

THE POETRY PROJECT NEWSLETTER
No. 84 October 1981
Greg Masters, Editor
St. Mark's Church
2nd Ave. & 10th St. NYC 10003

WEDNESDAY READINGS: at 8 pm, suggested contribution \$3. Hosted by Bernadette Mayer & Bob Holman: October 14 - Amiri Baraka, Miguel Algarin & Lorenzo Thomas. October 21 - Eileen Myles & Lewis Warsh. October 28 - Anne Waldman & Lorna Smedman.

MONDAY READING & PERFORMANCE SERIES: at 8 pm, suggested contribution \$1. Hosted by Bob Rosenthal & Rochelle Kraut. October 12 - Larry Goodell & Ricky McKoy. October 19 - Marc Nasdor & Irving Stettner. October 26 - Jeanne Lance & Carol Bergé. (Open reading November 2.)

FREE WRITING WORKSHOPS (held in Faculty Lounge of the Third St. Music School, 235 East 11th Street)

Tuesdays - with Maureen Owen, beginning Oct. 13, 7 pm.

Fridays -- with Steve Carey, beginning Oct. 9, 7:30 pm.

SPECIAL WORKSHOP: With Lorenzo Thomas, October 15, 8 pm, free (at the Third Street Music School)

telephone booth number 102

you and your bottle
and your smoke
and your coke
are cordially invited
to attend a party.
If you cannot make it
send your bottle
and your smoke
and your coke
to keep the party going
until you are able
to party with us

Pedro Pietri

This is the 84th Poetry Project Newsletter and the beginning of the Poetry Project's 16th year. Though, as everyone knows, the condition of America - its atmosphere and government - bespeaks fragile commitment to poetry and the other arts, the Poetry Project promises a livelier season than ever of readings, workshops, lectures and publications. Please help us by donating \$5 to the Newsletter to cover the cost of paper and printing for one year (8 issues). Full Poetry Project Membership information is on the second last page of this issue.

Next month, plans for a Poetry Contest will be announced. This attempt at money-raising involves the accompaniment of \$5 with your submission of poems to be judged by some as-yet-unnamed judge or judges. Winners will receive prizes and their poems will be published in the Newsletter (the entry fee covers the cost of a year's subscription to the Newsletter). So, you can begin sending poems with stamped envelopes plus \$5 (attention Poetry Contest, c/o Poetry Project Newsletter...) now; judges will be announced next month and winners soon after.

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BOOKS & MAGAZINES RECEIVED (Summer Pile-up)

