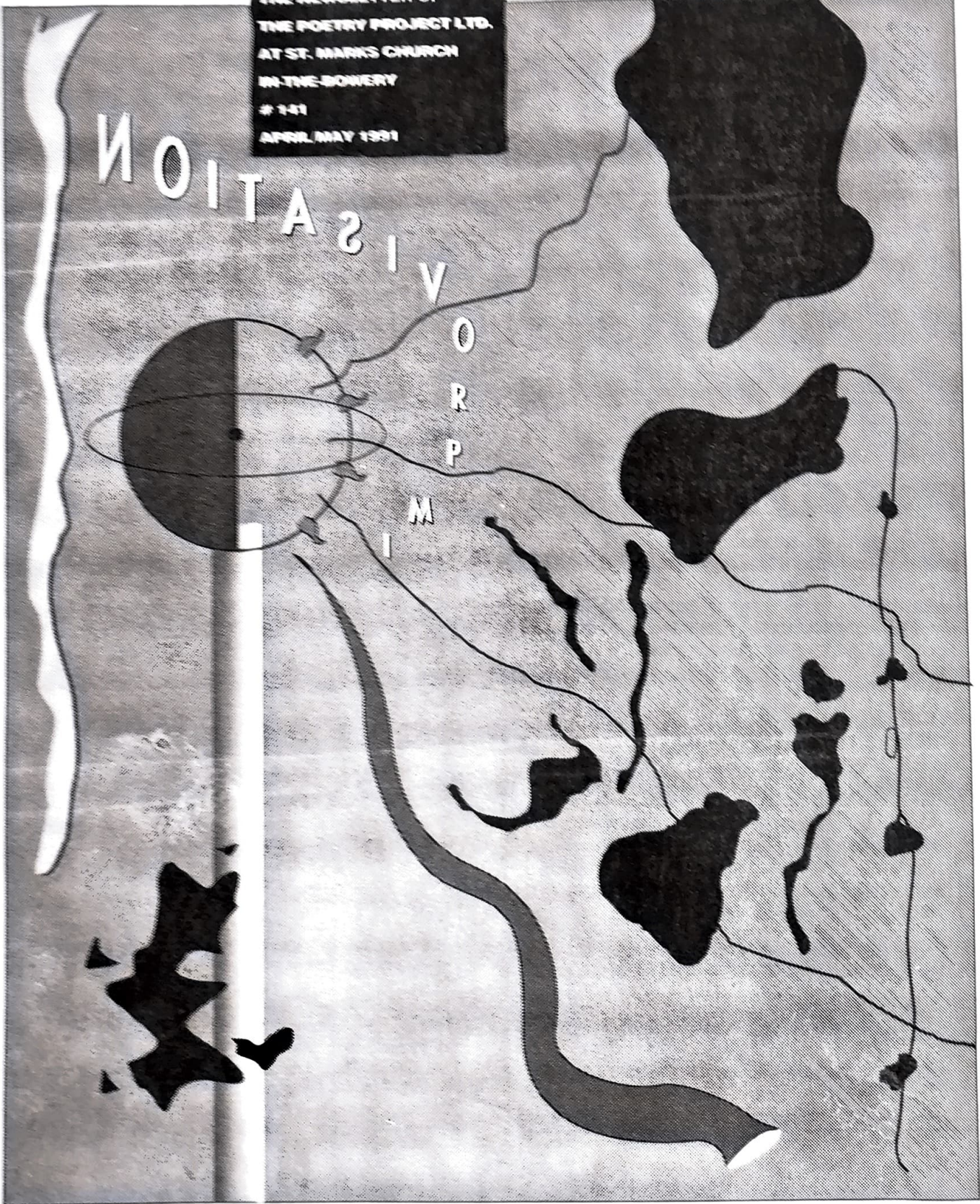


The Poetry Project

THE NEWSLETTER OF
THE POETRY PROJECT LTD.
AT ST. MARKS CHURCH
IN THE BOWERY
1-51
APRIL, MAY 1991

NOITAZIV
ORP
MI

The background of the cover is a textured, light-colored surface. A vertical white pole runs down the left side. A globe is positioned in the middle-left area. Several large, irregular black shapes are scattered across the page, some resembling ink blots or abstract forms. A thin, dark line with small circular nodes winds across the right side of the page. The text 'NOITAZIV ORP MI' is arranged in a curved path across the upper and middle sections.

JOB AT THE POETRY PROJECT

The Poetry Project regrettably announces the departure, at the end of the 1990-91 season, of Kimberly Lyons (Program Coordinator), Lee Ann Brown (Program Assistant/Monday Night Coordinator) and Jerome Sala (Newsletter Editor).

The Project will be seeking to hire, for the 1991-92 season, a Program Coordinator, a Monday Night Coordinator and a Newsletter Editor. For job descriptions and information about how to apply for these positions, please inquire at the Poetry Project office (212-674-0910).

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The Poetry Project

**THE NEWSLETTER OF
THE POETRY PROJECT LTD.
AT ST. MARK'S IN-THE-BOWERY
#141 APRIL/MAY 1991**

The Poetry Project Newsletter is Mailed to Members of The Poetry Project and to Contributors (of \$20 or More).

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SPECIAL SECTION: IMPROVISATION

Editor's Note: I decided to feature this topic after reading an essay by Stephen Greenblatt entitled "Improvisation and Power." The essay made me aware of not only the artistic side of improvisation, but its social and political aspects as well. To investigate further, I gathered pieces from the following authors.

IMPROVISATION

Bruce Andrews

(On Monday night, January 21, 1991, the Poetry Project presented an 'evening of improvisation'. The 2nd half was a quartet of George Cartwright, Michael Lytle, Evan Gallagher & myself—improvising for 35 minutes with assembled & disassembled woodwinds, brass, toys, live sound effects, and poetry. I sat at a large cardtable with a microphone & my lexical 'raw materials': about half of the word clusters & phrases I'd generated since New Years, in piles of the 4+1/4 by 3+2/3 inch pieces of cut paper I do all of my writing on. From these—at times untidily spread around—I was composing word constellations & longer units & sequences out loud. They were miked to be heard on top of & in between & underneath the drastic (&, in Derek Bailey's phrase, 'non-idiomatic') free improvising of the acoustic musicians. We were all in many ways constantly shifting & modulating in response to each other, in the moment—but the writing also took place under the hideous shadow of America's brutitarian war-making, less than a week old at that point). Below is an excerpt from the text, transcribed from the recording of the performance—(with punctuation designed to give some sense of the timing & intermittences).

Nessun dorma, nessun dorma. Animal cowards / the truly... far-sighted 're always nagging at you / pig bounces rep—... deco pig—Word / the entropic... got up & hopped / a sex-toy lending library on wheels—like so many tenpins / sausage dazzling, congenially bumpered / race makes people // groupie prom / webwork of filth—zouk the hair-trigger / bougainvillea foster-care labanotated whiplashy robespierre cut-outs / Don't butch my bluff / spasm some bother / beesting dildo closeups / prim suds, eggshaped /// (sp.) / mirrors; aficianados // Justice can get a bone structure; thinking is for restaurants / The hallucinogens are calling a work stoppage. The screaming had high heels on /// juicy nerve enough—the favorites are fluttering / swivel doll / Idolizing nib lump slippage = skin; dreams don't have backyards / Sex... is anxiety, in dress clothes / poofed by a prom... you want your own carioca / I'm upset is... prehistoric; teddy bears, unemployment, intercom fellatio—you want a matching grant before you have sex? // IMPEACH THE PRESIDENT /

kissing belligerent / Sandinistas invade Namibia // decorative colonies / Recourse bracketed hatchets is just fantasia Opheliason / Geek, thick...—Word. / Unzippered, jojo in front; gonadizers of // the manlike sugarsauce—furtive in face, on tiptoes / solo giveback, feeder lips // lipstick intervallic pre-platonic... Dislocatably Yours, // If orchids could wage war / No animal gets an order; America is sleeping / Are we a U.N. widow? // Palestinians hide behind syllables // Foetal blemishes a wish could become a matinee / No tongue can walk across evergrommeted bliss blasts / (pat to pay to pet)—if you're snowbanked over letters.../ no translatable indiscretions / Sin for fun, called a stunt-in—cum cuss cut—testicles of eccentricity / saliva disconcertation hoozit // Throw up on memory lane / It's always the romanticism of *somebody else* that's shabby. They *did* have money fights / Joint slaughterhouse... even the scaffolding is frightened / Necromansion—at least she didn't call it Camelot // ghostbusters on a pensionplan / The *commodity* had twins to sell bunkbeds to // Was that rhyme gassy enough? Your vocabulary could use a guard-rail / Meetings keep us young / Why are you grovelling in the already articulated? / slunks... (squint) (wronagation)... (wreck-tions), (loop) // Now they're called HUMAN REMAINS POUCHES / sunkholistic /// Get me a new delinquent—radioactive arbitron / flagellants... gypsified... for hire, allegiance in bulk; satisfact—satisfactoid / The slick shall inherit, imperturbably fucked the surplus value without fixed address /// Larvae sung / Bastardizes the border, an eyeball spy trick shimmies another syllable / languourous, languourish... body // tense & hunched, up the fluffed immediacy // a self-stuffing chicken / Juke up stiff symptomatic overbite / care bears on adrenalin / Let a tourniquet get to be your best friend—well, it was pre-human / If certainty's your game... / In a leveragable swamp—no glaze eats its meat, the gesture is hubby. Squat's not neutral enough for me. Praise the nitwits / Nerves butcher the dark—eightball pause tapered into syllogism // Chevron, hula, relationally furtive; the steady... is deplorable / teensily satisfactory // Pan to the left—pets ate your complete sentence! / TOY SURFACE, begging lustrous—night soaks meteorite // Eye's isms / A dinky microscope sound—well, vernacular me out! / Taffypull in real

time, to keep the chipmunks from starring //
 headlights, shockproof; movietoned sugar bassline
 learn to swim by editing // The presentational is
 oppressive / Sprinkles up papier-mache—torrid off-
 white—irremediable flicker, a trickle of keystrokes //
 hydra italics, flatchested perforations; a neo-decorative
 indifferentialism / wavelength nostalgia—when is an as,
 eyed out plus *whoa*, follow-up / The figurative, that
 trojan horse / big dome intricacies / Fun from a
 book—a full-flavored anorexia, ovened dusk, a
 decorative correction /// ... braille, shorthand / Don't
 retract it, tip it in! // My unconscious could only get
 standing room // Foster-parents for the mermaids—
 the endentured compensatory // aching for Lenin—it
 was very cleansing, but I wasn't dirty /// Orphanage
 impedance gaffes it out on a leash—headrest in
 sumptuousity; I do leave some room for reality, let
 grammar go elsewhere / **BOLDFACE** / The 'my-my'
 hypotenuse—a heavy vibratoer, quasi-gurgling / (do-
 re-mi), poke points //// Word! /// Israeli bounced
 ape: Hotttype // galore // salutable, doctrinal, disney
 wetting / forced... syllables / suck... a scud—Top Gun
 tessitura; move into a new Kuwaiti neighborhood // &
 I'm not prepared to say! / Pouncy, uptight, but calm—
 only the concussions are known / (pushy whisper) / A
 tabletop theater strapped to their ejection seats //
 incoherent very bright fact down ready syllable patrol
 loudspeakers, tourniquets on midnight / a PNG
 (persona non grata) party // Connectives... leave a
 bitter taste // stochastic vulva with buddy system /
 scooters in containment: the Brechtian leaves me cold /
 Its juice... is dirt / Ideals in their wacky suits?—a
 tourist day of the dead, a pudding of output / Gimme;
 creamy; gappy—pistoleroing... Sentence. /////

Impassably regicidal abstractionated gapping pre-op
 mannikin syndrome, extra ego / Paraplegic unison
 thumping into delicacy / cholestomy harvests; insipid
 rapture / Bestialfication, the kewpie doll... in its...
 deforestation mode / piss on clatter / low octane
 gammaglobulin / **CRIME—CREAMY—** // big lousy
 eyes // eclipticism—fab, rocket, pages hoard abortives,
 pre-chucked, ream pez / golems... of gender cumlights
 —jury fists, neck... image... dumb, reprieve of the skin
 —conniptional thunder / Reindeer eat subjectification
 / Palestine's new ZIP code //// forearm behaves—the
known, that powertrip // Milk the roar; clamor neck
 slapshot fireball // trash crosses into horror; the same
 is new again—slurpy divertissement // The pedophiles
 are regrouping / Thought is its land-fill—only signifiers
 bleed / Get it on digital & we can talk / You have a left-
 wing memory; gave out a few menopauses—suck tights
 dry / In fat, its cancer darwins; eyelash impromptu;
 fingertipping horoscope / Camels enter the spaceship,
 flange on lips, nighttime methodology // Pleasure's

tracers, collective nerves; Wall Street had you for
 breakfast—to blackout mode, red cheats on white //
 Gyps nest // Breakage stylized moralism stirfry ////
 Scale of actuarial S & M turtles, a departicularizing
 hum... **ALIBI = REVENGE...** carcass for president /
 You call your cliches *rigor*. You call dissatisfaction
 nutritious —**OUTLINE RULES!**—(somebody dashed
 ahead of me to that specific experience) / I'm horny, I
 want my reference point to be everything;... suddenly
 eat the furniture / Incorrect chinchillas, faith kooks,
EXCUSES fire up the gazebo / ... conquered autonomy.

