

THE POETRY PROJECT NEWSLETTER
No. 86 December 1981
Greg Masters, editor
St Mark's Church 674-0910
2nd Ave & 10th St NYC 10003

WEDNESDAY READINGS: at 8 PM, suggested contribution \$3. Hosted by Bernadette Mayer & Bob Holman: December 2 - Samuel R. Delany & Toby MacLennan. December 9 - Gwendolyn Brooks & Ntozake Shange. December 16 - Cookie Mueller & Pedro Pietri. December 23 - Susan Cataldo & Diane Ward.

MONDAY READING & PERFORMANCE SERIES: at 8 PM, suggested contribution \$1. Hosted by Bob Rosenthal & Rochelle Kraut: December 7 - Open Reading. December 14 - David Zimmer & Russell Smith. December 21 - Vicki Hudspith & Chassler. December 28 - Leslea Newman & Joel Lewis.

Special Workshop with Gwendolyn Brooks on Thursday December 10 8 PM free at the Third Street Music School, 235 E 11 St

FREE WRITING WORKSHOPS (held at the Third Street Music School)

Tuesdays - with Maureen Owen, 7 PM

Fridays - with Steve Carey, 7:30 PM

Lecture by Rackstraw Downes on December 3 in the Parish Hall at 8 PM, contribution. His talk is entitled "What Realism Means to Me".

THE ANNUAL MAMMOTH POETRY PROJECT BENEFIT WILL TAKE PLACE THIS YEAR ON JANUARY 1. CALL US FOR DETAILS

A community election for a new member of the Advisory Board will be held in the Parish Hall on Saturday December 12th. Members of the community can vote between noon & 3 PM. A community meeting will take place at 1. Self-nominations for the community seat on the Board are due in the Poetry Project office by 5 December 9. The Advisory Board elects the Director and the Program Coordinator of the Poetry Project, chooses the editors of THE WORLD, chooses the Monday Night Series Coordinator, votes on all major changes in the budgets and structure of the Poetry Project, gives advice on the selection of the newsletter editor & workshop leaders, & suggests readers, lecturers, etc. to the Director and Program Coordinator. There are 8 members: 4 are elected by the Board itself, 3 are chosen by the community and the other is the Program Coordinator. The present members are Charles North, Alice Notley, Harris Schiff, Rochelle Kraut, Ed Friedman, Jessica Hagedorn, Maureen Owen & Bob Holman. Anyone can nominate her or himself for a community-elected position by making such a declaration, on paper, and leaving it at the Poetry Project office. Anyone can ask for a copy of the bylaws which govern the Advisory Board and therefore the Poetry Project. Any questions or ideas about the Poetry Project can be raised at the community meeting. (Extra community meetings can be called by a group of 15 people from the community.)

Guest editor for the upcoming issue of THE WORLD is Charlotte Carter. "The issue will commingle prose and poetry. It will be a 'thematic issue' only in that it will present the current good works of a variety of writers." - C.C. Deadline for sending mss. for the issue is Jan. 1, 1982. Send work with SASE to THE WORLD c/o The Poetry Project.

