piling up. It's flying little white blind spots across the air and landing in soft, silky layers. It is pillowing the earth, a featherbed to end all rust and dirt. Trees hope to shake free of the white glove, but won't. A man walks through the window, walking through snow. He is wearing moccasins or he is barefoot. He walks all day and he walks all night over the small foothills through the scrub brush and the snow and sometimes he runs. He runs or he walks, just for the fuck of it. The dark night up around him howling, or the day laid out brightly over the sky.

He thinks he will walk all the way to Santa Fe but does not because this is several years later—many years later, to be accurate. And he is tired now of walking all night and all day, he doesn't do that anymore but he will speak of it—"I will go out and walk all night in the god-damned moonlight, I'll walk all the way to Santa Fe in the snow just for the fuck of it."

They French kiss for five seconds on the bed, she pulls his hands onto her breasts, and he is sure—what is he sure of? It's a hotel room, pea-green blanket on the bed, one chest-level rectangular window running across the wall, white stucco foam on the ceiling with glitter to work like shimmering, minuscule stars. A pressboard nightstand and wobbly chair, the door at his back, and outside, the cold starry night; New Mexico, and its meridians.

When he was twenty, that kid o.d.ed out in Texas, and they felt compelled to drive his body back to Wyoming. What was his name? Ricky? Eddie? Boy? Like his grandfa-

ther, Jon thought if he lay on the body long enough his own body heat (he had heat to spare) might bring the boy back to life. And like his grandfather, in a famous story with a dead mailman, no one was revived, though a small stench started up, and I never heard if they ditched the body or did, for once, make it all the way to Wyoming.

* * *

Date Unknown

Houses and houses and houses and houses. Houses and houses and houses and a pool. Then the bigger buildings rise up out of the Earth's surface at the radiating axis of the city. Cars move around, people inside them. (Watch) from the window as the city changes from a sea of houses laid out in sloppy grids, splattered across the valley, creeping into the mountains, falling off right into the sea. (But there is no sea here.)

— Is this your inch? Whose inch is this? I will build a house on it.

Watch as the city shrinks from the window, into this specific patch of grass, that roof, those antennae, that language, that garage, a driveway, a child on a bigwheel. The child has shiny hair. It's not a bigwheel, it's a hip-pity-hop; she bounces down the driveway and into Carpenteria, 1972.

There are hobos out by the traintracks they wear bannanas over their chins and noses when the train stops they jump off chickencoop roofs and trains the children playing in the sand pit by the line of eucalyptus trees scream. Men in dark stubble jump off the train to scare them, children of shiny hair, that is their job, to scare them, although the children never see these men the children jump up from the sandpit screaming and run when the train stops. This is at dusk, and the night-towering lemon is high.

Because I have abandoned many things—lovers, houses, hours, cats, cities—I hate to leave. I hate to leave restaurants, I hate to leave parties, I hate to leave the house after breakfast. But I am always willing to leave a city or a friend or my father, if not for good.

Later, just me, arriving in a border town far after dark in a country much farther from here, or in the outskirts of the capital, the train pulls in, we sling our packs onto

our backs; night; bushes. Where do you sleep in dusty Khartoum?

As a young man, my father crisscrossed this country so many times a small constellation appeared, a light board with half-aborted destinations; he left barely visible electrical lines tracing and flashing after him, like the small luminous dots that line the sides of some fish, to help them keep their bearings. I chose to travel to distant countries, where no buses could be found, no telephones, and by the time I got home, you could not drag my father twenty minutes away from home to go to the movies.

Later, just me, arriving in a border town far after dark in a country much farther from here, or in the outskirts of the capital, the train pulls in, we sling our packs onto our backs; night; bushes. Where do you sleep in dusty Khartoum?

* * *

Chapter

— Pop, I'm writing a book about you. I mean, with you in it. Are you ready to do this interview?

— Mmrmph.

— O.k., where were you in 1963?

In 1963, my father was clean clean clean as a whistle. By 1968, I was three and he had descended into those dark and distant lands called Heroin. The sun warming his armpits in the afternoons.

— What happens when that particular crystal gets slipped into the vein?

— A dark water into which the light descends only a short distance, vestigial gill-slits emerge as the colloid pours in. A luminous, liquid night. Underwater, one can think and dream. All our aqueous history laid out on the sea-floor. In the emulsified dusk, one can see the strings of a violin held down by eel-like pinkies. One can travel, one can go. (My father's early aquatic life is redeemed.) The earth makes no light of its own, covered by a night's pressure; what enemies here in the dark, what prey? Sounds and color detach from their objects and float away. Small invertebrates swim brightly through the

bloodstream. On the surface, under a full moon, the ship establishes a new weight. Sperm moves through the body walls, all the tidal animals are no longer rooted to lunar waters—beams, flashes, fluctuating densities, the body moves back, pre-Cambrian, toward the Polychaete worms. We can organize disorderly things in the world, put public telephone pieces back in their cradles. These were the myths that invented feelings. We do not have to be afraid of heat, or of water, nor fire.

* * *

Date Unknown

The bird-like lights are hovering over Albuquerque where there is the easy living of Quonset hut casinos and the flashing blue circle of the Creamland sign near the abandoned transfer station.

Walking around the rim of his home, a 180 degree house, half the circumference of the volcano's vista, he says, if his life is a geological form, my father wishes for a place to step on all the rocks of each red mesa and plateau where the rich dirt has piled up, he says

if I could thread these sides together
I would have a 360 degree home

a crater without seams, a center of *success*. Success lies in the layers of dirt, each one took hundreds upon hundreds of years to build up. If I dig here, I might find a flint-carved arrowhead that gleams at all of its edges, a place to build an underground room that is warm in the winter, cool in summer, and I could sweep the dirt from the floor right into the river.

Instead, I had \$10 to get out of _____ de Navidad, tearing the door off its hinges in Teotihuacan and getting thrown in jail, mediocre out-of-body experiences ripping into muscle and pitching me against the wall. I've chickened out on all my visions: they were just bad pharmaceutical speed.

If there were a home to go home to, I'd go to San Ignacio, Widow's Tears (so-called because that stream dried up so fast each year); I'd get an extension on the story of my former life with creeks.

* * *

An Inventory of Jon's Visions I Know About (Dream Events)

—Owl with a 60-foot wing span flits over the highway at Tres Piedras

(Continued on page 27)

The Walt Whitman Cultural Arts Center

25th Anniversary Season Notable Poets & Writers Series

Friday, February 1 at 7:30 p.m.

Lorenzo Thomas

\$6 general admission,

\$4 students/senior citizens, free to members.

Poetry Workshop - Saturday, Feb. 2

\$30 (general public) \$20 (members)

Call 856-964-8300 to register

Friday, April 12 at 7:30 p.m.

Ishmael Reed

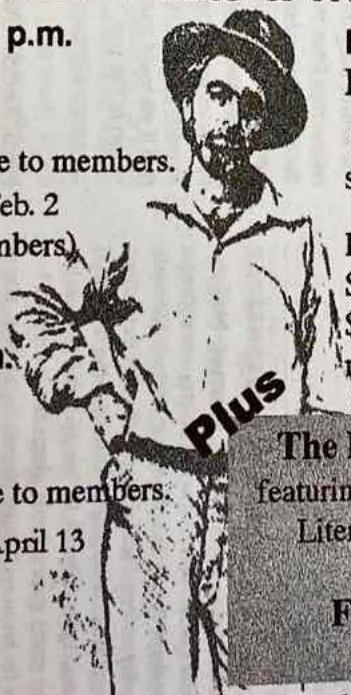
\$6 general admission,

\$4 students/senior citizens, free to members.

Fiction Workshop - Saturday, April 13

\$30 (general) \$20 (members)

Call 856-964-8300 to register



Friday, April 5 at 7:30 p.m.

Hank Lazer and Ron Silliman

\$6 general admission \$4 students/
senior citizens, free to members.

