

THE POETRY PROJECT NEWSLETTER
No. 74 May 1980
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:
May 7 - Susan Howe & Douglas Messerli. May 14 - Bill Berkson & Josephine Clare.
May 21 - Elleni Fourtouni & reader to be announced. May 28 - Edwin Denby.

Monday Nights hosted by Bob Holman: May 5 - Open Reading. May 12 - John Champoux,
Neil Hackman, Gary Lenhart. May 19 - "Better, Stronger": video film by Ed Bowes,
Philip Whalen (video), Lenny Goldstein Live. May 26 - Daniel Krakauer, Schuldt,
Diane Torr.

WORKSHOPS AT ST. MARK'S: FREE*****ABSOLUTELY FREE*****WRITING WORKSHOPS*****
Note: With the exception of the Sunday Workshop, all begin at 7:30 pm and are held
at the Third Street Music School, 235 East 11th St., NYC.

Tuesdays- Poetry Workshop with Jamie MacInnis.

Fridays- Poetry Workshop with Steve Carey.

Sundays- Poetry Workshop with Harris Schiff (6 pm in the St. Mark's Parish Hall).

SPECIAL ONE-TIME WORKSHOPS.

Thursday May 8 - Douglas Messerli.

Thursday May 15 - Josephine Clare.

Thursday May 22 - To be announced.

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

April Newsletter Special Thanks: To Rose Lesniak, John Witek, Ginger Miles, Gary
Lenhart, Maureen Owen, and Ron Padgett. Thanks!

SOLICITATION: Out There, issue 15, will be a calendar. We are seeking submissions
of poems, parodies, graphics and/or any other extrapolations dealing with the twelve
months. Send material to Out There Press, 156 West 27th St. 5W, NYC 10001.

Foto-Ready Production and the Poetry Project are offering a workshop in Publications
Production (planning, design, editing, typesetting, and printing) on Sunday, May 18,
2-6 p.m. Participants will receive basic instruction in these subjects and demonstra-
tions at equipment. The workshop is free, but enrollment is limited, on a first-come
first-served basis. Call the Poetry Project at 674-0910 for information.

Jim Hanson writes from Chicago to say he's supporting Philip Whalen for President
because "Isn't it time we had one that speaks, not to say thinks clearly,..."

"Monday...it took all the money I had,/ except 2¢, to wash my clothes, I must rob
somebody to get food/ for supper/ FROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT/ \$580 BILLIONS"

He signs off with; "I ask you." Cheers Jim!

Look for the Ear Inn benefit in early June to pay for the new Ear Inn sound system.

BOOKS RECENTLY RELEASED: p=paper, h=hardback, npl=no price listed.