BOOKS AND MAGAZINES RECEIVED

Waltzing Matilda by Alice Notley: Kulchur Foundation, NYC, \$3.50p \$7c (includes the great journal work "Waltzing Matilda", 6 short plays with characters like Dark Mountain, Elephant, Ocean, Lady With Breasts, Blue Sky & Brunette Man, the transformed summer camp letter "No Woman Is An Islandess", an award to senses interview with George Schneeman + the sublime chat of "My Bodyguard" & more new poems)...Herald of the Autochthonic Spirit by Gregory Cors: New Directions, NYC, \$4.95 (ever informed, a word-winged marketplace of muse-honed vision data, child touch dreams, honey source replicas, Hasidic memory stratifications, pure ear money, tranquil Homer's motel joints and priestly bloomed discipline - Michael Scholnick)...from Z Press, Calais VT, \$4 each: Border Theme by Reed Bye & Cabin by Anne Waldman...Pet Food & Tropical Apparitions by Jessica Tarahata Hagedorn: Momo's Press, POB 14061, SF, CA 94114, \$5.95p \$15c...The Southern Cross by Charles Wright: Random House, NYC, \$10.50c...the only romance is what is accurate by Stephen Spera & Joel Colten: Philadelphia Eye & Ear, POB 1882, Phil. PA 19105, \$3 (photos & poems) also for \$3 from same: A Few Swimmers Appear by Don Yorty...Old Glory: An American Voyage by Jonathan Raban: Simon & Schuster, NYC, \$16.95...from Black Sparrow: Dangling in the Tournement by Charles Bukowski, \$6.50p \$14c & Thrice Chosen by Edouard Roditi, \$5p \$17.50c...from New Directions: HERmione by H.D. (novel), \$6.95 & New Directions 43, \$5.95p \$16.95c (Brock, Guillevic, Molinaro, Waldman +)...Primer by Bob Perelman: THIS Press, 2020 Ninth Ave, Oakland, CA 94606, \$4...Life Supports by William Bronk (New & Collected): North Point Press, 850 Talbot Ave, Berkeley CA 94706, \$20c...The Defence of Guenevere, and Other Poems by William Morris, ed. M. Lourie: Garland Publishing, Inc, 136 Madison Ave, NYC 10016, \$40c...Pavane by David Trinidad: Sherwood Press, 9773 Comanche Ave, Chatsworth CA 91311, \$4...Marilyn Lives by Joel Oppenheimer: Delilah Communications, 118 E 25 St, NYC 10010, \$8.95 (glossy book of photos & text)...Secrets of Elegance by Chris Tysh: Detroit River Press, 2371 Pulaski, Hamtramck, MI 48212, \$3...

United Artists 14, ed. Lewis Warsh & Bernadette Mayer, 172 E 4 St, 9B, NYC, 10009, \$2.50/\$10 for 5 issues (Schuyler, Creeley, Collom, Koethe, H. Weiner, McClure, Berrigan, Codrescu, Banks, Savage, Myles, Berkson, eds.)...Mag City 12, ed. Masters, Scholnick, Lenhart: 437 E 12 St #26 NYC 10009, \$2 (Apollinaire trans. Padgett/Ball, Mayer, Warsh, Wright, Schneeman, Herz, B. Rosenthal, A. Ginsberg, Ginsberg/Padgett, Corbett, Berrigan, eds.)...MSS Spring 81, ed. J. Gardner, L.M. Rosenberg: SUNY at Binghamton, Binghamton, NY 13901, 3 issues \$10/\$4 (J. Higgins, C. Dennis, Nemerov, Dickey, Wagoner, S. Nunez, M. Seydel +)...Open Places 31 & 32, ed. E. Bender: Box 2085, Stephens College, Columbia MS 65215, \$6 (Levertov, Disch, Waldrop, Inez, Gallagher, Piercy, Stafford, Ullman, Atwood, Hacker, J.A. Phillips, Zu-Bolton II, Owen, much more)...BC Monthly 28, Box 48884, Vancouver BC, V7X 1A8, Canada, \$3.50 (The Atoms of Democritus by Peter Good child)...The Pearl, ed. Sheila Mae Lanham & David Beaudouin: Tropos Press, 2842 St Paul St, Baltimore, MD 21238 (new mimeo mag which so far has put out 2 issues - J. Brown, Cardarelli, Carlin, Nauen, Owen, Royce + in #2, Berger, Cody, Coleman, Heller, Welt, Wood, eds. + in #1)50¢...

Hard Press Series #20, ed. Jeff Wright: 340 E 11 St NYC 10003, \$1 (The Sayings of Famous Man by LA's Madame X - 4 postcards)

HOLLAND DAZE:

Report on the One World Poetry Festival "War Against War" in Amsterdam, October 2 - 12, 1981

Well I'll tell you. It wasn't such a great trip. First of all, not one person rushed up to us after any of our 6 or 7 gigs shouting, "Never mind the bollocks, here's the Avant Squares!", although one guy did say, "For some spectators, checkers are exciting."

