

THE POETRY PROJECT NEWSLETTER
No. 64 April 1979
Vicki Hudspith, Editor
St. Mark's Church
2nd Ave. & 10th St., NYC 10003

READINGS AT ST. MARK'S: Wednesday Nights, hosted by Ron Padgett & Maureen Owen:
April 4--Lewis MacAdams and Jessica Hagedorn. April 11--Bruce Andrews and Rae
Armantrout. April 18--Bob Perelman and Ron Sukenick. April 25--Victor Hernandez
Cruz and To Be Announced * Monday Nights, hosted by Bob Holman: April 2--Open
Reading. April 9--Susan Noel and Michael Scholnick. April 16--Gloria and Steve
Tropp/ Hannah Weiner. April 23--Terry Jacobus and Al Simmons. April 30--Sandy
Pilder and Diane Torr. Wed. readings begin at 8pm. To accomodate Museum of Modern Art,
+++++ Mon. Readings begin at 8:30, this month.

READINGS AROUND TOWN: The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53rd Street, NYC, 6:30pm
April 2--David Antin, Anselm Hollo, Clark Coolidge, Introduced by Armand Schwerner.
April 9--Mary Ferrari, Phillip Lopate, Bob Holman, Introduced by Joe Cervalo.
April 16--Kenneth Koch, Ron Padgett, Kate Farrell, Introduced by Alice Notley.
Free Admission. No Reservations. The American-Scandinavian Foundation,
127 East 73rd St, NYC (between Lex & Park), 7:30pm FREE: April 19--Muriel Rukeyser &
Siv Cedering Fox. May 3--Lennart Bruce. Viridian Gallery, 24 West 57th St, NYC,
7pm, \$2: April 5--Charles North, Annabel Levitt. April 19--Rose Lesniak, Ed
Friedman. EAR IN, 326 Spring St., NYC, 2pm, \$2: April 7--Steve Benson, Tom Weigel.
April 14--Rae Armantrout, Bernard Welt. April 21--Charles Stein, Edmund Chibeu.
April 28--Paul Violi, Carolee Schneemann. Tin Palace, 325 Bowery (corner East 2nd
St.) NYC, 2pm, \$1: April 1--Eric Selby Jr., Michael Stephens. April 22--George
Economou, Alice Notley.

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WORKSHOPS AT ST. MARK'S: FREE / Writing Workshops / FREE

Tuesdays: Writing Workshop with Ed Friedman, 7:30pm at Third Street Music School,
235 East 11th St., NYC (off 2nd Ave.)
Thursdays: April 12--Virgil Thomson: The Art Song in America, at 7:30pm, Third
Street Music School, 235 E. 11th St. April 19--One-shot workshop with
Bob Perelman, 7:30pm, Third St. Music School, 235 E. 11th St. April 26--
One-shot workshop with Victor Cruz, 7:30pm, Third St. Music School,
235 E. 11th St.
Saturdays: Poetry Workshop for kids aged 8-13, with Bob Rosenthal, 11am-12noon,
in St. Mark's Parish Hall.
Sundays: Poetry Workshop with Harris Schiff, 6pm in St. Mark's Parish Hall.

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LECTURES AT ST. MARK'S: Virgil Thomson on "The Art Song in America" Thursday,
April 12, 7:30pm, Third Street Music School, 235 East 11th St. off Second Ave.
Two dollar suggested contribution/reservations call 674-0910.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS: ANNOUNCEMENTS: ANNOUNCEMENTS: ANNOUNCEMENTS: ANNOUNCEMENTS: ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Magazine Co-op Type Store announces typeservice at reasonable rates, as well as
design advice. Located at 105 Hudson Street #311 or call Michael Andre at 226-7170
for more information. "We are very fast- because we have no business. We are
very cheap- we received a CCLM/Ford Found. grant. Our prices are well below the
current market level."

Persons interested in participating in an ongoing Meditation and Yoga/Poetry work-
shop with Neil Hackman, please call Neil at 260-1677 for further information.