Poetry Workshop with Hank Lazer-

Saturday, April 6 Cost \$30 (general)

\$20 (members) Call 856-964-8300 to
register.

The New Jersey Literary Showcase
featuring New Jersey State Council on the Arts
Literary Fellows: **Barbara de la Cuesta,**
and **Debbie Lee Wesselmann**

Friday, March 8 at 7:30 p.m.

FREE

The Walt Whitman Cultural Arts Center
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NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE
ARTS

NEW JERSEY
STATE
COUNCIL
ON THE
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event

at the POETRY PROJECT

FEBRUARY 1, FRIDAY

Nuzion Fusion 020102

Brooklyn's Gold Sparkle Band premieres portions of *The Williamsburg Concertos and Architecture #1*. Come hear why *Time Out New York* calls Gold Sparkle "One of the Best jazz bands in New York City." Performers include Charles Waters, Andrew Barker, Adam Roberts, Jeremy Wilms, Missy Mazzoli, Matt Lavelle, Janis Shen, and super-surprise special guests TBA. [10:30 pm]

FEBRUARY 4, MONDAY

Open Reading

Sign-up at 7:30 p.m. [8:00 p.m.]

FEBRUARY 6, WEDNESDAY

Benjamin Friedlander and Murat Nemet-Nejat
Benjamin Friedlander's most recent books of poetry are *A Knot Is Not a Tangle* (Krupskaya Press) and *Algebraic Melody* (Zasterle Press). Robert Creeley writes, "Benjamin Friedlander has edited impeccably the complex texts of Charles Olson (*Collected Prose*) and Larry Eigner (*areas lights heights*). He has provided remarkable translations of other poets such as Paul Celan. ... His own work has long been a measure for his peers." Murat Nemet-Nejat, poet, translator and essayist, is the author of *The Bridge* (Martin, Brian and O'Keefe, London). He is working on *Eda: A Selected Anthology of 20th Century Turkish Poetry* (Talisman House) and the forthcoming extended essay, *The Peripheral Space of Photography* (Sun and Moon). [8:00 p.m.]

FEBRUARY 8, FRIDAY

City of Fiction II Experimental Prose & Fiction

Mat Johnson's novel, *Drop*, just out from Bloomsbury, receives high praise from *The Washington Post Book World*: "Johnson's talent is obvious from the get-go" Michele Madigan Somerville is the author of *Wisegal* (Ten Pell Books): "The poet takes on the Homeric oral tradition...the Heroics of the woman that Homer and Dante omit ..."—Joanna Sit, *Small Press Review*. Christina Chiu's collection, *Troublemaker and Other Saints*, won third place in the Playboy Fiction Contest. Mike Albo's publisher writes: "Take David Sedaris, Sandra Bernhard, and Christopher Buckley and roll them into one fiercely hilarious human being. Then add a dash more subversive humor and outrageous irony and you might begin to see *films*

are performed for a live audience. Since its inception in 1995, *The 24-Hour Plays* have produced well over 200 new short plays in this manner. This is the first time the event has taken place at the Poetry Project. With writers Jeffery McDaniel, Rachel Levitsky, Brian Kim Stephens, Sharon Mesmer, Jordan Davis [8:00 pm] [Admission: \$9 general, \$6 students & seniors, \$5 members]

FEBRUARY 20, WEDNESDAY

Kimiko Hahn and Sekou Sundiata

Kimiko Hahn is the author of six collections of poetry, including *The Artist's Daughter* (forthcoming, W.W. Norton). She has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York Foundation for the Arts, and the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund. Poet Sekou Sundiata has co-produced a series of concerts at the American Center in Paris and was featured in the Bill Moyers PBS series on poetry, *The Language of Life*. "His music comes from so many places it is impossible to name them all. But I will wager that if we could trace their common origin, we'd arrive at the headwaters of the soul."—Bill Moyers [8:00 p.m.]

FEBRUARY 22, FRIDAY

Nick Zedd + Rev. Jen: Art Stars on Display read recent work and screen *Lord of the Cockrings*

The duo will read past and recent work attacking consensus reality, as well as screen their new movie, *Lord of the Cockrings*. Nick Zedd is the insurrectionary mastermind of the Cinema of Transgression and director of *War Is Mentrual Envy*, *Why Do You Exist*, *Ecstasy And Entropy*, *Police State* and *They Eat Scum*. Saint Rev. Jen is the author of several plays, including *Rats*, *Urban Elf*, *Magical Elf Panties*, and *Lord of the Cockrings*. [10:30 pm]

FEBRUARY 25, MONDAY

Quraysh Ali Lansana and Cathy Park Hong

Poet Quraysh Ali Lansana is the author of *Southside Rain* (Third World Press, 2000) and a children's book, *The Big World* (Addison-Wesley, 1999). He has edited *The African American Literature Anthology* (Glencoe/McGraw-Hill, 2001) *Role Call: A Generational Anthology of Social and Political Black Literature* (Third World Press, 2001). Cathy Park Hong's first book is called *Translating Mo'um* (Hanging Loose Press, 2002). She is currently a teaching fellow at the Iowa Writer's Workshop. [8:00 p.m.]

MARCH 8, FRIDAY

P.O.W. Poets of War

POW: Poets of War is a group of poet performers who stand against the state of seige in the USA. The POWs kick presentations of their own words and thoughts but they will also perform past great writings related to the themes of war. Surprise musical guests. More information is available at galinskyplace.com [10:30 pm]

MARCH 11, MONDAY

Sarah Manguso and Rebecca Reynolds

Sarah Manguso is the author of *The Captain Lands in Paradise* (Alice James, 2002). Her poems have appeared many journals, including *The American Poetry Review*, *Boston Review*, and *Chicago Review*. Rebecca Reynolds' first book, *Daughter of the Hangnail* (New Issues Press 1997), received the 1998 Norma Farber first book award from the Poetry Society of America. Her second book, *Moon Hotel*, is forthcoming from New Issues Press in Fall 2002. [8:00 p.m.]

MARCH 13, WEDNESDAY

A Benefit for Poets in Need: Norman Fischer, Leslie Scalapino and special guests

Poets in Need is a nonprofit organization providing emergency assistance to poets who have an established a presence in the literary community as innovators in the field. Readers include the founding directors, Norman Fischer and Leslie Scalapino, as well as special guests Ron Padgett, Charles Bernstein, and others. Leslie Scalapino is the author of more than 15 books of poetry, most recently *The Tango* (Granary Books, 2002). As editor of O Books, she has brought out more than 100 titles of contemporary poetry. Poet and Zen priest Norman Fischer is the author of nine books of poetry. *Opening to You: Zen-Inspired Translations of the Psalms* has just been published by Penguin. [8:00 p.m.]

MARCH 15, FRIDAY

Short Films, Videos, and The Vocabulary of the Moving Image

Using films by directors Alison McDonald, Andy Watts, Peter Schapiro and others, a brief survey of diverse approaches to short film- and video-making will expand on a quote from the French artist Annette Messager: "I want to [be able to] use video...like a pencil..." [10:30 pm]

Horrito"—Morrow, William & Co. [10:30 pm]

FEBRUARY 11, MONDAY

Miriam Sagan and Eula Biss

Miriam Sagan is the author of more than 20 books, including *Archaeologist of Desire* (Red Hen) and *The Art of Love: New and Selected Poems* (La Alameda Press). She is also the editor of *Canoeling Down Cabarga Creek: The Buddhist Poems of Philip Whalen* (with Robert Winton) and the e-zine *Santa Fe Broadside*. Eula Biss teaches writing to high school students for the DreamYard Project and is currently teaching a pilot program for high school girls sponsored by *The Vagina Monologues*. Her first book, *The Balloonist*, was just published by Hanging Loose Press. "The Balloonist holds a fresh line on confession, biography, and the formal uses of information in poetry." —Rebecca Wolff, *Fence* [8:00 p.m.]