Nor did any sleek suited people trail mysteriously down to our dressing rooms offering us free samples of his/her wares in return for the thrills we provided in performance. Oh sure, we got a toke here, a snort there, but they were just being polite. I mean we 3 Squares traversed afar bearing musical gifts, following yonder stars and I was absolutely a knockout in my emerald-green turtleneck, fuschia V'd sweater, rusty corduroys and organically dotted brown leather mini, slightly ripped for sentimental reasons so you can imagine how ingeniously appalled I was when the hotel waiter refused to serve me, ME, in his pseudo-French mess-hall in Amsterdam. I mean it wasn't as if his dumb restaurant was going to have any major affect on architecture or anything, and the little Nazi even had the nerve to kick out Miguel Algaran for singing, mind you, at the table! And Chassler was sitting there in his silver-sprayed vinyl longcoat, red scarf and baby blue shades and the guy didn't say a fucking word to him! Or to Mike in his Ozzie Nelson golfing getup! Obviously, the little Hitler was nothing but a tuxed-out rascist-misogynist. Well I wasn't going to let any foreigner talk like that to me, so I told on him. I told the girl at the desk who bitched him out good in immaculate Dutch, and the next day the guy confided in Chass that he did drugs and he was very humane after that, even preparing a Crock for poor Mike down with the flu, the second of many to fall to Hollanditis (a term we cleverly picked up from an art show by the same name).

Anyway, you can begin to see the problem. Nobody recognized ME. Chass and Mike recognized me when it suited them, as well they should . . . since we've been at band practice together six nights a week for the last year, and Andrea came over from Paris and kept reassuring us we are the best band to emerge internationally in the last 25 years, and all four of us slept in this one room and we'd turn out the lights and lay there talking and giggling for hours really, it was just like being back at summer camp when I was nine. Great sex.

"Well look," you may say, "at least you got to go to Holland, you got to play with some English and Dutch bands, you got to meet Dutch people living 16 to 20 people in a squatted house and thoroughly enjoying themselves on Dutch welfare (Dutch people don't like to work for a living), and they let you use their carefully made practice space (I've always loved dormitory life the best), and you got to hang out in the hotel bar with famous people (even if I wasn't allowed in the restaurant, which was overpriced and you had to ask special for water), you got to see some great acts, meet some super known and unknown people, you had your first photographing session with a cute squatting photographer who got some great artistic shots down some narrow hall,

you had your first interview done by people who were writing their ninth interview, and you had your second interview done by people who were writing their first interview..." They were just teenagers! And everybody in our band except Mike is over 30. And Mike'll be over 30 soon and I can't wait to see how tolerant he is of people his age now.

You want to know the truth? The real problems, the real obstacles, were the famous people. They hogged all the best interviewers and photographers for themselves. I mean, these journalists come into the bar, and a lot of times they don't know what the famous people look like, and the Squares were so visually interesting that the journalists were immediately drawn to us, but before we could get out a word, the fucking famous people jump up and start pulling out their fucking American Express cards with their fucking names on them so of course the media people instantly forget about us just because they've never heard of the Avant Squares. (It's the same damn story at sound-checks too. The famous bands get to go first and take all the time they need, while we have to sit around and wait for a century, and we finally get up there, and do you think the people are willing to take the time and put out the immense effort to get the right delicate mix we need for our beautifully subtle tones? Know what I mean?) Well, their loss I say.

AND, as if the frustration of working your ass off, paying your dues and still not being appreciated for your enormous talents wasn't enough, the fucking arrogant Dutch squatters, knowing there was an important cultural event of international scope going on, choose that time to refuse to leave houses they don't even own and initiate a riot. The police definitely did not start it. The police were just there to get them out. I mean the Dutch government, which handed in its resignation to Queen Juliana two days before we left (a coalition government in which the Christian Democrats didn't hold all the cards), this feeble government already strained had to take time off from supporting the arts to send armed family men and a tank or two to this old house (near the Van Gogh Museum) where they were forced to use tear gas against those rowdy selfish punks who did not want to get out of there, and they screamed, and they threw stuff, and it went on intermittently for almost a week causing inconvenience in tram and taxi service and damaging severely many bank windows. One squatter was shot by an owner of a squatted house.

