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## **David Rattray**

INTERVIEW WITH THE INVISIBLE

## **John Cage on Nam June Paik**

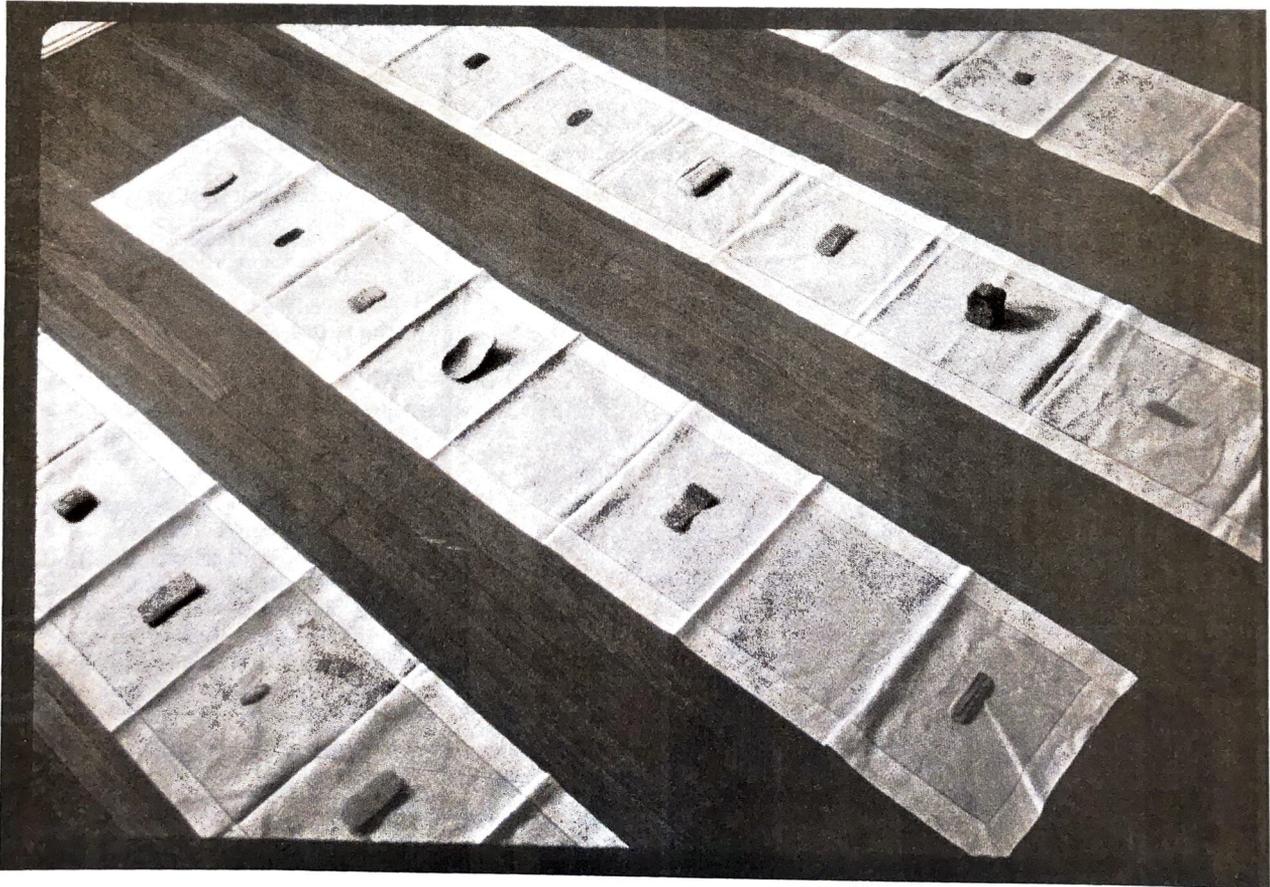
AMBIVALENT ABOUT PAIK'S MUSIC

## **Poetry and Architecture**

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JOHN HEJDUK

## **Rhubarb Words**

SPOT THE PHILIP SIDNEY (OUR DOG)





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# Taking Risks Seriously

DAVID RATTRAY TALKS ABOUT THE WORTHWHILE LIFE, FLYING THROUGH THE AIR, SOME INVISIBLE VIRTUES OF RECEIVED CLASSICS, AND A ROOM FULL OF IRAQI CABBIES

With Ken Jordan

Poet and translator David Rattray has been an almost legendary figure since City Lights published his translations in the ubiquitous *Artaud Anthology* of the mid-sixties. He is certainly one of our most knowledgeable—it would be fair to say “learned” and “erudite”—scholars on the dissolute wing of the avant-garde; which, of course, includes some of its most vital practitioners. His collected stories and essays, *How I Became One of the Invisible*, has recently been issued by Semiotext(e), and it was on the occasion of that publication that we met in his Alphabet City apartment.

■

**Ken Jordan:** Were this a People magazine interview, at some point you'd be asked: just how does one become one of the invisible?

**David Rattray:** “One of the invisible” really means a member of the invisible secret Utopia. It means somebody who is in this world but not really of this world. It is the antithesis of what they vulgarly call exposure.

**Ken:** Invisible to whom?

**David:** Invisible to whatever that is reflected in the glaring eye that gives you exposure, such as Channel 5, the NEA, and publications and trade publishers and a review in The New York Times....

**Ken:** They used to call this the underground.

**David:** One of the first really good books that I ever read was given to me by my grandmother, who wanted to pass something good along to me: Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. But that doesn't have anything directly to do with being somebody that would have been an underground artist 30 years ago.

**Ken:** Maybe it does.

**David:** Maybe it does.

**Ken:** You can see where it might.

**David:** If I'd never had any kind of education I probably would have ended up being some sort of an outsider artist in

a jail or an insane asylum making cartoons with little texts....

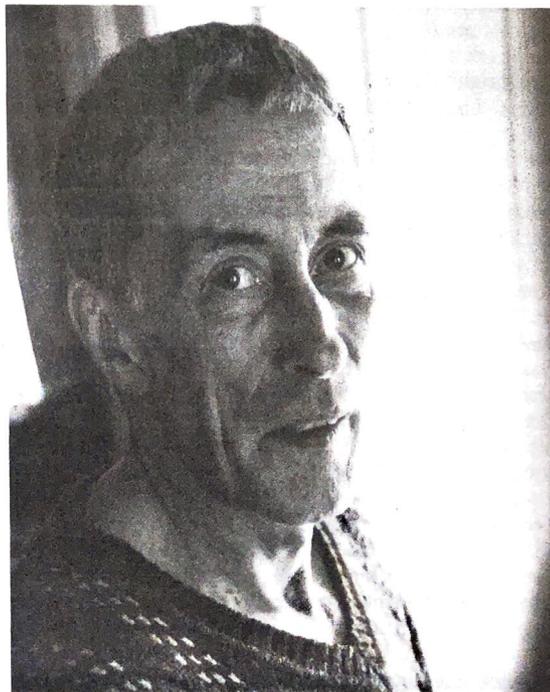
**Ken:** If you hadn't had an education?

**David:** But because I did have an education I didn't just reject the whole thing wholesale and say that every one of the professors and all the received classics was just a crock, which is what many of my respected contemporaries did. I didn't do that at all. Rather, I found in the works of many of the accepted and received classics that they had something valuable, beautiful and real to communicate that was definitely worth listening to. So I found that my definition of the invisible could be enlarged to include figures such as John Hall Wheelock, a poet writing in a late 19th century vein, who I quote in the book. A man like that is also part of the underground. Not every one of them has to be on the lam!

**Ken:** You were an undergraduate at Dartmouth?

**David:** I went to the Classics Department there, and we read very intensively in Greek and Latin literature. I worked on that a lot, so it got into my blood and my bones. I read it to this day. But the one who brought it all together for me in the end was a wild man named Jack Hirschman, who is still well known as a poet.

**Ken:** He was a professor there?



**David:** He was an instructor in the English department. He didn't do too well there because he wasn't just an academic, but with the students he did really well because he was a wonderful man, a fireball of energy, and he had all these great things for us to read.

**Ken:** Like what?

**David:** Like John Wieners, for starters. Like Malcolm Lowry, Jean Genet and William Burroughs. We'd never heard of these things. We got our initiation from Jack Hirschman. Artaud... I was sent to Artaud by Jack Hirschman. It was like living in the Book of Revelations.

**Ken:** And then where did that send you?

**David:** It sent me straight to the wilds of Southern Mexico, where this poet friend, Van Buskirk, and I had a plan to smuggle vast quantities of marijuana into the United States. And we thought we would be able to live off the proceeds from selling it. It was like that movie, *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*. It had a comically pathetic ending. We didn't get busted. We succeeded in bringing into this country something like a half a pound—some wretched amount—of rather mediocre Mexican pot. It didn't amount to a hill of beans! We brought that in at the risk of life and limb. I mean, not only did we expose ourselves to being murdered by Mexican gangsters or the police. We were friends with our landlord, the police commander where we lived. And he was a raving maniac, a very interesting man, a dope addict — I described him in great detail in the book. But if we hadn't been killed in that fashion, we had the US Immigration, the Customs Service and the Texas rangers to overcome.

**Ken:** Did you go straight from Dartmouth to Mexico?

**David:** I first went from Dartmouth to France for two years on a Fulbright Fellowship, and I got a degree from the Sorbonne. I took it seriously and did well, I really learned a lot.

**Ken:** What were you studying?

**David:** Still Latin and Greek, and we did some French studies, like Flaubert.

**Ken:** So the standard classics....

**David:** Exactly. They were the received classics. But while I was there a poet named Harold Norse introduced me to the reading of William Burroughs. I've never met Burroughs, but I've read and admired him since 1958. Harold Norse gave me his copy of *Naked Lunch*, and I read it in one night, and it completely changed my life.

**Ken:** Why would you say that?

**David:** Well, it gave me a whole perception of what is real and what is unreal, involving our culture and the things we were striving for. Burroughs had a very clear perception of that. He often used to think of how certain substances, both the standard ones like heroin and cocaine, and various mysteri-

ous other ones like yage in South America, and so on, have that specific ability to kill the editor that's in there in your optic nerves that prevents you from actually seeing things as they really are.