FEBRUARY 13, WEDNESDAY

Terence Winch and Geoffrey Young

Writing on Terence Winch's latest title, *The Drift of Things* (The Figures) Joan Retallack applauds: "If there were a DC school of poetry, Terence Winch would be its Frank O'Hara." He was the subject of a profile on NPR's "All Things Considered," and has been featured three times on Garrison Keillor's "Writer's Almanac" radio show. Editor and publisher of The Figures since 1975, Geoffrey Young's most recent books of poetry include *Cerulean Embankments* (Living Batch Books, 1999) with drawings by Carroll Dunham, and two chapbooks, *The Dump* and *Skate for Lunch*, both from Cease Upon the Midnight. [8:00 p.m.]

FEBRUARY 15, FRIDAY

Love As the Way: Singer/Songwriters Queen Esther and Theo Eastwind

Queen Esther, musician and solo performer, has written four one-person shows. Her recent effort, a socio-political romp about reparations called *The Big Payback*, was developed this summer at Performance Space NYC/Here Gallery. Most recently, she spent the last two months hosting Tribeca Playhouse's Stagedoor Canteen, a USO-style variety show for the relief workers at Ground Zero. Theo Eastwind, contemporary folk rocker, will share should-be-will-be classics from his CDs *Oh La La Li* and *One*. [10:30 pm]

FEBRUARY 18, MONDAY

The President's Day 24-Hour Play Festival

At 10 pm the night before the show, about fifty writers, directors, actors and designers gather at a theater. After everyone is briefed, the writers are left alone to compose a ten-minute play. At 7 am, the directors read the plays, make their bids, and begin casting. The actors start rehearsing by 9. At 8 pm, ink barely dry, the new plays

FEBRUARY 27, WEDNESDAY

Jane Delynn and Ann Rower

Jane Delynn is the author of several books, most recently a collection of fiction and essays, *Bad Sex Is Good* (Painted Leaf Press, 1998). Praising *Real Estate: The New York Times Book Review* called it "an on-target, wickedly funny tale of musical apartments, malfunctioning appliances and misplaced passions." Ann Rower's second novel is *Lee & Elaine* (Serpent's Tail). She is also the author of *If You're a Girl* (Native Agents/Semiotext(e)). She has collaborated with the Wooster Group and other performers. [8:00 p.m.]

MARCH 1, FRIDAY

Loudmouth Collective Presents an Anti-Reading

Loudmouth Collective, a young, Brooklyn-based press dedicated to fiction and poetry, artists' books and sound art, presents an anti-reading of new work by Matvei Yankelevich, Joel Schlemowitz, Ryan Haley, James Hoff, Ellie Ga, Marisol Martinez, Julien Poirier, Filip Marinovic and many others. Expect live typewriter art, concrete poetry, language installations, paperless books, poetry film and loads of free books. [10:30 pm]

MARCH 3, SUNDAY

A Tribute to Fielding Dawson (1930—2002)

A tribute to the writer and poet, Fielding Dawson, who passed away on January 5th, 2002. [3 to 7 pm]

MARCH 4, MONDAY

Open Reading

Sign-up at 7:30 p.m. [8:00 p.m.]

MARCH 6, WEDNESDAY

Ted Greenwald and Tom Raworth

Ted Greenwald, a modern master of the New York School, is the author of numerous books, including *Jumping the Line*, of which Charles Bernstein wrote "the gentle but persistent permutation and context-shifting of this 'ghostly sewing' create 'machine songs' that are semantically open, experimentally spacious, and thematically self-reflective." Since 1966, British poet Tom Raworth has published more than 40 books and pamphlets of poetry, prose, and translations. He has collaborated and performed with musicians (Steve Lacy, Joelle Léandre, Steve Nelson-Raney, Esther Roth, Nino Locatelli), painters (Giovanni D'Agostino, Micaela Henich), and other poets (Franco Beltrametti, Corrado Costa, Darío Villoja). [8:00 p.m.]

MARCH 18, MONDAY

Stephen Burt and Jean-Paul Pequeur

Stephen Burt's book of poems, *Popular Music*, received the Colorado Prize for 1999. Forrest Gander notes, "In poems that are personal in their distrust of constructions of gendered self, dazzling in their speed of association, and masterful in their orchestration of an insistently ebullient music, Stephen Burt pulls the cork from a new century." Jean-Paul Pequeur's poems have recently appeared in *Verses* and other journals. Switching diction and flying through paradigms at the speed of light, he reminds us how, when walking to buy groceries after the rain, we're now abstract and confused, now important, now pretty happy. [8:00 p.m.]

MARCH 20, WEDNESDAY

John Yau and Lynn Crawford

Over the past two decades, John Yau has published two dozen books of innovative fiction, poetry, and art criticism. His most recent title is *Borrowed Love Poems* (Penguin Putnam, 2002). Lynn Crawford is the author of *Solow and Blow* from Hard Press. *Simply Separate People* is forthcoming this year from Black Square editions. Her work appears in *The Oulipo Compendium* (Atlas Press, London). [8:00 p.m.]

MARCH 22, FRIDAY

20 Djs In 200 Minutes

Conceived by Christopher Stackhouse and furthered by journalist/DJ Michael Vasquez of Sub Rosa, NYC, literally 20 Djs in 200 minutes or less will be playing (saying), whatever, however. Short list of Djs TBA. [10:30 p.m.]

March 25th - 29th: Holy Week. No readings.

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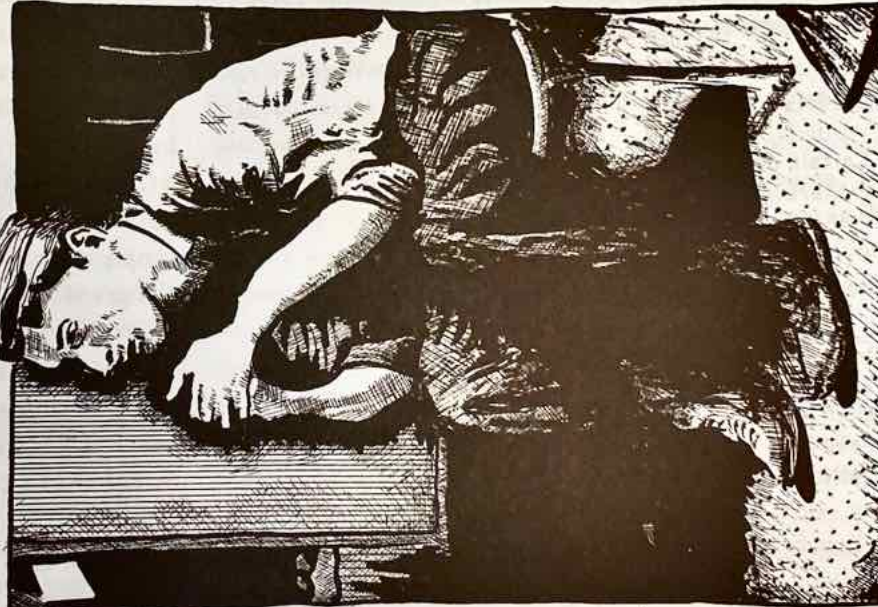
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All events are \$7.00, \$4.00 for seniors and students, \$3.00 for members and begin at 8PM unless otherwise noted. Programs are subject to change. For information call 212 674 0910

IN THE SUMMER OF 1962 SMITH GOT TOGETHER A NUMBER OF ACTORS, POETS AND ARTISTS FROM HIS LOWER EAST SIDE NEIGHBORHOOD, TOOK THEM ALL TO THE ROOF OF THE WINDSOR THEATER, AND FOR 300 DOLLARS, USING MOSTLY STOLEN, OUTDATED FILM STOCK, SHOT FLAMING CREATURES.