I of course, didn't go near the riot. Chass and I went out shopping for cheese and fish in a lovely open-air market where the people were so busy with daily life, you wouldn't even know there was a riot going on. We must take our strength where we can, and it was certainly comforting to know (especially being so near Germany) that people can maintain their daily routines with such calm and sanity even while misbegotten violence is perniciously erupting a few blocks away. Oh, and I guess you heard Sadat got shot. And there was that humongous anti-nuclear arms build-up in Europe demonstration in Berlin I think it was, and the Solidarity people in Poland held a "Festival of Forbidden Songs", and the IRA bombed out some of Ms. Thatcher's constituents and Moshe Dayan choked on a ham sandwich, and the Koo-koomeanie enlightened hundreds more in front of firing squads. I

swear I don't know what this world is coming to. The infant Mitterand, French government already had to devalue the franc by 8 per cent, proving once again that socialism in any form cannot work. But will any government work? That's the question I keep asking myself. And again and again I find myself answering, "art. That is where the real struggle is to be waged."

That's why a band like the Avant Squares is so necessary in today's world. Our non-hierarchical method of constructing organic, dynamic and precise music combined with our articulate lyrics imbued with hints for civil defense and emotional clarity is why it was so horrifying to watch us being passed by again and again and again while the famous people got all the drugs and press. It's not because I'm in need of attention (even tho as the baby and only girl of well-to-do doting parents it's my birthright), it's certainly not jealousy of the famous has-beens now culturally irrelevant and leeching off the gullible Europeans. It's just that these people have had their time. They took their best shots, and they still failed to bring about world peace and happiness. So why not let us have a go at it? We're not in it for the glory or the fame or the money. We're doing this for the people, for our masters in the Kremlin. It's mere coincidence that I'm so photogenic.

Well, I guess it wasn't a total loss. I got some ego strokes, I got to meet some swell people, and 3 of the PA systems were the best we've ever played with so we finally got a chance to hear ourselves (and geez, did we sound terrific), and I did get to walk the same cobbled streets in the pleasant towns of Leiden and Haarlem, the same leafy sidewalks where Einstein strolled and laughed with Ehrenfest and Lorentz in those carefree days before unleashing the atomic bomb.

- Barbara Barg

THREE WISHES FOR THE MURDERED SISTERS

I wish the fascist mouthpieces were right;
that you'd had guns.
If you had to go out, I wish
you could have done it like Camilo
Torres, taking a troop of them
with you to the ditch instead of ending up
like murdered women anywhere, under the West
Side trestles as in the revolution. I wish
that Haig and Duarte had been there when they dragged
you from the earth, and that a subterranean
river of blood had caused the earth
to sink beneath them, swallowing the lies
they try to feed the people you loved.

- Tim Dlugos

ERNEST HEMINGWAY: SELECTED LETTERS 1917-1961, edited by Carlos Baker,
(Scribner & Sons, NY, 1981)

I picked up this book thinking it was impossible to finish; just a few letters here and there, I figured. But I had to go on and read every word. Why is it, this writer, so fascinating to me and to so many other readers, even now when I think it must be he is very much out of fashion, his attitudes very worn out, even offensive.

Well there is a great deal of literary gossip here. Hemingway loved gossip very much. Almost no theorizing (sometimes he tells you what writing is or how he feels about it but it is always pretty simple: "A writer is like a gypsy. He owes no allegiance to any government. If he is a good writer he will never like the government he lives under. His hand should be against it and its hand will always be against him," he wrote to Ivan Kashkin, the Soviet critic, in 1935), no tortured intellectualizing, no enumerating of spiritual problems (when Hemingway can't sleep - usually - he says so; when he's depressed he says he's got the "Black Ass," jokes about it). Lots of stories, lots of details about writing, lots of details about business, a terrific lot of joking, black humor, seriousness. In short, these letters are interesting. They are as moving and as interesting as Lew Welch's letters, maybe three hundred times more interesting, say, than the letters of Wallace Stevens, who was a very good writer, but not of letters. Maybe you can be a good writer and write dull letters (Joyce too) but to write interesting letters you have to be a good natural writer (maybe you can't write good finished works) and also a pretty interesting person. I think these letters are as interesting as they come.

