

POETRY PROJECT

Blanco/Gringo/You an excerpt from Cuba & His Teddy Bear by Reinaldo Povod

Redlights
You don't wanna dance to his kind'ah music?!

Teddy
I don't like it.

Redlights
But if it was rock—you know that metal an' shit, you'd get down.

Cuba
He don't know how to dance to Spanish music.

Redlights
Well, he better learn
(He grabs LOURDES and they dance together fiercely. JACKIE rolls two joints of pot. REDLIGHTS will dance with enthusiasm—gawling with "yeah's" and "baya's." CUBA watches them with delight.)
TEDDY will walk into his room—take his writing pad and pen and will sit on his bed. He will begin to write.
The song will play. CUBA stands, cuts in on REDLIGHTS. JACKIE continues to roll the joints. REDLIGHTS will dance by himself. Occasionally TEDDY will stop writing and cover his ears.

The music will gently fade.
CUBA, LOURDES and REDLIGHTS will all sit.
TEDDY stops writing and addresses CUBA, REDLIGHTS, LOURDES and JACKIE.
The two joints of marijuana will be passed among them.
As TEDDY reads from his pad:
Teddy
(Intimately)
I first layed eyes on him again, about 8-9 years ago. In a place where the Landscape is pleasing to the eye, and the Colors of the People are not of the ordinary. I'm speaking of Puerto Rico and the Rainbow People.
Puerto Rico to where my mother ran away taking my older brother with her—many years ago.
My brother was Barefoot, wearing nothing but a dirty pair of shorts, and he was playing with other Barefoot kids. All tan'd, or Trequenyo-dark skin, or Prieto-Black. He was a shade darker than tan'd, not quite dark skin'd, and definitely not Black.
Me? I was El Gringo. Me, hispanic, was called El Gringo. To the Natives anyone not born on the

Island was considered a Gringo. This applied also to Nuyoricans, Puerto Ricans born in the City. Yes, even they were called Gringos.

E'te Prieto, this Black kid with a big fat ass—On my Block, I remember Roy saying, "Any Nigguh you see with a fat ass, he eats a lot of Pork Chops." I eat alot of Pork Chops, Roy, I ain't gotta fat Ass. 'That's 'cause you ain't Black, stupid.' Ohhh. How come you ain't gotta fat ass, Roy? Cause I don't eat Pork Chops, that's why.' Ohhh. 'Stupid.' Then Roy took his hand and did like this—SMACK!... And my straight hair fell in front of my eyes. Not being Afro-like, Kinky, or thick. 'You White, you White,' Roy said to me. 'You White.'

Blanco/Gringo/You. Blanco/Gringo/You. The Black kid with the Fat ass repeats it again. Blanco/Gringo/You. Blanco/Gringo/You. Is he asking me, or is he accusing me? Blanco/Gringo/You. Blanco/Gringo/You. They all chanted. Even Him, the one a shade darker than tan, barefoot, not quite dark skin'd, and in Shorts, shouted: GRINGO—GRINGO—GRINGO. I didn't care about the others calling me Gringo, but I did care about him.

I felt like Abel, and he was Cain.
To them I was Cain.
GRINGO/GRINGO/GRINGO
CAIN/CAIN/CAIN.
The Inventor of Murder.
El Gringo—Cain
who invented the act of robbing thy neighbor by force.
El Gringo—Cain
who reduces you by force.
EL Gringo—Cain
The Americano—represented all that was evil—to them.
The Serpent.
So when I approached him—The one a shade darker than tan'd, barefoot, not quite dark skin'd and in shorts—and like the Serpent I whispered in his Ear:
'Brother against Brother'
He clenched his fists, blinked his eyes in anger and then he
He
He
STRUCK ME!
NOOO—came the shout from the House
Kiss Him He's your Brother.

Raised on the Lower East Side, REINALDO POVOD is the young author of the sizzling play CUBA & HIS TEDDY BEAR, which premiered at the Public Theater with a star-studded cast featuring Robert DeNiro, Ralph Macchio and Burt Young, under Bill Hart's direction. Povod's new play, LA PUTA VIDA TRILOGY opens at the Public Theater in September, 1987.

Burt Young, Ralph Macchio,
Robert De Niro from the play CUBA
& HIS TEDDY BEAR by Reinaldo
Povod; produced in 1986 by Joseph Papp
for The Public Theater.



MARTHA SNOPE

In Memoriam: Cary Grant, 1904-1986; Desi Arnaz, 1917-1986

"If you hear any noise, it's just me and the boys..."
—George Clinton, lyricist and leader, Parliament-Funkadelic

"When a human-being gets up in the morning and decides what to do and where to go he is finding his reason or excuse to continue living. We as artists have only that to do. We want to learn and respect and honour 'the whole'. The content of mankind is our subject and our inspiration. We stand each day for good traditions and necessary changes. We want to find and accept all the good and bad in ourselves. Civilisation has always depended for advancement on the 'giving person.' We want to spill our blood, brains and seed in our life-search for new meanings and purpose to give to life."
—Gilbert & George, "What Our Art Means," 1986

"War makes me feel like a woman..."
—Bobby Floyd, lyricist and musician, 1986

The Guys' Issue—men writing about men writing, women writing on men writing, quirky and accomodating concepts we came up with in dealing with materials which range from Galway Kinnell's poems (one grave and reflective, the other lighthearted) to Calvin Reid's wry illustrations

to an urgent manifesto by Paul Schmidt to an electrifying excerpt from Reinaldo Povod's recent hit play, *Cuba & His Teddy Bear*.

Besides being fresh new writing from a fresh young Hispanic writer, *Cuba & His Teddy Bear* is also an autobiographical story set in the Lower East Side, where Ray Povod grew up dreaming of becoming a writer.

In her review of Chester Himes' novel, *If He Hollers Let Him Go*, Martha King examines this brutal, American work with a keen, probing eye and a serious sensitivity to its importance on all levels: as contemporary literature, as film noir detective genre fiction, and last but not least, as social study. Thankfully, this almost forgotten work has just been reissued in paperback by Thunder's Mouth Press.

There is a heartfelt review of Ber Green's memoirs by Michael Scholnick, Alan Kikuchi's whimsical and affectionate photo narrative, and Gary Lenhart gives a scholarly appraisal of Eduardo Galeano's Latin American masterworks; new writers Tim Pratt and David Surface are also featured, as well as critically-acclaimed short story writer Peter Cameron, who will be teaching a workshop at The Poetry Project in March. And then, of course, our usual and unusual calendar of events...

Happy reading, and while JOSE is on holiday, hold on to your sense of humor.

Jessica Hagedorn
Editor



CALVIN REID

Fan mail, hate mail, bulk mail. Some responses to this year's Poetry Project Newsletter. If you can't please 'em, print 'em. —ed.

Yo, hold up, Jessica: Check this out, on the for-real tip. We just saw your latest Newsletter and flipped! Could we see a complete transcript of the Thulani Davis "jammie" X, *The Life & Times of Malcolm X*?

As a note of good faith, we included our latest things: One "EMPIRE," One superhard for-real poem, and our latest Arthur Kill Alliance. Can we stay in touch? Straight up.

—Na'im Hasson Abdur Razzaq
c/o Paul Gordon; Ed. Dept.
Arthur Kill Correctional Facility
Staten Island, NY

With regard to this year's Poetry Project Newsletter: Aside from its extraordinary counterrevolutionary blandness, it does not relate to this poetry project at all, though it seems to be relating to some poetry project, perhaps the Uptown Y? Can we

please have our own newsletter?

—Alice Notley
New York, NY

We are dancing in honor of your new editorship. Good luck and keep up the good work.

—Keith Abbott
Oakland, CA

The PP magazine is wonderful, vibrant, DIFFERENT, its reach so wide, it inspires.

—Olga Broumas
Provincetown, MA

The issue you edited and John's layout finally lend some dignity to our poetry and that world, here. It's really fine. Thank you for including the anthology and being so generous.

—Zoe Anglesey
New York, NY

The arete of a newsletter is timeliness, late it's no good no matter how prettily printed.

As someone who's been connected with the Project for decades I feel bitter pain at this chi-chi stupidity, you seem to be sinking in terminal swank. The NEWSLETTER was great and greatly useful in mimeo. THERE'S NOTHING FASTER THAN MIMEO. Since you gave up mimeo, you've never been able to get it to me on time. No reason why with a MacIntosh and Gestefax mimeo it shdn't look good.

Keep it simple/cheap/open. Complicate the medium and you become dependent on the folks with money.

—sam abrams
Rochester, NY

Thanks for the Newsletter. It looks bright and snappy and I particularly like the openness and congeniality of the editor's note. It sets a nice tone vibrating.

—Ron Padgett
New York, NY

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Friends Committee: Rudy Burckhardt, Paul Cummings, Peggy DeCoursey, Morris Golde, Ted Greenwald, Vicki Hudspeth, Yvonne Jacqueline, Patricia Jones, Madeleine Keller.

