

THE POETRY PROJECT

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Pamela Janne Wardick

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Jazz gently drifted out of The Knitting Factory, bopped up and down over the heads of the 300-plus people waiting in the sharp winter cold to make the scene. The scene, a timely and dramatic jazz reading of Jack Kerouac's *Mexico City Blues*, orchestrated by impresario Vincent Katz. This event stirred many a memory and fantasy of "an afternoon jam session on Sunday". By 3:00 pm as performances began, The Knitting Factory had a packed house and by 5, fans outside were calling for a second session, which was quickly organized and performed by the 32 poets and 12 musicians. This jam session was a catalyst for artistic euphoria unseen since the '50s, as each performer read selections from the 242 choruses which comprise the text of *Mexico City Blues*.

Readers included: Allen Ginsberg, Tom Savage, Lita Hornick, Susie Timmons, Vicki Hudspith, Charles Bernstein, Elio Schneeman, Bob Rosenthal, Simon Pettet, Barbara Barg, Lee Ann Brown, Steven Taylor, Jeff Wright, Maggie Dubris, Lewis Warsh, Gerard Malanga, David Trinidad, Rochelle Kraut, Judith Malina, Hanon Reznikov, Nina Zivancevic, Eileen Myles (also acting as co-MC), Bob Holman, Jerome Rothenberg, Michael Scholnick, Richard Meyers, Vincent Katz, lil Ti Pousse. The musicians included Charlie Morrow, Samir Safwat, Mark Ettinger, and Pat Hall. Their instruments, also interesting and varied: piano, guitar, soprano, tenor, and alto sax, xylophone and other percussion, trombone, synthesizer, conch, bells, and horn. There was a beautiful backdrop by artist Wander Clifton. The Newsletter sent performer/roving reporter Vicki Hudspith into the crowd for some of the participant/spectator responses to this major literary event:

VH: Charles Bernstein, why are you here?

CB (in sunglasses): We just want to pay tribute to Jack, man.

Eileen Myles: I never really thought I particularly liked this poem, but I think it's good to have special events for poets.

Elio Schneeman: Well, uh, why is anyone here, why are the gargling monsoons tremulous? (That's really bop, man.)

Vincent Katz: Forgive me, forgive me for not answering your eyes.

Barbara Barg: Cuz I don't have an apartment.

Susie Timmons: It's my career comeback.

Maggie Dubris: I went to a pawnshop in Lowell once. I also stopped at the tourist bureau where they sent me to Kerouac's grave where I was going to chip off a piece but the graveyard was closed.

Lita Hornick: I'm here to read a few of Kerouac's great choruses from *Mexico City Blues*. I love it! The rhythms are like nothing else.

Allen Ginsberg: Of course there's a vast nostalgia of hearing

the whole of the great seminal classic of poetry, *Mexico City Blues*. Location's just right. Near the Bowery on Houston Street where Kerouac hung around... [and on the subject of Kerouac's recordings of his poems]...If you listen carefully you'll find that the enunciation is brilliant. His model was Frank Sinatra, and Kerouac's student in that sense was Dylan, who learned poetry from *Mexico City Blues*.

Gerard Malanga: Why are you here? That's a good question. I should be home working, but this is my social life right now.

Marc Nasdor: It's 35 degrees outside, figured it was as good a place as any to come in out of the cold and hear some poetry.

Bob Holman: On the record, Vicki, what are you doing here anyway?

VH: Someone handed me a microphone stuck on the end of an emery board.

BH: Would you file my tongue please?

VH: This sounds like fun, I'll file your tongue! [This was not part of Ms. Hudspith's assignment. - Ed.]

Michael Scholnick: I'm one of the scheduled readers, Vicki.

VH: That's cool.

MS: And I love Jack Kerouac.

Richard Hell Meyers: I'm here to remember Robert Frost.

Tom Savage: I'm here because this is my favorite book of Jack Kerouac's and this is the first time I've heard it referred to and it's the first time in my lifetime I've had a chance to read with jazz, which is a magnificent thing. I grew up with believing as I do in the setting of words to music and I was curious to see how it would work. My one suggestion for future events of this kind would be to rehearse.

Rochelle Kraut: I'm here because I like Kerouac's work and Vincent asked me if I'd read and also suggested that I sing. It was interesting to try to do with musicians that I'd never heard before, but I gave it a go! It made me see a lot of possibilities for something that could be done with a group of people working with some musicians. I'm enjoying it!

Susan Leites: It was just what I wanted to hear on a Sunday afternoon. I loved the musicians improvising with each other and the poets. It let us hear the music in the poems in a new way.

VH: You were an Innocent Bystander here today...

IB: I was?

Jack Kerouac: I want to be considered a jazz poet blowing a long blues in an afternoon jam session on Sunday. I take 242 choruses; my ideas vary and sometimes roll from chorus to chorus or from halfway through a chorus to halfway into the next.

— Vicki Hudspith

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Two Minutes for Robert Duncan

It's funny to have to be brief about Robert Duncan, since there is nothing brief about his work or my responses to it.

There seems no limit to the breadth and scope Duncan envisioned as a poet's project. Because his endeavor so overwhelms any of the traditional ways we have of defining poetic work — as, say, lyric poems or critical essays — he continually provoked a re-examination of the smallness of scale that characterizes the conception of poetry of many of his more mainstream contemporaries. His research and scholarly preoccupations, his insistence that linguistics and the Dark, Saussure & gnosticism, are sources of the poetic remain an important alternative to residual anti-intellectualism and emotion-fetishizing of much contemporary verse. The fact that Duncan's poetry remained controversial because it was thought to be too intellectual or not plain-spoken enough has given encouragement to at least two subsequent generations of poets, who have taken off on his "permissions" while interpreting them in wildly different ways.

For me, the heterodox range of Duncan's sources has had impact even beyond any of his specific enthusiasms. Anyone who has visited his house can attest to the sheer exuberant fantasy and marvelous humor of Duncan and Jess's transformations of these "sources" into a *home* as rich with whimsy as accumulated knowledge. Duncan inspires one not to accept the given narrative of cultural history but to look to a multiplicity of hidden and suppressed and vilified sources for myth-shattering revelations about the past and present. This insistence that poetic material is to be found not only, or even primarily, in the hallowed texts of Literature but also in those sources that are without authority is a foundation of his consistently anti-authoritarian, liberatory politics and poetics. It would be ironic if his own explorations and wanderings were sanctified into a new curriculum of required study.

The first time I met Robert Duncan, after a performance I did in San Francisco in the mid-70s, he handed me a poem he had written while I was reading and in response to my work. I've often thought about the generosity of the gesture of entrusting me with his only copy of this poem, which went so much beyond any friendly words he might have said at the time.

Here is something of what he wrote in the poem:

*She appeared in a shift
waiting for shifters. From one sentence to the other
a world is declared necessary. Time
has to count to be counted. In phrases.
In phase. In consequences. In place.
In this place I is an event without a hat.
I meanwhile mean my own hat.
What I does is natural
in a sentence referring to me me occurs.*

Duncan's last book, *In the Dark*, will always be associated for many of us with the news of his death. Thinking about that

marvelously evocative title — suggesting both the terrors of the unknown and the grace of fallibility — I kept hearing Lil Green singing her bluesy "Romancing in the Dark", a sound transported from almost fifty years ago, that seemed to meet this occasion with full force. "In the dark, it's just you and I / Not a sound, it's not one sigh / just the beat of my poor heart / in the dark. / Now in the dark I get such a thrill / when he presses his fingertips upon my lips / and he begs me to please keep still / in the dark. / But soon / this dance will be ended / and you all is going to be missed... / Just let them dance / we're going to find romance / in the dark."

— Charles Bernstein

(Delivered at the memorial tribute to Robert Duncan, held on October 9, 1988, at The Poetry Project)

FOR JULIAN'S

for Jed

And so to Julian's, last of the goodtime poolrooms
Move in a cloud of smoke to the only unclaimed green
space
in New York It's in a corner and there's no light,
just happy to be here, gentlemen

But look at these balls

They're not the same size, the four-ball looks
oval and the one-ball —
the one-ball isn't a ball at all, it's a grapefruit

All right. All right, I can play with a grapefruit
if I have to, delicate little slices so the cue
doesn't penetrate and the pulp doesn't spill
I can play the grapefruit off the Chinese eggplant
and then come back for the duck egg in the side
and leave the iceberg lettuce for the break shot
That's what I can do

I love the blue chalk build-up on my palm
the click of the balls, the juicy bounce
of the grapefruit on the rail

This is the last available table at Julian's
and I don't care if the balls are bricks

— Robert Hershon

That is rather different but

it is connected with this

-- Bruce Andrews

NEW POETRY: IBERIAN ROOTS: *Selected Poems of Salvador Espriu* (translated by Magda Bogin); Norton, 170 pages, \$15.95. *Late and Posthumous Poems: 1968-1974*, Pablo Neruda (translated by Ben Belitt, introduction by Manuel Durán); Grove Press, 239 pages, \$10.95. *Rhythm, Content & Flavor*, Victor Hernandez Cruz; Arte Publico Press (Univ. of Houston, 4800 Calhoun, 2-L, Houston, TX 77204), 172 pages. \$8.

A young lawyer and successful writer of novels and stories, with six fiction books to his credit by the time of the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, Salvador Espriu observed the revolutionary upheaval in Barcelona, the bombardment, assassinations, persecution, deaths of friends and family. "All I know," he would write years after this prolonged, irreversible chain of shocks, "is that / blood I did not shed / has wrecked the world."

The work of this greatest of modern Catalan poets, now appearing in the *Selected Poems of Salvador Espriu*, has not taken this long to reach English by accident. The poet himself, who died in 1985, did little to press his poems upon the world, partly out of necessity.

"The strange time entered me / in jails of silence." Following Franco's victory, Espriu's beloved Catalan language was officially proscribed, forbidden in schools, books, newspapers, magazines and even public conversations, making mere utterance into an act of defiance. When the ban was lifted, in 1946, Espriu ended a period of mute witness and re-emerged as a writer, but one transformed, having now abandoned his stories and "turned" — his translator says in her preface — "to poetry almost as a monk to prayer."

The poems incorporated a new tragic-elegiac vision, memorializing "my dead moving off / one by one down long / rows of silence," marking with fatalistic sadness "the closed dance of everyone" left among the living, yet also keeping up the small flame of a redemptive dream, the lingering "whole yearning / for salvation" of his native country. "When someone asks / What keeps you / in this harsh, arid, / blood soaked land? / Surely it is not / the best land you could find," he wrote in one poem, "We answer simply, / in our dream it is."

He managed to maintain a low-profile legal career, escaping, in physical terms at least, the Falangist police reprisals suffered by many of his fellow Catalan patriots. His own long trials were largely internalized, his poetry becoming his clandestine shelter and refuge from the terror around him.