Progress of the letters gives a pretty good graph of the career of the great American author, any great American author. An early period of learning and experimentation when things are terrifically exciting and fertile, usually at this point the associations with fellow later-to-be-famous artists are formed, usually against a background of a very romantic time and place. At this time the writer knows how good he or she is but it's all promise. Five years later success starts. Five years after that the associations are different (less interesting), it's a different place, the writer is conscious he or she's got an audience, the pronouncements get more developed, more profound. Period of trying to beat the form he or she is working in. Great fame. Writer takes him or herself very seriously. Writing becomes less interesting than necessity of being public spokesperson. Old age, self-imitation, stupidity, tragic end. All this is mapped out in these letters. You can see what "they" did to old Hem and how miraculously well he seems to have stood up to it, all in all. People then as now always trying to get underneath the pose, what really makes Uncle Papa tick, what really is he about. But I have always been convinced and remain convinced he was pretty simply this large tough guy who loved to hunt and fish, really could box, really was irresistible to a lot of women, really did know horseracing, bullfighting, skiing etc, did all he could to make life seem continuously interesting and profound to himself, and he could write better than just about anyone. He said, very simply, in answer to his most baroque critics, "No; I think how we are is how the world has been and these psychoanalytic versions or interpretations are far from accurate."

There are a lot of little tidbits in these letters you'll like though they've mostly appeared elsewhere in other forms (in Baker's previously published biography of Hemingway). Like his punching out Stevens in Key West in the early thirties, his boxing match with Morley Callaghan, rounds timed by Scott Fitzgerald who let one round go far longer than it was supposed to, on purpose, because Hem was getting beat, skiing in Switzerland, nearly ending up with frostbitten penis (which I assumed was trigger for main character's problem in THE SUN ALSO RISES but later Hemingway says it was having been shot during World War 1 then having infected penis due to bits of leather embedded in skin), the clever way he slithered out of Boni and Liveright contract by writing TORRENTS OF SPRING which he knew they'd have to reject, thereby freeing him from obligation to them (they handled Anderson too). Well you can imagine in nearly a thousand pages how many interesting things. Some letters really particularly striking documents. Like early exuberant letters to fishing buddies, full of outrageous puns and nicknames and, like they say, bursting with enthusiasm for life; or the letter to his parents describing wounding in WWI where he talks with great seriousness and not any foolishness really about how great it is to die for your country at an early age; or letter to Gerald and Sara Murphy on the death of their teen-age son ("We all have to look forward to death by defeat, our bodies gone, our world destroyed; but it is the same dying we must do, while he has gotten it all over with, his world all intact, and the death only by accident"). Or this, from WWII (during and after which Papa particular brand of bloodthirsty lunacy became pronounced):

One time I killed a very snotty SS Kraut who, when I told him I would kill him unless he revealed what his escape route signs were said: You will not kill me, the Kraut stated. Because you are afraid to and because you are a race of mongrel degenerates. Besides, it is against the Geneva Convention.

What a mistake you made, brother, I told him, and shot him three times in the belly fast and then, when he went down on his knees, shot him on the topside so his brains came out of his mouth or I guess it was his nose.

The next SS I interrogated talked wonderfully. Clearly and with intelligent military exposition of their situation.

When Mr. Hemingway wanted to tell someone off he could. To Cardinal Spellman: "You will never be Pope as long as I am alive." To FDR Birthday Memorial Committee: "Today we are gathered together to honor a rich and spoiled paraplegic who changed our world" or the truly outstanding letter to Senator Joe McCarthy: "Senator, I would knock you on your ass the best day you ever lived. It might be healthy for you and it certainly would be instructive."

Occurred to me there's a great similarity between careers of Hemingway and Kerouac, the latest American writer who's enjoyed impossible popularity and personal fame, every detail of his life having been written about til I am sick of it. Different generations, of course, the one expressing the toughness and realness of the strong brave USA, the other the corruption superficiality and sad lost hopelessness of the same sad USA, but really almost the same: Super-human energy and magnetic personality, terrific enthusiasm for people

and places, fantastic success (though Kerouac never made the really surprising sums Hemingway did) and then the crashing paranoid ending. You would almost believe that a person like this won't come around again for a long time.

