

THE POETRY PROJECT

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JOSEPH CERAVOLO: 1934-1988

In his essay, "Was That A Real Poem or Did You Just Make It Up Yourself, Robert Creeley notes that "what we call poems are an intrinsic fact in the human world whether or no there be poets at the moment capable of their creation." The poetry of the late Joseph Ceravolo accomplished Creeley's definition of poetry as intrinsic human facts in the most graceful and *honest* means possible. From the publication of his first chapbook, *Fits of Dawn*, in 1965, Ceravolo created one of the most distinctive and singular poetic oeuvres written in this period. A poet of endless invention, he was, like Wallace Stevens, also a poet of a particular thematic. But unlike Stevens's effort to offer poetry as the "Supreme Fiction" where once the gods dwelled, Ceravolo offered the spiritual topography of a deeply feeling and contemplative individual whose practice always involved the unearthing of the simultaneous sorrow and joy in everyday life.

*In the world today
there is
no world so attached as I am
to worlds.*

(from "Note From St. Francis")

Joseph Ceravolo was born in Astoria, Queens in 1934. He attended a local high school and, following a stay in the Army, earned a degree in Civil Engineering from CCNY. Although he had dreamed of writing fiction in high school and had attempted some poems in the Army, creative writing was put on the back-burner as he pursued City College's demanding curriculum.

Instead of continuing on with a Master's in Engineering, as is common practice in that profession, Ceravolo audited classes at the New School for Social Research. When the advisor asked, "What do you want to pursue," Ceravolo blurted out, "I want to write poetry," as if unconscious desire rose to the surface and let its presence be known. Shortly after this encounter, Ceravolo enrolled (in 1962) in Kenneth Koch's now-legendary New School poetry workshop.

In this workshop, Ceravolo met poets Ruth Krauss and Jim Brodey, and, through Brodey, met Ted Berrigan, fresh from Tulsa, Oklahoma. Within a year, he had met most of the artists and writers associated with the New York School. It was during this period that he spent an autumn in a village outside Mexico City. The poems written during that fall of 1960 were finally published in 1979, in the volume *Transmigration Solo* (Toothpaste Press). Although these poems are Ceravolo's earliest mature efforts, many of his later themes and stylistic tropes are already in place. In "Migratory Moon," the play of the speaker's striking power of description, and his helplessness against that which he has already conjured, creates a poem of great mystery and subtlety that seemingly rips past the poem's 13 lines:

Cold & the cranes.

*Cranes in the
wind
like cellophane tape
on a school book.
The wind bangs
the car, but I sing out loud,
help, help
as sky gets white
and whiter and whiter and whiter.
Where are you
in the reincarnate
blossoms of the cold?*

Ceravolo's first national recognition came with the 1968 publication of *Spring in This World of Poor Mutts*, published by Columbia University as the first book to win the sadly short-lived Frank O'Hara Award for Poetry. Further recognition occurred with his inclusion in Ron Padgett and David Shapiro's *An Anthology of New York Poets*. He won an NEA Fellowship in the early '70s and his poem "The wind is blowing west" was included in an Oscar Williams anthology of modern poetry. Despite the critical praise and support of Kenneth Rexroth, John Ashbery, and Kenneth Koch, Ceravolo's publications were far and few between. After his critically received first volume, it took eleven years until the above-mentioned *Transmigration Solo* appeared, along with the chapbook *INRI* (Swollen Magpie). In 1982, Kulchur Press brought out *Millenium Dust*, his largest published collection.

The most distinctive aspect of Ceravolo's writing was the compressed, almost epigrammatic, quality of his poetry. *INRI* is a volume composed entirely of such work. Structured in syllabics, and no poem is longer than six lines, it is a book of fundamental emotions, questions that we ask ourselves constantly — yet never voice for fear of "sentimentality":

THE CAR

*All I got left is the car
and a broken heart.
But what more
do I deserve, now?*

EXPERIENCE

*I've been around
I've been over
everything in 30 odd years
and it still breaks.*

RISING SOUND

*Starting from nothing
Ending it all
The note of the
Cicada in the back yard.*

The last poem is the most direct representation of the influence of Chinese prosody on his work. Ceravolo's poetry reflects the timelessness and subtlety of the Chinese masters. In the "Appended Words" section of the *I Ching*, we find the following prosodic advice: "Investigate the quintessence of the principle of things, so as to put it to use." Ceravolo took everyday material and transformed the world into a luminous dome; but, like the Chinese poets, he refused to overwhelm the reader with an overload of detail. In the spirit of the Buddhist poets, he creates a landscape of daily sadness ("A black, a beautiful universe"), but this world is not without redemption. Similar to the Buddhist teaching that believes that one can begin to cut loose from this world of *samsara* (mental and spiritual pain, but literally translated as "going in circles") through a radical awareness of the illusionary world, Ceravolo reenacts a state of bliss and peace with each act of poetry:

Spiral

*Anti-stars far away
Venus, Jupiter and Moon
around each other, yet far apart.
My life: yet it all comes back.
Stars and matter and spiral
clear and cold
about to take me on:
warm body and all.*

Much of Ceravolo's later work can be seen as an attempt to reconnect the link between religious impulse and poetry that was lost with the advent of Post-Modernism. He was something of a cross between an Italian Catholic mystic and an American Shintoist — each sentient object in the world in its own spirit and all these spirits singing in key in an endlessly improvised song:

Milky Ways

*What holds this together?
What eros of a living star
slides through these heavens and heavens
making me most fortunate of all?*

*But flattered plagued and lonely,
like wings it folds around me:*

*like the branches of a willow
in the rain, and falling to earth.*

Ceravolo's poetry was much like the music of jazz pianist Thelonious Monk, an artist of unseemingly great complexity who only revealed his mastery when necessary. Ceravolo employed the inference, the resonance and the musical phrase to convey meaning in the most delicate means possible. A line such as "I am so alone on / this television screen" recasts the image of daily exile in concrete and dazzling measures. Often, Ceravolo's poetry seemed to be in a state of crisis, threatening to capsize by the purity and nakedness of the speaker's emotions. But the poems rarely collapse because they never quite resolve in the way we, as readers, expect poems to resolve. In

our "chance-ordained firmament," he maintained authority over the text with subjectivity's Reign of Terror. The signature of Ceravolo's text is not summarized by the fetishized subject; it is found on the surface, upon those delicate "rudiments of passion" — words.

In the eight years that I knew Joseph Ceravolo, I never heard him complain about his lack of recognition or the demands that his career as a civil engineer made on his time. Although his work rarely appeared in magazines in later years, he continued to write work of enormous power. From the unlikely source of Saul Bellow we get this bit of wisdom: "Poets have to dream, and dreaming in America is no cinch." Joseph Ceravolo was a dreamer that remained; a poet whose task was no less than carrying the imprint of all our dreams "into the land / of pure migration."

—Joel Lewis, September 1988

* * *

MOTHER LAND

I can always go back
to where my land is,
born in free die in free
I can always go back
to where I was born.

I can always shed tears
upon my soil, dirt
of my planet, water of my
body, rivers and oceans,
I can always shed tears.

I can always leave blood
behind my life
if the gods control the flow
even where clouds
form mysteries of sonic flight
I can always leave me.

I can always go back
I can always shed tears
I can always leave me.

-- Joseph Ceravolo

RIFLE SHOT

What you can't have is what
you can't have
is what you want
when you cannot want
because good times and good love
fly out of you
quicker than an automatic gun
quicker than an automatic
quicker than a gun
quicker than a particle
flies from you when you're dead.

Dream stuff, dream towns, dream schemes
act upon the heart
and wait and dream,
till all's gone, all's dissolved,
by crystal dust in space,
quicker than a spirit
when you're dead
quicker than a spirit leaves
the beauty of your face.

AMOR AND PSYCHE

Given all the love that's left
in all the world bereft of energy
light and tears,
there still remains the fear
of losing, close to lost,
closer to battlefields in frost.

When lying in each other's arms
and legs enraptured in memory,
there still remains the kiss
like the fires of a candle,
or a forest in seclusion,
or migration lost for ages.

*Oh yes, Time has returned; now Time reigns
absolute; and with the hideous old man the
whole of his demoniac retinue has returned,
Memories, Regrets, Spasms, Fears, Afflictions,
Nightmares, Rages and Neuroses.*

*I assure you that now the seconds are stongly
and solemnly accentuated and each one, spout-
ing out of the clock, says: 'I am Life,
insupportable, implacable Life!'*

-- Charles Baudelaire

(from *Twenty Prose Poems*, City Lights, 1988;
trans. Michael Hamburger)

WINTER

Ask the sun why today
a glow passes over your face
and the ice stretches in the bay
over the cool whiteness of your race.

February winds, late winter warmth
far away ancestral eyes blind
by deserts, and tundras growth
that eats up whatever I find.

Ask the sun why the day
flows over every last trace
of struggle in the sacred decay
of love in the human race.