In the covert coded language of his poems, his own generation of young Spaniards became lost souls, people of the "Golah" (Hebrew term for the diaspora) while the wounded motherland, Spain herself, became "Sephad" (again a Hebraic name, recalling the sufferings of an earlier exodus, that of the Sephardim in the fifteenth century). And the central mythic ground of his poetry was also a place half real, half symbolic — the tiny fishing village of Arenys, just up the coast from Barcelona, where the poet's parents were born, where he spent his childhood (and now lies buried). This ancestral spiritual home, functioning in his poetry as what the Greeks called

temenos, or sacred precinct, is given the anagrammatic name "Sinera"; its spare landscape of sea, sky, rock, hill and vine contribute the source-images of his writing.

Mined, shaped and polished from the stark, dramatic monosyllables of the Catalan tongue — that mysterious "gold" as Espriu called it, into which he'd plunged his artist's hands — the poems inscribe an elemental and basic lexicon, recalling the narrow, emotionally charged vocabularies of mystics or displaced persons. "I chose the simplest / words to tell myself," Espriu says in one poem. On his solitary castaway's "naked rock of song," each word counts.

*From the sea I will be saved
perhaps, by poetry, a few
bright words that stand
for my whole life.*

("Diptych for the Living")

A valuable introduction by Espriu's longtime friend and publisher Francesc Vallverdú informs us the poet spent his last twenty years more or less withdrawn from the world, a virtual recluse living out his "high conception of literature" by committing himself to his poetic canticle, designed, as one verse proclaimed, to "give each thing a final name / as old memory shapes new creation." Unpretentious about his intent, Espriu modestly considered his art "a small help in living an upright life and perhaps in dying a good death." Though political conflict and its aftermath indelibly stamped his poetry's course, the deeper attitude the poems ultimately convey is as Vallverdú suggests "not so much political as... 'prophetic' in the Hebraic tradition."

One of Espriu's best poems is an homage to the great Chilean poet Pablo Neruda, consciously echoing the latter's more flamboyant style to acknowledge a fellowship in art and resistance, and hailing a future where "we shall be freed forever / from the wells dug by long fear."

Neruda's own *Late and Posthumous Poems: 1968-1974*, a bilingual edition (like the Espriu book) brings over into English a good sample of the large body of work he left behind on his death in 1973. Eight separate Spanish-language volumes, most of them posthumous, are represented here.

It is Neruda's swan song. Terminally ill in these years, spending much of his time alone in his oceanside retreat at Isla Negra, he continued to shoulder the heavy public burden of his position as world man and world poet — a campaign of his own for president of Chile on the Communist Party ticket, followed by extensive travels to support the candidacy of Allende, the ambassadorship to France, a Nobel Prize and then a recurrence of cancer in Paris.

This is a contemplative, even rueful Neruda, addressing megalithic Easter Island figures as sad, wise peers — "O lone, pensive dignitaries." In "Child of the Moon" the humble railroad worker's son mourns his narrow, alienating calling as a word-maker — "I feel the world never belonged to me." "A

Heavy Surf," one of many poems which the ubiquitous sea dominates as a symbol of infinite duration up against man's extremely short-term existence, closes on a gesture of surrender to cosmic inevitability: "Then when the wind has had its way with us / we can see ourselves as we are, face to face with the invisible." And in "One Comes Back" — a poem of his last months — he confronts the transitoriness of his own identity in a voice that is, like much of the best of his work, universal:

*One comes back to the I, the old house
with its nails and interstices, yes,
to a selfhood grown bored with its selfhood,
a suit full of holes; one
tries to walk naked in rain,
a man wants to wet himself down in clean water, in
elementary wind, but gets only
as far as the well of his selfhood again,
the old, piddling obsessions:
did I really exist? did I know what to say,
or to pay or to owe or discover?
—as if my importance were such
that the world with its vegetal name,
its black-walled arena,
had no choice but to accept or deny me.*

Victor Hernandez Cruz is an American poet of Iberian roots several times removed — transplanted from the Caribbean to New York's Lower East Side and then to the San Francisco Bay, he has followed his poetry all the way back to his sources. "I walked in Puerto Rico with a guitar in my belly / I walked in Spain with Mecca / in my sandals... / I walk in New York with a fan / in my pocket / made with the feathers of / three continents..."

Rhythm, Content & Flavor traces the progression of Cruz's work through highlights of four previously published volumes, from early documents of youth in the "crazy city" of New York ("Your whip is strong / Not all can walk your line / We walk it with our hands / And survive like seashell necklaces") to a recent sequence titled "Atlantis: The Age of Seashells," recounting his belated homecoming to the island culture of his birthplace. "That imaginary place / called Puerto Rico" here flowers into lyric myth, as a lost continent of paradisaical poetry and vivid music, "sound surrounded by water / Islands of green pensivity / Going and coming rock eternity / We could say the fish started here."

Cruz's main subject is the power of poetry and music to transform. The movement in his verse is from music to knowledge to myth, but it all starts from the music, a seamless bilingual lyricism weaving tongues, beats and accents, salsa, bop and soul into a "Manhattan dance Latin / in Spanish to African rhythms / A language lesson / Without opening your mouth."

— Tom Clark

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Truth is slimier than fiction. — Lorna Smedman

IN THE HUMAN PROVINCE: *Way*, Leslie Scalapino; North Point Press, Berkeley, 1988; 160 pages, \$12.

The brutally cold weather associated with deep winter arrived early in New York City this season, single-digit readings in late fall's early December. And with the physical actuality of this bitter weather comes the social fact of the recent journalistic ritual of scouring the corners of Manhattan's transportation terminals to see how the city's tribe of homeless men and women are faring.

If the homeless are at all media-conscious, they must have breathed a collective sigh of relief at the end of the adverse publicity that had plagued them since the summer. Thanks to Mayor Ed Koch's advice to desist from giving handouts to beggars (based on the theory that the less people give the more likely the homeless will come into the city's safety-net bosom), magazines and newspapers made the growing homeless population out to be the oppressors of the upper classes who were forced to endure the sight of the indigent and give up their illusion of Reagan-era prosperity as they boarded trains to Cos Cob or the Hamptons. Winter, however, replaced the scorn with sympathy as the newspapers filled up with photos of men and women asleep on heating grates and gave yet another tour of the subterranean steam-pipe city of the homeless below Grand Central Station.

Not too many years back, the homeless in Manhattan were simply called "bums" and were located in their own neighborhood, the Bowery. The term "bum", according to lexicographer Stuart Berg Flexner, was first recorded around 1855 in Oregon and is derived from the German "bummler" — a loafer. The date and locale of the phrase suggests that the term was applied to the unsuccessful wanderers from the California Gold Rush. By the end of the Civil War, the term "bum" was applied to the many wandering veterans from both the Blue and the Gray; our present use of the term comes from this period. That the phrase could be converted into a verb that expressed carefree leisure ("to bum around") and that the noun itself was closely associated with one particular group of the homeless — the stereotypical profile being a middle-aged male alcoholic — clearly indicated the need for a more neutral and inclusive term: the homeless.

Leslie Scalapino's *Way* is a serious and sober book-length poem attempting to come to terms with both the meaning of "home" and "homelessness". More expansive and inclusive than her two previous volumes, *Way* makes a forceful case for poetry as a social act, rather than a limited literary practice. Scalapino subverts the dichotomy between subject and object and, in doing so, offers a politically engaged poetry that goes beyond the enlightened voyeurism of mainstream models such as Carolyn Forché.

Way is organized into a long, four-part section entitled "Later Floating Series" and a smaller, two-part, eponymously-titled section. The long quotation by physicist David Bohm at the head of the volume serves as the opening into this complex work. "Nature may have in it an infinity of different kinds of things" begins Bohm's discussion about the limitless nature of

the physical world. However, after launching into a discourse that bears an eerie resemblance to a Tibetan Buddhist Cosmology, Bohm ends the discussion by declaring: "...we admit also that nevertheless there still exists an absolute, unique and objective reality." Scalapino's *Way* places itself in the slippage between the infinite regression of language that Jacques Lacan spoke of and the mainstream view of language as a mere carrier of the poet's "thoughts".

In taking on such a loaded project as addressing the plight of the homeless, the artist is faced with a problem: that most of the available signifiers have been filled to the brim with images and attitudes formed by the popular media. The recent, and quite well-meaning, "Homeless In America" photography exhibit at the New York Public Library is an example of good intentions that, in the end, fetishize the homeless by making them grist for photographers in search of a subject. Scalapino, in a technique reminiscent of cinematic language, relentlessly offers up details of quotidian life in a montage made up of small gestures:

*the people—whole
families—who'd gone to sleep on
the sidewalks—in rows—not
as a reactive
response—on my part—in the
sense of reactive in that setting*

*which had been—our
having to
have stepped over them—the
rows of people—curled up on
the sidewalks—sleeping—though
that occurs now—for it
to be reactive in that*

*the man—that had
really happened—starving lying
in garbage—that is on
my part—or on one's part—and
not done away with in
that way*

(pages 115-116)

I'm reluctant to quote from a work so based on the notion of the reciprocity of independent entities (and, as a reviewer's aside, I've never thought that larding a reviewing with quotes is particularly good practice in making the case for the worth of a text). *Way* is built on discrete progressions, permutations that only are realized in process. The book is best read in one take in order to appreciate the subtle music that underpins the work. It is not the chamber music of Pound, or Eliot's *Four Quartets*, but the hard talk of Anton Webern and Eliot Carter — whose compositions' complexity and atonality (to paraphrase Theodor Adorno) are only reflections of contemporary life, rather than avatars of some future music.

Despite the social consciousness that is at the spine of *Way*, it is neither a social tract nor a successor to the "we are all bag

ladies" poems that had their minute in the mid-seventies. In her undercutting of the anchoring and omnipotent "I" of the text, she puts the narrator under judgement much in the manner of narratology sitting in judgement of the world:

*my—it would have to be—being
introverted—having nothing to do—
as that—situation of the man
lying there—not producing
that*

*when—the state of introverted has
got to be—in myself—as a
negative event—so that man
lying there—though not producing
it*

*that as the same—not like
the man who'd been
lying there—though not producing the
situation—not coming from his
condition or the setting*

(pages 116-117)

Way is a troubling and disturbing work. It is poetry in real time and a poetry that seems to pause slightly before moving on to the next perception. Scalapino's eye is like Michael Snow's slow zoom shot that becomes the star/hero of his classic film *Wavelength* — putting pressure on the everyday until its construction is revealed. *Way* could have been easily titled "We Live As We Dream, Alone" (to borrow a title from the rock band The Gang of Four) for the landscape it depicts. In a period where a growing neo-formalist poetry movement reacts to the temper of our time by ignoring or replacing it with an esthete's dreamland.