PEOPLE NEVER KNOW WHY THEY DO WHAT THEY DO, SMITH WROTE IN "BELATED APPRECIATION OF V.S. LYONS STERBERG." BUT HE WENT ON TO WRITE, "THEY HAVE TO HAVE EXPLANATIONS FOR THEMSELVES AND OTHERS." SMITH'S "EXPLANATION" OF HIS FLAMING CREATURES WAS — IN GREAT PART A REACTION TO THE FLURRY OF WRITINGS THAT OTHERS WROTE ABOUT IT — SURPRISINGLY SIMPLE, BRIEF. "I STARTED MAKING A COMEDY ABOUT EVERYTHING I THOUGHT WAS FUNNY, AND IT WAS FUNNY. BUT THEN THAT WRITING INCLUDED A COUPLE OF THINGS JONAS MEKAS HAD WRITTEN FOR THE VILLAGE VOICE AND SUSAN SONTAG'S "JACK SMITH'S FLAMING CREATURES," WHICH APPEARED FIRST IN THE NATION IN 1964 AND WAS INCLUDED IN AGAINST INTERPRETATION, NUMEROUS OTHERS HAVING WRITTEN ABOUT IT SINCE — INCLUDING P. SITNEY ADAMS AND J. HUBERMAN — BUT THE FILM'S OVERWHELMING BEAUTY (A RESULT, IN PART, OF THE SOMETIMES NEAR TOTAL "WHITE OUT" EFFECT OF THE OUTDATED STOCK) & THE HORROR OF AT LEAST ONE SCENE (YES, WE'RE GETTING TO THAT!) DEFFY ANY REALLY ADEQUATE DESCRIPTION.



THE SCENE THAT MOST STICKS IN MY MEMORY IS THE "ORGY," WHICH BUILDS IN INTENSITY UNTIL

IT BECOMES OBVIOUS THAT IT'S ALSO A RAPE ACCOMPANIED BY BLOOD CURDLING SCREAMS,

SEVERAL "CREATURES" BEGIN FONDLING AND THEN FURTHER VIOLATING A WOMAN IN BLACK. THE CAMERA ITSELF SEEMS TO TAKE PART, MOVING "IN SYMPATHY"

WITH THE WRITHING CREATURES. TOWARD THE END OF THIS SCENE, THE SOUND SUDDENLY GOES OUT, THE CAMERA BEGINS TO SHAKE, AND PLASTER RAINS DOWN OVER EVERYTHING — A VIOLENT EARTHQUAKE.

Fuck You - Aloha - I Love You

by Juliana Spahr

Wesleyan University Press, 2001

The back cover stresses the author's attempt to "explore Hawai'i's politics of location and the poet's place in it as an outsider"; a blurb points out the "goodbye-hello message of the title," a message doubled by the title as whole and "Aloha" in particular. It all makes one feel like the book has barricaded itself in Fort Da.

It's not quite an accurate account, however. Nor is the book determined by the Freudian/Derridean game of fort/da, in which "gone away" plays an equal part with "here." This is largely a book of gathering, a linguistic and semantic account of human conjoinings and how multiple conjunctions play against each other to produce and display both power relations and community. Though it loves the flattened-affect tone Modernism devised to signal the alienated *I*, it is a book of *we* and *us*. These dominate even the one series of the book's five built by boundary: "gathering: palolo stream," organized by the struggles between indigenous rights of access and the blocks created by private landowners.

Certain of we have a right to a
gathering of the stream

...

the parking lot of owned by
certain of we

...

Certain of we have rights and
these rights are written so that
there is a possible keeping, a
keeping away, that denies
gathering.

In a few rare moments, the gathering procedures seem too mechanistic: in the series "a younger man, an older man, and a woman," the diagrammatic account of a tumblers' formation depends too much on Steinian repetitions (which by now must really be considered a sort of academic formalism), and insists too heavily on being read as a social allegory. Less immediately decidable is "switching," which oscillates between a professional meeting and an intimate scene; like "gathering," it leans one *we* against another. But it's important that, *pace* jacket copy, there is no outside, no goodbye; the speaker appears equally inside the hotel and con-

ference room.

But they are not equal. The sexual scene has "transformative possibilities" the meeting lacks, and the moment of desire in the poem focuses on the question

How to speak around a table as if
one leg is on one shoulder and
then the other | stretched out or
twined around the other person.

Such a hope is itself oscillating, delicately unresolved between communal utopianism or romantic banality. Though either of those seems an exaggerated terminus, the capacity to find both points in the poem's field of possibility is remarkable. It's a poem which, like much of Spahr's work, seems engaged in resisting the delicate, the romantic, the utopic. So the intensities, the exaggerations of affective imagination the poem puts in poise, run against the grain of her technical manual diction, which explicitly rejects a romantic lyricism or polemical passion.

The oscillation between clinical and romantic is familiar to Spahr readers, most directly from *Spiderwasp, or Literary Criticism*, which imbricates poetic and critical texts. Rather than apostrophizing a break with lyric tradition (in the terms of Language writing), Spahr bluntly assumes that break—the fissure between lyric and analytic—as a social fact. It is not simply a goal or an achievement, but rather is where the problem of poetics resides; it is the location of poetry's crisis.

In this sense she deserves the nebulous, negatively-produced title "post-Language" writer, a term which might be worth saving if it can be a descriptor rather than a logo. But the book is not simply a poetics allegory, for it orchestrates the fissure as a materialist, quotidian crisis—appearing in both language and event of the poems—in the lives of the human figures. The break in tradition is what allows for the seeming paradox of an alienated "we"—we have conjunctions, but we are separated from the totalizing unities of the lyric tradition.

Fuck You - Aloha - I Love You, despite the strictness of its speech, resolves as an affecting articulation of the alienated *we*. And in its final imaginings of a transformative *us* which need not exist against every other *us* and *we*, it pursues something like a reach toward a future moment not determined by the break.

the fissure. In this dialexis there is even a patient optimism, exactly what is absent in the equivocal game of throw and retrieval, inside and outside, hello and goodbye (she almost manages to name the game in "da kine":

And I am reaching, reaching,
Reaching for them always. For da
Kine. I am reaching.

The way she leaves "For da" hanging out there in midair kills me). —GENEVIEVE BERNSTEIN

Tripwire 5: Expanding the Repertoire: Continuity & Change in African-American Writing Edited by Yedda Morrison and David Buuck

Renee Gladman, giovanni singleton, Nathaniel Mackey, Harryette Mullen, Wanda Coleman, Erica Hunt, Mark McMorris, Lorenzo Thomas, Will Alexander, C.S. Giscombe and Julie Patton got together to discuss innovation in/and African-American writing at New College in San Francisco, April 2000. Their gathering has been documented in a wonderful and indispensable special issue of the journal *Tripwire*.

Gladman's choreography of folds is an emblem for the set:

I gave what I could tell was a hateful look to this screaming baby, then caught myself—and to recover—caressed the baby. But it's not your baby, told myself. So then I spit on the phone, which made me feel immature, so with the spit I acted as thought to dust the phone. Yet, with all my attempts to save face, the scene was not unlike those with babies and pocket animals—when they have embarrassed you in public. All you want to do is get them alone, out of the pity of others, and hope that in private the reason for their madness will come.

("Scenes from After That, a novella")

The overlap of these unretractable gestures could be said to constitute an aesthetic and political syntax, one among an inexhaustible field of such protocols that emerge at the intersection of blackness, black experience, the question concerning their sameness and difference, the experimental address and suppression of that question, etc. (depending on how you want to stretch this multiple). Let's say that stretching the multiple—the application of pressure, heat, love, endangerment, whatever to a rich and already given newness—is something that can be referred to as innovation. The collective task undertaken by the contributors to *Tripwire 5* is to investigate innovation in African-American literature in light of a history of

both academic and anti-academic literary criticism and history that sees Afro-diasporic cultural expression both as the absence and the condition of possibility (the raw, source material) of the new in art.