The Book of Ebenezer le Page by G.B. Edwards: Knopf, \$13.95 (find of the year, everyone around here agrees--the reader gets absorbed into the life & lives that unfold, told by an elder on the isle of Guernsey whose rough charm & assertive opinions on everything & one give flesh & make us friends with the dozens of characters, relatives & loves that come in & out of the author's life, interlocking the dozens of these threads in an easy story-telling manner taken up & dropped & advanced later, from his boyhood before electricity through the occupation during the wars up until the 60's with the infringement of TVs and tourist trade never leaving the microcosm of his beloved island universe)...from Little Caesar Press, 3373 Overland Ave., #2, LA, CA 90034: Nothing to Write Home About by Joe Brainard, \$3 (Brainard's statements & reports are magic since they change us, total strangers, who are given them in his easy going over a Campari kind of tone--afternoon porch sights & 'coffee out' city encounters are zeroed in on & the joy & amusement of the writer at being anywhere at all relieves us. Insomnia's blamed on his pillow. He's a master of the mini-essay: "Loser - He was at the airport when his ship came in."), Italy by Donald Britton, \$3, Fantoccini: A Little Book of Memories by Kirby Congdon, \$3, Shrewcrazy by Elaine Equi, \$3, The Recession Diary and Other Economical Writings by Anne Pitrone, \$3, The Brute by Peter Schjeldahl, \$4...from Black Sparrow: Midnight Mass (stories), \$6p \$14c & Next to Nothing (collected poems 1926-77), \$5p \$14c both by Paul Bowles, Proud Beggars by Albert Cossery, \$6.50p \$14c, Selected Poems by Gilbert Sorrentino, \$7.50p \$20c...from North Point Press, 850 Talbot Ave., Berkeley, CA 94706: Notes for Echo Lake by Michael Palmer, \$6p \$12.50c, Songs and Sonnets from Laura's Lifetime by Francis Petrarch trans. Nicholas Kilmer, \$7.50p \$15c, Recollected Essays by Wendell Berry, \$7.50p \$15c (an inspiring apologia for the ideal life--BM)...from AM HERE BOOKS/IMMEDIATE EDITIONS, 2740 Williams Way, Santa Barbara, CA 93105: The Rodent Who Came to Dinner by Tom Clark, \$3 and Mother's Voice by Robert Creeley, \$3, both clean mimeo, signed & 1 collector editions also available...from The Turtle Island Foundation, 2845 Buena Vista Way, Berkeley, CA 94708: Angels Laundromat by Lucia Berlin, \$4.95 p \$10c and Tell My Horse by Zora Neale Hurston, \$8.95p ...from Garland Publishing, Inc., 136 Madison Ave., NYC 10016: Laura Riding: A Bibliography by Joyce Wexler, \$32, The Poetry of Arnaut Daniel, ed. & trans. by James J. Wilhelm, \$25, First Poems: A New Edition by George Campbell, \$18...from Viking Penguin: Shadow Train by John Ashbery (reviewed this issue), \$4.95p \$8.95c, Early Auden by Edward Mendelschn, \$20...Both Sides of the Goat by Lenny Goldstein: Andrea Doria Books, 515 E. 6th St. #C8, NYC 10009, \$2...Bronze Age by Susan Noel: Rocky Ledge Cottage Editions, Box 125, Cherry Valley, NY 13320, \$2...Kneading the Blood by Maurice Kenny: Strawberry Press, Box 451, Bowling Green Sta, NYC 10004, \$2.50...Becoming Visible by Philip Lamantia: City Lights, \$3.95...Who's That Pushy Bitch by Jana Harris: Jungle Garden Press, Fairfax, CA, npl (an attracting charm pervades through the tough crusading blame naming tho we're shortchanged cause her anger punches possibility. Her portraits/scenes of working people, in the city or at some river fork, as always, are loving & well-chosen. A passionate poem to a photo negates her sex charges other

wheres)...Schedule Rhapsody by William Corbett: Pig Press, 7 Cross View Terrace, Neville's Cross, Durham DH1 4JY, Great Britain, \$3.50...Byron's Letters and Journals, Vol. 11, 1823-4, ed. Marchard: Harvard University Press, \$15...Green Soldiers by John Bensko: Yale University Press, \$4.95p \$9.95c...State Lounge by Alan Bernheimer: TUUMBA, 2639 Russell St., Berkeley, CA 94705, \$2...Mercury by Jonis Agee: The Toothpaste Press, Box 546, West Branch, Iowa 52358, \$7.50p \$30 signed c...The Populist Manifestos by Lawrence Ferlinghetti: Grey Fox, \$3.95...Endless Life: Selected Poems by Lawrence Ferlinghetti, \$4.95p \$14.95, Love and Terror by William Herriek, \$13.95: New Directions...from Tombouctous Books, Box 265, Bolinas, CA 94924: Five Aces and Independence by John Thorpe, \$5 and Practicing by Jamie Mac-Innis, \$5...from Station Hill Press, Station Hill Rd., Barrytown, NY 12507: The Z-D Generation by Edward Sanders, npl, The Courtyard of Continuous Returning by Mark Karlins, \$3.50, Orexis by Kenneth Irby, npl...from Shell Press, 172 E. 4th St., NYC 10009: My Newport by Steven Hall, npl and More Recent Poems by Rando, npl...The Isle of the Little God by Mary Ferrari: The Kulchur Foundation, 888 Park Ave., NYC 10021, npl...Maria Nephele: A Poem In Two Voices by Odysseus Elytis trans. Athan Anagnostopoulos: Houghton Mifflin, \$10...Poet's Theatre: A Collection of Recent Works, ed. by Michael Slater & Cynthia Savage: Ailanthus Press, 210 Thompson St., NYC 10012, \$4.95.