Scalapino faces down the bitterness of this period in a sharply etched series of vignettes whose shifts in perspective and textual particulars defeat the easy realism which "mimetic" writing purports to offer. The tortured bits of the quotidian that Scalapino calls up in her text force the reader to fall back on his/her own relation with realism, the real world and one's own judgement of that sphere. The pressure put upon the reader to make a judgement — something quite rare in an era where many poets seem masters of a form of emotional fascism (the reader being asked to meditate upon the poet's wonderful insight, good politics, and subtle sensibilities) — is that which is disturbing and troubling in *Way*.

"Marginality is becoming universal", said the late French sociologist Michel de Certeau. "I had the sense of being nothing," says the speaker in *Way*. Home/homelessness: has the poet (and the poetry community on the whole) decided which is preferable? That unrepentant ex-Nazi, Martin Heidegger (a fave of many poets), spoke of the poet as dwelling in language — "the house of being", where the rents are much cheaper than in Hoboken or on Avenue B.

On a plane much more prosaic than Heidegger's tour of the

galaxy, the imaginary Poets' Hall of Fame seems brimming with the homeless. In room 1: Francis Villon — "The Vagabond King". Down the hall is Basho, who went on a begging tour of Japan with his circle of proteges and fellow-moochers. And in the modern wing, we read Vachel Lindsay's account of "spreading the Gospel of Beauty" through America; that is, performing his irritating poems in return for eats and a mat to crash out on. And let's not pass up the Maxwell Bodenheim room! The now-forgotten Bodenheim, a familiar to over two generations of Greenwich Villagers, was the archetypal boho — the homeless poet once staying at William Carlos Williams's Rutherford home for two weeks with a fake plastered broken arm (the jig was up when Doc Williams finally took a gander at it). Bodenheim's "office" was a public bathroom in the Village (honest, they did exist once upon a time) and he died in a Bowery flophouse while unsuccessfully defending his girlfriend from a rapist. Our tour ends right near the gift shop, by a sad-faced portrait of the late Bob Kaufman — whose unfortunate existence on the streets of San Francisco seemed the focus of one-too-many memoirs and tributes after the poet's passing.

Leslie Scalapino's *Way* is a major touchstone of the *new* political poetry that has emerged in American writing during the last ten years or so; that is, works that have been informed by post-modern (ulp!) political thought and the end of the post-scarcity politics that dominated New Left thought. Examples of this new political poetry include recent work by Bob Perelman and Kathy Fraser, John Thorpe's *Five Aces and Independence*, Ron Silliman's in-progress *ABC* and Beverly Dahlen's *A Reading*. Although disparate in their approaches in making meaning, all these works are united in a practice of *political* listening and attention. The *new* political poetry goes beyond didactic models that make their claims on obtuse moral grounds that play upon the guilt of the comfortable reader.

Scalapino's poetry positions itself midway between the extremes of W.H. Auden's quip that "poetry is an airplane flying over Wyoming in the middle of the night" and Amiri Baraka's demand that "poetry be a weapon of revolutionary struggle". In a non-revolutionary time, *Way*, in its slow and deliberate manner, argues that change is constantly occurring in the world — perhaps not a new or profound message, but something necessary in an era of diminished returns. *Way* asks its readers to understand our world of cops and crackheads, "Just Say NO!", and lap-computers, as only being a social construction of reality. I don't think George Bush had *Way* in mind as one of his "thousand points of light"; though I think that on the shunpike we've been sauntering down for the last twenty years, *Way* might be as good a Baedeker as one can find for our changing landscape and weather.

— Joel Lewis

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The follies of girth weigh their own sincerity.

-- Roumanian Proverb

ELINOR & MAGGIE DO JIM: *Wilderness: The Lost Writings of Jim Morrison*, Vol. 1; Vuillard Books, Random House, \$12.95.

"Nothing else can survive a holocaust but poetry and songs. No one can remember an entire novel. No one can describe a film, a piece of sculpture, a painting, but so long as there are human beings, songs and poetry can continue."

— Jim Morrison

Had Jim Morrison survived, he would not have allowed this book to be published. As he put it, "The principal of the school holds his nose. / A dead cow is in there. I wonder / why they haven't sent someone to / remove it?" However, the cover picture is very sexy. We suggest you rip it off and avoid the rest of this book, which consists of unedited, immature works that Morrison undoubtedly would have burned before getting into the bathtub. This book may be of some slight interest to graphologists, as a few of the poems are xeroxes of actual manuscripts. We see from these that Morrison, contrary to popular belief, did not have a particularly strong sex drive,¹ was depressed,² meticulous³ and did not have a lot of continuity in his life.⁴ "My heroes are artists and writers," he said. Nauen and Dubris are writers. Therefore, Jim Morrison would have slept with them had they only been old enough. If he had been more adventurous, he would have slept with them anyway.

People often confuse a good song with a good poem but a successful song, taken away from the music, can only fall. The only poems in the book that begin to indicate Morrison's talent as a songwriter are transcriptions of his performed poems, many of which are available on record. This one isn't:

*Cold electric music
Damage me
Rend my mind
with your dark slumber
Cold temple of steel
Cold minds alive
on the strangled shore
Veterans of foreign wars
We are the soldiers of
Rock & Roll Wars*

Jim Morrison was a General in the Rock & Roll Wars; his songs changed a generation. People will buy this book expecting to feel the way they did when they first heard *Strange Days* on the radio, and Random House is counting on that. In the depressing parade of rock poetry books, this one is sicker than most: The author is not here to either halt publication or collect the royalties.

— Maggie Dubris & Elinor Nauen

¹The g's, f's and y's are not expressive, expansive, not willing to take chances.

²Writing slants downward.

³Dotted i's, crossed t's.

⁴Words separated in the middle or connected awkwardly. In general, immature.

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

The first time I read one of Sal Salasin's poems in a little magazine, I was so impressed that I got his number and called him up. I caught him while he was eating. He talked to me like Kilgore Trout, incredulous and cynical, yet grateful.

His new book fulfills the promise of the poem that sent me to the phone. Generally untitled, the poems are short, almost diaristic accounts of one man in New York City, 1980s. Salasin has done extensive graduate work in China and Japan and professes to be influenced by Asian poetry. Other reviewers, noting Salasin's sarcasm and contempt for the late capitalist system, make a comparison with the work of Kenneth Fearing, the principal Marxist poet of the Thirties. But Salasin is really your basic New York poet — he's learned from O'Hara, Berrigan, and the other gurus of the New York School, perhaps taking an occasional cue from Ginsberg's "America." There's more than an echo of O'Hara in lines such as:

*Big time radio personalities
broadcasting to me! the unemployed!
Bob Grant poisons the heart of America
and I love it I wonder why?*

But O'Hara's innate optimism and love of life are absent from Salasin's worldview. The vision goes sour.

*Poet of
the City and People of New York
(big deal).
Springtime here lasts
exactly thirty seconds so
pay attention.
How the city stands it
I don't know.
I can't.*

Perhaps part of the difference was that O'Hara earned a decent living (in a city that was at that time easier to live in) as a curator at the Museum of Modern Art [Ed. note: O'Hara had been promoted from Assistant Curator to Associate Curator shortly before his death.], a job that, if sometimes frustrating, was congenial to his mental and social needs. Salasin, on the other hand, is a self-described wage-slave, and the poems document bouts of unemployment. This gives license to a chronic occupational hazard of poets, what Peter Schjeldahl once called, "the mean streak nourished by a career of deprivations."

Salasin stalks through the city of wealth, knowledge, and poverty; it's the place for him, yet he often hates it. He loathes the yuppies while being sneakily envious of them. There's desperation and an underlying fear as he lurches toward a lonely old age:

*The city is full of beggars.
Not only could I be one,
it's beginning to look like
I probably will.*

*I make friends with difficulty
and keep them not at all.*

* * *

*How I manage to go to work every morning
amazes even me.*

*Catching my reflection in
a storefront,*

I see my father.

I'm

living the life of the city.

There's also a persistent misogyny running through these poems. Sometimes Salasin softens, Bukowski style, as if to let the pose slip a bit and remind us that there's a sensitive guy under it all, but if I were a woman I wouldn't go near him on a bet. (I almost wrote, "on a bed." *Definitely not on a bed.*)

Yet Salasin presents his fear and loathing in a masterful fashion. The lines are usually short and read like stream-of-consciousness, but the style is sure and the line breaks make sense. There's a seamless fusion of TV babble, Shakespeare, proletarian newspeak, the Bible, Fifties doo-wop lyrics, advertising, and cornball jokes.

Quick!

What century are we in?

*Who opens this book to
disturb my repose?*

*Mine enemies are vanquished and
the righteous uplifted so*

*I certainly don't have
time for you.*

Lines reoccur from poem to poem, both echoing obsessions and giving unity to the collection. Literary allusions — Auden, Baudelaire, et al. — are dropped in with disdainful ease. And Salasin has the gift for absolutely killer last lines:

The wolves are cold in Central Park.

They sing to me and I sing back.

or

Sweetly shines the sun on us below.

We are unworthy, probably.

Will it play in Peoria or the Twenty-first Century? Or will Salasin one day be as neglected as Kenneth Fearing is today? He has a hope for the future, comically expressed but nonetheless real for all that:

*A life as short at
a 24-hour sellathon at Levitt's.*

Not much to offer but

I've got an evening free.

*I asked the poets of the future
they said no*

we borrow from you

you don't borrow from us

it doesn't work that way.

*You just go on
we're reading you, don't worry,
you're doing ok.*

Spleen can live, artistically expressed; witness Juvenal and Martial. But whether or not Salasin's work makes it into Humankind's Greatest Hits, he's an accurate reporter for his era. His book ends with a right-on vision of America today:

*Somewhere,
alone in a cheap hotel room
the spirit of our nation
is living on oreos,
watching television
and cleaning a telescopic rifle.*

— Reagan Upshaw

*

Easter Sunday, Tom Clark; Coffee House Press, Minneapolis, 1988. 148 pages; \$8.95.

Few poets are as prolific and consistently interesting as Tom Clark. His newest book, *Easter Sunday*, is a sampler of poems culled from some 35 volumes published over the last 25 years. It's not exactly a collection of "greatest hits" but more like, in Tom's words, a "greatest hits tortured" — or revised or changed or mutated or bent into new meanings.

As he states on the flyleaf, Tom sees the poet as "not so much owner or proprietor as simple custodian of poems entrusted to his care by the language." This care and attention to the intrinsic dialogue of the poem, the "listening work," is what the poetry of Tom Clark is all about.