Burroughs was always a visually oriented guy, and so for him it's always what you see. He was literally a *visionary* and a *seer*. So he's thinking about what you see. And, obviously, 99 % of what we see isn't really what's there. The editor that's in the optic nerve and other places in the brain that's receiving signals is sort of fudging things to help us survive, to cope better. But because it helps us cope, it also conceals from us the true nature of what we're looking at. There's a barrier between us and reality, and Burroughs was extremely keen on breaking down that barrier, and peeling away that dirty film between us and reality. And time and again he was thinking of heroin and various other things as ways to get rid of the affective garbage between us and what we really see. *The Naked Lunch* and *The Soft Machine*, these were the first ones that I gravitated towards. And I did gravitate towards them, big time. I was very, very attracted to Burroughs' vision and understanding of things.

**Ken:** Of course, so much a part of Burroughs' vision has to do with a heavily romanticized vision of life as an outsider, as a gangster....

**David:** Well, you should have seen me in the early 60s!

**Ken:** I'm curious....

**David:** In my black suit. I had this black suit and black wrap-around sunglasses, which I wore at all times. The breast pocket of the black suit was for my kit, which held all my drug paraphernalia.... I was really quite a card, moving from one club to another listening to jazz, which was because of Van, who opened my ears to jazz. I embraced that romantic vision wholeheartedly.

**Ken:** It's a big leap from Dartmouth.

**David:** I thought I was just jumping through a hoop that's in mid-air and coming out the other side. I remember it vividly as an experience just like that. You know, the Living Theatre had a thing towards the end of *Paradise Now*, they'd make a human pyramid, and those who dared could climb up onto the top of this pyramid and do a swan dive — it was called flying — and they would just leap off with their arms outspread like wings and fly into the waiting arms clasped together of the people in the audience who were waiting for them to come flying through the air towards the seats.

**Ken:** Did you jump?

**David:** Of course. And flying was exactly what I thought I was doing when I stepped out of the academic world, out of that cocoon, to spread my wings and fly. And it included stepping into a way of living that involved the daily risk of life and limb and the systematic destruction of everything that a middle class upbringing in East Hampton, Long Island, implied, and was supposed to lead to. I was supposed to become a

professor of literature at an Ivy League college somewhere, married to a girl that'd come to East Hampton in the summertime, and it was all going to be very nice. My mother couldn't, for the life of her, understand what was wrong. She had no problem with me reading Jean Genet or the Marquis de Sade or Marcel Proust or anybody else, but...

**Ken:** She just didn't want you to take it seriously!

**David:** Exactly. I could pursue my intellectual interest to my heart's content, but to live in a way that seemed to be implied by the things that really touched me most deeply, and made me feel that this was where I had to go — that was something that I can't blame my mother for not approving of! No one of her class and time could possibly have understood.

**Ken:** *How I Became One of the Invisible* brings together different kinds of writing — fiction, memoirs, and discursive essays — but it's wonderful the way the book coheres, because at its center are your interests and your sensibility, which is so specific and particular.

**David:** I would say that this book really is a poetic autobiography. Whether it's stories of what happened in my life, as a young man and then later, or essays about books and writers that I considered or translated, the book always has to do with whatever it is that poetry is trying to find and communicate. I think that idea of finding and communicating is very important. Somebody recently asked me to define poetry, and I think it can be defined — people say that it can't, but I believe that it can. I think a simple one phrase definition of poetry is: the invention of life or reality through language. To invent reality through words, this is what poetry does. And it isn't such a highfalutin' thing as such a definition might make it seem. I also think that if poetry isn't capable of keeping a roomful of Iraqi cab drivers enthralled for an hour, then it isn't worth a Goddamn thing. It must make people want to dance, or to make love, or to sing. It must fill them with the impulses to do something real in life; it must stimulate their imagination and their mind; it must entertain them and give them something to think about and provide them with some solid information. I believe that good poets and good poems do this.

**Ken:** The book includes essays about writers who you've translated, including Artaud, Crevel, Gilbert LeComte. What is it that attracted you to these figures?

**David:** I *identified* with all of these people. I have a personal sense of identification with them because they shared that search to invent life through language, and it's a very dangerous and a tricky kind of search. Because you don't really know whether it's real. These guys were out on what Ken Kesey always used to call an edge — out on the edge — they

were edge people. People who write on the edge of craziness or death or some kind of final confrontation with a recognition of the absolute emptiness and void of everything. Maybe nothing is real. Those people lived with that all the time, and so have I — all my life. And this isn't a before and after story. I'm living with it now. So I really identified with them. I felt a kinship with figures as different from each other as Emile Nelligan and Artaud and some of the other people that I talk about. Even ones that were spectacularly different from me, or at least the way that I conceive of myself. But those are my subjects because I feel that in a way they're my ancestors, my predecessors, my heroes.

**Ken:** What is it that brings them to the edge?

**David:** Because they're stripped of the coping mechanisms that make for balanced living. In some cases this has happened to them situationally, because of the world in which we live; in other cases, maybe they willfully and perversely chose to embrace this. It happens differently to different people. But even the most well-balanced and sane people in the world can be confronted with some of these problems, and there really is not an answer to them. There really isn't any way to cope!

**Ken:** Of course, what makes these writers so fascinating to read is their commitment to write from the "edge" with such a determined honesty.

**David:** To be honest in a real, absolute, way is almost to be prophetic. And if you can be prophetic — though not too many people can be for very long at any time in their lives — but if at least that prophetic note is struck a few times, then it's gonna upset the applecart. And if that applecart is not upset, then conscious life just can't

go on! This injection of irrationality and craziness and disorder into the ordered life is what regenerates life in general. Without it, we're going to get a hieratically ordered system, such as they had for many years in ancient Egypt, and among the Mayas, and so on. I think it could come very easily to us here, and probably will — thanks to IBM and all of these great, uniform institutions.

A very important part of what the poet is supposed to be doing is upset the applecart. Because, after all, the applecart is just an endless series of indigestible meals and social commitments that are useless and probably shouldn't even be honored, and futile, pointless conversations and gestures, and then, finally, to die abandoned and treated like a piece of garbage by people in white coats who are no more civilized or conscientious than sanitation workers. That's what the applecart means to me. And when a poet's voice, a poet's imagination, is able to touch people enough so that they will change that, of course it's upsetting the applecart. I think that poetry has a real kind of... I wouldn't say preachy kind

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of a function, but it definitely is there to support and encourage people to realize that there's a worthwhile life out there to be lived. A way of living that is there — that all you have to do is invent it. It's available to all of us.

**Ken:** When you say a "worthwhile life," and when Pat Robertson says a "worthwhile life," you're talking about two very different things. Would Artaud have been talking about a "worthwhile life?"

**David:** Oh yes. He would have said, a life that is free. He would have said, without any organs. A body that didn't have any organs, meaning that all those biological imperatives, and, I suppose, social imperatives. Artaud, after he'd been sick with cancer long enough, was dreaming of a way to live that was pure and free and enlightened. And I think I can relate to that. In my book, when I was talking about cutting loose from those kinds of bonds, I quoted this poet Albers Von Flauten, whose diary of 1822 sums it up in just a rhyming quatrain:

To taste of nothing but the flesh of light  
Forever whole and sweet  
To drink of waters that refresh  
But never drive the blood to heat

And I think that that kind of a life is really there, it just has to be invented.

**Ken:** And so the purpose of poetry...

**David:** Is to help people invent their lives — through language!

**Ken:** And at the same time to subvert all that keeps one from living a real life.

**David:** Yes, exactly. Even sometimes in a destructive way. I certainly don't think that the lessons in living that you can get from reading certain kinds of literature, including many pages by William Burroughs and Jean Genet, are all that edifying in a constructive way. But they help destroy, they help break it down. I remember the Marquis de Sade saying to someone — and of course he was always constructing these little imaginary debates — he said to this imaginary opponent: You build. You're always building. I destroy! I simplify! And many of these corrosive pages of the great or underground classics help to destroy — they're not very edifying or uplifting. They're good for people because they help to destroy something that needs to be destroyed, that needs to be subverted.

**Ken:** Would you say that there's more that needs to be destroyed today than when you started out 30 years ago?

**David:** Oh, no doubt!

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# More On Paik (1982)

A PREVIOUSLY UNPUBLISHED

ESSAY

By John Cage

I have known Nam June Paik for more than 25 years. Though I wrote the text for the 1965 Bonino Gallery exhibition of his first TV works, I have never stated explicitly what I think of his musical work. Since Paik has frequently referred to our meeting as a turning point in his life and work, and since this panel is part of a major recognition of that life and work, it seems incumbent on me now to draw lines as clearly as I can between us, showing what I do in my work, what he does in his, and what area, if any, there is in which we are equally at home.

I find myself wanting to say that I have never thought of Nam June Paik as a composer. But that would not be true. Formerly I was the only musician for the dance programs given by Merce Cunningham. Then there was David Tudor also, and somewhat later Gordon Mumma, three of us. When Merce Cunningham began to multiply the number of his performances by programming *Events*, Tudor, Mumma, and I decided to open the company programs to music provided by other composers. We would do this because the Cunningham dancers were trained to support themselves on their own two feet, not on the music. We believed that any other music than ours, providing it interested us, could go with the dance without disturbing it. Twice we have been proved wrong. Once with the music of Charlemagne Palestine which consisted in large part of a recital of his thoughts while defecating, thoughts about how uncomfortable it was for him not only to move his bowels but to have his music (which he did not play) in a situation which was not a planned collaboration. And once with the music of Christian Wolff which consisted of overtly political songs. Our way of choosing composers was this. Each of us made a list of five. We then found names repeated from one list to another. Finally we voted. In this way Nam June Paik was invited to accompany two *Events* in the Westbeth Studio given by Merce Cunningham and Dance Company. Shigeko Kubota sat beside Paik who played just a few notes on the piano (it seems to me these notes were a quote from the literature) and then placed his head on the keyboard giving the impression of someone filled with sorrow. This was an excerpt from his *Etude for Pianoforte*. Afterwards Shigeko told Merce: Your dance beautiful! Nam June's music Ugh! Ugh! Ugh! For the second evening Paik played a recording of the *Verklaerte Nacht* at a speed much slower than normal. Afterwards, smiling, he said, "Now we know Schoenberg great composer."

It is frequently noted that Paik was trained as a musician at the University of Tokyo, having written his thesis on the work of Arnold Schoenberg; and that among his early compositions, all of them conventionally notated, there are Korean folk music flavored pieces, serial melodies for solo violin, and a nonserial *String Quartet*. I know of no performances of these works. They seem to have been abandoned by the com-

poser except for documentary or exhibition purposes.