Claiming newness as a possibility is no trivial affair given the intensity with which novelty has been valorized in what is called, as if on cue, the modern world. When the writers collected here make that expository and literary claim they knowingly advance a long tradition of such advance. Will Alexander thinks his own striving for "A New Liberty of Expression" in its relation not only to Melvin Tolson and Bob Kaufman but also to "Kemet's pre-dynastic fires." When he does so, though, it's necessarily under the shadow of an historically specific denial of the capacity for innovation. To operate in an ancient tradition of the new now—under the relatively recent constraints of this denial and under the pressure to address realistically or naturalistically this denial's conditions and effects—is a hard, fucked-up gift to find oneself in, a rough object to find, like a piece of glass or steel applied to strings, a wire nailed between the floorboards and the wall, some walled newspaper. We have kept finding ourselves new in finding such things but this is an anxious enterprise. I think that *Tripwire 5* is driven by and out of this anxiety which is a factory for difficult beauty.

Obviously, this anxiety is also not trivial. It emerges in part from the specific conditions of production of that writing which, coming out of a tradition of innovation, marks itself as innovative again. Mackey raises the question concerning where and how such writing is commodified and consumed and this question, as Mullen reminds us, is bound to issues regarding audience and community that are inescapable for any writing wherein the exercise of literacy remains a political assertion. Coleman and Thomas offer personal and institutional histories that chart the effects of the only partially defeated impermeability of the boundaries of literary identities and coteries. Hunt and Giscombe reassert the importance of developing reading strategies supple enough to cut the high art/vernacular opposition that continues to obscure new black poetry and prose and strong enough to tease out the complex landscapes of need that, according to McMorris, must motivate formal innovation.

In "The Cryptographic Ocelot," Alexander gets us to the new findings and identifications need makes us make:

we are those beings sucking secretive visional liquors, we are not beings seeking vivariums, simulations, vacuums of eternity in which certain jewels are grown, certain lights established, certain peacock seleniums impelled by superficial enrapturement, no, for us the impulsive

breathing of transmuted zodiacs, of transfunctional ciphers and codes which set up folios lighted in the depths by an acrobatic jasmine star

Meanwhile, Mullen moves, by way of a Norm Crosby experiment raised to a higher power, out from the outside (of need) and back to a family history in which every new word, wrong word, vibrates with implication:

Their inelegant smoother was a reacher who muddied lard, learned debris, and wept them upon the prosper pat. Reaching them fright from strong was her per rental doodly. They threw up and wind soft to mercy rule and hinder guardian, then on to sedimentary, fecund diary, and slide rule. They were wood in all those paces, and waded to knowledge at Cutie Ostentatious.

("Kirstenography.")

We could take this, for a minute, as the family history of the whole strained and striated set of differences that could be called the black avant-garde—its swerve from all the efforts that make it possible, even its own attenuated and delicious self-assertions. Coming from an implausible—if not impossible—position, this writing is the place to be: highly localized disturbance/s of the space-time continuum, each with their own internal spatio-temporal constituency, adjunct/s of gone matrix gone from, had to be happy to get together, now gathered around artist Arnold J. Kemp's out, canted, platformed yardbirds. *Tripwire 5* is a cool glimpse of the future, and futures past, in the present. —FRED MOTEN

The Habitable World

by Beth Anderson

Instance Press (Santa Cruz, CA), 2001

It's a rare talent to be able to direct the inquiry of a poem to levels other than strictly literary, although that's not to say that Anderson doesn't deliver in the poetic department. In fact, her internal references to the writing process, instead of being irritating or repetitive as such process-referential insertions can be, act as grounding to her exploration of geological, geographical and architectural habitation. They anchor the text to itself and serve an essential function in introducing the literary inquiry to an inquiry into non-literary fields. She does not allow either "side" to drift too far from the other; instead, the literate are invited to investigate the laws of matter and the intricate processes of inhabitants, and the house-builder or scientist or construction worker is invited to investigate the equally essential world of the

literary. Construction is met by construction—the building of words is interwoven with the building of residence and interaction with exteriors.

Despite their elegant gestures at narrative structure, Beth Anderson's sentences are elusive to the conventional ear and lack easy and logical resolution. Instead, these syntactical cheshire cats lead the reader into speculation upon the physical, social and emotional processes with which humans are confronted every day—not what they mean, because the book of nature, whether human or wild, as yet remains incomprehensible, but what these processes are and with which we are walking interiors interacting each second. Utilizing the pose of unfulfilled personae constructing habitations within landscape, Anderson directs us into the freshly intriguing world of physical laws, nesting impulses and the small actions we take to make ourselves comfortable in the prickly domains of matter and energy.

From enormous and lovely lines written on a geological scale, such as:

a horizon that curves
not the flat line seen up close to be a future
thick layers of the previous century within a text

or

Written on the walls are initials, reminiscent of carving in trees overhead, as if the wallpaper were from a scroll that [had been carried around the world.

Or

If our purpose was to follow the path of the sun
Like one space left between two of the same word
Then what is the if we leave for poetry?

—Anderson inevitably turns toward the disappointments of returning to the smaller scales of the obligation to exist within the socio-physical world. Again and again, throughout her book and across the smaller groupings that make up the book (which includes two previously published chapbooks), this pattern of gorgeous grand expansiveness is immediately followed by the flatter tunes of inhabiting the difficult local.

Some poet afflicted with a taste for the homespun once said that everyone should at some point build a house (along with other such falsely charming tasks as planting a tree, writing a book, and other such stuff). It was a facile directive, unconscious of economic, ecological or physical obstacles, and unquestioning of the mental stress generated by the ceaseless small adjustments that exterior and interior must make to accommodate each other. Anderson, on the other hand, deeply explores these minute compromises in fascinat-

ing and complex scale shifts. — MARCELLA DURAND

Vocoder
by Judith Goldman
Roof Books, 2001

"Fascinated as by a basilisk with three heads, I could not leave this clique; the ground near them seemed to hold my feet." — C. Bronte, *Villette*

"The servants wait as slowly as their mistresses carve." — M. Wollstonecraft, *A Short Residence in Sweden*

The vocoder or *voice coder*, invented at the beginning of the forties by Bell Labs' Homer Dudley, electronically converted vocal sounds into a form in which they could then be broken down, reassembled and easily sent along a narrow bandwidth. Thus, during their furtive, trans-Atlantic phone calls, that co-dependent couple FDR and Churchill could not only understand each other perfectly (a pin drops...) but could bathe in the assurance that their scrambled *sotto voce* went otherwise unheard. Thereafter it has existed, distinctly but marginally, in that antiquated futureworld of such things as jetpacks and wrist televisions—as the voice of robots from Daleks to Kraftwerk, of Laurie Anderson's ponderous masculine subjects, as the late Roger Troutman's long, sexy, horn-like lines for Zapp, and most recently as shorthand aural envelope and signifier of Ecstatic intoxication (Cher, Madonna, Daft Punk). For Judith Goldman I think it stands for not only the unreliability and instability of utterance, but for the pathos of the crude transformative urge that the vocoder has come to represent: better to speak as a robot, a diva, or a horn section than risk the consequences—or admit the possibility—of unmediated exchange.

In *Vocoder* this distrust of utterance paradoxically co-exists with a passionate fluency; a deep sense of political commitment contends with a coruscating despair. This dividedness extends to the book's considerable formal invention, which constantly undercuts its own eloquence. Thus a beautifully wrought sonnet that begins with a sentence whose hypnotic rhythms both parody and embody a millennium of conventional sonnetthink.

My love is like the national debt, portraitless and dear,
yet billed as mine impolitic when begging was the Norm.

and ends with a punning and pointed "closure" that slams like a car door, a trick ending—

Let me cash you,
sweetheart; I'll never exchange you for another.

pivots in its middle on the undermining question that also occupies the centre of the book—

My love, do you buy this?