It's remarkable to note in *Easter Sunday* how Tom intersperses his earlier poems (revised or simply rediscovered) with new poems, creating a kind of tensile strength in the weave. Lyrical, tough, hip, satiric, pissed-off and awestruck, these poems manage to express the "abiding spirit" of Tom's entire work.

Ted Berrigan jokingly characterized Tom as "the slick, easy poet" but it goes without saying that it takes a ton of work to achieve the kind of fluency that is everywhere apparent in Tom's poetry. His voice is pliable, malleable, he can say anything he wants with it.

*The man who calls up Larry King
at one o'clock in the morning
to recommend reading the Koran
as a cure for AIDS makes
more sense than the man
who calls up the KAL-X
Midnight Trax disc jockey
and says Fuck You in Korean
but then again the man
who just after the minor quake*

*calls in and says the tremor
let the air out of his basketball
sounds so much more like
the voice of the future*

("Apocalyptic Talkshow")

A mad clarity, a sharp and accurate depth-perception and dueling pluralities glitter here.

*Two crows sew themselves onto the lace flag
Of that flying cloud whose cosmetic grace
Adorning the Plain Jane face of the day
Pins them in an unlikely halo of pale light
After one blast of which they dance away
Croaking shrilly as abandoned divas
Whose black scarves flap in the breeze*

("The Process")

He builds his marble staircase, well-hewn step by step, then goes skipping down them. A rush of language tumbling word over word.

*Machines can think like Wittgenstein
And the radio's a machine
Thinking softly to itself
Of the midnight Flower
As her tawny parts unfold*

*In slow motion the boat
Rocks on the ocean
As her tawny parts unfold*

*The radio does something mental
To itself singingly
As her tawny parts unfold
Inside its wires
And steal away its heart*

("Radio")

The voice that strides through *Easter Sunday* stubbornly asserts its uncompromising devotion to the imagination. Tom has consistently held to his "unspeakable visions," carrying them aloft like a banner, although it must seem like a cross he drags through the vast desert the poetry world has become — a wasteland of prize winners and poetry workshops.

These are high-quality poems backed by Tom's integrity and wit. The book is, as the title suggests, a restatement, a renewal. As he lays it down in the final lines of the last poem in the book, "The Blue Dress":

*...nature never dies in time
because it never really existed
outside this recurrent bewildering
intensified mind ignition garden
we call creation*

— Kevin Opstedal

One-Man Show With Maps

"What do I know about the acquisitions
Frederick The Great made
between 1740 and 1785? Not much.
But I knew I could count on gold stripes
to transcend historical quarrels
and whisper an intimate "Yippee!"
in the pensive viewer's ear.
For territory gained from Poland
from 1793 to, say, 1806,
I snipped off flat red diagonals
within an extremely bold outline,
this fly-blown, banned-in-Britain brown.
And I felt that a Prussia diminished
by the Treaty of Tilsit in 1807
deserved a seepage green that would make
Bruno-the-Besieger yawn.
Then, to mark the territory
regained by the Treaty of Vienna
eight years later, I got
this hot Cerulean, supplemented
by a Lucky-Dog Red to designate
new lands acquired by the same treaty.
For The Confederation of 1815
I slopped on a dirty yellow,
and for territory won from France
in 1871: an eager, unabashed purple,
a Guilty-with-an-Exclamation Purple!
offset with fleshtone horizontals.
The Empire before 1914
was a livid reminder for me
that the trick to enjoying a full life
is not to allow one vice or virtue
to outshine the others, but to let them
all fight it out with shovels in the dark.
As usual, an ambiguous humility
proved a formidable challenge
until Bully Dots on a mauve ground
came "running" to the rescue.
Now, 1918 to 1930 presented so many
trite problems I compromised
with this grey-and-black solution:
the startling grey your hair
is supposed to turn if you spend
a night with a goddess, and
the familiar Portrait of Our Saviour
on Black Velvet Black.
Either that or a barrage of verticals
across a Come-and-Get-Me Copper.
Anything to avoid that This-is-my-first-
day-on-the-job-but-I-can-see-the-rest-
of-my-life-from-here "enjambment"
that we all dread so much.
I also wanted to avoid
Gadzooks Orange for The Republic,
though I considered relieving the tension
paradoxical tones create
with yet another primary
or an unimpeachable tint of Hindoo Grief.

The Great Stalemate nearly defeated me,
until I chose a deeper grey,
adding silver flecks
to suggest teethmarks on lead.
From then on I soberly, quickly
picked up the pace — a crescendo,
if you will — for all territory
ceded between 1918 and 1923:
for land ceded to France, lilac
edging a Dead-Dutchess Brown;
to Denmark, a Gangster-Banker Blue;
to Lithuania, a sweaty, snorting
Treat-in-the-Wheat; to Poland,
Swindler's Yellow; and to Belgium
and The League of Nations, a To Whom
It May Concern Please Reply *
At Your Earliest Convenience Hope
To Hear From You Soon Thank You
Very Much For Your Attention Pink."

— Paul Violi

* * *

Attention

Dawn's faded apparitions of the undead just stealing
Back into the trunks of cypress still at overnight
Minimum fahrenheit I ventured
Into that strange eternity gossamer-fall

A swarm of sparkling particles down-drifting
Iridescent snowbugs parachuting? A slow
Solar drizzle into the kneehigh mist layer
That was forming above the tall grass?

In the great vault overhead however
Was emerging cloudlessly the color blue
Coming into being on an unstained
Cadet's blouse of ozone, ruling out rain or snow

A grasper after manna with palms outflung
I discovered this microflourescent flutter
Of atoms in reverse liftoff away from heaven
Was actually minute ice spicules

Out of which arose a rainbow fragile
As water colors thinly brushed on kleenex
Or the difference between breathing
And practically everything else

— Tom Clark

WEDNESDAY NIGHTS

February

1 **STEPHEN RATCLIFFE's** books of poetry include *[where late the sweet] Birds Sang*, and *Distance*. He is the publisher of Avenue B press. **BRUCE ANDREWS** is the author of thirteen books and chapbooks including *Getting Ready to Have Been Frightened* and *Give Em Enough Rope*.

8 Poet, translator and editor **BILL ZAVATSKY** is the author of *Theories of Rain and Other Poems* and *For Steve Royal and other Poems*. He is the publisher of Sun, a literary press. **ARTHUR SZE's** collections of poems include *Read River*, *Dazzled* and *Two Ravens*. He has received an NEA Creative Writing Fellowship.

15 **TOM SAVAGE** is the author of *Housing, Preservation, & Development* and edits *Gandhabba* magazine. **DAVID ABEL** is a co-editor of *Red Weather* magazine. He opened The Bridge Bookshop in 1987. **RAYFIELD WALLER** is the author of *Abstract Blues*. His poems and essays have appeared in *Solid Ground*, *Black Scholar Magazine* and in *The Third Coast: Anthology of Michigan Poets*.

22 **ANNE WALDMAN's** books of poems include *Make-Up on Empty Space; Skin, Meat, Bones; and The Romance Thing*. She is the editor of the *Homage to Ted Berrigan* (Coffeehouse Press). **XAM CARTIÉR's** novel *BE-BOP RE-BOP* was listed among the "Most Notable Books of the Year" (1988) in the *New York Times Book Review*.

March

1 **PEDRO PIETRI's** *Puerto Rican Obituary* is in its seventh edition from Monthly Review Press. His most recent book is *Traffic Violation*. **LUIS FRANCIA** is the author of *Her Beauty Likes Me Well*. He is the editor of *Versus: An Anthology of Philippine Protest Poetry*.

8 **CYN. ZARCO's** *CIR' CUM·NAV'I·GA'TION*, received the Before Columbus Foundation's American Book Award. Her poems have been anthologized in *American Poetry Since 1970: Up Late*. **CLIFF FYMAN** is the author of *Stormy Heaven*. Recent poems have appeared in *Mudfish* and *Transfer*.

15 **ROBERT KELLY** is the author of fifty books of poetry, fiction and essays. His most recent books of poems are *Not this Island Music* and *Oahu*. **MARTHA KING's** books of poetry and fiction include *Islamic Miniature* and *Monday Through Friday*. She publishes the literary newsletter, *Giants Play Well in the Drizzle*.

22 **CHRISTY SHEFFIELD SANFORD's** first collection of poems will be published this year by *Apalachee Quarterly*. She is a recipient of a Florida Arts Grant in Literature. **ELIO SCHNEEMAN's** two books of poems are *In February I Think* and *Walking in the Mad Space*.

29 **A CELEBRATION OF MIGUEL PIÑERO** Readings and remembrances of the late playwright and poet, hosted by Miguel Algarín, Amiri Baraka and Ntozake Shange.

MONDAY NIGHTS

February

6 **OPEN READING**

13 **MICHAEL GIZZI** has had three books of poems from Burning Deck, the most recent being *Species of Intoxication*. He's had work in *O·blek'*, *Temblor* and *Sulphur* magazines, and has just completed a new manuscript, *Continental Harmony*. **PETER GIZZI** is co-editor of *O·blek'* and is working on a series of poems, "Maps."

20 A reading by contributors to the upcoming issue of *The Portable Lower East Side*, "New York City's most socially committed literary magazine." Past contributors to the magazine include Pedro Pietri, Grace Paley, Hubert Selby, Luisa Valenzuela, Tuli Kupferberg, Ed Sanders, Hans Haacke & Tom Waits. List of readers unavailable at press time

27 **LESLIE DICK** has had writing in *Bomb*, *Semiotexte*, *Between C and D* and *Emergency* magazines. Her novel *Without Falling* has just been published by City Lights. She's an American who's lived for 20 years in England and is spending this year in Los Angeles. **LYNNE TILLMAN** is the author of the novel, *Haunted Houses* (Poseidon) and co-director and writer of the movie, *Committed*. She's working on a new novel called *Home Sick*.

March

6 **OPEN READING**

13 **ANDREW LEVY** wrote *Between Poems* and the forthcoming *Values Chauffeur You*. His writing has appeared in *Pessimistic Labor*, *Central Park*, *Abacus*, and *Oars*.