Coming back to the beginning, why is Hemingway so fascinating for me. Well the writing is great of course and the music of it especially. Something new, some dignified version of what goes on, maybe that's it, the dignity of the people in the works, which maybe becomes a false or forced dignity, but still, there it is. That appeals to me. But when I read Hemingway I don't feel better, I feel worse. Why is that. I think a really complete writer always makes you feel better (Williams) not worse, makes you see the value of what you've got, your own time and place, actually see it, not induce a feeling of nostalgia, like Hemingway's works do. So there is something wrong with Hemingway's works, these letters too, what's wrong is he leaves something out, doesn't face something, glosses over something he wasn't smart enough or tough enough to include. What is it?

- Norman Fischer

NERVES

Que sera, sirrah. I'm turning cyanotic
and you say goodbye in Japanese.
In the Misty Mountains, missed you,
Mister Right. Mysterious white
steamscapes pop up when the weather turns
toasty, whether you're there or not.
Oriental skyline sans sharp edges,
snipped out of the sky with blunt-edged
scissors, with kindergarten love. The nappy
Afro yawns, is blanketed with foggy kisses,
5 a.m. A yam. What? A yam.
The static on your telephone spells
trouble, so screw your concentration
to the sticking-place and, popeyed,
listen. I'm a man. M. A. N. And you're
my little export, a feather on a schedule
of impossibly unbalanced payments.

- Tim Dlugos

A new poetry magazine called LUX, edited by Diane Raulerson, is looking for submissions. Send to her c/o The Pennyroyal Press, 29 St. Mark's Pl, NYC 10003

The Poetry Project is attempting to put together complete sets of The World magazine. Anyone with back issues they'd like to donate back?

Danspace presents the NY premiere of GARDEN, choreographed & performed by Johanna Boyce & Arnie Zane, on Dec. 11, 12, & 13 and Dec. 17, 18 & 19 at 8 PM with a 10 PM show added on the Saturday nights. All shows will take place in the Parish Hall. Contribution \$4/TDF. 674-8112 for res.

COCKTAILS AT SOMOZA'S: A Reporter's Sketchbook of Events in Revolutionary Nicaragua by Richard Elman (Apple-Wood Books, \$10.95)

In September 1978 Richard Elman took an assignment to cover Nicaragua for Geo magazine. It was one of those ironies -- the kind that Mr. Elman is a master of -- that he was asked to cover the life and local color of a country that was bleeding to death, in an all too familiar pattern of torture and government terror supported by the United States. The article that resulted was a moving and penetrating account of a man's entry into the horror of human brutality and the heartbreaking dignity of human struggle. It was not the travelogue that the editors were hoping for. Mr. Elman recounted his experiences, during the First Sandinista Offensive, with the sharp eye of a reporter, but he brought to this the humanity and writing talent of one of our finest novelists and short story writers. It was this first piece for Geo that laid the ground work for Cocktails At Somoza's.

This book starts with Mr. Elman's recounting his trip back to Nicaragua after the victory of the Sandinistas. He moves over the landscape that he had known first as a scene of brutal repression and fear. He recollects his own fears and then moves on to examine the changes he finds. What emerges as he records his experiences is a concern that the revolution will not bring the dream to fruition. He sees the isolation of the revolutionary dream by the course of political and economic forces playing out all around this "little island" in an ocean of American and Soviet interests. He records the profound sense of liberation in the lives of the people; the way the country is rebuilding itself and defining itself. The second section of the book gives his account of the people's struggle to overthrow the Somoza government. It is not history as much as the telling of a story that Mr. Elman narrates. It is a story about people and their daily lives caught in the trauma of "Events". The third section comes back to the present and speculates on the future.

What gives this book its special quality is the fact that Mr. Elman doesn't write as a leftist or a moderate or a conservative. He moves us along with his constant concern for the way the lives of real people are revealed in the events that become history. What emerges in this collection of short prose pieces, poems and notebook entries is a profound sadness that history catches events and lives and holds them frozen in the version that the times and forces in control demand. There is a clear and hard-earned knowledge that what is all too often lost in the recounting of our versions of history is the daily struggle to live and build vital social connections.

It is unfortunate that the publisher decided, and the author allowed, this book to be presented as "A Reporter's Sketchbook..." Whether it was the author's or the publisher's decision, it puts a label on the collection that makes it seem less significant. It will put a lot of readers off. In many respects this is not a book about Nicaragua, and it is only situationally a reporter's book. Elman is not simply a reporter on the scene covering the news. This book is much more a collection of prose pieces and poems, that deal with a broad range of human experiences. Many readers will miss this because they will dismiss the book as dealing only with "current events", which of course change very rapidly.

