

+ POETRY PROJECT NEWSLETTER #270 +



- - - FALL 2022 / 50th Anniversary Issue - - -

THE POETRY PROJECT NEWSLETTER #270

EDITORS | Kay Gabriel, Bianca Messinger, Morgan Võ

COVER ART | Joe Brainard, *Pansies* (1968), mixed media collage. Used by permission of the Estate of Joe Brainard and courtesy of Tibor de Nagy Gallery, New York.

DESIGN | Morgan Võ

CONTRIBUTORS | Arianne Ayu Alizio, Alexis Almeida, Terrence Arjoon, Chia-Lun Chang, John Colletti, Corina Copp, Brenda Coultas, Ted Dodson, Marcella Durand, Betsy Fagin, Nada Gordon, Marwa Helal, Mitch Highfill, Vicki Hudspeth, Hung Hung, Lisa Jarnot, Kamikaze Jones, Shiv Kotecha, Fernanda Laguna, Greg Masters, Gillian McCain, Greg Nissan, Ron Padgett, Dani Putney, Holly Raymond, John Rufo, Jerome Sala, Eleni Sikelianos, Alicia Wright

STAFF | Sasha Banks, Kyle Dacuyan, Will Farris, Kay Gabriel, Laura Henriksen, Roberto Montes, Nicole Wallace

EVENT PRODUCTION COORDINATOR | Anna Cataldo

AUDIO/TECH MANAGERS | James Barickman, Noa Mendoza, Aida Muratoglu

CREATIVE COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR | Ivanna Baranova

BOARD OF DIRECTORS | Ricardo Maldonado (chair), Délana R.A. Dameron, Molly B. Gross, Deepali Gupta, Vincent Katz, Annabel Lee

Editors' Note: Write Here

Against the odds, the *Poetry Project Newsletter* has been running for fifty years. The *Newsletter's* longevity is a testament to the labor and imagination of the nearly forty editors who've run the publication since 1972, and to the vibrant community around the Project whose inventive writing, feverish activity and enticing gossip has given us something to print.

Being real for a second, the collective activity of the *Newsletter's* readers, writers and editors has produced something basically unique among poetry periodicals. It's a journal for serious poetry and arts criticism that's free to access online and in print, and that you don't need an advanced degree to write for. It's also a community news bulletin. Issues from the 70s advertise empty rooms in poets' apartments or congratulate new parents on their babies; former editor Gillian McCain ran a much-loved gossip column in the 90s called, fittingly, "Dirt"; and in the interviews that typically fill the *Newsletter's* pages, you can hear the friendships and social contexts that animate just about anybody's life in poetry. Finally, the *Newsletter's* five decades and 272 issues* form a remarkable archive demonstrating how several generations of poets, concentrated in but not limited to the community surrounding the Project, have thought about writing, culture, politics and each other. Reading back through the archive, someone might see references to court support for anti-nuclear demonstrators, arguments about mimeograph printing, letter campaigns opposing Reagan-era austerity cuts to the NEA budget, vocal support for poet Ernesto Cardenal and the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua for which he served as minister of culture, favorable mentions of Jack Spicer, total ignorance of Jack Spicer, the rise of Language Poetry, remembrances for Joe Brainard, Tim Dlugos and other AIDS deaths that rocked the Project community, an excerpt of Thulani Davis's opera about Malcolm X (reprinted in this issue), dozens upon dozens of interviews with both currently beloved and forgotten poets, and a write-up of the People's Library at Occupy Wall Street.

This issue, we make merry of a long half-century with celebrations of the *Newsletter's* illustrious past alongside new work that carries forward our tradition of rich anomaly. Check the amazing cover art, Brainard's *Pansies* from 1968. (Do hang this on your wall, please.) Ron Padgett—the original editor—returns with a note of origin, and several other editorial alums offer poetry and recommendations of their favorite issues (many of which can be read at poetryproject.org/publications/newsletter—get immersed!). Arianne Ayu Alizio's shares a series of poems, chosen by Daniel Borzutzky for this year's Brannan Prize. Former *Newsletter* editors Betsy Fagin, Marwa Helal, and Ted Dodson share poems as well, and two more works of poetry come to us through new translations: three from Fernanda Laguna's *Pañuelo de mocós*, translated by Alexis Almeida; and Hung Hung's "Another Life", translated by Chia-Lun Chang, who interrogates the act of translation in an accompanying essay. Shiv Kotecha reports from the "battle" that Jack Spicer's poetry, in Daniel Katz's phrase, "wage[s] against itself." An anonymous forest defender updates us on the Defend the Atlanta Forest movement. And we have critical writings on several new works, including a few inspired takes on recent releases from important forebears: Ted Berrigan, H.D., and Lewis Warsh.

Our *Newsletter* is open, alive, shifting, weird, failing, succeeding, trying, burning, decomposing, reminding you why you love poetry, inciting you to read something different and write something new. Fifty years is a long stretch for a community paper—we look back on it with pride, criticality, fascination. While the next fifty years seem poised to bring important moments of struggle and change in the world at large, we hope this paper can remain a space for human beings, in our strength and vulnerability, to bring something spirited to the challenge of those moments. We're here for you, truly, and here because of you**. Join us in offering a little love to a filthy old rag.

* While this issue is #270, two issues in the past have been numbered wrong: there are two issues numbered #127, and two numbered #144.

** To submit reviews, essays, interviews, etc., query us at: neditor@poetryproject.org

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Fall 2022

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OLIVIA ELIAS
CHAOS, CROSSING
 Translated from French by
KAREEM JAMES ABU-ZEID

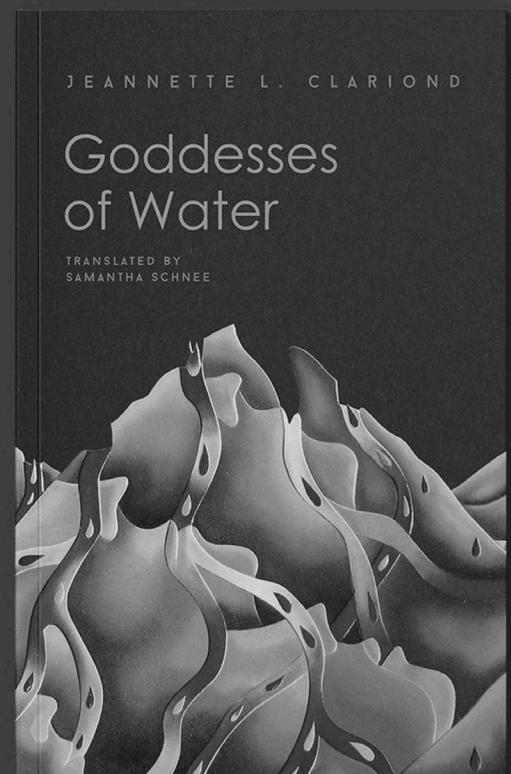
“In her English-language debut, acclaimed French-language poet of the Palestinian diaspora Olivia Elias probes deeply into the upheavals of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Olivia Elias, child of the Nakba, is a world citizen, resident at one time or another of Lebanon, Canada, France. But as a poet, she remains a Palestinian, inhabited by the landscape, the language, creating lyrics that speak the sorrow of displacement, and a memory vaster and deeper than any one woman’s, with a restraint that dignifies both grief and rage.”

— Marilyn Hacker

JEANNETTE L. CLARIOND
GODDESSES OF WATER
 Translated from Spanish by
SAMANTHA SCHNEE

“*Goddesses of Water* is at once profoundly dark and dazzling, both blinding and fearsome, with a radical beauty that is cruel and inexorable, perhaps because, in a world like ours, beauty can be nothing but cruel, cruel and necessarily sad, just like the gods and goddesses, just like Coyolxauhqui herself.”

— Raúl Zurita



ENNIO MOLLEDO
NIGHT
 Translated from Spanish by
MARGUERITE FEITLOWITZ

“Ennio Molledo, translated now for the first time by the daring mind of Marguerite Feitlowitz, conveys the Chilean night in all its linguistic, political, and cultural meanings: darkness, affliction, and absence of ethics or reason: the enduring wounds of Chile’s dictatorship. In this quest for clarity amid darkness, Molledo’s poems reverberate with the force of a language writing its way out of the psychological shackles of the state.”

— Daniel Borzutzky

A Note on the Poetry Project Newsletter

Ron Padgett

In late 1972 something got me to thinking that there was a flow of interesting information on The Poetry Project grapevine but that its transmission was haphazard. You might be desperate for an apartment and not know that the person sitting next to you at a reading was looking for a subletter. Or that an exciting new underground publication was coming out of San Francisco or Toronto. Information about the Project's own activities wasn't easily available to people living beyond metropolitan New York. A newsletter might fill in some gaps.

When I approached Anne Waldman, the Project's director at the time, with the idea of publishing a newsletter, she responded with her usual spontaneous energy: "Great! Do it!" Leaving the *Newsletter's* monthly creation entirely to me, she surprised me by offering to scare up an honorarium of \$25 per issue. (Given the Project's meager budget, I had assumed that I'd be doing it pro bono.) With a zeal typical of many of the young people around the Project, I quickly wrote the first issue, designed a simple format, typed the mimeograph stencils, and ran them off, using the mimeo machine in the St. Mark's Church's main office. Collating, stapling, addressing, and mailing the modest two sheets of paper was, compared to the mammoth issues of *The World* magazine being assembled at the Project in those days, a breeze. I felt no editorial pressure nor did I envisage a future for the *Newsletter*, as it was such a modest venture and one that depended on the existence of The Poetry Project, whose funding was always precarious. In other words, I saw the *Newsletter* as potentially useful but no big deal.