Or, as another poem continuously repeats, *who knows?*

Repetition is a device that Goldman manages to employ as both funky, well-timed rhythmic displacement and jittery jump-cut alienation effect, often within the same poem. Though "The Axe Man Cometh," for example, necessarily lacks on the page the dizzying array of melismatic variation (from vals-peak swoon to James Brown instruction) that Goldman is in performance able to bring to bear on the words *huh* and *dick*, its threnody for the late Clinton administration, eviscerated as if by flashes of lightning, equals Polly Harvey's "50 ft. Queenie" for its audacious hijacking of phallogocentric discourse.

But for all of its contemporary resonance, Goldman's work seems rooted in a careful apprehension of the Romantic project. Well aware that the roots of modern English-language writing lie in the systematic repressions of the Napoleonic era, Goldman is able to tease from the era's vocabulary resonant equivalences, not only of its rhetorical energies but of its cloakings and evasions. Such works as Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Short Residence in Sweden* and Charlotte Bronte's *Villette* in which their narrators, cast adrift from familiar worlds, negotiate their unpredictable fates with a subjectivity both astringent and vulnerable, are evoked by *Vocoder* not only as stylistic "sources" but as acts of practical solidarity. It is this sympathetic spaciousness of approach that, as much as its frequently astonishing technical facility, distinguishes this important book. — PETER CULLEY

Something Said
by Gilbert Sorrentino
Dalkey Archive, 2001

In his preface to this second edition of *Something Said* novelist and poet Gilbert Sorrentino notes that he has added twenty-five essays to the original edition published in 1984. He goes on to say that over the past fifty years he has read "thirty thousand, give or take a few hundred" pieces of criticism and theory. Of these he guesses that a mere one-percent has "informed" his work as a writer. I have read far less such pieces over the past forty years but Sorrentino's proportion of usefulness to baloney is about right. *Something Said* is an exceptional book by an exceptional literary intelligence and it belongs in my one percent.

At or near the center of Sorrentino's interest is

the writer who, in his words, "discovers what he knows as he knows it, i.e., as he makes it." Sorrentino's hero William Carlos Williams is one such writer. *Something Said* begins with five essays on Williams's work and example, the most valuable of which is "The Various Isolated: William Carlos Williams' Prose." Here as throughout Sorrentino writes with stinging clarity, "aggressively useful"—his phrase—sentences that mean to argue for what he values in writing and influence his readers. His authority is bracing. It is one of the book's chief pleasures as it commands assent or talking back. To read Sorrentino is to become involved in an ongoing conversation.

Another pleasure is the writers he writes about, poets and novelists who have been shamelessly neglected: Jack Spicer, John Wieners, Lorine Niedecker, Paul Blackburn, Coleman Dowell, Edward Dahlberg, George Oppen among others. In many instances I bet Sorrentino was alone in giving the book under review serious attention. In a review of a book of Kenneth Rexroth essays Sorrentino contrasts him with John Simon. "The beauty of Rexroth's work," he writes, "as against the work of a diddler like Simon is that Rexroth knows everything that Simon knows—and then knows a lot more." Both know Baudelaire, Li Po and Eliot, but Rexroth also knows Bud Powell and The Grateful Dead. The same can be said of Gilbert Sorrentino. What can further be said is that he quotes to great effect—see the essays on Spicer and Wieners—and that he does devastating demolition work. Read his essays on Marianne Moore's poems and John Updike's *A Month of Sundays* and his asides on Robert Frost and Robert Lowell, and you will see that Sorrentino damns with a gusto equal to that with which he praises. He is the best sort of critic, subjective, partisan, one who has figured things out for himself, a stand-up guy and no diddler. Sorrentino is also the author of at least one terrific novel *Aberration of Starlight* and an original poet whose poems leave a pleasantly bitter, cleansing aftertaste. His essays linger on the mind in a similar way. —WILLIAM CORBETT

Recollections of My Life as a Woman: The New York Years

by Diane di Prima
Viking, 2001

Diane di Prima's memoir-in-progress *Recollection of My Life as a Woman* is a compelling and at times heart-rending document of a life in poetry. This first volume, *The New York Years*, leads the reader on a tour through her earliest memories, her childhood and college years, and her experiences as a young poet and

mother. In avant-garde writing circles, di Prima has been viewed across decades as a role model for women writers—and whether one aspires to her aesthetic or not, during the 1960s she and Denise Levertov certainly set an example for what it meant to be an American woman poet. Perhaps that is why her extensive newly published memoir is at times so difficult to read—in that it confirms our fears and suspicions about the trials of the female artist in a society and a literary community flawed with sexism, classism, and racism. It is a memoir that makes clear throughout that the liberation and liberatory joy of di Prima's work clearly emerged out of an oppressive environment—from di Prima's childhood through her immersion in mid-century and late century New York School, Beat, and San Francisco poetics.

From the beginning the memoir proceeds in uneasy fits and starts, the first sixty pages presenting brief moments of early childhood comfort that were too often punctuated by violence and abuse. It can only be with dis-ease that the reader processes di Prima's quite open and graphic descriptions of the treatment that she received at the hands of her parents, yet perhaps the candidness of the imagery stands as a necessary testament to the violence of the world (global and local) that shaped di Prima's character and influenced subsequent chapters of her life. Later in the memoir, her testimony regarding the difficulties of survival for a single mother is equally saddening. She gives descriptions of the pressure put on her by friends and family to abort her children and muses upon the times that she found herself alone, recognizing that "the woman who is charged with manslaughter when she leaves her child alone to go to work, to go to the store or the doctor and the house burns down, is doing what she has done a thousand times before, what she has had to do, in a world, a society that leaves her no options."

Throughout the book the reader is faced with these oppositional forces of love and hatred, of male and female, of nurturer and destroyer. di Prima enters each new scene creating an uneasy balance, and a negative capability of sorts. She is quick to point out the disappointments of her creative and personal life with male counterparts and yet she also writes: "I saw these guys, myself, and the others, as artists simply. All the striving was for and of the work, and I loved them for it.... My choice: to overlook their one-upmanship, their eternal need to be right." And certainly a valuable aspect of this book comes in di Prima's ability to capture the texture of New York City literary and intellectual life during the 1950s from the point of view of a young woman who is able to view her male counterparts in all of their loveliness and with all of their flaws. Present in the script are the great artists of

mid-century from Frank O'Hara to Merce Cunningham to LeRoi Jones, and present too is one pleasing and unexpected anecdote about a 1956 visit to Ezra Pound. Her chronology of inter-community interactions and her clear portrait of what it meant to be an intellectual woman during the 1950s in New York City make this essential reading.

As di Prima writes in an author's note at the beginning of the book, "Close as I can, this is how I remember it. I could be wrong about some thing. Most everybody is." In reading *Recollections of My Life as a Woman* perhaps we can be less concerned with right and wrong and more focused on engaging in those stories as they unfold for us from the point of view of one who was there. The memoir is touching in the sobering personal recognitions and "radicalizations" di Prima arrives at regarding her own life and the role of women in society, family, and literary communities. *Recollections of My Life as a Woman* will serve as a great companion to di Prima's work as a whole. It made me eager to re-read her early writings and to re-consider her influence on my own life and work.—LISA JARNOT

The Angel Hair Anthology Edited by Anne Waldman & Lewis Warsh Granary Books, 2001

It was the Spring of 1966. U.S. soldiers were climbing into underground tunnels in Vietnam, the body count was in full swing. Martin Luther King Jr. was active in Chicago. The Beatles' *Rubber Soul* was getting a lot of airplay. Lewis Warsh and Anne Waldman put out the first issue of *Angel Hair*. It included new works by Jonathan Cott, Lew Ellingham, Lee Harwood, Denise Levertov, Charles Stein and Gerard Malanga. Later issues would typify the emergence of a group of writers who literally changed the rules and delivered on the promises of *The New American Poetry* (Donald Allen's anthology of 1960). This was where you would find the works of Bernadette Mayer, Jack Anderson, Ted Berrigan, Michael Brownstein, Lewis MacAdams, Dick Gallup, Rene Ricard, Kenward Elmslie, Ron Padgett, Joanne Kyger, Lorenzo Thomas, Joe Ceravolo, Tom Clark, Steve Carey, Bill Berkson, Jim Carroll, Larry Fagin, and, of course, the works of Anne and Lewis. *Angel Hair* was oversized, with simple letterpress titles (except for the last issue, Spring 1969, which featured a cover by George Schneeman).