Bruce Andrews will be giving a talk at St. Marks Poetry
 Project on April 7th entitled "Paradise & Method."
 (See calendar.) His *I Don't Have Any Paper So Shut Up*
 (or *Social Romanticism*) is due soon from Sun & Moon.

From **A FIRST READING OF ON THE ROAD AND LATER**

Clark Coolidge

And then there were those huge excited letters that
 seemed background and framework for the *Road* prose.
 These fascinated me too and I began to write my imag-
 inations of them to friends, probably the first writings I
 did for no other reason than the high that came from
 jabbering everything down alone in the middle of the
 night. Everything that happened to me, the minutest
 details of sunlight on a shoe, began to seem vastly
 important, had to be scribbled down, and with *exten-
 sions*. It was like blowing your thoughts over the
 everyday whatever life. Endless lines of words that you
 followed if only because you couldn't see their ends.
 The connection with jazz here is obvious: improv-
 isation. Nobody had ever spoken to me of writing in
 this way. I had thought the writer must first have it all
 in his head and only *then* put it into words, but no. I
 began to see how it was really excitingly done: You
 wrote from what you didn't know toward whatever
 could be picked up in the act. Poetry starts here.

Thirteen years after his death now his work, like that of
 any originator, seems surrounded by silence, a few
 parts astonishment and absorption, many parts
 misapprehension or neglect (in another age he would
 have been called eloquent). And the famed "Beat
 Generation" period of the late Fifties seems mainly to
 have been a resurgence of age-old art camaraderie and
 generativeness in an otherwise unfeatured time. But the
 challenge of his art remains immense, a challenge

brought to my mind once again just the other day, and appropriately in another great excited letter, by the poet Bernadette Mayer: "Somebody someday has to do that work of never stopping, of going as fast as it can be gone to the point, dare I say it, of eliminating existence at all so that, and that would be an interesting moment, which gets gotten to sometimes in poems, or in Proust, you've finally gotten to the end of reminiscence and all experience and certainly all knowledge (if you have it), and get left with the great and wonderful high blank of no purpose at last but a mind wherein you can know exactly (ha!) how you and everyone else too exists in the world at this time (not the times but breathing)." Reading his lines I can easily if temporarily, his darkly-marked tone speaking in mind, convince myself that *I* am inking down the words, that I am this Jack Kerouac. It is as if hidden somewhere in his books there is a writing that hasn't been written yet and will never be finished. Recently in a dream I tried to convince him to release some of his unpublished writings (or persuade his widow to release them) but he answered, refusing, "Writing settles nothing."

Now when I look at his works (and Kerouac is the writer I have reread most often, excepting possibly Beckett Melville and Shakespeare) they keep their flame and I have no doubt that he is the central writer of my place and time. More of the second to second matter transformation of world into mind is there in his lines than in anyone else's that I have seen. In this sense he comes closest to being the *total* writer. There is the sensation that nothing is missing or lost. Reading his books is like being handed another mind, myriad-filled and ceaselessly sending. There's a momentum of mind-voice that otherwise might be found only in Proust or certain Bop musicians. A speed of pick-up on the fly that *includes* so much, a poet's energies to make of every thought of the world a great ringing edifice. And even his doubts along the way are included to push and transform ("musician stops, brooding on bandstand" in *Mexico City Blues*). All I need do is read a few pages to regain sheer belief in the unstoppable endless volleying Everything Work. Sometimes he gets to a naming-density so multicircuited, as in certain parts of *Visions of Cody*, that I begin to feel something beyond belief is about to rise and advance ("I followed in back"). That key has been turned and nothing will ever be said to be the same again, as indeed it has not been since I first turned the last page of *On the Road*, "dreaming in the immensity of it."

Originally appeared in *Talisman*.

Clark Coolidge's latest book is *Sound as Thought* (Poems) from Sun & Moon.

From **TERRITORY**

low light makes a landscape
out of distance

a poem is one of the almost successful
forces of nature

smacked around by repetition and
reflection

electric calendar and ancient alphabet
ferocious but hybrid specifications

ringing the changes on the mythology
of riff

point where the point runs to and back again
the rigors of function and novelty

passage mechanics shagging the circular
angle by angle one secret or the next

perfecting the transparent source
indolent strut dithering at the meridian

or just hammering at the window
a preserved disclosure something skeletal

fortuitous and taut

Ray DiPalma

Originally appeared in *O.blek*.

Ray DiPalma's most recent book is *RAIK* (Roof). Sun & Moon has just released his chapbook, *Mock Fandango*.

WRITING AND SPONTANEITY

Nick Piombino

From the instant of birth to the instant of death, the individual is met with the constant requirement that spontaneity be controlled. At the same time, in many interactions the individual is expected to appear spontaneous while in many situations it is not possible for her or him to be actually feeling what is being displayed. It is no surprise that once given the opportunity to be spontaneous an individual might feel some ambivalence.

7/13/88

The more I am heard, the more I must resort to silence to be heard, the quicker I go, the more stealthily I must move.

What you are looking for, accept only that, even if you have to collect it in very small amounts over long periods of time.

Despite many efforts to counteract this, even recent events strongly point in the direction that the group is finding more and more ways to control the individual voice and mind. The recent moves against individual freedom of expression and the increasing restrictions on the National Endowment for the Arts are clear evidence of this. While it is true that there has been a victory for the so-called "experimental method" in both the sciences and the arts, this victory from the standpoint of individual expression was a pyrrhic one. While an historical procession of geniuses has generation after generation revealed an ever deeper confirmation of the individual desire for freedom, a powerful historical process has taken place to make sure that the group mind will easily hold sway over the individual mind.

What does the experimental approach imply? It points to the reality that expression itself is of enormous value because it is only through expression that anything unrevealed will can be revealed. There is a very great temptation in the group mind to use the power of attention to give "reality" or take away "reality" to or from a group, a cause, an idea. This lack of attention can belittle the significance of something in the eyes of the group. Conversely, the power to concentrate attention itself, through, for example, advertising, confirms the group's ability to determine which individuals will be heard.

In turn, the individual has countered such techniques of concentrating group attention by forms of experimentation. The experiments might be in physics, politics, music, medicine or poetry, but the end goal of the experiment is often to win the attention of the group towards an alternative paradigm in the way of carrying out certain activities, maintaining certain beliefs, or just feeling a certain way about something, like oneself, for example, or the group as a whole. Usually, the group's responses to such experiments will be rapid and definitive. No doubt, very often the group expresses itself through an individual representative, but it will be clear to most individuals that it is the group that is speaking. Ironically, the only way this can ever, and does ever change, is through an individual accepting the full brunt of the group's response. True, such an individual may represent a group, but this representation will never be as formal and as wholehearted as that obtained by the individual who has the explicit backing of a group or institution.

9/12/88

Things resist manipulation and usually respond better to a frank and solid grasp.

One of the most familiar forms of spontaneity is that of the structured game. In such forms the spontaneity consists of employing one of a specified set of moves as a response to the move of another. This includes the poem as game where the King is Content and the Queen is Form, the Bishop Rhetoric and the Knight Metaphor, the Castle Imagery and the Pawns Allusions. Each moment allows for certain moves, disallowing others, taking the poem to its eventual victory or defeat. The first tournament is enacted in the mind of the poet — the later tournaments in the minds of the readers, editors and publishers — and finally in the assertions of critics, and in the end in the annals of history. Among many other things, experimental poetry arrived at the scene to propose a slightly different game. First, there would be no hierarchy of form and content, making the King and Queen of equal strength. This possibility was resisted greatly up until very recent years, shifting only slightly as structuralist and post-structuralist criticism shed some light on some earlier attempts to experiment with language (i.e. the works of Poe and Mallarme as discussed by Roland Barthes and Jacques Lacan). The strength and quality of the old distinctions would depend on the specific writer. Some writers would not distinguish such functions at all, others would allow a remnant of this to remain, kind of like the constitutional monarchy in England.

10/29/88

You come to the delicate portion, which is the center of the machine. You get there by means of feeling your way there because your eyes are no good to you there. Your feelers fly in the air. You touch the delicate part with your feelings-feelers and the whole machine moves.

Also, the tournaments (if these were to be retained) would not necessarily fall into the hierarchies above. For example, the poet may publish her own poems and the poems of others. Also, the poet may herself become the critic of her own work. Some writers have offered theoretical models for their own work, others have renounced the importance of history. Some have even gone beyond symbolism and impressionism to demand that the reader and the writer share equally in the task of shaping meaning. Other poets have changed the model of how a poem is to be visualized. The common root in all these approaches is to allow the poet to circumvent conventions, which more and more determine what poets will say and how they will say it. Gradually, as the writer accepts full responsibility for every aspect of the poem, the authority slips away from the context and into the hands of the poet. And, at the same time, the idea of the context as moral judge is gradually replaced by the concept of the context as arbiter of forces. The old dream was one in which the game would render the forces as controllable agents; the new dream is one in which the forces emerge spontaneously as predictable agents of unpredictable change.

The re-emergence of spontaneity as a central force in creativity can be tracked in the evolution of Buddhism, for example, from the early desire-repressing forms to the later forms like Zen Buddhism where responsiveness and openness to feelings replaces these strict controls through laws and tenets. Similarly, earlier psychological systems stress behavioral conditioning, while more recent systems like psychoanalysis utilize free association of ideas and spontaneous expression of thoughts as methods of discovering underlying conflicts, so as to release them. However, at the same time, while such systems attempt to systematize their approaches by means of group organizations which offer courses of instructions, gradually the ideals of spontaneity may be obscured by the need both to explain and to institutionalize evolving systems of practice.

2.

"You can hold yourself back from the sufferings of the world, this is something you are free to do and is in accord with your nature, but perhaps precisely this holding back is the only suffering you might be able to avoid."
—Kafka

Holding back here is closely related to the issue of spontaneity. Another connection is that so-called automatic writing, expressing for the sake of expressing (where the content is secondary), also called "art for arts sake", shares with Romanticism and psychoanalysis an idea of discovering through uncovering or revealing suppressed energies within the soul or psyche ideals which have been lost in the past. So that all proponents of freedom of expression find a common source of light arising from individual strivings. In this view, all individuals share the same ironic fate of a necessary lifetime struggle against an abject fusion with the strongest beliefs and wishes of the group. When the individual speaks out in opposition to this tendency, all individuals are reminded that the individual *can* speak out, while inevitably, the force of history overcomes the power of the convictions of any single individual's beliefs or ideals, if that is the will of the group. On the other hand, when the power of the individual is derived from the group, the group will invariably assert its power to silence the individual, even when it is announcing its efforts to curb and control this power, as in a democracy. This is why poetry which seeks the consensus of the group about its meanings and purposes is often suspect to me, depending on the degree of self-reflection and irony it contains about its own meanings and purposes.

Author's note: "Writing and Spontaneity" was presented as part of a talk at SUNY Buffalo on December 6, 1990. Some of the accompanying aphorisms, selected and arranged by Jerome Sala, were published in *Verse*, Spring 1990.

Nick Piombino's *Poems* (Sun & Moon) was published in 1988. His essays, collected in *The Boundary of Blur*, are due out, also from Sun & Moon. More of his aphorisms are forthcoming in *Avec IV*.

12/8/88

Then I realized that I myself was history going backwards—I saw the improbability of every event as wondrous in itself, and suggestive of times past and those to come.

4/21/89

Beware, dear philosopher, behind the ghost of every argument is the ghost of a person come to haunt you.

Don't think of the gallows at the beach—think of the beach at the gallows.

6/19/88

The book itself is the fiction.

SOME POLITICAL ASSUMPTIONS OF SOME FORMS OF IMPROVISATION

Fiona Templeton

(written concurrently with Zurich interdisciplinary workshop in perception and assumption, through performance; and concurrent with OilWar)

Jerome Sala suggests when asking me to write about improvisation that in poetry perhaps it's what one does anyway; meaning invention? Yes, at least at a primary level, in all but utterly systemic composition, though even then semantic or contextual choice is made. Then in subsequent times perhaps a not much different process can be used for editing, if any. But that's improvisation as process, not as form. What makes improvisation live?

Still what isn't apparent in the page of writing is the time of its making. Even in poetic forms where space is importantly not all verbally occupied, (Eigner, Albiach), this space is a function of the time of reading. There's usually little immediate difference between a page of much reworked and slowly rewritten text and a quickly written unreworked one. On reading at a more than primary level, a distinction might be discerned in density, a time of the mind moving at varying speeds between words, the sinking, opening or leaping of attention demanded by the impossibility of only assuming what happens there. And yet a surreal associative density might need to be read more slowly than it was written.

