

# The Poetry Project

The Newsletter of the Poetry Project at St. Mark's Church in-the-Bowery

Issue 127, Dec./Jan. 1987-88



## *MEETINGS IN MEXICO* by Kenneth Koch

### THE CONQUEST OF MEXICO

- NOBLE: They say Cortez is coming, at the head of teeming troupes,  
To win all Mexico for his Queen, Isabela!  
They say he is in quest of gold, and that he will do or suffer anything to get it!
- MONTEZUMA: How is he dressed? What does he look like?
- NOBLE: He is dressed in shining metal and with a feather on his hat.  
He sits astride something with a tail. His skin is white.

MONTEZUMA: Oh then, oh then, it is he!

NOBLE: Who?

MONTEZUMA: Quetzalcoatl, the savior of  
Tenochtitlán,  
For whom I have waited so long!

(Aztec music and dancing.)

#### THE PROMENADE IN OAXACA

(Evening. EDWARD is in his forties, CHRISTINE is fifteen.)

EDWARD: Christine, let's walk  
Down this street.

CHRISTINE: I heard  
Last night  
At the circus  
Someone died  
Of I don't know what.

EDWARD: Electrocutation?  
Dog bite? Broken spine?  
Falling from seat? Bench collapse?  
Snake bite? Rat bite?  
We must not go to see  
This circus—  
Oh, Christine,  
Just one night  
And yet not having one night—  
Fifteen years old—  
Mystical summer—  
Good-night  
Oh, my clearest, best!

#### THE VANISHED GOD

QUETZALCOATL: Intricacies of mountains, things to  
be done;  
Correction of people's ways;  
direction to spiritual aims;  
Collection of blood; amnesty given  
for stones—  
I, Quetzalcoatl, know it all. I work  
Through and for the people. I am  
Quetzalcoatl.

(He goes, hundreds of years pass.)

TRAVELER: I have heard that Quetzalcoatl was  
wont to sit down here  
Talking to the people, on summer  
evenings,  
And that now he has gone away.  
What became of him?

INDIAN MAN: *covered with dust*) Know, traveler,  
he was vanquished, conquered  
by the Christian saints.  
Some say he was strangled; others,  
that he was chained to a moun-  
tain until he turned to dust.

TRAVELER: Do people still believe in him, and  
turn to him sometimes?

INDIAN MAN: Yes and no. We do not think he will  
return, but we light his fires.

(He ignites a pile of sticks that bursts into flame.)

#### AN ATMOSPHERE OF HEAVY, INTENSE (SUMMER) STILLNESS PERVADES THE WORLD OF CHRISTINE ET EDOUARD

EDOUARD: Let's sit down  
In this blazing garden,  
Christine.

CHRISTINE: All right, Edouard. I can walk  
No more.  
I used to be fifteen  
But now I am sixteen  
And I am tired, so tired,  
After all.

EDOUARD: Have we something to say?

(A silvery form—THE FUTURE—  
makes a fleeting appearance.)

CHRISTINE: Yes, yes—Look! The Future!  
But now it's gone!

#### QUETZALCOATL AND THE COOK

(Mazatlán. COOK is a young Chinese woman dressed all  
in white cook's clothing, including a round cook's hat.)

COOK: Why do they call you "The Feathered  
Snake," my Lord?

QUETZALCOATL: What a sweet, innocent ques-  
tion! Don't you have a  
Quetzalcoatl in China?

COOK: Maybe. But if we do, we call it by a different name!

*(Volcanic explosions.)*

LES BOUSCULADES DE L'AMOUR,  
SUIVIES DE THE MEXICANA

*(Mist. In the distance one can see that there is a crowd of people. Nearby are EDWARD and CHRISTINE.)*

CHRISTINE: The mood of this island is being  
distracted  
By these four hundred people  
Who have come here from the  
bumps.

EDWARD: What are the bumps...Christine?

CHRISTINE: Oh! You called me by my name.  
Tell me  
That at other times we can talk of  
other things.  
But now the hot night, the mercurial  
paciings of the dancers  
And the sea tanager's wild cry  
distract my heart.

EDWARD: Christine you talk like the Omniplex  
Literary Encyclopedia  
But you do it without art. Kiss me.  
Now, what are the bumps?

*(The scene changes, or it may be just that the people in the distance become clearer. In any case, the scene is many Mexican people in a soft summer evening light. They are dancing gently in a big yard or field.)*

EDWARD: They're dancing the "Mexicana"

CHRISTINE: Quietly, slightly moving their feet

EDWARD: As if with butterflies' attentivenesses

CHRISTINE: And sometimes holding hands.

EDWARD: From this modest swinging

CHRISTINE: Comes the horror of Inquisition, the  
blood-slash of a destructive  
nobility, the steamy crash

EDWARD: Of a seed time of ethical values, the  
Putsch

CHRISTINE: And the remorque of brains from this  
Mexicana

EDWARD: Slightly delightfully beginning—  
almost like a tree gently bud  
ding, beneath the light spring  
rain.

THE MEETING IN MEXICO

(CORTEZ, MONTEZUMA, TOMMY TIME,  
and OTHERS.)

MONTEZUMA: Well, it's been a good session.  
I hope that you gentlemen are  
satisfied.

TOMMY TIME: That seems fine to us. Edward will  
leave Christine at the train.  
A few years later he will see her and  
she will be a little older.  
But still ravishing. Never will he  
forget the soft feel of her hand.  
In his, on the Zócalo.

HAPPINESS: And Cook will be born. That's what  
really tickles me.  
Cook, actually, up till this time, who  
hasn't really been in existence.

CORTEZ: But—let me get it straight. My con  
quest is assured.

HAPPINESS: Yes, though I won't be there.

TOMMY TIME: I, however, will. And what of you,  
Montezuma?

MONTEZUMA: I will be remembered in the stone.

*(Enter COOK with EDWARD, hundreds of years later.)*

EDWARD: Oh, Cook, where is Christine?

COOK: Not born yet, I think.  
Keep walking, though—we may  
come to her in time.

CHORUS OF  
MOTHERS WITH  
INFANTS IN

THEIRS ARMS: Babies grow up to be beautiful and  
passionate women  
And handsome and passionate men.