KNOCK KNOCK, ed. Vicki Hudspith & Madeleine Keller: 141 W. 24 St, NYC 10011, npl ("A Funny Anthology By Serious Writers" and they're all here mostly new New York - Bandanza, Barg, Holman, Hartman, Kushner, Lenhart, Cataldo, Dlugos, Carey, Bijou, Bennett, Bernstein, Friedman, Lesniak, McKay, Myles, North, Owen, Padgett, Rower, Rubino, Savage, Towle, Weigel, Wright, Zavatsky, Waldman, Nolan, Ginsberg + much more)...The Paris Review 79, \$10...Intrepid, ed. Allen DeLoach, Box 110, Central Park Sta., Buffalo, NY 14215, \$3.50 (a good issue celebrating Wm Carlos Williams with pieces about him by poets like Ginsberg, Corman, Oppenheimer, McClure, Levertov which detail the legacy also photos, letters & many other contributions)...The Difficulties (#2), ed. Tom Beckett: Viscerally Press, 429 Irma St. #3, Kent, Ohio 44240, \$4 (Corman, Silliman, Perelman, Bernstein, Gottleib, Hejinian, Eigner, Davies, Messerli, Enslin, others)...tottel's, ed. Ron Silliman: Central City Hospitality House, 146 Leavenworth St., SF, CA 94102 (#18--Steve Benson's Blue Book 42)...Little Review 15, eds. McKernan, Weingart, Webster: Box 205, Marshall University, Huntington, W. Virginia 25701, npl (K. Krolow, A. Ball, C. Chambers +)...

Two poetry calendars & newsletters from lower California are worth subscribing to even for those in other parts of the country because of the number of reviews they each contain. POETRY FLASH has been around (August was issue #101), a subscription is \$7, editors are Steve Abbott & Joyce Jenkins: Box 4172, Berkeley, CA 94704. POETRY NEWS, which is another product of the incredible Beyond Baroque Foundation, is usually more lively since they have people like Dennis Cooper contributing and it's free tho I'm sure a donation wouldn't be refused. Editor Jocelyn Fisher, 681 Venice Blvd. Box 806, Venice, CA 90291.

FOR L.Z.'S MEMORY

"After the first death there is no other..."
It depends on who's dying.

Robert Creeley

Shadow Train by John Ashbery (Viking Penguin, 1981), \$4.95 p, \$8.95 c.

"Typical."

That's how one poet described these 200 new stanzas. The irony of this witty epitome is partially that the tone remains the same in most of Ashbery's work while the architecture of the books varies as much as possible, from the prose called Three Poems to the double columns of "Litany." The radical change coupled with a lack of departure is typical.

The lackadaisical astonishment Ashbery has constructed is familiar to us. The tone that is maintained is one of a fait accompli. No one seems sure of what may have been accomplished but more importantly they're saying how. And the tone, tho "flat", implicates many voices in its unobtrusive shiftings of tense and person.

Colin Wilson has referred to consciousness as a "web of relationships." At his best Ashbery is extending this web, and hence consciousness, with every line. He is, "...Encouraging these branching diversions around an axis." Why? Because this is what keeps the uninflected tone interesting, a seam that is seamless.

Therefore, the surprises are not so much surprises, as one unfurling wave of curiously appropriate resonances. "And you get two of everything. Twin tunics, the blue/ And the faded." In the same poem, "My personality fades away/ As dreams evaporate by day, which stays." This enduring disappearing act recedes sidewise into or from the present which was the future, really, all the time anyway.

The inclusion of short sentences supplies a nice rhythm to the famously longer, roomy lines. "Hey, stupid!" "A blight." "Get it?" "The poem is you." They are like clicks of space between the boxcars of well loaded sentences that roll by.

Shadow Train is my favorite Ashbery title. It sounds like a Rock & Roll album. Even the cover photo of a low hooped fence, its arcs running in and out of the snow, duplicates or shadows the poems in Shadow Train which all vanish half way down the page, all 50 poems, all 16 lines each. And the lines themselves will plunge suddenly into the blank white snow of total association and continue to run along unseen tho you know they're there and can see where they come back out again.