April 30 -- Kulchur Foundation announces the publication of Let Myself Shine by Stuart Lavin with a publication party at the Gotham Book Mart, 41 West 47th St., NYC, 5-7pm. Also, Swollen Magpie Press announces the publication of David Antin/Debunker of the "Real" by Lita Hornick. An exhibit of drawings by Bruce Chandler will also be opening on this evening. All readers of the Newsletter are invited to attend.

SPECIAL THANKS in helping with the March 1979 "Newsletter" to: Ron Padgett, Maureen Owen, Frances LeFevre, Harvey Lillywhite, Steve Levine, John Witek, and "Howard".

DEADLINE: For all Newsletter material is the 1st of the month for the following month. All CONTRIBUTIONS are not only welcomed but needed. Please be sure and let us know when your address changes.

BOOKS RECENTLY RELEASED: p=paper, h=hardback, npl=no price listed.
MAG CITY, 437 East 12th St. #26, NYC 10009: MAG CITY #6, works of Alice Notley, Pat Nolan, Rene Richard, John Godfrey, Jamie MacInnis, Tow Weigel, Elinor Nauen, Bob Rosenthal, Steve Carey, Gary Lenhart, Tom Savage, Tim Dlugos, Michael Lally, Bob Holman, Gregory Masters, Michael Scholnick, Ralph Hawkins, Larry Fagin, Ted Berrigan (\$1p). TUUMBA PRESS, 2639 Russell St., Berkeley, Calif.94705: CAMBRIDGE M'ASS by Robert Grenier (265 poems in poster format, \$6p); Senses of Responsibility by Charles Bernstein (\$2p). BLACK SPARROW PRESS, P.O.Box 3993, Santa Barbara, Calif.93105: The Joe Chronicles-Part 2 by Rochelle Owens (\$5p/\$15.cloth); All The Good People I've Left Behind by Joyce Carol Oates (\$4.50p/\$14.cloth). ROBERT LYNN PUBLICATIONS, 1316 Putnam Ave., Plainfield, N.J.07060: In & Out The Big Dusty by John Elerbe (poems from a maximum security prison, \$2.95p plus .35 postage). SUN & MOON PRESS, 4330 Hartwick Road, #418, College Park, Md 20740: Cuiva Sails by Ray DiPalma (\$3p). CROSSCUT SAW PRESS, 1806 Bonita Ave., Berkeley, Calif.94709: Imago by Elizabeth Harrod (\$2.50p). THE COACH HOUSE PRESS, 401 (rear) Huron St., Toronto, Ontario, Can M5S 2G5: Of Light by Robert Hogg (\$6.50h). DANAIDES PRESS, Chicago, Ill.: Federal Woman by Elaine Equi (npl). BC MONTHLY, Box 48884, Vancouver, Can. V7X 1A8: Let Sleeping Dogs Lie by Dachshund Hamster (Brad Robinson) (npl); of seasonal pleasures and smallhinderances by roy kiyooka (npl); A Call by Gerry Gilbert (npl). THE SPIRIT THAT MOVES US PRESS, P.O.Box 1585, Iowa City, Iowa. 52240: Volume 4 #1, works of Lucien Stryk, John Burt, Maureen McCoy, Ilya Ehrenburg and others (\$1.50p). UN POCO LOCO, edited by Larry Fagin, The Poetry Project, 2nd Ave & 10th St., NYC 10003: February 1979 poems by Ron Padgett. CASEMENT BOOKS, 67 Morton St., NYC 10014: Planh by Ray DiPalma (\$3.50p).

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AFTER THE LATIN

He was the kind of person you knew that when he talked to himself he didn't say very nice things. He thought they would comprise a collection of pieces, bits so expressive they demanded recording. But the best that could be said for the work of X was that it rendered a tastefully done unusual variant. Thus it became a part of the bacon and cartoon life in New York, where to X everything seemed some dark oversustained technicality.

---Ray DiPalma

SHADE by Charles Bernstein (Sun & Moon Press) \$3.00 Paper, with a cover by Susan B. Laufer

When I worked in a chi-chi upper East Side bookstore, one of the most often asked questions was, "Is it well written?" "Can I understand it?" being the implication. The inquirer/reader was defining the possibilities of the writing, setting the limits of what is acceptable. Charles Bernstein sees it differently. The poems in his precisely titled book, SHADE, are situated in a terrain in which they can suggest numerous possibilities of meaning, without, as Bernstein writes in his poem St. McC,

categories
enfolding
a proper place

In Poem Bernstein writes, "There is no more natural sight." Since culture attempts to define, and largely succeeds, our perceptions for most of our early life, then, Bernstein would argue, a tree is not a tree (shades of Gertrude Stein!), because one cannot see anything without a certain cultural implication. Nothing can be taken for granted.