CHRISTINE: Why didn't you wait for me at the  
hotel?

EDWARD: I don't know. Fear, perhaps.

CHORUS OF  
MOTHERS:

Babies become variable individuals,  
lead complex lives,  
Are prey to contending instincts, and  
are often deflected by outside  
things.

CHRISTINE:

I stayed there for an hour.

EDWARD:

I'm sorry. I was there. You were  
late.  
You didn't come. I went out.  
It was stupid and useless. I tried to  
come back. But I was blocked  
by a million cars.

(from *One Thousand Avant-Garde Plays*, to be published  
by Alfred A. Knopf in the spring of 1988.)

## BOOKS

*Give Em Enough Rope*, Bruce Andrews; Sun & Moon Press,  
1987. \$10.95. "The six long works...are artful records of  
Andrews mind and ear..."

*Farewell to the Sea*, Reinaldo Arenas; Viking, 1987. \$16.95.  
(translated from the Spanish) "A brilliant evocation of life  
under Castro..." - *The Guardian*.

*April Galleons*, John Ashbery; Elizabeth Sifton Books/Vi-  
king, \$15.95. The poet's twelfth book. "Wide ranging, musi-  
cal, meditative...America's finest living poet." - *The Observer*

*Heart's Bestiary*, Reed Bye; Rocky Ledge Cottage Editions,  
2227 W. Nicholl St., Boulder, CO 80302. No price mentioned.  
"...the work of a poet interested in the self, the natural world,  
and the language that holds them together." - Charles North.

*From Nicaragua with Love*, Ernesto Cardenal; City Lights  
Books, \$5.95. Cardenal's work since the 1979 revolution,  
most of it in English for the first time.

*The Garden of Earthly Delights*, Paul Carroll; Chicago Office  
of Fine Arts, 1987. \$5. Winner of the Chicago Poets Award.

*Japan*, Maxine Chernoff; Avenue B, PO Box 542, Bolinas,  
CA 94924. \$6.

*Lonely Crusade*, Chester Himes; Thunder's Mouth Press,  
New York, 1986. A re-issue of an early novel by the late black  
expatriate novelist. "The value of this book lies in its effort to  
understand the psychology of oppressed and oppressor..." -  
James Baldwin.

*Panic\*DJ*, Bob Holman; The VRI Theater Library, PO Box  
1208, Imperial Beach, CA 92032. No price mentioned. "Per-  
formance Text, Poems, Raps, Songs" from a master per-  
former.

*The Lives of a Spirit*, Fanny Howe; Sun & Moon Press, 1987.  
\$10.95. "...a lyrical and profound prose work."

*Before Recollection*, Ann Lauterbach; Princeton University  
Press, 1987. No price mentioned. "These poems are concerned  
with naming the world and with the creation of intense, present  
experiences that occur 'before recollection.'"

*Seasons on Earth*, Kenneth Koch. Elisabeth Sifton Books/  
Penguin, 1987. \$12.95. Contains the long poems *Ko* and *The  
Duplications* and the title poem. "...witty, sensuous, extrava-  
gant, and profound poems that follow in the great comic  
tradition of *Orlando Furioso* and *Don Juan*."

*Thirsting for Peace in a Raging Century*, Edward Sanders;  
Coffee House Press, 1987. \$19.95 cloth, \$9.95 paper. A 25-  
year (1960-85) poetic retrospective from one of the founding  
members of The Fugs.

*The Romance Thing*, Anne Waldman. A collection of stories  
written during her travels around the globe.

*Information From The Surface Of Venus*, Lewis Warsh;  
United Artists Books, Box 2616, Stuyvesant Sta., New York,  
NY 10009. 93 pages. \$6.

*Wearing Dad's Head*, Barry Yourgrau; Peregrine Smith  
Books. \$7.95. "These enchanting short takes, by an original  
young writer, are odd, true, and thoroughly hilarious." - Susan  
Cheever

## Exhibitions

"New Romantics" at the Union Square Gallery, 32 Union  
Sq. E., Rm 408, NYC 10003 (777-8393). Curated by Greg  
Masters. Includes paintings by Rudy Burckhardt, Louise  
Hamlin, and Eric Holzman, and ceramics by George  
Schneeman. Through November 28th.

"The Arts at Black Mountain College" at Grey Art Gallery,  
NYU, 33 Wash. Pl. at Wash. Sq. E. (998-6780). Through  
December 19th.

"Marianne Moore" at The Grolier Club, 47 E. 60th St. A  
celebration of the centennial of Ms. Moore's birth (Nov.  
15). Exhibition of manuscripts, photos, letters, etc. Through  
Nov. 28th. Admission is free.

## Project Papers

Those of you who have already been to a reading or lecture this  
season know that printed examples of the readers' work, in an  
ongoing series called *Project Papers*, are available to the  
audience free on the occasion of the event. However, if you  
missed someone you wanted to hear, you can still get the  
corresponding *Project Paper*, available at \$1 per *Paper*, from  
The Poetry Project. (At the end of the year a whole set will  
make an interesting and eclectic anthology.)

# REVIEWS

**HOLLO ROLLING:** *Pick Up the House, New & Selected Poems*, Anselm Hollo; Coffee House Press, Minneapolis, 1986; \$8.95.

Somebody corny, Robert Frost maybe, said any collection of twenty poems is twenty-one poems. This book, heavily weighted with new work not published elsewhere, begins with poems that have been. An ample section is lifted from *Heavy Jars* (1978); a sparser selection contains poems written between 1959 and 1965; and the whole is arranged in three movements, paralleling chronology: "The Sixties and Thereabouts"; "from *Heavy Jars*"; and the final, longest, title section, "Pick Up the House, 1981-1985."

As if this weren't warning enough, the flap announces, "Anselm Hollo believes that all his poems are part of a continuous song..."

Since this is a small press book, and an editor is nowhere specifically credited, we can assume these choices are the poet's, the book is the poet's, and we're to read it whole, as narrative. It is, in fact, an epic, not in any sense of elevated style or inflated scale, certainly not (Did those meanings accrue when this good noun degenerated into adjective?), but in the sense of a linked sequence of episodes, and of the voice of a traveller, relating occurrences, dreams, scenes, phrases, fragments—always relating what is carried forward back to the old honored tradition. To ideals, my cynical and exhausted friends.