The relevance of this short run was probably beyond the imaginings of either editor at the time. Frank O'Hara, Jimmy Schuyler, Kenneth Koch and John Ashbery had already emerged and been given the designation, "The New York School." The critical stance

toward their works was in development, but what these poets had in common was already being debated, pro and con. It wasn't until the publication of *C Magazine*, *Adventures In Poetry* (two other crucial magazines of the period) and *Angel Hair* that readers could really say what the designation meant. Obviously, there was a new attitude about daily life. Ted Berrigan and Anne Waldman were writing poems that simply listed the activities of their day(s). Ted and Larry Fagin were known for their top ten lists of things they did, favorite songs, favorite books, etc. There was a glorification of the mundane in these works, as well as another strain which reflected a more interesting set of activities to write about, namely sex, drugs and rock and roll (in that order). It was, after all, the sixties, and there was a lot of consciousness expansion going around in those days. Imagine John Crowe Ransom writing on acid, or imagine Ted Hughes writing about rolling up a joint and smoking it with W.D. Snodgrass. A new bloom was on the rose, and these poets were enjoying a period of prosperity and freedom from the 50's mores that would have been impossible six years earlier. There was also a willingness to experiment with form, to focus on the plasticity of language (especially in works by Clark Coolidge, Aram Saroyan and Bernadette Mayer). This sense of word play and abstraction in the midst of every day life was already present in Ashbery, Koch, O'Hara and Schuyler, but it became so much more pronounced in the works of the so-called second generation of New York School poets.

The magazine was not to be the only output of *Angel Hair*. As publishers of small-press poetry books, they would publish over 35 books and broadsides, including six or seven books vital to the development of a great deal of what has emerged since, such as Bernadette Mayer's *Eruditio Ex Memoria*, *Moving* and *The Golden Book of Words*; Clark Coolidge's *Own Face and Ing*; Joe Brainard's *I Remember*; and Hannah Weiners's brilliant *Clairvoyant Journal*. Anne was running the Poetry Project in those days, and she lived nearby at 33 St. Mark's Place, where poets and artists would party before and after Poetry Project events. So she had knowledge of and access to an enormous array of writers, and *Angel Hair* reflected that range. Although considered a New York School vehicle, *Angel Hair* published books by Lee Harwood, John Weiners, Robert Creeley and Charlie Vermont as well.

Holding this new book in hand, one feels a reflection, however distorted by the passage of time, of just how exciting it was to pick up Ted Berrigan's *Nothing For You*, hot off the press. Ted Greenwald's *Makes Sense* still does so. As Creeley says in the excerpt from *In London*, "The song of such energy/invites me."

The Angel Hair Anthology includes work from all six issues of the magazine, as well as selections from all

of the books that the press published (except *Eat This!* By Tom Vietch). So there are some odd entries, such as Kenward Elmslie's brilliant and baffling *Girl Machine* (1971) and Britton Wilkie's *Limits of Space and Time*.

Another marvelous feature of this book is the section "Angel Hair Memoirs," where most of the contributors write brief memoirs of the times, or the circumstances of being published by Angel Hair, or the specific entries themselves. Along with these memoirs are pictures. Frank O'Hara in 1964 in his Broadway loft. Clark Coolidge playing drums in 1967. A nude photo of Coolidge, Carol Clifford, Gerard Malanga, Tessie Mitchell, Dick Gallup, Tom Veitch, Katie Schneeman and Anne Waldman, 1972, at the Schneeman's apartment on St. Mark's Place. A young Tony Towle at work. Anne Waldman and her mother, Anne Waldman and Philip Whalen, Bob Rosenthal and Jim Brodey, 1977 at Dick Gallup's apartment. I like a particularly wind-blown photo of Kenward Elmslie, Anne and Lewis on the beach in Westhampton in 1968. Everybody I've talked to about this book admits to starting with this section, even though it is in the back of the book.

There is a developing context for this anthology. In recent years, there has been a significant increase of interest and awareness of the New York School. Penguin republished Ted Berrigan's *Sonnets* and Joe Brainard's *I Remember*. They also published Alice Notley's *Descent of Alette*. There is a retrospective of Joe Brainard's artworks touring now; it just left NYC. Granary Books brought out a lovely bibliography of Ted Berrigan a few years ago, as well as the magnificent bibliography of the mimeo era, *A Secret Location in the Lower East Side*. The New York School has come to occupy a more robust locale in academia, and in the publishing world. The old Adventures In Poetry imprint has been revived as a book publisher, already in print with new books from Charles North and John Ashbery. Perhaps we will see more major works of the sixties and seventies come back into print. At least some of this work has been rescued already, and can be found in this 619 page masterpiece anthology.

It is appropriate that this review appear in *The Poetry Project Newsletter*, for so much of the work herein was conceived or performed at the Poetry Project, and some of the ghosts invoked in the book roam the grounds of this place. —MITCH HIGHFILL

Sheepshead Bay

by Edward Barrett
Zoland Books, 2001

...When I was a kid I wanted to build a bathysphere covered with huge headlights like a thousand eyes and one

big porthole for me to look at the bottom of Sheepshead Bay as I sailed silently and safely under the water.

("Letter in Latin to Bill in Vermont.")

We ride shotgun in Ed Barrett's bathysphere, reading his second collection *Sheepshead Bay*. Such is the intimate style of this poet's work. By turns feverish and playful his prose poems induce the sepia heartbreaks of his old Brooklyn neighborhood (now South Slope) and the haunted present.

There is great fun to be had here, evidenced by the award-show send-up "Imitations of Immortality"; "The Living End", a series of "I forgets" à la Brainard; "A Vision of Ted Berrigan in Cambridge, Massachusetts" a nightmare poem starring the great poet. And lines like:

Mike's Pastry has the best cannolis in the North End,
No one has ever said this in a poem, and for the poet,
as for the research engineer, it is important to a) get it
right and b) do it first....

("Pilgrims Undaunted by Speed")

Barrett lets us see the invisible hands at his grand piano: the Boston accents of Corbett, Wieners, and Torra crossed with Koch, North, and Ashbery. It is a sound all his own. His voice is matter-of-fact: even at his most fantastic moments, the poet does not play his poems, or play us, for laughs. The laughs that come come in recognition of the heavy lifting that is taking place.

When Barrett's poems do utilize linebreaks, his lines pick up speed and breath. "Naming Race Horses" comes at the collection's centerfold. It's a dark piece and a light one: part-panic attack and part-prayer. An epistle with five verse sections, the poem careens from the playful "I have never been on a reconstruction of a Viking sailing/ ship./ Reconstruction Of A Viking Sailing Ship/ is not a good name for a horse.// " to a chorus of "I like...."

I like shopping for something to
make dinner with at 6 o'clock in
the evening when people are getting
home and it's already dark.
I like buying bread and bright yellow lemons.
I like to buy the wine or the beer,
I like to say "I'll fix drinks"
and I like cutting a peel of a lemon.