I first met Nam June Paik in 1958 in Germany. I had been invited to teach and lecture at Darmstadt. I had more than 20 years earlier studied with Arnold Schoenberg for two years free of charge having promised him in return to devote my life to music. I could argue that I have been faithful to my promise. Concerned to find a better reason for writing music than the one I had been taught, that was to have something to say and say it, I had embarked on a study of oriental philosophy, finally attending for two years the classes in the philosophy of Zen Buddhism given at Columbia University by Daisetz Suzuki. In one of his lectures he drew an oval on the blackboard, placing two parallel lines half way up the left-hand side. He said, This is the structure of the Mind. The two parallel lines are the ego. The ego has the capacity through its likes and dislikes to cut itself off from its experience whether that comes to it from above, the world of relativity, through the sense perceptions, or from below, the absolute, through the collective unconscious and the dreams. Or, instead of cutting itself off from it, the ego has the capacity to flow with its experience, and that is, Suzuki said, what Zen wants. Having earlier taken as true the reason for writing music given me by Gita Sarabhai from her teacher in India, that is to sober and quiet the mind thus making it susceptible to divine influences, I then, in response to Suzuki's lecture, determined to go out rather than in, to use chance operations as a discipline in my music, a discipline equal I trusted to sitting crosslegged, having faith that the mind's structure was indeed oval (continuous upon itself), that my writing of music would be as a result not self-expression but self-alteration. I had been practicing the discipline of chance operations for 10 years before I met Paik. One or two years later I found myself in Cologne attending a performance by him of his *Etude for Pianoforte*. Behind Paik as he performed was an open window, floor to ceiling. His actions were such we wouldn't have been surprised had he thrown himself five floors down to the street. When at the end he left the room through the packed audience, everybody, all of us, sat paralyzed with fear, utterly silent, for what seemed an eternity. No one budged. We were stunned. Finally the telephone rang. "It was Paik," Mary Bauermeister said, "calling to say the performance is over."

I determined to think twice before attending another performance by Nam June Paik. In the course of my studies of Indian philosophy, I had become aware of the nine permanent emotions of aesthetic tradition. The rasas. The four black, sorrow, fear, anger, disgust; the four white, the heroic, the wondrous, mirth and the erotic; finally, the one without color, in the center, towards which any work of art should conduce, tranquility. The *Etude for Pianoforte* was definitely black, a mixing of sorrow, anger and fear, and these three separate from tranquility.

Some years later in New York, Paik invited Merce Cunningham and me to Canal Street to see his *Zen for Film*. Hour long film without images. "The mind is like a mirror; it collects dust; the problem is to remove the dust." "Where is the

mirror? Where is the dust?" In this case the dust is on the lens of the projector and on the blank developed film itself. There is never nothing to see.

Here, we are both together and separate. My 4'33", the silent piece is Nam June's *Zen for Film*. The difference is that his silence was not sounds but something to see. His life is devoted, it seems to me, not to sounds, but to objects. He is a performance artist and a sculptor.

From a concentration on the black rasas in *Etude for Pianoforte* Paik moved through the colorlessness of tranquility exemplified by *Zen for Film* to the concentration on the white rasas of the present exhibition. The result is a delightful and amazing spectacle. As Cathy Kerr said, Cheerful. As Lise Freedman said, Exuberant! As Ray Gallon said, "Isn't it wonderful?" *Fish Flies on Sky*, those completing the work comfortably reclined below it. Or *TV Garden*. "I could hardly tear myself away." The moment I got off the elevator on the 4th floor I began smiling. I didn't stop until I was John Cage. Admitted I was. "You must feel very close to this." I replied: No closer than you; we are both on Madison Avenue. We were looking at *V-ramid*. Paik has shown us both sides of the coin, but as Suzuki said in response to the question "Why do you say death one day and life the next?", in *Zen* there's not much difference between the two.

In *Zen* they say: Men are men and mountains are mountains before studying *Zen*. While studying *Zen* things become confused. After studying *Zen* men are men and mountains are mountains. Asked what the difference is before and after, Suzuki said, No difference, just the feet are a little off the ground. Paik's involvement with sex, introducing it into music does not conduce towards sounds being sounds. It only confuses matters. I am sure that his performance with Charlotte Moorman of my 26'1.1499" for a *String Player* is not faithful to the notation, that the liberties taken are in favor

of actions rather than sound events in time. I am thinking of the point where Paik, stripped to the waist, imitates a 'cello, his back being bowed by Charlotte Moorman.

Once Virgil Thomson told me that his mother after hearing my prepared piano for the first time, said, "It's very nice, but I would never have thought of doing it myself." A similar remark could be made about many of Paik's pieces, the *Serenade for Alison*, for instance, in which nylon panties, black lace panties, and blood-stained panties in the course of a striptease are stuffed into the mouths of a music critic, the second music critic, and the worst music critic, and the *Chronicle of a Beautiful Paintress* which is a list of the months and the flags which are to be stained "with your monthly blood." But one would have to say instead of "very nice," "Shocking! and I would never have thought of doing it . . ." or "It's disgusting, etc."

*The Danger Music for Dick Higgins* (Creep into the Vagina of a Living Whale) is pure fiction, not music, not danger, at all. That is to say, never to take place. The *Young Penis Symphony* is another matter. What with society's changed manners and the popularity of the present exhibition both with critics and art lovers, we can expect many performances, say, two year ahead of Paik's schedule, "Expected World Premiere around 1984 A.D." Referring to one of the performances, however, a person will say, I saw it, not heard it.

His *Symphony No. 5* dealing as it does with days, weeks, years, centuries, mega-years, is also not music but fiction.

In fact the most musical of Paik's works are those for which he has given no performance directions, for which the accompanist is simply the sounds of the environment. I am thinking of the ones which are just sculpture, *TV Chair*, *TV Buddha*, for instance.

(Thanks to Richard Kostelanetz, editor of John Cage: Writer [Limelight, 1993])

## JOHN CAGE

**Yesterday John Cage died at almost 80 of a stroke in a Manhattan hospital.**

**(First thought: of the bowling alleys—automated, with metal disks—frequented by Cage, Cunningham, Jasper Johns and other artists, at Dillon's bar, circa 1962.)**

**At a Crown Point Press opening in San Francisco, Cage told me about not exchanging drawings with de Kooning. He had sent a mesostic in homage for the de Kooning birthday issue of the College Art Journal which Rackstraw Downes and I edited. "How did you like the poem?" he asked at**

**Crown Point amid the crowd come to see his and Tony Cragg's new etchings. "I thought there was probably a story that went with it," I said. "There is," he said, and told how he and Bill had arranged to meet at Bill's loft so that Bill would get one of John's artful-looking scores and John would take away a de Kooning drawing. When John had entered they began discussing whether or not an artist should want to be great—de Kooning thought yes and Cage thought no. ("we Don't/agrEe/...i think you're Great" is how the poem resolves the question.)**

**Then Cage looked at de Kooning's drawings and couldn't find one that he wanted so he left the score and went home empty-handed. Characteristically, John found his version of the story very funny. A little later in our conversation, I said: "You know, John, I've wondered—because you left California for New York and I left New York (though not so long ago) and came here—if you ever think of returning to the West. Cage said, "Oh no, for a composer there's really only New York!"**

**—Bill Berkson**

# Poetry and Architecture

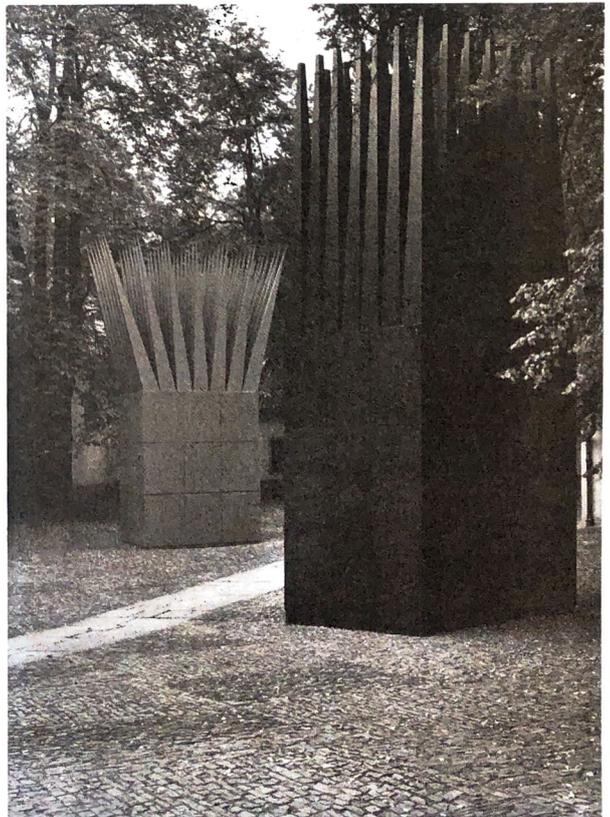
In Which **David Shapiro** discusses the Masques and other Structures of Cooper Union's Dean, **John Hejduk**, with particular Attention given to work in Oslo. (Pictured below, the project *House of the Suicide* and *House of the Mother of the Suicide*, the Installation having taken Place in the Royal Gardens of The Prague Castle, Photo by Helene Binet, courtesy Cooper Union)

John Hejduk poses a problem that is acknowledged, by critics as diverse as Vidler and Tafuri, to be one of the limits of architectural discourse itself. On the one hand, his titanic structures are part of a continuing series of theatrical and, in a sense, poetic masques; on the other hand, the characters are "atomic" shapes that seem anti-literary and resolutely "formal" in their typological simplicity. The opposition is here made acute: The structures are still, moreover, "wall houses" in part out of Mondrian and Mies, mute, speechless as the walls of Holderlin. But they are also, through naming, nomadic sequencing on wheels, and as part of a species of "repertory company" of his other structures, as part of a continuing Roussel-like meditation on "imaginary" cities, at the densest verge of announcing themselves as figurative representations.

Hejduk refuses to solve this problem, and one might say that his exploitation of the crisis in form in architecture is itself a severe criticism of any so-called solution. It is evident that Tafuri is wrong to see in these "creatures" archaic regression or nostalgia, since the forms themselves are willing to take upon themselves the most violent or paranoid sculptural excess. It is not for nothing that Hejduk has applauded the sensuality in Bataille's explorations in evil and *dépense*. The charge of theatricalism might also be nearer the mark if Hejduk's structures were not so evidently economically derived from his exercises, exacting and transparent, after Corbusier and cubism. This synthesis, after all, of cubistic and surrealist pulverization might be said to be Hejduk's revenge more than his dilemma. It has been his accusation against forms of sterile or complaisant collage in the age of eclecticism.