Almost all of the poems have short lines. There is a verticality to these poems as they pull our attention downward. Because the lines are short, there are moments of disjuncture not only from line to line, but within the sentences and phrases themselves. These poems do not attempt to charm us, though there is a charm present. Nor do they attempt to be witty, though there is a wittiness present. See Ballet Russe; a poem that through its declarative sentences, its assertions, questions the idea of definition.

The fact that nothing can be taken for granted is one of the underlying premises to Bernstein's poems. They are attempts to build on that fact. At their best they succeed in ways that are exhilarating to the reader willing to ask, "What does it mean to read?"

-- John Yau

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In response to Tony Towle's review of The Big House, A Collection of Poets' Prose (in February "Newsletter") I must say it is unfortunate that he, having spent a disproportionate amount of space discussing my preface, managed to miss its point entirely. Perhaps that misunderstanding is caused in part by our divergent concerns. I'd like, then, to review the difference in our points of view and restate what I think are the principal issues addressed in this collection of poets' prose.

Mr. Towle seems primarily interested in the question of whether poets' prose has quality: "...whether or not poets can write prose" or "...whether or not the selections here are 'better' than the poetry by the same poets." I am relieved that he finds that quality frequently "good to excellent"; however, quality may not be as significant an issue as others raised by the prose of poets.

My original question, posed in the preface, was whether poets' prose can in any way illuminate the workings, premises, or potentialities of prose in general. Poets' prose (to quote the preface) can allow us to observe "persons (poets) accustomed to using language as a personal, plastic medium contending with a form (prose) normally used to create the sense of consensus, through shared assumptions of what words mean and how words may be structured and framed."

I did not, as Mr. Towle claims, propose that the writings in The Big House are "revolutionary". The selections represent a continuum, anchored at one end by pieces which intentionally disrupt prose by manipulating syntax, and at the other by finely-honed, literal narrative. The range of the poets' response to prose is, in itself, instructive.

To paraphrase the preface: prose, especially expository prose traditionally suggests to the reader a shared language, a shared reality, an agreement between reader and writer about subject. The various experiments, parodies, and the precision of the works in The Big House may provide the reader with some insight

into one's expectations of prose.

It remains my conviction that poets, who know that one's language is as indissolubly personal as one's experience, bring that knowledge to the writing of prose. Not that they can't therefore write smooth and convincing prose (often they excel at it), but that they know better than most the price which prose exacts to create that convincing surface.

For the rest, I am glad for Mr. Towle's interested reading of The Big House, and am delighted he shared my pleasure at the skill and diversity of the work therein.

-- Michael Slater

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OOPS DEPT.: The wizard of pasteup made a slight error in the Project calendar for February, which carried a beautiful drawing of a fire escape and shadows by Hugh Kepets. Upsidedown. Wizard of pasteup now very embarrassed, very sorry.

POETS PLAYS DEPT.: The Manhattan Theatre Club is presenting, April 9 and 10 at 8 pm, a reading of Frank O'Hara's "Awake in Spain," Kenneth Patchen's "The City Wears a Slouch Hat," and Wallace Stevens' "Carlos Among the Candles." Tickets are \$3.50, reservations suggested: 472-0600. These are readings, not full productions.

SUPPORT NYS ARTS BUDGET DEPT.: Gov. Carey is requesting \$33 million for next year's NYSCA budget. We urge you to write to the NYS legislature as soon as possible to support his budget and perhaps even suggest a possible increase. Write to Senators Warren Anderson, Manfred Ohrenstein, John. J. Marchi, H. Douglas Barclay, and Assemblymen Stanley Fink, Daniel Walsh, James Emery, and Arthur Kremer, all of whom are at the Legislative Office Bldg., Albany, NY 12247. Programs such as those at the Poetry Project are directly affected by the size of the annual arts budget.