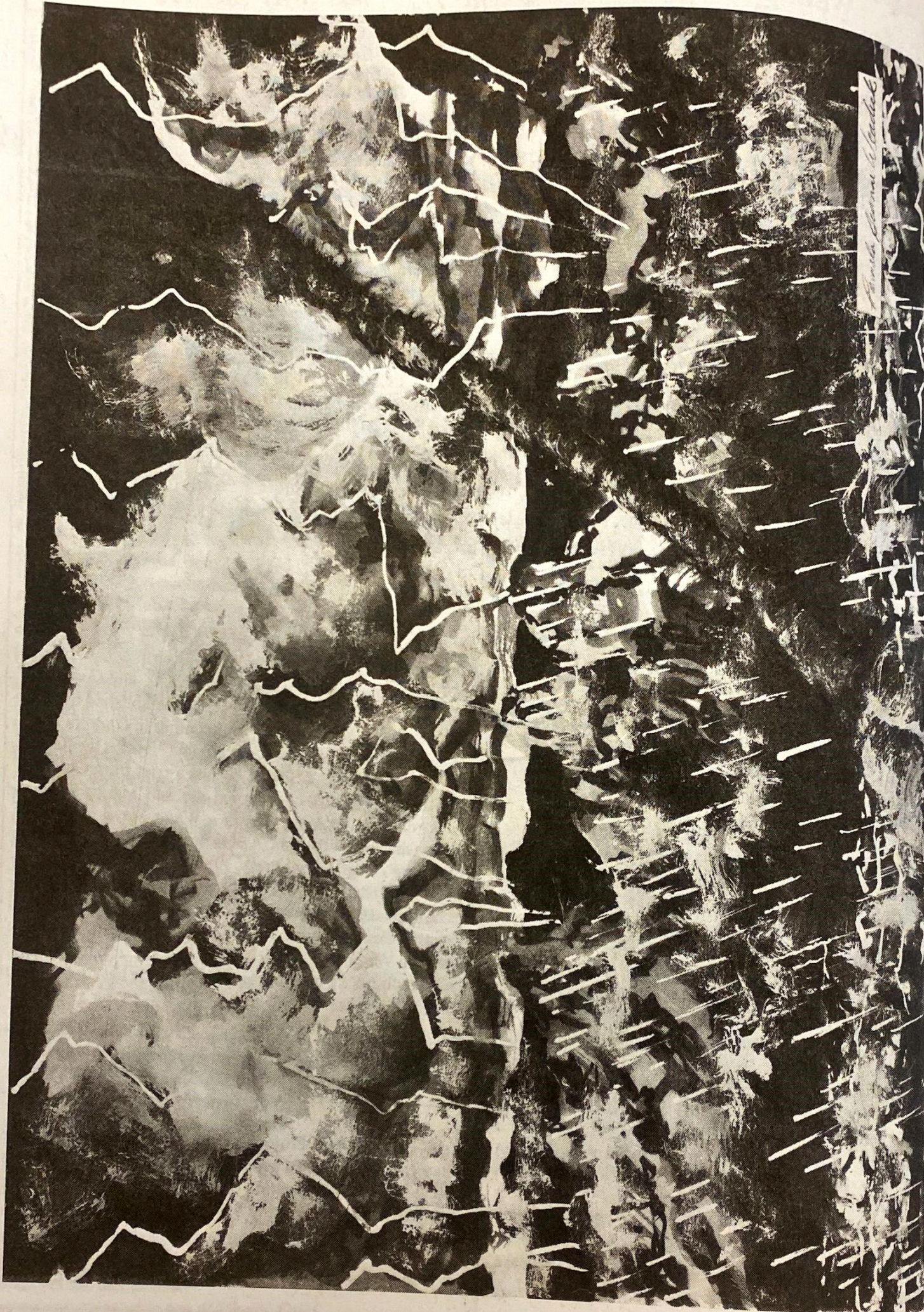
JESSICA GRIM's *Intrepid Hearts* was published by Coincidence Press. New work is forthcoming in *Ottotole* magazine. She's co-coordinator of the reading series at the Ear Inn.

20 **LORRI JACKSON** is "just a poet from Chicago." **ABBE MICHAELS** co-authored the late Margo Howard-Howard's autobiography, *I was a White Slave in Harlem*. She's a member of the band Azalia Snail and wrote *A Fault or Fortunate Thing* (Velvet Press, 1984).

27 **CHRIS KADISON**, the ex-Lower East Sider, fleet-hack, legendary lover and grim-witted keeper of industrial dawns makes a rare visit down from his eco-anarchist cell in Northern Vermont. **LAURIE PRICE**, a.k.a. Tendora Vorpa, has not published a book but intends to entitle her first volume *Lampshade Sonatina*.

JOBS AT THE POETRY PROJECT

The Poetry Project will be hiring a *Poetry Project Newsletter Editor* and a *Monday Night Coordinator* for the 1989-90 season. Application procedures and descriptions of both jobs are available from the Poetry Project after Feb. 1. The deadline for all applications is March 10, 1989.



THE POETRY

St. Mark's Church
New York, NY 10003

PROJECT

2nd Ave. & 10th St.
(212) 674-0910

February

- 1 Bruce Andrews & Stephen Ratcliffe
- 6 Open Reading
- 8 Bill Zavatsky & Arthur Sze
- 13 Michael Gizzi & Peter Gizzi
- 15 David Abel, Tom Savage & Rayfield Waller
- 20 "The Portable Lower East Side" Reading
- 22 Anne Waldman & Xam Cartier
- 27 Leslie Dick & Lynne Tillman

Lecture Series

- 19 "New York Ghosts" with Simon Pettet
(See next page for details). 7 pm.

Special Events

- 2 A Tribute to Joel Oppenheimer: (See next page for participants and details). 8 pm. FREE.
- 14 Valentine's Day Reading: (See next page for participants and details). 7 pm. Contribution of \$10.
- 24-26 Dance/Poetry Collaborations: three evenings of collaborative works co-sponsored with the Danspace project at St. Mark's Church (See next page for participants and details 8:30 pm. Contribution of \$7.

March

- 1 Pedro Pietri & Luis Francia
- 6 Open Reading
- 8 Cyn. Zarco & Cliff Fyman
- 13 Andrew Levy & Jessica Grim
- 15 Robert Kelly & Martha King
- 20 Lorri Jackson & Abbe Michaels
- 22 Christy Sheffield Sanford & Elio Schneeman
- 27 Chris Kadison & Laurie Price
- 29 A Celebration of Miguel Piñero hosted by Miguel Algaín, Amiri Baraka and Ntozake Shange

Lecture Series:

- 19 "A Painter's Bestiary" with Basil King
(See next page for details) 7pm.

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

OPPENHEIMER TRIBUTE

A Tribute to Joel Oppenheimer, Thursday, February 2nd (Ground Hog Day). FREE. Readings and remembrances by Brian Breger, John Dobbs, Don Melander, Michael Stevens, Ron Swoboda, Anne Waldman, Russ Wetzsteon and Jonathan Williams.

The late Joel Oppenheimer was the Poetry Project's founding director. He taught writing workshops at universities throughout the U.S., including Manhattan's City College, and was a long-time columnist for *The Village Voice*. His numerous books of poetry include *New Spaces*, *Why Not?* and *Names & Local Habitations* (selected earlier poems).

VALENTINE'S DAY READING

An evening of love poems read by Harry Mathews, Jessica Hagedorn, Victor Bockris, Ron Padgett, Lois Elaine Griffith, Dennis Cooper, Larry Fagin, Ann Carlson, Jim Brodey, Roberto Echavarren, Bernadette Mayer, Ted Greenwald, Carmen Valle, Steven Hall, Yuki Hartman, Hetty Jones, Susan Cataldo, Alan Davies, Michael Decapite, Don Yorty, Nina Zivancevic & Carlos Stephanos, Sparrow, Susie Timmons, Vyt Bakaitis, Suzan-Lori Parks, Bob Rosenthal, Rochelle Kraut, James Sherry, David Sternbach, Mary Sullivan, Steve Carey, Ellen Carter, Rob Yagley, John Yau, Vincent Katz, Teresa Keefe, Ruth Altmann, Sara Mannheimer, Andrew Levy, Greg Masters, Etan Ben-Ami, Ann Rower/Vito Ricci, Bill Kushner, Ray Di Palma, Lynn McGee, Maggie Dubris, Cheryl Fish, Phil Good, Basil King, Elinor Nauen, and Elliott Katz. Begins at 7 pm. Contribution \$10. Members: \$8.

DANCE/POETRY COLLABORATION

Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings, February 24th, 25th, and 26th, 8:30 pm: POETRY/DANCE COLLABORATIONS co-sponsored with the Danspace Project at St. Mark's Church. Works by ANNE WALDMAN & LISA KRAUS, DENNIS COOPER & ISHMAEL HOUSTON-JONES, KENWARD ELMSLIE & ALMON GRIMSTED and ISHMAEL REED & CARLA BLANK. ANNE WALDMAN (see 2/22 listing). Fluid and virtuoso dancer LISA KRAUS was a principal dancer with Trisha Brown Dance Company until 1984. She is currently teaching at NYU's Experimental Theater Wing. Poet, art-critic and fiction writer DENNIS COOPER's most recent collection, *Closer*, will be published by Grove Press this spring. Provocative dancer/performer ISHMAEL HOUSTON-JONES uses text, improvisation and relentless raw energy in his performances. KENWARD ELMSLIE is a prolific poet, fiction writer, librettist, playwright, and songwriter; his most recent books are *City Junket* and *26 Bars*. ALMON GRIMSTED is a wonderful improviser; he has performed with Yvonne Meier, Linda Austin, Jennifer Monson and John Kelly, among others. Poet and novelist ISHMAEL REED's books include *Conjure*, *Mumbo Jumbo*, *Chattanooga* and *Reckless Eyeballing*. CARLA BLANK is a dancer from the San Francisco Bay area, where she works primarily with children, but also performs her own choreography.

LECTURE SERIES

Sunday, February 19th, 7 pm: *New York Ghosts*. SIMON PETTET will discuss the exploits and consequent legends of several early local inhabitants: Peter Stuyvesant, Jacob Steendam (Manhattan's first non-native poet), A.J. Steward, and Lorenzo De Ponte.

Simon Pettet is the author of *Lyrical Poetry* (Archipelago Books, 1988). He has lectured at the New School for Social Research and at the Stevens Institute of Technology.

Sunday, March 19th, 7 pm: *A Painter's Bestiary*. BASIL KING will show slides and read the poems written for paintings by Jasper Johns, Andy Warhol, Georgia O'Keeffe, Walker Bradley Tomlin and others that comprise the "A Painter's Bestiary" series.

Basil King's recent publications include *Split Peas: Poems and Drawings by Basil King* and *Against Numerology* (poems by Richard Caddel, drawings by Basil King).

WRITING WORKSHOPS

"Bilingual Poetry Workshop" taught by Carmen Valle, Tuesdays at 7 pm (through February 28th). For writers who read and/or write in Spanish. Bilingual discussion.

CARMEN VALLE is from Puerto Rico and now lives in New York. She is the author of three collections of poetry.

"Translation is Exploring Language" taught by Murat Nemet-Nejat, Tuesdays at 7 pm, (March 7th-28th). Translating as a mirror on one's own language, as a way of exploring it. To attend the workshop no knowledge of a foreign language is necessary though it would be helpful. The workshop will aim at a theoretical understanding of the process, through writing and discussing different approaches.