STILL LIFE

O hydrant, how strange it is
to be mortal flesh and blood
and die off, and be born
and be more movable than a tree
be gravity fed like all creatures
and sun fed

when at any moment
a volcano erupts poison gas,
an earth movement swallows itself
while cicadas rub sound off
in the sunny stillness,

and fool the continuity of love.

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means without written permission from the abovementioned
Estate.*

Too Late Blues

The dancers have stopped
and crowd the bandstand
It's that old number
Too Late Blues
It's black and white
The end of the movie

-- Greg Masters

The 1988 Symposium of The Poetry Project took place from April 7th through the 10th, with 32 poets participating in a variety of readings, panel discussions, and lectures. In this issue we are publishing the contributions to the Symposium of Joel Oppenheimer and Kofi Natambu.

ABOUT NEW FORMS

by Joel Oppenheimer

we love our word processors. we love the way videos allow for visuals. we love the sounds electronics give voices and ears.

but there were poems before alphabets, before hieroglyphs, before cuneiform, before syntax, even before words.

i don't mean some kind of platonic poemness either. even before words, some ancestor indicated something other than need or warning in the sounds he or she made to another. it was a real poem.

all the invention, the technology, ever adds is new possibilities for presenting or transcribing what we've already dreamed of, and, usually, figured out some way to do, even if awkwardly and imperfectly, to present or transcribe.

the search is not, is never, *new forms*. new forms are found when needed, or we invent them while we play because we're playing, asking, gee, can i make that happen that way? the elizabethans and the moderns, each playing with new technologies and new and pliant language, reeled new forms out poem by poem, because why not?

some find the accepted language binding, or the old forms no longer useful to it, and have to find new language and new forms to fit their needs.

williams in his various insistences, dickinson's simple hymnal structures, whitman, browning, blake, smart, back and back. we don't know that homer sang it differently than those before him, but if he did we know some of the tavern regulars bitched about it.

what they each invented those who came after could use, for a while anyhow. then, each time, the next wave, those who can't get out of their inheritance so their voices cry to us strangled in their poems. how much i wished, a teenager reading 'shropshire lad' in bed, that housman had been born twenty years earlier *or* later, so he could have really written those poems!

or think of melville and hardy, attention focussed so on prose they could use only the given forms for poems and so the poems seem somehow either too ponderous or too light, somehow never quite right for their various weights.

the form is merely what the poems look like, what defines the spaces within, what tells us what it's *not* for, what we have to go into and move through to find out what's inside.

which sounds like architecture. but before creeley told us that 'form is never more than an extension of content', louis sullivan told us that 'form follows function'.

i have parroted both since. it took today, with its necessity to speak to the subject (Ed saying 'the hell with it, just talk about what you want to'), to bring me back to these two elegant equations and to allow me to understand them.

frank lloyd wright took sullivan's ductum and added to it the force of the vernacular — that which we build to fit our needs out of the materials around us in a way that uses those materials maximally.

vernacular architecture, just like vernacular language, is that which the culture understands and uses. the buildings serve, each, their various purposes; we are not confused or miserable or bored using them.

the poems which matter, which help us live, are informed — *formed* — the same way.

so the first problem is, what is it we're saying, and why? and then the form ought to announce itself, make itself available.

what is it we've been saying? it's been fashionable to talk — to talk! in words! with meanings! — about how there's nothing to say, and if there is, it's impossible to say it, and if it is said, it's impossible for someone else to understand — to stand under, to see the roots of, where it grows from, where it goes to.

but much of what we say is *meant* to be understood, and much of it *is* understood, despite all.

there's more than utility to language and life, of course. we take joy in gargoyles and gaudí, watts tower, victorian follies, herrick's 'tercet of litlees upon a pipkin of jelly...', limericks, language poems, and cummings' grasshopper reassembling on the page.

it won't do at all to forget that zukofsky — that genuinely serious poet — told us that 'the test of poetry is the range of pleasure it affords as sight, sound, and intellection. in that pursuit we'll try anything, play any game.

so of course there's play, with its own seriousness, but perhaps not often saying much, when i'm happy or tired or bored i play, using that seriousness to restore self, since those conditions are not conducive to an other seriousness, a seeking, about the universe or self.

poems have always been capable of, and used for, and meant for, both functions: play and saying something. either function is valid. play didn't disappear when horace or milton decided poems ought to teach us something, and saying something didn't disappear when derrida and lacan had bright ideas.

what can poems say? they can present, reveal, or transform the universe or self, figure out how to exist in universe or self, and probably do innumerable other things that didn't occur to me that warm afternoon in new hampshire when i wrote this knowing spring was here and i wanted to play instead of trying to say something.

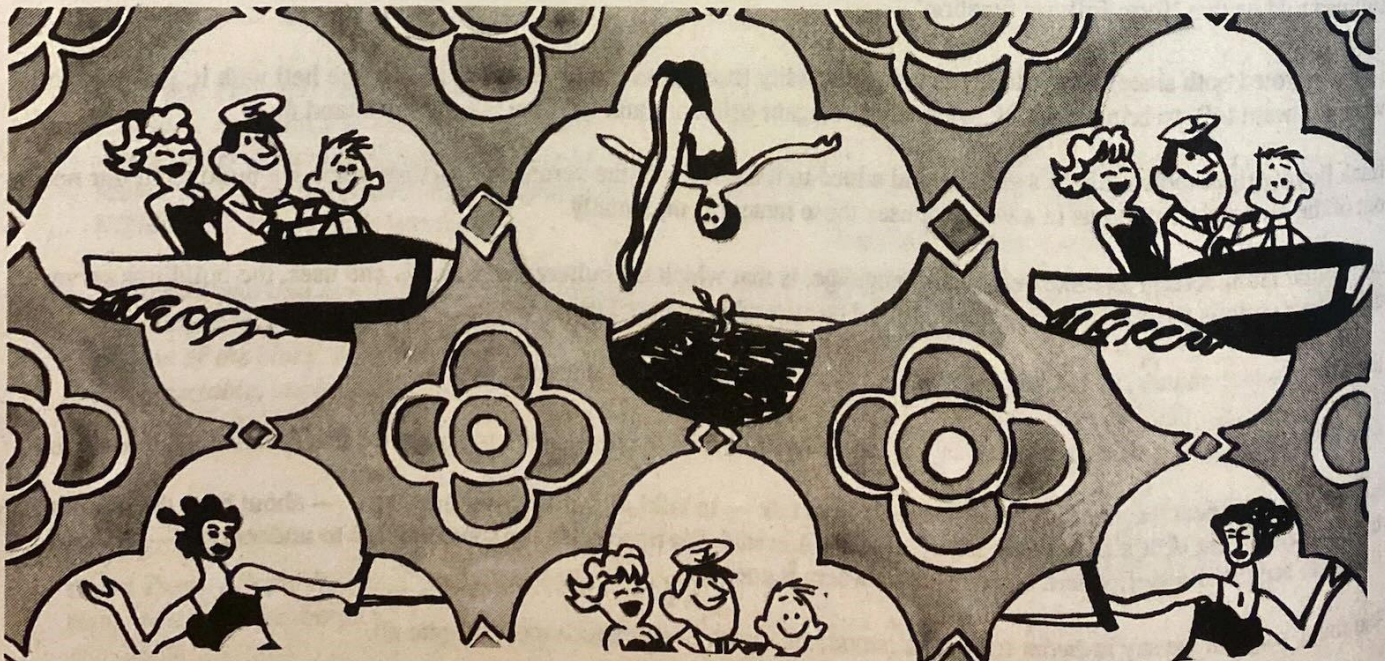
but discovery, definition, knowledge, change ought to be enough, if we're careful. it's always easy to build a nice house with dumb rooms. especially if it looks the way everybody else's does, so everybody loves it or at least knows the right words to say.

i'm thinking of all the poems which explain universes while ignoring gritty facts, and we say 'what a cute little poem'. the poems which miss the point because the poet is busy with rhetoric, and we say 'boy, this is deep!'. the poems which get lost in self talking about what self felt while self was observing the universe or life, and then brag about it. we grimace and say, 'how sensitive!'

those three phrases cover the human response to most poems, until, somehow, in some unexpected place, the reader/listener is knocked on his/her ass because a poem does its job. which is simply to create a new reality, to re-vision us, to make us see differently, maybe even, god forbid, to make us understand.

we do it with craft, care, just as building a house — no matter what materials, what kind — we do it as the house stands. why believe otherwise about the poem which, so much more buffeted, must always stand up.

so we plod on, trying to find the poems, and to house them, and to make the housing stay solid but quiet, damn it, not get in the way. to hope, over and over again, for an epiphany — to see from, upon, over, at, after — and then to find the form inobtrusive and necessary, natural and real, that holds it properly.



DISQUISITION(S) ON WHAT WE'RE HERE FOR
"Language and the Uses of Power"

by Kofi Natambu

What is language but the endlessly myriad and imaginative ways we use to speak and thus shape the mercurial dimensions of the world, a means of thinking/writing (and thereby) defining and giving form and meaning to that world? Where mind-force and social environment (conditioning, "understandings") are articulated and determined. The use of language reveals how and why we learn and create "ideas" of WHAT that world is (and is becoming...