Hollo is an epic poet; a poet of "the long journey / across a room" ("Night Wind Pieces," p. 15). It seems to me, he declares his chosen obligation early on, as in the call and response of "Minotaur Poem":

*To say good morning blues how do you do  
something is sneaking round the corner  
not about the weather  
myself I'm feeling pretty bad  
not about the climate  
you are adorable  
but of certain limitations  
myself I'll go to Spain one of these days  
but of no importance  
all of you are wonderful people  
and to say it is a great pleasure indeed  
with a lilt*

With a lilt. Lest my term epic throw you off—this work is in celebration of that little world defended by Bergman in *Fanny and Alexander* in which we have permission to value a moment's worth of "unloneliness." Certainly we're allowed to make the necessary and lovely blandishments of sex, food, and companionship, central to our concerns, even when what we're gonna get is a shot at being "...your 'beatnik Walter de la Mare' / in the pantheon we share / with Al Alvarez, a totally great guy." ("Dream Rain Dance," p.19).

So this is how harmonica sounds in Finnish. Played for friends or all alone. The house or the street corner could be anywhere, because the player travels, picks up images, and casually uses local words. He carries with him the harmonica's elastic use of breath, both in and out, the individual tongue-made notes, the small and homely riffs, waved out of cupped hands. Those cliches of lonesome travelling—with a twang, in the rain—it rains a lot in Hollo's poems—are gently and adroitly present. A cow in a field pees Brancusi's bronze *Endless Column*, and you understand there's a baggage of culture here, casually stuffed in a backpack.

Small doesn't mean snugly sheltered. Against explosions of carnage and fear, there is a persistence that is as close to heroic as I can imagine. It continues! Improvisational humor, smarter 'n paint, counterpoints a profoundly mortal pulse. *Equity. Compassion. Tenderness.* he writes (see "A Round for the Trout Fisher," p. 64), out of hipness that knows staying alive was always a matter of exploiting the unexpected:

C & W

Life is complicated  
Drains are roaring  
Percy B. Shelley  
was fond of soaring

In walks a minimalist  
He says, "That's boring"  
He needs to be kissed  
by someone complicated

Another sweet  
big head  
to remain entertained  
and a bit more alive than dead

\*

This last is plucked from the long sequence that begins the final section, and in which Hollo's riffs go stronger and more complicated than in his earlier work, as if picking up momentum and assurance. The rage that fuels these friendly poems is kicking up its heels these days—and moving on out. "Amigo, we're buzzing along," he sez. Indeed yes.

Pick up *Pick Up the House*. I think it could pick up a house.

— Martha King

## SLEEPY EIGHT

That flute echoed, shamelessly.  
Did we have the same prerogative?  
Endlessly, and they've been redone.

--Vincent Katz

***The Spontaneous Poetics of Jack Kerouac*, by Regina Weinreich; Southern Illinois University Press. 155 pages. No price indicated.**

As a onetime editor of Kerouac (during the *On the Road* agony), I am deeply indebted to Regina Weinreich for a critical exposition of Kerouac's method of creation; it reveals merit and genius where I and some of my publishing colleagues saw only perversity and novelistic malingering. ("It's not writing, it's typing.") So it seemed.

Kerouac is revealed here as an extremely hermetic writer who cannot be read on the level of a popular novelist. Weinreich makes it clear that we are not dealing with only a novelist, but with a prose-poet and mystic. No wonder the publishing world has never and still does not know exactly what to make of him. He once told a TV interviewer that "beat" meant "to see the face of God."

I would also urge reading this book for those who have dwelt (like Norman Podhoretz only recently) on whether or not Kerouac is a good role-model for the young—an expedient evasion of the mystery of Kerouac's appeal that has remained unsolved over all these years. Weinreich explores the crevices and inner workings of the mystery—Jack's creative imagination. To do this she has divided the novels into major and minor, arranging them both aesthetically and chronologically, connecting them in terms of his personal history and in terms of "outer" history, and binding them together according to the laws of his artistic logic. And, as a great blessing to a formerly mystified reader of Kerouac's unpunctuated "spontaneous prose"—she supplies a highly credible rationale for that, too.

This book is more a close examination of the "poetics" of Kerouac's sentences than it is an accumulation of plots. I read it in one sitting and, if you'll excuse me for sounding Rex Reed-ish, I found it thrilling.

—Carl Solomon

***Not This Island Music*, by Robert Kelly; Black Sparrow Press, Santa Rosa, Calif., 1987. 182 pages. \$9.00 paper.**

Kelly's much anticipated collection fills in that four-year gap during which we saw his prose but few of his poems in print. He looks back over a half century in these poems, seeing his youth in the youth of others and in his own youthful memories. The joy, pleasure, fear and pain in his writing come from an acceptance of age, i.e. he is *not* the tortured young Eliot of "Gerontion".

In going back to youth, Kelly comes back to himself here and now. He understands that his desires remain the same. Again, he has arrived into the destined body of his tensions and intentions. His voice sees itself. Here is the dethroned king awaiting enthronement, the childless Arthur, the Fisher King hopefully sacrificing himself.

Kelly's self-acceptance grants him permission to employ language on occasions both internal and external, no matter

how trifling those occasions might at first appear to us or to him. As Gerrit Lansing instructed us twenty-five years ago, "Under the permissions, man will be able to find in woman more the original wholeness...". Kelly successfully continues the quest "To find the part of him that's woman..." while wrestling with "...that other god, her flesh". In stark yet savory honesty, love and lust and the greed of desire dance around images of her lips, her lap, her hips, her breast, her thigh. His words penetrate still.

If, at first, we see this book as a hodgepodge of occasional pieces, lacking editorial insight and direction, it is because we envy those who grant themselves permissions we dare not grant ourselves. When Kelly states, "My needs are my permissions", he is not making excuses. His wordiness is a worldliness all-encompassing. It is satisfying and satisfactory. We share his voice to the extent we allow ourselves. And Kelly gently reminds me that, "...I am not a different voice, I am the same voice endlessly reviewing options of earth..."