What do we make of the title, "Oh, Nothing" on page 15. A speaker. A listener. The title defies us, it finds us saying that it's impossible and wondering how the author will get out of it. Settings for two. But wait. We're told, "These two are sisters". Who - the reader and the read? "But the youngest and most beautiful sister/ Is called Forward Animation." Better set it for three. No, you make four, or am I the you he referred to as her as in, "Of her it may be said/ That what she says, she knows and it will always come undone/ Around her." What will? "Oh, Nothing"?

A few lines down the waterfall of the same poem, "The glassy,/ Chill surface of the cascade reflected her." This central image is also used in "Variant," from Houseboat Days. "Until the whole thing overflows like a silver/ Wedding cake or Christmas tree, in a cascade of tears."

So that what is coming undone around her is precisely this cascading "globe" which is the last word of the poem. This globe is a convex mirror, if you will, and the question is, can the gaze extend completely around the globe. Because as any part comes toward you, the rest is

receding around the corner. Finally, "Oh, Nothing" becomes a revelation. Oh. The globe becomes not a one sided mirror in which you see everything which is nothing, but is a lens that provides a focus for the distortion necessary to see around.

-- Jeff Wright

AM HERE CATALOGUE #5

Edited by Tom Clark & Richard Aarons

A sociological document of the first order, this Montgomery Ward type catalogue (alas without pictures) is well worth the \$10 price simply as Americana, let alone for its evidence on the condition known as The Economy. It's an alphabetical listing of materials for sale by authors ranging from Abbott to Zukofsky, at prices that almost make you believe you are a cultural asset. Every item is numbered and priced, and throughout this large-size paperbound basic text are sprinkled comments on particular books, penned in his best absolutely straight and informative manner by a very astute Tom Clark. Clark on Dorn, Clark on Roy Fisher & Jim Burns, Clark excellent on Dick Gallup, Clark incisive on Robert Creeley, and the manners are impeccable. Dennis Cooper adds his comments here and there, showing his own biases endearingly. Do you need every book ever written by Anselm Hollo? I do. You won't want to buy them from this guy, for these prices, but the list is useful, and to see the size of Mr. Hollo's oeuvre is to be told. TC is not useful on AH, one of his rare lapses. Again, do you need \$7,500 worth of mss. by Janine Pommy-Vega? You have come to the right place. AM HERE #5 is salted with a one line per page text by Mr. William Burroughs also, and is prefaced by a penetrating & telling list poem by Mr. Clark which is in fact the best thing in it. Kudos to Tom Clark for Marcel Duchamping it into this particular mirage.

THE EARLY AUDEN by Edward Mendelsohn, Viking Penguin

A massive tome which might have better been titled THE POEMS OF THE SOMETHING AUDEN, in which, without benefit of anecdote, drollery or light touch, the coming to birth of hereafter dominant themes (it says here) in Auden's Corpus, including extensive documentation of genesis and maturation via helter-skelter, entropy, eccentric practice and the chemical life (Benzedrine by day, wine & martinis at even, seconal for sleep) marches past the eyes for hundreds of pages, insomnia's perfect enemy....."Lay your sleeping head my love/human on my faithless arm"....

PARIS REVIEW #79, THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

Let's hear it for Hi-jinks & decorum. The Paris Review Gang, tho they never did come up with a Hemingway, nor even a John Maynard Keynes, did have fun in their day, and still do. Especially the brilliant Harold "Doc" Humes, the appalling but lovable Terry Southern, and someone wonderful named Patti Hill. The 25 year memoirs by assorted hands, woven together by George "The Bogey-Man" Plimpton, should be read. Believe it. This issue also has plenty of poems, many terrible, but first-class works by Clark, Padgett, Ashbery, Koch, Schuyler, and probably somebody else.

Also amazing nonsense by Kinnell (ye gads!), a rare tired poem by Philip Levine, who generally confounds by being good, and some really awful unknowns. The Interview, with Rebecca West, is not to be missed. She is perfect. "Leonard (Woolf) really had such a tiring mind..."