MURAT NEMET-NEJAT is a coordinator of the Committee for International Poetry. His book of translations from the Turkish poet Orhan Veli, will be published by Hanging Loose Press.

"Exercises and Experiments in Poetry and Prose," taught by Bernadette Mayer, Fridays at 7 pm (through May).

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

"Word!: Language, Signification, and Rhythm in New World Writing (Today)," taught by Kofi Natambu, Saturdays at 12 pm (ongoing through May).

KOFI NATAMBU is the editor of *Solid Ground*, a literary magazine of the arts, culture and politics and the author of a collection of poems, *Intervals*.

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

Reading

I wouldn't mind saying something about reading. Before I got hold of the new Celtic Thunder record, I was reading the autobiography of Lenny Bruce which is subtitled "How to Talk Dirty and Influence People" and you might not think he'd actually written the book but it seems like he did and it includes transcripts of when he got arrested for playing seditious Irish-American music in public — only fooling — for when he said what he called a ten-letter word in the midst of one of his stints, so I read this and began counting — could it be *cunnilingus*? That's 11 letters! This is just like being Catullus, I thought, counting hendecasyllables till you get to eleven and can then transform them to twelve if you want. Well the word was cocksucker and that was the word in legal question, cocksucker. I'm sure just like in Bruce's past no one wants to publish or hear about this. Even deepseated friends I've talked to recently have wound up saying Lenny Bruce was boring but the transcripts of his trials and tapes of his comedic actions are not and oh friends I did have this dream while I was reading this book. I dreamed that I saw once again Ted Berrigan and he was living in a box in heaven and he had two boxes to live in and when we wanted to speak together the dream or he made it zoom into the box that only included him yet the other box did too and we cracked jokes in thankful Irish-American ways since death might've happened to us both. Also, he said what the hell else are you reading, more utopias? No I said, a book about chaos by James Gleick. Why not he laughed and we began discussing the question of whether the butterflies could actually influence the beatings of the drums on the other sides of the blob-like globes. Ted said yes and made fun of the author's name. I've also got hold of Mr. Garcia Marquez's *LOVE IN THE TIME OF CHOLERA* (not to mention Steven Hawking's also best-selling *BRIEF HISTORY OF TIME*, not written by him but by a group of cohorts basing it on his directions and work as astrophysicist and like Celtic Thunder's rendition of "Oft in the Stilly Night," quite the same in fact, or Whitman's "When I Heard the Learn'd...[what?]" oh period. Hawking is proud to include the fewest equations). As for Marquez, we must weep more for his knowledge and beauty of description even in translation and want to know all the languages plus all the books even we poor people have access to which include, but first to talk about him: the book is written backwards! And as such it is perfect for instance there is a moment where one character says to another, "That may be the reason he does so many things, so that he will not have to think." What hurts me says the other is that he has to die. Is this part of the curse the Spanish geniuses have put on us that we will forever perceive their dialogue to be as beautiful as, for instance, Dominick Murray's *a capella* "Bachelor's Warning?"

Other books by my bed include: *THE FACTS ON FILE DICTIONARY OF GEOLOGY AND GEOPHYSICS* edited by a person with no more surprising a name than Dorothy Lapidus and which includes parent isotopes for stable daughter elements in half-life years — what more could one expect of a set of pages? There is also in it the *nuée ardente* (highly mobile turbulent incandescent gaseous cloud coming from a volcano

— a young volcano?) plus the definition of nucleation: the initiation of crystal growth at one or more points in a system, for example, a melt. Next to that I am reading Lucy Calkins' weird maybe even exploitative book *THE ART OF TEACHING WRITING* which makes me nervous and I don't understand all the repeated abstracted words of it, to say the same thing over and over again ("The writing teacher needs to provide tools for revision," "Drafting soon becomes revision," "to use and adapt the techniques...") oh lord lend me back to Lenny Bruce, I am scared scared scared. Happily right here to make me understand that life can be great is a manuscript written and illustrated by Gary Gullo and so beyond belief as to "make even the angriest of the others laugh," and believe as we do in Coyote. Next to it lies Hannah Weiner's beautiful essay about the sentence which has stuff in it like "Jimmie sentence structure *WRITE IN JOY APRIL* has decided to become Hannah finishes her sentences *WE WEAKEN EASILY*." Beyond, an *Everyday Life* issue "on" the unspeakable featuring Clark Coolidge which is not a framework, the octet, the voice, George's photographs of asses; then a catalogue called *Language in Art* since 1960 full of essays, dialectics

*who weakens easily
in the midst of a mirror dream*

I've been lucky in my reading lately. I've also got Queneau's *THE BARK TREE* here and 111 poems by Christopher Middleton plus Pasolini's novel *THE RAGAZZI* and also *Transfer*, no two *Transfers* and you know what too? A book I got for fifty cents called and being *THE WORLD'S GREAT LETTERS* which includes Michelangelo negotiating terms with the pope, Sir Walter Raleigh bidding farewell to his wife before he's to be executed, stupid St. Paul of course, Bonaparte if you're interested, Benjamin Franklin's love life, George Washington's miseries, the horrible terrors of Beethoven which should never have been expressed, Keats' Shelley's and Byron's questions of love, no, Dostoevsky's last thoughts which make us both scared and aware of how eloquent we might become, Franz Schubert's desperate pleas in the midst of unemployment, plus Emerson's consent to *LEAVES OF GRASS*, Poe's asking for help..., an ancient book.

At this same booksale at St. Luke's where you could fill up a bag of books for a dollar, we obtained and are now reading *WEST OF SUNSET*, a novel by Dirk Bogarde; *AND BOTH WERE YOUNG* by Madeleine L'Engle, author of *A WRINKLE IN TIME*; Baldwin's *NOBODY KNOWS MY NAME*; *HIP HAIR*: From Mohawks to Dreadlocks and Beyond (author unknown); Ashley Montagu's *THE NATURAL SUPERIORITY OF WOMEN*; the 5th edition of the Harbrace College Handbook (grammar); Leakey's *PEOPLE OF THE LAKE*; Turnbull's *THE MOUNTAIN PEOPLE*; Paul Goodman's *THE COMMUNITY OF SCHOLARS* and his *THE EMPIRE CITY*; *THE JOHN MCPHEE READER*; Erving Goffman's *ASYLUMS*; Simenon's *NOVEMBER* and *LOST MOORINGS*; Robert Parker's *TAMING A SEA-HORSE*; Derek Walcott's *THREE PLAYS*; *THE ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF CHARGERS* (the Vietnam War); *THE RIGHTS OF INDIANS AND TRIBES*, an American Civil Liberties Union Handbook, which includes answers to

questions like "Has the United States honored its treaty commitments?" Guess what? an anthology of love poems edited by Jean Garrigue; **THE COMPLETE SEX DICTIONARY**; **MY LIFE & LOVES** by Frank Harris; and several editions of the **GUINNESS BOOK OF WORLD RECORDS** which Max, age 8, wanted to have to compare.

Three other texts have entered the house since the aforementioned booksale: an unusually perfectly direct art-catalogue essay on Irving Petlin by Paul Cummings; a scarily untranslatable novel maybe about sex or the spirits of fathers and Katherines yet of Eugene, **RIVER ROAD** by Chuck Borgman; and a strangely great issue of *The Washington Review* full of interviews with writers, artists & gallery people about the fascinating physical and kinds of rotations around New York City by others in close-enough-by cities to assess the tribal and also the awful. This review has always published great interviews with young writers and artists; this issue is all interviews and Mary Swift is the ultimate interviewer.

Meanwhile, there is **THE LIFE OF THE BEE**. David Abel of the Bridge Bookshop on 7th St. between First & A Avenues, finally found me an out-of-print copy of this book in English for five dollars. It's by Maurice Maeterlinck, translated by Alfred Sutro, Dodd, Mead & Co, 1937. Here is the table of contents: On the Threshold of the Hive; The Swarm; The Foundation of the City; The Life of the Bee; The Young Queens; The Nuptial Flight; The Massacre of the Males; The Progress of the Race.

From noon till three, when the purple country trembles in blissful lassitude beneath the invincible gaze of a July or August sun, the drones will appear on the threshold. They have a helmet made of enormous black pearls, two lofty, quivering plumes, a doublet of iridescent, yellowish velvet, an heroic tuft, and a fourfold mantle, translucent and rigid.

And at the end:

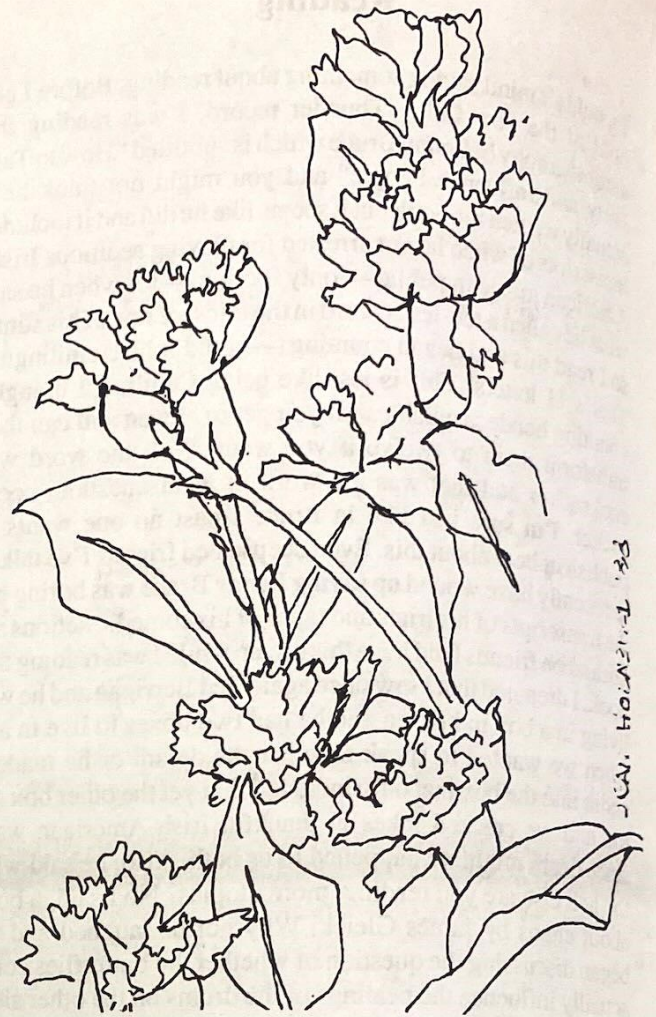
Let us nourish this flame on our feelings and passions, on all that we see and think, that we hear and touch, on its own essence, which is the idea it derives from the discoveries, experience and observation that result from its every movement.

No one had ever cut the pages to read the bibliographic appendix of this fifty-year-old copy of this book till yesterday.