—David C.D. Gansz

### THE OPEN READING, Monday, October 5, 1987

Many readers started out shaky and ended triumphant. They yelled, murmured, swung bottles and hurled papers. A woman dropped her coat seductively on the floor. Another primly straightened her fire-engine red jacket and calmly described heterosexual bondage. A man with slicked-back hair quipped limericks at an audience that was, by then, punchy and tolerant. He pulled the next reader's name: "Camilla, give 'em a wheela deala!" A young man with cerebral palsy asked a friend to read his poems; a Japanese man apologized for his "problems with the language," then grinned and added, "but fuck it!" The last poem of the night was in Spanish; its inflections and gutsy repetition of sound riveted the (mostly) English-speaking audience.

Richard Hell, Coordinator of the Monday Night Series, hosts the monthly Open Readings. He warned participants that he would be "brutal" about the time limit. "Thank you!" he yelled from the back of the room, interrupting whomever went over. No one seemed to mind. Each reader, on leaving the stage, pulled the name of the next reader at random, from an envelope. It's poetry Russian Roulette style; what's heard next could be deadly—or it could offer a new lease on life.

I scribbled down some favorite lines, though at times was too mesmerized to write. Out of around 25 poets, eight used rhyme and regular rhythmic patterns, often patterns of the poet's own design. It's easy to see how the sound of poetry kept it alive when entire classes of poets and listeners couldn't read or write. Maybe it's metabolic, the ease with which we fall, for example, into ballad meter, the beat of nursery rhymes, the music that gives words momentum.

I won't say more except to quote: "Debbie, your loins/I

## MONDAY NIGHTS

### DECEMBER

#### 7 OPEN READING

**14 KEITH ADAMS** is from District 6, Capetown, South Africa. He is a Benjamin Malloy scholar, a fellowship created by the NYU Department of English and The African Arts Fund. **RAJIN GOVENDER**, age 25, is from Durban, South Africa, where he ran the poetry and literary society at the University of Durban-Westville.

**21 TERRI HARDIN** is a poet and a translator of classical languages. She is the author of *Nimue* (Guignol Press). Forthcoming is *Au Go-Go*, also from Guignol. **ZOE TAMERLAINE** is co-author of the novel *Curfew USA*, due soon from Logos Press. She starred in the cult classic films *Ms 45* (Abel Ferrara), and *Special Effects* (Larry Cohen), as well as in *The House Guest* and *Exquisite Corpse*.

**28 SHARON SHIVELY** is a 20-year-old student at Barnard, the author of *Mezzanine* (Enso, 1986), and was a Ted Berrigan Scholar at Naropa. She is sororal twin of K.C. Shively (below). **K.C. SHIVELY** is author of *Iris* (Enso) and an editor of *Terminal Zone*, a journal of critical theory and rock music.

### JANUARY

#### 4 OPEN READING

**11 MARY EGAN STERNBACH**, 34, is author of *Countries with No Name* (Guignol Books, 1982) and *8 Pieces Written in Italy*, also from Guignol. **MICHAEL DECAPITE** is 25, from Cleveland, and has been in New York since May.

**18 COOKIE MUELLER** is author of *How to Get Rid of Pimples* (Top Stories), and is a columnist for *Details* magazine. **PHIL GOOD**, 26, is co-editor of *Blue Smoke* magazine. He is the author of *Drunken Bee Poems* (Blue Press), and studies journalism at the School of Visual Arts.

**25 ELLEN MUDD CARTER** is author of *Carrying the Sun* (Unimproved Editions, 1986). She has recently returned from India "with many poems." **DANINE RICERETO**, 21 years old, is a poet living on the Lower East Side.

## NEW PUBLICATIONS

The Poetry Project is pleased to announce two new publications: **CUZ**, edited by Richard Hell, a Monday Night Series magazine, for sale at readings beginning in December; and **PROJECT PAPERS**, writings by Wednesday Night readers and critical & historical articles encapsulating major trends and directions in contemporary poetry—available free at Wednesday readings; back issues cost \$1 ea.

## WEDNESDAY NIGHTS

### DECEMBER

**2 RICHARD HELL** is a poet and a former leader of the rock group *The Voidoids*. His articles have appeared in *Spin* and other magazines. **JIM CARROLL**'s latest book is *Forced Entries* (Penguin) which is about drug addiction and art in downtown New York in the 70s. He is also the author of *The Basketball Diaries* and *The Book of Nods*, (Penguin, 1986).

**9 BARRETT WATTEN** is a central figure in the Language School. His books include *Progress* (Segue Books), and *Total Syntax* (Southern Ill. Univ. Press). **CARTER RATCLIFF**, poet and art critic, is the author of *Give Me Tomorrow* (Vehicle Editions Press, 1984), illustrated by Alex Katz.

**16 SUSAN NOEL** is the author of *The Bronze Age* (Rocky Ledge Editions). She is studying 19th Century English Literature at the University of Colorado in Boulder. **TONY TOWLE**'s books include *New and Selected Poems 1963-1983* (Kulchur Foundation); and *North* (Columbia Univ. Press), the Frank O'Hara Award for 1970. Among his other awards are an NEA grant and a CAPS fellowship.

### JANUARY

**6 MAUREEN OWEN** is the editor and publisher of Telephone Books and *Telephone* magazine. Her own books include *Hearts in Space* (Kulchur Foundation), *Zombie Notes* (Sun Press). **SONIA SANCHEZ** is the author of 13 books, including *I've Been a Woman: New and Selected Poems*, and most recently, *Under a Soprano Sky*.

**13 MICHELLE CLINTON** is a Los Angeles poet, performance artist and activist whose recent book, *High Blood Pressure* (West End Press, 1986) challenges racism and sexism. This is her first New York appearance. **JIM BRODEY** is the author of *Lights of Manhattan* and *Judyism (the original ms.)*. His ninth and tenth books will appear this year.

**20 ALAN DAVIES** is the author of *Active 24 Hours* (Roof, 1982), *Name* (This Press, 1986), and a collection of essays, *Signage* (forthcoming from Roof). **DAVID SHAPIRO** is a poet, playwright and essayist. His books include *The Page Turner* (1973), and *To An Idea* (1984). Forthcoming is *House (Blown Apart)* from Overlook/Viking.