Board of Directors: Bobbie Bristol, Thulani Davis, Tim Diugos, Laurie Harris, Greg Masters, Bob Rosenthal, Paul Schmidt.

CELEBRATE OUR 20TH ANNIVERSARY!

Yes, I want to be a member of the Poetry Project, Inc.

___\$50: Full Member, 1 Year ___\$75: 2 Year Membership ___\$150: Sponsor ___\$300: Benefactor
___\$500: Patron ___\$1000: Lifetime Member ___\$25: Supporting Member

No, I do not wish to be a member at this time, but here is my gift of \$_____.

Name _____

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All contributions are tax-deductible. Please make all checks payable to the Poetry Project, Inc.

One Year Membership (\$50): A season pass to all Poetry Project events—including the 20th Anniversary Symposium, all readings and performances, "talks" on poetics, writing workshops, and the New Year's Day Marathon Reading. Plus, a year's subscription to the Poetry Project Newsletter!
Two Year Membership (\$75): All of the above for two full years... at a savings of \$25.
Sponsor (\$150): Two passes to all Poetry Project events, a one-year subscription to the Poetry Project Newsletter, and a free copy of *The World Record*, an amazing two-record set of historic readings at The Poetry Project from 1969 to 1980.
Benefactor (\$300): Four passes to all Poetry Project events, a subscription to the Poetry Project Newsletter, a copy of *The World Record*, and grateful public acknowledgement.
Patron (\$500): Four passes to all Poetry Project events, a subscription to the Poetry Project Newsletter, a copy of *The World Record*, grateful public acknowledgement, and for this year only, a signed copy of *Allen Ginsberg's Collected Poems*.
Lifetime Membership (\$1000): All of the above benefits and gifts, and grateful public acknowledgement.
Special Supporting Membership (\$25): A subscription to the Poetry Project Newsletter and free admission to the New Year's Day Marathon Reading celebrating 20 years of poetry at St. Mark's Church.

Look Hear

The "Discovery" (*The Nation* contest, co-sponsored by the 92nd Street Y and *The Nation Magazine*, is designed to attract large audiences to poets who have not yet published a book of poems. Each of four finalists will be awarded \$200, a reading at The Poetry Center and publication in *The Nation*. For contest rules and information, call The Poetry Center, (212) 427-6000, extension 176 or 208. Entries must be postmarked on or before February 13, 1987.

HUSKER DU Challenges Giorno Poetry Systems Artists to give royalties to the AIDS TREATMENT PROJECT. Giorno Poetry Systems artists currently accepting the challenge and donating their royalties include: William Burroughs, Laurie Anderson, Keith Haring, David Johansen, Arto Lindsay, Anne Waldman, Jessica Hagedorn & Sonic Youth, among many others. To give to the AIDS TREATMENT PROJECT, send your checks to Giorno Poetry Systems Institute, Inc., 222 Bowery, New York, NY 10012. To quote Diamanda Galas: "Listed, man/ It will soon be time./ Let's not *chat* about/ *Despair*./ *Death's* not fancy feelings./ If you are a man (and not a coward)/ you'll clasp the hands of him ignored by mercy/ until his final breath/ becomes your own."

The "First Latin American Writer's Conference in New York" is scheduled to take place during three consecutive Saturdays starting on January 24, 1987, from 9 AM to 3 PM at 87-03 Northern Blvd., Jackson Heights, NY. To discuss issues concerning the conference, contact Laureano Corcas at (718) 565-6499 between 12 noon and 6 PM. Panelists include Julio Marzan, Jaime Manrique, Gregory Kolovakos (NYSCA), Don Linder (Poets & Writers), and Dolores Prida, among others.

There will be a party at Gotham Book Mart on February 9th for Lita Hornick's book *Nine Marzins*. All readers of the Poetry Project Newsletter are cordially invited. 5-7 PM. 41 West 47th St., NYC.

Although it is beyond the resources of the government to get more ordinary Americans to read poetry, since Federal funding is tied up these days in making lots of machines that go boom, still, in an attempt to reintegrate poets into "normal" American life, the Department of Health and Human Services now offers a modest stipend to citizens who will entertain poets in their homes.

—Judith Karasik,
reprint of a reprint from FORBES
Volume 138, Number 13, 12-15-86

The Grollier Poetry Prize is now accepting submissions as of December 15 for the 1987 competition. For a copy of the rules, please send a s.a.s.e. to The Grollier Book Shop, 6 Plympton St., Cambridge MA 02138.

The Rockland Center for the Arts sponsors Writers-in-Residence for published writers of fiction or poetry for four to six month residencies. To apply, send cover letter, biography, publishing history, samples of published writing and a proposal for workshops, readings or community activity to the Rockland Center for the Arts, Writers-in-Residence Program, 27 South Greenbush Rd., West Nyack, NY 10994. Deadline: Feb. 15, 1987.

Published and edited by artists, 108, AN EAST VILLAGE REVIEW, will provide

Press, PO Box 10870, Minneapolis, MN 55440.

Best wishes to departing board members Maureen Owen, Gary Lenhart and Michael Scholnick. The Poetry Project welcomes new board members Bobbie Bristol, Laurie Harris and Vicki Hudspeth.

On behalf of the Poetry Project, thank you Rudy Burkhart & Yvonne Jacquette, Morris Golde, Rackstraw Downes, Julien Studley, John Cage, William Kushner, Alex & Ada Katz and the many members and friends for their generous support.

ERRATA: The photograph of Iris Rose which was included in issue #124 was mistakenly credited to Jackie Shue.

thoughtful, lucid and comprehensive coverage of East Village exhibitions and performances. 108 hopes to provide not only intelligent commentary but a listing that will make artists and galleries in the area more accessible. Subscription rates are \$8. for individuals and \$10 for institutions; 108 is published bi-monthly. Publishers are Calvin Reid, Patty Harris, and Janet Gillespie. Make checks payable to 108 Magazine, 108 Bowery, NYC 10013.

In memoriam, poet Darrell Gray, 1945-1986. A founding member of the Actualist Movement in Iowa in the early '70's, his numerous books include *Scattered Brain* from Toothpaste Press. Anyone with information or manuscripts by Darrell Gray, is asked to contact Allen Kornblum at Coffee House

P P I N K E Y E



Tim Pratt State of the Art

St. Mark's Church, December 8—

I had to "work the event." But I was also interested. "State of the Art—a town meeting to discuss performance." Were that many people really just going to talk? Surely, a performance would "happen," this many performers in one room...

A new Englander and a stickler, I should say that this really wasn't a "town meeting" which is stricter, more formal (a la Robert's Rules of Order), though also congenial. This was more a panel, a confab, a discussion. There was a panel—Eric Bogosian, Catherine Bush, Lucy Sexton, Fred Holland, Stephanie Skura and, as moderator, George Bartenieff of Theater for the New City. And over a hundred others—dancers, performance artists, actors, directors, choreographers, poets.

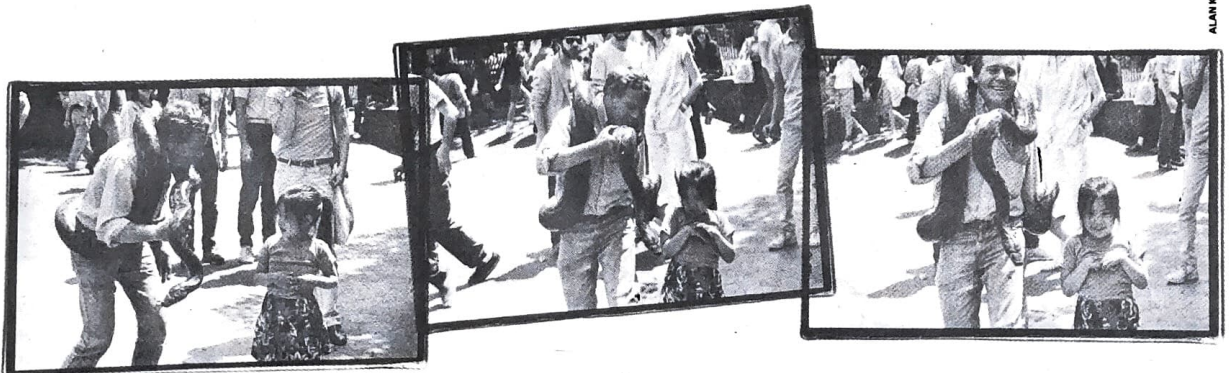
In a couple of minutes, each of the panel members did "takes" on history, aesthetics, politics, money. It was a diverse crew—Lucy Sexton has booked acts for a 10' x 12' stage at the Wah Wah Hut for several years; Bogosian has acquired grants, gigs at the Public Theater, on Miami Vice, etc.; Bartenieff has relocated an entire theater company to a former municipal building in downtown New York's choked real estate scene; and the others are at points in between.