— Bernadette Mayer

* *
*There once was a boy from Lagrog
 Who played with his little green frog.
 The frog made a leap
 To a place that was deep,
 The mouth of the little boy's dog.*

— Jimmy Christensen



Love of wisdom puts you on the spot.



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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, and guest faculty.

1989 Summer Writing Program

(July 3-30, 1989). A month-long program featuring a contemplative practice week, a New Forms Conference, and performance 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.

Below are some of the answers to the first four questions of last issue's Questionnaire. Answers to the remaining five questions will be printed in our next issue.

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

All the way. (Herbert Elbern)

Approximately 2.3 kilometers. (Maria Mancini)

You call this a career? (Morrie Warshawski)

I hope midway, but one never knows when words will be replaced by silence. (Joanne Seltzer)

1/4 (Janet Hamill)

In the middle. (Don Yorty)

Too far. (Greg Masters)

I think I'm at that point when my career is about to "take off." (Julie Erlich)

My career as a dirty rat is going along fine. It's my career as a poet that's fucked. (Bill Kushner)

Far enough to call it a career and be bothered by the measure. (Akua Lezli Hope)

Rapidly approaching the moment of vast popular acclaim! (Anselm Hollo)

I feel I no longer have to endorse products that I would not personally use or allow in my home. (Paul Violi)

I never identify myself as one having a career, but as having a vocation. Remembering what William Carlos Williams once said: Art is a curious command / We must do what we are bidden / to do and can go only so far / as the light permits. (Gerard Malanga 26:xi:88)

After thirty-plus years, I may finally be beginning to have one. (Dick Higgins)

About 2 blocks from home and still not sure how to get there. (Cheri Fein)

Beyond expectations. (Bill Berkson)

Probably not as far as I'd like to think I am. (Perry Souchuk)

Since I believe my career and life to be synonymous, and all part of an inter-connected and perfect New Age patchwork, my response would be that at my best, my life runs parallel to my career, which can exist in another dimension, and have a life and energy of its own. When I'm not particularly creative for stretches, my life runs a few seconds behind my career, while remaining parallel, in non-linear time and space. You could say that my career is perfect and already completed and published, and my life, or goal, is to tap into that perfection. In a more concrete explanation, I'd say my career is at the 50% point, it reaching maturity when I die. (Mark Yanofsky)

Just south of 96th St., but new condos and co-ops are going up everywhere. (Charles North)

I'm starting to be paid money; I made \$225 in the last 2 months, though I gave it all to Ellen, for using her computer, because it seems like tampering to spend it. (Sparrow)

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

Brilliantly of course, if I chose to; where? tut tut. Stop peeking! (Maria Mancini)

I don't remember my first poetic thought/insight/inspiration but it probably happened in the bathroom. (Laura Foreman)

Never have given myself credit for any of these things. (Greg Masters)
I was alone in the dorm and bells were chiming midnight. These were the saddest bells I'd ever heard... (Judith Horam)

In my 16th year, on a cold overcast winter Sunday afternoon, on the sofa in the living room of my parents' home in New Milford, NJ. I read Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard." (Janet Hamill)

My mom sent me to my room for some stupid thing. I was about six. I wrote a poem on a piece of paper that started: "I hate the walls, I hate the floor, you make me so mad, I can't take any more". I slipped it under her door and she laughed and kept it instead of hitting me. I remember thinking "poetry works". (Maria Gitin)

Circa 1953: The farm adjoining our property was turned into a "development." All the houses looked exactly alike and all the streets were named after poets. We moved. (Paul Violi)

I couldn't, I have no idea, and I have no idea. (Cheri Fein)

I was sitting in a hotel dormitory in Amsterdam. A man was playing a guitar. I felt like walking over and smashing the guitar over his head. It occurred to me to write a poem instead. (Ellen Carter)

The first time I saw snow and was old enough to talk I said to my mother, "Oh look, it's raining soap." (Joanne Seltzer)

When I was maybe seven, I was walking down the street one day, blissful and unaware. Suddenly I realized I was talking out loud to myself. It horrified me that I could be talking to myself without even knowing it. And what's more, referring to myself as she. My mood was ruined. I was no longer invisible. I began to feel eccentric and weird. (Julie Erlich)

It was poetic. I had it on the altar during my Bar Mitzvah ceremony. (Herbert Elbern)

Hitch-hiking in a bathing suit at the age of seven to find my father who had promised to take me along and then left me on the beach instead. (Dalton Trumbo)

It is the same as my first memory — I was in a blue crib supposed to be napping, at my Grandmother's house one Sunday, a toy donkey named "Donald" was in my arms, I wrote a song about a star. (Dick Higgins)

Age 10. When I realized my identical twin brother and I were 2 people. I'm still trying to describe it. (Perry Souchuk)

I was no more that 4 or 5...when late at night what I thought at the time to be newspaper type scrolled before my eyes. I also would have vivid and deep dreams about a witch casting a spell on me. I now see the print as the Karmic contract I signed where I agreed to what appears on the surface to have been a terrible childhood...I also at the time was an addict of Dark Shadows, which, when combined with my lunatic parents and oppressive orthodox jewish schooling, and some grass 13 years later, led me to poetry. (Mark Yanofsky)

I read that WCW poem about the white chickens and a little handcart in a book called *A Cavalcade Of Poems...* (Sparrow)

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

A man with a guitar. (Ellen Carter)

A perverse God who decreed: "You shall write words few will care to read." (Cheri Fein)

My muse? The inability to do anything else? Boredom? My genes? My dybbuks? The kid who dropped me on my head? (Joanne Seltzer)

The rabbi's daughter. (Herbert Elbern)

Started out as a songwriter. Lyrics had more impact than melody, so I began to rant instead of sing. (Richard Jarboe)

Cold weather. (Dalton Trumbo)

The *Saturday Evening Post*. (Bill Berkson)

"Inspired" isn't quite the word I would use. (Perry Souchuk)

King Arthur. (Victor Bockris)

A tragedy at the 6th grade prom was formative. (Sparrow)

The language of my father's talking. (Laura Foreman)

Yes, The What inspired me to begin to write poetry & so did The Who, too. (Bill Kushner)

...it's impossible to list inspiration because it's endless. (Don Yorty)

Pain and acute observation. (Judith Horam)

Glorya Okulski, my high school English teacher. (Janet Hamill)

My first girlfriend & horror movies. (Morrie Warshawski)

John Hall Wheelock was the first modern poet whose works I read and admired. Years later I would photograph him and we became friends. (Gerard Malanga 26:xi:88)

Rosemary Clooney, but I resent the insinuation that I write poetry. It was already written when I got there. (Maria Mancini)

When I discovered that you didn't have to be brilliant every day to write poems. Every once in a while was sufficient. (Charles North)

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

Go with what you've got. (Bill Berkson)

Male and female poems and instincts mate to breed new poems. (Dick Higgins)

You only left an inch for this answer. Sorry! (Perry Souchuk)

Do judges wear underwear? (Charles North)

It depends on the woman; it depends on the man. (Laura Foreman)

No. (Victor Bockris)

Yes, there is a difference between "male" poetry & "female" poetry & I, Bill Kushner, am that difference. ("Bill Kushner")

Yes. It is the difference between *in* and *out*. (Tom Beckett)

There is only poetry which is androgynous... (Don Yorty)

Male poetry has always assumed too much while female has worked from the inside. (Greg Masters) [Greg has now successfully carried this male principle into answering questionnaires. -Ed.]

Yes but why define it. (Akua Lezli Hope)

On the highest levels male and female poetry are the same; they differ on secondary levels. (Janet Hamill)

Male poetry has a dangling participle in the middle. (Richard Jarboe)

Male poetry is positive; female, negative. (Herbert Elbern) [No letters, please. This opinion, in particular, in no way reflects that of the editor.]

Social and historical roles come into play in all the arts, but I see no reason for insisting on them. (Anselm Hollo)

I didn't know poetry had sex organs. (Ellen Carter)

Male poetry generally contains more g's, j's, y's and q's than does female poetry. (Lee Ann Brown)

I think there's a topical difference quite often and find much male poetry either offensive (meaning sexist) or boring. But much poetry — much of the best poetry — is gender-neutral. (Joanne Seltzer)

I don't know. If there were it would probably be a cock. (Julie Erlich)

Most women's poetry is written by women and most men's poetry is written by men. I would say "all", but that would be sexist. (Maria Gitin)

I wouldn't touch this question with a ten-foot enjambment. (Cheri Fein)

Yes. We have a different attitude/approach to wordvalue and ideas. We use more domestic and homey images. Our voices, so long repressed, unpublished, tend to be a little shrill. Our work is given less value, naturally reflecting the societal attitude toward women, since most editors and publishers are white men. (Judith Horam)

This is a question only a hermaphrodite could answer. (Morrie Warshawski)

* * *

The Motions

Of late you feel less.
Simple arousal remains, radium
ticking in the wrist
from a watch worn long ago.

— Reagan Upshaw

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O Books

A Certain Slant of Sunlight, Ted Berrigan, 1988, \$9.00

a realm of shorter poems, written in a newly freed voice, that drifts among day-book, epigram & lyric, in all literary awareness

Dissuasion Crowds the Slow Worker, Lori Lubeski, 1988, \$6.50

Return of the World, Todd Baron, 1988, \$6.50

STREAMING Larry Kearney **TRIKE** \$8.00

with O Books

O One / An Anthology, ed. Leslie Scalapino, 1988, \$10.50

with writing

by Larry Eigner, Alice Notley,
Benjamin Hollander, Aaron Shurin,
Jerry Ratch, Norma Cole, Tom
Raworth, Charles Bernstein,
Michael Palmer, Robert Grenier,
Rick London, Lyn Hejinian, Alan
Davies, Abigail Child

Phantom Anthems, Robert Grenier, 1986, \$6.50
Dreaming Close By, Rick London, 1986, \$5.00
Abjections: A Suite, Rick London, 1988, \$3.50
Visible Shivers, Tom Raworth, 1987, \$8.00
Catenary Odes, Ted Pearson, 1987, \$5.00

Books Received

Getting Ready To Have Been Frightened, Bruce Andrews; Roof Books (Segue Foundation, 303 E. 8th St., NYC 10009) 1988. 116 pages, \$7.50 paper. "has the sharp clarity of a midcareer master in full engagement with the issues of a world — and with a very specific message..." - Ron Silliman.

In the Zone, New and Selected Writing, Laura Chester; Black Sparrow, 1988. 231 pages, \$12.50 paper, \$20 cloth. Poetry and prose from 1972 to 1988.

Conductors of the Pit. Works by Rimbaud, Vallejo, Césaire, Artaud, Holan, translated and introduced by Clayton Eshleman; Paragon House, 1988. 230 pages, \$24.95 cloth. An introduction to "a post-Surrealist sensibility rarely found in American or British poetry."