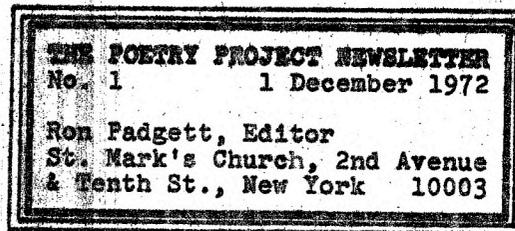
The activities announced in the first issue included news of the upcoming featured readers (Charles Reznikoff, Nicanor Parra, Sonia Sanchez, and Robert Kelley), the Project's free workshops (conducted by Bernadette Mayer, Steve Malmude, and Lorenzo Thomas), and new publications, mostly from small presses, with work by Joe Brainard, Katie Schneeman, David Anderson, Paul Auster, Johnny Stanton, Tom Veitch, Tessie Mitchell, Edwin Denby, Lewis Warsh, Philip Whalen, Anne Waldman, James Schuyler, John Koethe, Kenward Elmslie, and many others, as well as a note on two upcoming shows by George Schneeman, one at the Fischbach Gallery and one at Holly Solomon's 98 Greene Street Loft (with a celebratory reading there by Ted Berrigan, Michael Brownstein, Steve Katz, Maureen Owen, Dick Gallup, Anne Waldman, Lewis Warsh, Larry Fagin, Peter Schjeldahl, and me). The subsequent issues I edited were along the same lines but more densely packed, with a greater variety of information and tone, some of it rather cheeky.

The single best thing I did in the *Newsletter*—I'm going to brag here about something I might not deserve any credit for—was to send out an appeal asking some publisher to take on the work of Charles Reznikoff. I had met him recently at a private dinner where I learned that he had been reduced to getting his work typed up and then printed by a neighborhood shop and that he had to correct the numerous typos by hand. He was around 78 at the time. To me the injustice of his situation was heartbreaking. I've always fantasized that when the *Newsletter's* call went out it was heeded by Tom Clark, who in turn urged Black Sparrow Press to come to the rescue. Which they did. Reznikoff lived until early 1976, long enough to see his *Col-*

lected Poems in production, and eventually Black Sparrow issued his complete works, poetry and prose.

Overall I got a lot of cottage-industry satisfaction from producing each issue, but after bringing out seven of them I felt it was time for someone else to take the reins, partly because I thought the editorial point of view should be freshened up

periodically. Thus in the fall of 1973 Bill MacKay took over and the *Newsletter* began what turned out to be its long evolution, as reflected in its sequence of editors, its upgraded means of production, its larger formats (and its digital existence), its increased readership, and its wider cultural, social, and political focus—an evolution from what could be seen as a feisty neighborhood bulletin to something much larger but forever feisty.



Next month Grove Press, under the Zebra Books imprint, will issue the remarkably wonderful pornographic novel *Two Suspicious Girls* by Katie Mitchell (Katie Schneeman and Tessie Mitchell), a book which Edwin Denby has called "one of the masterpieces of English and American literature."

Fits Editions (c/o Hilton Obenzinger, 3617 23rd St., San Francisco 94110) recently issued a sort of tiny Classic Comic newspaper, *The Attic Sentinel*, whose headline reads, "Prometheus Bound Over." It is the work of David Anderson, a very talented, interesting and almost completely unpublished young prose writer. "Prometheus Bound Over" has funny illustrations by Nancy Senauke. It sells for 10¢ plus 10¢ postage.

Johnny Stanton's Siamese Banana Press, after a brilliant underground publishing history, has apparently bit the dust, or, as Stanton puts it, "It got bruised and deep rot set in." The bruise was financial. In addition to the delightful *Siamese Banana*, the newsletter of the Rhinelander Boys' Club, where Stanton is athletic supervisor, the Press issued the following titles, which are still available for \$1 each from Stanton at 325 E. 89, New York City: *The Banana Book* by Joe Brainard, *The Cigarette Book* by Joe Brainard, *The Friendly Way* by Joe Brainard, *Lord Scum's Hotel* by Don Weingarten, *Mouse Works* by Rebecca Brown, *Under Western Eyes* by David Anderson, and *Self Portrait* by Anne Waldman and Joe Brainard. Now out of print are *Death College* by Tom Veitch and *Nadness in Literature* by Keith Cohen. The final title, *A Little Anthology of Surrealist Poems* (Breton, Eluard, Char, Peret, Tzara, Artaud, Soupault, Desnos, Aragon and Arp), edited and translated by Paul Auster and with a cover by George Schneeman, has just appeared.

Issue #1, December 1972.

Other People's News

Nearly forty people in fifty years have edited the *Poetry Project Newsletter*, most in two-year stints held successively between 1973 and 2019. I asked the living editors, past and present, to tell me about their favorite *PPNL* issue that they didn't edit themselves (some talked about their own editorial work, and that's fascinating too). In their replies, you can hear what enlivened their imaginations while they were heading up the *Newsletter*. I like that a handful of points stand out for editors across the decades, like Frances LeFevre's ingenious issues from 1977-78, or the genre of the *Newsletter* interview. — Kay Gabriel

BRENDA COULTAS

NL Editor 1998-1999

#144, edited by Lynn Crawford (Feb-March 1992): Because it feels good in my hands and pleases my eyes, I love the calendar with a Lori Landes drawing titled *After the Revolution*: woman in a bathing suit reading on a beach under palm trees.

Folded into quarters, heavy enough paper, meant to be posted on your wall like the Poetry Calendar, a broadsheet of all the readings for the month. Poets running to St Mark's bookshop to grab one from the foyer.

And #144 was published a couple of years before I joined the staff. So I think of the poets I just missed meeting, like Joe Brainard who read in the "James Schuyler: Hymn to Life" evening.

GREG MASTERS

NL Editor 1980-1983

When I arrived on the scene in the mid-1970s, I was drawn to Ron Padgett's *Newsletters* as they showed me a community—with notices of personal milestones alongside the lit stuff. That model guided me when I was awarded the reins: to stay aware of the [actual] social network while sharing the work of a loose-based but vibrant collective of poets who were regularly attending readings and taking the workshops at The Poetry Project, and extended far and wide as well to connect with compadres with similar tastes.

ELENI SIKELIANOS

NL Editor 1998-1999

We so didn't know what we were doing or how to do it, but what a gift we got in doing it. We were often in the office till dawn trying to put the thing together, getting it wrong. The December/January 1998/99 issue: Ashbery's short text on Pierre Martory's passing, Lorenzo Thomas's memorial (which we misspelled) for Tom Dent, C.S. Giscombe's "The Shape of the Wolf," Mei-mei's piece, or Isabelle Pelissier's images floating through the calendar... Ah! Remembering how Barbara Guest told me she invented a word in her talk—let's say it was "startling," because I can't remember which word it was—she wasn't

bragging, she was confused, and I was confused because it was a word I thought I knew. There—the possibility for re/inventing an ordinary word, in the flux of language and world, in the hands of a poem denizen. Now I know: of course she invented "startling."

BRENDAN LORBER

NL Editor 2005-2007

How was it to receive the very first *Newsletter's*, with their samizdat-adjacent mimeo confirmation that the poets are up to something? Especially #4 which whips up the 2nd Ave vortex through fresh-faced weirdo advocacy, apartment swaps, gossip, errata, and the *Newsletter's* first article (reprinted in hot dragon fire from The San Francisco Book Review) Tom Veitch's "HOW I WON THE BIG TABLE PRIZE AND GOT MY HEAD PUSHED IN." Subsequent issues, rife with magic mirror portals, owe a lot to #4 and editor Ron Padgett who built the wry frame on which contemporary accounts of love for poetry and among its practitioners are sourced and amplified half a century later.

JOHN RUFO

NL Editor 2019-2021

Reflecting on a Community Meeting that took place in early November 1977, *Poetry Project Newsletter* Editor Frances LeFevre says: "The Project is not doctrinaire or tightly organized, but it is dependent on the hospitality of St. Mark's church, the responsibility of the poets who keep it going, and the money that has to be raised for its maintenance." Not "tightly" organized, but organized nonetheless, however loosely, with hospitality, responsibility, and maintenance conducted by poets who see the work of poetry as prolonging the party (including setting up and breaking down tables/chairs), a sustenance with a metonymic mindfulness. Basically: it's fun, and it's work too, and the work is fun and vice versa, and you get it in the mail. It's this attitude that buoyed me along as *Poetry Project Newsletter* Editor for a while, forty-plus years after Frances LeFevre put together *Newsletter* #50. The way structures of teeming change but echo at once: around the edges of what it means to get together and to make sure we can get together, forty years after today.

VICKI HUDSPITH

NL Editor 1979-1980

Besides being a great friend, Frances LeFevre brought a chatty, well written *Newsletter* loaded with local poetics history. In one of my favorite issues, February 1978, Frances spotlights poet Tony Towle and his work "Poetic Income." I think it gave us all some perspective on the financial rewards (not) of writing poetry. Frances delivered the facts, like readings and important dates, but she also gave us a little bit of an insider's view of what it was like to live and work around The Poetry Project in those years! We all thrived and loved it so!