In the hours that followed, money and space and their lack were dominant themes. "Can we not talk about money so much? I'm getting a headache..." A voice in the back, 9:30. And someone suggested the exodus from Soho lofts to East Village studio apartments would best be followed by a move onto the video screen. "I don't want to work in video," said a dancer. Plus, inevitably, guilt trips—"Why should we complain? What about poor blacks, Hispanics...?" Practical tips peppered a few speeches—cheap rehearsal space, etc.

Days of informal performances in lofts, peer reviews, mimeo news were lamented, gone and urged renewed. And some speeches reminded all of the worth of artists, period, and of artists that have figured out how to work with other artists—all in a culture where withholding money isn't the only means used to discourage art.

By evening's end, I was tired, as can happen hearing so many personal and public laments. But I was also heartened. There was something refreshing about hearing the spectrum of "career" stages so candidly portrayed, from "sucking dick at the Palladium" to turning down grants (!). And, about hearing some of those tips. Also, to have been reminded by the inveterate Bartenieff of the twin futures of real estate and art in New York City, making necessary a new kind of savvy. If suggested future meetings occur, one hopes problem solving is even more the order. And revelling in "the work" wouldn't hurt either—a challenge in a town whose audiences listen more and more to fewer critics.

Afterwards, I found myself out with a crew as diverse as the meeting. Around one of the "Around the Clock's" tables sat a dramaturg, several performers, a performance administrator and poet, and myself, another poet. I asked Tim Miller about writing for performance, something I had recently done for the first time in collaboration with Kate Foley, a choreographer and dancer. Stephanie Skura spoke of mangos found on LA's streets—another recent discovery. "When did you leave Wisconsin...?" I hoped other crews were sitting around other tables somewhere. I was glad Richard called the meeting...



ALAN KIKUCHI

MANIFESTO—

Letter About Performance

Paul Schmidt

I want to convince you that the art of performance is a fundamental part of poetry, one that's been lost for a long time in America, and one we need desperately to get back. We have to reclaim it from rock music, which is stealing poetry's thunder. And I mean thunder, the boom and roar of big voices speaking out loud, at top volume, like Mayakovsky, or Langston Hughes shouting on a street corner, or Walt Whitman singing on the beaches of Long Island.

What we have to do is lay down our books and stop calling our evenings "readings!" We have to memorize our poems and perform them for an audience by heart! (Don't you see what it really means, that phrase "by heart?") The poem has got to go directly from the poet to the audience, by the most powerful way possible, without any intervening junk. It bores me to see a poet stand up in front of a mike he doesn't know how to use and that scares him to death, and rattle a stack of pages and then stare at them and mumble, and never look into the eyes of his audience because he clearly thinks they're hostile and is using his book as a wall to protect himself—that's no fun.

Machinery isn't alien to poetry, it's neutral. What we have to do is make it serve our intentions. Performing a poem will mean learning how to use a microphone, mastering the machinery, not letting the machinery master us. We need workshops in how to use a mike. And in places where there's no mike, we have to be able to expand ourselves to fill a room without one. We need workshops in the technical aspects of speaking: how to control breath and volume, how to sound consonants, how to glide vowels up and down and in and out, how to play with sound in order to make the poem show itself off. Listen to Allen Ginsberg read—how beautifully he shapes his sounds! Sound is the founda-

tion of the universe; the power of poetry comes from hearing that sound, no matter how faintly, in a poem. And we respond to a poem by how well the universal sound reverberates in it.

I've heard people argue against this kind of training. They cite the example of actors reading poems, and how phoney they sometimes sound. But a poet speaks his own words, and an actor always acts someone else's words, that's the crucial difference. If an actor spoke his own words, he wouldn't be acting. These same people go on to claim that "inspiration" and "honesty" are what really count, and they believe these qualities come "naturally," or maybe with a few drinks or drugs. I think that's a delusion. Of course we all love authenticity in poetry, and of course we hate pretense. But that's true of any kind of performance. Why should that argue against technical training? Knowing the technical aspects of performing, how to use your voice and body, how to use a mike, rehearsing with a tape recorder in front of a mirror until you get good—these things are no more dishonest than shaving.

I'm not claiming that performing poetry this way is easy. It's not. It's very hard. Next to stand-up comedy, it's the hardest kind of performance there is. But that's what makes it a risk worth taking. Someone performing by heart is always less boring than someone reading because of the risk involved. Risk is never boring.

And then there's a deeper argument. In a world of capitalist consumption, how do we keep poetry from becoming a commodity? By keeping it from becoming a thing. And it becomes a thing only in print. We make fetishes of print! We all dream of being printed, of having a book, as if this makes us authentic, gives us validity in a consumer world. But why should we take our reason-for-being from a thing? Besides, even though you "wrote" the book, it's owned and distributed by someone else, or even if owned and distributed by you, it's bought by someone else, who then "owns" it—and of course you didn't really "write" it, you put your words into a machine and got back this book, this thing. A handwritten book would at least have some mark of the poet on it; a printed book is just another consumer item.

The only way out of this situation is to have the poem by heart—a part of you, beside your heart, in your veins, inside you. And only you can get it out, by performing it. If someone wants to hear a poem, they need you. They can ask you to come to them, or they can go to you, and you say the poem, and then they pay you for it. So there's no distance between you and the poem, which is as it should be. There's no middleman, and no commodity: you get paid for performing, and that's that. And even in the special case of a sound or a video recording, although it's a commodity and can be sold, it's possible to argue that it's still you: your voice, your body, your presence, the image of you. But books aren't you, because your voice is gone. No voice, no poem.

Good performances of poetry aren't boring. Language is only boring when it loses its connection with its source. And the authentic source of language is the human body, the voice, the shape a body gives to sound. When we watch and hear someone speak,

we experience the body giving shape to language—rhythm, pattern, pulse. Those are the things that are missing from most poetry nowadays, and they've been taken over by rock music. It's true that most of the words of rock music are boring and dumb, and poetry means smart words. Yet even then I'd rather watch a boring rock singer jump and shout than I would a boring poet fiddle with a piece of paper as he mumbles into a mike he doesn't know how to use.

We can get rid of the paper by learning the poem by heart. And to learn a poem by heart we have to remember it the way musicians remember music, by rhythm patterns. They count bars, which means we have to have bars to count. That's what Mayakovsky did, he had a fixed number of beats in each line. And we have to emphasize patterns of vowels and consonants and syntax, to give the poem shape. That way the poem stays in the head. And if people start composing poems in their head, we will soon have a different kind of poetry. Without paper to scribble down whatever comes into your head, the poem will be only what stays in your head. The shit will clear away, and only what's important will remain. But it will need rhythm to help it stay there. And it will have a new shape, a personal shape, one that the individual voice and breath and lungs give it, not a shape determined by a rectangle of paper that's the same for everybody. And maybe then "academic" poetry will begin to wither away, the kind that's written on paper so it can be bought and sold and filed away in libraries.

And once we get rid of the paper, and don't need our eyes, maybe darkness can be restored to poetry. Some art needs light. Painters needed light; no one could paint on cave walls until they first invented fire. But poetry may well have been a means to charm the darkness before fire was invented. Poetry needs darkness if its images are to grow and reveal themselves. Poetry loves darkness—I think that's why all the stories say Homer was blind. But poetry nowadays can't compete with the glare of light—we have never-ending neon, constant cable TV, street lights that never go off. Whenever all our senses work at once, the sense of sight dominates, and the other senses are thrown into shadow. But remove every source of light, sit in absolute darkness, listen to poetry—and hear how the poem begins to fill up space with its patterns. The Russian Futurist poet Khlebnikov believed that sounds were representations of three-dimensional space. We can get a sense that he was right when we sit in darkness and listen to sound. What happens? Instead of merely patterning time, the poem begins to pattern space. But it patterns the limitless space of the mind, not the paltry commercial space of a piece of paper.

Big performances of smart words with rhythm and shape—that would be very interesting. That's what I think the poetry of the future will be. The age of print is dying; a new century is coming. It's time to get poetry into SHAPE to meet it.

PAUL SCHMIDT is the translator of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF RIMBAUD (Harper & Row) and THE KING OF TIME (Harvard University), a translation of the Russian Futurist poet Velimir Khlebnikov. His play BLACK SEA FOLLIES opened off Broadway this past December.

Aboard The Steamboat Delta Queen, On The Mississippi River: Jack The Modernist

by Robert Gluck

(Seahorse Press, 1985)

\$7.95

by Roberto Bedoya

Jack The Modernist is pretty hot! The sex—great! We're in San Francisco, 1981, before AIDS drastically redefined the gay community. Bob, the narrator, describes reckless evenings at the baths, S/M scenes, watersports, jock straps, tight white t-shirts, and every other icon that occurs in gay sex. Bob meets Jack, has sex with him, loses him.