When writing is named improvisation on a theme, the superficial musical analogy blurs the distinction between the compositional and the interpretive. Musical improvisation where the same term is used differentiates between interpretive (active) composition and interpretation of the composed (known). But in the analogy improvisation becomes a description of a relation, not a process, that is, of a movement between forms (idea to word), not between types of structure within a form.

In musical improvisation the movement given-invented increasingly loses its ladder. There's a conceit of the inspirational, originary, new. The form tends to be linear, continuous production through excitation. No wonder some think of improvisation as a man's game.

The same is true of traditional (naturalistic) theatrical improvisation, seen as invention co-extensive with product, a valuing of expenditure, often until you can't anymore, contained in the time created, ego-driven,

competitive. A lot of liquid proof, foaming at the mouth, sweat.

Compared to expressions of oral poetry where formal values allow memory, or newly include making-time, such improvisation imagines inconsistency, confuses rupture and ejaculation, living and beating Nietzsche in the unborn, that is, made, the way stockbrokers think about money. And yet this seems to imitate the above-mentioned page, making-time subsumed into product, liveness requiring negation of the negative, or of reflection in both mental and formal senses. It is both materialist and mystifying (exclusive). For the moment call the improvisation with these assumptions source-based improvisation, though result-extensive might also serve.

Its identity often becomes stylistic and stylistics; see how contact-improvisation, however liberating for the dancer, always looks like contact-improvisation. Within an improvisation organized by Bill Gordh, Ishmael Houston-Jones had taken over from me writing in a book; a dancer approached and threw the book away, exhorting him to improvise, that was, dance like her. Bill on the other hand has one of the most generous visions of improvisation: he said, PS122, 12:00 to 5:00. There resulted something like a Twombly of time (so including exhaustion).

For the moment then call this other approach frame-based. Even while for some Bill's frame was an arena for perhaps incompatible virtuosic nuclei (once beyond naughtiness, boring when it's always, as often, the same), one person simply walked around the space occasionally. Because inside the frame can be room for the positivist and its opposite. Its opposite not being negativist, as a positivist might assume, but including both. Nor is this a revaluation of the ladder, except perhaps on the other side of the wall.

What wall? Begin with a line, not forwards, but creating two aspects. Before and after. Nothing may happen, but since we don't have to wait for something to happen in order to begin, that is what happens. What is there? On that side of the line, on, and on this, off. Off may observe on, in order to decide how to affect on. The best move might be to remain still. A point without a frame is radiant; a point within a frame may be excentric. The audience may be on or off. Off will affect on, as will the audience, and both vice-versas. Off may go on. On may be subsequent to and co-spatial with off instead of co-temporal and separate from. On may be the dark.

Composition can be mutual and non-competitive when

the single object of attention is not identical with the active self. Not only, that is. Competition may also be framed, so seen. The assumptions of an intention are redefined by the coincidence of that intention with another's. A secret intention may never be fulfilled. The making-time may be perceived, may be dressed. Drama may be between different values, as between hindering successfully and describing inaccurately, or a chair and a dream in the middle, and then two chairs in opposite corners. Large cube and prone performer. See difference without equating definition with isolation. How to render visible the occasional walker, probably in-existent within the value/recognition proportions of some? Compare silence within to silence between. This a different reason to be live. Above all how to be able to stop what is only there because it sees itself as unstoppable, and above all not by being unstoppable too?

Fiona Templeton is the author of *You — the City* (Roof Books), a Manhattanwide play for an audience of one now enjoying great success in Europe. Her booklength poem, *London*, was published by Sun & Moon (1984).

IMPROVISATION AND LITERATURE

Tyrone Williams

I have been asked to consider the effect of improvisation on the creation of 20th Century American literature. I will, for the most part, confine my comments to poetry, though I believe they are equally pertinent for prose fiction in the period that concerns me, the Fifties.

On the one hand, the task appears relatively simple. One thinks of Kathy Acker's revisionist novels that deconstruct the "classics" of European literature; Allen Ginsberg's "Howl," surely one of the signature poems of the Beat Generation; and, of course, the work of LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka), Michael Harper, Bob Kaufmann, Jayne Cortez, and others. On the other hand, if one considers the innovations of post-World War II poets like Ginsberg (as well as Louis Zukofsky, Charles Olson and Frank O'Hara) in terms of a literary tradition extending back to Whitman and Dickinson, disentangling the influences of this tradition from those of the jazz tradition becomes more difficult.

Now the issue of "influence" has concerned literary critics in this century with increasing urgency as the drive to scientificize literary criticism culminates in our

epoch in the ascension of structuralism and, more generally, semiotics. Nevertheless, influence, like meaning and significance, has proven resistant to this procrustean regimentation. One now evokes "influence" under the caution flag of even more uncertainty than before; one speaks of influence in terms of probabilities instead of absolutes. In the question of the influence of jazz improvisation on 20th century American literature, one has an excellent example of the problem.

Ginsberg, Olson, Kaufmann, Baraka and others have testified eloquently about the effects that listening to jazz and blues have had on their literary enterprises. Hence the proliferation of poems about jazz and blues music and musicians from the Fifties to the present. Not to put too fine of a point on it, but if writing poems about paintings is a convention of the neoromantic poetry of the predominant culture, then writing poems about jazz or blues music has become a convention of oral performance and black poetry. In both instances one has the sense that these homages to other art forms betray a certain anxiety about the efficacy of poetry as a credible witness and reporter of human experience. In some ways, these homages to painting and music reflect a deeper anxiety about the "nature" of poetry: imagery or music (the witness "sees"; the reporter "talks"). That the obvious answer—poetry is both sighting and sounding—has not sufficed is evident in the charges and countercharges that too often substitute for argument in the poetics of neoromantic poetry, concrete poetry, oral performance poetry, and language poetry.

The problem is probably not that poets are really confused about the "proper" nature of poetry, but that in any given age a particular aspect of poetry is given precedence over its other aspects. These are finally political and philosophical questions, questions indirectly related to the one I want to address: does jazz alone, or even primarily, account for the forms deployed by those who lay claim to its influence? This question is particularly apt for the older generation of oral performance poets, the Ginsbergs, Olsons, Barakas. We know that these poets were classically trained, that they read and studied the European Symbolists and Surrealists, not to mention Whitman and Dickinson, the great American experimentalists of the 19th century.

One obvious response is to argue that both literature and jazz influenced these poets' construction of forms. But if that is the case, then how can we discern the literary influences from the musical ones? It is not enough, for example, to point to repetition, "breath—

lines," and the additive format, building phrase upon phrase with variations, as "jazz" influences. These techniques are evident, to varying degrees, in the work of Whitman and Dickinson. Nor is it enough to rely on personal accounts, since the white Beat poets' predilection for exoticizing black culture is well known. And one can well imagine the cultural and personal forces that led to, for example, Don L. Lee and LeRoi Jones' powerful refutation of their "academic training" in the late Fifties and Sixties, a refutation which does not preclude the possibility that, for all its stridency, their work as Madhabuhdi and Baraka continued to pay its debt to, for example, the Surrealists, of whom Jones in particular was enamoured.

Another battery of problems presents itself if one asks about the relation of improvisation to automatic writing, which may have influenced Olson's pioneering "Projective Verse" essay. Inasmuch as the latter arose out of the experiments of the symbolists and surrealists—influenced more, it appears, by developments in psychology (e.g., Freud) and physics than the other arts—one wonders to what extent the work of people like Kerouac, for example, remains under the influence of the Europeans even as it declares itself American, raised on blues.

Let me illustrate some of the difficulties of influence by juxtaposing two passages from two well-known poems:

Just as you feel when you look on the river and sky, so I felt,
Just as any of you is one of a living crowd, I was one of a crowd,
Just as you are refresh'd by the gladness of the river and the bright
flow, I was refresh'd,
Just as you stand and lean on the rail, yet hurry with the swift
current, I stood yet was hurried,
Just as you look on the numberless masts of ships and the thick-
stemm'd pipes of steamboats, I look'd.

Compare the rhythm and cadence of the preceding lines with these:

change, into a necessary blackself.

change, like a gas meter gets higher.
change, like a blues song talking about a righteous tomorrow.
change, like a tax bill getting higher.
change, like a good sister getting better.
change, like knowing wood will burn. change.
know the realenemy.

These lines are from Walt Whitman's "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" and Don L. Lee's (Haki Madhabuhdi's) "A Poem To Complement All Other Poems." Both excerpts share common features: a

rolling cresecendo that builds toward the climactic last lines, repetition for the power of mesmerization, variation for the power of novelty, freshness. I hope it is clear that I am not suggesting that Lee was not influenced by jazz. Nor am I suggesting that Whitman's innovations occurred in a cultural vacuum, that his innovations were not themselves influenced by, for example, Scripture, both written (the Bible) and spoken (sermons). I am trying to demonstrate the difficulty of extracting *specific* influences from the forms of the poems themselves.

It seems that while there is little doubt that American black music—specifically, jazz and blues—influenced the poets of the post-World War II era (as well as the pre-World War II generation), it is difficult to ascertain exactly what counts as a musical influence and what counts as a literary influence.

Tyrone Williams' chapbook *Convalescence* was published by Ridgeway Press. He has recently completed a new book, *The Adventures of PI* (Poems) and his work is forthcoming in *Caliban*, the *Kenyon Review*, *Transfer* and *River Styx*. He is an Assistant Professor at Xavier Univ. in Cincinnati.

DESIRE DEVELOPS AN EDGE

THE PINK GUITAR: WRITING AS FEMINIST PRACTICE by Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Routledge, (29 W. 35th St., NYC 10001, 1990), 196 pp., paper, no price listed.

Reviewed by Joel Lewis

Charlie Parker, in an oft-told anecdote, was once asked how one became a great jazz improviser: "First, learn everything you can on your instrument. Then *forget* that *shit* and play!!"

19. I am not a writer as such. I am a marker, maybe that is a way to say it. All the signs emerge on the page (I put them here, they came here through me) (some were already there, in the weave of paper, no tabula rasa)
—Rachel Blau DuPlessis, "The Pink Guitar", p.173

Rachel Blau DuPlessis' *The Pink Guitar: Writing As Feminist Practice* improvises against the "chord changes" of normative critical practice. "Not positing oneself as the only, sol(e) authority". Here, the structured absence of the critical process is put under interrogation along with her book of questions — gender, Modernism, poetry.

... I am tired of "poetry" — that bike wheel mounted upside down thinking it is a real bike, forgetting it was undone by Duchamp. Tired of Hollywood poetry, like Hollywood cinema, endless discursive narration which only had different people in starring roles. And judging from their pictures in APR, the stars are pretty similar too.

—"Otherhow", page 149

Robert Duncan's *H.D. Book* must be something of a model for DuPlessis' essays. And perhaps D.J. "Doc" Lacan & his hip-hop stupid fresh flip-flop signified & signifiers. And maybe it is also something of a reaction to the reification of feminism as practiced in American Universities — now more of a selling point on the academic job market than a hinderance to employment. DuPlessis' approach is confrontational, sometimes exasperating and a bit hard to follow. But it is always worth the effort and train fare. She eschews the illusion of the thesis/exposition/summary essay to suggest that there *is* life after the *MLA Handbook of Style*. And for us poets, she is suggesting a way that political poetry can become a critical, rather than polemical, weapon.

Write poetries. Write Writings, write readings, write drafts. Write several selves to dissolve the bounded idea of the self.

—"Otherhow", p. 149

Language is a situation where a multi-poly-mishuganah set of discourses is set into play to explore and enact our crossings.

—"Otherhow", p.155

DuPlessis is the best reader of two of our most profoundly radical poets: Susan Howe and Beverly Dahlen. DuPlessis: "Exploration not in service of reconciling self to world, but creating a new world for a new self."

Found in the footnotes (*always* look in the footnotes!):

It is not women's poetry only which is gendered. Men's poetry, which is called "poetry", is saturated with gender, can hardly make a move, make an image, build a poem, make a climax, without a she. Even the most innovative and experimental works cannot move forward, past a certain point in their unrolling, cannot write themselves without a traditional positioning of women. We are just beginning to be able to see male writing as, despite its claims, partial, marked, not gender neutral, not universal.
—footnote to "The Pink Guitar", p. 192

We are just beginning to come to terms with our Fathers' shady pasts. DuPlessis: "Modernists show the strength of a politicized culture based on a shared revulsion to World War I, on one hand, and the Russian Revolution on the other." Ezra Pound as the original "dickhead" — E.P. decided that brain matter was "a great clot of genital fluid"; and in his middle

years would lie nearly flat in a chair, or, better yet, recline on a sofa. His friend, New Direction publisher James Laughlin observed: "Fluids don't run uphill. The poet reclined as much as possible to facilitate and increase the flow of spermatozoa from his balls to his bean." e.e. cummings' late life isolation in his garret on Patchin Place was spurred on by his marriage to model Marion Morehouse & his desire to keep her as far as possible from his lecherous writer & artist friends. William Carlos Williams began one of his short stories in this manner: "He was one of those fresh Jewish types you want to kill at sight, the presuming poor whose looks change the minute cash is mentioned."