- **THE TOOTHPASTE PRESS, Box 546, West Branch, Ia 52358: Gone Sailing by Helen Adam. Drawings by Ann Mikolowski. (\$5.00p). Quicksand Through the Hourglass by Dave Morice (\$4.50p). Countries, poems by Anne Waldman, with Linoleum Blocks by Reed Bye (\$4.00p).
- **THE STRANGE FAECES PRESS, 174 Thorndike St. #4, Cambridge, MA 02141: Strange Faeces #20 -- work by Opal L. Nations, Derek Pell, Max Ernst and others (\$3.00p).
- **CROSSCUT SAW PRESS, c/o Bookpeople, 2940 7th St., Berkeley, CA 94710: Portable Sun by Tom Planté (\$2.00p).
- **PRINTED EDITIONS, P.O. Box 842, Canal St. Stn., NYC 10013: Phone by Jackson MacLow (\$4.00p).
- **D.U.M.B. Associates Inc., 50 Cooper Square, 3rd Flr, NYC 10003: Down Under Manhattan Bridge--D.U.M.B.--Your favorite art and poetry review with work by Alex Katz, Red Grooms, Dan Freeman, Sune Hanel, Cathy Saksa and others. Not to be believed, so d.u.m.b. you have to check it out! (\$3.00p).
- **GRIM REAPER BOOKS, 20 East 30th St., NYC 10016: Journeys Around One Point by Annette Hayn (\$2.50p).
- **GEORGE BRAZILLER, INC., One Park Ave, NYC 10016: Long Talking Bad Conditions Blues--Fiction Collective, edited by Ronald Sukenick (\$4.95p).
- **RANDOM HOUSE, 201 E 50th St, NYC 10022: Water & Stone by R.G. Vliet- (\$5.95p).
- **HARD PRESS, 340 East 11th St, NYC 10003: New postcard series from the master of cards include: Tim Dlugos, Anne Waldman, Amiri Baraka.
- **ROCKY LEDGE, 723 19th St, Boulder, CO 80302: Rocky Ledge #4-- Susan Noel, Corso, Coolidge, Godfrey, Kyger, Brownstein, Bye, Fox, Hollo, Waldman, and Ginsberg (\$3.50p).
- **CAITLIN PRESS, Box 35550, Stn E, Vancouver, B.C. Canada: the murdered dreams awake by Cathy Ford (\$4.50p).
- **LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY PRESS, Baton Rouge, La 70803: The Public Hug by Robert Hershon (\$5.95p).
- **VEHICLE EDITIONS, 238 Mott St, NYC 10012: When I Was Alive by Alice Notley. Cover by Alex Katz. (npl).
- **NEW DIRECTIONS, 80 8th Ave, NYC 10011: Josephine the Mouse Singer, a play by Michael McClure (\$4.95p).
- **THE UNSPEAKABLE VISIONS OF THE INDIVIDUAL, P.O. Box 439, California, PA 19419: Volume 10 -- In memory of Jack Kerouac 1922-1969; Writer-Director of Earthly movies Sponsored and Angeled in Heaven. Very interesting book read in one sitting (almost) with essays by Herbert Huncke (most interesting to me), Carolyn Cassady, Corso, Baraka, Whalen and others (\$8.00/173 pages/paper).
- **UNITED ARTISTS, Flanders Road, Henniker, N.H. 03242: UNITED ARTISTS NINE -- Kushner, Berrigan, Warsh, Mayer, Coolidge, Myles, Notley, Codrescu, Rosenthal, Schiff (\$2.50p).
- **LOON BOOKS, 190 Dromara Rd, Guilford, CT 06437: The Liberties by Susan Howe (\$2.00p).
- **ALCATRAZ EDITIONS, 354 Hoover Road, Santa Cruz, CA 95065: BUG DEATH by f.a. nettlebeck. (\$5.00p).
- **BLACK SPARROW PRESS, P.O. Box 3993, Santa Barbara, CA 93105: The Beach Cafe and The Voice by Mohammed Mrabet (\$4.00p/\$10.00h). Further interesting reading from Morocco.
- **BOOKSLINGER, 2163 Ford Parkway, St. Paul, MN 55116: Piano Album-- Short Piano Pieces, 1962-1984 by Dick Higgins (\$10.00p).
- **HIRAM POETRY REVIEW, P.O. Box 162, Hiram, OH 44234: #27 -- work by John Anson, Lyn Lifshin, Carol Dunne, Robert Linn and others (\$1.00p).
- **LEO WIENER, P.O. Box 233, Bayside, N.Y. 11361: Silence Moves by Leo Wiener (\$2.45p).
- **THE ECCO PRESS, 1 West 30th St., NYC 10001: String by Dennis Schmitz (npl).
- **THE BROOKLYN SUN, 45 So. Oxford St., Brooklyn, NY 11217: new monthly publication with graphics, poetry, essays, looking for submissions also. (\$1.25p).
- **THE ALTERNATIVE PRESS, Grindstone City, MICH 48467: Very interesting postcards, bumper stickers, book markers, calendars etc., done on nice paper with letterpress. Write to them for more information on their tastefully done series!
- # Magazine, c/o Brian Breger, 86 East 3rd St, NYC 10003: #15 -- Charles Birenbaum, Dino Fabris, Robert Kelly, Toby Olson, Rochelle Owens, and Michael Roman (donation).
- **UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS PRESS, P.O. Box 429, Amherst, MA 01002: Two-Headed Woman by Lucille Clifton--1980 winner of the Juniper Prize sponsored by Univ. of Mass. (\$3.95p).