**27 YUKI HARTMAN**'s latest work is *Ping* (Kulchur Foundation, 1984). He is currently at work on a new book of poems, *Glass Eye*. **SUSAN CATALDO** is the author of *Brooklyn-Queens Day* (Telephone Books) and is the former editor of *Little Light* magazine.

## COMMUNITY MEETING

The annual Poetry Project **COMMUNITY MEETING** will be held **Saturday December 12th at 2 PM** in the parish hall. All are welcome. Admission **FREE**.



# THE POETRY PROJECT

2nd Ave. & 10th St. NYC 10003

(212) 674-0910

## DECEMBER

- 2 Richard Hell & Jim Carroll
- 6 Lecture Series: "Bop 'n' Schlock: Pop Culture as Mom Muse," A Demo by Maxine Chernoff & Kenward Elmslie
- 7 Open Reading
- 9 Barrett Watten & Carter Ratcliff
- 13 Book Party for American Poetry Since 1970: Up Late edited by Andrei Codrescu. 7 pm. Admission free.
- 14 Keith Adams & Rajin Govender
- 16 Susan Noel & Tony Towle
- 21 Terri Hardin & Zoe Tamerlaine
- 28 Sharon Shively & K.C. Shively

All events begin at 8 pm, admission by contribution of \$5 except where noted. Programs subject to change.

Workshops: Tuesdays & Fridays at 7 pm, Saturdays at Noon (for more information, see the back of the calendar).

## JANUARY

- 1 NEW YEAR'S DAY MARATHON READING  
over 100 poets & performers including Allen Ginsberg, Anne Waldman, Rudy Burckhardt, John Yau, John Cage, Richard Hell, Bernadette Mayer and Charlotte Carter. **Beginns at 7 PM. \$10 contribution.**
- 3 Lecture Series: "The Jack Spicer Circle at Gino & Carlo's," a talk by Larry Fagin
- 4 Open Reading
- 6 Maureen Owen & Sonia Sanchez
- 11 Mary Sternback & Michael Decapite
- 13 Michelle Clinton & Jim Brodey
- 18 Cookie Mueller & Phil Good
- 20 Alan Davies & David Shapiro
- 22/23 Theater Series: *150 Years* by John Kaplan  
**(at the Universal Bellows Theater, 43 2nd Ave.)**
- 25 Ellen Mudd Carter & Danine Ricereto
- 27 Yuki Hartman & Susan Cataldo



## THEATER SERIES

January 22nd and 23rd at 8pm: **150 YEARS** written and directed by John Kaplan. PLEASE NOTE: **150 YEARS** will be performed at the Universal Bellows Theater, 43 Second Ave. (between 2nd & 3rd St.) in Manhattan.

*JOHN KAPLAN has had two successful productions in this series: Dropsy (1985), and Get Lost (1986).*

## LECTURE SERIES

Sunday, December 6th at 8 pm: **BOP 'N' SCHLOCK: POP CULTURE AS MOM MUSE," A DEMO BY MAXINE CHERNOFF & KENWARD ELMSLIE.** **KENWARD ELMSLIE**, poet, librettist, and performer, has published six books of poetry, among them, 26 Bars (Z Press) in collaboration with artist Donna Dennis. **MAXINE CHERNOFF** is the author of five books of poems, most recently New Faces of 1952 (Ithaca House) and Japan (Avenue B).

Sunday, January 3rd at 8pm: "The Jack Spicer Circle at Gino & Carlo's," a talk by Larry Fagin. **LARRY FAGIN** is the author of I'll Be Seing You: Selected Poems 1962-1975 (Full Court Press) and other books. He was editor of Adventures in Poetry magazine. He teaches in the Poetry-in-the-Schools program, and at the Naropa Institute in Boulder, Colorado.

## BOOK PARTY

Sunday, December 13th at 7pm, 4 Walls 8 Windows will be hosting a publication party for American Poetry Since 1970: Up Late, edited and introduced by Andrei Codrescu. The anthology is a collection of works by over a hundred poets, including Ted Berrigan, Fay Kicknosway, Maureen Owen, Anne Waldman, Clarence Major, Anselm Hollo, and John Yau.

## NEWSLETTER

The Poetry Project Newsletter, edited by Tony Towle, will be published bi-monthly, November through June. News of Project events, essays, poems, vital information, letters, gossip, and reviews. The Newsletter will be sent free to all members of the Poetry Project. Subscriptions available only institutions @\$20/yr.

Drawings for the Oct./Nov. and Dec./Jan. calendars by Kim MacConnel. Dec./Jan. Newsletter cover drawing by Jean Holabird.

## WORKSHOPS

"Poetry and Prose" taught by Bernadette Mayer. Tuesdays at 7 pm (ongoing through May). A study of etymologies, subjects, objects, long forms, eloquence, mythologies, field guides, dream-work, schools and hermetism. General training for the perception and communication of the whole and its parts. Athletic Aesthetics.

*BERNADETTE MAYER is a former Director of the Poetry Project. Her books include Mutual Aid (Mademoiselle de la Mole Press), Utopia (United Artists) and Midwinter Day (Turtle Island Foundation).*

"Prose Fiction and Poetry" taught by Charlotte Carter. Fridays at 7 pm (ongoing through May). A prose workshop encompassing straight-ahead narrative as well as other forms of writing not confined by traditional of "the story." An ongoing focus on the larger work, novels in progress, collections, etc.

*CHARLOTTE CARTER is the author of Sheltered Life (Angel Hair). She has studied with Paul Bowles in Morocco. A CAPS grant recipient, she is at work on a novel.*

"Poetry, Journals & Romanticism" taught by Jeff Wright. Saturdays at 12 pm (through December).

*JEFF WRIGHT is the editor of Cover magazine. His books include Employment of the Apes (Hard Press) and All in All (Gull Books). He is currently teaching writing at Brooklyn College.*

"Writing & Looking" taught by John Yau. Saturdays at 12 pm beginning January 9th (10 Weeks). Poetry, art, and criticism: what are their capabilities? Their limitations? The workshop will go on field trips to museums and galleries, write poems, reviews and journals, and attempt to arrive at an understanding of the relationship between words, art and the nature of meaning.