JOHN COLETTI

NL Editor 2007-2009

#91 (May 1982): The single poem, "Sleep Gummmed Eyes," from, I believe, *A Few Days* by James Schuyler remains among my favorites. That it was the entire front piece for this issue of the *Newsletter* is a delight; it felt as if it was framed and on a wall, as often his works were in collaborations with artists such as Jane Freilicher, and of a certain weight. "So be it." Also, the great complement ending Bernadette Mayer's review, "I wish I'd written these poems," is memorable—and a true feeling when reading work you admire, just as leaving a reading you say to an author, "I'm going to go write now after hearing you"—the highest compliment.

MITCH HIGHFILL

NL Editor 1995-1996

The *Poetry Project Newsletter* serves the New York poetry community as well as the larger community of artists by publishing book reviews, interviews and essays, poems and sometimes gossip. What makes it work are the interactions with the community. When I was editing the *Newsletter*, I most enjoyed getting unsolicited reviews from an intrepid mix of readers. Tom Clark would send in reviews from the West Coast, for example. I came into the office once or twice a week to pick up the mail, always a treat. My favorite issue of the *Newsletter* was the first one I got in the mail, edited by Greg Masters (as I remember) in 1981.

NADA GORDON

NL Editor 2002-2003

I don't actually have a favorite issue, but I reached into the archives and selected Issue #28, edited by Ted Greenwald. I think it's the earliest issue on the website. I am enamored of this sentence from Alan Davies's review of Anne Waldman's *Fast-Speaking Woman*: "The

poems aren't optimistic, but their stubborn insistence is a biological push to a conclusion of some sort, from which point another poem can be sung." It's insightful really, since poems, categorically speaking, are odd compulsions, or perhaps records of compulsions, and this text of Waldman's may be particularly so, as Davies points out.

LISA JARNOT

NL Editor 1996-1998

April/May 1995, editor Gillian McCain: Gillian's regular gossip column "Dirt" was always fun and all the issues she edited were sharp and sexy. This one was subtitled "to the film industry in crisis" and featured some very cool articles on the intersections of film and poetry.

MARCELLA DURAND

NL Editor 2003-2005

I loved reading Gillian McCain's gossip column, "Dirt," in the *Poetry Project Newsletter* in the 1990s. I was kind of lost/searching/shy as a poet back then and even though I didn't know most of the writers mentioned, those bits of information, ranging from books published, people seen, babies born, felt the beginnings of a welcome to the Project. I think "Dirt" gave me the courage to sign up for what turned out to be a poetry- and life-changing workshop with John Yau, and to start attending the readings of those writers who seemed to lead such compelling lives.

JEROME SALA

NL Editor 1990-1991

I love the "Newsletter interview." Two examples: in the December 2007 issue (ed. John Coletti), Arlo Quint interviews the late Ted Greenwald. Greenwald shares not only how he writes, but, drawing on Project history, how a literary scene works. Then there's Feb/March 2006, which features part 2 of an interview editor Brendan Lorber did with Noam Chomsky. We learn about cross-cultural elements embedded into our minds and thought. Both are "scoops" you couldn't find anywhere else. This remarkable range exemplifies the *Newsletter's* ability to deliver not just the poetry news but to dive into exciting controversies and ideas.

GILLIAN MCCAIN

NL Editor 1994-1995

When I first moved to NYC in 1987, I discovered an intriguing-looking book called *Homage to Frank O'Hara*, which led me to The Poetry Project. I immediately became a mem-

ber, and eventually gathered up the nerve to submit some poems to the *Poetry Project Newsletter*.

I remember exactly where I was standing when I started skimming the pages of the February/March 1990 issue, and discovered, on page six, a poem called “Biography.” Wait, Tony Towle—the Tony Towle—Frank O’Hara’s close friend—chose a poem of mine? I had arrived!

Then, from 1994-95, I was given the honor of editing the *Newsletter*, and really arrived! Kudos to all former, present and future editors of this amazing publication!

MORGAN VÕ

NL Editor 2021–Present

I would point to two reviews from early *Newsletters* that I love: one is Alice Notley’s extended take on Edwin Denby’s *Collected Poems*, from issue #37, in which her entanglement with Denby’s writing is worked through in psychically wild, blooming somatic detail; the other is Lorenzo Thomas’s significantly more brief but enthusiastic, casual, sly review of *The Gate of Darkness* by Tsi-An Hsia, from issue #29. Each conveys the sense that the authors speak into a space where they know people. For me, that’s the fundamental beauty of the newsletter form.

KAY GABRIEL

NL Editor 2019–Present

Tim Dlugos’s period editing the *Newsletter* (1983-1985) is full of controversy, and it provoked some deliciously stern responses. That tells me the essays he was editing were felt to have real stakes, as when Dlugos (#112) offered ambivalent reflections on Guatemalan poet Otto René Castillo’s political poetry and Castillo’s translator responded with righteous anger, probably justified (#115). Or when Dennis Cooper uplifted some Los Angeles poets he admired (also #112), a poet who felt himself excluded accused Cooper (#114) of simply promoting his friends, and Cooper responded, more or less, by arguing that poets make the interventions that we do because we want to reach beyond our own small aesthetic factions to have effects at greater scale. The issues are plenty juicy besides, but I think I most admire Dlugos for publishing essays about poetry that people believed were worth fighting about.

TED DODSON

NL Editor 2013–2015

I have a soft spot for Corina Copp’s editorship, which were the first issues I was ever greeted with at the PP, though my favorite issue was one I remember getting that electric feeling from when I found it in a stack up in the church office while doing research before I came on as editor. It was issue #58 from October 1978, edited by Vicki Hudspith, which begins with an announcement of the infamous church fire of that July, a hopeful report on repairs and ongoing readings and workshops and anti-nuclear actions (including Allen Ginsberg’s, Peter Orlovsky’s, and Anne Waldman’s upcoming trial dates) and ends with John Yau’s image of the parallel vantages of a past and present self, the writing of the past and the object of the poem.

CORINA COPP

NL Editor 2009–2011

There’s an exchange I’ve never forgotten from the interview Greg Fuchs did with Eileen Myles for one of John Coletti’s issues, #219, April–June 2009. “GF: Do you have any advice for writers?” “EM: Yeah, have an interesting life.” This conversation is about class, because everything is; I remember where I was sitting in the office. “EM: I know one should do this towering, phallic thing in their career, but I like having a wide, dilettantish, female career [...] Poetry’s like the root, like a cutting.”

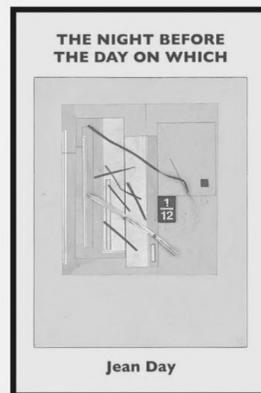
Eileen used to bring cut yellow flowers to readings and hand them out one by one. Do you still do this, Eileen?

I’d also point to an essay I solicited from Sean Bonney about the UK poet Anna Mendelssohn (aka Grace Lake), #226, Feb–Mar 2011. This was really important for me to do, and I was so grateful for his labor; we also got to speak with her daughter, who gave us the photo of Anna. Sean really understood Mendelssohn as a poet of refusal. In Sean’s words, “The poem’s content, as an interrupting voice, comes from ... convulsion, where the poem turns inside out, where the statement emerges directly from the rubble of poetic form, or indeed from institutionalized avant-garde politesse. The untruths that the language carries are pounded into garbage, are twisted out of shape, until the perpetrators of those untruths can no longer enter the language, and so that not new forms, but new statements can emerge. Or, as Mendelssohn puts it beautifully: ‘a poem of objects that live by magic.’”

ROOF BOOKS

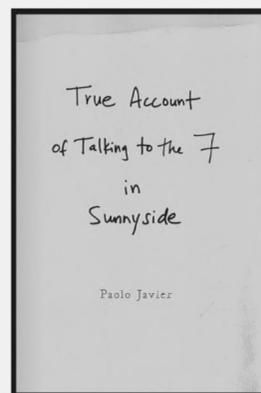
the best in language since 1976

Announcing our fall titles:



The Night Before the Day on Which
by Jean Day

“A road trip through an America gone haywire. Day nails the zeitgeist in surprising ways again and again—no easy feat! Even in dystopia there is the thrill of recognition.”
—Rae Armantrout



True Account of Talking to the 7 in Sunnyside
by Paolo Javier

“Paolo Javier’s poems are magic carpets of extravagant textures (visual and verbal), combining an engagement with the social politics of the local with a commitment to aesthetic freedom that exultantly borders on abandon.”
—Charles Bernstein



Mine Eclogue
by Jacob Kahn

“I can’t think of another book in which the pastoral has been so knowledgeably upbraided and reanimated. That it is also a blast to read is a testament to Kahn’s embodied musicality, deft touch, arresting candor, and infectious will to community.”
—Brian Blanchfield



Segue Reading Series
Saturdays, 5pm
at Artists Space, NYC
& livestreaming

fall curators:
Nightboat Books
winter curators:
James Sherry &
Lonely Christopher

order Roof Books
from SPD.org!

seguefoundation.com
roofbooks.com

Betsy Fagin

NL Editor 2015-2017

swallowed wrong

Swallowed anything to plead
on behalf of ensured success.
They saw us coming,

with our generous donations
to supplement a lack of love
and never traveling enough.

Didn't adequately explain
how money works to navigate
from the city's hindsight

to an upstate river town
with space to roam. Lost in regret,
distant reason doing meaningful

time, showered in protection
causing known and unknown harms.
Must remember to move the car

while I'm here, find a Monday spot,
stare into the distance of this life.
I don't know if I feel free

under surveillance. I swallowed
what was pent up in me,
about to explode: the new time

an arrow pulled back, extreme
tension, but no clear direction,
no aim at all.