Modernist agendas concealed highly conventional metaphors and narratives of gender, views of women as static, immobile, eternal, goddess-like. until the problematic of women is solved, no writer is truly modern. modernist agendas conceal highly conventional views of race — African-Americans as primitive, "colorful", picturesque people. Until the problematic of race is solved, no writer is truly modern.
—"Pater-daughter", p.44

The "review" part of these notes: *The Pink Guitar* is the freshest and most stimulating collection of critical writing that I've read in the last couple of years. And I didn't have to skim the "professor" parts of this book because there are none. This is deft improvisation — a dance between the categories and tropes of the poetic and the critical much in the manner that Lennie Tristano reinterpreted the jazz tradition in his work. And, as an added bonus, *The Pink Guitar* is a welcome antidote to the pounding disinformation of desert war news. (And most of the yellow ribbons tied to trees, dogs, parking meters & everywhere else are manufactured in Paterson, NJ — a pit stop on the Modernist road map...)

Want the poetry of shifters, a pronominal poetry, where discourses shift, times shift, nothing is exclusive or uniform, the "whole" is susceptible to stretchings and displacements, the text marks itself, and there is no decorum. Anything can be said. Want the poetry of a raggedy, hewn and situational character, with one criterion: that it has caused pleasure in the making. pleasure in the writing and intransigence in the space for doing writing, and that is it. My only interest: in making objects that give me pleasures; they may also be interesting enough to sustain and renew whatever regard, look, or reflection is by chance cast upon them. That is it. Period.
—"Otherhow", p.144

Joel Lewis' book of poems, *House Rent Boogie*, was the winner of the 2nd Ted Berrigan Memorial Award and will be in published later this year by the contest's sponsor, The Yellow Press of Chicago, IL.

IN MEMORIAM

TIM DLUGOS

1950 - 1990

Tim Dlugos died on December 3, 1990, of complications due to AIDS. The following was put together by the Poetry Project and writers across the country who knew him and admired his work. The section begins with three poems by Tim, followed by poems in his honor by other poets.

HERE COMES THE BRIDE

Ironweed, beggarweed, joe pye weed,
the Huck-Finn-threading-his-raft-among-the-stiffs-
and-driftwood feeling that a fellow gets
slapping with his paddle at the silt
and the gaseous muck he slogs through on the trek
to land. Then a cloud moves.
All those purple flowers that the streak
of purple on the endless-shades-of-green
shore signified from a midafternoon
midriver point of view become a hundred
sheaves of light. I learned their names from a book
that someone gave me in another world,
the one I came from, where adrenalin
runs like a river through the jittery day.
I've come out of the current like a girl
who thinks it's time to change
her name to something simpler, and is looking
for a way. They say folks out here work
while the light lasts, the light that outlasts them.
It's hard to tell what time it is this time
of day; these parts don't change until the sun
breaks through and bathes the river in the gentlest
glow I know. I've been there.
I'm wedded to the notion of a living
and a life awash in it, a series of tableaus
as self-contained as frames of film
where change comes imperceptibly. "That field
was carpeted in purple just a week ago;
now it's all gone to seed." When I was single,
I had the most insane adventures.
Now that I'm married, I've nothing
but the path in front of me, the wide one
to the house with the big front porch
whose light will go on in a little while.

YOUR NEW HOUSE

for Eileen

Forty, sign of plenitude
or fullness in Semitic myths:
forty thieves, a surfeit
of desperation and bravado
galloping on steeds through rooms
of someone else's house, a big
one with a fence and name;
forty days in the wilderness
eating roaches, wearing leathern
straps, a downtown style
and housing touch in the Synoptic
Gospels; forty nights of rain,
the pitching deck resounding
with the screeching animals—
make this madness stop!—;
forty years until I lead you
by the hand to the place
I have prepared for you especially.
All that went before is
so much furniture. Welcome
to your new house, full
of everything you need in a land
of light. It belongs to you now.
It's name is Today.

December 10, 1989

FRIENDS SERVICE

Does light
emerge or gently
blast, as in smut,
as in thrown-off
heat, to merge
with molecules,
to gently scrape
the painted surface
with pure energy
impressive for its
silence as much
as for its skid
delineated by
the dust this
side of leaded panes,
light that floats
inside a voice
like motes
across a beam
intruding from
the outer world
in an exercise
the strength of which
depends on sitting
still, on listening
for rays suffusing
deeper than the heart-
less heartbreaking
world of romance or
of nature, a spot
that throbs with
revelation independent
of what anybody thinks
or has to have to say
keeping speech at bay
like dogs until it
starts to glow, grows
irresistible? Hold
back the words
until they turn
to light.

Three poems by Tim Dlugos

I guess all I'd like to add as an anecdote here are a couple of things that are kind of food that fell off the plate before I got to say them, at the memorial event we had for Tim yesterday. One was that Tim and I never discussed abortion. That astonishes me and I feel immensely grateful. I had heard rumors, more than rumors, I had been told that Tim was opposed to abortion, on what grounds I didn't know—because we never had talked about it. But it seems like a wonderful thing to me. I mean, I may have even told him that I went to the March in Washington last year. Not a peep from Tim. It was just an area of huge difference and for the sake of our friendship, a really good one, we never touched it at all. It feels like immense respect, this kind of graceful avoidance. I'd like to say he did it.

Also I owed Tim \$170 when he died. I'd owed it to him for a couple of years and kept not paying him back at all—because he had AIDs I thought I had to pay him back in one lump sum. Which I never could do, so I did nothing. And I had really changed my style in regards to money and everyone I did owe money to got little bits, \$10 a month. But not Tim. I was making him special, which he would have hated—he kept saying “I don't want to be everyone's friend Tim who has AIDs.” I finally figured out that I could give him little checks too. And it made him tremendously happy. I felt like an idiot not to have realized that small things had more to do with him living than large gestures. So now I send my check to the Pen Writers Fund for AIDs each month, and once I've paid Tim back it'll feel sad in some other way. I don't know what I'll feel, of course. But I love sending the check. It's a communication.

Eileen Myles

SIX ELEGIAIC STANZAS

in memory of Tim Dlugos

1.
Now I'm looking out at rows of houses built from cinderblocks: squalid roofs, little square windows, fenced yards, each one with a striped rubber ball and a duck. It could be anywhere, and is: it's my home town, and there's my house, with two people who claim to be my parents sitting at a table. Me, I don't argue. Not about this, or anything. Life's too... something. Not short, exactly, and though I'd love to say “peculiar,” as you can see from this view on top of our famous local promontory, it's sort of terrifyingly not. Downhill maybe.

2.
A Man for All Seasons. The Man Without Qualities. The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance. The Rifleman. The Man from Galilee. The Man from Uncle. Trouble Man. Superman. Repo Man. The

Confidence Man. The Man Who Came to Dinner. The Man from Snowy River. The Man from Rio. Our Man in Havana. Two Guys from Brooklyn. Two Guys. The Lonely Guy. Hey there, lonely boy. Hey there, you with the stars in your eyes. The Quiet Man. Invisible Man.

3.
The old clown sits down to eat his breakfast. He's *very* old—the make-up on his face weighs a ton, and his artificial nose feels like a Volkswagen. He lifts a spoon of cereal and milk to his mouth, then pours a bit of coffee into a saucer so it can cool. The morning is grey, with what looks like rain clouds leaning against the hills. Bending toward the table, he sips the coffee from its saucer, spilling some, but the good thing about clown outfits is they don't show stains. Around him is his ancient wallpaper, his ancient toaster, and a picture of himself painted when he was a young clown. It keeps on making him laugh.

4.
“Like a dolphin in a canceled series now you can do what takes your fancy: Find bright light smeared on furniture like red shoe polish; sniff out trouble; ask a pump attendant for directions. I won't use your initials—T.V., J.A., J.B., K.W., WWLM, U.S.A. My uniform is crisp but drab. I was an ancient teacher's cub scout, a down-to-earth caricature of life unknown among the sensible. Set awhile and stroke my mane beneath this banyan. Flesh colored glasses. Flawless hands. Obsessive detail. This is overwhelmingly real. This is familiar music.”

5.
This day, this meal, this tree, this hand. This curse, this love, this stupendous, this red and green, this maybe to listen just once in awhile. This quiet. This-what-could-be-called-swell-if-not-for-the-excruciating-pain-which-accompanies. This confusion of the perfect, this one mistake, this year, this accident, this decade, this epoch. This shadow lengthening, difficult noise.

6.
It's evening and the air above the river here is a warm and stubborn greenish-brown. Fish rise near the banks, and downstream from where we stand a thin, white racing scull, its oars dragging in the dark water, lets itself be propelled by the current slowly from our sight. Its crew, also in white, sprawls in various postures of exhaustion, and one of them, near the front, leans so far over the side as to almost touch the surface of the river. He's vomiting, no doubt, but from here we can't taste the fist of bile behind his tongue or hear his difficult breaths. From here, he is only a vague white shape, slightly out of line from the rest. Near me, you shake your head as if to say, “This world, so unlike any other.”

James Krusoe

GLORIA MUNDI

for Tim Dlugos

Objects invisible at night come into view.
Transformations take place amid the dreadful calm
like a second birth in the midnight storm.
This voyage suggests the possibility of new
control, of holding angels captive in the palm
of your hand, transcending time and form.

Yet we need to spend all the money we brought
with us for the trip. We cancel lunch plans
so the masters can rub our hands and feet.
It is clear now we will never be caught
breaking the rules, caressing our desperate fans
after the concert in the oppressive summer heat.

I know something will strike me in exile.
I have long been the agent of my own visual pleasure,
an American voice encoded as an icon of desire.
This "making strange" of the familiar is a style
of sexual displacement, a narrative measure
signified by the body alone, de-negotiated, afire.

Terence Winch

Originally appeared in the *Washington Review*.

THE HALLWAYS

for Tim Dlugos

Nobody speaks to me
from the spirit world
Those grey hulking shapes
I see from time to time
in the morning near
the door to the office
like obese Bartlebys
stooping at the shoulders
are just tricks of the light
I've been asked many times
if I believe in ghosts
No I say but they exist

Ray DiPalma

DRIVING BACK FROM NEW HAVEN

Tim looks at his watch, reaches into his
pocket, takes out a small plastic container
and swallows an AZI pill with a sip of Sprite.
"Poison," he mutters under his breath. I
glance over at him. We haven't talked about
his health the entire trip. "How does it
make you feel?" I ask. "Like I want to live
until they discover a cure," he snaps. We
travel in silence for a while. I stare out
the window at all the green trees on the
Merritt Parkway. Then he says: "I resent
it. I resent that we were not raised with
an acceptance of death. And here it is,
all around us. And I fucking resent it.
I resent that we do not know how to die."

David Trinidad

Reprinted from *Poets For Life: Seventy-Six Poets
Respond To Aids* (Crown). Copyright(c) 1988 by
David Trinidad

TUMOR

for Tim Dlugos

Tumor is not the word for it, we agree,
after milk and cookies. The proper word
would be more like RAVAGE or UNFROCKED
or like a place where they require ties.

Michael Lally (c)1972

TIM

When we met I was 30 and you were 22—
I was reading my poetry at Catholic U
in Washington DC— it was 1972 — you
were boyishly enthusiastic about the
possibilities of poetry — and so was I
— it's one of the things that kept us close
until you died — no—still,
because when I think of you
it's as though you've gone away to
some place more exotic than I've ever been,
but we can still communicate, all I have to do
is pick up one of your letters or poems and then
sit down and write one back to you—

Michael Lally (c) 1991

APRIL

1 April Fools Day Open Reading

3 Experimental prose writer, **Barbara Einzig**, is the author of five books including *Robinson Crusoe: A New Fiction* (Membrane, 1983), *Disappearing Work* (The Figures, 1979), and *Life Moves Outside* (Burning Deck, 1987). She also received a NYFA fellowship in poetry in 1989. Poet **Elizabeth Robinson** is the author of five collections, including *Bed of Lists*, (Kelsey Street Press, 1991), *In the Sequence of Falling Things* (Paradigm Press, 1990) and *My Name Happens Also* (Burning Deck).

8 **Stacy Doris'** poems have appeared in *Triquarterly* and *Tyonyi* and are forthcoming in the *Antioch Review* and *Central Park*. She is the co-editor of a forthcoming issue of *Tyoni* dedicated to current French Writing. **Laynie Browne**, a recent graduate of the Brown MFA program, is currently the Monday Night Reading Series assistant at the Poetry Project.

10 **Maxine Chernoff's** books of poems include *Leap Year Day: New and Selected Poems* (Another Chicago Press, 1990) and *Japan* (Avenue B Press). Her collection of short stories, *Bop*, was reprinted by Vintage in 1987. **Paul Hoover's** book-length poem *The Novel* was published by New Directions in 1990. His other books of fiction and poetry include *Saigon, Illinois* (Vintage, 1988) and *To An Idea*. Together, Maxine Chernoff and Paul Hoover edit the periodical *New American Writing*.

15 **D.S. Marriott** lives in London and is the editor of *Archeus*. *Airs & Ligatures* is his new book out from England. **Nichole Brossard** is winner of the Grand Prix de Poesie 1989 de la Fondation les Forges and the Prix du Gouverneur general. Her new book, *Picture Theory*, (translated by Barbara Godard), her first U.S. publication, is just out from Roof Books.