Since language is inextricably bound to the form/content of what we think and do, is in fact the very instrument for thought and action, it cannot possibly be an independent "transcendental" force that is somehow divorced from or not connected to the historical accretion of values, beliefs, 'concept', and [mis] information that constitutes the living legacy and active extension of what we call Society.

IT IS IN THIS WAY THAT WE MAKE AND ARE MADE BY OUR "PERCEPTIONS" OF THE WORLD. THUS IDEOLOGY NECESSARILY BECOMES THE *PRISM* THRU WHICH WE GLIMPSE THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL STRUCTURES(S) THAT WE HAVE "CONSTRUCTED."

what we call culture is that complex matrix of institutional technological and philosophical/emotional practices that become *SOCIAL RELATIONS OF POWER* which, in their multiple range of actions and discourses, are used to structure & 'express' what we refer to as REALITY

language is the cultural and social tool that we have to build and extend the realities that we 'refer to' as such it is simultaneously the methodological framework for organizing and containing discourse AND the *raw material* of its substance thus any theoretical or critical investigations into or discussions about what specific uses language has for providing insight significations and ideas for 'liberating' thought society and culture is automatically fraught with profound political dilemmas (questions of/about TRUTH and POWER) that simply cannot be ignored

THIS is WHY it IS crucial IN publically ADDRESSING the important THEME of how POETICS can be INSTRUMENTAL in the TRANSFORMATION of these HISTORICAL categories that WE, as WRITERS, not LOSE sight of the "larger" CONTEXTUAL questions, ISSUES, conflicts, STRUGGLES, and PROBLEMS (as well as STRATEGIES) that COLLECTIVELY constitute a very broad NETWORK of "battles over the terrain of truth and power" (to loosely paraphrase M. Foucault) in modern society...

For what we are positing here is not merely a refined or exclusive "intellectual" dialogue about the intricate aesthetic and formal dynamics of this or that "conception of poetics", but forging a deeper social awareness of the massive

multi-dimensional aspects of the economic, administrative, juridical, academic, military and 'legitimation' structures (disciplinary, media, and regulatory agencies) that control/direct how we live. This huge infrastructure's power and autho-

rity is reinforced by the analytical and interpretive praxis of the 'intellectual and professional class' who are responsible for providing the ideological moral and psychological

justification for maintaining the hegemonic status quo. This is what is meant by the phrase "political economy of truth" (or as Foucault puts it: "regimes of truth"). It is in this context that any discourse about language, thought, and society resides.

So when we take up the immense task of investigating meaning and modality in poetics we are essentially talking about in what particular ways writing can affect our *knowledge* of what language can do to influence or direct cultural activity in a historically specific period. With the parameters of the social/political reality of the United States

this automatically means a confrontation with the reigning mythologies and systemic rituals of "race", class, gender, and imperialism (both economic and cultural).

In more specific poetic terms this means that we will have to seriously question the dominant role of the "transcendental signified" figure in most discourse referring to social relations among disparate cultural and physical groupings with the body politic of this nation.

Living in the land of the great transcendental signified where signifiers and signs are taken to be *identical* to the signified or where meaning and truth are said to be "represented" by the signified *substituting* for the Sign (as in all advertising), we are accustomed to pretending that our ideological and mythological biases and fetishes about the "world we live in" are omniscient signs of our UNIVERSAL significance for all human cultures throughout this lovely logocentric universe we've created. Only, in our self-proclaimed and gloriously "moral" view we haven't merely created it, but have ORDAINED it, with the social and historical approbation of the ART gods that we pay to defend and protect our sancrosanct (sic) traditions and forms. It is in this way (we repeatedly tell ourselves) that we protect our "civilization" from the ravages of those who, because of "race", class, gender, or aesthetic/idiosyncratic bent, are seen as unfit to join the hierarchy of *canons* ('academic' & 'avant-garde') that have *determined* the 'natural order' of art productions in the now cosmic sphere of all that is HUMAN. This particularly reductive concept of the epistemology of art is then projected into the programming of our cultural and educational institutions, and from these political strongholds spread like viruses through the impressionable minds of people throughout society where they begin to take on the force and character of Icons

This activity is then legislated by the official guardians of the political economy of culture. It is in this context that we witness the instantaneous transformation of the art-object into commodity and exchange-value. Here where the market, and only the market, rules we glimpse the real *philosophical reasons* why certain ideas and values (e.g. societies, cultures, artists, histories, ideologies, peoples, etc.) are considered *more* important and HUMAN than Others. It is at this point in the on-going process of producing and reproducing literature, music, painting, film, architecture etc. that we experience what is MEANT by previously "mysterious and metaphysical" terms like HUMANITY and ART. IT is also at this crossroad that we meet up with what we have been taught is REALITY.

thus our methodological and technical uses of language always move in the direction of the (already made and codified) *referent* we are told by our priest-teachers and policemen-icons that we only have to learn how to find the "proper representations" of this Golden Mean Reality and express our mimetic desires/powers to enhance its already glowing omnipotence

Thus
Shakespeare
Bach
Picasso

JOYCE	DICKINSON	CAMUS
POUND	SANDBURG	SARTRE
CAGE	FROST	MANN
KEROUAC	WORDSWORTH	BECKETT
GINSBERG	STEIN	BARTHES
BLAKE	HEMINGWAY	FOUCAULT
WHITMAN	FAULKNER	WRIGHT
BALDWIN	HURSTON	HIMES
WOOLF	MAILER	UPDIKE
ELLISON	CESAIRE	VALLEJO
BRETON	ARTAUD	NERUDA
MARQUEZ	BORGES	NABOKOV
POE	CELINE	MILLER
O'HARA	ASHBERY	BARAKA
REED	MORRISON	ELIOT

[...FILL IN YOUR OWN ICONS IN THIS SPACE...]

come to us already prepackaged and
labeled "critics choice" and "primetime writer"
by the ever-present Siskels & Eberts
of our cathode-ray induced dreams

P.S. "Did you know that Burger King in their blackhistorymonth commercials used the famous reflective pose of Dr. Martin Luther King next to their logo while a magisterial whitemale voice intoned "The Dream still lives at Burger King..."

After that: who needs Cindy Sherman? or Dada or "new & better poetries"

So what is poetics and
who is Liberation is the
question we somehow must
pursue this time around

At Night The States, Alice Notley; Yellow Press (distributed by Small Press Distribution, 1814 San Pablo Ave., Berkeley, CA 94702). 76 pages. \$6.95.

Alice Notley is a "New York poet" who grew up in the Mojave Desert. In this night-trip log-book of autobiographical self-reflections, all those personal "states" in between — from Florida, Illinois and Montana to love, dreams, and loss — are explored in poetic depth. Here, feeling her way in the dark through the aftermath of a beloved partner's death, Notley touches on every stage in the life of love and of the spirit, from the blissful peaks to the lowest of the bad valleys.

Up to now — with successful books like *When Spring Comes*, *Waltzing Matilda*, and *Margaret & Dusty* — Notley has been a poet notable for her flights of imaginative language, the kind of linguistic daring the eighteenth century called "fancy." But "ultimate things" like capital-G Grief are usually not viewed as the material of fancy. And this is a very different Notley, trained by suffering to make leaps into new musics and knowledge.

Free-associatively speedy as ever on the surface, here she lets a graver voice in under that nervy lyric one. Like a heart slowed by its burdens into occasionally missing a beat, her whole "sound" changes and deepens. "If Gertrude Stein had been able to write, she'd have written like that," Ed Dorn has said of *At Night These States*... "The aphasic lapses are brilliant." To my ear that skipped-rhythm, dropped-stitch quality, whether heart murmur or aphasia, makes Notley a more interesting poet than ever before.

With the death of the poet's lover come emotional states apparently continents apart. Poetry is the resolution of such vast contradictions — in this case, between a dissociated desolation and self-affirmation's exhilaration-beyond-loss: "this strange enrichment of the / spirit I feel though bereft." To the bereft one, constellations of sense and memory come back like floating islands of phantom pain, compressed into the moment-spaces of a word: "start," "weather," "song," "pine," "rose," "love," "wind," "dream," and "night."

*You're one of the faraway mapmakers now
the scent of pine, then gone.*

("Poem")

*The star, desire,
is herself
skin shining
in the
black evergreen
night*

("L'Etoile")

*Days go by but you
stay secluded
in your onyx jet walled villa on the
dark side of
our other Mother*

("Baby Lovely")

Stranded on this side of Death's deepest of night-states, the poet is left to pick up the pieces. "This person who sleeps in my bed," says Notley in a poem called "Sweetheart," has "slept there forever and yet / there was another." "And I will always be another / Unrecognizable to my mirror." The integration of the personality is a wavering sail in mortality's storms.

*I had a dream that I
was marrying myself.
Looking through a
crystal; & from among the
millions of refracted
brides she walked towards
me, white veil & dress & bouquet*

("I Had a Dream That I")

I dreamed that he came back secretly for a few days...there had been some delays...I asked him if he wished he could really stay & be living again. No, he said, he was tired of having to be so masculine, captain of a ship too tight, too small even. He wanted to be more feminine, quieter for a change...