The 3 reviews above by Ted Berrigan

(see Books Received for addresses)

KA*THUNK

There's no way anybody can stop
Bugsy, beauty, the bane, or bop
You take your iron, heat it slow
and out it comes pop, pap, or po'
So get into your Dodge Charger
of the gunmetal hue and go
where the pollen of poppies blows
and style accrues just like guano
between very flaccid eyebrows
counting money on subways trains
The world of tissue dips and wheels
spraying its weird fungus about
Only the sun keeps you awake
and a murmur in your cool heart

John Godfrey

A Part by Wendell Berry (North Point Press, Berkeley, 1980).

When readers take Wendell Berry's poetry to ear and mind, they place themselves in the consciousness of nature's priest singing the spirit. This spirit life is not the symbol of pastoral poetry, but the unique and delicate harmony of man, bird, beast, and tree, each possessing like and particular qualities. Earth is "deathless" in "Purification" in contrast to man who suffers numerous deaths. In a poem honoring slaughtered hogs, Berry cautions "let this day begin again the change of hogs into people, not the other way around, / for today we celebrate again our lives' wedding with the world." No Renaissance man this poet, Berry visions man as A Part of nature, a co-participant with every other part of life on this earth. The truth of his small body of poems is very sobering.

While the volume's opening section establishes the connections of man and the rest of nature, section II develops a spirituality whose concept rests upon the word "grace"--the forces of man and spirit with the latter prevailing. Grace brings together opposites in a complementary manner as in "To the Holy Spirit": "By Thy wide grace show me Thy narrow gate." The juxtaposition of large and small, numerous and scarce, is man's undoing in the sense that abundance destroys man's caution and appreciation by stimulating his appetite for greed. In "We Who Prayed

and Wept" and "July, 1773," one of the Kentucky River poems, man becomes perverse when need is filled and lack of need leads to willfulness that upsets harmony and man's place as a part of the natural world. He has chosen not to recognize and cooperate with grace.

Sections III to VI include aphorisms, narrative poetry, translations, and insights into man's dependence on his senses. While the sound of one man becomes the guide to another at night, the eye of the day perceives the new though it views familiar ground. Because man tends "to make intent/ of accident," he is unable or unwilling to sense the natural beauty and mystery of existence. In dependence on his mind and in answering its consuming pride, man seeks what is contrary to his well being. In thinking himself above the rest of mankind and nature, he has lost the vital ties that make life possible. In seeking the world he has lost it.

A Part is not a volume of lament but rather a reaffirmation of hope as some do perceive, communicate and work as a force contrary to the usually accepted sense of progress. In the concluding lines of "The Slip," Berry states ironically "Though death is in the healing, it will heal." In the last section, the poet demonstrates his faith in the land, particularly his own along the Kentucky River as he plows with a team of horses. He is a nonmechanistic and organic farmer, a model of what farmers and their farms can be. The tradition of caring for the land and animals and crops identified with it prevails as attitude and value he passes on to his son and readers. Though poetry is the mode of communication, Berry desires his life and ours to be "life beyond words." As he espouses the value of land and man's acknowledgment of his dependence upon it, he likewise maintains the poetic traditions of language precision and crafted form. Wendell Berry's care-giving and thoughtful poetry rests on a firm and basic philosophy: "What I stand for/ is what I stand on."

---Joseph F. Connelly

STRING STORY

The beluga and the coast shape themselves;
we trade the story back and forth
without loosening the net.

Ookpik settles to her nest;
Nanook's head wheels from side to side,
and the ermine dives like an otter.
A blizzard of shapes
against the white roof.

So many people here tonight, the roof drips;
we mop up the puddles quickly,
although they are hard to find.

Ann Fox Chandonnet

Rumors had been going around among workshop writers for days that F.T. Prince's *The Doors of Stone* was ordered and due at Hawkeye Bookstore. While most of us had never read a line by the man, reliable sources convinced us that here, once again, might be the mystery book that would open the pages. The book with the lines to send you running to the Me Too store for a fancy cheese, or make you look straight up at the sky and buy a bus ticket or knock at a long-watched door.

Meanwhile, bide the time out Burlington Street, whose big old houses were full of inspiration of a vague restless sort when their lights clicked on, and take a short right to the bridge over the Rock Island line tracks, always good for half an hour, weather permitting. With luck an east-bound freight would pass under, just picking up speed and starting to lumber, with maybe a wanderer visible in an empty boxcar. (When a spark from a passing train ignited one of the huge fuel tanks across the river from the Dairy Queen in May 1969, a transient named Henry Trueblood was injured in the explosion.)