"Going Off the Deep End"

Licorice Chronicles (Kulchur Foundation, 888 Park Avenue, NYC 10021. \$3.50p/\$7.00h/ 1979).
Common Sense (This, 1978/\$5.00p) and You Bet! (L Publications, 1978/NPL). Both of these
may be ordered from: Small Press Distribution, 1636 Oceanview Ave., Kensington, CA 94707.

With the publication of three new books of poetry in the last two years, Ted Greenwald could appear to casual observers of the contemporary poetry scene as a poet who, in the tradition of the "New York School," tosses off poems at a phenomenally expeditious rate, as a sort of "lunch-poem-poet" of the 70's. Those well-acquainted with Greenwald's works, of course, will perceive these books as products of more than a decade of writing: Common Sense has been culled from many of his previous books, and Licorice Chronicles represents work dated from 1964-1967. Indeed, along with You Bet, these new publications merely emphasize how long and carefully Greenwald has been practicing his craft.

Yet, for all this, several of Greenwald's poems do have a slick, slap-dash surface which detracts (or even attracts) the reader's attentions away from the discipline and intelligence pervading his work as a whole. Some of the poems of Common Sense, for example, read almost as parodies of the O'Hara a la Berrigan accumulation of significantly insignificant emotions and events: "rain (second day in a row)/ morning (day-after-day)/ body smell, need a bath/ coffee cigarets in ashtrays..." ("For Ted, on Election Day"). And other pieces of the same collection offer little beyond the kind of ironic bemusement of a poem such as "Something Nice Happened," wherein the narrator is pleasantly surprised to hear that a "foul drunk" friend has come down with hepatitis. In these sorts of poems there is little ideational or formal excitement generated by the poet; the fact that the narrative content of a poem such as "Something Nice Happened" is fragmented through Greenwald's manipulation of time, contributes little but a mild befuddlement to the reader's experience of it. And underlying such works is an annoying sort of "down-home America we're all just plain folks" attitude, a kind of "don't get me wrong/ my feet are very much on the ground" philosophy to which Greenwald evidently feels compelled to subscribe.

However, fortunately for his readers, Greenwald isn't "just plain folk," and the "common sense" which he practices is less like Tom Paine than it is like Gertrude Stein's. In fact, what Greenwald obviously is seeking in his alignment with "common sense" is a counterbalance to the linguistic risks he takes in the majority of his poems. The art of the acrobat is at the heart of Greenwald's poetics. "A/sense/of/balance/takes/a/sense/of/balance," he observes in the title poem; or, as he puts it in "Mister Tree's Manual," "I go off the deep end and come up in shallows."

It is this "going off the deep end" that characterizes Greenwald's poetic achievement. In "Dew, Discrepancy," "Lapstrake," "Elegance and Umbrellas," "Blink," "Superfluity," "The Life," and several others of this collection, Greenwald's writing permits "language to go off/And fill/the sky of the Mind" ("P.S."). Through the short, unpunctuated line -- which characterizes so much of what has come to be called (for lack of a better description) "language" poetry -- and its attendant staccato-quick shifts of sound, image and syntax, Greenwald creates a poetic landscape in which all is subject to a dynamically energizing flux, in which "Language (the ass) carries/The burden of meaning" rather than the other way around. The first few lines of "Blink" represent for me the remarkable kaleidoscope of image and sound which characterizes the best poems of Common Sense.

the management
organized
the company
and that was splendid
enough chairs for all
a quick change
of clothes and scene
brings us
to
the
lawn

of the company
stretching out under our gaze
which itself
beer in hand
stops short of the horizon
.....

("Blink," p. 10)

Here, as the reader breath-takingly is forced into a series of confrontations with sign and signified, the attenuation of line does matter a great deal. The lines continually pull the words away from narrative continuity, pull both poet and reader in the direction of the terrifying but beautiful "deep end" of language. It is only the fragile memory of narrative that grounds the poem in experience, in what Greenwald metaphorically calls "the shallows." If there is occasionally something ostensibly "shallow" about that ground of experience, it, nonetheless, is necessary, to Greenwald's way of thinking, for, it is the experience, it is the poet's own voice, his talking, which provides the poem with the emotional content that he refuses to abandon. For Greenwald poetic activity is almost always a "talking through his poems" ("P.S."), a "talking through particles" (You Bet!, p. 6), a carefully controlled balance.