Self-referential, self-effacing and self-aware, Barrett leaves for us a world of days and friends that blurs social and subconscious. The pieces of this luminous book hang, weighty and warm as salt water on the air. —JIM BEHRLE

(Cont. from page 15)

—Ghosts arrive in carriages for a high-class tea in an orchard
—Enormous ponies crossing the road to Chama
—Devils and ghouls and the generally dead busting through doors in Mexico City

* * *

Date Unknown

If I can just not do anything for a few moments so that I can think about my father; cease from all activity except the concentration of the plane taking off, and to think about my father; the father speeding away in the dark below, under the blackened clouds of Albuquerque, cumulus shot through with orange and pewter; he himself speeding only when someone else is at the helm. Otherwise, shambling. He shambles around through the underbrush of Albuquerque. His camp is no longer near the dumpsters, but in a pile of wood chips between University and the War Zone (high crack area). On the other side of Albuquerque, in the neighborhood and house in which he used to live, the city seems harmless, quiet. But circling his camp are men with crow bars and tire irons and guns, hiding in dark corners of the road and in alleyways. You need a Road Dog, he told me, a partner wise in the ways of the street, to watch your back. Jon has recently had his head smashed in, and the wounds became gangrenous. In the hospital, he was given hot oatmeal in the morning and pudding after dinner. He could bathe, and his sheets were clean. Each day he thought up new ailments, but they soon released him. He left the pale blue plastic band nostalgically fluttering on his wrist for weeks.

It is wearying to write about my father the big-bad-druggie-with-gun-dabblings-guy over and over. I'm tired of the brilliantly-talented-tortured-father sometimes-mean-guy persona on him. I know this fatigue to be because I saw him today and there before me was my father. His chest was thin. I would like him to find another woman, or rather for her to find him, and make a family of him again (but no more children!). That woman would bathe him, dress him in clean clothes and feed him, put him in a warm house and lay him down in a warm bed, and lay down with him, too, so that he, my father, might make it to 60, or 68—enough years for us to see him, and for all of us to grow big. It is possible that he might use that woman up, that her life would be spent with it, the years of looking after his socks, and

waiting for him to come home, taking care of him when he crashes the truck, loses his wallet again or gets hit with a crowbar to the head. It might no longer be possible, after fifteen years with that man, for that woman to tank up and drive. Or it may be that her life will have gained some small thing, a grain of understanding or feeling about the humans who live here; or perhaps some big thing, some grid of understanding that connects hearts and their attitudes and bodies and astronomy, physics and dust and crying babies and zoo animals and fiber optics, thereby.

It is wearying to write about my father the big-bad-druggie-with-gun-dabblings-guy over and over. I'm tired of the brilliantly-talented-tortured-father sometimes-mean-guy persona on him.

* * *

The Last Book He Told Me

One day, when he was living up on the mountain above Taos, my father and his friends got very hungry. They had eaten nothing but bread for some days. So down they went to Chama, where they knew a farmer had some sheep. They crept over the mocassined earth, soil thick and spongy beneath their feet. Up he grabbed a little lamb and tucked it into his armpit, Jon and the lamb, running across the dirt. But when he got to the fence, he looked at the lamb hard in the face and knew he could never eat it, and said (or at least he says he said), Why, er, excuse me, sir, to the small lamb thing in his arms, and walked it slowly back to its original square footage, set it down, and instead found the henhouse and grabbed up two chickens, which, at home, he half plucked and boiled, but those damn hens were bitter as could be.

.

Eleni Sikelianos's most recent book is Earliest Worlds. She is currently working on two long projects: this prose work, and a long poem currently called The California Poem.

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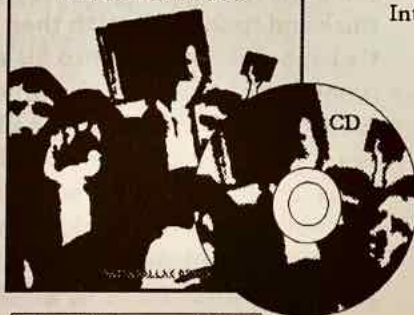


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Books Received

Books

- Rae Armantrout, **Vell: New and Selected Poems**. Wesleyan University Press, 2001.
- Amiri Baraka, **Somebody Blew Up America** (see www.AmiriBaraka.com).
- Bill Berkson & Frank O'Hara, **Hymns of St. Bridget & Other Writings**. The Owl Press, 2001.
- Charles Bernstein, **With Strings**. University of Chicago, 2001.
- Clark Coolidge, **Far Out West**. Adventures in Poetry, 2001.
- Linh Dinh, **A Glass of Water**. Skanky Possum, 2001.
- Stacy Doris, **Conference**. potes & poets press, 2000.
- Kenward Elmslie & Mary Kite, **Spilled Beans A Conversation**. Drawings by Joe Brainard. Skanky Possum, 2001.
- Richard Hell, **Hot and Cold: Essays, Poems, Lyrics, Notebooks, Poetry, Fiction**. Powerhouse Books, 2001.
- Bhanu Kapil Rider, **The Vertical Interrogation of Strangers**. Kelsey St. Press, 2001.
- Ikhyun Kim, **il jom oh**. Handwritten Press, 2001.
- Bill Lavender, **pentacel**. Fell Swoop, 2001.
- Lisa Lubasch, **Vicinities**. Avec Books, 2001.
- Bernadette Mayer, Jen Hofer, Danika Dinsmore, Lee Ann Brown, **3:15**. The Owl Press, 2001.
- Eileen Myles, **On My Way**. Faux Press, 2001.
- Oskar Pastior, **Many Glove Compartments: Selected Poems** (Trans. Harry Mathews, Christopher Middleton, Rosmarie Waldrop). Burning Deck, 2001.
- Laurie Price, **The Assets**. Situations, 2001.
- Mekhtoub (It Is Written)**, Press Play, 2001.
- My Secret Longitude**. Press Play, 2001.
- Alissa Quart, **Solarized**. Harry Tankoos Books, 2002.
- Leslie Scalapino and Marina Adams, **The Tango**. Granary Books, 2001.
- Susan Smith Nash, **To the Uzbekistani Soldier Who Would Not Save My Life**. Avec Books, 2001.
- Rochelle Owens, **Luca: Discourse on Life and Death**. Junction Press, 2001.
- Patricia Terry, **The Weight of the Shadows**. Red Dust, 2001.
- John Tipton, **clause automata**. Cello Entry, 2001.
- Keith and Rosmarie Waldrop, **Ceci n'est pas Keith/Ceci n'est pas Rosmarie**. Burning Deck, 2001.

Magazines

- PomPom Issue One**. Editors: Allison Cobb, Jen Coleman, Ethan Fugate & Susan Landers (POM2, 227 Prospect Ave. #2 Brooklyn, NY 11215). Contributors: Spahr, Coultas, Killian, Coolidge, others.

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Ron Padgett writes:

Aficionados can now visit two new websites: JoeBrainard.org and KenwardElmslie.com.

(Continued from page 3)

Shevi Berlinger writes from San Francisco:

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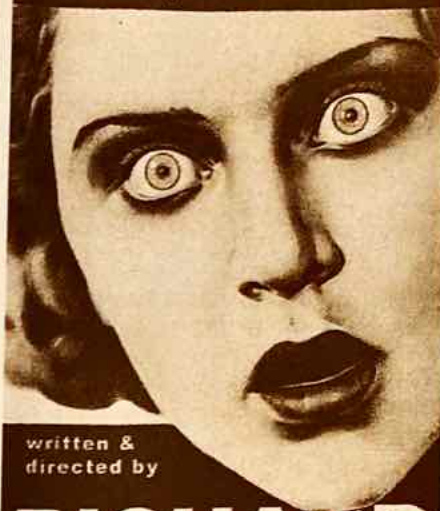
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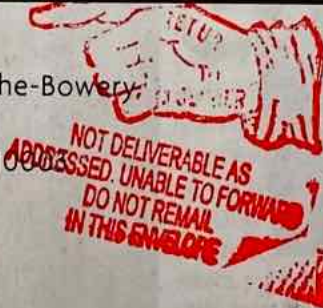
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