CHINESE DEPT.: Last call for donations of poetry books which the Project will ship off to poet Simon Schuchat, currently teaching for two years at the University of Shanghai. Simon says the Chinese have heard of no American poets since Anne Bradstreet. He'll donate the books to the University library collections.

EDITOR RETURNS DEPT.: The Project staff and advisory board have invited the editor of this "Newsletter" to return for a second stint next year, an invitation she has accepted. In a forthcoming issue she will include a questionnaire asking for readers' suggestions.

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Greek Women Poets translated by Eleni Fourtouni (New Haven: Thelphini Press, 1978)
74 pp. \$4.50

Eight poets are represented in this small anthology of translations: Victoria Theodorou, Rita Mpoumi-Pappas, Melpo Axiote (who died in 1974), Lili Bitá, Katerina Anghelaki-Rooke, Kiki Dimoula, Jenny Mastoraki, and the translator herself, Eleni Fourtouni.

Although their various dates of birth roughly span the first half of this century, one being in her early seventies, one in her late twenties, and the rest somewhere in between, their similar experiences make them real contemporaries of each other. All are women who were born and brought up in Greece in the social order completely ruled by men-- a sharply defined existential situation if there ever was one-- and who achieved identity and a measure of freedom through their writing. Each has lived under one or more tyrannical regimes and demonstrated her opposition with poetry or political action or both. Their combined memories cover World War I, the Metaxas dictatorship, the German/Italian Occupation and the Resistance during World War II, the civil war that followed, and the years of the junta.

Repression, oppression, isolation, danger, terror, violence, bloodshed-- all these have touched their lives and are in their poems. But the Greek mountains, sea, sky, sun, and olive trees are also there, and these poets and the other

women they write about have their share of the Greek philotimo, that mixture of pride and self-respect which is different from both. Here is "Maria" speaking, in "A Thousand Murdered Girls" by Rita Mpoumi-Pappas:

So, I'm on "death row!"
It seems like a funny thing-- even if it is
dead serious-- I'm not big enough for it.
Even so, it makes me proud, stubborn,
It makes me a rock.

And I'll spit on their decision--
this scrap of paper that kicks me
out of life at 19-- I'll step on it like
the stub of their cigar
before I go.

And "Krinio," in the same sequence, to her firing squad:

I see your eyes wide open
--you can't help all this--
your hands want to touch me
before they pull the trigger-- I understand...

Go on, spare me the morning frost
I'm almost naked
dress me in your fire
smile at me boys
cover my body with your gaze

I've never been covered by a lover
not even in a dream...

The longest poems here are Melpo Axiote's "The Homestead," a strikingly vivid surrealistic work expressing the double bind in which so many Greek women have been caught for centuries, between arranged marriages and bleak spinsterhood, and "My Mamma and Satan," by Katerina Anghelaki-Rooke. The theme of the latter is the ambivalent mother/daughter relationship, also used by many American women poets at present:

SHE TORTURES ME
What have I done wrong
what mistake did I make
what ritual did I neglect?
Grim the Easter of memory
life is again nailed
on the cross
the lilac cuts through me
stretched out on the black and white tiles...

But again:

How much goodness in you
how much trust
how much natural peace...

It is interesting to compare these works with a recent collection of writings by women from various ethnic groups in New York City, Ordinary Women. The chief difference is in scale. The New Yorkers, even when they protest the "system," are personal about it, fed up with "bad dope / bad schools / bad homes / and bad headaches" (Sandra Maria Esteves) and with "the trivialization of certain nouns: / love / roots / tenderness" (Patricia Jones). Their images are mostly from street scenes, households, and mass-produced commodities. The Greek women move on a larger, more universal stage because of their country's history. But the two groups do meet at one point which is the most crucial to them both, the struggle against men's tyranny at every level. Kiki Dimoula sums it up in her "Mark of Recognition," about a statue of a women with her hands tied:

They all call you a statue right away.
Right away I call you a woman
Not because the sculptor
surrendered you to the marble
as a woman
and your thighs promise generations
of beautiful statues
--a clean harvest of immobility--
but because your hands are tied...