How remarkable it is, then, that Greenwald plunges into depths as fathomless as those of Licorice Chronicles. In this work, narrative continuity, that ground of "common sense" belongs less to everyday living than it does to the irrational world of dreams, the world of "Chang, the soybean merchant, the dream merchant, and reader of stars" (p. 10). Even the talking voice, the "I I I" which dominates the poems of Common Sense and You Bet!, consistently gives way in Licorice Chronicles to the unfolding of linguistic fragments, each fragment -- through image, syntax and sound -- in turn determining the next.

pears covered with gray clay
protracting sere flow of clouds over barn
(thru the sink window) blackbirds plundering thru unpruned branches, plums
green peaches seasons mingling
seasoning in a single eye lacing
salt with a slid sideglance
out of clouds towered foam of "preferring biting stars"
to transforming fact and image, tasting wings with (my) eyes
flowing onto the oiled gray road.

(Licorice Chronicles, p. 55)

No longer is the short line, the particle, the unit of meaning; nor is the unit here what Ron Silliman has recently described as "the new sentence." Rather, in eschewing both, Greenwald establishes in passages such as this an absolute fluidity of mind and world, a language of landscape where fact and image, life and imagination continually transform one another. Those that fear that in giving over the poem to language, that in moving away from self-centrism, poetry will be drained of life and left a sterile machine of words, ought especially to heed what Greenwald shows us. For, even in this short passage, one can observe that alliterative fruits -- pears, plums, peaches -- the color gray and the related images of clouds, the logic (again alliterative) of seasons, seasoning and salt, and the several references to eyes and sight (to name only a few of the prosodic devices here at work) all encourage the reader to link the fragments into an incredibly emotive whole that is unlike either our dreams or experiences, a whole that exists only in art. This, of course, also is a kind of balance. But, instead of coming to that balance through rational control, through the voice of his personality, in Licorice Chronicles Greenwald has gone below the surface of experience and allowed language to discover his voice, to uncover a self. Because of that faith in language, he has created in Licorice Chronicles a work of overpowering beauty and complexity. To say that this is one of the best works of poetry I have ever read is beside the point; of much more importance is the fact that this is a work I want to experience again and again.

-- Douglas Messerli

The Morning of the Poem by James Schuyler (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, \$10.95h).

"Silver day

how shall I polish you?" (Good Morning)

A heady perfume, a bunch full of now, poems which are fresh. One can smell the air scented with flowers, trees, rain:

"Hotter today, hotter still tomorrow" (The Morning of the Poem)
touching senses with light color, weather, of taste, flavourful memories; paintings and places, names:

"England, France

Denmark, Germany (oh yes, and Italy),"

Poems peopled with friends, lovers, dogs, plants, a raccoon. A rat is not a "fat mouse". Everything is something to pick up and "hold close" and everything is like how:

"Moved by air, the air is like the gray-haired striding
slim waisted" (The Morning of the Poem)

man to fall in love with in the supermarket. No clinging but, magic, mischief, movement.

"... I turned

my back and this small green world went shadowless,"

(The Morning of the Poem)

It is delightful and scary meeting the feeling in the air or:

"walk the street at night
without feeling scared unless
someone scary passes."

(Dining Out with Doug and Frank)

Through a landscape of New York painted with beauty and sympathy to Maine, Venice wherever, sparkling and dancing like light on water is each word. The architecture of the poem, words:

"A better morning comes to pass
sunlight buttered on the grass" or

"An office building straight from Babylon." or

"The color in the petal

Is merely light

And that's refraction:" (The Morning of the Poem)

Names of roses, buildings, trees, flowers, 'McSorleys' 'McFeely's'

"Stars like the Koh-i-noor" or

"the poem

the house for sale."

(The Morning of the Poem)

The music twists and turns everything is:

"...Discontinuity
in all we see and are:
the same, yet change,
change, change...."

(June 30, 1974)

the tempo of the poem. And the, the end moving quicker, quicker, that tense, excruciating walk to the pissoir in Paris. Excitement.