I should not be here. I should have
just stayed a country boy.

Microchipped, I've become a tracking device—
come to find out location information is pretty
important after all. Inner door gets released, on purpose

or by accident— jettisoned into the unknown: weightless,
without direction, just floating. Maybe I can breathe,
maybe I cannot. Maybe intoxicating— these dancing skills

are top notch. Maybe this groundlessness, these feet on fire
the first time ever really feeling alive. Mesmerized—
repeated exposure to danger builds a kind of confidence

that may soon unleash devastation. Gathering wild roses,
preserving summer fruits and flowers against the coming cold,
dark. Half red, half black— defiant.

You don't like it?
Say something.
Say it to my face.

Audience having their own side-conversations,
busy on phones, destroying their highest qualities—
and for what? Replacement cruelty, having fought

so hard, wanting everyone to fight, wanting everyone
to suffer if it means they'll soften to possibility— later,
tenderized. Awakening to fact that I'm sending flowers

right now— elixirs, hurling keys over the gates, digging
tunnels. Wrapped in blankets against the cold, relying
on inner warmth. Time split long ago— fractured

into lifetimes and moments. Into a witch hat, wolf's milk
path leading just beyond the range of perception.
Awareness flowering slowly of its own accord.

No longer condemned to carry sword and shield
along the service road to where satellite parking was.
Zooming in is one more good reason to live in a digital world.

sleepwalking

Speaking from the heart makes you one of us,
already soaked through, already broken.
Land already wasted, strewn with inevitable losses—

Belaboring sound with meaning denies a deeper rest
through cycles of flood and drought, plenty and lack.
Waves postponed, not cancelled.

Staying lost in underwater realms or deep space, through
future or past, through all elements and time itself,
all dimensions right here for total disorientation—

Be ready for anything: attack, deception, pleasant
surprises, kindnesses, gifts, betrayal, abandonment.
Find solace slipping into something more comfortable.

me, I'd jump

Impossible leaves thinning
the birdy oak is a riot of redstarts.

Do belonging, care and welcome require
accepting structures and rules of the group?

Generations of dead, no one to talk to, no
blending in now, of all times. Destruction sewn

right into the design. Collapsing or torn down,
falling from internal corruption. Me, I'd jump clear

up to the sky. One jump escape me forever, never
come back down to eat whatever the grocery store sells,

what everyone's always done. Social death then real death.
Then rebirth like *oh hey, I haven't seen you for awhile, how you been?*

Stuck in a train car between stations with someone smoking cigarettes.
All of life used to be like that. Dark blue cloud against a pale blue sky.

Monarch died sooner than predicted— an interesting turn
of events. It's hard to make sense of the data, even to follow it.

Ted Dodson

NL Editor 2013-2015

from 'Poem beginning with a phrase from Robert Glück
on the occasion of my 37th birthday'

"I always wanted to be a great husband and wife, and a child too..."
all of these things, at once, anchored by a largesse of self that has capacity
to transform the feelings another part of me considers true enough.
We're all these pieces patterning together, the catalyzing self, the conscience, and the human
object, which is sometimes more of a wall against which only the tackiest things adhere.
I saw this headline trending: "I left my husband for the most hated man in America."
That really could be anybody. It's a good idea to leave your husband, but not for anyone in particular
unless that new husband is yourself. Can't say that I want to be a great most hated man in America.

It's my birthday, so I'd like to write something beautiful, like how Bob writes about fucking (sexual politics) and food
(also sexual politics), so sumptuous and precise. Like, when he describes pissing in Brian's mouth
and says he can't feel the difference between cock, urine, and Brian, that it's all a sort of endemic pressure
radiating outward, that he envies "the clarity of [Brian's] position." Something like that,
but I feel suspended in the ugly air of self-pronouncement and reflection. Brandon
(happy birthday, Brandon!) texts me that he's making panzanella and a flat, stamp-like pasta
(like a round, Roman stamp smaller than a coaster but larger than a silver dollar) called corzetti
paired with braised morels and maitakes. I ask him about his ideal end to a birthday
poem. He says he ends his with a rhyming couplet invoking the specific age he's turning.

Thirty-seven years wound within this line,
but ending with a couplet feels like a double-bind.

I question if it's true
that art is most alive when it is at its most artificial, that the closer to our reality's end
we can write that the virtual world of art and its fabrications saturates with increasing vibrancy
our experience of things until that experience becomes a line infinitely thinning, minimizing
into the window of pure creation. It is a continuation of what we know of ourselves, however indistinguishable
from its new solution. Today, which is a few months later than when I started this poem, it's the first chilly morning of fall.
Marie and I left the windows open last night, and our apartment is full, which isn't hard to do, with the scent
of leaves first shedding their green, minuscule matter gathered in the cold rasp
traveling through our window screen. Outside, no difference is born to the eye yet,
though the unweaving of color happens first without anyone seeing it, fibers collecting in eddies then
turning gently under the skin of passersby still shaded overhead as they too are quietly dissolving
and recombining, how our being continually replaces itself fold by fold (the measure of a moment), every living thing a heaven
comprised of all that has passed through many other things before and has now become entangled in a sheer stroke
of luck (whatever that is), as lucky as anything is to be.

generation of feeling

these growing pains though
this good will hunting
we
fallen twigs
look like bones
waiting to be lit

i am trying to tell you something about how
rearranging words
rearranges the universe

the days is numbered

startling semiannual saccharine sensitivity to sentencing in a season of severing and severances
to so called civil servants of streachery and separation i sense a series of spectators or
investigators wont save us like stolen generators nothing speculative about spectacles we beasts
spit and sputter spits and sputters splitting sutures of your occipital up your occidental
skeptical of this spectacular softness of this plexus flex i choose the best for myself swearing
the swivel of the stank of spangled smear with speared wet spirit spent to coalesce in this
nonsense that's the thing about your language is i make it sound so good it doesnt have to make
sense they is all what you is where you from someone tell these oxymorons we is dual citizens
former resident aliensss and we have only just begun counting down this society's days with the
efficiency of arabic numerals

Greg Masters

NL Editor 1980-1983

from "In the Days of Mimeo"

Being as we were always there
attending readings, setting up
and putting away the folding
chairs, Gary and I fell into
jobs at The Poetry Project
assisting in the office with

each of us becoming masters
of the Gestetner 420
mimeograph apparatus.
To produce a publication
in those pre-computer days, we
typed stencils on an IBM

Selectric, with which you could swap
a font ball to gain italic—
quite the advancement at the time
and quite necessary for a
publication containing a
plethora of fresh book titles.

This people's technology had
been used for decades in classrooms
to run off lessons and quizzes—
with the smell of the ink
on new pages wafting into
the nostrils of students perhaps

not so eager for instruction—
but the aroma altering
perception, enflaming senses.
This printing process began with
cutting a stencil, the stroke of
the typewriter keys displacing

the stencil's coating thus making
the sheet permeable to ink.
One missed keystroke meant retyping
an entire stencil so the
labor often stretched late into
the night alone in the still church.

Once a page was typed and the pad
was slathered with ink, the nine-holed
stencil was fastened into place
around the drum of the device.
Reams of paper were then pulled through
the electric-charged rotating

assembly, embraced against the
spinning stencil and kissed with an
impression before being pushed
off into a containment bin—
complete, ready for gathering
with previous printed pages.

Whether it was *The Poetry
Project Newsletter*—a monthly
trade journal carrying alerts
of upcoming readings, reviews
of new poetry books, essays,
poems, art and reports on poets'

activities (distributed
to a mailing list of around
2,000-plus recipients)—
or any number of dozens
of other poet-run presses,
friends gathered around a table

and began the collation dance—
as much a social occasion
as functional necessity—
circling en masse to combine the
individual sheets into
editions of a few hundred

to be passed around to friends,
the admired, and prospective fans.
Looking back, it sort of felt like
the Matisse painting *Dance (1)* at
MoMA, but a downtown version
with cheap beer and drabber colors.

Page size was more often than not
eight-and-a-half by eleven
or eight-and-a-half by fourteen—
20-pound letter- or legal-
sized paper used for the contents
while 80-pound cover stock

wrapped the new minted offering.
A book of, say, 50 pages
was fastened on its left side with
two or three staples (three-quarter
inch), pounded into the book's edge
with a heavy-duty stapler.

Once the *Newsletter* was run off
the mimeo, collated and
stapled, it was time to affix
the mailing labels, a list of
more than 2,000 subscribers
I labored to keep up to date.

Each month's mailing then had to
be bundled according to ZIP
Code in order to prepare for
delivery at bulk-mail rates
(with Permit Number 605).
Each rubber-banded packet was

emblazoned with a colored dot
to identify the proper
geographic coordinate.
The prepared batches were loaded
into duffel bags supplied by
the postal service and shlepped in

a cab to the Old Chelsea Post
Office on West 18th Street, where
an ogre at the loading dock
would find something amiss in the
way the mailing was sorted, some
minor infraction enough to

unleash his pronounced objection.
No Christmas card for that guy, I
declare, 40 years after the
unpleasantness and test of my
fortitude and ability
to persevere in the real world.

THE POETRY PROJECT NEWSLETTER
No. 2 1 January 1972

Ron Padgett, Editor
St. Mark's Church, 2nd Avenue
& Tenth St., New York 10003

Charles Reznikoff's reading at the Church on December 6 brought to mind a perennial question: why doesn't a large publisher issue the work of this marvelous septuagenarian? It is true that New Directions, in conjunction with San Francisco Review (that is, George Oppen's sister June Oppen), bless them, brought out Reznikoff's *By the Waters of Manhattan* in 1962 and *Testimony* in 1965, but it is even more true that these books represent but a fraction of his work, a work that deserves a larger public. Here is one of the best American poets of the twentieth century going almost unpublished.