("Vitamin Equals Cigarette")

Senses of self and other, female and male, are not easily pinned down in these states. Where an exploiter might address it as an emotional constant, Notley writes of bereavement as an archetype of bewildered variability. "The thousand arms of Love" entangle, but "the little self is canny," escaping into "the vehicle of only myself." And yet, and yet. "I could have stayed forever in your arms."

This is, finally, a redemptive book, and an uplifting one, for all its sorrows. The poems carry an Orphic quality of being flung toward life, and charmed, like "all / that courses through the / mirror that opens to song" ("Backyard").

— Tom Clark

(Tom Clark is at work on a biography of the American poet Charles Olson.)

Colors of Creation Day

In a letter I wrote to this person I met
could be summoned and acknowledged, admitted and
attempted

finally, as if from the last embers in a layer of ash
what just lay dormant wanting through seasons to
reach this summer Sunday afternoon with
the sky a seventh-day blue, a quartet, and the cats
licking themselves, chasing each other, now collapsed

All it took was the telling. Not like a ballad
corrupt with tribute but straight from the heart
as firm as fermented memories will allow on
this side of a season, ocean, and some countries
between us. From which this invitation to
kindle all those distances is sent. Alive
for what matters and who there is for it to matter with.

-- Greg Masters

WEDNESDAY NIGHTS

December

7 **KOFI NATAMBU** is the author of two books of poetry, *Intervals* and *The Melody Never Stops*, and a book of critical essays on music and literature. **JIMMY SANTIAGO BACA** is the author of *Martin & Meditations on the South Valley* (New Directions) and is currently at work on *Black Mesa Poems—One Year in the Life of El Gato*.

14 Poet, essayist, translator, editor and teacher **ANDREI CODRESCU** is the author of *Comrade Past and Mister Present* and *Monsieur Teste in America & Other Instances of Realism*. He is the editor of the influential anthology *American Poetry Since 1970: Up Late*. **MIRA TERU KURKA** is an invertebrate paleontologist and research librarian at Time, Inc. Her new collection of poems is *Fleshpots* and her book *Fruit and Government* was published by Permian Press.

21 **JANET HAMILL** is the author of two books of poetry, *Troublante* and *The Temple*. Her poems appear in a number of anthologies, including *Deep Down: The New Sensual Writing by Women*. **JOHN BRANDI** has published over fifteen books of prose and poetry, his most recent one is *Hymn for a Night Feast: Poems 1979-1986*.

January

4 **DANIEL KRAKAUER** is the author of *Poems*. His work has appeared in *Deutsche Rundschau*, *Gandhabba*, *Cover* and elsewhere. Five of his plays have been performed at The Poetry Project. **JOEL LEWIS**'s books include *Entropia* and *Three Works*. His poetry, essays and reviews have appeared in *Sulphur*, *Transfer*, and *Caliban*. **SAL SALASIN** is the author of the recently published *Stepping Off the Plane Under the Protection of the Army*. His poems have appeared in *Exquisite Corpse* and *New American Writing*.

11 **SUSAN HOWE** is the author of seven books of poems including *Articulation Of Sound Forms In Time* and the forthcoming *The Europe of Trusts*. Her critical study of the poetry of Emily Dickinson was published in 1986. **ERICA HUNT**'s writing has appeared in *Pessimistic Labor*, *Boundary 2*, *Black Scholar*, and *Vanishing Cab*.

18 **TAYLOR MEAD** is currently at work on a new book, *Son of Andy Warhol*. He will be appearing in the film *Buster's Bedroom* with Donald Sutherland and Geraldine Chaplin. **VICKI HUDSPITH** is the author of two books of poetry, *White And Nervous* and *Limousine Dreams*. She edited *The Poetry Project Newsletter* from 1978 to 1980.

25 **JOHN CAGE** is the Charles Eliot Norton Professor of Poetry at Harvard University. His most recent books are *X* (Wesleyan University Press) and *Conversing with Cage*, edited by Richard Kostelanetz (Limelight Editions).

MONDAY NIGHTS

December

12 **FRANK** reading - contributors to the American magazine in Paris's current NYC issue. **JOSEPH DONAHUE**'s poetry has appeared in *Temblor*, *Hambone* and elsewhere. Poet, critic and fiction writer **STEPHEN PAUL MARTIN**'s *The Feminine Imagination* was just published. **NINA ZIVANCEVIC**'s first book of poetry in English is *More or Less Urgent*, recently published by New Rivers Press. The New York editor of *Frank*, poet/essayist/translator **LEONARD SCHWARTZ** has published widely in literary magazines, including *Harper's*, *Exquisite Corpse*, *American Letters*, and *Commentary*.

19 **RICHARD ALLEN** and **KAREN PEARLMAN** are a collaborative duet company whose work is a cinematic blend of text and dance/action. They have been critically acclaimed by The New York Times. Allen is the author of *The Way Out at Last*, and the forthcoming *To the Ocean and Scheherazade*.

January

9 **ALISON STONE** and **BARBARA HENNING**. Alison Stone is a student at Columbia who has had poems in *Poetry*, *The New Statesman*, and *The Paris Review*. Barbara Henning is a native of Detroit recently relocated to Brooklyn. Her first book, *Smoking in the Twilight Bar* was just published by United Artists.

16 **MARTINE BELLEN** teaches freshman composition in the CUNY system and has a chapbook forthcoming in Mary Sternbach's *Lines* series. **NANCY MCGUIRE ROCHE** comes from Kentucky and now lives in Nashville; she has been known to dance her poems.

23 **LYDIA TOMKIW** is from Chicago, edited *B-City*, has released six poetry/music collaborations as "Algebra Suicide," has a fifth volume of poetry, *The Dreadful Swimmers*, forthcoming. She has also appeared in the anthologies *The Next American Poetry* (1987, Scribner's/Macmillan) and *Under 35: The New Generation of American Poets* (Doubleday/Anchor). **CASSANDRA STARK** has appeared in local films and had some of her writing published before withdrawing into isolation two years ago. This will be her first public appearance in some time.

30 **DAVID TRINIDAD** is an L.A. poet who has recently moved to Brooklyn to study. His books include *Monday, Monday* (Cold Calm Press) and *November* (Hannan). He has had poems recently published in *The Paris Review* and in the anthology *American Poetry Since 1970: Up Late*. **R. WEIS** will have work in the anthology of writers from LaMama, entitled *Friday Evening at the Galleria, New Voices, New Works*. He has recently been collaborating with Paul Gehris on short films and will present one, *Sun of Manipulation*, at his reading.



LOU L.

THE POETRY PROJECT

ST. MARK'S CHURCH
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10003

SECOND AVE. & TENTH ST.
(212) 674-0910

DECEMBER

- 5 Open Reading
7 Kofi Natambu & Jimmy Santiago Baca
12 Frank reading: Joseph Donahue, Stephen Paul Martin, Nina Zivancevic, & Leonard Schwartz
14 Andrei Codrescu & Mira Teru Kurka
19 Richard Allen & Karen Pearlman
21 Janet Hamill & John Brandi

Lecture Series:

Sunday, December 11, 7pm. *Black and Latino artists in Downtown Manhattan* (see next page for participants and details).

Sunday, January 15, 7pm. *Estranged Convergences: the Work of Jan Groover*. A conversation with the artist and Ann Lauterbach (see next page for details).

JANUARY

- 1 NEW YEAR'S DAY MARATHON READING with over 100 poets & performers including Allen Ginsberg, Maureen Owen, Richard Foreman, Spaulding Gray, Richard Hell, Jackson Mac Low, Carmen Valle, Yoshiko Chuma, The Microscopic Sextet, Rudy Burckhardt, Kofi Natambu, Elaine Equi, Jerome Sala, Reno, Kenward Elmslie, and Larry Rivers & the 13th Street Band.
2 Open Reading
4 Daniel Krakauer, Joel Lewis, & Sal Salasin
9 Alison Stone & Barbara Henning
11 Susan Howe & Erica Hunt
16 Martine Bellen & Nancy McGuire Roche
18 Taylor Mead & Vicki Hudspith
23 Lydia Tomkiew & Cassandra Stark
25 John Cage
30 David Trinidad & R. Weis

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

WORKSHOPS

"Writing and Reading Writing" taught by Steve Levine, Tuesdays at 7 pm (October 18th through December 20th). Readings in all sorts of all forms of modern poetry from all periods.

STEVE LEVINE is a poet whose affiliation with The Poetry Project began in 1976.

"Bilingual Poetry Workshop" taught by Carmen Valle, Tuesdays at 7 pm (beginning Jan. 10th for 8 weeks). For writers who read and/or write in Spanish. Bilingual discussion. Focused on different kinds of Latin American poetry, from traditional rhyming forms to open forms, including works by Martí, Neruda, Vallejo, Pizarnik, Sabines, Villanueva. Discussion. Questions. Use of a journal to record development.