*JOHN YAU is a poet and art critic. His books of poetry include Broken Off by the Music and Corpse and Mirror. He has published reviews and essays in Artforum, Art in America, and other art magazines, and has written monographs and catalogue essays on Jane Freilicher, Malcolm Morley, Rackstraw Downes, Roger Brown, and David True, among others.*

**\$50 registration fee includes membership privileges and admission to all regularly scheduled events.**

wish to make mud pies, to scratch your name deep in the dirt road/ Seventeen cyclonized wind cyclones, drilling holes in Manhattan/ A needle-like splinter was wedged in his eye/ Like a Wednesday, in the middle of the week/ Relationships going nowhere go on forever/ Two flies fucking on a coffee cup/ Art is none of my business/ Search and destroy your luggage/ The rich hallucinate a famine in their midst/ I raise dark, personal coffee to my lips/ I am disturbed by my freedom/ Do not worry, it is only sacred pig cooking at 350 degrees/ There was a sink in the bathroom, somehow like a living thing/ Sidewalks they cut the crust off of/ Truth is the hobby of full bellies/ His canvas women are foolish, dunce caps hanging on their breasts/ Pounding away at the door and thinking there's a chute back to civilization/ The grass let go, a thousand fingers, one by one" ... and... "Thank you very much!"

—Lynn McGee

*Open Readings at The Poetry Project take place the first Monday of every month, at 8 p.m. The suggested contribution is \$5.*

## SALAD

*for Carl Theodorski*

Deep inside the big Glad bag I seem to smell the earth in its entirety. One whiff of these Nasturtiums & Forever banned from my Mexican blue bowls: fake Jersey tomatoes & supermarket cukes.

*Dress Lightly!* Carl's note reads. & Don't Wash Again, Neither.  
These littluns already quite peppery. May I suggest a mild vinaigrette.

Coveralls,  
Open air market phantom in search of the new  
You give good greens  
& seeds & grasses from up  
Near the Pennsylvania border

But more than this,  
Forbidden barbarous charge not even the carnivores know

Wet & trembling  
Dressed & dripping lemon  
A delicate prey—I hear white lettuce also goes  
by the name a rattlesnake root. How cutting edge,  
I think,  
& sip a little more California blush. Yes, How edgy.

How evil. How TV drug dealer. How Dissolute,  
Dangerous & Decadent to lie back on the daybed  
In the middle of the night &  
Bite the head off a flower.

—Charlotte Carter

## Magazines Received

*Address*, May-June 1987 (PO Box 20328, London Terrace Sta., NYC 10011) \$5. Includes work by Cid Corman, Ted Enslin, and Jonathan Williams.

*And*, Vol 1 No. 6. 1987. (740 Univ. Ave., Rochester, NY 14607). Includes a conversation with Grace Paley.

*The Americas Review*, Vol. 15, Summer 1987. 117 pages. (Univ. of Houston, Univ. Park, Houston, TX 77004) A Review of Hispanic Literature and Art of the USA.

*Bombay Gin*, Vol. 1 No. 2, Winter 1987. Includes interview of Jack Collom, and work by Anne Waldman, Ed Friedman, Jack Kerouac and Clark Coolidge.

*City Lights Review*, Number 1. 204 pages. \$9.95. Edited by Lawrence Felinghetti and Nancy J. Peters.

*Helicon Nine, The Journal of Women's Arts and Letters*, (PO Box 22412, Kansas City, MO 64113) Issue on Southern Womanhood. 215 pages. \$12.

*Kalliope, a journal of women's art*, Vol 9, No 1. 72 pages. \$3.50. (3939 Roosevelt Blvd, Jacksonville, FL 32205).

*Long Shot*, Volume 6. (PO Box 456, New Brunswick, NJ 08903) 115 pages. \$4. Work by Ginsberg, Baraka, et al., including "An Apology to Robert Penn Warren" by Leaping Lanny Poffo, the Poet Laureate of Wrestling.

*Mudfish*, (Attitude Art, 184 Franklin St., NYC 10013) \$7. Latest issue includes work by Ashbery, Ash, Elmslie, Lauterbach, Gerrit Henry and Jill Hoffman.

*Parnassus, Poetry in Review*, Volume 14, No. 1. 300 pages. \$7. A wide variety of reviews and articles, including James Laughlin on Propertius and Goethe.

*Red Weather*, #2 (Prospect Books, 500 E. 11th St., NYC 10003). \$4. Includes work by Bernadette Mayer and Alan Davies.

## Announcements

La Mama (74 A.E. 4th St.) will present Bob Holman performing *Panic\*DJ*, with music by Vito Ricci, on Monday, December 14, 9pm. For information and reservations, call 475-7110.

Poetry is being solicited by *High Times* (211 E. 43rd St., NYC 10017/972-8484). Payment varies from \$25 to \$100. Send submissions to: Espy LaCopa.

The next issue of *The Difficulties* will be devoted to the work of Susan Howe. "Responses to Ms. Howe's work are being sought for this context." Inquiries should be directed to: Tom Beckett, 596 Marilyn St., Kent, OH 44240 (216-673-9282).

# INTERVIEW OF LES LEVINE

## by Ted Greenwald

*Les Levine is an internationally known artist. This past summer a major installation of 27 billboards, entitled "Forgive Yourself: Mass Media Project for Kassel" was commissioned for Documenta 8.*

*What does it feel like to be an artist in the "postmodern" era?*

Very much like it feels to be a secretary in the computer age.

*Which is what?*

More of the same. Only it's faster. And it's more competitive. And the equipment kind of agitates you all the time. But I think you should change "postmodern" to "postspiritual/sensitive." I don't think any artist thinks in those terms.

*You're the only artist who incorporates words that are used as a poet would use words. How do the words work for you?*

The words I use, for me, form active emotional pictures. They are picked because of their cliché baggage. They're grounding words in that, they uncomfortably force you to connect your linguistic architecture with your sense of psychological sophistication. In that sense they're completely like poetry, since from my point of view what poets do best is not describe situations but make feelings through language. And so, from two entirely different approaches, the parallel is the sediment of human emotion that is stirred up. While poets tend to generate sentences, I tend to freeze-dry everything into a small chip, which can be reconstituted by the brain breathing air into it.