Therefore, it has been wrong merely to search through Hejduk's work for a text or an inter-text, but he has generously supplied these texts themselves in several of his books, and they are, moreover, necessary. But he has not, even in the lengthy text and masque "Victims" attempted to substitute architecture for poetry or vice versa.

Nor does he use architecture merely to illuminate a kind of sacred-secular text. He has made a decision towards repleteness, in which architecture and poetry are seen as distinctive, contingent, but touchingly simultaneous structural acts. Poetry and architecture complement and refurbish each other, and the emphasis is on the severity of both as forms of criticism. The "structuralist" bias in Hejduk, his love of God's detailing and the heraldic acts of building, are there to give the lie to anyone who finds a discontinuity between his so-called early and late periods. The poetics of Mondrian in the "diamond" sequences are not radically different than the poetics of his masques: both periods involve the idea of intransigent perturbation as the theme of a transgressive art of shelter. Both periods involve a political-poetic critique, moreover, of the epoch in which shelter itself, the so-called theme of refuge, has been displaced by an extreme of absence. Hejduk never becomes a Mallarmean nostalgic, however, and his architectural strictures function in a massive present tense to criticize the forms of nostalgia. But, like Wallace Stevens, he has studied the nostalgias, and Tafuri would be more correct to assume that the simplicity in Hejduk's "animals" presupposes a refining (Continued on page 21)



# PUBLICATIONS

BOOKS AND MAGAZINES RECEIVED

## BOOKS

*Amazon Dream*, Roberta Allen; City Lights, 1993. 181 pages. \$9.95 paper.

*How I Learned*, Gloria Frym; Coffee House Press, 1992. 131 pages. \$11.95 paper.

*The Song of Percival Peacock*, Russell Edson; Coffee House Press, 1992. 144 pages. \$11.95 paper.

*Legends from Camp*, Lawson Fusao Inada; Coffee House Press, 1992. \$11.95 paper.

*The I and the You*, Jean Day; Potes & Poets, 1992. 111 pages. \$11 paper.

*spaces in the light said to be where one/ comes from*, Stephen Ratcliffe; Potes & Poets, 1992. 88 pages. \$9.50 paper.

*Toner*, Ron Silliman; Potes & Poets, 1992. 67 pages. \$9.50 paper.

*The Madame Realism Complex*, Lynne Tillman; Semiotext(e), 1992. 165 pages. \$6 paper.

*New & Selected Essays*, Denise Levertov; New Directions, 1992. 264 pages. \$11.95 paper.  
*Paterson*, William Carlos Williams; New Directions, 1992. 311 pages. \$38 paper.

*Special Capacity*, Michael Friedman; Intermezzo Press, 1992. 81 pages. \$8.95 paper.

*Black Watch*, Steven Hall; Intermezzo Press, 1992. 57 pages. \$8.95 paper.

*The Last Century*, Laurance Wieder; Picador Australia, 1992. 140 pages.

*Coat of Arms*, Chris Tysh; Station Hill, 1992. 61 pages. \$9.95 paper.

*Echolalia*, George Tysh; United Artists, 1992. 76 pages.

*Cat Licked the Garlic*, Anne Tardos; Tsunami Editions, 1992.

*Twenties*, Jackson Mac Low; Roof Books, 1992. 100 pages. \$8.95 paper.

*Jacques Dupin: Selected Poems*, Tr. by Paul Auster, Stephen Romer & David Shapiro; Wake Forest, 1992. 191 pages.

*Periplum*, Peter Gizzi; Avec Books, 1992. 61 pages. \$8.95 paper.

## WORKSHOPS

### POETRY WORKSHOP

Taught by Maureen Owen. The goal of participants will be to complete a twenty page poem over the course of the workshop. Work will include researching subject matter for the text of the poem. There will be weekly assignments based on in-workshop writing, reading and discussions. Besides in-workshop readings of selected poets and discussions of their work, there will be a study of linked verse and Renga. Serious effort will be made in instructing participants on how to get their work published in small press magazines. **Saturdays at noon (February 6th through the end of April).**

### EXPERIMENTS IN POETRY

Taught by Bernadette Mayer. **Thursdays at 7 pm. (Through the end of April)**

### EDITING THE WORLD

Taught by Lewis Warsh. **Fridays at 7:30 pm. (Through the end of April)**

### REGISTRATION FEES

Registration for workshops costs \$200/workshop or \$100/year for Poetry Project members. Annual membership in the Poetry Project costs \$50.

## UNITED ARTISTS BOOKS

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*THE FAST* by Hannah Weiner \* \$6.00

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*PERSONAL EFFECTS* by Charlotte Carter \* \$6.00

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by Lewis Warsh \* \$6.00

*BLUE MOSQUE* by Anne Waldman \* \$6.00

*SMOKING IN THE TWILIGHT BAR*

by Barbara Henning \* \$5.00

*LOVE UNCUT* by Bill Kushner \* \$6.00

*HEAD* by Bill Kushner \* \$5.00

*THE SONNETS* by Ted Berrigan \* \$5.00

*ONE AT A TIME* by Gary Lenhart \* \$4.00

*SONGS FOR THE UNBORN SECOND BABY*

by Alice Notley \* \$4.00

*THE MAHARAJAH'S SON* by Lewis Warsh \* \$5.00

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# FEBRUARY

## 1 OPEN READING

HOSTED BY WANDA PHIPPS

Sign-up at 7:30 pm. **Monday at 8 pm**

## 3 MICHELLE WALLACE & RANDALL KENAN LECTURE ON "RACIALITY IN LITERATURE"

Michelle Wallace's books are *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman* and *Invisibility Blues: From Pop to Theory*. **Randell Kenan** is a novelist whose most recent book is *Let the Dead Bury Their Dead* (HBJ). **Wednesday at 8 pm**

## 5 BLOOD AND GUTS IN HIGH SCHOOL:

Writers read pieces on those formative years: **John S. Hall**, **Michael Carter**, **Christian X. Hunter**, **Nick Zedd**, **Cecily Patterson**, **Viva**, **Gillian McCain**, **Legs McNeil**, **Darius James**. **Friday at 10:30 pm**

## 8 GUSTAF SOBIN & JOSEPH DONAHUE

**Gustaf Sobin** is an American poet, novelist and translator now living in France. A new novel called *Venus Blue* was recently published by Little Brown & Co. **Joseph Donahue** is a NYC poet whose books include *Mythic Motions of the Approach* (Red Dust) and *Before Creation* (Central Park Editions). **Monday at 8 pm**

## 10 MICHAEL BROWNSTEIN & WALTER MOSLEY

**Michael Brownstein** is the author of nine books of poetry and fiction. His novel *The Touch* is forthcoming from Autonomedia. **Walter Mosley** is a crime nov-

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## 1 OPEN READING

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## 3 JAIME MANRIQUE & CORNELIUS EADY LECTURE ON "RACIALITY IN LITERATURE"

**Jaime Manrique's** first volume of poetry received Columbia's National Poetry Award. **Cornelius Eady's** books of poetry include *Kartunes* and *Victims of the Latest Dance Craze* which won the Lamont Poetry Prize in 1985. His most recent book is *A Gathering of My Name* (Carnegie Mellon Press). **Wednesday at 8 pm**

## 5 FIFTY WAYS

Writers read pieces on their most memorable break-up—stories of dumping or getting dumped: **Thomas Soyers Ellis**, **Cynthia Nelson**, **Dave Rosenthal**, **Terri Hardin**, **Jill Rapaport**, **Gavin Moses**, **Bill Kushner** and more. **Friday at 10:30 pm**

## 8 PENNY ARCADE & BINA SHARIF

**Penny Arcade** (aka **Susana Ventura**) is the creator and star of *Bitch*, *Dyke*, *Fagtag*, *Whore*. **Bina Sharif** is a performance artist and playwright whose work, *Empty Your Closets If You Want No Fire*, is upcoming at PS 122. **Monday at 8 pm**

## 10 CECILIA VICUNA & INDRAN AMIRTHANAYAGAM

**Cecilia Vicuna** is a Chilean poet who lives and works in NYC. Her latest book is *Unravelling Words And The Weaving of Water* (Graywolf, 1992). A native of Sri Lanka now living in NYC, **Indran Amirthanayagam's** first collection of poems, *The Elephants of Reckoning* (Hanging Loose Press), is due in 1993. **Wednesday at 8 pm**

## 12 POETRY VIDEOS

Courtesy of **Mich. Carter & Radio Thin Air**, **William Burroughs**, **Kathy Acker**, **Leonard Cohen**, **James Schuyler** & more. **Friday at 10:30 pm**

## 15 RICHIE WEST & VITA JIMENEZ

Formerly of the band **Camper Van Beethoven**, **Richie West** is a writer/composer whose recent work is a mixture of post-'60s jazz and modern classical styles. **Vita Jimenez's** poetry has appeared in *The World*, *Telephone* and *The Little Magazine*,

**9** Gustaf Sabin is an American poet, novelist and translator now living in France. A new novel called *Venus Blue* was recently published by Little Brown & Co. Joseph Donahue is a NYC poet whose books include *Moments of the Approach* (Red Dust) and *Before Creation* (Central Park Editions). **Monday at 8 pm**

**10** MICHAEL BROWNSTEIN & WALTER MOSLEY  
Michael Brownstein is the author of nine books of poetry and fiction. His novel *The Touch* is forthcoming from Autonomedia. Walter Mosley is a crime novelist whose latest book is *White Butterfly*. The *New York Times Book Review* called him "one of America's best mystery writers." **Wednesday at 8 pm**

**12** PAUL SCHMIDT LECTURE ON VELIMIR KHLIBNIKOV  
Paul Schmidt is a translator, scholar and theater director. Velimir Khllebnikov was a poet and the founder of Russian Futurism. **Friday at 10:30 pm**

**15** PATRICIA SMITH & WILLIE PERDOMO  
Patricia Smith is the winner of the 1990 and 1991 National Poetry Slams and the author of *Big Towns*, *Big Talk* and *Life According to Motown*. She writes political commentary for the *Boston Globe*. Willie Perdomo is a writer from East Harlem who was the Slam Champ for the Nuyorican Poet's Cafe in 1991. His first volume of work is *Where a Nickel Costs a Dime*. **Monday at 8 pm**

**17** GLORIA FRYM & GEORGE TYSH  
Gloria Frym is a poet and short story writer whose latest book is called *How I Learned* (Coffee House Press). Andrei Codrescu wrote about her collection, "These are pure stories ... I felt, while overhearing these—the pleasure of being an intruder, a spy, a voyeur." Bob Holman wrote about George Tysh's poems, "Inside are whole body poems with a pulse voice, poems that anchor the deep and fracture light. Very hot brain. In other words, no other words: talking music." His latest book is *Echolalia* (United Artists Books). **Wednesday at 8 pm**