I call you a woman
because you always ended up
a captive.

Since this is not a bi-lingual edition and I've not seen the originals, I've read the poems as if they were written in English. They seem remarkably convincing simply as poems. The richness and resonance of the sounds of Greek are not there, of course, but a lot of the spirit comes through. Ms. Fourtouni obviously has a sensitive understanding of both languages and she is to be congratulated on having preserved each poet's individual voice.

--Frances LeFevre

(Reprinted by permission from "The Journal of The Hellenic Diaspora", Vol. 5, No. 4, Pella Publishing Co., New York.)

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The moon shows through as if
The earth began to see its breath;
Moths stirring from
The chilly ankle shallows.

Such stillness now as if each tree
Were a gate left standing open,
Or AUTUMN were the name
Of an Egyptian god.

-- Harry Fainlight

The Poems of A.O. Barnabooth by Valery Larbaud, Translation by Ron Padgett and Bill Zavatsky, Mushinsha, Tokyo / \$6.00p dist. by Serendipity Books

Valery Larbaud was a French poet who wrote mainly in the first quarter of this century. A.O. Barnabooth the title's namesake is a fictitious character, but, in light of the poems, no less real for us than Larbaud. Larbaud was a poet's poet much in the same sense as the translators and their peers are. They seem to be cousins in sensibility and use of language. This is one reason these translations work so well, as in these lines from Nevermore...: "Nevermore!...and then, Damn! / There are astral forces around me. / I'm motionless in a hotel room / Full of motionless electric light.../ I'd like to wander in the yellow dawn through a vast & foggy park / All filled with white lilacs." Or these lines from L'Eterna Volutta: "Lift your sultry kiss to me, colorada!"

Larbaud never imposes himself on us in his poems. This sense of anonymity adds further to the integrity of the poems. He fulfills the poet's task of making the most mundane things profound, ironic, and shining: (from Europe) "The glowing street with everything reflected / The striped bus, the black cab, the girl in pink / And maybe a touch of sunset.../ The roofs wet with rain, the bluish square and smoke rising.../ The tarnished copper clouds slowly rising.../ Everything suspended in a kind of damp tepidness, and the odor of honey tobacco: / The gilt edge of this book / Is growing brighter! The sun is trying to come out/". And from Carpe Diem: "Take this sad winter day on the grey sea / And let me hide my eyes in your cool hands;/ I need gentleness and peace, O my sister./ Be my young hero, my protective Pallas,/ Be my sure shelter and my little town;/ This evening mi Socorro, I am a humble woman / Who knows only how to be restless and loved."

The senses revel in these poems, and Larbaud's attention to detail is truly a labor of love. He has also what seems to be a "true poet's" sensibility, which is an interesting blend of compassion and great nostalgia. The main focus of these poems is a poetic record of the author's travels. His vision is both specific and vast: (from Indian Ocean) "Oh tropical summer night! / Atolls of twinklings emerging from bluish depths! / The blazing Crucero! /...The vision of Creation, immensely / Silent-- overhead, all unrolled, the firmament. / I want a spring morning, a little grey, in my hotel room, / The corner window open on the rue de Noailles, in cool air, / To see over there (five o'clock, still no trams)/ The calm Vieux Port and the boats of the Chateau d'If./"

Larbaud says in Thalassa: "I have a luminous circle on my soul, the porthole," Padgett and Zavatsky would've been poets to Valery Larbaud's own heart as he is to theirs. These translations convey Larbaud's magic admirably.

-- Neil Hackman

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G-MAN SQUEALS ON BUTTERFLY

The distinguished scientist had offered his
assistance until you warned him,

"Don't do it. She has gold antenna. Gold
antenna you know nothing about."

---Elaine Equi

TEXAS

I'm nearly crying for it--
looking at the large coloured map on his wall
poor TEXAS looking big-as-life
and dying to secede
Mama, Did Annie Oakley ever cry? Or,

Mother is it true she couldn't cry
thats why she could shoot so well?

O Mama,
I just want to cry
sitting here looking at TEXAS across
the face of the map

so big & so lonely
I just want to get a beebie gun
and shoot that fucking state to bits

-- Eileen Myles

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