17 Poet and visual artist **William Allen** is the author of *The Man on the Moon* (N.Y.U. Press/Persea Books). He has taught poetry and creative writing at, among other places, New York University and the School of Visual Arts. San Francisco Renaissance poet, playwright and filmmaker **James Broughton** is the author of fifteen books of poetry, including *Special Deliveries: New and Selected Poems* (Broken Moon Press, 1990) and *75 Life Lines* (Jargon Society, 1988). In 1989, he received the Maya Deren Award for lifetime achievement from the American Film Institute.

22 **Jerry Estrin** is the editor of *Art & Con*, and the author of forthcoming *Cold Heaven* (Zasterle) and *In Motion Speaking* (Chance). **Larry Price** is the author of *Crude Thinking* (Gaz) and *No* (World Version) (Zasterle Press).

24 **Carla Harryman** and **Lyn Hejinian** will be reading from their book-length collaboration *The Wide Road*. Carla Harryman (see biographical note for her April 28th lecture).

Poet, editor, publisher and translator **Lyn Hejinian** is the author of several books, including *Writing is an Aid to Memory*, *My Life* and, a new book, *The Cell* (forthcoming from Sun and Moon). She founded Tuumba Press in 1976 and co-edits *Poetics Journal* with Barrett Watten.

28 **Jeff Derkson** is the editor of *Writing* and a founding member of the Kootenay School of Writing in Vancouver. His new book, *Down Time*, is newly out from Talonbooks. **Andrew Levy** has two new books - *Values Chaffeur You* (O Books) and *Democracy Assemblages* (Innerer Klang). His work has also been published in *Temblor*, *Writing* and *ABACUS*.

MAY

2-5 25th Year Symposium

15 **Memorial Reading for Michael Scholnick**. Michael Scholnick died suddenly of unknown causes last November. Among his books of poems are *Perfume*, *Beyond Venus* and *Longer Days*. His introductory essay for the catalogue of the *Alex Katz: from the Early 60's* exhibition at Robert Miller Gallery appeared in 1988. Scholnick was one of the founding editors of *Mag City* and served for several years on the Poetry Project's Board of Directors.

22 **Fiction/Non-Fiction**. A reading by recipients of 1991 Writing Fellowships in fiction and non-fiction from the New York Foundation for the Arts.

29 **A Benefit for the National Campaign for Peace in the Middle East**.

MAGAZINES RECEIVED

Avec #4 (P.O. Box 1059, Penngrove, CA 94951). Includes William Fuller, Carla Harryman, Jena Osman and more. 192 pp., \$7.50.

Brief 8 (P.O. Box 33, Canyon, CA 94516). Features Corbett, David Rattray, Martha Ronk. 25 pp., \$2.50.

Lift #5 (36 Central St., #2, Somerville, MA 02143). Poems by John Yau, Fanny Howe and T.J. Anderson III. 92 pp., \$5.

Hambone #9 (134 Hunolt St., Santa Cruz, CA 95060). Ted Pearson, Charles Bernstein, Alice Notley. 187 pp., \$7.

O.blek #8 (Box 1242, Stockbridge, MA 01262). Features Larry Fagin, Rae Armantrout, Michael Gizzi and Chris Tysh. 197 pp., \$5.50.

The Underground Forest/La Selva Subterranea (1701 Bluebell Ave., Boulder, CO 80302). A bilingual magazine featuring work by Bobbie Louise Hawkins, Bridgitte Mars and many others. \$5.

Washington Review, Vol. XVI, #4 (Box 50132, Washington DC 20091). Dance, Theatre, Art Critism and Poetry. \$2.



THE POETRY PROJECT APRIL/MAY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

APRIL

- | | | | |
|-----------|---|-----------|--|
| 1 | APRIL FOOL'S DAY OPEN READING | 15 | D.S. MARRIOTT AND NICHOLE BROSSARD |
| 3 | BARBARA EINZIG AND ELIZABETH ROBINSON | 17 | WILLIAM ALLEN AND JAMES BROUGHTON |
| 7 | LECTURE: BRUCE ANDREWS: "PARADISE & METHOD" 7 pm | 22 | JERRY ESTRIN AND LARRY PRICE |
| 8 | STACY DORIS AND LAYNIE BROWNE | 24 | CARLA HARRYMAN AND LYN HEJINIAN |
| 10 | MAXINE CHERNOFF AND PAUL HOOVER | 28 | LECTURE: CARLA HARRYMAN: "MEDITATION ON PREPOSITONS" 7 pm |
| | | 29 | JEFF DERKSON AND ANDREW LEVY |

MAY

- | | | | |
|------------|--|-----------|--|
| 2-5 | 25TH-YEAR SYMPOSIUM, four days of readings, performance, lectures, discussions and parties with Robert Creeley, Victor Hernandez Cruz, Kenward Elmslie, Allen Ginsberg, Kimiko Hahn, Ann Lauterbach, Harryette Mullen, Charles North, Ed Sanders, Steven Taylor, Anne Waldman and many more. | 22 | FICTION/NON-FICTION. A reading by recipients of 1991 Writing Fellowships in fiction and non-fiction from the New York Foundation for the Arts. |
| 15 | MEMORIAL READING FOR MICHAEL SCHOLNICK | 29 | A BENEFIT FOR THE NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST |

The Poetry Project

ST. MARKS CHURCH IN-THE-BOWERY
SECOND AVENUE AND TENTH STREET
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10003

EVENTS BEGIN AT 8PM UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED: ADMISSION BY CONTRIBUTION OF \$5.00.
PROGRAM SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

WRITING WORKSHOPS

THE WRITER AS TRANSLATOR OF EXPERIENCE

Thursdays at 7 pm (February 7 - April 25)

Taught by Jaime Manrique. A workshop for writers who are interested in exploring in fictional terms the texture of their lives—what is commonly called experience. The participants will be asked to focus on some aspect of their preoccupations, and to explore them in fictional/memoir form to discover their unique voices.

Jaime Manrique is the author of several books of fiction, poetry and criticism in English and Spanish. In April 1991, Vehicle Editions will publish his epic poem *Christopher Columbus on His Deathbed*. He is currently Writer-in-Residence at the New School for Social Research.

THE VISUAL AND THE VERBAL

Saturdays at 12 noon (February 9 - April 27)

Taught by Susan Cataldo. A class for visual artists who write and writers who are also visual artists who want to write about their daily lives and their work. We will look at and discuss all forms of art. All types of writing (poetry, prose, journal writing and letter writing. The workshop will develop ideas about how to proceed with making a manuscript that represents a few months of work you want to talk about. Collaborations will be encouraged.

Susan Cataldo is a poet and photographer. She is the author of *Brooklyn-Queens Day* and edited *Little Light Magazine*.

REGISTRATION FEES

Registration for the workshops costs \$100; \$50 for a year-long membership in the Poetry Project plus \$50 annual workshop fee. Current members of the Project need only pay \$50 at time of registration, providing they renew their regular membership when it expires.

LECTURES

Sunday, April 7 PM

Bruce Andrews

Paradise & Method

A talk about reading's erotics of poetics, poetics of politics — to help map a radical trajectory for language's methods: in word-to-word fluidities, in syntax & sound as labs of breakage & re-convening, in intimacy as facework & distance. Show & tell on "Lip Service," Andrews' now nearly-done recasting of Dante's *Paradiso*.

Bruce Andrews is the author of a dozen books, most recently *Executive Summary*.

Sunday, April 28 7 PM

Carla Harryman

Meditation on Prepositions: Narrative and Non Narrative

Conceptual ideas regarding narrative and non-narrative. Looking at the process of objectification from the point of view of the reader and the writer.

Carla Harryman is the author of six books of poetry including *The Middle*, *Property*, *Percentage* and *In the Mode of* forthcoming from Zasterle press.

Many thanks to the donors of prizes for the 1991 Poetry Project Lovers' Raffle:

Alternative Press, American Airlines, Angelica's, Art Forum, Brooke Alexander Gallery, Burning Deck Press, Catchword Papers, City Lights, Conjunctions, Cucina di Pesce, Diwan Press, Richard Foreman, Full Court Press, Allen Ginsberg, Hanuman Books, Knopf, o•blek, St. Mark's Bookshop, Scarlet Magazine, 2nd Avenue Kosher Deli, Tandoor Palace, Tender Buttons, Rectangles, Roof Books, Ukrainian National Home, United Artists books, The Village Voice, Warren's Wines & Liquors.

Congratulations to all the prizewinners in the Poetry Project Lovers' 1991 Raffle.

Grand Prize and Art Prize winners:

Grand Prize, two roundtrip tickets to Nassau, Bahamas—Joan Clark • 2 1987 Symposium poster by Jasper Johns—Kate Valk, Maggie Paley • 1990 Symposium print by Kim MacConnell—Irving & Dianne Benson • 1988 Symposium print by Roy Lichtenstein—Stephen Cohen • 1989 Symposium print by Francesco Clemente & Allen Ginsberg—Paul & Suzanne Jenkins • Photograph print of William Burroughs by Allen Ginsberg—Vicki Hudspith.

BOOKS RECEIVED

Michael Davidson, *Post Hoc*, Avenue B Press (P.O. Box 542, Bolinas, CA 94924). 85 pp., \$8 paper.

Jeff Derksen, *Down Time*, Talonbooks (201/1019 E. Cordova St., Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada V6A 1M8). 91 pp., No price listed.

Michael Gizzi, *gyption in hortulus*, paradigm press (Eleven Slater Ave., Providence, RI 02906). \$4 paper.

Anselm Hollo, *Near Miss Haiku*, Yellow Press (5819 N. Sacramento, Chgo., IL 60659). 65 pp., \$6.95, paper.

Andrew Levy, *Democracy Assemblages*, Innerer Klang (7 Sherman St., Charlestown, MA 02129). No price listed.

_____, *Values Chauffeur You*, O Books (5729 Clover Dr., Oakland, CA 94618). \$8 paper.

Vincent Katz and Rudy Burckhardt, *New York Hello!* Ommation Press, 53 pp., \$8 paper.

Gale Nelson, *stare decisis*, Burning Deck (71 Elmgrove Ave., Providence, RI 02906). 142 pp., \$9 paper.

Laura Moriarty, *Rondeaux*, Roof Books (303 E. 8th St., NYC 10009). 107 pp., \$8 paper.

Jena Osman, *underwater dive: version one*, paradigm press, \$4 paper.

David Rattray, *Opening the Eyelid*, diwan press (161 Eckford St., Brooklyn, NY 11222). 79 pp., \$9.95.

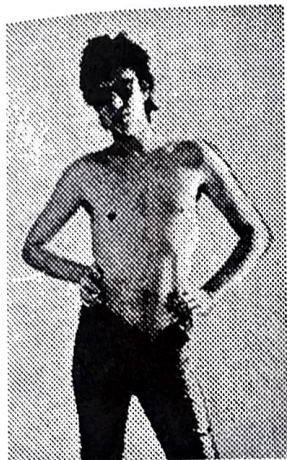
Tom Savage, *Processed Words*, Morning Coffee Chapbooks #27, Coffee House Press (27 Fourth St., Suite 400, Minneapolis, MN 55401), 20 pp., \$10 paper.

Spencer Selby, *barricade*, paradigm press, \$4 paper.

Craig Watson, *unsuspended animation*, paradigm press, \$4 paper.

Susan Timmons, *Locked From the Outside*, Yellow Press, 57 pp., \$5.95 paper.

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RICHARD HELL: ARTIFACT

Notebooks 1974-80. Poet, writer, actor and musician, Richard Hell was one of the true originators of the punk rock movement. Dreams, sexual encounters, song lyrics, publishing projects, performing and recording sessions, Artifact is a modern-day "Notes from the Underground."
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As a gossip columnist for Details magazine and the East Village Eye, Beauregard Houston-Montgomery has been arbiter of style and elegance to New York's clubgoers and fashion victims for two decades. In a world where tedium is the greatest crime, he is never dull.
 Essays 114 pages Illustrations \$4.95

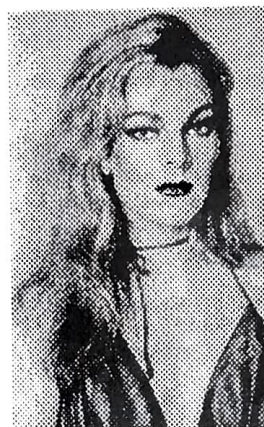
DODIE BELLAMY: FEMININE HIJINX

Two extended prose works on Love, Life and Larceny, balanced midway between terror and hilarity. In "Complicity" two young women shoplift their way through a large swath of suburbia. "The Debbie's I Have Known" presents a teenage girl incarnate, with few if any morals.
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 Cookie Mueller died of AIDS in New York in November of 1989.
 Stories 120 pages Frontispiece \$4.95



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- JACK SMITH: HISTORICAL TREASURES**
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REVIEWS

MY AFTERLIFE GUARANTEED,
by Nanos Valaoritis,
City Lights Books (261 Columbus Ave., San Francisco, CA 94133,
1990), 88 pp., \$6.95 paper.