Let's get scholarly. Bob's look at his relationship with Jack leads to a discourse on Mickey Mouse, Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, and even the images and meanings we have associated with "couples" and intimacy. It's these moments of reflection that I feel are especially brilliant. Professors of semiotics, deconstructive philosophy and Jungian psychology would appreciate Gluck's

More than great sex, there is so much going on in this wonderful book: stories of ex-boyfriends, platonic friends, the characters Bruce and Denise, sensual descriptions of food, more good sex, loss, love, and desire. There's also Phyllis, a compelling participant in Bob's writing workshop. The loss of Phyllis' son parallels the loss of Jack's love for Bob.

observations.

Like good gossip at a party, the narrative moves from one subject to another. While it may sound confusing, Bob often addresses the reader directly by telling us what he is doing with the story. He says: "Instead of cut-up phrases, my characters are cut-up fryers from the supermarket dressed as engineers and passengers. I prod them onward, hoping we don't all collapse into parts."

"History and self are narrative puzzles," Bob also says at the end of this unique novel. The reader is treated like a traveller going down the Mississippi River, not on a raft like Huck Finn or a senior citizen on the Delta Queen, but more like the water itself. The stories turn back and forth, move around islands, always fluid, never losing direction.

ROBERTO BEDOYA is the literary director of The Intersection in San Francisco. He is the author of PICAS, a collection of poems published by e.g. Press.

The Ace of Spades: If He Hollers Let Him Go by Chester Himes

(Thunder's Mouth Press, 1986.
Originally published by Doubleday, 1945)
203 pages, \$ 7.95

by Martha King

"We're a wonderful, goddamned race, I thought. Simple-minded, generous, sympathetic sons of bitches. We're sorry for everybody but ourselves; the worse the white folks treat us the more we love 'em. Ella Mae laying me because I wasn't married and she figured she had enough for me and Henry too; and a black audience clapping its hands off for a blind white acrobat."

If He Hollers Let Him Go by Chester Himes)

The Emerald City isn't actually green. It has a guardian at the gate who fits all visitors into green-tinted eyeglasses, tightly locked at the back of the head. Dorothy and her friends enjoy the city as variations of one green theme, even though they don't forget they've been made to see it that way. It is, after all, integral to our national myth that we know the score, and American literature has reflected back at us a long line of clear-eyed realists, predating the pragmatic Dorothy, comfortably including Sam Spade, Philip Marlowe, and their hard-boiled company.

In the Los Angeles of 1943, race tints every neighborhood, every human exchange in parking lot, shop, and bar, every knot of freeway traffic, every cheap roadside diner—as pervasively and as claustrophobically as if the entire population were locked into racial eyeglasses. Robert Jones, the clear-eyed protagonist of Chester Himes' novel, does not adjust.

There's scant haven in black society, for in this yeasty boomtown atmosphere, whites may join black society at will—to gamble, pick up sex, dance, dig the music. Nor is there monolithic exclusivity in white society, for light-skinned Negroes, middle-class blacks "of better type," may mingle in mixed groups at elegant hotels, golf courses, restaurants, the same establishments where they are emphatically not welcome alone or in the company of other blacks.

On the job, Robert is paid white man's wages. He's earning more money than he has ever seen before in his life. He's bought a beautiful late-model Buick and elegant evening clothes, and he is going with Alice, the light-skinned daughter of a physician, an educated, spirited woman who loves him. His two years at Ohio State University, where he had strived for a middle-class profession and washed dishes in white fraternity houses to support himself, had never given him the feeling of dignity and achievement that wearing his thick workboots, leather tool belt, and tin hat (at a "signifying angle") do.

Jones is the first black in the yard to have been given a position of authority, and the taste of what he recognizes as ordinary manhood is preternaturally sweet. The price he pays is explicitly clear: every move on the job is a test of his phantom authority, every glance a racial challenge. The physical conditions aboard the ship where Jones and his crew, aptly enough, work in the toilets fitting a new ventilation system into the heads, mirror the psychic environment. The entire ship is a "littered madhouse," an earsplitting hive of workers where one has to "pick every step to find a foot-size clearance of deck space" and be constantly mindful of the hazards that might put out an eye or tear off an ear.

In America, fantasy is practical. Robert discovers, as he slips on first one and then the next of the inevitable banana peels of his absurd position, that a dream of murder can sustain his precarious balance. It is only after he makes his first murder plan, a day-dream plan, realistically imagined and pursued in fact in actual preliminaries, that he experiences his first moments of peace, strength, even of love of country, some sense of why the war is being fought and some personal pride at his part in it. With this murder in mind, he doesn't tense at the baiting of the shipyard gatekeeper; he can respond with wicked humor and no gut-wrenching consequences: "The only way you can make me mad

now,' I told (the gatekeeper), 'is to get a mouthful of horse manure and blow it through your teeth at me.'" And he knows exactly why: "I had a peckerwork's life in the palm of my hand and that made all the difference."

If He Hollers Let Him Go is a bonafide masterwork of classical American detective fiction with a lid lifted, so that what had been apparent as gritty realism in the works of Hammett or Chandler, appears here, eerily, to have been metaphor all along. In white detective novels, the old knight doggedly pursues truth through a harrowing obstacle course. Betrayals, including self-betrays in the more sophisticated exegeses of the theme, mount like the physical assaults and conflicting baffling information. The theme is honor and how to preserve it in a degraded world—and somewhere in the plot, the knight falls in love and loses his direction. Whether the woman is guilty, innocent, or some grey stage in between, she always deters the hero from his quest. Detective fiction is as misogynistic as the medieval Christian myth from which it springs.

In Chester Himes' mystery story, the knight doesn't struggle to find a solution to a problem he has (altruistically) taken on; he struggles to possess the simplest personal integrity for himself. The novel's narrative propulsion—its suspense, if you will—derives not from a mystery without (who done it) but from one within. It derives from whether, or when, the hero will do it, as hour by hour he is stripped of his fragile personal defenses.

Retaliatory murder will hold meaning for only a minute and will end his hope of living a man's life as surely as he comes to believe that a murder affords him his only chance to save some portion of a normal man's authority. (I'd prefer to say human being's, but he would say and mean a man's: this distinction should not be tampered with.)

The eyes of this novel, the characters' and the author's, and now ours as readers—already forced to focus through the prism of racism—now focus still more narrowly: on the quest. As befits detective fiction, everything is honed for its purpose, a stripped-down state in which the hardboiled prose of classical detective fiction is forged. This prose moves to the cadences of the underclasses and brims with the sardonic, irrepressible energy of folks who (more ways than one) are getting their heads beat in:

"...the tips of his dogteeth showed like a gopher's mouth and his blue eyes were blistered with hate... Then that sick, gone feeling came in the pit of my stomach—just a flash. And a blinding explosion went off just back of my eyes as if the nerve centres had been dynamited. I had the crazy sensation of my eyes popping out of my head and catching a telescopic photo of ringed fingers, some half up, others squatting in a circle. Then I didn't know a thing." (page 33)

As the noose tightens, young Robert Jones tries accepting Alice's absurd proposal that the two of them can forge a private life the race war can't touch. After all, she says, in a blazing triumph of racialization (fulfilling the function of woman in this classic form), how could a mature person jeopardize his future just because some ignorant person calls him a nigger?

If He Hollers is a bad joke and an actual nightmare. Robert Jones is no more a victim at the end of the story than he was at its beginning, and there is a sense in which the entire novel is a single intense session of wild racial clowning. This novel's hero loses everything except the last laugh.

It is hard to understand if He Hollers Let Him Go's precarious literary history. The novel has been out of print in the U.S. a good twenty-five years. This new edition was reprinted from a 1947 English version, replete with British spellings—it does tweak the eye to see the word "coloured"—but no matter how Thunder's Mouth Press did it, they have done us all a mitzvah by rereleasing it. It's cheap too: \$7.95. Buy a copy now, while you can. You won't easily find much of Himes' other work elsewhere, with the possible exception of Cotton Comes To Harlem which received a burst of publicity when the movie version appeared.

Otherwise, Chester Himes was or has become only peripheral part of the pantheon of black American novelists. He deserves more, or perhaps he deserves other. In his hands, black humor has terrible double meaning and this work is roman noir veritable.

MARTHA KING is a writer and editor of GIANTS PLAY WELL IN THE DRIZZLE, a poetry newsletter. A collection of short prose pieces is forthcoming from Zelot Press in 1987. She lives in Brooklyn.

Shalom: Blood, Fire and Pillars of Smoke: excerpts From A Memoir by Ber Green

(A Jewish Heritage Writing Project/Teachers
& Writers Collaborative Publication)
\$ 5.00

by Michael Scholnick

Friday afternoon, my attention is focused, partaking in a writer's magic. He is new to me.