CARMEN VALLE is from Puerto Rico. She now lives in New York and participated in the Project's 1988 Symposium: "Poetry of Everyday Life." She is the author of three collections of poetry: Un poco de lo no dicho, Glenn Miller y varias vidas después, and De todo da la noche al que la tienta.

"Exercises and Experiments in Poetry and Prose," taught by Bernadette Mayer, Fridays at 7 pm (ongoing through May). Traditional forms, chance methods, other poets, dreaming, science writing, realism and surrealism, chaos and de-ramentation, repetition. The uses of journals. The translation of observation. Study of transitions. Long poems, experimental method, creations of new forms.

BERNADETTE MAYER is a former Director of The Poetry Project. Her books include Mutual Aid, Utopia, Midwinter Day, and Sonnets.

"Word!: Language, Signification, and Rhythm in New World Writing (Today)," taught by Kofi Natambu, Saturdays at 12 pm (ongoing through May). This class will concern itself with a theoretical and critical investigation of how vernacular and oral uses of language affect writing. Focus will be on modern and postmodern forms of poetry, fiction, and literary theory. Music, in a myriad of forms, will be featured as well as "sound-texts." SOME SOURCE-TEXTS: Jayne Cortez, Amiri Baraka, Ishmael Reed, Roland Barthes, Henry Dumas, Jacques Derrida, Zora Neale Hurston, Lorenzo Thomas, David Henderson, Victor Hernandez Cruz, Clarence Major, Ralph Ellison, Ntozake Shange, Bob Kaufman, Jessica Hagedorn, Stephen Henderson, and Sonia Sanchez.

KOFI NATAMBU is the editor of Solid Ground, a literary magazine of the arts, culture and politics and Nostalgia for the Present, an anthology of writings from Detroit. He is the author of a collection of poems, Intervals.

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

LECTURE SERIES

Sunday, December 11, 7 pm: *Black and Latino Artists in Downtown Manhattan: Past, Present, Future.* Miguel Algarín, Amiri Baraka, Steve Cannon (moderator), David Henderson, and Robbie McCauley, will relate the local pre-history of literary/performance "scenes," including the Poetry Project, Poets Co-op, and The Nuyorican Poets Cafe, to the current situation; and discuss historical Black settlements in the Manhattan, and public episodes and attitudes that have shaped the (in)visibility of artists of color.

MIGUEL ALGARIN is the director of the Nuyorican Poets Cafe and a Professor of English at Rutgers University. AMIRI BARAKA's *The Music*, a selection of poems, essays and plays was published by William Morrow, 1987. He is Chairman of the African Studies Program at SUNY, Stony Brook. STEVE CANNON, long-time resident of the Lower East Side, is a professor of literature at Medger Evers College in Brooklyn. DAVID HENDERSON is preparing a book on Reggae for publication in 1989. He is the author of a biography of Jimi Hendrix, and his most recent collection of poetry is *Low East*. ROBBIE McCAULEY has published work in *Catalyst* and *The Portable Lower East Side*. She has performed solo and in collaborations at Danspace, Dance Theater Workshop, P.S. 122, and Franklin Furnace.

Sunday, January 15, 7pm: *Estranged Convergences: The Work of Jan Groover.* A Conversation with Jan Groover and Ann Lauterbach. Jan Groover's photographs of arranged objects, landscapes, and formal geometric tableaux, investigate cubist space. The artist and poet/critic Ann Lauterbach will talk about visual strategies in Groover's work and its possible parallels in contemporary poetics. Slides of the artist's work will be shown.

JAN GROOVER's "New Color Work," at the Robert Miller Gallery, was her first exhibition since her retrospective at The Museum of Modern Art in 1987. Her photography has been seen in recent group exhibitions at the Hudson River Museum and MIT. She is on the faculty of SUNY, Purchase. ANN LAUTERBACH is the author of a collection of poems, *Before Recollection* (Princeton, 1987). She, artist Bruce Boice and Jan Groover collaborated on a book entitled *Greeks*.

SPECIAL EVENT

Sunday January 22, 3 pm. *A Benefit for the Tibet Fund* with readings by Maureen Owen, Jackson Mac Low, Armand Schwerner and others. Admission is by contribution of \$5.

COMMUNITY MEETING & ELECTION

The annual Poetry Project Community Meeting will be held Saturday December 10th at 2 pm in the parish hall. All are welcome. Admission FREE. (See page 20 for details on the election)

RECENT COLLECTIONS: *H.D.: Selected Poems* (New Directions; 198 pages, \$18.95); *The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams: Volume II, 1939-1962* (edited by Christopher MacGowan; New Directions; 553 pages, \$37); *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers: Volume I, 1920-1928* (edited by Tim Hunt; Stanford University Press; 521 pages, \$60).

The poet H.D., or Hilda Doolittle (1886-1961), left a Philadelphia suburb a few years before the First World War to become a brief part of literary history in Europe, a modernist alongside her literary promoter Ezra Pound, with whom she'd once had a schoolgirl fling. Fresh off the boat in London, she was tagged by Pound an "Imagiste." The tag stuck, though the auratic, hieratic priestess's voice of H.D.'s writing never quite harmonized with the less elevated strains of modernist poetic associates like Pound. Closer in spirit to H.D.'s passionate intensities ("somewhat fine-wrought," she termed her poetic persona in one verse, "fiery tempered, delicate, over-passionate steel") was D.H. Lawrence, with whom she shared a strong personal affinity. But where H.D. and Lawrence ultimately diverged was over the issue of "the man-pulse," that pseudo-force Lawrence worshiped and H.D. regarded as a mere "trick" employed by men to hoodwink and subdue women, and themselves.

Editor Louis Marta, in his introduction to the timely and useful *Selected Poems*, is surely correct in stressing H.D.'s isolation. If, as Martz suggests, Pound and Lawrence merely joined British poet-husband Richard Aldington in a general male failure to understand her, then it's equally true H.D. eventually made the most of her passionate autonomy in life and poetry. "At least I have the flowers of myself," she was proposing as early as the 1917 poem "Eurydice," "and my thoughts, no god / can take that."

In her mature poetry she first adopted the neo-Greek classic mask of Sappho, writing in a fragmentary, ecstatic, entranced voice caught up in the mystery and "fright of beauty," making poems as durable, enclosed and vibrant with implication as archaic carvings.

During years of personal anguish and despair after the War, a time of lonely, refining silence, her particularly female identity emerged with new and challenging clarity. "Is there none left," she asked in the 1924 poem "Cassandra," "can equal me / in ecstasy, desire?" A decade later, in a period of creative ebb and self-questioning over her bisexuality — "I had two lives separate," she summarized her case history in poetry — she underwent psychoanalytic treatment by Dr. Sigmund Freud, who reassured her she was a poet but told her she needed a man in her life to sustain her. "Angry with the old man / with his talk of the man-strength," H.D. responded with a vivid new burst of self-affirming, prophetic poetry ("It was he himself," she credited Freud in her poem of tribute to him, "who set me free to prophesy").

Announcing the now-celebrated (and in some cases only lately published) "lost" poems of the Thirties a redemptive return of the female principle to a spiritually distressed world, she did indeed take on the prophet's mantle in poetry, anticipating the

spirit of the current feminist movement by a good half century. (Martz notes that the present-day women's struggle for liberty can be seen as in some respects an extension of "the essential struggle that lies deep within her poetry.") These poems are well represented here, as are the visionary meditative "Trilogy" written during the Second World War in London, and that late, great, Blake-like mytho-Biblical prophetic sequences of "Hermetic Definitions" and "Helen in Egypt," summoning a "magic greater than the trial of arms." H.D.'s is an intriguing Cassandra's voice beckoning us back across the clutter and business of the Twentieth Century to primordial mysteries.

Among the youthful H.D.'s first admirers was a University of Pennsylvania medical school student named William Carlos Williams, who later recalled her in girlhood as possessing a "provocative indifference to rules and order," and an uneasy skittishness "found in wild animals at times." If it was that intuitive primal gift and uneasiness of H.D.'s which made her a poet, it was Williams' own eye for the vivid brilliance of nature manifesting itself in the human world that made *him* one. Much as has been made of the poet-doctor's initial vow to discover — and deliver — "no ideas but in things," the simple truth remains that it's the human understanding saturating all his mature writing which makes it so exceptional. This is made more clear than ever by *The Collected Poems*.

In these majestic poems, now painstakingly restored to original compositional states and attended by invaluable notes on text and biographical backdrop, that famous early vow can be seen for what it was: an expression in literary terms of an ingrained resistance to the abstract, the specious, everything that falsifies and exploits nature in persons and in the world. Its complement is an almost religious devotion to the actual shape of the moment, however joyous, painful, or plain.

*at the small end of an illness
there was a picture
probably Japanese
which filled my eye*

*an idiotic picture
except it was all I recognized
the wall lived for me in that picture
I clung to it as a fly*

("The World Contracted To A Recognizable Image")

All Williams' labor over the years to define the nature of his art by practicing it, his endless care and trouble over the fine points of the poem, now appear revealed in the solid beauty of his work's final coherence.