**19** WOMEN FROM THE VILLAGE VOICE  
Laurie Stone, Lisa Jones, C. Carr & Pagan Kennedy. **Friday at 10:30 pm**

**22** UNBEARABLE BEATNIKS OF LIFE  
Jill Rapoport, Max Blagg, Sharon Mesmer, Peter Lamborn Wilson, Deborah Pintonelli, Ron Kolm, Bart Plantegna, Carol Wierzbicki, Mike Golden, David L. Ulin, and Hal Showitz will read with introductions by Jim Feast. The Unbearables are a free-floating, in-your-face, gathering of semi-beat black humorists. Autonomedia will issue an anthology of their works in the fall of '93. **Monday at 8 pm**

**24** JILL RAPAPORT & REBECCA WRIGHT  
Poet, playwright and essayist Jill Rapoport has published work in *Red Tape*, *Long Shot* and the *Poetry Project Newsletter*. Her plays have been performed at La Mama and ReGenesis Theater. Rebecca Wright is the author of *Ciao Manhattan*. Forthcoming are *Seven Days* and *Cities of the Magazine*. Her work appears in the anthology *Out of This World*. She works in molecular microbiology at the Washington University Medical School. **Wednesday at 8 pm**

**26** WORKSHOP READING  
A reading by students of the Poetry Project's writing workshops: Eileen Brilliant, John Larson, Jo Anne Wasserman, Mort Cohen, Ed Roberson, Merry Fortune and many more. **Friday at 10:30 pm**

## 12 POETRY VIDEOS

Courtesy of Mitch Corber & Radio Thin Air. William Burroughs, Kathy Acker, Leonard Cohen, James Schuyler & more. **Friday at 10:30 pm**

## 15 RICHIE WEST & VITA JIMENEZ

Formerly of the band Camper Van Beethoven, Richie West is a writer/composer whose recent work is a mixture of post-'60s jazz and modern classical styles. Vita Jimenez's poetry has appeared in *The World*, *Telephone* and *The Little Magazine*, and a chapbook called *The Courtship of Mickey and Minnie*. **Monday at 8 pm**

## 17 CHRIS TYSH & JAMES SHERRY

Chris Tysh's latest book is *Coat of Arms* (Station Hill Press). She is a professor at Wayne State University. James Sherry is the author of eight books of poetry and prose, most recently, *Our Nuclear Heritage* (Sun & Moon Press). He is publisher of Roof Books and President of the Segue Foundation. **Wednesday at 8 pm**

## 19 MICHAEL WEAVER AND JOHN STRAUSSBAUGH

A celebration of the publication of Michael Weaver's *My Father's Geography* (U. of Pittsburgh Press). Weaver's books include *Water Song* and *some days it's a slow walk to evening*. A former Baltimore pal of Weaver's, John Straussbaugh is a contributing editor at *New York Press*. **Friday at 10:30 pm**

## 22 BETH BORRUS & MERRY FORTUNE

Beth Borrus is a New Jersey writer whose work has appeared in *The New Censorship* and *Bakunin*. Merry Fortune is a singer/performer and assistant editor of the zine *Pagan Place*. **Monday at 8 pm**

## 24 MEENA ALEXANDER & SOICHI FURUTA

Meena Alexander has five books, including her autobiography *Fault Lines* (Feminist Press). Her latest book is *Night-Scene, The Garden* (Red Dust). Soichi Furuta is a poet, professor and art consultant who writes both in English and Japanese. His most recent book is *Montefeltro the Hawk Nose*. **Wednesday at 8 pm**

## 26 LARRY CLARK ON LARRY CLARK

A lecture by one of the foremost photographers of our time whose books include *Tulsa*, *Teenage Lust*, and *Larry Clark 1992*. He is currently working on *Don't Drink and Keep Your Dick in your Pants*. **Friday at 10:30 pm**

## 29 ELAINE RANDELL & JORDAN DAVIS

Elaine Randall's book of prose pieces, *Gut Reaction*, spans ten years of her life as a social worker. She lives in England. Jordan Davis is editor of the *Poetry Project Newsletter*, and is at work on a book of 1,000,000 poems. **Monday at 8 pm**

## 31 LARRY FAGIN & PAUL VIOLI

Larry Fagin's latest book is *The List Poem* (Teachers and Writers Coll.). He is a former co-director of the Poetry Project and the founder of Danspace. Paul Violi is the author of seven books of poetry. His most recent book is *The Curious Builder* (Hanging Loose Press). **Wednesday at 8 pm**

# MARCH

# REVIEWS

JOHN HOLLANDER

## **Types of Shape**

Yale U. Press, New Haven, CT; 1991.  
\$10.95, unpaginated.

This is an exceptionally clever little book of “emblematic,” or shaped, poems, ranging from more or less familiar shapes like cats and a lightbulb to inspiredly complicated ones like a beach umbrella together with its shadow (and pole consisting of one 2-letter word per line), a note on lined music paper, the domed Low Library at Columbia and—my favorites—two on adjoining pages: an arrow that meditates on its own existence, while pointing ahead to the silhouette of New York State on the next page, the occasion for a new meditation. The challenge of the form is immense, virtually impossible; and by demonstrating not only that shape and “meaning” can be tied together in non-trivial ways (putting light years, let’s say, between these and so-called “concrete poems”) but that the genre can

include poems that are lyrical and even philosophical, in addition to being handsome and ingenious, Hollander deserves a niche in the Cathedral of Poetry. In fact,

he’s made the territory so much his own, Apollinaire and George Herbert notwithstanding, it’s hard to imagine what else might follow.

The premise does, like most formal ideas, have its built-in limitations and pitfalls. For one, each shape demands sustaining the original inspiration: no matter how brilliant the idea and the opening of the poem, you still have to get to the prescribed end. Hollander’s openings and closings are invariably fresh and imaginative, both thematically and visually, satisfying the formal half of the challenge; middles are occasionally a problem. The rigors of adhering to the silhouette produce some uninspired writing, a lyricism too easily arrived at (at least for my taste); also some straining after meaning, or Meaningfulness, as if to convince the reader that this is after all a serious game.

But all in all, there is a great deal of pleasure to be gained from watching these poems work out their premises, sometimes traveling a good distance in the process—and from watching Hol-

lander, who is nothing if not deft as well as erudite, think and feel his way through the metaphysics, erotics and aesthetics, as well as the sheer landscapes and weather, of living. Remarkably, in the best poems, the shapes do seem to both be, and speak for (or about), themselves. Not only does the book give ingenuity a good name; it reaffirms the paradox that formal poetry, albeit in rare instances, can be inspiring and even liberating. I for one am left somewhat in awe.

Twenty-five of the poems in *Types of Shape* were originally collected in 1969 (where was I?—or rather, the 60s couldn’t have been the best time for a book of formal poems); this reissue has ten new ones, an interesting and useful introduction covering the history of the genre and Hollander’s own approach to it, and semi-scholarly notes (which probably don’t need to be there) to each poem in the book.

—Charles North

DERAN LUDD

## **Sick Burn Cut**

Semiotext(e), New York, NY; 1992; 187 pp.

If Quentin Tarantino’s *Reservoir Dogs* is the Seventies gang movie for the young, straight, white, male and middle class, could Deran Ludd’s *Sick Burn Cut* be *Reservoir Dogs* for William Burroughs’ fans and other members of the anti-bourgeoisie?

Not exactly, but they share similarities. Both are filled with disillusioned youths trying to cope by means of crime, violence, power plays, drugs, self-conscious taste in music and firearms. And, of course, the plans that could never go wrong inevitably do. Unlike the movies, Ludd’s novel is populated with queers, fascists, spiritualists, heretical believers (in fact heretics are the only true believers here) and the odd beaten and maligned messiah figure.

Gangs, like most movements and religions, frequently form around possible saviors. The Straight Shooters are a

### **the margaret winter**

this winter everyone was margaret and she was all alone.  
she didn’t have dinner or pork chops.

she didn’t have a white christmas or any spare languages.

she had her own.

margaret was the lady of christmas  
margaret was the creepy sun.

margaret was a cat until she got drowned in somebody’s pool

let the cat out let the cat out the people cried

and the winter went

—Danine Ricereto

mafia of transvestites, outcasts, and former loses trying to maintain control over the Belltown section of Seattle. Their leader is a tall lesbian named Ruby but at the center of the inner circle is Mary.

"Mary is a 31-year-old man with a revolver in a cheap cotton dress./He occasionally forgets this." Mary may also forget he is moody, over-confident, self-destructive, the chief lieutenant of the Straight Shooters, a professional criminal, occasional prostitute, murderer and nemesis to yuppies of all sexual orientations. What Mary doesn't know is that he may be the incarnation of the Virgin Mary and that he is not a fully developed character. Ludd, however, does make him a likeable-enough anti-hero for me to care that Mary's at the center of the plot.

Meanwhile, in Spokane . . . (and the book does use soap opera jump cuts) a parallel plot develops. A group of teenagers and one 20-year-old have gathered, but not as a gang. They are a handful of angels who have taken human form and have united to devout-

ly wait for Mary, Mother of God and Queen of the Angels, to come and reveal their true purpose on earth. Sheila, their leader, knows Mary is coming because she has received visions of the Queen of Angels since she was eight. In a clever touch, Ludd has the Queen of Angels teach Sheila about masturbation and safe sex in between other religious prophecies.

Like a very good novel, or poem, *Sick Burn Cut* has great moments of insight and observation, and like a good grade-B film it's full of tension and action, but much like a novel it also has its share of wasted space and wasted words. One character avoids most of the dead spots and shows up in more of the great moments: Mary's boyfriend, Sayyid Husayn—if he wasn't an adherent to a heretical sect of Islam, he'd be Zenner than thou. He is the man who always shoots straight and a man who hears the call of ages wake him from a deep sleep for evening prayer. Husayn is an eternal survivor—from the streets of Beirut to



hustling in Paris bathrooms to gang wars in Seattle. "To be alive from one hour to the next is acting in faith to Sayyid

Husayn. Incha Allah. 'If God wills it.' " Husayn is unlike all the other characters because he has a world view that extends far beyond himself and because he is the only one strong enough to be a believer and a savior without needing to become a leader.