Reviewed by Charles Borkhuis

Numerous revisions, collages and reversals of Greek myths pop up like volcanic islands throughout the 41 surreal prose-poems in Nanos Valaoritis' remarkable latest book. His stories delight in the ironies of philosophical speculation and scholarly dispute and are frequently the product of an ironic fusion of postmodern wit with classical distance. His playful formality is at once wonderous and intimate.

In the first story called "Procrustes," the title's protagonist, who forms his furniture from the bodies of passersby, becomes a wry appologist for the stretching and breaking of limbs and heads to conform to the specifications of his ideal bed. Undaunted, Procrustes continues

....dreaming and hoping for at least one person who would fit, someone flawless who wouldn't disappoint him. Otherwise he would be doomed forever to keep trying, and to subject his guests to all sorts of tortures. And that would be deeply upsetting to both him and to them.

Theseus, the innocent wanderer, finally falls into Procrustes' clutches. Since tradition is divided on Theseus' outcome, Valaoritis offers several of his own endings, the last of which has the aging Procrustes attributing "to Theseus a perfection that he did not possess." Thus, Theseus' Pyrrhic victory over his tormentor causes him to later doubt his position of omnipotence. The memory of Procrustes' bed of perfections sours all of Theseus' subsequent victories; he internalizes the bed and stretches himself upon its rack for the rest of his days. In this sense, Theseus becomes Procrustes' eternal guest. In a final coup de grace, Valaoritis' last sentence replaces Theseus with the reader.

As for the bed ... if there ever was a bed, don't we all sleep on it every night?

We would not be wrong in seeing flashes of Kafka, Borges and Calvino throughout *My Afterlife Guaranteed*. In isolating this tradition we must also seek its progenitor in Zeno's paradoxes which date back to 300 B.C. As a Stoic disciple of Parmenides, Zeno argued that all change is an illusion and sought to show the contradictions implicit in thinking otherwise. Thus, his famous race between Achilles and the tortoise in which the faster will never overtake the slower because no step can be taken without traversing half

that distance ad infinitum. An infinity of points opens up between stasis and the first step. The question that runs through Kafka, Borges, Calvino and Valaoritis is: Have we, in fact, taken the first step? Like Theseus, after a lifetime of "steps", we wonder if we have ever left the starting blocks (Procrustes' bed).

In another story entitled "Helen of Troy," Valaoritis offers the following remark:

Anything cut in two would still be an epic even if it were only a worm.

If our hero-as-worm in the preceding line contains an *infinite* epic that is begun with each cut, then we are back at the starting point: Parmenides' unity of Being.

Another seminal influence on Valaoritis' prose comes through his surrealist affection for such French writers as Rimbaud, Jarry, Roussel and Breton, which is readily apparent in such stories as: "The Jaguars," "How I Wrote Some of My Books," "Anastronomical Details," "The Train", and the "Tree of Happiness."

I looked at myself in the mirror that Edward Jaguar was holding up to me with his teeth. I was transforming into a woman. Breasts had grown where only tits had been, my long hair became shinier and curlier and black as ebony. My eyes sparkled, while the gathering crowds applauded wildly, not their savior but their savioress, not their hero but their heroine: Myself. Rejuvenated from an old man to a young woman. While Edward Jaguar himself, already half-man, was holding my hand with carnivorous glee.

("The Jaguars")

In all of Nanos Valaoritis' short fiction, folly is as inextricably wedded to reason as pain is to pleasure. As with Zeno, no division is possible.

No feeling is foolproof. The proof is still deeply buried in the pudding.

("In Praise of Folly")

For Valaoritis, his afterlife can only be guaranteed if he has never left it.

THE NOVEL/A POEM, by Paul Hoover,
New Directions (80 Eight Ave., New York, NY 10011, 1990),
80 pp., \$12.95 paper.

Reviewed by Stephen Ratcliffe

After being perceived several times, objects acquire the status of "recognition." An object appears before us. We know it's there but we do not see it, and, for that reason we can say nothing about it. The removal of this object from the sphere of automatized perception is accomplished in art by a variety of devices.
— Victor Shklovsky, *Theory of Prose*

In order to say something about the "object," how can writing make us "see" it as it is in fact, as if for the first time? One thinks, for instance, of a writing that could give us perceptions and thoughts in (and about) the experience of reading itself, whereby the apprehension of a text becomes analogous to apprehension of the world. The "story" as we know it will be informed by itself, by the twists and turns and edges of a language which calls attention as much to the seams in the artifice as to the narrative it pretends to disclose.

The Novel/A Poem investigates the ways in which such a writing might break apart the structures of information by which art tries to hold its mirror up to nature. In place of representation, it puts forward a "view" of the world that is fully conscious of the part it plays as words in a performance of the world one knows through language — *The world was meaningful —/ no sentence could alter that* — the implication of whose structures lead us through reading to the creation of meanings which contain, but are not contained by, those structures. Like sound bytes pieced together without "transition," *The Novel* echoes the voices whose tradition it is heir to — Western Literature, American Culture, Literary Criticism, Journalism, Advertising, Popular Songs — *Life is/ filled with bitter tears, on a/ highway called the Blues*. Its fragments refuse to give us the comfort of a constructed whole into whose surface (sensuous details, the landscape of fiction as window through which one sees an illusion of people in the world) the reader may be absorbed. These interruptions, it turns out, work as the "device" by which "automatized perception" (in narrative as in life) is short-circuited, making way for the perception of elements as and for what they are.

In reading *The Novel*, one keeps getting tripped up, keeps having to adjust his or her sense of what is going on as the work, which keeps shifting, unfolds itself. With each change of the lens — now this "story" now that — the illusion of reality in a narrative-as-window-on-the-world gets shattered —

New O Books

Distributed by Small Press Distribution, 1814 San Pablo Ave., Berkeley, CA 94702; and Sun & Moon Press, 6148 Wilshire Blvd., Gertrude Stein Plaza, Los Angeles, CA 90048; Inland Book Company, 22 Hemingway Ave., East Haven, CT 06512

What is the inside, what is outside?

/What is censoring? What is being censored?

Edited by Leslie Scalapino

ISBN #1-882022-09-2; \$10.50

The 31 poets in this collection of prose, poetry and essays are writing both the individual and the communal awareness at the same time or separate; in the words of Bernadette Mayer, a "Plural Dream of Social Life."

Among those included are:

Carla Harryman, Fanny Howe, Lynne Dreyer, Mei-mei Berssenbrugge and Richard Tuttle, Laura Moriarty, Alan Davies, Clark Coolidge, Steve Benson and Hannah Weiner.

They're writing what is not social, now. So we can see what that awareness is.

Time Rations

Benjamin Friedlander

ISBN #1-882022-05-X; \$7.50

Benjamin Friedlander remembers what wounds of World War he was born after. Days can't cover words at the fact gate. Lines to the end of myth begin at the middle. This is intelligent, passionate writing. The poems in *Time Rations* are fragments, splinters, and pilgrim staves.

Susan Howe

Values Chauffeur You

Andrew Levy

ISBN #1-882022-06-8; \$8.00

This kaleidoscopic work is buoyed by the "complex indrafts" of an impassioned reflexivity which takes us straight into the momentum of language as it evanesces.

William Fuller

New O Books

KISMET, Pat Reed;

ISBN #1-882022-03-3; \$8.00

A book-length poem about which Robert Grenier has said: "With abandon . . . through the poem into the (claros) opacities & frog-bound clarity of a *Spring & All*."

Open up
the dark gate

just how dark
is the dark gate

it can only be
so dark

THE INVETERATE LIFE,

Jessica Grim;

ISBN #1-882022-04-1; \$7.50

A first collection of poetry described by Laura Moriarty as "Strength. Wit. Non-stop action. These assertions are only incidentally beautiful. Vulnerability is allowed into a cadenced, breathless analysis. The past is your problem. And try to keep up. Because there is no slack."

"Stress holds the real & its 'toward' aligns us with mystery's arraignment, faces in facts moving about."

Bruce Andrews

CANDOR, Alan Davies;

ISBN #1-882022-08-4; \$9.00

A juxtaposition of essays, reviews, and poems which is apprehension as tonal critical commentary. The text skates up to itself in sometimes utter simplicity, revealing himself/itself.

It's cognition.

We both want you.

"Davies' belief in radical self-reflexivity has led him, in the course of his writing career, from a virtually opaque formalism to a continuity of text and life-world that is anything but aesthetic construction."

Barrett Watten

The hero shrank
 into the past tense, becoming a lexical vapor
 between the wind and thee.
 Half an hour later, he was nothing more
 than an inward bruise, smudge
 of something read.
 Foot, feet; tooth, teeth; goose, geese.
 Travel, ravel, trave.
 Ouilimette, Illinois. Written out of life.

The Novel (art) isn't as Aristotle claimed an imitation, it's as real as (thinking) reality itself. The collage of its fragments is central to the project its words project in their mapping of the space. *She was by, of, about and at./ The sentence performed a phonic act.* Reading it, we aren't able to lull ourselves into the fabric of a novel (or poem) as narrative. Rather, the disjunction of each leap displaces us into yet another frame (of reference) or tone (of voice), one heard or viewed as if from a different angle — *It was almost a song, nearly a speech after dinner,/ alas on loan, amassed a fortune, amo, amas, amat.*

One reads *The Novel* not for its "story" but in order to read, and thereby to know, the world as words whose interplay make it (world) fully present. Instead of assuming the reader's response to fiction as representation, its writing is conscious of and pleased by its capacity to make illusion — *The white body of words isn't a woman or man./ It's the shape that carries them both,/ shaking like meat, insolvent as water.* It does not forget (and in effect pays homage to) its own devices:

The "scaffold of self"
 was being built in a bedroom.
 She climbed into a climate of ego and desire.
 But what would Serena do, now that she was a name?

Instead of linear plot, *The Novel/ A Poem* gives us the possibility that narrative might go forward by turning in upon itself in concentric circles, like Chinese boxes within boxes, its framework discovered each (new) sentence by sentence. Because *Art/ is the act of dissimulation. Making still/ is making strange. Metaphor freezes and changes./ Thought is refractory. Narrative follows/ a curving line,* the poem-as-novel/novel-as-poem unfolds layers of itself as itself — *He (the novelist) was about to enter the building/ where he himself sat in a chair, / reading the novel in which this happens.*

When writing echoes voices clearly other than the writer's own, one gets the sense of writer as ventriloquist, or actor capable of taking many parts (none of them "his," all of them "his,"), the poem not so much an expression of self as construct of devices whose sound/image enacts the mind/sense at work. So through Hoover one "rehears" Shakespeare, Herbert, Sterne, Williams (*so much depends/ upon/ a red morpheme/ glazed with commas/ beside the white/ inflexion*) and even Hoover's own novel (*In Saigon, Illinois/night shifts on the home front/ a television war*)

— each instance followed by non-sequitur whose sense doesn't "fit" the context, and so realizes the indeterminacy of our condition. Observation — knowledge — depends upon the position or angle of the observer — as soon as "I" adopt it/ *the mode is already gone.*

The Novel/ A Poem takes place along what Hoover calls *An axis of simultaneities,/ where ... evil leaps but never lands* — "evil" in this case being each instance of language, image, idea, voice or "thread" taken up momentarily, only to be interrupted, dropped or lost. Because, as *The Novel* tells us, *fiction/ practices fragmentation, then/ we enter the ruined museum,* echoes of a cast of voices are broken into by yet more echoes — *Genealogies, chronicles, duplicates,/ notes, lists, tales, accounts/ copies, citations, archives, inventories,/ monuments, reproductions, simulacra, fakes.* As *If mankind dreamt collectively,* Hoover's "ruined museum" is nothing less than our location in American culture, circa 1990, a collection of fragments which *The Novel* — a profoundly political poem — shores up against our ruin.

Note: All italicized lines are quotes from *The Novel/ A Poem.*

LYRIC AND DRAMATIC POETRY, 1946-82 by Aime Cesaire; translated by Clayton Eshleman and Annette Smith. University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1990

Reviewed by T. J. Anderson III

my defense: engraved by a tooth of sand on the pebble—
 it is my heart torn from the hands of the earthquake—
 THE CIPHER ("Monsters")

The publication of Aime Cesaire's *Lyric and Dramatic Poetry, 1946-82* by translators Clayton Eshleman and Annette Smith marks the completion of the "official" Cesaire canon into English. Eshleman and Smith were responsible for translating the highly acclaimed *Aime Cesaire, The Collected Poetry* published by The University of California Press, Berkeley in 1983. However, for many this Martinican writer continues to remain a fairly unknown poet-conductor. Cesaire's poetry is often charged with a very difficult and extensive vocabulary, as well as complex language constructions. To read Cesaire in the original French or in translation is a challenge; to understand his work as a flashing portal into a labyrinth of exotic Martinican flower and fauna and the human involves an astute ear tuned to the polyrhythms of Africa and the language of Europe. If one is willing to chip away at the poetry, one becomes dazzled by the brilliance of a poet who is able to successfully manipulate the colonial language net.