While contemporaries looked to pre-antiquity, to America's speech, or into their own souls for traces of the authentic, the notorious, self-professed "anti-modernist" Robinson Jeffers turned away from the human world altogether, assuming the eternal planet-consciousness of rocks, kelp and buzzards. His long-lined, doomy verse epistles against civilization were controversial in their day, but time, and a chronically combative, nest-fouling human race, have vindicated Jeffers as a cos-

mic philosopher, proving him less cranky than accurate in his dark forecasting of an encroaching "catastrophic time." His reply in its face is his defiant identification with the life force of nature that looms and soars in his poetry.

The developing poetic stages of that starkly grand cosmic view are now being laid bare in an ambitious, definitive four-volume standard edition inaugurated with *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers: Volume 1, 1920-1928*. The Stanford edition begun herein will present in its first three volumes all Jeffers' published poems chronologically, from 1920 through 1963, establishing what is projected by its editor as a "Jeffers canon," with a fourth volume reserved for "apprentice work" (1912-1919), uncompleted manuscript poems, and basic textual apparatus.

No mention is made of notes, and while it's true that over-annotating — the attempt to explicate through footnotes — can spoil the implication-potential of verse, it's also true that some detailed bio-history of the poems themselves might provide a useful flashlight for following the poet into all those dark cosmic spaces. Jeffers' poems — here moving from the early collection *Tamar*, which established his reputation in 1923, to *Cawdor* (1928) — are magnificent on their own, but for sixty dollars, the buyer deserves all the illumination he or she can get.

Still, no review of such poetry can end on a quibble. In this first volume, Jeffers' enduring themes of man's doom and nature's power emerge in poems that are sentinels for the century: "Phenomena," "Shine, Perishing Republic," "Continent's End," "Point Joe," "Hurt Hawks." As America plunged into the affluence of the Jazz Age — "While this America settles in the mould of its vulgarity, heavily thickening to empire" — Jeffers stared across history into the geological death of the continent, a lone voice intoning natural truths against the thin hopefulness of Progress.

*The long migrations meet across you and it is nothing to
you, you have forgotten us, mother.
You were much younger when we crawled out of the
womb and lay in the sun's eye on the tideline.*

*It was long and long ago; we have grown proud since then
and you have grown bitter; life retains
Your mobile soft unquiet strength; and envies hardness,
the insolent quietness of stone.*

*The tides are in our veins, we still mirror the stars, life
is your child, but there is in me
Older and harder than life and more impartial, the eye
that watched before there was an ocean.*

("Continent's End")

— Tom Clark

"HOW YOU SEE YOURSELF IS MY POLITICS" A
Certain Slant of Sunlight, Ted Berrigan; O Books, 1988. 116
pages, \$9.

Written on 4 1/2-by-7-inch cards, these poems represent a pivotal year in the life of Ted Berrigan. A year which ended six months before he died. A year of vicious bouts with other poets. A year whose creative refuge was found in these ever-present cards on the periphery (read: poet's center) of some very crashing crazy sad days. That the year's days also burgeoned with love, warmth and humor is evident in this, his last book. These poems are written with power from every port in the poet's wide-ranging psyche, "call me Berrigan / Every day when the sun comes up / I live in the City of New York."

Never one to impose restrictions, Berrigan the poet kept every option open always. Thus there are surprises at each turn. Verlaine and Rimbaud rise on beef barley fumes. Ted's dying mother is envisioned in the prime of her life after he sees a young woman with a 1940s' hairdo on St. Mark's Place. The "real" here is forever suggesting some potential there in this book. The language bubbles airily now, and then clangs off the mat like 400 iron pounds later.

Minuet

the bear eats honey

*between the harbored sighs
inside my heart*

*where you were
no longer exists*

blank bitch

You'll find no political posturing here. These poems insist on a world composed of personal faces and personal voices. Portraits pop up frequently. Sometimes people are described, sometimes evoked via their idioms, sometimes they're addressed and sometimes they address. The fact that he could speak in so many people's voices testifies to his ability to penetrate the psyches of others. Ted got close.

*Distance is like Treason. Something
There is that doesn't love a wall: I
am that Something.*

The lyric love poems are delicious. The comic poems are hilarious, from the slapping of knees to dry sherry-muffled chuckles. Sometimes exuding a fine patriarchal warmth, sometimes bellicose as a fishless sea lion, these poems have it all.

A long list of collaborators kicked in a word here, a line or a drawing there. Alice Notley put the posthumous manuscript together. At times her sequences are masterful, with some poems springing their neighbors' meanings into the crystal clear.

This book continues to grow on me. For all the other hands and voices involved there's an uncanny air of individual urgency that emerges more with each reading. The personal tallying is Lear-like; catalogues of friends, of enemies, childhood memories, of a neighborhood and a family, of his love of Alice — of his life, finally. I'll still be reading this book when I'm old and saying goodbye. Its humanity is sage, affirming that, "the gods are not burning us just to keep warm."

* *

— James Ruggia

ROOM WITH VIEW. *Housing, Preservation, & Development*, Tom Savage; Cheap Review Press (Box 926 Village Sta., New York, NY 10014-0926). 85 pages, \$4.50.

Tom Savage washes his dirty linen in public. Much of it involves his landlord, who once tried to burn down his building. Some of his bosses he hasn't liked either. He wonders whether a trip to the St. Mark's Baths is worth dying for.

Savage is a little impolite, which at one point he apologizes for.

ON HURT

*If, as you say, talk is cheap
why are you so easily offended
when I say something
which, out of my own referrent conditionings,
rubs some of your referrant conditionings
the wrong way? Since the roots
of these initiations and their responses vary
why assume offense when none was intended?
Better to let talk be cheap if it offends you
and let it lie in the trashcan
with last month's corpses of cut flowers.
Certainly, had I intended to hurt you,
I would have played some malevolent game;
not made an inappropriate remark.
Forgive then, as you will soon forget
and concentrate your responses of fear of slight
against those who truly intend to hurt you.*

Do you hear the euphony of his mind? It's almost *scriptural*. Savage follows the muse of Simplicity farther than most of us have courage to.

And simplicity leads to surprise.

REAPPORTIONED ORDER

*When men were men and women were women, alleycats
were alleycats and trees were trees.
Since women have become men and men have become
women,
Alleycats have become trees. Trees made the switch, too.
This has upset several earthquake faults
And depressed everyone living on Charles Street, New York
City*

*Where tree shit is overflowing the curbs
And cat-leaves have collapsed several fire-escapes
Onto the heads of four dead drunk Santas, out of uniform
and under the table
As streets have become floors and vice versa.*

Listen, everyone! Tom is saying, "A poem is not a music box; you don't have to carve the gears. A poem is a walk. You go straight for a mile, then you make *one left turn*."

OPHTHALMOLOGY GULCH

*A fool sees only today.
Sloth sees only tomorrow.
Death sees only yesterday.
Children see only mornings.
Adults see only minutes.
Fame sees only an hour.
Buddha sees only a world-cycle.*

Ted Berrigan is grinning in Paradise at Savage.

— Sparrow

* *

M's DREAM

*Sitting alone in a darkening room
May be a metaphor for some
Depressing journey into shadow
But the quiet (perhaps a little
Saxophone music and a thought
Or two) is a lot better than being
Dead. Absence of pain may not
Be pleasure, yet there are many
Absences greatly to be wished
Like absence of regret, for instance
Or the many endings of desire.*

*A yellow window in a blue wall
Under a grey opalescent sky
The pattern of weathering on an asphalt-shingled roof
The curtains and plants of someone's home
The cleansers and brushes, mops and brooms
That keep life clean if only we use them
A weekly extravagance of optimism.*

*It is a world of details, objects
That mean something in the hodge-podge
Of the mind, what we bump into and when
Just things, an open window, a bright
Stone, a discarded piece of paper.*

— Dick Gallup

KOH PHA NGAN

Pinned eyes in the breeze
Island nod with lapping brine
Coconut palms shed a shadow
land on the afternoon
Through breeze is the sound
of sliding sand in a coffin
I am beautifully alone
and my heart is opaque
but very clear to me
Voices in German and motorbikes
and the sound that's my own —
of the breathy voice I hear
from the woman who knows
the words I want to use

0025 hrs.

Hibiscus on my knee
A long way between legs
and the moon wants to be
used like a G-string

I am halfway around the block
on old Pha Ngan and I mean
blazing a trail alone in
wet boulder sculpture and
dark mush mulch jungle steeps
A day later that and 13 baht
get me exactly one pack
of Krong Thip and a cloud of
smoke out my ass
spells your name

AKHA

Tribe on dusty hill
Beauty and ageing and
the constant attendance
of death, sex for the childless
tabooed to the jungle
Ka-lump, ka-lump
rice threshed, grass combed
in sheaves for broomlife
like black embroidered
skirts shook free
of gray, death gray dust
Sweet teacher from the South
face so Malaysian, perfumed over
like some crazy flower nearby
hands covering face and eyes
in shy unknown English
Tell me how to say
"Gula-LOOMA" in my own
language, how to smell
your perfume in my heart.