*What are some of the differences between visual artists and poets?*

Artists at the most basic wisdom aspect are trying to find their bodies. That's why they often use materials that imply a sensual relationship to the body, whereas poets are more in search of their mind. Inasmuch as they want to know their body, they do. They're more mystified by the way they think. And how thinking can present an entirely universal and complete work. It's the difference between a German joke and a Jewish joke. Not having a sense of humor is tantamount to being condemned to hell. Artists do not trust their imaginations. Everything must be concretely proven before they know which world they live in. Or when to laugh, whereas a poet can invest a blade of grass with the most complicated belief system imaginable.

*Do you think poetry will ever develop an economy?*

No. It's not an economic activity. Art quite definitely is an economic activity. That may be in the long run why poetry is always going to be closer to the gods than art will be. Artists are their own gods. Poets believe in the future. No matter how much artists try to imply that their work is purely spiritual (i.e., "My art is my meditation!"), essentially it's a losing battle because art at the present time encourages the demise of human feeling by generating fierce competition and insatiable greed. Two activities which do not lead an individual toward spiritual activity. Poets, on the other hand, as much as any other person(s) in our society—almost as much as advertising copywriters—are the new prayer writers of this day. They want us to see that every miniscule aspect of life has its own state of integrity and dignity.

*Why does the media have such a hard time with poetry? Will it ever be accessible?*

The reason for that is simply that poets are not prose writers. They don't write in a form that is journalism. The difference is—the media assumes that reportage of the facts is the most sustaining information you can get out of anything, whereas the poet understands that the facts are not real, that some artistic invention must be wrapped around them to express them as human feelings. So, you have a kind of inverted thing occurring—where the poet is giving you the facts you really need, and the media is deciding what facts you should have. Media tends by nature to be very put off by real feelings. That's why they can have people—night after night—who have gone through disasters, crying on camera. Crying becomes not an expression of sadness, but a subtle form of advertising. Poets are too hot to handle. A poet is deeply expressing something felt in a form that someone else may be able to participate in that feeling. Therefore the media would find poets disruptive and noncommercial.

*What's commercial: "Works and plays well with others.?"*

Doesn't express feelings, that's commercial. It diminishes everything to a facade, to an advertisement. In that sense, media would see poets as emotionally antiquated. On a down-to-earth level, poetry is *highly* personal. You cannot have a personal experience with 200 million people. It's a virtual impossibility. Historically, the best poems are love poems written for one person.

*Do you have any sense of what direction art will take as we enter the 21st century?*

I wouldn't care to put myself in the role of predictor, but as the 21st century is more than three weeks away, we may have 18 new styles.

*What's your favorite movie of the 80s?*

*Blue Velvet.* (pause) You don't want to ask me why it is?

*Okay, why?*

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Because it put the audience very much in contact with their own sense of psychosexual dysfunctioning, and gave them a revised view of the American Dream. The audience I saw it with was less inclined to believe the small town innocence and more inclined towards the drugs, violence, and sexual demons. One had the sense that horror was more commonplace and believable in their minds than innocence and idealism.

*What advice would you give to a young writer or artist coming on the scene today?*

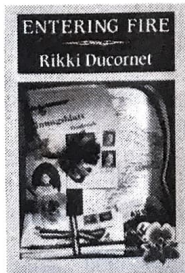
Young people are their own best advisors. They have studied the strategies and found all the openings. Their major problem is there are too many of them. I tend to like things that are continually new by the mere fact that they have been going on forever.

*Poetry is something that has never been sold as "poetic"—any thoughts on this?*

The notion of poetics could be seen as stimulus for ego gratification. If something makes one feel something then that could be called poetic. Of course in this day and age, drastic measures have to be taken. Some of us are so cut off from our poetic feelings, that mere words won't do the trick. We need loud music and apocalyptic vision. They're the only things that make our eyes open. Truth and beauty are too low-key for a society bombarded by mass media.

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# QUESTIONS

*The following questions were written during Bernadette Mayer's first workshop of the 1987-88 season on Oct. 13th.*

- Will we study etymology (or entomology, it would really bug me if we didn't...)?
- Who has had an original thought (Pee Wee Herman)?
- Poetry and originality?
- Poetry - no rational reason?
- Why do I think this is poetry? Or, is any of the above relevant to poetry?
- I'm not responding to the left column, am I?
- What is a poem?
- No rules?
- Is this the left-hand column?
- Why should I want to know?
- Who is this asking?
- Must I keep writing?
- Can I write without pen and paper?
- Is this five minutes?
- Should I ask or sit quiet? Can this be allowed? No rules?
- Who question, what questions, which questions. Whose questions. How to spell question. Some of them are good, right? Which one? Does it make any sense what I am doing? Is this going to lead me any where particular in life? Could I make a decent living from it? Am I wasting my time? Why is my hand bothering me? Am I old? What is this?
- Does this money go towards the church?
- I wonder what the other people in the room think of me?
- Have you thought of life as a quest with no goal or grail? Such as money?
- Why are you so suspicious? Is everything a con game?
- Is she a good mother?
- Do you have a question?
- What's a bad poem? What's a bad question?
- The bullet as an injurious question?
- Do the senses turn back in on themselves to create new senses?
- People without images have no images? Are you sure?
- Poetry of the ears, eyes, nose & throat?
- How do you ask how to polish, pick, pound your poetry into perfect real poems and not lose your tone, feeling death that came when you died the first silent death and wrote the first poem, perfect in its absolute first spontaneity and dead?
- Where are the bathrooms?
- What does asking questions have to do with poetry?
- Does a question get you deeper into things, is that what I do anyway, without knowing?
- What is right, what is wrong?
- Poetry - stupid word!?
- Simple questions - what word, what order of things. Are these other questions to ask?
- What does this all have to do with writing?
- Why try to know anything? What is the point?
- Are questions God?
- Do questions have minds?
- What makes anyone want to write? But is this the kind of question that's at all worthwhile?
- A poem made of questions?
- Do forms change your thoughts, your flow of thought, is that what form is?
- What are helpful questions to ask about a poem? What are helpful comments to write on a poem? What are helpful questions to ask about a poem that will be true to any poem and not somehow change its intention?
- Does there need to be a purpose to begin writing in the first place or is it enough to have a form or structure e.g. this one of writing for five minutes about questions, which doesn't seem very pertinent...
- What are the forms of poetry and how can I use them?
- Who is the person who knows not the answer he is questioning?
- What are you going to do with your apartment?
- No scream?
- Where are the calling machines? I want what? How to find? And so?
- Can you capture anyone's essence in essencing martial displays?
- We're going one more minute on the cello for a vast platoon of incessant catwalk trouble, with rafters falling, swift bleeding on un-pruned hooks, and what gives you a learner's permit expiration date?
- And do I fill this time with the fear that has wakened my days for so long?
- How can words be vicarious if they're your words?
- Is it the forms that pour themselves, or the words?
- Is it five minutes yet?
- Can you have poetry without something approximating a rule?
- Oh what am I doing here?
- Is being a poet like being a standup comedian?
- What precisely is thinking?
- Is writing the same as peace itself?
- Thinking is almost impossible to describe, isn't it?
- Why did I decide to take a poetry class tonight instead of prose?
- Why isn't much poetry read in 1987?
- Why are people rarely true to their hearts?
- Why did I make a date to have dinner at 8:30?
- Is my therapist a lesbian?
- Does my therapist have kids?
- Why am I so self-destructive?
- Why is this such a hip progressive church?
- Why do men in corporate jobs have short hair? Why do I exist?
- Why can't I remember to put question marks after my questions.
- Why do people take poetry workshops? Why do people and writers smoke?
- Poetry sucks. What do you want? To be loved? To be feared and hated!
- How about your own voice?
- I can't spell? So how do you spell miserable.
- So is it anger or boredom?
- What is a bad poem? Is a bad poem without line breaks?