This new collection contains an essay, a verse play, and a collection of poems—a marvelous network of roots and branches that all connect to the same “tree,” an image that is extremely important to Césaire. In the essay “Poetry and Knowledge” he says: “And the tree’s superiority still more than the animal’s, because the tree is fixed, attachment, and severance to essential nature... And because the tree is stability, it is also surrender.” Césaire is a poet whose work is constantly entangled in both the beautiful and ravenous clutches of the earth.

Following a superb introduction by noted scholar A. James Arnold, is Arnold’s translation of Césaire’s poetic manifesto, “Poetry and Knowledge” which is an attack on scientific thinking. Césaire sees poetry as a voice from the primal world which had embraced Nature and he believes that “mankind has never been closer to certain truths than in the first day of the species.” For Césaire, the poet “is that very ancient yet new being . . . who . . . searches for and receives in the sudden triggering of inner cataclysms the password of connivance and power.”

Most of Césaire’s literary influences were the post 1850 French poets who left the Apollonian era of the nineteenth century and “leaped into the poetic void.” Surprisingly, this essay, written from 1944-45, makes no mention of the African and Diaspora influences that have so importantly contributed to his work. Although this influence is not directly mentioned, when one closely examines Césaire’s verse, one notices a romantic view of a “primitive” Africa partly rooted in myth and partly rooted in history that works as the triggering point for the poetry.

The verse play in this book is *Et Les Chiens Se Taisaient (And The Dogs Were Silent)*. It is in three acts and uses several African/tribal dramatic conventions: chorus, masks, music and dance. The play is a tour-de-force of Césaire at his surreal and historically rooted best, bringing in several symbolic representations of characters from ancient Egyptian myths merged with West African gods while, at the same time, transporting them to a New World and a timeless context. But what is most interesting here is what happens to Césaire’s protagonist-hero “The Rebel” who faces a collision of African and European cultures. Here, the desire for rejuvenation through the umbilical cord of nature and the rootedness to the universe is continued to be viewed as an avenue for the salvation of the Human which is constantly threatened with separation and estrangement.

moi, laminaire (i, laminaria)— a group of poems included in this book and composed in 1982, show a Césaire who has begun to re-evaluate his past concepts of space and time and in the process of doing so the tie to natural objects slowly begins to diminish. *i, laminaria* becomes a text in which the speaker is now ready to “settle accounts.” It is a text of evolutionary change.



RICHARD FOREMAN'S

(Secret: Perverse: Inevitable:)

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In the opening poem, "lagoonal calendar," Césaire uses a theme that appears constantly throughout the other poems in this collection. The speaker declares: "i inhabit from time to time one of my wounds/ each minute i change apartments." I read the phrase "time to time" to mean an expansive, constantly continuing movement of time. The speaker lives in "apartments" and is therefore constantly mobile. There is no opportunity for settling down nor complacency when one has the oppressor's boot at his back, when the poetic voice is threatened by stagnancy, or when the changing forces of Nature are at work. For Césaire, the clock is running out on African and Caribbean civilization and the "wound" continues to enlarge and fester. What emerges is a diminished laminarian self that is still bound to Nature. That self is the speaker made small by its awesome and destructive power. The text is Césaire in postmodern.

Eshleman and Smith present a very readable translation of one of this century's major writers. For those readers who are bilingual, there is the accompanying French text to *moi, laminaire* but unfortunately not to *And The Dogs Were Silent*. The choices of the translations are so accurate that often I forget that these poems were originally written in French. The result is that the power of Césaire in the original is still maintained. *Lyric and Dramatic Poetry 1946-82* by Aime Césaire is certainly an important publication. I highly recommend this book as I do *The Collected Poetry*. I am reminded of a letter the American poet Charles Olson once sent to Cid Corman in 1953 explaining how important it is "that we begin with Zero— are 0." For me, Aime Césaire is the 0. He is the cipher.

A TASTE OF HONEY, by Bob Flanagan and David Trinidad, Cold Calm Press (P.O. Box 481102, Los Angeles, CA 90048, 1990), 32 pp., \$7.50, paper.

Reviewed collaboratively by Henry Flesh and Eric Latzky

A Taste of Honey, a collaboration between poets Bob Flanagan and David Trinidad recently published by Cold Calm Press, was written over the course of a year. Each poet contributed one line per day (usually consisting of 10 syllables a line), utilizing telephones and telephone answering machines. This review was written in a similar manner on one Saturday afternoon.

The very idea of collaboration between two very different poets is intriguing. Poetic treason?

Or groundbreaking, revolutionary? Even when one is a straight masochist, the other queer and infatuated with pop culture? Certainly *avant*, perhaps a bit kooky, it nonetheless works here for Flanagan and Trinidad. In fact, the success of their book is its ability to combine the heavy, the down and dirty with a lighter, bittersweet pop playfulness. This dichotomy, which is present throughout, gives this work an edge, a sort of tug-of-war between sensibilities. Unlike other less imaginative and more egocentric poets, these two never resort to shtick. Indeed, this book is remarkable in its redefinition of the poetic process. The almost seamless melding of two distinct voices is fascinating because poetry is too often spoiled by the narcissism of selfful expression and exclusive references. Flanagan and Trinidad are compellingly wide open in their respective works. This accessibility is directly transferred to *A Taste of Honey*. The *fun* of this collaboration is eloquently illustrated in lines like "Nonetheless, I have come to answer your need for love and your hunger for someone with a big dick and excellent credit so you can buy, buy, buy and fuck, fuck, fuck..." And yet there is a dark side to this seemingly light work. This can be found in lines like "This is the factory where the seeds are made and these are the seeds that will impregnate Mother Earth with the ultimate evil: row after row of enraged vegetables passing themselves off as human beings." Flanagan, who lives in Los Angeles, and Trinidad, who lives in New York, volley constantly with warmth, coldness, ease, and harshness. Ironically, the Angelino tempers the optimism inherent in the California cliché, while the New Yorker displays a guilelessness not native to one who has a grip on that city. This skewering of stereotypes adds a certain *je ne sais quoi*, which makes this work all the richer. There is a kick to this mix, higher than the cancan, longer than *A Chorus Line*. And yet the kick is mellowed by nothing. *A Taste of Honey* packs the wallop of the Santa Ana winds on a rush-hour train.

THE PETRUS BOREL STORIES

by Tom Ahern.

Sun & Moon Press (6148 Wilshire Blvd., L.A., CA 90048, 1990),
113 pages, \$9.95 paper.

As Wittgenstein remarks, the world can easily be reduced to only the straight row of the avenues of the industrial district, with no place for the crooked, winding streets of the old city.

— Charles Bernstein

Reviewed by Laban Carrick Hill

In *The Petrus Borel Stories*, Tom Ahern takes the reader deep into that old city, along its blind alleys and twisted, dilapidated lanes. These seven intransigent journeys are ingeniously constructed from a "few bonechips of plot" unearthed by Petrus Borel's biographer Enid Starkie. Ahern suggests in his "Author's Note" that these stories are Borel's "*contes immoraux*—his contrast with the popular, sweetened *contes moraux* (moral stories) of the half-century previous." Ahern goes on to describe Borel as a man who had an "intense apparent hatred of humankind." These stories unquestionably mirror those sentiments.

The stories prey on our expectation of a moral order. Quickly, these assumptions are undermined by the self-centered passions. In "The Anatomist" a young woman marries a man much older than her. As can be imagined, his age causes impotency, and as a consequence the newly weds drift apart with him discretely moving his belongings nearer to his laboratory. Soon the young wife takes on lovers to satisfy her sexual hunger for companionship. Over a period of a few years she has many lovers, until one day she becomes gravely ill and confesses her adultery to her husband. In response, he lifts and carries her to his lab to show her his gallery of her lovers grotesquely tortured and preserved.

The obsessive selfishness of characters is underscored by the fact that no good deed goes unpunished. In "Dina La Belle Juive," an elderly tailor good naturedly tries to help his niece meet young men to marry by sending her on errands all over the city. In the microcosm of these tales, the best intentions are thwarted by the very graphic cruelty of the populace. For reasons I won't divulge here, the niece is raped and drowned on one of her trips through the city.

These tales most certainly reside in towns and cities with no straight lanes or wide, well-manicured boulevards. The insidious, scheming nature of these societies reveal humans at their most depraved. Primarily cynical about mankind's nature, these stories portray men and women as only having a dark side to their psyche. However, this is probably no surprise

when you consider Ahern's cautionary words in his introductory note.

Perhaps this predilection for the ghastly carries over into the overall conceptual structure of these stories because there is a troubling pattern which emerges. The feminine characters consistently find themselves in positions of being maimed or killed, whereas the males never receive the bitter end of the stick from a woman. As a whole, the women are portrayed as innocents even when committing adultery. Not once does a woman's psychic torment externalize itself into actions as depraved as the male characters.

To my mind, this pattern is a bit disappointing because the overall imaginative richness of the tales is wonderful. This lack of adventurism quietly undermines the strong thematic concerns with mankind's versus a male's dark psychic alignment.

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**THE FORMAL FIELD OF
KISSING: TRANSLATIONS,
IMITATIONS & EPIGRAMS,**

by Bernadette Mayer, Catchword Papers (Attn: Paul Cummings,
420 E. 72nd St., N.Y., N.Y. 10021, 1990), 30 pp., \$6 paper.

Reviewed by Peter Lamborn Wilson

One thing about "the Classics" which seldom gets mentioned is how smart introverted schoolkids undergoing their doses of "Classical" education can fantasize about free pagan sensuality and even be overcome in dusty chalky classrooms by golden "streaming sensations" of secret, erotic bliss. Those naked line-engravings in old *Iliads!* Catullus, Horace, the Greek Anthology! how they enoble the steam of the boys' locker room! and how many plaid-skirt-uniformed Catholic Hi-School Girls in Trouble possessed by gentle Sappho!

So one of my favorite bits of Bernadette's *libellus* is the *Gratia*, including "Thanks to all my teachers: Sister Immaculata, Sister Aloysia, Sister Felician..." — I'm delighted to think of her afternoon reveries, her April attention wandering as Immaculata drones on about Livy or something, staring out the window— "Bernadette!! are you still with us??" — and here years later this little-book illuminated with "*moecha putida, redde codicillos*" ("Fucking whore, give me back my notebook!" — Catullus #42) and her self-description as "dyed-in-wool lesbian" ("Epigram", p.14). "Bernadette! did you write this filth??" — "Yes, Sister Immac..." — "Hold out your hand!" — *smack smack* with the ruler.

There seem to be two Bernadette Mayers — the austere language poet, and the raucy/ironic/romantic/sarcastic wit who produced *Formal Field*. Probably even more Bernadettes. Most successful poetry is an exercise in Armchair Schizophrenia, after all. The "Language" Bernadette no doubt deserves a Literary Critic rather than a mere Book Reviewer, but the clear-talking Bernadette of *Formal Field* only needs to be quoted.

POOR JOHN EGAN EPIGRAM

Poor John Egan
Thrown out of kindergarten
P.S. 19
For making clay penises
& calling them cocks
In arts & crafts

...FROM THE GREEK ANTHLOGY

You sing and play the lyre and I'm on fire
I want to strum the whole fucking universe
you know I want to loosen your strings

("Anon. #99, with Rosemary Mayer")

CATULLUS #99

...Once when we kissed you used your spit
to wipe your lips, oh your soft fingers
you looked like you thought you might get AIDS
from the dirty kiss of this diseased whore

This is someone who knows what to do with fucking words, man. And everyone who ever got hot down there in Latin III or Greek 101 will feel tranquil recollections from this book.

NOT A MALE PSEUDONYM, by Anne Waldman, Tender Buttons (71 E. Third St. #17, NYC 10003, 1990), \$5 paper.

Reviewed by Eileen Myles

I'm a lesbian. So being asked by the Poetry Project Newsletter to review this book, a collection of Anne Waldman's lesbian poems, fragments—kind of a chronicle of an affair in lyrics—seemed to me as absurd as their asking James Baldwin to review *Black Like Me*. I mean, it's a funny thought, right? Problem is that the book in question is very good. Can stand on its own, a little island in the stream of Anne Waldman's (how would I know) continuous straighthood. What's a lesbian book anyhow? There are some classics, of course. I always think of Marilyn Hacker's *Love, Death, and the Changing of the Seasons*, a novel-in-sonnets which documents the rise and fall of an affair. And there's an affair every three pages in a good Olga Broumas book. But Anne Waldman's poems are different from those others because their authors are "out" lesbians which was, kind of my original point. Waldman's lesbian poems occur in relation to a world of men. Men's "mettle" is tested "astride (these women's) thinking", we hear about the "stink of men talk," men are "in the corner watching," the women taunt and sing "My heart belongs to Daddy" at one unfortunate guy, and male sperm still runs down one or the other's legs, which is not necessarily unlesbian, but certainly worthy of note. The love in question is lust under threat—it has definite limitations, so the poet's desire sensibly seeks territory. She constantly toys with the idea of space: "I am so wide, Dear Lady/a narrow place like you I'd take/a tent to run my life." The lovers' difference, finally, is articulated by space. The poet narrator (her lover is a poet too) takes on a male role, identifying herself with the world outside: "I wanted to be a sailor/send my prayers to the holy ocean/& to you,/happy wife." Elsewhere, "I carry love gifts to you." The narrator is always referring to exotic places, parts unknown. At one point she is addressing her poet lover: "You watch me through the eyes of your book/for you are always writing" and the other's writing becomes a way of *being* rather than an aggres-

sive activity. For herself she claims "...I am really the elder/And in my poetry I give you to the world." That's a pretty brash thought, defining her own poetry as a kind of extroversion, turning her lover into a gift, giving her to the world — whether she wants to go or not.