Ber Green came to America in 1923. He received a law degree here and was literary editor for the *Morning Freiheit*, A Yiddish paper, for over fifty years. He's an 85 year old man of letters, the author of poetry, prose, and diverse translations. Across difficult boundaries, Ber Green's memorized speech reaches back with fulfilling succinctness and authority, depicting an all but vanished reality with its delicious relevancies intact. Rich indeed, for instance, is "Nursing An Aunt Back To Health," which tells of the

I follow the day's news with a concerned feeling of dismay, conscious of those heartbeats beneath the gloss. More or less detached, the spotlighted situation is of demanding consequence, but I do not feel drawn into the fray beyond the desire to assign guilt. I reflect that the summarized event serves perversely to exclude so much else. The infant mortality rate amongst blacks has risen markedly in the last 20 years since the immortal Kerner Commission Report on Civil Disorders concluded that such inequities of our social order directly caused racial turmoil and violence. Over banana-sweetened cornflakes I glimpse my own greed, not the hypocrisy of my demands. Astounding acts of unlimited evil and corruption on earth continually enkindle one's moral indignation. I roar at the television and throw imaginary potato salad at that scum, D'Aubuisson politicking in Washington, very casually attired. I wish for justice to flower, yet my relationship to the reported incident is a distant, ineffectual one. I belong to no army. My house is not on fire. My attention and care are taxed to the ceiling by an array of duties. My day is a full one.

How different, strangely, is my relationship to an interesting piece of literature such as this dazzling, slim book by Mr. Ber Green. Inhuman chaos is afar. Undisturbed by pettiness, I shine in the company of a scholar and sage. Amazed and refueled on a

THE PINK LIST

Noteworthy publications received:

- Raymond Carver Ultramarine \$13.95 (cloth)
Random House
Langston Hughes I Wonder As I Wander \$9.95 (paper) Thunder's Mouth Press
Tian Wen: A Chinese Book of Origins translated by Stephen Field \$8.95 (paper) New Directions
Philip Lamantia Meadowlark West \$4.95 (paper) City Lights
Pier Paolo Pasolini Roman Poems translated by Lawrence Ferlinghetti & Francesca Valente \$5.95 (paper) City Lights
Allen Ginsberg White Shroud Poems 1980-1985 \$14.95 (cloth) Harper & Row
Jeff Wright All In All \$6.00 (paper) Gull Books
Bill Miller Alley-Strewn Phrases \$5.00 (paper) Gull Books
Carlos Drummond Travelling In The Family: Selected Poems edited by Thomas Colchie & Mark Strand \$9.95 (paper) Random House
The Collected Poems of Williams Carlos Williams Vol. 1 1909-1939 edited by A. Walton Litz & Christopher MacGowen \$35.00 (cloth) New Directions
Jack Marshall Arabian Nights \$8.95 (paper) Coffee House Press
Vicki Hudspeth & James DeWoody Limousine Dreams \$6.00 (paper) Bench Press
Alex Kuo Changing The River \$8.95 (paper) Reed & Cannon
Julio Marzan Translations Without Originals \$3.95 (paper) Reed & Cannon
Jerome Rothenberg New Selected Poems \$23.50 (cloth) \$8.95 (paper) New Directions
Sibyl James The White Junk of Love, Again \$6.95 (paper) Calyx Books
Allen Ginsberg Howl \$22.50 (cloth) Harper & Row

Magazines:

- Callaloo editor: Charles H. Rowell (\$15/year) Dept. of English, Wilson Hall, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA 22903
Quarterly West 10th Anniversary Issue editors: Christopher Merrill & Ann Snodgrass (\$8.50/2 issues) 317 Ogden Union, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT 84112
Indiana Review editor: Pamela Wampler (\$10/3 issues) 316 N. Jordan Ave., Bloomington, IN 47405
Rolling Stock Senior editors: Edward Dorn & Jennifer Dorn (\$2/issue) Campus Box 226, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO 80309
Bomb Winter 1987 editor: Betsy Sussler (\$18/4 issues) PO Box 2003, Canal Station, NYC 10013
Tongue editors: Gary Jacobelly & Jason Kahn (\$3/issue) PO Box 3985, Los Angeles, CA 90051
Conjunctions editor: Bradford Morrow (\$16/2 issues) 33 West 9th St., NYC, 10011

SMALL PRESS ADDRESS

- Thunder's Mouth Press, PO Box 780, NYC 10025
New Directions, 80 8th Avenue, NYC 10011
City Lights Books, 261 Columbus Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94133
Gull Books, Little Westkill Rd., R.R. #01, Box 273A, Prattsville, NY 12468
Coffee House Press, PO Box 10870, Minneapolis, MN 55440
Bench Press, 141 West 24th St., NYC 10011
Reed & Cannon Co., 1446 Sixth St., Suite D, Berkeley, CA 94710
Calyx Books, PO Box B, Corvallis, OR 97339

time Green's Aunt Henye suffered on the brink of death from starvation. "I will save her life," the young Mr. Green announces to the doctor. Whereupon the boy ingeniously contrives to catch pigeons in a trap he's learned how to make out of strong hairs torn from the tail of a horse.

The simple prose sometimes has the incisiveness and punch of Celine, sometimes the understated literalness of the author's immediate Russian predecessors, such as Chekhov. The humor is veiled and dry. In "Yekutiel's Matchmaker," the scribe confesses: "It was I who wrote the letters from my Aunt Feyge to her groom. He had narrow shoulders... a wrinkled face. He made very lively movements."

Fainstakingly excerpted from lengthy dictations covering the

THE POETRY PROJECT

WEDNESDAY NIGHT READING & LECTURE SERIES

FEB



Philip Whalen

CHRIS FELVER

4

Holly Hughes & Gary Indiana

Holly Hughes is a playwright and performer. Recent works include *The Well of Horniness* and *The Lady Dick*. She is currently at work on a play called *Dress Suits To Hire* which will open in the late Spring at the WOW Cafe. Gary Indiana is a poet and performance artist, whose column on visual art appears regularly in the *Village Voice*. His collection of short stories, *Scar Tissue* will be published this winter from the Gay Presses of NY.

11

Ed Smith & Tina L'Hotsky

Ed Smith is a young poet from Los Angeles whose most recent book, *Fantasyland* was published by Cold Calm Press. Tina L'Hotsky has just finished her novel, *Harem Afternoons*. After long being an active performer, writer, and entrepreneur in downtown art circles, she has moved to Los Angeles where she is staff writer on the t.v. show, *Chilly Scenes Of Winter*.

18

Elizabeth Fox & Gary Lenhart

Elizabeth Fox is the author of *Limousine Kids on the Ground* (Rocky Ledge, 1983). Her poems have appeared in numerous publications, as various as *Bombay Gin* and *The National Magazine of the Lower East Side*. Gary Lenhart's books of poetry include: *One At A Time*, *Bulb In Socket*, and *Drunkard's Dream*. A former editor of MAG CITY, he is currently Associate Director at Teachers & Writers Collaborative.

SAT & SUN

21

The Poetry Project Play Series presents: *She Is In Tangier*

A play by Millicent Dillon, based on the life and work of Jane Bowles. Directed by Bob Holman.

22

25

The Talk Series presents: Jan Clausen on *Mending The Silence: New Directions In Feminist Poetry*.

Poet, novelist, and journalist, Jan Clausen's most recent book is *Sinking, Stealing*, a novel published by Crossing Press. She is one of the founding editors of *Conditions*.

MAR

4

Galway Kinnell & Ai

World-renowned, Pulitzer Prize winning poet Galway Kinnell will be reading at the Poetry Project for the first time. His most recent book is *The Past* (Houghton Mifflin, 1985). A former student of Kinnell, Ai is the celebrated author of *Cruelty*, *Killing Floor*, and the recent *Sin*, all published by Houghton Mifflin. Thunder's Mouth Press is reissuing her first two books in paperback this year.

11

Philip Whalen & Ed Sanders

Philip Whalen's most recent book is *Heavy Breathing* (4 Seasons Press), which contains such Whalen classics as *Scenes Of Life At The Capital*, *The Kindness Of Strangers*, and *Enough Said*. His two novels, *You Didn't Even Try* and *Imaginary Speeches For A Brazen Head*, have just been published. Ed Sanders' collected poems, *Thriving For Peace In A Raging Country*, is forthcoming from Coffee House Press. His opera "Star Peace" will soon be released in a two volume, two record set from Olufsen and New Rose, France. He will be accompanying himself on a microtonal, bardic lyre.

18

R. Weis & Mark Ameen

R. Weis' "Falling Off Buildings," a collection of poems and monologues, was performed at the Poetry Project last year. Mark Ameen's first collection of poems, *A Circle Of Sirens*, was published by SeaHorse Press in 1985.

SAT & SUN

21

The Poetry Project Play Series presents: *The Accident* by Charles Borkhuis.

22

25

Honor Moore & Cornelius Eady

Honor Moore's new book of poems, *Fire-Walker*, will be out from Chicory Blue Press in 1987. Cornelius Eady is the author of *Kartunes* (Warthog, 1980) and *Victims Of The Latest Dance* (Ommation Press) which was the Lamont Poetry Selection for 1985.