Watching Mary, Husayn and the other Straight Shooters in action is a lot of fun, like a great B-movie. But how does all that gel with the spiritual overtones and the imminent collision between Mary and the kids from Spokane? Included among the various allusions to Islam is the quote from the Quran that begins the novel. It's from Sura 19, the Sura of Mary, the Sura which will also point out that Jesus was a prophet and not the Son of God as some might have you believe. Hmm, I smell an allegory.

—Jason Cruz

# burning deck



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**PAM REHM: The Garment In Which No One Had Slept**

"Hesitation has been used 'to have something to give back,' shyness has been used as 'a nerve into all circumstances.' What Pam Rehm has given in these poems is worthy of our intense and serious attention."—John Taggart 64 pages, offset, Smyth-sewn, paper \$8, signed paper \$15

**Serie d'Ecriture No.6: JEAN DAIVE, A Lesson in Music (trans. Julie Kalendek). 64 pages, offset, paper \$6**

**Serie d'Ecriture No.7: Dominique Fourcade, Isabelle Hovald, Jacques Roubaud, Esther Tellerman etc. translated by Norma Cole, Tom Mandel, Cole Swensen and others. 96 pages, offset, paper \$6**

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

ADEENA KARASICK  
**The Empress Has No Closure**

Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1992.



Today where I find poetry most interesting is where things outside of what is traditionally considered poetry meet poetry. *The Empress Has No Closure* is such a text as theory moves in the space of the poetic—an essay on Robert Creeley's "The Door" or on the stamp ("In the Beginning ( ) the Post") mixes with poems, works with the poems to open doors into new languages. Karasick is hyper-aware of how language operates, its many dialects. The poem "Alefbet" for example mixes contemporary French theory and Hebrew to pun amongst languages:

*"jew i jewish" je, i  
 jouissance, jew  
 essence en jeu, am  
 "jew-ich" juden, i*

And such a heady mix is not unusual



**Scarlatina**

When I was three  
 I had scarlet fever  
 I remember  
 the way water  
 tastes  
 sucked from a wash cloth  
 that people walked  
 out of the walls.  
 It seemed as though the uni-  
 verse  
 was a bare tree  
 where the walls came  
 together  
 In Tucson  
 Arizona  
 when it rains the air is full  
 of wet dust  
 and strange little colored  
 lights  
 that glisten on cacti.

—Kim Lyons

in this work.

I think it is no coincidence that such things occur to my reading most frequently in the writing

of women. Not that women have a biological access to openings and spaces but rather women have spent years as satellite dishes arms open reaching out receiving. The trick has been a difficult one—how to translate these codes. Karasick does it this way:

*I am renamed in  
 a grammar of pronouns  
 as North is a promise  
 a possibility  
 only. no conclusions  
 t'a (sum), i am  
 a translation; a*

*trance'lation of  
 drives and drive myself wild—*

Here is a self-conscious I, an I that is all over the poems always declaring "I am": "I'm a (n)e(u)rotic complex./A pa(thetic moment"; "I am/a wound"; "I am an abandoning process"; "I am near to"; "I am a curtain call"; "i'm a grant;/A gift migrates" (all of these from the poem "Archeotorture").

Here is an "I" responding to the theoretical debates on the subject (most obviously represented by Lacan, Lyotard). The subject in these debates is caught between the strictness of identity made by the call for multiculturalism and the fragmented, dissolved identity as presented by Lyotard or the empty subject of Lacan. None of these dichotomies seems to be providing answers. The call for multiculturalism can easily mutate into the extremes of nationalism. But the other choice, that of denying the subject, is just as limiting and problematic for women. Karasick negotiates these extremes by presenting a subject that is multiple, that is always mutating into some other thing. The subject is both present in her work and multifold. It exists without the biological strictness of multiculturalism by being full of rupture, displacement, and other confusions. The "I" in the *The Empress Has No Closure* pursues its nomadness by departing, arriving,

laughing, punning: "So, my identity as history is not affixed, but is a fix in flux." Always declaring itself into existence but never settling on its existence, it is one that questions the subject, leaves with a continuation:

*as mentions amount  
 a mention of margins  
 A mention of excess*

*and when [i stop you continue]*

*Yr underlying rhythm: a mention of  
 a  
 mention mute and marked*

—Juliana Spahr

VYT BAKAITIS

**City Country**

Black Thistle Press, 1991, 146 pp, \$11.95 paper

Born in Lithuania, growing up in Germany and Massachusetts, and living now in Brooklyn, Vyt Bakaitis takes us in *City Country* on a journey of self-exploration that encompasses practically every known version of modernism in poetry. For all his inclination to experiment, however, his distinctive touch is lyrical—one might even say charming, with a Kerouac twist. Consider, for example, "In F Sharp Minor, Op. 23":

*Quiet as possible  
 I put on the record, you're  
 asleep already, in the next room, and  
 our overnight guests  
 downstairs, they're*



**Maybe**

Maybe I will  
 become a cigarette  
 and burn away burn away  
 burn burn burn your FINGERS  
 because you fell  
 asleep and weren't watching  
 me, you forgot about  
 me.

—Cynthia Nelson

not sleeping yet, I don't think.

Jesus, I'm sorry I can't listen to this music.

It's so beautiful.

I'm keyed up, my eyes in the fix of this all-yellowing bug-lamp starting to strain. Not to mention my head.

Just from too much coffee, I guess.

Scriabin went batty, didn't he? No, "died quite suddenly" it says here. Though one record cover I saw had his hair in flames.

It's late. Here it's hot, outside where I was it's sticky and not very dark, sometimes

it gets so you can't see any stars

but just now, out on the stoop

I could make out our black cat

crouched on his paws, head shifting sideways and up

to track that swallow I used to think was a bat

circling and circling low over the yard, both

their radar scanning the night.

And a cobweb of stars overhead.

At first it's just another guy who can't get to sleep—but then you realize that he's not "just another guy" since his pre-occupations run from Scriabin's hair in flames, to bats, black cats, and cobwebs. As it turns out, the prevailing consciousness, as it brings this or that precise thing down close for one's inspection, isn't so much scary as peculiar-seeming



### Piping Music

Aborigines in the pipes knock the paint off my walls, and now we have heat.

—Elio Schneeman

(not so much Poe, in other words, as Whitman). And indeed not only is *City Country*, like *Leaves of Grass*, essentially a life

reconstituted into poetry—but also Bakaitis' identity, like Whitman's, changes with each new perception and meditation. Finally, though (and here's the fun part), it is hard to tell in which direction the metamorphosis is traveling; am I, as I become the persona in this book, these fragments that may or may not be about to come together and make sense—or this making sense about to break into fragments again? The following is from "A Dice Menagerie (Zero and Up)"—an extended journal/collage piece:

Watch, how  
Names take on the shape of  
things, in your  
Dark visors, both name and  
number of yours  
Snagging at random  
cobwebs & daisies,  
cottages & domes

Say I followed the sun  
I'd be dead by nightfall  
Your streets no longer lead home  
Welcome to Rock Island says one sign

Right where the true revolution of  
roots  
Usurps a firm foundation, hope in last  
place

& trust  
a must

Support your local genius THE POET  
Scarecrow in alien fields

For there's a heart  
to each busted part  
makes the truth  
of her pain  
plain to see

Another way to think of the dialogue at the core of *City Country* concerns the dilemma Marjorie Perloff discusses in *The Dance of the Intellect*:

... whether poetry should be lyric [as



we see in Stevens' poems, she suggests] or collage [as used by Pound in his *Cantos*], meditation or encyclo-

pedia, the still moment or the jagged fragment: this is the larger esthetic dichotomy at the heart of modernism.

But whereas Perloff's concerns are analytic, Bakaitis is still living a life. The "country" side of the two-part *City Country* equation suggests, among other things, both the country where he was born, and the part-nostalgic part-real innocence of rural America:

The flies sound good and dry  
up near the tarshingle siding. A big bee bumps the screen, I can hear how, with bird squeaks like crushed glass from woods across the road. I don't hear the brook running, though it's never thirsty, out there in the shake.

(from "In the Heat of the Yard")

The "city" suggests both the author's present home in Brooklyn and a state of mind:

At the back of my mind stands a city with buildings I don't remember that lean in on each other, solid walls without windows, windows without light, where shadows take over the sidewalks and the streets run out in the next block. An animal crawled in to die, and night leans close to look in. I can hear breathing, thick and heavy and see the wound open its fatal smile, glistening with each heartbeat. It is the heart itself, insisting I live in danger and don't see it yet.

("How I Get Where I'm Going")

For me the most intriguing part of this journey is the psychological one, as

we participate in Vyt Bakaitis' ongoing attempt to figure out what he is all about. Like the rest of us, of course, he is always

**REVIEWS**

someone else. In terms of the visual arts, it is like looking at a landscape by Paul Cezanne, or "The City," by Fernand Leger, and knowing full well that some place in the one is the other resting dormant: all you have to do is read the next poem, or next stanza, to see it begin to emerge. So there you have it. And by the way: the best poems in *City Country* are the love poems.

—Benjamin Sloan

**DAVID TRINIDAD  
Hand over Heart: Poems 1981-1988**

Amethyst Press. New York, 1991. 127 pp. \$9.95.

David Trinidad may be the first American poet. Walt Whitman, even Emily Dickinson, were Europeans set free of Europe. T. S. Eliot and Pound, of course, moved to Europe, and William Carlos Williams was, finally, a Japanese poet stuck in New Jersey.

My English friend Pavitram said: "There are traces of Europe as far west as Chicago." It's only in California, he believed, that America is undilute.

David Trinidad was born in Southern California, and a poet must explicate his birth. He's the first poet to suggest we cannot separate our televisions from ourselves.

from *Double Trouble*

Cathy

*From the beginning, I was opposed to Patty's "wild" idea. It just didn't seem feasible. Her enthusiasm, however, was dizzying. After listening to her plan, she persuaded me to exchange clothes with her. Frantically,*

**apartheid**

it ain't easy being the son of man  
birthday it's no scene it seems  
and i harbor a rat for my vacation  
i never missed you  
in went  
out for coffee

—Danine Ricereto

*she threw on my white blouse, plaid skirt, knee socks and oxfords while, reluctantly, I slipped into her sweat*

*shirt, blue jeans and scruffy tennis shoes.*

\*\*\*

*The real test came at nine o'clock, when Uncle Martin stopped by to turn out the lights. "I hope you understand this is for your own good," he said. "I dig, Pop-O," I uttered with a weak smile. He didn't seem the least bit suspicious, so I slid into Patty's bed and blew a goodnight kiss at him. Then, for a convincing finishing touch, I blew another kiss across the room, at Patty's heart-shaped framed photograph of Frankie Avalon.*

A new era always appears bestial, the way a newborn child, dripping with blood, is. But the human soul is not as fragile as moralists fear. The soul persists, even on *The Patty Duke Show*.