Some of the individual prose pieces in this book and some of the

poems are among the best writing of this type produced by any writer today. Pieces like "The Tipitapa Baths", "The Battle of Masaya", "General Allegrette's Burial", and "Managua's Only French Restaurant", rank with the stories of Isaac Babel. Mr. Elman is one of the only writers I have encountered that has been able to translate the combination of humanity and the constant, watchful and ironic eye into an authentic American prose. It is a scandal, but nonetheless consistent with what Richard Elman has to say about the way we live, that no major American publisher would touch this book, even when it was a "popular" subject.

Today Nicaragua is no longer "the cause"; no longer the "hot item". History is claiming the events and shaping them. Time and circumstance are now shifting to El Salvador. But the people here or in Nicaragua or El Salvador are not given the luxury of manipulating history to suit the popular taste. It is this reality to which Richard Elman so beautifully and touchingly addresses himself.

- Harry Lewis

LURK SPEAK

I went down in the sunset
meaning down its stairs

Seeking what turns at issue
behind the words the prayers

- Clark Coolidge

SHUT MY MOUTH

ENOUGH SAID, Poems 1974 - 1979 by Philip Whalen (Grey Fox Press, San Francisco, 1980, \$4.95)

Every new Philip Whalen book of poems gets harder and harder to talk about. The poems actually have to be read to be believed.

OBSOLETE MODELS

Now the hours of my life grow small
Shoddy months and threadbare years
A favorite pet universe that ought to be "put to sleep"
By the vet; gracefully relinquished.

I say, "Something eludes me
Something is right over there -- someplace."

(cont)

A drop of mercury slides very smoothly away
A description slightly out of focus

At least there are nasturtiums again
Disc leaves dusty green
More entertaining than many another
Verdigris

What do I want
What am I really after
Sometimes a tree answers.

The nice thing about all of Whalen's poems is the wisdom, the common sense cut with erudition. And he still gets away with things no one else can: "Cinnamon infested coffee (blarp)". All evident in Enough Said.

In the preface, Whalen marvels at his good luck, alive and well as a Zen monk in California -- nice work if you can get it.

THE LAUNDRY AREA

Each time I hang up a washboard
The slenderest thread of cold water
Runs down my wrist and into my armpit
Without wetting my clothes.

But he also moans that it could end any day. Tomorrow even. After all, he's not getting any younger. But if he'd let that stop him, there wouldn't be any poems. And there are poems, confident, perceptive, sage poems.

THE GHOSTS

Of people dead fifty years and not only people --
Theaters and streetcars and large hotels follow me
Into this dusty little gully. None of them ever liked
California
Why don't they stay in Portland where they belong
I'm tired of them.

A new ghost in this morning's dream,
Beautiful and young and still alive
How far will that one follow me? I'm not chasing any,
Any more.

The little surprise at the end of this volume is "Six Doodles". These are models, in the poet's own eccentric hand, of the mind moving across the page. They can be examined closely and for hours at a time. They have an authenticity, a substance that eludes the typographed body of the selection. Enough said.

RUNNING COMMENTARY

"Now it is autumn and the..." is a kind of poetry I have always loved but not "and the days dwindle down..." because the days go by and it all always is falling in, it always does all fall in. For example Olsonian syntax becomes a waitress. Young girls' letters is now the newest formal idea around (poems). This book, 5 Aces & Independence, (from Tombouctou), by John Thorpe, is about all the "issues" (money, war, marriage, tribal separation) in that it is person(s) experiencing them. No one else is writing like this. It is a stunning read... and searing addition to its predecessors in the world, Matter, & Cargo Cult, difficult to find but still extant John Thorpe texts (books). He is present and holds himself accountable.

Meanwhile,

in Norman, Oklahoma, Madison Morrison has taken time out from his alchemical laboratory, in which he has been for some while conducting provocative & just possibly significantly important experiments with the application of condensare to the cosmological epic, to assemble Sleep, ("I want to think of the nether elliptic, and the sun, pausing by the streams of Glacier Creek to regain composure."). Sleep willingly fails to contain a high degree of risibility and (at) distractions, and it is clean & white & cool, like sheets are in the land of Will Rogers & Kerr-McGee, where Woody Guthrie was born, and Karen Silkwood's fate predetermined. I'm fascinated, you may be too. "And if thinking of that makes you want to give up thinking, relax. You know, it'll all disappear whether you think of it or not, so why not enjoy it."