Exquisite Corpse Reader: The Stiffest of the Corpse, edited by Andrei Codrescu. City Lights, publ. date: March 1989. 255 pages, \$12.95. Selections from the inimitable magazine by Cage, Giorno, di Prima, Hollo, Waldman, Lamantia, Notley, Creeley, et al.

Wild Dreams of a New Beginning, Lawrence Ferlinghetti; New Directions, 1988. 129 pages, \$6.95 paper, \$18.95 cloth. Poems from an "ageless radical and true bard".

Presenting...Sister NoBlues, Hattie Gossett; Firebrand Books (141 The Commons, Ithaca, NY 14850). 144 pages, \$8.95 paper, \$18.95 cloth. "A collection of highly spiced writings detailing the downs & ups of a mature Black urban member of the wild wimmins clan..."

This Coffin Has No Handles, Thomas McGrath; Thunder's Mouth Press, 1988. 244 pages, \$9.95 paper. "McGrath is major. If you don't know his work, you owe it to yourself to dive into it at the first opportunity." - S.F. Review of Books.

The Pleasures of Seafood, Rima and Richard Collin; Stretcher and Swann, New Orleans, 1988. Includes, interestingly enough, a recipe for Veal Oscar.

Poetic Forms, 10 audio programs hosted by Ron Padgett; Teachers & Writers Collaborative (5 Union Square W., NYC 10003). Set of five 60-minute audio tapes, \$47.95 for the set. Interview/conversations originally developed for WNYE. Includes Free Verse (Bill Zavatsky); Haiku (Wm. J. Higginson & Penny Harter); The Ode (Charles North); The List Poem (Larry Fagin); The Sonnet (Bernadette Mayer); The Prose Poem (Alan Ziegler); The Villanelle (Anne Waldman); The Ballad (Reed Bye); The Acrostic (Larry Fagin); and The Blues Poem (Richard Perry).

Blood and Feathers, Selected Poems of Jacques Prévert (1900-1977), translated by Harriet Zinnes; Pantheon Books, 1988. 119 pages, \$8.95 paper. Facing French and English.

The Fennel Extracts, William Talcott; Thumbscrew Press

(1331 26th Ave., San Francisco, CA 94122), 1988. 36 pages, no price mentioned. Our copy had a piece of pressed, real, aromatic fennel between the cover and the title page.

Emerald Ice, Selected Poems 1962-1987, Diane Wakoski; Black Sparrow, 1988. 343 pages, \$12.50 paper, \$20 cloth.

Magazines Received

B City, #5 (Connie Deanovitch, editor, 619 W. Surf St., Chicago, IL 60657). \$5. Includes work by Jerome Sala, Elaine Equi, 15 L.A. poets, an interview with Clark Coolidge, and a tape of Paul Hoover reading "The Novel" with David Stevenson performing electronic music on the back side.

CUZ #2, edited by Richard Meyers. Available from The Poetry Project. \$2.95. 100 pages. A lot of literature for its size and weight-category. Includes work by Wm. Burroughs, Susie Timmons, Dennis Cooper, Eileen Myles, Maggie Dubris, Rochelle Kraut, Lee Ann Brown, Michael DeCapite, Molly Russakoff, and Will Patton. Two drawings by Amanda Uprichard.

Eleventh Street Ruse (322 E. 11th St., NYC 10003). Four issues \$1. Lively four-page mimeo.

Frank, No. 10, Autumn 1988 (David Applefield, Ed., 31, rue du Colonel Delorme, 93100 Montreuil, France). \$7. Includes section on Pakistani writers.

Giants Play Well in the Drizzle, edited by Martha King (326-A 4th St., Brooklyn, NY 11215), No. 21, December 1988. Ms. King always seems to find interesting poems to publish, interesting in the non-clichéd sense of the word.

Korea Today, No. 7, 1988 (Pyongyang, Democratic People's Republic of Korea). Includes photograph of "The great leader President Kim Il Sung [inspecting] newly-made electric locomotives and heavy-duty goods waggons." Also, the English phonetics for: "I agree to discuss the itinerary" ("iljonggyehockgul toronhanunde chansong innida").

Poets & Writers Magazine, Volume 17, Issue 1, Jan./Feb. 1989 (201 W. 54th St., NYC 10019). Includes a conversation with Quincy Troupe.

Teachers & Writers, Vol. 20, No. 1 (5 Union Square W., NYC 10003). One year, \$15. Includes an article on "Writing Oral History," by Cynthia Stokes Brown. "Speaking Written History," by Ron Padgett, will appear in its next issue.

Transfer, Vol. 2, No. 1, Fall/Winter 1988-89 (Gary Lenhart, Editor, 248 W. 105th St., NYC 10025). 155 pages. \$5. Includes work by Anne Waldman, Kofi Natambu, Greg Masters, Lorna Smedman, Charlotte Carter, and Joel Lewis on Ted Berrigan's *Sonnets*.

Washington Review, Vol. XIV, No. 4, Dec./Jan. 1989 (Box 50132, Wash. DC 20004). \$2. Includes the interviews mentioned by Bernadette Mayer elsewhere in this issue.

Two Poems by Bill Kushner

9/12/88

Monday! stepping over the guttery alleys & on
To the avenues & you among morning traffic, stopping it
Well, if for a minute, now that's surely something
As all New York looks, a desperate taxi honks itself hoarse
& so everyone piles in "is this Paradise or what?"
& so someone cute answers "or what" thinks he's so smart
& he probably is, but you can't be him you are only
Yourself, help us all, as they screech fast & deliver what fruit
WHOLESALE, so you, he's juicy & big & he'll tell you the Truth
In his arms & huge if you'll only ask, ahh but who wants truth?
No! one wants passion! & let's get to it quickly, something
Good golly! to do after school I'm so always horny, but he pulls
Away & a flood of light & you gulping in it, come & swallow
& time for home, take a deep hard breath, the fumes the flowers
The memories & there's always the rest of the day for a scream
You skip gaily along in your heat to the beat, sunny side of the street

SWEETHEART

Hi! I missed you at the Anger Workshop
Where were you? My father had wild eyes
& called me his very own sweetheart. Sweetheart
He'd call me, his own son. He'd get us both drunk
& turn on the music & ask me with a deep bow
To dance. Sometimes I'd hide like under
His car. Once a Voice said, You've got to
Stop this right now or you'll die. But
The next morning, I woke up & I didn't die. Once
He said he loved me more than he'd ever loved my
Mother. That man is inside me. Than MAN
ARRESTED FOR CHILD ABUSE is me. That abused child
Is me, too. I can only love those men who
Make me fear them. I love violent men
& now it's Saturday. But Sundays are
The worst days of the week. Yeah, kid, I'll see you.
I have to feel fear for me to get turned on.
I have no boundaries. He has my father's own
Wild blue eyes & he calls me Son.

* * * * *

Announcement

Poets' Guide To Canada. Michael Andre, of *Unmuzzled Ox* (105 Hudson St., NYC 10013/226-7170) is looking for... but we'll let Michael tell it in his own words: "Virgil led Dante around Hell, and Canada, similarly, is another world. I don't understand my home and native land. What's needed is an airport guidebook comprehensible to the American cultural Exporter arranged in alphabetical order written in the highest order: VERSE! We need 200 poets, 10 for each province, and 100 Yanks. Every town, every league, Expos, Galbraith-Gretzky, MacDonald, Trudeau-Mulroney, Gaspé — what are the needed entries? Enter them. *Et en français, si vous voulez.*"

MARTY AND LENNY

Marty and Lenny were brothers
numbers three and four among the eight children
and Marty married Louise and then Lenny
married her sister Bertie and then Marty
and Louise bought a house in Flatlands and
Lenny and Bertie bought the house next
door a year later and when Lenny lost his
job selling suits Marty gave him a job in
the hardware store and before long they
had become partners and there was reason to
think that if Marty inhaled Lenny blew
smoke rings but it didn't work out that way
There was a variety of petty jealousies
financial irregularities boundary disputes
and invitations not proffered so
when Marty and Lenny stopped speaking to
each other there were many levels of non-
communication

I do not speak to my brother
I do not speak to my brother-in-law one way
I do not speak to my brother-in-law the other way
I do not speak to my neighbor
I do not speak to my partner
and years later when Marty died Lenny
stood at the casket and stared at his brother
but no one could tell if his lips were moving
or how he assessed his prospects

— Robert Hershon

Reflection

No word since you left the States
I don't know what to think
You for one wanted freedom
I was angry and hard at that
City life keeps me busy, but
sometimes in my busboy jacket

pouring water for customers
dining room mirrors all around
I look into myself
and see the night
I tried to keep you

— Cliff Fyman

To Himself

Hey, Sluggo, how do you think
this birdshit
got on the *inside* of my windshield

— Sluggo

THE POETRY PROJECT WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING:

GIFTS:

National Endowment for the Arts, Philip Glass, Paul
Cummings, Susan Greene & Yuki Hartman, Basil & Martha
King, Anthony Galzarono.

RECENTLY RENEWED MEMBERS:

John Ashbery, Ruth Altmann, Jack Anderson, Mr. J. Bailey
Morgan, Rania Barber, Karla Barker, Nancy Berke, Martin
Bienstock, Lauren Boland, Lester Bridges, Brad Brown,
Paul Brown, David A. Canu, Denya Cascio, Susan Cataldo,
Andrei Codrescu, Jess Collins, William Considine, John
Corbin, Patricia D'Alessandro, Magali Damas, Raymond
Danowski, Hal Davis, Anne Delaney, Rackstraw Downes,
Shelagh Doyle, Michael Eden, Ruth Eisenberg, Eugene
Eisner, Steve Facey, Charles Ferris, Dan Foley, Elizabeth
Fox, Raymond Foye, Jane Freilicher-Hazan, David Fried-
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X. Lennon, Elena J. Leon, Stan Leventhal, Arlene G.
Levine, Steve Levine, Joel Lewis, Carol Mager, Harold &
Mildred Masters, Harry Mathews, Todd McGovern, Monty
McVay, Honor Moore, Lorelee Noletti, Charles & Paula
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Treshan, Edward Vega, Esteban Vincente, Aaron Vlek,
Helena Waldman, Tisha Watson, Carl Watson, Josephine
Wilson, Don Yorty, Nina Zivancevic

The cover and calendar drawings for this issue are by
Pamela Jeanne Weadick. Layout by Jean Holabird.

PILLOW

Let narcissism go, spread it out
and away. Moon me, you bring
out my maternal side. I punch you in the stomach
move against you, fast until we
collapse and just like that,
we think it is always snowy out there
warm in here, and it is
under this notch
humans fall through like falls.

— Cheryl Fish