"stop stirring

the rice and come with me to Maine..."

-- Helena Hughes

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A Writer's Guide to Copyright is now available from Poets & Writers, 201 West 54th St, New York, N.Y. 10019. Complete with instructions, examples and sample forms, the cost is \$5 including postage (\$3.75 if you're listed in their directory).

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SOLICITATION: MAIZE notebooks is looking for third world poetry and fiction. Manuscript deadline is May 1, 1980. Send to: MAIZE, P.O. Box 8251, San Diego, CA 92102. SASE requested. A sample copy of the magazine is \$2.00.

Interview with Eileen Myles (poet, living in New York City).

Eileen Myles: To me, what's so great about being a poet is that it's a total no-win situation. I have an ego as a poet, part of me wants to be famous and all that, but basically I know that I'm not going to get rich, or famous. Being a poet is not going to impress your mother; you're not going to make the cover of Newsweek; and it's not going to make a fucking bit of difference. In a way, it's like having the smallest soapbox in the world, and because of that, you can be utterly omnipotent. That's what is so wonderful about it: you're completely free. Poetry is not a commodity art.

Vicki Hudspeth: Yes. Sometimes I think it might be a relief to come home, flip on the tube, and check out. But for me too, there is always the urgency to write and be part of poetry, even though no one is paying money for it.

E.M.: That's what makes the time when you're not writing poetry so nice. You can get into disco, clothes, or you can get a new lover. But there comes a point when you start getting a little nervous. Then it's time to start writing again. So when you're not writing you can afford to indulge yourself and not really care. That time is a luxury. You can use it to get in touch with your averageness as a poet. Because there is a remote possibility that poetry may wind up on the map at some point and I'm sure it's only extremely mortal poetry that will.

V.H.: Do you ever use your notebook to get material for poems?

E.M.: Sometimes, but notebooks are basically jerking off. Though in a notebook, you don't have to deal with censorship. I think about this a lot when I'm writing: how much do I want to reveal?

V.H.: Still, your work does seem to say quite a bit about your life without revealing everything...

E.M.: Somehow I feel that what you don't put in the poem is the form of the poem or the main emotion. That's what people like Hemingway were into. He had that whole idea about something not exploded, so he could dwell on everything around it. A few years ago I read a lot of poems by men with lots of sex in them. For awhile I thought about writing raunchy poems--being real upfront about myself as a heterosexual person. I wasn't the only woman doing that, but it felt important then. Some people may have thought that I was being very revealing, but at the same time I was just having fun by being completely open about something that I didn't actually care about. Mentally I was going through a whole thing where I was realizing that I was gay. I don't know if that has as much to do with writing as it has to do with psychology.

V.H.: I think it has everything to do with writing. It has to do with the contours of a poem and what you choose to outline.

E.M.: I always know what I have in mind to say. I'll write a line and then I'll go to write another line and I'll not write that one, but think of the one I'll write after. In that way I get a longer poem or more mileage because I never quite complete a thought. It's as though you're explaining something but you don't want to finish. It's like coming on to somebody. As long as you're not too direct, the illusion is going to keep going. But as soon as you say, "Well, should we go to bed together?" you know there's going to be a yes or a no, and that's it. There's always a sense of what sort of lines will bring you to a dead stop and kill all associations.

V.H.: What are you reading?

E.M.: For a year my plan is not to read a single book that has been written by a man. I feel that there may be something crass about that, but in college I had big reading lists that had only male writers on them, and there's nothing perverse about that, right?

Interview with Alex Katz (painter, living in New York City. A studio book of his painting, Alex Katz, with text by Irving Sandler, was published by Abrams this Spring).

Vicki Hudspith: Why do you often paint portraits of poets?

Alex Katz: They're interesting people. If you want to draw or paint someone, you'd like to be around people who are interesting.

V.H.: You seem to have gone against every trend during your career. Now, you've won widespread acclaim for your work, but how were you able to keep going?

A.K.: Poets were always part of my audience. I felt that, intellectually, I had a first-class audience. Frank (O'Hara) and Edwin (Denby) and Jimmy (Schuyler) were as smart as anyone else around, so I felt pretty lucky with that audience.