-- John Godfrey

Thanks to the ancestors
of my host that this January
night under this bamboo shed
floor the pigshit will freeze

— John Godfrey

* * *

Grand Central

From here we watch
as they begin their travel,
to some suburb
severed from the city
by more than rail and rush hour,
recalling its roots
with "Countryside Mall"
and "River Run Parkway"

They can't see
their own departure
from this cathedral
of commuting—
Cinerama Kodak slide
shining in the East,
changing with the seasons—
last month the black-and-white art deco
of the killer whales
in Florida waters,
sunny and blue—
this month the Adirondack lake's
mirror of fall foliage,
sunny and gold

We have our vista
from sun-soaked catwalks
in ten-flight-high
dirty double panes
and a smoky floor
leaking light bounced
from the traffic's chrome,
tipping our balance
toward the chandeliers
dotty with moon bulbs

Above,
shine constellations inside-out
themselves a floor beneath the skylights
curtained by city soot

Below,
trains do slow U-turns
and head back out
while silently
I stand my lover
in the Oyster Bar's alcove,
take my place
across the vault
and whisper
into the arch
of Gustavino tiles.

— M. LaBare

QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer the questions below and send them to The Poetry Project (you may want to use your own paper for purposes of volubility). As per last season's questionnaire, understand that we may print your answers in future issues.

1) How far along do you think you are in your career?

2) How would you describe your first poetic thought/insight/inspiration and where and when did you have it?

3) What (or who) inspired you to begin writing poetry?

4) Do you think there is a difference between "male" poetry and "female" poetry? And if so, of course, what is it?

5) What is the proper attire for poets?

6) What part does a poet's diet play in his/her work? Do you have any particular eating habits before or during writing?

7) How has the prevalence of computers/word processors changed poetry?

8) How do you feel about using autobiography/"true events" in your work?

9) Write in your own question and then reply _____

Signature _____

Books Received

Return of the World, Todd Baron; O Books (5729 Clover Dr., Oakland, CA 94618), 1988. \$6.50.

Nice To See You, Homage to Ted Berrigan, Edited and with an introduction by Anne Waldman; Coffee House Press, Minneapolis. 208 pages. \$14.95 paper, \$24.95 cloth.

Candles Burn in Memory Town (Poems from Both Sides of the Wall), edited by Janine Pommy Vega; Segue Books (303 E. 8th St., NYC 10009). 108 pages. \$6. Anthology published "as a result of a poetry workshop in Sing Sing . . ."

Will She Understand? Fielding Dawson; Black Sparrow, 1988. 154 pages. \$20 cloth, \$10 paper. New short stories.

The Durrell-Miller Letters, 1935-80. Edited by Ian S. MacNiven. New Directions, 1988. 480 pages. \$26.95 cloth.

Disco Frito, Richard Elman; Gibbs Smith, 1988. 224 pages. \$15.95 cloth. Fictional dispatches from revolutionary Nicaragua.

William Everson, the Life of Brother Antoninus, Lee Bartlett; New Directions, 1988. 272 pages. \$25.95 cloth.

Gay & Lesbian Poetry in Our Time, edited by Carl Morse and Joan Larkin; St. Martin's Press, 1988. 399 pages. \$29.95 cloth.

Smile, Owen Hill; Words & Pictures (1250 57th Ave., Oakland, CA 94621), 1988. The book's epigraph: "Excuse bad writing, I have handcuffs on." —Billy The Kid.

Red Shift, P. Inman; Roof Books (300 The Bowery, NYC 10012), 1988. 60 pages. \$6 paper.

Ode to Walt Whitman & Other Poems, Federico García Lorca; City Lights, 1988. 82 pages, \$6.95 paper. New translation by Carlos Bauer.

Dissuasion Crowds the Slow Worker, Lori Lubeski; O Books, 1988.

The Name Is Dillinger, Todd Moore; Kangaroo Court Publishing (1505 State St., Erie, PA 16503). The first of a projected 21-volume series, which is "rated R for strong language, sex and violence." The volumes are \$5.95 each.

A Tree Within, Octavio Paz. Translated by Eliot Weinberger; New Directions, 1988. 162 pages. \$8.95 paper.

Stepping Out of the Plane Under the Protection of the Army, Sal Salasin; Another Chicago Press, 1988. 88 pages. \$9.50 paper.

Way, Leslie Scalapino; North Point Press, (850 Talbot Ave., Berkeley, CA 94706). 1988. 148 pages. \$12 paper.

Sutured Words. Contemporary poetry about medicine. Edited by Jon Mukand; Aviva Press (PO Box 1357, Brookline, MA 02146). 396 pages. Priceless.

Drunk on a Glacier, Talking to Flies, Janine Pommy Vega; Tooth of Time Books (634 E. Garcia, Santa Fe, NM 87501), 1988. 84 pages. \$6 paper.

Sissie, John A. Williams; Thunder's Mouth Press (93-99 Greene St., NYC 10012). 1988 reprint of his 1963 novel. 277 pages. \$9.95 paper.

Cultural Affairs in Boston, Poetry & Prose 1956-1985, John Wieners; Black Sparrow, 1988. 200 pages. \$9 paper, \$20 cloth.

HO HO

for Joel

I have broken
the small bounds
of this existence and
am travelling south

on route 90. It
is approximately
midnight, surrogate
earth time, and you

who could, can, and
will never take anything
seriously will die
as dumb as ever

while I alone in
state celestial shoot
forward at designed rate,
speed at last unimpeded.

-- Robert Creeley

COMMUNITY MEETING & ELECTION

The annual Poetry Project COMMUNITY MEETING will be held **Saturday December 10th at 2 pm** in the parish hall. All are welcome. Admission FREE.

Simultaneous with the Community Meeting (from 2-4 pm) will be the election of a community member to the Board of Directors of The Poetry Project, Ltd. A list of the candidates for this position is available at the Poetry Project office. Current members of The Poetry Project, writers who have participated in Project events and all those who have demonstrated an on-going interest in The Poetry Project are eligible to vote in the election. The election is conducted by written ballot.

7th Street & Ave. A
(On Seeing Miky Piñero's Body)

What the hell are you
doing in there,
your lips sewn,
your eyelids shut
for

ever,
What do you think you're doing
hidden in that casket;
come out, come on out
and let's play,
what's a guy to do
without you, without CienFuegos
without his main mellow man?
Who's a guy to play with?
make words with,
got to get you back!
How come you let me go,
didn't I love you
with right "e"?

not the one for empty,
not the one for enough
but the one for eternally,
like I'm eternally yours,
you eternally mine,
but now, now you can't
come play with me
in Tompkins Square Park,
and I can't get mad at you,
figure that one out!

Who am I going to be mad at?
Damn you take a lot of liberties
leaving me in Loaisaida
with all my planets atwirl,
silly like a spinning child,
twirling and spinning,
swirling and straining,
and crying too,
like the day I was chasing you
in Tompkins Square Park
to make you stop saying
what you were saying about me,
I don't remember now

what it was you were saying,
but I skinned my knee
trying to catch up to you
and what would I've done had
I caught up to you
except shake you and hug you
and jump into our usual jump rope,
just you, me and Lucky playing,
twirling the rope faster and faster
till we could shout at him
you're out,

at which point Lucky would say,
"it be's that way sometime and,
even after I die it'll be that way all time."

-- Miguel Algarín

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M.F.A. Program in Writing & Poetics

Anne Waldman (*Director*),
Year-round faculty: Bobbie Louise
Hawkins, Jack Collom, Diane diPrima,
Allen Ginsberg (Spring semester 1990
residency) Fielding Dawson, and Anselm
Hollo. The program consists of two
summer sessions, two resident academic
semesters, and a final non-resident term
to complete one's manuscript.
Application deadline for students
entering Summer 1989 is April 1, 1988.

B.A. Program in Writing & Poetics

Susan Edwards (*Director*) with year-
round faculty Bobbie Louise Hawkins,
Jack Collom, Mary Kean, & guest faculty.

1989 Summer Writing Program

(July 3-30, 1989). A month-long program
featuring a contemplative practice week,
a New Forms Conference, and perfor-
mance work. Four week faculty
residencies include: Allen Ginsberg,
Anne Waldman, Bobbie Louise Hawkins,
and Diane di Prima. Other guest faculty
scheduled for 1989 are Alice Notley,
Nathaniel Tarn, Clark Coolidge,
Bernadette Mayer, Marianne Faithfull,
Jim Carroll, William S. Burroughs, Jack
Collom, and others.

Apply early— program enrollments are limited.

Magazines Received

The Americas Review, Vol. 15, nos. 3 & 4: Chicana Creativity and Criticism: Charting New Frontiers in American Literature. (Arte Publico Press, Univ. of Houston, Univ. Park, Houston, TX 77004). \$5.