"*Approximate Man*" and *Other Writings* by Tristan Tzara has been translated and introduced by Mary Ann Caws and published by Wayne. This first large (320 pp.) collection of Tzara's work in English bops onto the market at \$11.95.

Larry Fagin's *Adventures in Poetry* announces that the following books remain in print: *Catting* by Steve Malmude, \$1.50. *A Sun Cab* by James Schuyler, \$2. *City Junket*, a play by Kenward Elmslie, \$2. *Chrononhotonthologos*, an 18th-century mock epic play by Henry Carey, \$1.50. *The So* by Clark Coolidge, \$2.

Just published are *Belgrade, November 19, 1963* by Frank O'Hara and *Suite v* by Clark Coolidge, \$1 each.

Adventures in Poetry books slated for Winter 1972-1973 are a *Song and a Diary for A* by Richard Elliott, *The Oriental Palace* by Joseph White, *The Flying Glove* by Mary Ferrari, *The Funny Place* by Richard Snow, *The Khaki* by Glen Baxter, and *Adventures in Poetry 10, the Anonymous Issue*.

Adventures in Poetry, Larry Fagin, Apt. 18, 437 East 12 Street, New York City 10009.

English painter and poet Glen Baxter is currently exhibiting paintings in a group show called "Artichokes, Part II" at the Greenwich Theatre in Greenwich, England.

THE POETRY PROJECT NEWSLETTER

October 1983

#100

75¢

(Free at The Poetry Project)

TED BERRIGAN 1934 - 1983

Some Thoughts on Ted Berrigan & His Work

The delight of Ted Berrigan's presence—in the poetry, where I first encountered it, and in the life, stretches of which I was privileged to share—generates a unique double vision: one, a down-to-earth, Hank Williams, Janis Joplin, Gordon Lightfoot sense of the surrounding space and times, and, two, the shared realm of Ezra Pound (“a witness”), William Carlos Williams, Frank O’Hara, Charles Olson, and on and on—combined with a constant awareness of what has gone before, is still going on, and is about to happen in either world—a world that was, is, “either and both” that way, inseparable: where we live. Ted is an incredibly sensitive and intricate-minded experimenter with and explorer of both language and speech, one who regards the poet’s task as continuous attention to *both* inspiration *and* invention.

Ted Berrigan’s work displays an incomparable eye-ear perspicuity for the ludicrous, be it social, erotic, political. That, coupled with an absolute refusal to construct any Yeatsian/Olsonian “system” (while he was warmly related to those two masters, in his heart’s ear), makes him a powerful and irreplaceable figure among our (his) contemporaries. The man wrote his own program, in each and every poem or poem sequence, and thus the structures created will tantalize, defy, and delight explicators to come, for a long time, if not for ever.

There are, thank ye gods, poets who escape classification in terms of “isms”: Guillaume Apollinaire, Basil Bunting, Mina Loy, Cesar Vallejo spring to mind, and Ted Berrigan is most certainly of their company. They are “mavericks”, working assiduously *alongside* what the prevalent conventions may be, responding to and reflecting them, at times, reacting against and refracting them at others, always pursuing a vision that is their own and is not dependent on group approval, not to be seen or heard through filters of fashion or social charm. The seeming harshness of their works is always redeemed by their honesty, which is what makes them last, in life and death, beyond their “polite” contemporaries—which is not to say that their lives and works did not manifest great manners and true *politesse*: as Ted Berrigan’s certainly did, and do.

Ted Berrigan knew how to ride through the bends without prettifying them, and I suppose that is why the literary establishment has thought to have such difficulty with his work. They’ll come around, as they did in the case of Apollinaire—and still, they’ll go on skulking in the shrubbery, as they are wont to. But cheers to them, too.

hot sunny baltimore day,
walking through the park,
holding her hand, touching her waist.
checking out the zoo,
in & out the gates.
sun sets. oh, ted, we miss you,
whistling in the dark.

—Anselm Hollo, 8 August 1983



© LaVerne Harrell Clark

FOR TED BERRIGAN

After, size of place
you’d filled
in suddenly emptied
world all too apparent

and as if New England
shrank, grew physically
smaller like Connecticut,
Vermont—all the little

things otherwise unattended
so made real by you,
things to do today,
left empty, waiting

sadly for no one
will come again now.
It’s all moved inside,
all that dear world

in mind for forever,
as long as one walks
and talks here,
thinking of you.

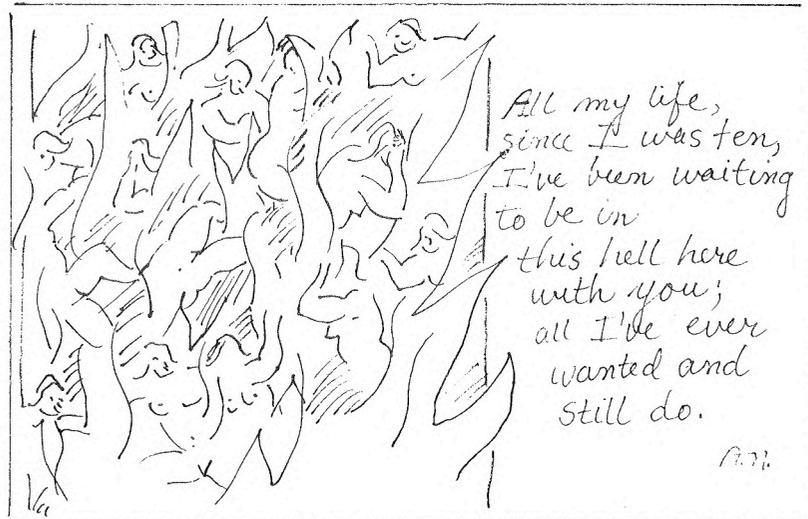
—Robert Creeley

THE POETRY PROJECT NEWSLETTER

October 1982

#92

75c



Alice Notley/George Schneeman

WEDNESDAY READINGS: at 8 PM, suggested contribution \$3. *Hosted by Bernadette Mayer & Bob Holman:* October 13 - Ted Berrigan & Ron Padgett. October 20 - Terry Garthwaite, Bobbie Louise Hawkins, Rosalie Sorrels (these 3 have a new record "Live at the Great American Music Hall" on Flying Fish Records - c/o Hawkins, Box 344 Bolinas CA 94924 \$8). October 27 - June Jordan & Diane Burns.

MONDAY READING & PERFORMANCE SERIES: at 8 PM, suggested contribution \$1. *Hosted by Rochelle Kraut:* October 11 - Jack Skelley & David Trinidad. October 18 - Frank Rubino & Elio Schneeman. October 25 - Lenny Goldstein & Don Yorty.

FREE WRITING WORKSHOP on Tuesdays at 8 PM with John Godfrey (beginning October 12). John Godfrey's new book is *Dabble: Poems 1966-1980* from Full Court Press. He says about the workshop: "We will discuss the influence of poets born 1875 to 1900. To begin with anyway."

Top left: Issue #92 (Oct 1982), art by Alice Notley and George Schneeman. *Bottom left:* Issue #113 (Apr 1985), photo by Robert Mapplethorpe. *Bottom right:* Issue #134 (Oct/Nov 1989), art by Rochelle Kraut.

Opposite: Issue #100 (Oct 1983), photo by LaVerne Harrell Clark.

POETRY PROJECT

The Newsletter of The Poetry Project at St. Mark's Church in-the-Bowery
Issue 113, April 1985 \$1.00



Kathy Acker

Female Trouble:
NEW WORK BY ACKER AND PEACOCK
by Eileen Myles

ON BEING AN EXPERT
by Robert Glück

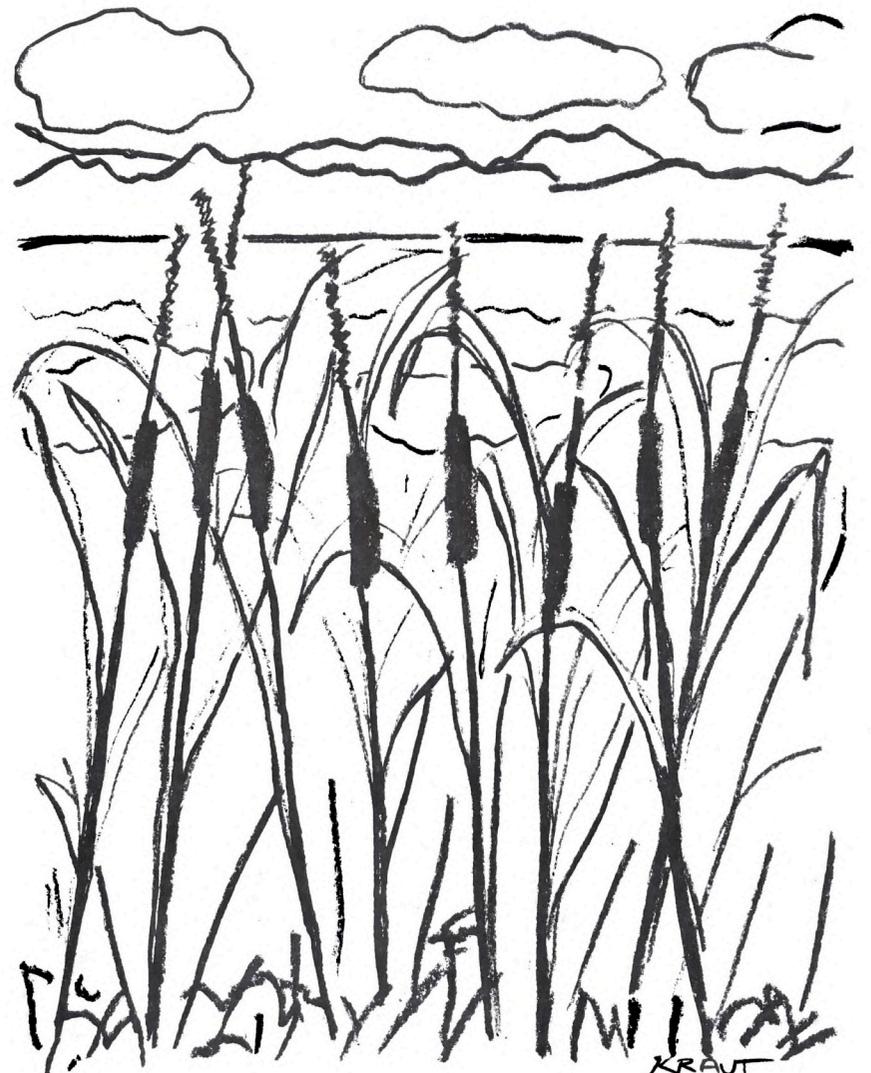
**MICHAEL SCHOLNICK ON
THE PROPER INTRODUCTION**