All events begin 8 PM.
Admission: \$5.
Programs subject to change.
For more information, call 674-0910.

Lisa Kotin by Lisa Kotin



MONDAY NIGHT PERFORMANCE SERIES

WORKSHOPS

2 Open Reading

9 Alien Comic/Tom Murrin in "The Making of a Performance Artist"

16 Catherine Bush reads new fiction
Impala—Poet
Lisa Kotin performs "The Doughs"
—Scenes 1 through 4"

23 Brian Jucha directs "Mercy Street,"
based on the works of Anne Sexton
Trinket Monsod in an excerpt from
"Tristan's Break: One Filipino Triptych"



Trinket Monsod & Alain Masson

LAURE DREZ

2 Open Reading

9 Re: Vision performance group directed by
Steve Bailey in "Cassandra is wondering
where she is"
Mark Russell reads

16 Nina Fonoroff—new films including
"Department of the Interior"
Mimi Goese—Performance Artist
Donna Masini reads

23 John S. Hall—Writer
Layle Keane in "Women, Ah"
Karen Pearlman/Richard Allen—
"That Was Fast"

30 Dance Noise
Danny Mydlack displays "The Modern
Accordian Method"

Susie Timmons
"Advanced Poetry" Workshop,
Tuesday eves. 7 PM (Ongoing)

Susie Timmons' book of poems, *Hog Wild* was published by Frontward Books... With Bob Holman & Sara Miles, she was a founder of the New York Poetry Calendar.

Study the greets to learn their tricks! Enlightening class discussion—invigorating assignments—experiments with attitude development and dissolution!

(This workshop is made possible by Poets & Writers, Inc. through funds which it has received from the NYSCA literature program.)

Peter Cameron
"The Short Story" Workshop
Friday eves. 7 PM
Begins March 6, thru April 24

Workshop members will analyze each other's short fiction as well as stories suggested by the instructor, who will also read and comment on all work submitted for workshop discussion. *Workshop limited to 15.* To apply, send one short story by February 20th to: Peter Cameron, c/o The Poetry Project at St. Mark's Church, 2nd Ave. & 10th St., NYC 10003. Poems or excerpts from other types of writing will also be considered. If you wish your manuscripts returned, please enclose a S.A.S.E.

Peter Cameron's fiction has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Mademoiselle*, *Grand Street*, *The Kenyon Review*, *Rolling Stone*, and *Prize Stories: The O. Henry Awards*. His first collection, *One Way Or Another*, was published by Harper & Row in 1986 to critical acclaim.

Bernadette Mayer
"Poetry & Prose" Workshop
Begins Friday, Jan. 9, 7 PM

"How words can be reflective of thought's complexities and transitions in poetry and prose, and how forms both reflect and create: freewriting, rhetoric and backwards revising, including dialectics and collaboration; questions of articulation about love and politics, kindergarten skills and knowledges about language (including etymology) and prosody, plus whatever workshop participants would like to do."

Former Artistic Director of the Poetry Project, Bernadette Mayer is the author of numerous books of poetry, including: *Mutual Aid* (Mademoiselle de la Mole Press, 1985), *Utopia* (United Artists, 1983), and *Midwinter Day* (Turtle Island Foundation, 1982). She is the recipient of several grants and awards, and is a prolific and active editor, teacher, publisher, and performer as well.

Ed Friedman
Performance Poetry/Poetry In Performance
Begins Saturday, Feb. 14, 12-2 PM

This workshop will explore approaches to making these kinds of poetry performances: a) ones in which brilliant writing is at the center of everything; b) ones in which poets/performers create works that require them to do things they aren't necessarily "good" at, in which innovation occurs because of the personal challenges involved; c) ones in which poets/performers are so skilled in their craft(s) that they can demonstrate the limitlessness of their possibilities; d) ones in which performers and audience get to know something new about themselves and each other. Collaboration, experimentation and multi-media will be encouraged. Workshop sessions will consist of writing and performing.

Ed Friedman founded the Poetry Project's Monday Night Reading/Performance series. His books are *La Frontera* (Helpful Book, 1983), *The New York Hat Line* (Bozoux of London, 1979), *The Telephone Book* (Telephone Books/Power Mad Press, 1979), *The Black Star Pilgrimage* (Frontward Books). He has presented readings, songs, plays and performances at the Poetry Project, The Kitchen, The Public Theater, MOMA, Charas, PS 122, Eye & Ear Theater, etc.

All workshops run at least 8 weeks. \$50 registration fee includes membership privileges and admission to Poetry Project events and all workshops for the year. Schedule subject to change. For more information, call 674-0910.

Program Coordinator: Jessica Hagedorn
Monday Night Performance Series Coordinator: Richard Elovich
Theater Series Coordinator: Elinor Nauen

The Poetry Center of the 92nd Street Y

Readings and Events February and March 1987

Yours Sincerely: Three Evenings of Letters.

The Poetry Center of the 92nd Street Y presents readings of letters written by prominent literary figures from the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. Literary critics will select the letters and invite contemporary writers to read them.

FEB. 2 8 PM LETTERS FROM THE 18th CENTURY

Chosen and cast by Christopher Ricks. Letters by Jonathan Swift, Edmund Burke, Samuel Johnson, Horace Walpole, Lady Wortley Montague, William Blake and Fanny Burney. Christopher Ricks is King Edward VII Professor of English Literature at Cambridge University in England. Tickets: \$8

FEB. 9 8 PM LETTERS FROM THE 19th CENTURY

Chosen and cast by Phyllis Rose. Letters by Emily Dickinson, Charles Dickens, Mark Twain, Jane Welsh Carlyle, George Eliot and Gustave Flaubert. Phyllis Rose's book *Parallel Lives* deals with the lives and marriages of several important Victorian writers. Tickets: \$8

FEB. 23 8 PM LETTERS FROM THE 20th CENTURY

Chosen and cast by Grace Schulman. Letters by F. Scott Fitzgerald, Virginia Woolf, Marianne Moore, T.S. Eliot, James Joyce, Gertrude Stein, W.B. Yeats and Wallace Stevens. Grace Schulman is the author of *Marianne Moore: The Poetry of Engagement* as well as many critical essays. She is a Professor of English at Baruch College. Tickets: \$8

MAR. 2 8:15 P.M. GERALD STERN AND GARRETT KAORU HONGO

Gerald Stern's new book of poems is *Knowledge Forwards and Backwards*. "Discovery"/*The Nation* Contest winner Garrett Hongo is the author of a first book of poems entitled *Yellow Light*. Tickets: \$6

MAR. 9 8 P.M. ARTHUR MILLER

One of America's premier living playwrights. His two new plays are *Clara* and *I Can't Remember Anything*. Tickets: \$8

MAR. 16 8 P.M. HOWARD NEMEROV AND J.D. McCLATCHY

Howard Nemerov's books include *Inside the Onion* and *Collected Poems*. He is a recipient of both Pulitzer and Bollingen Prizes for Poetry. J.D. McClatchy's new book of poems is *Stars Principal*. Tickets: \$6

MAR. 23 6 P.M. SALMAN RUSHDIE

Interviewed Live in *The Paris Review Writers-At-Work Series*. Novelist Salman Rushdie will be interviewed by Shusha Guppy, London Editor of *The Paris Review*. Tickets: \$7

MAR. 23 8:30 P.M. SALMAN RUSHDIE Reads From His Work

India's preeminent author, Salman Rushdie's novels include *Grimus*, *Shame* and *Midnight's Children*. Tickets: \$8

MAR. 30 8 P.M. PARKER HUANG

Chants traditional Chinese poems in an art form now vanishing in China. Tickets: \$6

Tickets available at the 92nd Street Y Box Office, 1395 Lexington Ave. Or call Y-CHARGE at (212) 996-1100.

The 92nd Street YM-YWHA is an agency of UJA-Federation.

Love, War and Outrage: The Works of Eduardo Galeano

Memory of Fire I. Genesis
by Eduardo Galeano
(Pantheon, 1985)
translated by Cedric Belfrage
292 pages, \$17.95

Days and Nights of Love and War
by Eduardo Galeano
(Monthly Review Press, 1983)
translated by Judith Brister
194 pages, \$8.00

Open Veins of Latin America
by Eduardo Galeano
(Monthly Review Press, 1983)
translated by Cedric Belfrage
339 pages, \$8.50
by Gary Lenhart

"Tonight, by order of Captain Balboa, the dogs will sink their teeth into the naked flesh of fifty Indians of Panama. They will disembowel and devour fifty who were guilty of the abominable sin of sodomy, 'who only lacked tits and wombs to be women.' The spectacle will take place in the mountain clearing, among the trees that the storm uprooted a few days ago...Vasco Nunez de Balboa chairs the ceremony. His dog Leoncico heads up God's avengers...He gets a sublieutenant's pay and a share of each gold or slave booty..."