Conjunctions 12, Bi-annual volumes of new writing. (published by Collier Books, Macmillan). \$9.95. Includes interview with John Hawkes, fiction by Harry Matthews, and poetry by Armand Schwerner and Ron Silliman.

Hanging Loose, #53 (231 Wyckoff St., Brooklyn, NY 11217) \$3.50. Includes Kimiko Hahn, Murat Nemet-Nejat, and Sal Salasin.

The Iowa Review, Volume 18, no. 1, 1988 (308 EPB, Univ. of Iowa, Iowa City, IA 52242). \$6.95.

Kalliope, a journal of women's art, Vol. 10, no. 3 (Mary Sue Koepfel, Ed., FCCJ South Campus, 11901 Beach Blvd, Jacksonville, FL 32216) \$3.50. "Men Portray Women" issue.

The Ledge, Vol. 1 #3, October 1988 (64-65 Cooper Ave., Glendale, NY 11385) \$2.50. Includes Jim Brodey and excerpts from Frank O'Hara as compiled by Bernadette Mayer.

Talisman, number 1, Fall 1988 (Box 1117, Hoboken, NJ 07030) \$5. Alice Notley issue: interview, poetry, and prose. Many other contributors as well.

This Month in Maine Literature, October 1988 (Maine Writers & Publishers Alliance, 19D Mason St., Brunswick, ME 04011). Just what the title says and incredibly thorough.

Unmuzzled OX, 26, 1989[!] (105 Hudson St., NYC 10013). \$2. Includes Paul Bowles, Lynn Tillman, Ted Joans, Anne Waldman, and Allen Ginsberg.

Myopia

When they
the two boys dragged danny posner
naked out of the cabin
onto and past the gravel walkway
to a grassy area
so that the three girls
walking along the dirt road
from the lake
wrapped in towels
their bathing suits and black hair
still dripping
could see him
naked on the grass
as he lay there crying
looking for his eyeglasses
in the damp grass

— Robert Margolis

Announcements

PANIC*DJ! returns to LaMama, Thursday-Saturday, December 1-3 at 10pm. Bob Holman's performance also features his Main Motor Scooter, musician Vito Ricci; Jam Master Jon on oshack, the first chair bongoist of the Sandafarian Philharmonic; and introducing Pasta Mon (as Himself). Box office 475-7710; TicketMaster 307-7171. Free "PANIC!" buttons to first 5,000 at each performance. BYOB. LaMama is at 74A E. 4th Street.

For a poetry reading series, "Poets in the Bars," we would appreciate hearing from anyone with information, anecdotes, reminiscences, or memorabilia concerning bars where poets have written, given readings, and held court. Contact: Bob Holman, Pedro Pietri, 17 White St., NYC 10013.

The Plowman (Tony Scavetta Box 297 Brooklin, Ontario, Canada L0B 1C0) is "requesting poetry submissions from all walks of life."

The Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities announces a deadline of February 6, 1989 for proposals for its Contemporary Arts funding programs - "Art Exchange", which provides funds for non-Mass.-resident artists to present completed works in that state, and for Mass. artists to present works outside the state. Open to all artistic disciplines. For full information and project discussion, call the Contemporary Arts staff at (617) 727-3668.

The two winners (the two earliest answers) of last issue's From Bad to Verse puzzle go to Jane E. House and Bernadette Mayer, both of New York City. Bernadette's note went as follows: "The torrential caveats of our friable enclosures made the variable foot seem like a great release."

November

And it's night
and the straight
and curved reflections
of a rolling headlight
spin the world
in the whisper of the river.
From the bridge
heavy and light bodies
fall at the same rate.
Winter mixes leaves
swept skyward
with snow
coming down,
and all you see
when you walk on water
are the patterns formed
by interfering waves.

— M. LaBare

Joel Oppenheimer 1930 - 1988

I remember reading *The Love Bit and Other Poems* (Totem/Corinth, 1962) and thinking the poet a straightforward insightful man. Then not much later he was my boss at the outset of The Poetry Project, 1966, and was those things. He carried the Black Mountain lineage, he had been a printer, a practical man. Precise and modest. He kept to the lower case "i". He was a little embarrassed to be heading up such an official project. He preferred doing business at his apartment, or at the Lion's Head, a frequent hangout for Village Voice reporters (the Voice offices were just next door at that time on Christopher Street) with whom he shared an affinity. He was a baseball aficionado, he enjoyed the company of men in that place: smoke n' news. He was solicitous, almost motherly towards me, in the best Jewish sense. That I was eating enough, sleeping enough, doing my own poems. He was also a domestic man, his heart was in the hearth: a woman and a family. He had five sons from several marriages. He brought a sense of community to the job. He was neither opportunistic nor autocratic. He respected the individual artist, and respected the difficulties of just getting through a day at a time. It's in his work. I remember fondly our delight at being able to be doing something as a "poetry project", it seemed a contradiction at the time, more organized than a series at a bar or a cafe. We didn't really know what we were getting into, what "it", the project, was getting into, or would evolve to. We went out and spent a wad of bills at Eli Wilentz's Eighth Street Book Shop for the "lending library" which quickly ended up on personal bookshelves. The poets were needy, the Project started to fill that need. There was a sense of unpretention, always, with Joel, as he talked about the exigencies of "the poem" in his workshop. He made it sound simple, an honest day's work.

— Anne Waldman

Barbara A. Holland

July 12, 1925 - September 21, 1988

Barbara Holland died on September 21st, the last day of summer, at St. Vincent's Hospital, where she was recovering from a stroke. She was 63. Barbara was published in many magazines and anthologies, including *River Styx*, *Little Caesar*, *Contact II*, *Antioch Review*, etc. Some of her books were *Crisis of Rejuvenation*, *Autumn Numbers*, *Burrs*, and *Running Backwards*. She read her work at every conceivable kind of space, in New York City, and all over the mid-Eastern states. She worked with the group Women On Mars, and the Bill Bixon and Todd Capp jazz groups. She was the recipient of a Caps fellowship in 1974 and a MacDowell resident fellowship in 1976.

— Hal Sirowitz

Aphorism On Writing

Listen for the sound of the empty glass
that rings with its own music

Voices of children
dreaming in glass rooms

-- Robert Margolis

THE POETRY PROJECT WOULD LIKE TO THANK
THE FOLLOWING:

FOR RECENT GIFTS:

The Kulchur Foundation, The New York State Council on the Arts, and The New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

NEW AND RECENTLY RENEWED MEMBERS:

B. Ilene Adler, Barbara Barg, Wayne Berke, Nicholas Borg David Canu, Dylan Fahey, Shazzi Felstein, Daniel Garrett Christine Graff, Arleen Goldberg, Stanton Hager, Janine Kijer, Sharon Krinsky, Joel Lewis, Seena Liff, Sharon Mesmer, Ann Pellegrim, John P. Richardson, Jack Rojas, Carmine Scarpa, Mady Schutzman, Holly Sims, Margaret Small, Miriam Solan, Johnny Stanton, Elaine Teitcher, Linda Tsakonas, Gena Vadestienne, Josephine Wilson, Ya-roo Yang, Don Yorty, Nina Zivancevic.

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Susie Decapite, Roger Ely, Ellen Carter, Phil Good, Laurie Harris, Janice Johnson, Teresa Keefe, Greg Masters, Bernadette Mayer, Marnie Grant, Lynn McGee, Elinor Nauen, Betsey Osborne, Jill Rappaport, Sal Salasin, Lauren Rowland, Steve Smith, Sparrow, Vicki Stanbury, Amanda Uprichard, Max Warsh, Sophie Warsh, Nina Zivancevic

The cover and calendar drawings for this issue are by Lori Landes. Layout by Jean Holabird.

*

*

LOCOMOTION

Stretch as far as you can
outside a warehouse
on Greenwich Street
 juggler's hands too small for
the balls
almost run over
when he went to fetch one
the man on the corner stood there clapping
children screamed, released from school
in one moving mass: everyone in love
recognizes steam
from the ground
imitating another image of a cloud
parking in a very dark garage your car
will be safe: protecting the gutter's
sewer, lost jewel,
empty street.

— Cheryl Fish

I have a granddaughter who is two years and two months old. She uses the telephone nearly every day, she turns the knobs of the radio set, somewhat at random, and, for her, all this is just as natural as playing with her blocks and dolls. I would not for anything lag behind my grandchild, so I am doing my best to give up seeing any distinction between what used to be called natural and what used to be called artificial....

--Paul Valery (1937)

THE POETRY PROJECT NEWSLETTER IS MAILED TO MEMBERS OF THE POETRY PROJECT AND TO CONTRIBUTORS (OF \$20 OR MORE).

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No unsolicited materials will 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 Lee Ann Brown 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:

\$50 \$75 \$100 \$200 \$500 \$1000

No, I do not wish to join at this time but here is my tax-deductible contribution of \$_____.

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Choice of The World Record, or One Thousand Avant-Garde Plays by Kenneth

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\$500 FREE admission for a year for yourself and two others to all Poetry Project events INCLUDING The 1989 Symposium; and grateful public acknowledgement.

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