THE NEW SMALL PRESSES OF PARIS

AND: BRIAN LEMNA ON BOBBIE LOUISE HAWKINS,
BARRY SCHWABSKY ON CARTER RATCLIFF,
AND POEMS! NEWS! ANNOUNCEMENTS!

THE POETRY PROJECT

The Newsletter of The Poetry Project Ltd, at St. Mark's Church in-the-Bowery #134 October/November 1989



THE POETRY PROJECT

#235

NEWSLETTER

Cecilia Vicuña & Rodrigo Toscano in Conversation

New Poetry by Mel Nichols | A Palinode by Nathaniel Otting

Remembering Jayne Cortez | Reviews & More



April/May 2013



poetryproject.org

poetry project

NEWSLETTER DECEMBER/JANUARY 1998/9 ISSUE #172 \$5

WHAT'S INSIDE

In Memoriam: Tom Dent
by Lorenzo Thomas

A Talk by Barbara Guest

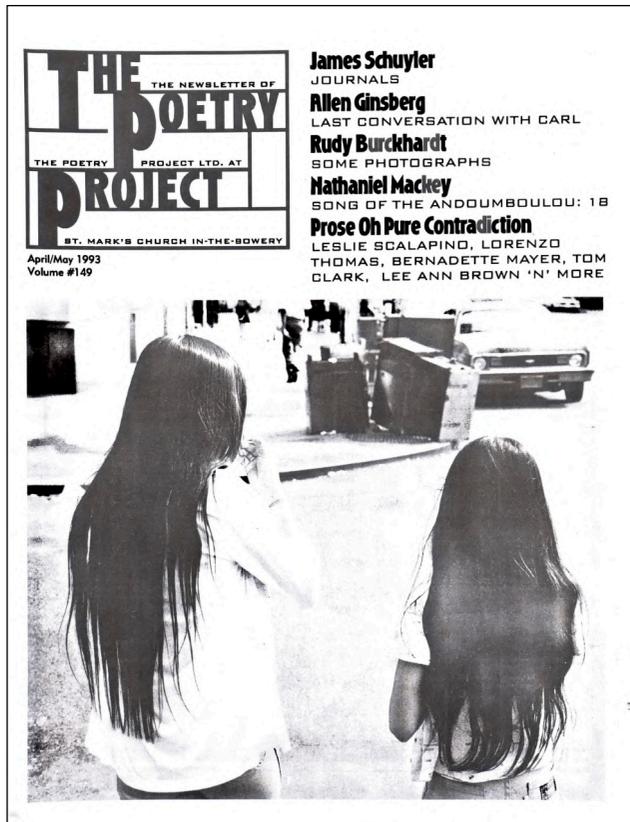
1998 Symposium:
Mei-mei Berssenbrugge
C.S. Giscombe
Sharon Mesmer
Tim Davis

REVIEWED

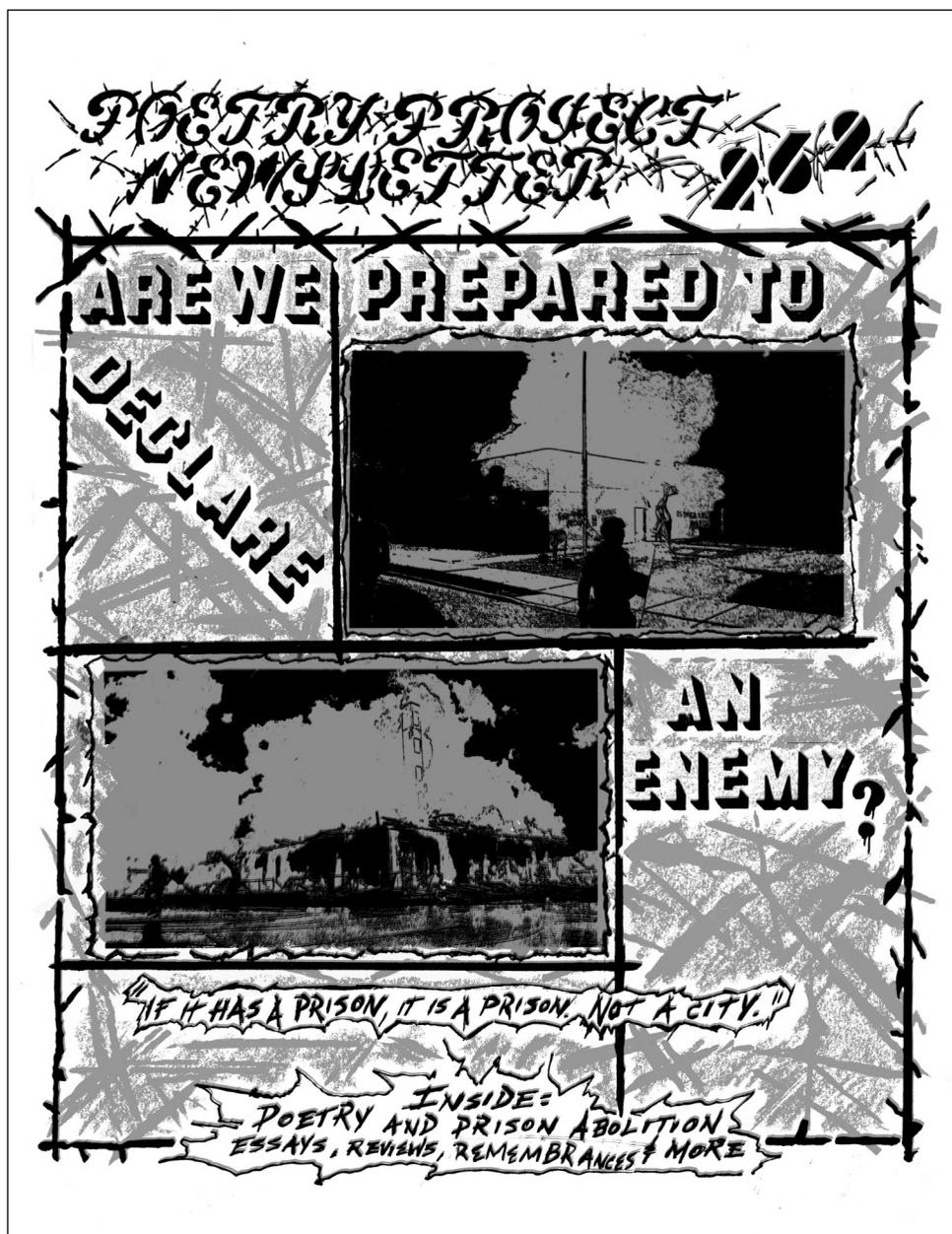
Anne-Marie Albiach
Mary Butts
Moving Borders
Ed Foster
Zhang Er
(New) American Poets
Tom Carey
Bill Luoma
Close Listening

POETRY

Barbara Guest



THE POETRY PROJECT
 DECEMBER 2015 / JANUARY 2016 ISSUE #245



Top left: Issue #149 (Apr/May 1993), photo by Rudy Burckhardt. *Bottom left:* Issue #262 (Fall 2020), art by Shiva Addanki. *Top right:* Issue #245 (Dec/Jan, 2015/2016), "I was crime...I will be poetry" (Lagoa, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil), photo by Kaia Sand

Opposite left: Issue #172 (Dec/Jan, 1998/1999), art by Isabelle Pelissier. *Opposite right:* Issue #235 (Apr/May 2013), art by Elisabeth Kley.

POETRY PROJECT



Martha George Anderson - Carol Brown

Thomas Young as Elijah and Ben Holt as Malcolm in the New York City Opera production of "X".