—  
"It's like a well," I found myself thinking, of *Hand Over Heart*. The cover, by Jim Isermann, could be the circles that arise when you drop your eyeglasses into a well.



It's easy to forgive radio, and we all love movies—but it is difficult to forgive TV. It's like forgiving one's mother and father.

—  
The American Poetry is about forgiving machines.

—Sparrow

**CHERYL FISH  
Wingspan**

Mellen Poetry Press, Lewiston, NY 63 pp.

Cheryl begins the poem "Locomotion":

*Stretch as far as you can*

and she herself is stretching, in this book—that's why it's called *Wingspan*. She's stretching her arms out her window on Franklin St. till they reach all the way to the Bronx.

The poem continues:

*outside a warehouse  
on Greenwich Street  
juggler's hands too small for  
the balls*

Suddenly there's a juggler—the last person one expects on Greenwich Street (though not on Greenwich Avenue), and besides, the first one in literature with hands too small. I've read poems in three languages and never heard of that.

*almost run over  
when he went to fetch one*

A poignant scene—almost Chaucerian; a juggler who'll die for his balls.

*the man on the corner  
stood there clapping*

Clapping because the juggler had lived? As if the whole thing had been a stunt?

*children scream, released  
from school*

The word "released"—which is a technical term for children leaving school (I remember "release time" from my youth), conveys how children explode from a building, like doves released at a rally.

*in one moving mass  
everyone recognizes steam  
from the ground  
imitating another image of a cloud  
parking in a very dark garage  
your car*

That's right, garages are very dark. Somehow I never noticed that, in my nervousness at leaving my car, and trying to remember where it's parked.

*will be safe: protecting the gutter's*

"Your car will be safe"—a New York City mantra—the complete reassurance.

*sewer, lost jewel, empty street.*

All the other poems are good too.

—Sparrow

PETER GIZZI

**Periplum**

Avec books. 1992. 61 pp.

Once we step around what Robin Blaser calls "the pile up of postisms," and make a way to an actual world (as in a thing done, a doing), we find ourselves entangled in a vast wreckage. On the surface, nothing is new here. When Ezra Pound opens the

*Cantos* with a translation of Homer and a reference to Odysseus's periplum in verse modelled on old English accentual meter,

he, too, is proposing to rediscover an actual world in the midst of the wreckage of the nineteenth century. Every poet necessarily takes on that responsibility and that adventure. Poetry, in that sense, is never "post" anything.

On the other hand, the specific wreckage we find ourselves in has not only to do with the continuing disintegration of stable social significations, the destruction of a world of known values and shared imagination. The very ability to signify unequivocally has been wounded. We find ourselves in the wreckage of a language no longer capable of upholding a world with depth, not to mention the wreckage of a subject constituted in such a language. In the center of that wreckage flicker nightmare images of the Holocaust. We are a generation born with that stench in our nostrils. We grew up in the shadows cast by that blaze. We learned philosophy and poetry from those who survived it. It defines our moment, determines how we think, how we see, how we read, what we can say. The language of so many elders, so certain and absolute, so complicit in that deadly drive toward a monolithic homogenization of "being," can never again be ours.

Yet there are still poets, and they will find a way to sing. Peter Gizzi's poems begin precisely here, in that necessity and dilemma. As usual on a voyage, they take place within a process of triangulation, that threeness that locates us, however ambiguously, in a space and a time. In the case of these poems, the points in the triangulation appear over and over variously as "Periplum," "The Locket," and "A.k.a."

"Periplum" locates the overall poems' ground in that specific restlessness and drive to know, and the world of its originating motion. What else, after all, do we have of value that doesn't arise out of whatever discovery we are thus pushed to. A man of no name and with a fortune to come. These days we watch map supersede map as the desperate illusion of a bounded world scrambles



to draw and redraw itself in history's blaze. What knowing we are capable of begins always here, in "the bewilderment/ 'I'm

at sea'."

"The Locket" moves to fix the second locating point in the known and familiar, Betty's or Veronica's locket, perhaps, a gift from Archie. It hangs there,

**On the Cover:**

*Homage to Francis Ponge,*  
Cyrilla Mozenter  
Linen runners, used stolen  
soap from N.Y., Mexico, and  
Rangely, Maine, 1991

**On the Calendar:**

*Black Sea,* Cyrilla Mozenter  
Altered book, stones from  
the Black Sea, linen tape,  
gouache

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minutely and absolutely domestic, a cherished, glittering object that opens to reveal the face of the beloved. Or would, if



it could. Here, "the face/static with grief/looks beyond." We are plunged into the nightmare at the heart of the ordinary. As usual, that plunge, in a single, sudden stroke, reveals and shatters the unspeakably fragile world, "that W written / across the horizon," the secret they never tell kids.

The third locating point in the ongoing triangulating business of these poems, "A.k.a.", is, after all, no point at all, but that fundamental activity both we and these poems are made of, pinned to the post office wall: Pete Gizzi, a.k.a. Peter Ulysses, a.k.a. Piers Plowman, a.k.a. Petey the Gooch—wanted for (very) grand larceny. Everyone knows criminality begins with lack of respect for proper nouns. After slipping from name to name, walking through locked doors is ducked soup, as Hermes, the poets' god, well knew, walking off with Apollo's sheep.

"Periplum," "The Locket," and "A.k.a." in their various incarnations and shifting identities manage to outline some kind of fix, but it's tenuous at best. Each slippery locus pitches wildly in relation to the others. In between the poet sings, and somewhere in those songs emerges a revelation of and a (re)turning to a knowing that is profoundly human: "So now when I line up and belong/to persons next to me/I'll be good and eat/my soup." I can't help but think here of Emmanuel Levinas' move from ontology to ethics, from being to actual relation, "face to face" as he puts it. Though this is clearly not Gizzi's text, both the poet and the philosopher think and write in the flickering shadows of the same blaze, the blaze of the world, the blaze of history, the blaze of knowledge, the blaze of the self, emerging with a new knowing, a knowing that mat-

ters, as in matters of life and death.

—Michael Boughn

TAKAMURA KOTARO

**A Brief History of Imbecility: Poetry and Prose of Takamura Kotaro. Translated by Hiroaki Sato.**

University of Hawaii Press; paperback, \$16.95.

There are second chances in literature if not in life. Hiroaki Sato's wonderful translations of the poetry of Takamura Kotaro (1883-1956) were published twelve years ago (as *Chieko and Other Poems*) without attracting the wide attention they merited; they return



it was my father's birthday and I called him on the phone because I had a phone.

I said excuse you fire he said excuse you fish. he said happy birthday to me. I said you too.

he said are you married yet. I said I know you are.

he said don't leave me if you don't have to.

I said I'm trying to be here. he said hello.

I said I want to thank you for everything I'm not. He said you too.

I can't wait for this fish. I can't wait for it but I do.

I said how come you didn't call me. HE said because it's my birthday.

I didn't do anything for your birthday dad.

You called me. No I didn't.

—Danine Ricereto

now in an expanded edition entitled *A Brief History of Imbecility*, offering a new opportunity to absorb the many and contradictory aspects of a poet for whom poetry was the truest kind of biography, the markings inscribed by a life. In his lifetime Takamura was many things—heir to a family tradition of Buddhist carving, pilgrim to the sources of Western culture, modernist in sculpture and poetry, elegist of a tragic marriage, panegyrist of the Pacific War, ultimately reclusive and nearly dispassionate analyst of his own past. To read his poetry is necessarily to become immersed in a personality and its crises.

In Japan nearly anyone can quote at least a few lines from one or another of Takamura's poems about his wife Chieko, "Lemon Elegy" perhaps ("So intensely you had been waiting for lemon./In the sad, white, light deathbed/you took that one lemon from my hand/ and bit it sharply with your bright teeth") or "Chieko Riding the Wind" ("Chieko, now mad, will not speak/and now only with blue magpies and plovers exchanges signs")—and can recount something of the circumstances from which they emerged: Takamura's impassioned, unorthodox marriage to the painter Chieko Naganuma, her gradual descent into schizophrenia, her death from tuberculosis in a mental hospital in 1935. The story is so well-known that a commercial movie has even been made about it.

Of the forty poems Takamura devoted to charting his relationship with Chieko, twenty-six are included here. Their tone is a compelling mixture of precision and desperation, driven by a compulsion to confront catastrophe with meditative objectivity, an unconsolated clarity that yields splinters of lyricism: "Threatened by the anxiety that her head was going to be destroyed,/sorrowed by the thought that she was going to pieces pretty soon,/Chieko put her things in order./Seven years'

madness ended in death./I savor quietly, quietly/the fragrant sweetness of the plum wine I found in the kitchen."

The Chieko poems are doubtless the most immediately appealing; it is difficult not to be caught up in their inherent drama, and unusual to encounter a poetic sequence in which the dominant personality is not that of the poet: true portrait-poems. But as this collection shows, Takamura's range was considerable. He would be an important poet, if only for his first book, *The Journey* (1914), crucial in bringing contemporary vernacular into Japanese poetry. His own journey was unpredictable and contradictory, with his early idealization of Auguste Rodin and Romain Rolland turning in the late '30s to an enthusiastic embrace of Japanese militarism. Only one of the many poems Takamura wrote in support of the Japanese war effort has been included here: addressed to the Japanese commander on Iwo Jima, it fascinates by relentless energy with which it deploys the slogans of self-sacrifice for the Emperor. After the war Takamura atoned for his wartime activities with the extraordinary poetic mea culpa "A Brief History of Imbecility," a highly original work in which he traces his ideological evolution, starting from earliest childhood memories and evoking in crisp snapshots a tangled process which culminates in the Emperor's public renunciation of his divinity: "now, serene, with nothing left,/I enjoy fully the beauty of the desolate."

All of Takamura's poetry constitutes a kind of emotional sculpture, appropriately enough for the man who was the preeminent Japanese sculptor of his day. The link between his two arts is close, and many of the poems Sato has translated are descriptions of the process of sculpting: "I began to think that I was close to the clay,/I began to think that my fingers knew the clay,/began to think that the clay delighted in me." Sculpture provides a

metaphor for his way of making poems in which phrasing is a form of cutting, hacking away unneeded matter to make visible the shape of a feeling of a relationship.

Takamura's poems are strangely refreshing even when, as is often the case, they are about being alone and unhappy. He looks at his own consciousness as if it were an object separate from him. He delineates a face, his own or another's in the same spirit that he would carve a mask, whether satirical caricature or the demon mask of madness. Who would know those contours more intimately than a wood carver?