In England what is to enjoy, this Indian Summer, is Birds, Cattle, Fish & Flies. Lamb #1, can be had cheaply from Nick Kimberly's, 11 Lambs Conduit Passage, London WC 1, England. Ralph Hawkins, a new presence in English Poetry, is presented in large-scale miniature in this small collection, which serves as issue #1 of Anthony Barnett's 3 x 5 mag. Birds, Cattle, Fish & Flies is 4 poems in which Resurrection is pondered one Monday morning, while not gone off to work. Nature on earth, in the air, under water, and at table, (ah, Easter Sunday Dinner!), yields up her reflections in long sinuous lines full of word-love, informed seriously via tone of voice. "hello to what's inside this outside and vice-versa/mincing the chicken with pork, adding cream,/cloves, mace and plenty of seasoning/skipping to you in a blue dress....it's all about distance and survival/dust wind and flare/it's to do with each day/what's after this I always ask?"

Whatever it is, at this point in my head, I'd rather be reading a book. A book you can read with delight and once more, with feeling, is Footloose. Irving Stettner wrote the stories in it, and a long time ago he was a Chocolate Soldier in Tokyo. It was a few days after Japan surrendered, and what Japan got in return was a 21 year old American phenomenon from Brooklyn, who became their first genuine tourist in years. He was a marvel, and the Japanese gently showed him how it is possible to live one's dream life, to draw and paint, & write, & fall in love, & see, & speak, get drunk, & be disappointed & never really surrender except totally, and grow up to be Irving Stettner, author of Footloose, poet, painter, reader, peripatetic philosopher-king, mildly pleased. He did it, and I did too.

Mother's Voice by Robert Creeley: Am Here Books/Immediate Editions, 2740
Williams Way, Santa Barbara CA 93105, \$3 (drawings & cover by Tom Clark)

MOTHER'S VOICE

Didn't you used to talk about
the things you saw in front
of your eyes? The little dots?
They had the those of exaltation
plus all that sadness
that nothing ever changes
does it? and personally we
know that's funny
but other than that
I want to hear a song that
wasn't no good---and his is good.

- Alice Notley

The Poetry Project is sponsoring a writing and oral history group for older adults at Tompkins Square Library. Jeff Wright will be working with the group. He is the editor of COMPASS, a magazine that focuses on the writing community of older adults in New York. Poets & Writers has also sponsored a workshop at Tompkins Square Library and the two will run back to back for 15 weeks. The group meets at 10 AM on Wednesdays. All are invited.

The Poetry Project is looking for a photographer to come to the readings & other events so we can document it all & get it down glossy.

By the way, October's poster was done by Yvonne Jacqueline, November's by Donna Dennis & December's by Marjorie Portnow.

A Prizewinner

Many years from now at a National Book Award dinner an obnoxious and slightly drunk reporter will approach one of the foreign guests of honor, a Sudanese holy man, who's reported to possess the power of clairvoyance, and will ask him:

"You're supposed to know it all...can you tell me how many writers are here tonight?"

"One," the Sudanese guest of honor will reply.

The reporter will almost spill his drink he'll be laughing so hard. His nose will tremble, his brains will shake, but the smirk will be wiped off his face as the holy man continues:

"There are eighty seven typists sitting at these tables. All of them copycats, mere ink dippers, but only one original storyteller. His name is Johnny Stanton. And he's the only one here who can justly be called a writer."

"Thank you."

- Johnny Stanton

POEM

SURE, LET'S CELEBRATE THE BLACK SIDE
OF JOY. LET'S DROWN
the cup of cheer
in the barrel full of wine.
Let's see the wildflower's face,
all mauve and purple and bright yellow,
flattened by the pages
of a book -- the spider
also pressed there
was once happy
chasing flies.

I worship all that's black.
To be alive's a shock
like listening to an angel
or a fairy
singing in a rock.

- Michael McClure

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