The recent premiere of the opera *X: The Life & Times Of Malcolm X* was a historic and joyous occasion. Despite its controversial nature, Beverly Sills and City Opera chose to produce a piece that is contemporary, American, black, and politically relevant. In an age dominated by the 3 R's: Regression, Racism, and Reagan, audiences in New York were nevertheless treated to a rare event within the bastion of white, highbrow culture — an opera that was not safe and sound. "X" is not a museum piece, written for fatcats. The stark, compelling libretto was written by poet Thulani Davis, a Board Member at the Poetry Project; the hypnotic, stirring music was composed by her cousin, *wunderkind* Anthony Davis. "X" traces the life of Malcolm Little from his turbulent childhood in Lansing, Michigan to his coming of age in a Boston jail. His conversion to Elijah Muhammad's Black Muslim movement leads to his revelatory journey to Mecca and ends with his tragic assassination at the Audubon Ballroom in Harlem, 1965. It is fitting that excerpts from this important new work begin this latest issue of the Poetry Project Newsletter. Issue #124 is filled with other holiday treats: new poems by Victor Hernandez Cruz, Bob Holman, Marilyn Hacker and Richard Elman. Plus, Jane Miller's astute salute to a 20th century Venus, Rita Spalcher's short, sexy fable, Karen Levy's photos and Richard Powell's eerie, serpentine headlines. There are also reviews of remarkable and provocative books, especially Lisa Kennedy's look at Al's brilliant, disturbing new collection of poems, *Sin*. Our regulars are back: MAMA DOG, PINK EYE ON, and our columnist JOSE, who is confronted with David Byrne's much hyped *True Stories*. Life imitates art. Thanks to our readers for the enthusiastic response to our first issue, #123. Keep those cards and letters coming!

Jessica Hagedorn
Editor

excerpt from the opera *X, The Life & Times of Malcolm X* Thulani Davis

ACT II
Scene I

1946-48. Malcolm broods angrily in jail, left alone by the others. Malcolm's brother Reginald comes to visit him and teach him about Elijah, the Messenger of Allah. Malcolm doubts everything Reginald says. Gradually he comes to a point of initial acceptance of this new idea. Reginald leaves Malcolm in jail as Elijah's voice is heard off-stage. Malcolm spends time studying the Holy Koran and books on black history. He has to begin wearing glasses because of his habit of reading in poor light late at night. He becomes a serious and more hopeful man. Malcolm X is born.

1952. The jail recedes as Malcolm hears, and eventually sees, Elijah. It is as though the word removed the bars. They come face to face. Elijah embraces Malcolm like a son and tells him he has much to learn. He tells him to obey the Law and to spread Allah's word. Malcolm is sent to start temples in the eastern states.

Prisoners

: In the devil's grip:
: the black men mourn:
: the slaver's whip:
: Black men, wake:
: from your living graves:
: before it's too late:

[Reginald comes to visit Malcolm. They sit opposite one another in the day room.]

Reginald

It has been so long.

Malcolm

Longer than you can know.
You don't count time where I've been.

Reginald

You got my letter?
Read what I said?

Malcolm

I just can't understand.
What's the game?

Reginald

I've changed.
I've found a new way.
I'm clean,
starting out new.
I met a man
who showed me the truth.

Malcolm

You talk in riddles
about truth and a man.
Don't try and kid me
when I need a plan.
They're riding me hard,
trying to n.a.k.e me break.
They're ready to nail me
if I make one mistake.

Prisoners

If he makes one mis'take

Prisoners

KEY: repeat marks :: indicate repetitions of a passage.

Malcolm
I thought you had a way.

Reginald

Have you ever met a man
who knows all things?

Malcolm [Incredulous]

No, brother.

Reginald

He knows who you are,
where you've been.
He knows your future.

Malcolm

I can't understand

Reginald

Your past was stolen,
taken from you,
your children tortured,
your women taken too.
Black is your skin,
the fate that's in your hands.

Malcolm

Brother, I know no such man.
Is he a god?
I can't understand.

Prisoners

I can't understand.

Reginald

Black is your skin —

Malcolm

I can't understand

Reginald

Who once was king —

Malcolm

Is he a god?

Reginald

You're now a slave

Malcolm

I don't understand
what you say

Reginald

Listen to me
the devil's got you in jail.
The white man left you
judged on a scale.
This man taught me things —
A nation we are,
all of us.

Prisoners

A nation we see.

Malcolm

God does not know me,
the hustlers or players.

On the fast track I see
only winners or losers.

Reginald

This man taught me things

Malcolm

God knows the good ones —
He betrays them.
We're out there alone;
God does not know me.

Reginald

But God is a man
His name is Allah.

Malcolm

We're out there alone.

Reginald

He came to this land.

Malcolm

God does not know me.

Reginald

He told Elijah.

Malcolm

We're out there alone.

Reginald

He told a black man

Malcolm

Who is Elijah?

Reginald

His own divine plan.

Malcolm

How can God be man?
Allah.
What a strange sound.

Men [Chorus]

: Allahu-Akbar:

Reginald

Elijah is the Messenger,
the Messenger of Allah.

Malcolm

Allah. Allah.

Reginald

Say His name again and again.
The rest will come in time.
To say His name is to praise Him. [Exits.]

Malcolm

Allah.
What does it mean
to say His name?

All [Chorus]

ALLAH!

Malcolm

Does He know I steal,
lie and take dope?

All

Allah. Allah.

Malcolm

To say His name
is to praise Him.
Soon I will ask Him
how empty it feels
to be God of an empty man
like me.

Elijah [Slowly appears in the back light]

You are not empty

Chorus

Malcolm!

Continued P. 9 ▶

ESSAY

No Cop City, Yes Real Life

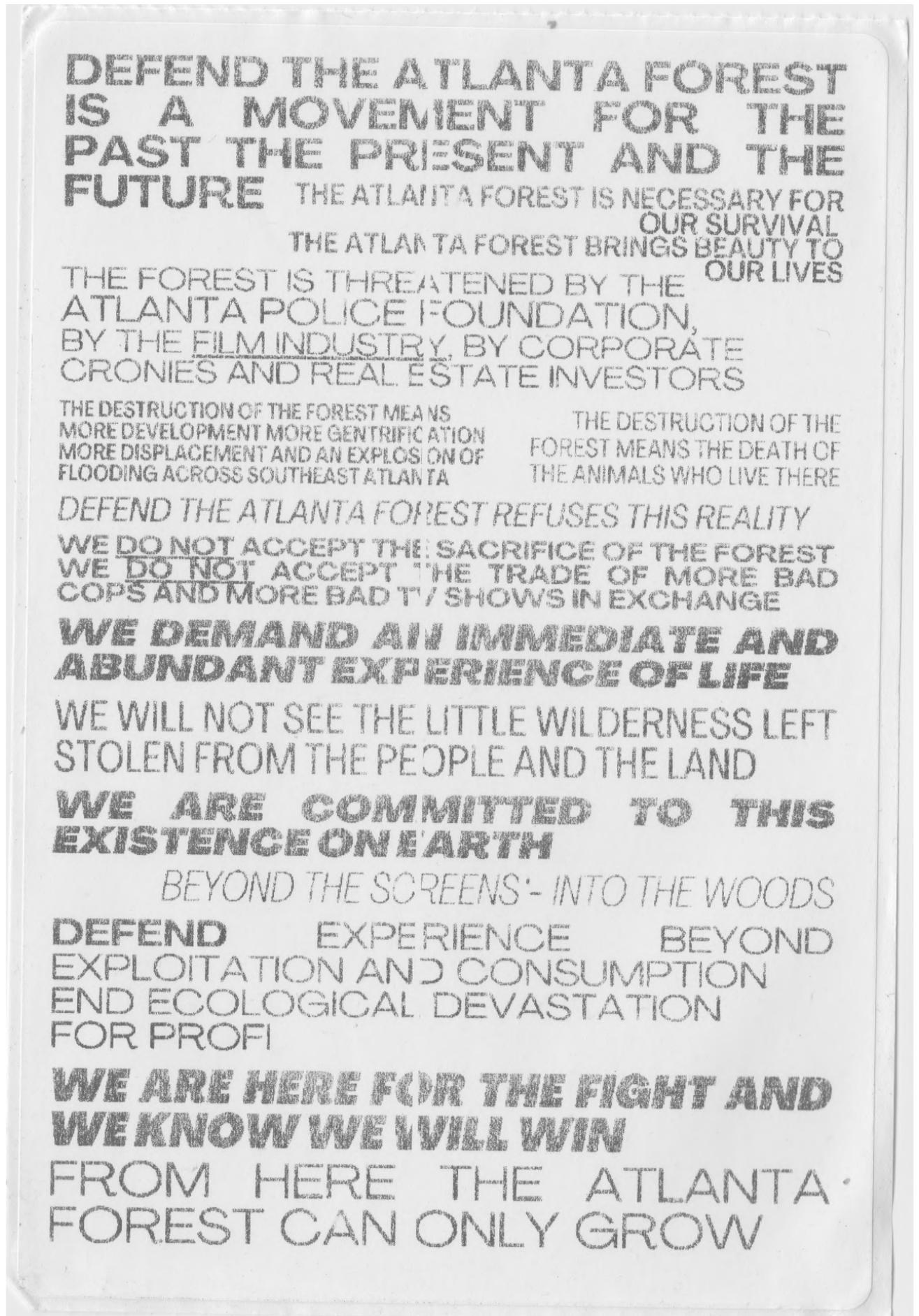
an anonymous forest defender

The very things that make our lives tenable are being stolen from us. This is nothing new. Water, food, air, public space, connection and care: it's all more and more privatized, sold only to those who can afford to pay, and guarded from those who cannot by various agents of the state. We state the obvious when we point out that current trends of skyrocketing rents, escalating campaigns against the houseless in every major city, and the slow replacement of real urban life with a surveilled, digital veneer, are all linked to the mounting wreckage of capitalist ecocide. Our resistance to this death cult, then, might also be as relentlessly interconnected—only more slippery, endlessly responsive, able to dodge security cameras and outraged yuppies alike—the exhortation at the riot to “be like water.”