Does it skip? Are there misspelled words? Are there clichés? What sort of people write bad poetry? Are there bad poets who are historically known as good poets? Are nursery rhymes bad rhymes? What words does one find most often in bad poems? What metaphors? Allegories? Images? Or rhymes? Is there a certain number of lines needed to make a bad poem? Who does one learn from to write the bad poem? Is there a bush that gives oracles that are bad poems? Are the Ten Commandments poetry? Are there rhyme schemes in the work? Is there a perfect bad poem? Are there more bad poems written than good poems? Can one write a good poem on a bad day or a bad poem on a good day? Does it count if one writes bad poems blindfolded?

Can weak lines support strong lines? Can weak lines be successful if they create the proper setting for what's to follow?

Is rhythm an instinct?

Can one detect an unfinished poem?

Why do so many people have an intolerance to poetry?

Is poetry that produces emotion more potent than poetry that produces thought?

\* \*

from *At the Gallery of La Casa De Las Americas, Habana. dec. 1984*

Picture No. 1  
Arnold Belkin: Attica

You say Belkin that the bones  
keep regenerating themselves  
but these zeromen surrounding us  
will they always allow us time to  
recruit marrow for our bones  
packaged in attica mold.  
Will we always stitch ourselves  
together in time Belkin as these  
spacemen jailers freeze their  
penises in future containers  
to be opened in perpetuity.  
Stepping back from your picture  
Belkin i remember my last visit  
to attica the bullet holes loitering  
in the walls the sound of bullets  
still circling our eyes.

--Sonia Sanchez

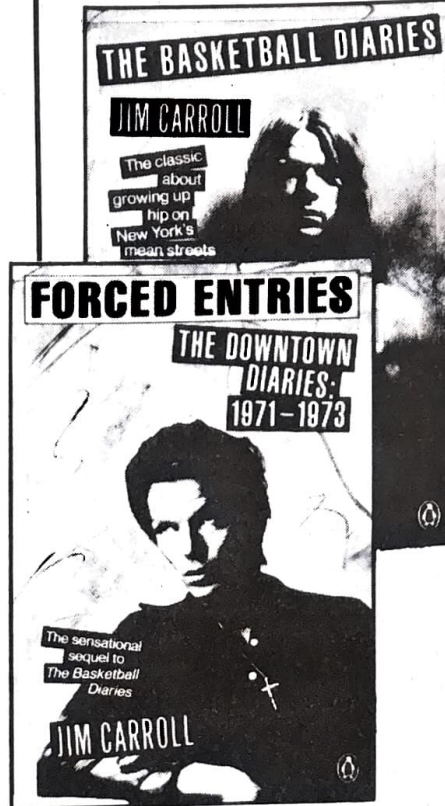
### Joy Chute (1913-1987)

Joy passed away on Sept. 6th. Her best known novel is *Greenwillow* (1956). She was also president of the PEN American Center from 1958 to 1960, and served on PEN's Executive Board for another 20 years. Many poets who never met Joy Chute yet came into indirect contact with her: it was she who thirty years ago established the PEN Writers' Emergency Fund.

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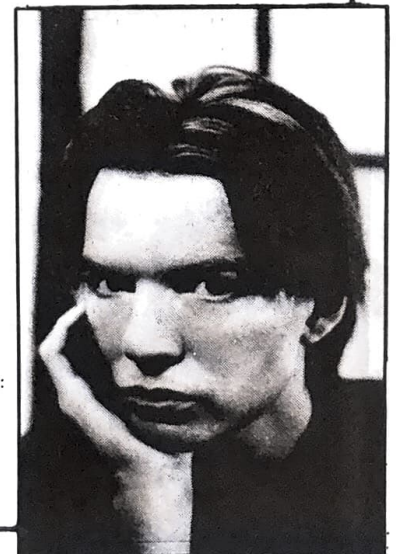
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The Poetry Project Newsletter is published bi-monthly, four times a year and mailed free of charge to members and contributors to the Poetry Project. Subscriptions are available to institutions only: \$20 / year. Checks should be made payable to The Poetry Project.

All unsolicited materials will not be returned without a SASE. Address correspondence to The Poetry Project, St. Mark's Church, 2nd Ave. & 10th St., NYC 10003.

Interested advertisers contact Kimberly Lyons or Lynn McGee at (212) 674-0910.

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Yes I wish to become a member of The Poetry Project. Here is my tax deductible membership gift:

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