(from *Memory of Fire: I. Genesis* by Eduardo Galeano)

It seems that the most vital poetry of our century has looked to dream or history for inspiration. But as dreams have entered polite discourse at the expense of prophetic powers, history has been retreating from public domain into a "science" for specialists. Now there is one dream, of "success," usually in economic terms. And a professor at Johns Hopkins University recently was surprised to discover that of 120 students, only two knew that the international May Day celebrations commemorate an American event. Of those two, one was French, the other Swedish.

It's sorely obvious why American high school students don't learn about the struggle for the eight hour day that erupted in violence in Chicago's Haymarket in 1886. As Eduardo Galeano writes in *Open Veins of Latin America*: "All memory is subversive, because it is different." Those who sponsor official revisions of history don't suffer from a lack of imagination; they know too well what events look like to other eyes. As the surrealists tried to reclaim the power of dreams, Galeano, using the library, recovers another subconscious. He gives back to us buried stories of the underclasses, of dissenters (and dreamers), of the unsuccessful, the assassinated, the rebellious, the oppressed.

Galeano is a prolific writer, but so far only these three books have been published in English translation. The second volume of *Memory of Fire* should soon be available. The big, ambitious book that is the earliest of this trio, *Open Veins of Latin America*, is subtitled "Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent." The theme is straightforward, that "underdevelopment isn't a stage of development but its consequence." Galeano contends that Latin America "continues to exist at the service of others' needs, as a source and reserve of oil and iron, of copper and meat, of fruit and coffee, the raw materials and foods destined for rich countries which profit more from consuming them than Latin America does from producing them." Although this division of spoils is most often ascribed to geography by its beneficiaries, Galeano tracks it to historical and political decision. For instance, coffee and sugar were foreign to the Caribbean prior to the 17th century, when they were imported on the same ships that carried the slaves needed to grow them as cash crops.

Galeano is one of those authors moved to write because he has something to say. His search has been to discover the vehicle for that intention. He entered journalism as a political cartoonist and the bold, satirical lines of that art are still evident. But he is also intensely lyrical. Though *Open Veins* is the earliest and least artful of this trio, there is already apparent an eloquence that makes the matter of historical research fiery and resonant. Galeano focuses on a regional pattern of exploitation, but he appreciates its variations. His stories are illustrative because he has faith that a good story illuminates, that the very act of remembering is salutary.

I picked up *Open Veins* because I was looking for a compact, sympathetic Latin American history, but I continued to read everything in English by Galeano because of his fine, concise prose. In *Memory of Fire: Genesis* especially, the credible rendering and expressive detail remind me of John Dos Passos and Alejo Carpentier. But I think what attracts me most to Galeano is that he lacks the patience of a novelist. Motivated by deadly urgency, he compresses historical process into telling incident. The only book I would compare to *Memory of Fire* is that grand, vigorous imagining of America by William Carlos Williams, *In the American Grain*.

Memory of Fire is the first book in a trilogy that promises to provide glimpses of American history from pre-Columbian times to the present. Historical figures come alive in their cruelty, rapacity, will, courage, and intelligence. The villains are not dehumanized but all too familiar. The saints are loco, but no less exemplary for it. The cast of historical characters is too long and various to recite, but include such memorable cases as:

Opechancanough, the uncle of Pocahontas who gave the bride away when she married John Rolfe. Under the name Luis de Velasco he had studied in a Dominican monastery in Seville many years before, and served in Mexico as interpreter and guide for Jesuits until he threw off European breeches and slayed the missionaries he served. At the age of 100, he was killed in a rebellion he urged against the English at Jamestown.

In its passionate detail and intellectual clarity, *Days and Nights of Love and War* is similar to *Memory of Fire*, but the narration is at once more intensely personal and more distanced by poetic convention. The central character is Eduardo Galeano, Uruguayan journalist exiled by the state of siege in 1973 and living in Buenos Aires until forced to flee Argentina also. Because the martyrs are no longer historical resurrections but flesh and blood companions, the author resorts to consolations of metaphor and the discipline of irony to try to transform brutality to meaning.

Days and Nights is often elegiac, because in an unnaturally short time Galeano lost a great many friends. But it is a summons, not a lament. Galeano can be as grimly humorous and slashing as the political cartoonist he was. He never fails to be outraged by the stupidity, absurdity, and cruelty of the enemy. He is also tender, sentimental, and generous. *Days and Nights of Love and War* is a strange melange of the daily and the nightmarish, as people are "disappeared" during a vacation at the shore or because of writing an article about coal shortages.

These stories would deserve our attention no matter how clumsy the telling. Fortunately, Eduardo Galeano is light on his feet. As he progresses from *Open Veins of Latin America* to *Memory of Fire*, Galeano's writing becomes more precise and inspired. That he isn't as acclaimed in this country as, say, Milan Kundera, says more about the geography of oppression than the quality of emotion.

Associate director of Teachers & Writers Collaborative, GARY LENHART is the author of ONE AT A TIME, a book of poems published by United Artists Press. He will be reading at the Poetry Project on February 18.

Love, Or Anything That Goes
By That Name
David Surface

People die and come back all the time—you don't have to look in the Bible to find them.

Kevin came back from up north when I was twenty-five. He was twenty-two but he came back with that kind of edge that put me years behind him. I don't know where he got it; I didn't even know he'd been gone.

They say that when men used to meet each other they started shaking hands to see which one was stronger. Now you talk to see who knows more—it's all the same thing, anyway.

"How do you fly?" I asked him one night when we were headed back into town, the dashboard lights burning in front of us like a little green fire—"in your dreams?" (In my dreams, getting off the

P. 10 ▶

▶ SCHOLNICK

years 1919-1923, "when 300,000 Jews perished in Russia," these introductory chapters trace a crucial smattering of scenes leading to, and including, the outbreak of the long awaited 1917 Revolution. We are informed of the everlasting holiday which entered the sad orphan boy's life in the form of Sholem Aleichem (the pseudonym means "peace to you"). Living with his grandparents in Yaruga, a Ukrainian town in Czarist Russia, "dark and poor and miserable and backward... with huge mud puddles... a country fair every week," one of the author's "close friends" was this Yiddish Shakespeare with his "wonderful tales." "In a simple manner, he helped me look into the hearts and brains of various kinds of people, understand their ideas, grasp their psychology." This is a mixture of personal and literary history, I suppose. Ber Green, then Itzikel Alter, marvels at the master's ability to describe so wisely and genuinely the "worlds of nearby little towns." But in the next breath the child artist has an inspiration. He will recite these stories, "such a great treasure," on Friday nights, in his grandfather's house "overpacked" with neighbors. Thus, then, the listeners, "lonely people, their lives full of worries, of hardships, of the yoke of making a living," looked into the famous characters' homes, "into their kitchens, into their thoughts and ideas." Astonished by the stories' miraculous authenticity and transfixed by the animated performances, the listeners "tasted the taste of Theater." Though terrible snowstorms, typhus sickness, and pogrom bands soon halted the readings, Sholem Aleichem "drove off the feelings of melancholy... kept up our hope for a victory of justice and humanity... and was received with great honor."

And so the subtle, tenacious chronicle proceeds. Food prices soar tremendously. "A great joy for me every morning was the glass of tea—to be exact, a glass of hot boiling water, because tea was practically impossible to get." An uncle working at a railway station brings from "time to time" a paper bag with odd pieces of nourishment, maintaining the boy's life. "I tried to be very economical with these rare products, making them last for weeks." The one-page section is titled "What To Eat?" Green's customary instinct for roundness occasions here as denouement a comparison between the oppressed classes, victims of famine, and the local rich classes who had recourse to the black market.

Earning small wages as an instructor of Hebrew, Yiddish, and Russian, Itzikel yearns not to study and write poems, though solely for such work is he trained and suited. He yearns to shed blood for the Red Army in battle against the pogrom bandits who will

burn to death his holy grandfather and crucify his teacher, gruesome acts performed for the sake of saving bullets.

Throughout, this is a sparingly drawn and level-headed book. One moving passage reads: "The happiness... lasted only a few weeks, but in that time I patted her splendid head... and shared my first light but warm kiss over her face... Quietly, just as quietly, as the little brook under the hill behind my grandfather's house, a tender love began to flow between me and Rochell... and her family gave me their consent and blessing, quietly, without a word."

No sense of remoteness obscures the telling. Green conveys layer upon layer of his heritage with a powerful objectivity.

A wealth of faces finds undiminished expression on these pages encoded, above all, with warmth and love. Even the preface, briefly setting down his motives and conceptions for undertaking the memoir, is a golden nugget of communication. "This book is a mixture of different kinds of history—literary history, political history, economic history, and personal history."