V.H.: In your recent show at the Marlborough Gallery, the portraits of four women in hats seems so flawless and effortless. Could you talk a little about those paintings?

A.K.: The four women in hats are the most controlled of the series. I kept going on till I got bored, and about the ninth one, I got bored. I thought I'd just run it through till they flattened out and it took about nine paintings. But they all had great balance. I started to have trouble with the last one, so I walked away from it.

V.H.: Is that how you know that you've reached the end of a series?

A.K.: On that particular one. With most paintings you just do one and you're out of it.

V.H.: What started you on the cutouts?

A.K.: I did the first one in 1959. I had screwed up a big painting, so I began cutting the people out of it. I put them on plywood at first, but the edges were rough. About 5 or 6 years later, it was solved when I happened to talk to a student of mine about this, and one day he came over to my studio with a metal saw and a piece of brass and handed it to me. I've done them on metal ever since.

V.H.: Critics have often remarked that your work has the quality of "aloofness."

A.K.: I think it's the style. Most people do not expect a "cool" style from a figurative painting. They can't read them the way they've read previous figurative paintings- that is, from a humanitarian, social point of view. My work has also been called "heartless," and things like that. If someone can deal with the stuff for what it is, I think everything is there. My paintings just don't read the way humanist paintings are supposed to read.

V.H.: I read that once after painting for an entire summer in Maine, you just scrapped everything.

A.K.: When I first started, I had some really painful summers. One summer I did scrap the entire four-months work. I think I did 60 paintings three or four years later and junked them all. I've thrown out a couple of thousand paintings.

V.H.: That's a lot of work to throw away.

A.K.: I don't care. It makes you feel liberated from the stuff. After all, it does represent you, and if you destroy it, you're liberated from being represented by mediocre work. You like your good paintings more so you feel a little better about your work. I'm sure I've destroyed some paintings that were better than the ones I've kept, but I don't think that's very important. It doesn't matter at all.

V.H.: How do you begin to work in the scale you've continued to work in?

A.K.: I wanted to put a painting next to a Kline that would have the same kind of muscle. I wanted something less traditional in terms of scale.

V.H.: Do you move into areas that are particularly uncomfortable for you?

A.K.: Yes, definitely. What you'd like to see sometimes is a logical idea technically but it's not rational. You make logical steps and you end up in places that are totally irrational. Very often you find yourself in these weird places and you get a little frightened.

V.H.: Do you ever have periods of time when you're not painting?

A.K.: My work seems to be going fluently. If I want to start something, I look back on my own paintings and pick up a thread.

ADVICE TO:

Friday, Zoe and Sandy advise me:
 Eat fruit, and drink plenty of water
 Eat green vegetables, chicken
 liver, raisins, molasses tea
 A quart of milk every day
 or at least one container of cottage cheese
 Sit in the sun for Vitamin D
 Rub your stomach with cocoa butter
 Buy a crib with the head tilting upwards
 Saturday, Bob tells me to drink red raspberry
 tea, even in early pregnancy
 it relaxes the uterus
 Be sure to breast-feed,
 as Deli says, "There's nothing more natural!"
 Read to the baby in the womb
 Sunday, Victor tells me I better exercise
 right after the baby is born
 or my stomach will stay big forever!
 Nancy, at lunch, gives me her best advice:
 Have help when you come home from the hospital
 though Neil and Roberta
 turned off their phone
 and wouldn't even let their relatives
 into the house, but be sure
 to buy the baby a record player
 My father suggests we think about moving
 24th Street is not a place for a child
 Odette instructs me in natural language
 vitamins, deep breathing, how to speak up
 to my doctor.
 My doctor tells me nothing at all.
 I open COMMONSENSE CHILD BIRTH and read:
 "Eat well. Get enough rest,
 moderate exercise, and above all, be serene.
 It's no accident that one of the theories
 about the smile of the Mona Lisa
 is that she was pregnant."

--Madeleine Keller

St. Mark's Church In-the-Bowery
 The Poetry Project
 10th St. & 2nd Ave.
 New York, N.Y. 10003