That bridge for me is permanently linked with Hart Crane's poem "The Mango Tree," thanks to a dozen sheet-lightning evenings spent tossing that word-cluster around and gazing down the tracks. With a little Leadbelly mixed in.

At 21 books and poets bond from sheer heat and anything around at the moment is there forever. The serious brown cover of Creeley's *Words* and an Iowa City park with swings on a street I can't remember. The slimness of *The Hotel Wentley Poems* and fluorescent light in a corner restaurant with the worst chinese food outside Nova Scotia. George Oppen and the brass bed section of the Goodwill store.

The town was full of books, the books, old, new and legendary. Someone had a copy of *Some Trees*. Someone else living in Cockroach Arms had a copy of *January* and would lend it out if you had references. Someone in the quonsets had copies of *Art and Literature*, and the big Yale editions of Gertrude Stein.

On the way back through town you stopped for a beer at Donnelly's or Kenny's, where the poets sat at one end and fiction writers at the other, and then looked in at Gerry Stevenson's bookstore, where there was bound to be something new since yesterday--maybe the complete 26 volume *Life Histories of North American Birds* would suddenly be there, stacked nonchalantly on the floor in the back.

Books, and the transcontinental clear-channel stations from Oklahoma City, Dallas, New Orleans. For the first time you knew people who sat up all night talking poetry.

Then one late morning they were there: a short block of burnt orange on the Hawkeye poetry shelf: hardcovers. I walked out the door with it (it was 53 degrees and partly cloudy) and across the street. On the corner, the daily Vietnam noon-vigil was just gathering. Heading south on Clinton, I glanced in the Burger Chef windows to see who was stirring. There were five or six familiar faces sipping coffee in scattered booths. All reading *The Doors of Stone*.

Merrill Gilfillan

Haiku

Let's have the money, or else.
Just do what I say
and nobody will get hurt.

Paul Violi

Once again we'd like you to think
 With sublime poetic reason,
 Of your crucial financial link
 To us, now in our 15th season
 Of readings, workshops, books and magazines;
 Three thousand inspired and inspiring nights
 That send you, like energized machines,
 Into big and wild poetic flights:
 Yet Hark! E'en now we have a deficit!
 (Poetry has never been too lucrative
 Though poems (and prose) are oft beneficent)--
 Our thanks, rhymed & unrhymed, for what you give.
 Contributions are tax-deductible;
 Your generosity ineluctable.

POETRY PROJECT MEMBERSHIP 1981-82

We would like to invite the readers of the newsletter to become Members of the Poetry Project.

One-Year Membership \$50

Members are given a season's pass to all events - 66 poetry readings and performances, 10 lectures and the Annual Poetry Project Benefit, plus the monthly newsletter and the bi-annual WORLD Magazine. (No contribution is asked at our weekly writing workshops and special "Writer in Residency" workshops).

Two-Year Membership \$75 (save \$25)

All of the above for both the 1981-82 and 1982-83 seasons.

Patron Membership \$150

Patrons receive two passes to all events of the season, all publications, plus a copy of THE WORLD RECORD, a double album featuring selections from Poetry Project readings 1960-1980, plus grateful public acknowledgement.

Benefactor Membership \$300

Benefactors receive four season's passes, all publications, THE WORLD RECORD and grateful public acknowledgement.

MEMBERSHIP FORM 1981-82

Please enroll me in the following:

_____ One-Yr Mem(s) \$50

_____ Two-Yr Mem(s) \$75

_____ Patron Mem(s) \$150

_____ Benefactor \$300

The real cost of our series is not reflected in the cost of membership. Please help us by contributing at least 20% above the price of your membership.

Memberships \$ _____

Contributions \$ _____

Total \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Please make checks payable to The Poetry Project

"I Dreamt I Slept..."

I dreamt I slept
in the backseat of a car,
and the walls were marble.

7/10/78

(An Afternote)

And the worlds were marble.
And the walls were!

- Robert Creeley

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