You may look upon Ber Green's current work of memory with trepidation and pleasure, for it is the eye of a ubiquitous storm. When the Revolution takes place, and Yaruga is planning its welcome, he asks his young Uncle Shloime, who is a "scholar of life" and soon an elected militiaman of the new government: "And later on, what will be later on?"

MICHAEL SCHOLNICK is a former member of the Poetry Project's Board of Directors. He is the author of two books of poems: BEYOND VENUS (Crony Books), and PERFUME (Remember I Did This For You Press).

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► SURFACE

ground is always a big deal—I have to get a running start, jump up and kick my legs and arms as hard as I can just to stay in the air.” “Is that how you do it?”

“No,” Kevin said, “I don’t have to do anything. I just open my eyes and I’m up there.”

The radio blasted a country song, four men singing about three things that are made in the USA—good cars, good women, good music—I could feel it coming and so could he, all that invisible weight coming down on his skinny shoulders just because I wanted to make him my leader, my guide or whatever it was I was asking him to be for me. And the way he answered and took it all on, gracefully, thoughtlessly, the way you take a cigarette without looking from someone you know.

There was a game we played—Kevin said it was a contest—where we’d drive out to a place where the river crossed over the road; we’d walk to the edge and put our hands in where it was deep and fast, then we’d start talking about what was in the water, what might be in the water. Like those giant blind fish they keep finding in caves around here, how this river probably comes from one of those caves. The first person to pull his arm out of the water was the loser. The problem was, the better you were at it, the more likely you were to scare yourself first. Kevin said the real secret was to sit there and not say much, let the other guy talk himself into losing. Kevin was good at that. I never learned how.

Born and raised in Kentucky, DAVID SURFACE is a musician and writer. Now living in New York City, he is presently at work on his first collection of fiction.

excerpt from Archeology
Peter Cameron

(from the collection ONE WAY OR ANOTHER
by Peter Cameron, Harper & Row, 1986)

Thursday
They are in McDonald’s discussing their future. The man is eating an Egg McMuffin and drinking coffee; the woman is eating a cinnamon Danish and drinking a diet 7-Up. I think it would be best if I leave Tuesday after dinner, the man says. The woman says nothing. We’ll have dinner together and then I’ll leave, he says. The woman gets up and orders another diet 7-Up. A young man takes her order, circling the proper items on his pad. He has curly blond hair, he calls her Ma’am, and she can tell by watching his hands that he is a virgin. His hands are small and white—they almost look like

a woman’s—and she can tell they have never touched another person, really touched, intimately touched. The woman is fascinated by hands. Her father left her mother for a pianist when she was ten. She hated her father and she hated the pianist—the pianist’s name was Victoria—until she was seventeen and saw a picture of the pianist for the first time. The pianist was standing in front of a fireplace, and her arm rested along the mantelpiece and her hand dropped over the edge and was silhouetted against the fire. It was just one of her hands—the other one wasn’t in the picture, or if it was she can’t remember where in the picture it was—but it was the most beautiful hand she had ever seen, and looking at it—the incredibly long, slender fingers framed in the firelight—she understood why her father loved the pianist, why he had left her mother; and the more she looked at the picture the more she began to love the pianist, too. Her hands are very small and it doesn’t bother her except when she and the man—the one who is going to leave her Tuesday after dinner, who’s eating an Egg McMuffin now—are making love. When they make love she’s aware of how small her hands are against his back or stroking his thighs. She wishes, when they make love, that she had hands like the pianist so she could touch more of the man all at once. The boy gives her the diet 7-Up and her hand touches his hand on the paper cup—his beneath hers, hers touching his—but quickly he pulls his hand away, spilling a little of the diet 7-Up on the silver counter, where it beads like mercury, and she walks to the little table where the man is still sitting, even though he is planning to leave her.

Saturday
They are in a bar and he is holding her up, high above the crowd, and she is swaying in the dark because the man is swaying beneath her, holding her, his mouth pressed tight against her; and below her, by the pool table, three men are having a fight and one of them picks up a pool ball—it’s the purple one—and holds it high above his head threatening to throw it at the other men and the jukebox is playing very loudly—so loudly she can’t even hear the men who are fighting swear at one another—the song Blondie sings that goes I’m not the kind of girl and the man, who’s very drunk, is lowering her, slowly, still kissing her, his mouth wet with beer and his tongue pushing back toward her throat, and the man holding the pool ball high above his head—people are dancing around him—slams the pool ball toward the table but instead of smashing it into the table he drops it into the corner pocket and then looks sheepishly at his empty hand and she can tell the fight is over and the song on the jukebox—the one Blondie sings—is getting louder because it’s getting closer to the end and the man’s tongue is sliding out of her mouth and she’s anticipating the way the floor will feel when her feet finally touch it, which they will, any second now.

PETER CAMERON’S stories have appeared in THE NEW YORKER, MADEMOISELLE, GRAND STREET, KENYON REVIEW, and PRIZE STORIES: THE O. HENRY AWARDS. He is currently at work on a novel.

First Day Of The Future
Galway Kinnell

They always seem to come up on the future, these cold, earthly dawns; the whiteness and the blackness make the flesh shiver as though it’s starting to break. But that is always just an illusion, always it is just another day they illuminate of the permanent present. Except for today. A motorboat sets out across the bay, a transfiguring spirit, all its little puffy gaps of disintegration collected and anthem’d out in a pure purr of dominion. It disappears. In the stillness again the shore lights remember the dimensions of the black water. I don’t know about this new life. Even though I burned the ashes of its flag again and again and set fire to the ticket that might have conscripted me into its ranks forever, even though I squandered all my talents composing my emigration papers, I think I want to go back now and live again in the present time, back there where someone milks a cow and jets of intensest nourishment go squawking into a pail, where someone is hammering, a bit of steel at the end of a stick hitting a bit of steel, in the archaic stillness of an afternoon, or somebody else saws a board, back and forth, like hard labor in the lungs of one who refuses to come to the very end. But I guess I’m here. So I must take care. For here one has to keep facing the right way, or one sees one dies, and one dies. I’m not sure I’m going to like it living here in the future. I don’t think I can keep on doing it indefinitely.

Pulitzer Prize winning poet GALWAY KINNELL will be reading at the Poetry Project on March 4.

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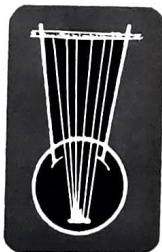


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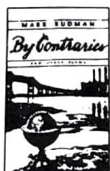


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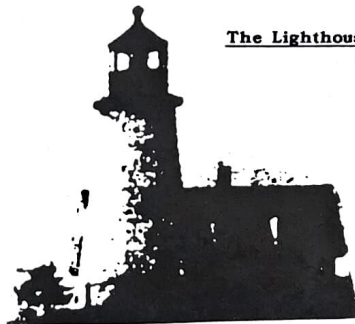
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She can drink from a beer bottle.
 She can light a cigar and sneeze out the match.
 She can drag on it so hard the end blazes.
 She can inhale without coughing.
 She can blow a smoke ring or two.
 She can withdraw and introspect.
 She can play the nose flute: f# with lower hole unstopped: a with both holes unstopped: c# with both stopped: the tonic, the mediant, the dominant of the chord of F# major.
 She can suck the whole instrument inside, where it continues to sing and cry.
 She can speak a pouting, pidgin blabber.
 She can clench on the iclus and moan on the arsis but can't come on the thests.
 She can wink and throw French kisses.
 She can motherly-kiss the fuzzy cheeks of young sailors.
 She can pick up the money they toss, including the dollar bills.
 She can count but not give change.
 She can smile.

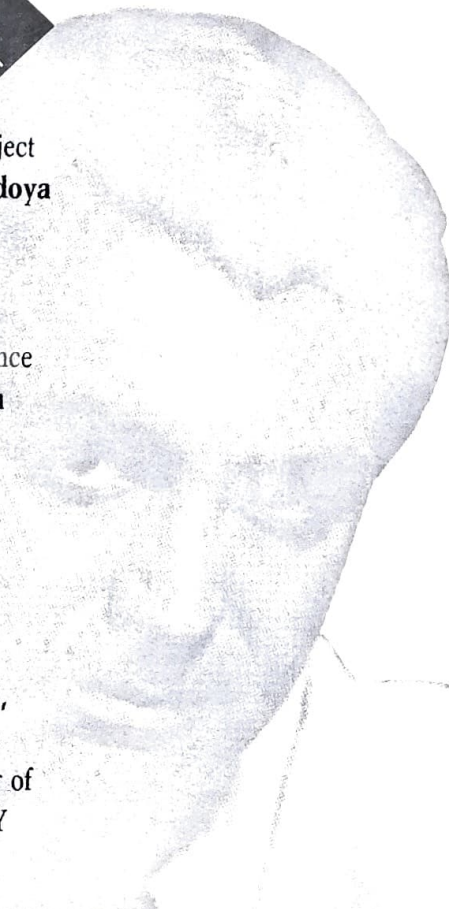
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