Anne Waldman has always been a poet who frankly expresses a desire for power within her work, whether we're looking at *Fast Talking Woman*, everything in between, or later on in *Skin Meat Bones*. Right up to today, in fact. She demands stuff of her readers/listeners, their obeisance kind of, and her quest to be a shaman in and outside her work is also part of that search. However, in this lesbian universe, by assuming the guise of male power, playing the butch to her lover's femme, something new kicks in. It becomes emblematic sexual power Anne Waldman is speaking through and the effect is powerful and quietly stunning.

At the end of *Not a Male Pseudonym* appears the information "Summer 1974/Revised June 1988." Despite whatever personal reasons Anne Waldman has suppressed these poems for fourteen years, they are now a real gift to those who know and care about her work — and even moreso a gift for those who have not yet gotten it. As I read along I recognize so many of her moves, mantras, questions. Like all of us she's a poet who has stuff she does, her tricks. But these lyrics also quake with a spiritual glow, say that love is holy —

that sense pervades them all, even when as lover she makes claims that sound silly, full of herself, awkward. Always, her saving grace is energy. She's going too fast to be anything less than totally honest. Sometimes the poet's impetuosity runs wild. A lyric might turn a little obscure, but not once does she lose control. Perhaps the most concise way she drives her poems is by asking questions. Sometimes the poem gets sprung from a single one: "Are you older than my body?/You seem full of surprises." It creates an agitated evenness that easily propels the rest. Another poem which is nothing but questions works differently. Nine questions. It sets up a field of something. A feeling of multiplicity. Grain? Something. It's an indirect kind of naming. We learn more about the questioner, of course, who's dancing around her object, but we get the scope of the feeling, a world gets conjured up in a way that's magical and evasive and very smart. She gets to make extravagant claims and praises and teases and accuses without having to own a position. It's a mythical kind of power, again like the power of sex which is what these poems are all about. For me, they are a blazingly lyrical moment in the poetic career of Anne Waldman. Risky, embarrassing, awkward, skillful. My favorite work of hers yet. They tell the most about who she is, or could be. All others fan out:

And spoke the night,
She's down on me.

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Burning Deck has received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts, the Fund for Poetry and the Taft Subvention Committee.

OPERATION MEMORY, by David Lehman, Princeton Univ. Press (41 Williams St., Princeton, NJ 08540, 1990), 87 pp., \$9.95 paper.

Reviewed by David Shapiro

In a tumultuous and indelible essay on the Holocaust, David Lehman records not only his own "personal" memories, but those of his mother. He writes the unforgettably horrifying scene of suffering: "They were driven in a truck to an open field, where they dug their own graves and were shot." Trying to write poetry after this reality is, as the philosophers say, impossible, and yet it is our task, not to be abandoned. Elsewhere, forging a poetic, Lehman writes about the "epigrammatic precision" of the sentence hanging over the entrance to Auschwitz. If one wants to understand the fury and indestructibility of Lehman's essentially Jewish poetry, one should consider this sentence as a goal and a limit: "The relation of sign to circumstance, of words to desolate place, is as terrifying as the dry bones of Ezekiel. It is a graver and eerier monument to human vanity than the ruined sculpture of a tyrant..." I read all of Lehman's poetry, his early tempestuous book *Some Nerve*, with its neglected collage-poem "Baby Burning", and his later volume, *An Alternative to Speech*, as a variety of restrained prophetic denunciation. It is not for nothing that he is the master of the detective story and also that he has been able, recently, to find a voice to hunt down and disarticulate what he regards as the bizarre and cowardly scandal surrounding Paul de Man's collaborationist writing (circa 1942). His anthologies on form, and his journalistic work, might be regarded as the attempts to restrain his more essential vatic mode. The effect is that of management of pain and rage through caustic Jewish wit. Such memory-work and grief-work do not set free but bind us more ferociously to a less abstract earth.

This sense of filiation and sacrifice was present early in Lehman's work, as in the lines that moved me in his early piece, "The Kiss": "The love/ Of a man for his father becomes/ The love of a son for his son." He has made the theme of survival his obsessive theme of mourning, in his new work:

Our hero, who wasn't always a hero, lives
In despair, but pretends not to care.
He disagrees with reality. That is his right,
And he has scars to prove it. Switch off the light
And he will follow the slowest voluptuous curve
Between any two stars, elaborating the distance
Before spanning it in a leap of forgetfulness.

Of course, Auden and Ashbery are the compound ghosts of this learned art. Like a member of the Oulipo group, in love with the manias and mathematics of form in all this formless fury, he turns detective into "Defective Fiction." Sic semper tyrannus. He invents an amazing trope of a schoolboy in Austrian military academy brooding on the square root of minus 1. The irrational in history is thus conjured and oneirically re-

drawn. The anti-allegorical topic of immanence is thoughtfully provoked in his eschatological "Four Versions of the End," or let me be clearer: The Jew of the 20th Century has become an old friend of annihilation. Their, our, and Lehman's poetry is "awed by the devastation behind us."

There is a lyrical, relenting side to Lehman that has produced beautiful love poems, villanelles, and the fabulously nostalgic "For I will Consider Your Dog Molly" with its brave use of Jewish themes in Kit Smart's parallelisms:

For she shook the water off her body, refreshed.
For you removed the leash from her neck and let her roam freely.
For she darted off into the brush and speared a small gray moving thing
in the neck.
For this was the work of an instant.
For we looked and behold! the small gray thing was a rat.
For Molly had killed the rat with a single efficient bite, in conformance
with Jewish law.

But one sees how the memories of Rosh Ha-shanah are dealt with, in an efficient scene of retribution. Lehman's best poetry is restless, and his most moving image is that of the sober Noah waiting for a decent sign in a poetics of Return:

—The question is whether the raven will return
After his end-of-the-world adventures, after the storm,

When one by one the masks slip off, and the bride embraces
The guilty son: true to the test, remembered and confessed

V-8, by Dennis Teichman, Past Tents Press (3168 Trowbridge, Hamtramck, MI 48212, 1989), 61 pp., \$6 paper.

Reviewed by Glen Mannisto

Dennis Teichman's second collection of poems continues the task of documenting, at close range, work and the urban infrastructure. While his first book, *Edge to Edge*, was industrial strength urban narrative, *V-8* documents the state of "apres car industrial culture" symbolized by the behemoth of power plants, the crotch-shaped eight-cylinder engine.

Two parts formalize the document. While the first part, "V-8", ferrets out an anthropology of midcentury urban domesticity and its erosion, the second section, "Tales from the Landfill", is an expose on the new urban

topography. The schema is fair enough but the depiction is wonderfully troubling.

There is a struggle evidenced throughout of where to put the instrument. There is a straight, optimistic descriptive technique, similar to *Edge to Edge*, that seems to have faith that a picture of the landscape will suffice. It is a language energetic and ready to do some work. "He puts out his lights/for different reasons/and any lapse is only copse,/words forested in tensions/between the wrists." It appears throughout *V-8*. It is a language offhanded and metaphorically smart: "Not a bad day at the back lot./Auto fumes dance, automatic fence/rests aluminate, past clasplings swirled along the concrete/stanchions portray signature quality/from the latest crashsite. No avulsion/stops this idea for museum piece." (Every Detroit poet imbibes "John Chamberlins" through the milk of the mother.)

A language ready to do some work but which is thwarted by the sheer amount and bereft nature of the landscape. An eco-no-system no language can equivalent or tidy up after. What occurs in *V-8* is a kind of linguistic psychothriller that tries to give order and challenge by any means: by hysterical standup comedy — from "Queen of the Molar Derby":

Are you going sassoon? We
haven't yet reviewed
the marriage of tires

to the road...
But the real star is still
the windshield, waiting
for the improved face...
The enclosed will find
themselves serial pedestrians
imagining their polis
her ass on the seat cover.
The world a lover's commute
when car doors gently bump together.

(The kind of pun in "Molar Derby" as molecular derby is out-of-control functional throughout *V-8* and serves as an important gauge to how much can be tolerated in the autowasteland.) Or the the comic's zany story in "Generic Tire Iron":

Yet another news break where
it's noted for the archives
that in the days of the super anecdote,
just after the tale
of an ill wind blowing cold,
what was air-brushed out
was the inside story of the storm,
migrant gear teeth clattering
on an open road stretching far enough
to snap gum on endlessly, too short
to think of feeling really modern.

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The language in *V-8* is taut between a politico-hipster-cyberpunk stridency, an emasculated, parodic rage made of desperate, syllogistic calculation and humour and losing its control altogether when incredulity overtakes desire and it cries out as the last poem, "Against This History", has it:

Apartheid is
hunky dumb mick nigger kike polack fag dyke,
now words spiraling hates into theories into
realities into a war of attrition against
the billions of unheard people who cry out
always NO MORE NO MORE NO MORE...

THE EUROPE OF TRUSTS, by Susan Howe,
Sun & Moon Press (6148 Wilshire Blvd., Gertrude Stein Plaza, Los
Angeles, CA 90048, 1990), 218 pp; \$10.95., paper.

Reviewed by Tom Clark

The author of an acclaimed personal reinterpretation of the work of Emily Dickinson (*My Emily Dickinson*), poet Susan Howe demonstrates in her own verse a vital relation both of influence and affinity with her New England predecessor.

Their adroit lyricism, metaphysical compression, and serendipitous ability to emerge from thickets of obscurity into sudden, unexpected accesses of wonder link these two gifted, exacting Yankee daughters as poets.

So does their shared habit of borrowing metaphorical settings from traditional mythic landscapes. As *Europe of Trusts* (a compilation of several serial pieces first published as chapbooks by small presses in the early 1980s) shows, however, Howe forsakes the Protestant biblical imagery of Dickinson for the archetypal metamorphic forests of the English verse tradition. In her poems the heraldic "listening woods" of Tristan and Iseult, Arthur and Arden—a mysterious echoing maze where "words and meanings meet" in a "hide-and-seek border region"—becomes once again the site of imaginatively-charged symbolic transformation.

But while Howe's legendary characters—King Lear and Cordelia, Jonathan Swift and Stella, the mathematician-philosopher Pythagoras—are largely drawn from that copious subtextual literary fund she somewhere terms "School Europe," they tend to commingle on her pages in a wild figurative melding, an "evanishing of the

actors / into one another."

It is Emily Dickinson's spectacular modernity, most of all, though, that Susan Howe seems naturally to favor: the questioning, riddling disposition, the playful allusiveness, the mischievously oblique wit. In fact Howe abruptly updates the Dickinson style and vision to fit a postmodern context.

Projective, processual, disjunctive, Howe's poetry recycles "plots and old plays" in deconstructed outline, revealing the "play of force and play / of forces" that underlay "Oldest chronicle." Here, narrative is boldly fragmented and the "pantheon of history shivered into / ruin."

Susan Howe's "ballad / wrapped in a ballad" unfolds the human condition as a "language Lost / in language," and reflects a view of identity as bafflingly aleatory, time-trans-shifted, a complex occasion of "visionary events stretching back to / Eden." In the timelessness of poetry's "fictive sphere," a place where "perspectives enter / and disappear" at every turning of the path, she comes upon a glimmering "night space" of mythic vision—non-patriarchal, post-historical yet ancient as a maternal hymn, "monadical and anti-intellectual / no clock running / no clock in the forest."

Exploratory poetry of this kind must finally be judged not by its difficulties but by its discoveries. Foraging for echoes of the primordial sources of poetic narrative, Susan Howe turns up ecstatic momentary glimpses of an "infinite city" of enumerated miracle where "Green grows the morning / in the first collége of Something." Such magic moments are well worth the arduous stretches of the trip.

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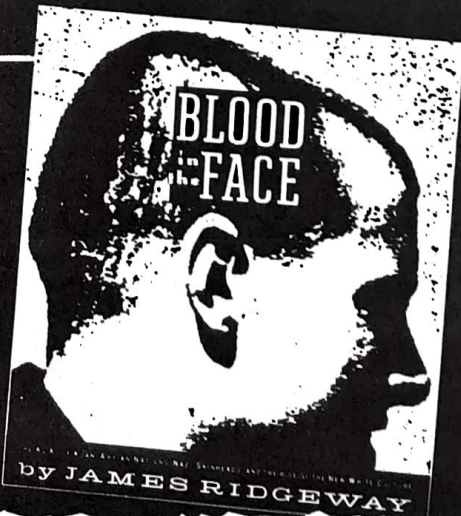
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