—Geoffrey O'Brien

## ARCHITECTURE

(Continued from page 9)

sense of the "primitive" or "neo-primitive." The full complement of Hejduk's theatre is at an extreme divergence as Rafael Moneo has pointed out, is for the flux of the urban and the contingencies that he has praised, for example, in the Bronx of his childhood. His taste is for the finite, the flexible, and the unfixd.

• • •

## Poem

Have you ever been on a steam train ride?  
I love trains!  
That is why today is a special day for me.  
The railroad yard is huge!  
The first thing I do is meet the engineer.  
Steam makes the steam train go!  
Shovelling coal is hard work!  
WHOOOSH!  
"W" shands for whistle.  
WOOOOOOOO, WOOOOOOOO, WOO,  
WOOOOOOOO!  
The train is coming!  
The man in the blue uniform is conductor Bill.  
HOORAY!  
CHUGGA, CHUGGA, CHUGGA, CHUGGA...  
I can see sheep!  
DING, DING, DING, DING, DING, DING.  
WHAT A GREAT DAY!

—Jonah Winter

## REVIEWS

The militancy in Hejduk's poetics is shown in Oslo, where the disturbing gigantism of his structure reminds one of Hejduk's

affirmation of monumentality and memory. The structure is tragic, speaks of disturbance from its title to its ornamental, embattled sides, and is a wild statement about pacifications and surveillance. Hejduk gives here an architecture that competes for realism with the meditations on power of Foucault. It reminds us of Said's sense that Derrida and Foucault offered two paths, one into an abyss of skepticism and the other by way of a commodious vicus of recirculation towards the world. Hejduk has taken that inconvenient route towards the world, and it is for this that his poetics has remained one of detailing, building, and realism, rather than escape, luxury, and fantasy. His angels are real and offended; his poetry is a commentary to our epoch's horror: and his figure of "Security" is a disturbing monument to the transgressions of a difficult time. What could be more silent than this affixing of the cubist wall house to the military poetic of the dream? Here, Hejduk's art reaches its profound complexity and makes other architectural solutions seem whimsical, melodramatic, or fantastic.

That this monument should be constricted at all is a testament to the idea of devotion to the architectural problem. That it should no longer remain is another testament to the shock of a severe deposition against the accomodating architectural lies which surround us.

## DOOR

(Continued from page 11)

I never ran into Clayton Eshleman on Avenue A; the report in my column, in which Eshleman is said to quote Charles Olson, and very loudly, is fictional.

Jackson Mac Low and Hannah Weiner, stars of Henry

Speaking of elements that burn in water, what does anyone think about the Eshleman/ Spahr correspondence collected in Buffalo mag *Poetic Briefs*? Poetry is in as usual serious trouble? There are no poets out there under 40? I think the problem might instead be height. There are very few poets over seven or eight feet tall these days.

When will we have a book better than *Paterson*? The problem consists in the question, which is phrased wrong. It should be stated: What can I do for my country?

Thanking you: Anna Malmude assisted with the production of this issue. She read the copy and approved, and disapproved, with zest.

Ben Franklin Books in Nyack, at last check, had fourteen of fifteen volumes of the Bollingen Paul Valery on the green shelf directly above the owner's desk, for the amazing price of \$8 a volume. The missing volume was the *Analects*, which, as you may know, is the hardest one to find.

—Jordan Davis

# Dirt

by Gillian McCain

**Sparrow** says that on December 11th, while meditating, a **Zappa**-esque koan bolted through him: "Are they called ground troops in the sense of ground beef?" He and **Hal Sirowitz** are founding the **One-Size-Fits-All** movement, which has absolutely no meaning yet, but may become a political group whose membership criterion is shoe size.

Great new anthology put out by **Serpent's Tail Press** called **Serious Hysterics**. Eight stories written by women where the protagonists all develop intriguing symptoms. Great stuff by **Marsha Rowe**, **Marina Warner**, **Lynne Tillman** and others. The cover is by **Dorothea Tanning** and is like an **Edgar Gorey** if he had been born female and read **Dora's** case study.

Speaking of Serpent Tail's Press, **Ira Silverberg**, who heads S.T. in New York, celebrated his 30th birthday at Fez with a party hosted by **David Trinidad**, **Lynne Tillman**, and **Betsy Sussler**. He and **Amy Scholder** are starting a new imprint of Serpent's Tail called **High Risk**. Look for books from **Gary Indiana**, **Pagan Kennedy**, **Sapphire** and more.

**Legs McNeil** has taken over as editor-

in-chief of *Reflex* magazine which is now called **Nerve**. Look for it on the stands in February. Lots of writers connected with the Poetry Project have work in the first and second issues: **Lenny Kaye**, **Victor Bockris**, **Janice Johnson**, **Carl Watson**, **David Vogen** and me.

Check out poet **Cynthia Nelson's** all-babe band **Ruby Falls**. New **King Missile** album called *Happy Hour* rocks the house.

**Lewis Warsh** told us that a bookstore in Mississippi requested a copy of **George Tysh's** *Echolalia* pronto because someone needs it to be used for a Special Ed class. Lewis has reservations on sending it — with poem titles like "Deconstructing Sodomy", "Genitalia" and "Enema" he just doesn't think that they'd be getting exactly what they bargained for.

Article by **Brad Gooch** entitled "The New Poets' Society: All But Pronounced Dead, Poetry Is Where It's At Once Again" in the January issue of *Harper's Bazaar*. We're glad poetry is getting press but please ... Its great that **Paul Beatty** got featured but **Henry Rollins**? I guess cos he had once appeared on the **Dennis Miller Show**, *Bazaar* readers could grasp the concept. Also, was it really necessary to rehash that whole Hollywood scene? It got so much press last year that the *Wall Street Journal* even covered it. I like **Michael Lally's** writing, but I don't want to ever hear again about a reading he organized where **Ally Sheedy** read her rehab poems. Since the main jist of the article was "spoken word", where were **Dona Bryant**, **Darius James**, **Maggie Estep**, **Jose Padua**, **Edwin Torres**, **Wanda Phipps**? We know Gooch is a good writer (check out his **Frank O'Hara** bio coming out soon) so we will assume it was probably the *Bazaar* editors — they must be consistent in maintaining the watered-down, skim milk, Cliff Note version of culture ...

Our 19th Annual New Years Poetry Marathon Benefit was ten hours of pure unadulterated fun. Highlights: **Ed Morales'** "Love Poem to **Amy Fisher**" (he compared Amy to girls he went to High School with who used to bum quaaludes off him and teach him how to use the periodical guides at the Public Library — Oh Amy, that **Buttafuoco**, he fucked you up ...); **Taylor Mead's** soundbites (On **Marky Mark**: "I bet he's boring even not to talk to ..."); **Tuli Kupferberg's**

## from Christ Enters Manhattan

Body's unrush, slow  
clouds curl. Astonished route:  
neither so ceremonial nor so dead—

loosened hair, a touch, red folds;  
within which all vision's fire, & blackness,  
& what the stars allow: the truest joy has no image . . .

Cornet rising over a lush knoll.  
Pleasure's a message you send back . . .  
Its lexicon betrays the lack of any one word

& tells obsessively the story of cancelled visits.  
The probe pours back images: an earth too hot to inhabit.  
(T calls, his father died. Our last talk was a good one . . .)

There is agitation & torpor & helplessness . . .  
Yellow stripe, red stripe. Wreckage of sun on the mountain.  
Fiery house, fiery horse, dragging jags of flame through the  
fields of the sky . . .

—Joseph Donahue

• • •  
Ittai and I Leave New York

The rains pound  
The artist goes to war  
Israel is dark when he arrives  
Under his arm is the old fiddle  
He puts it under the cot.  
Each day begins without a sun  
the last dream before breakfast  
interrupted by a gun.  
Pinned to the wall,  
her soft face  
curls in the heat.  
Left behind are  
the pungence of mustard  
the anxiety of dogwalkers.

The toothless man hums along  
she sweats in her stockings  
another uncomfortable date.  
Later out on the roof  
she thinks aloud,  
"In New York, who cares  
what anyone says particularly?  
But this makes for good poetry . . ."  
Your pride will keep you on earth  
says the man with a cup.  
A quiet girl in blue  
writes in the margin of her notes  
that she will sing tonight  
in Rome.

We spent a wet stiff night  
on your small bed  
until the pulse of our sleep joined  
the noise in the hall  
someone yelled  
and the June cool filled with busses.  
A fly blew through the kitchen  
and returned like an intoxicated monk  
to the brightness outside.  
A cool scent of ashes  
fell between the pews  
while wet-browed men  
chipped between the chalk lines,  
revealing Amitabha.

I finish my tea  
and go to the museum  
to see Silenus,  
the breasts of a Virtue  
and drunk lovers,  
asleep.  
While outside  
sunbathers invoke the tan  
that will fade.  
I walk back through the park  
noticing the green detail,  
the creak of swings  
shouts and other  
sounds of happy end.

I am tired  
So I do nothing  
while you play my guitar  
to the rain  
Shrieks of wet people  
rise through the trees  
thunder  
sets off a car alarm  
But mainly we hear  
the rain fall in the street  
and as the wind curves  
in the screen.  
The fan sends humps  
through the sheet.

To leave this city  
Get drafted  
Or marry and  
move to Vermont  
where your sculpture will rust  
as you walk naked in the back yard.  
Or drive to Indiana.  
Bring the cello.  
Not the dog.  
In Zanesville,  
where the wife waits in the sand  
for a man to unlock the cab  
stop for a Coke  
and move on.

—Louise Dubin

personal take on Rainy Day Woman  
("They'll fuck you when ..."); **Jackson  
Mac Low's** gorgeous juxtapositions;  
**Jasmine's** blasphemy rant ("God, the  
**Son,** the **Holy Ghost** ... Were they a dis-  
functional family?"); **Jeff Buckley's** bal-  
lad; **Steve Levine's** hermaphrodite slug

poem; **Ed Friedman's** Matisse Meets Mao  
piece; **Roy Derien's** "heaven" folk song  
with back-up; **Christian X. Hunter's**  
band **Little Red Book**; **Todd Colby's** rant  
that started out "John Denver john den-  
ver john denver ..."; **Homer Erotic**; the  
**Scumwrenches'** grand finale ... the high-

points were just too numerous to men-  
tion.

Have a great February & March &  
defend yourself against that seasonal  
light deficiency syndrome. And make  
things happen so I can write about them.

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