Enter the movement to Defend the Atlanta Forest, alternately referred to as “Stop Cop City” or “DTF.” The forest in question, known as Weelaunee, is located on ancestral Muscogee land. One of the largest urban green spaces in the country at almost 400 acres, and located in a historically Black neighborhood, this environment is critical to Atlanta’s greater climate resiliency—among other things, it is one of the last breeding grounds for amphibians in the area. Both the Atlanta Police Foundation and Blackhall Studios have plans to decimate this ecosystem, with the former planning a \$90 million cop training facility, and the latter endeavoring to build “the largest sound-stage complex on Earth” on the remainder of the forest. Lest this interweaving of utter disrespect for the natural world, the continued brutalization of Black and Brown communities by an increasingly militarized police force, and rampant film-industry-fueled gentrification feel a little too on-the-nose for you, you might be unsurprised to learn that the Weelaunee Forest also houses the remains of the Old Atlanta Prison Farm, a forced-labor camp that dates back to the mid-20th century.

As both projects were given the go-ahead by DeKalb county officials despite vast public outcry, activists and community members have been occupying the Weelaunee Forest for almost a year now. Embracing a range of viewpoints and experiences along with a diversity of tactics, this occupation has been sustained by like-minded individuals from around the world, with solidarity demonstrations popping up across the country. In the forest itself, old-school ecodefense strategies like tree sits exist alongside other forms of militancy, autonomous raves, and mutual aid projects. This is to say that not only does the DTF occupation courageously resist the decimation of the natural world, it also proposes alternatives for the type of reality we could be living in, propping a window into some sort of livable future, where there is food for everyone and life is abundant.

Should you feel moved by this brief synopsis to join the struggle, welcome—there are many ways to contribute, from donating or making phone calls to paying a brief (or long!) visit. Although an initial contractor backed out of the project, Atlas Technical Consultants will be attempting to restart construction within the next few months—this is a crucial time to be putting pressure on all parties involved. Remember, the fight is everywhere, and we have nothing left to lose.



For more information, visit defendtheatlantaforest.org; to donate, visit opencollective.com/forest-justice-defense-fund

It's a bad night.

Shiv Kotecha

At a 1957 poetry reading held at the Telegraph Hill Community Center, Robert Duncan introduced his then close friend, the ferociously smart, notoriously crabby Bay Area-lifer and poet, Jack Spicer to a rapt audience of about seventy-five: “In his own work,” Duncan said, “Spicer disturbs. That he continues to do so is his vitality.” He went on, carving out an image of Spicer’s vast, warping poetic cosmos with leery remove, careful to distinguish it from his own:

[T]hat God ‘contains’ is an aesthetic that defines my critical departure from delight in Spicer’s work where the uncontained [sic], the isolate, appears and accuses the Creator. All partial voice screams out of very hell, divorced from the good, truths that we can afford neither to deny nor to embrace.

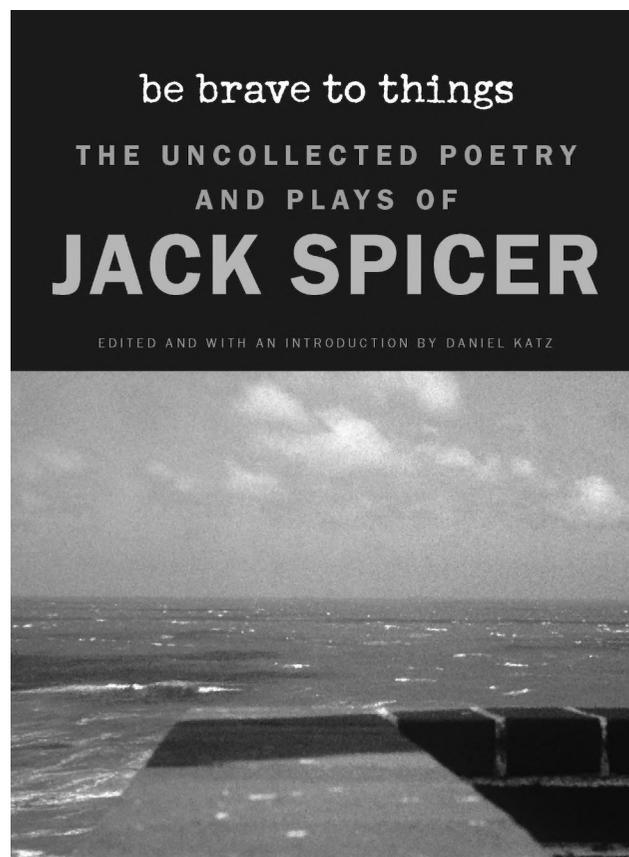
Duncan hits on the God-like qualities—*uncontained, isolate*—that give Spicer’s verse its uniquely tender, at times tenderizing, touch, “Like a diamond / Has at the center of it a diamond.” That the poet be an “instrument played upon,” open to “dictating” voices emanating from a supposed “Outside” is as foundational a tenet to understanding Spicer’s poetics as the calloused sense of self, and of community, he cultivated over his short, booze-addled life. These are the contradictions that spark the brashness of affect felt in the books and serial poems Spicer saw published in his lifetime—among them, *After Lorca, Admonitions*, *The Heads of the Town up to the Aether*, *The Holy Grail Book of Magazine Verse*. It’s a feeling, at least in my experience, close to joy.

Out now from Wesleyan University Press is *Be Brave to Things*, the fourth in an ongoing series of volumes resuscitating Spicer’s life and writing, following *Poet Be Like God* (eds. Kevin Killian and Lewis Ellingham), *My Vocabulary Did This To Me: Collected Writings* (eds. Peter Gizzi and Killian), and *The House That Jack Built: Collected Lectures* (ed. Gizzi). *Be Brave To Things*, edited by Daniel Katz, performs the difficult task of collecting the morass of *uncontained isolates* that a poet like Spicer—who wrote off a decade’s worth of stand-alone poems as “one-night stands,” and for whom publication was the enactment of a poet’s aesthetic and ethical prerogatives—left behind in his wake. Katz’s introduction outlines the fraught process of remaining faithful, at least in part, to Spicer, for whom a poem, writes Katz, “must say the very thing that the particular people to whom it is addressed cannot hear—what they refuse to hear and sends them running in the other direction or mailing rejection slips” (Katz). The result is a nice, girthy hard-cover presenting 200-or-so pages of previously unpublished verse and three plays—complete with annotations. *Be Brave to Things* is a welcome addition to Spicer’s not-so-minor canon, and as Katz astutely puts it, an “additional instance of the relentless battle Spicer’s work, when at its best, waged against itself.”

The volume opens with a reprint of *Collected Poems*, a short chapbook Spicer self-printed and hand-sewed in 1946, when he was a wee 22, as a Christmas gift for his UC Berkeley teacher Josephine Miles. The poems here, though juvenile, speak to many of Spicer’s sustained preoccupations: bar culture (“At Slim Gordon’s”); semantics (“To the Semanticists”); doggerel (“Wham Bam”); and, maybe most productively, games.

“You’re all a pack of cards!” opens the first poem, titled “The Bridge Game,” which zips across three stanzas, each registering, with varying degrees of literalism, the face values of playing cards—“Queen of Spades / Courtesy Bicycle / Courtesy Bicycle Playing Cards.” Each stanza is offset with short directives, as the kind Lewis Carroll’s Alice reads before biting into a shape-shifting shroom or cookie—“READ / VERY / FAST” or “Read with / an / imploring / voice”—locating the poem somewhere between poetic object, conjuring device, instructional guide (in which no one learns much of anything), and performance script. In Duncan’s account, for Spicer, “Bridge was always associated with active and acrimonious post-mortem. The postmortem of a particularly interesting hand could very easily go on into a second or third hand after the occurrence that was being discussed and analyzed.” For this poet, postmortems were a way to go forward, and hitting your head against the wall, poetry’s most common beginning.

Following the organization of Gizzi and Killian’s 2008 volume of Spicer’s collected writings, *My Vocabulary Did This To Me*, the poems in *BTT* are organized in sections based on place: the first section include poems from 1945-1955, composed after Spicer graduated UC Berkeley, and was still living in California; the second section comprises poems from Spicer’s ill-spent sojourn to the east coast, written in 1955-1956; the final section includes the poems Spicer wrote on his return to the Bay in 1955 until his untimely death by way of severe alcohol poisoning a decade later, at age 40. Included are drafts and outtakes of Spicer’s early series *Imaginary Elegies* and outtakes of poems that closely resemble, in theme and structure, poems from his collected books. Also included are several one-off series’ and two attempts Spicer made at putting together a *Selected Poems*, despite his principled vehemence against the poetry “collection” as such.



Be Brave to Things: The Uncollected Poetry and Plays of Jack Spicer is out now on Wesleyan University Press.

“There is really no single poem,” Spicer wrote to his friend and primary executor, the poet Robin Blaser, a letter first published in his omnidirectional registry of romantic complaint, 1958’s *Admonitions*. “The trick naturally is ... to explore and retreat but never be fully realized (confined) within the boundaries of one poem.” The premise of Spicer’s serial compositions is that, through the meticulous arrangement of motifs and codes, repetitions and procedures, titles and subtitles, in-jokes and imitations, poems become navigable architectures of thought. They are like a hall of mirrors, or, as Blaser put it, a “hell of meanings.” A good poem, according to Spicer, has the power to stage the polyvocal dynamics of a social scene, or a dead letter office, or a cemetery, or hell itself. His poem “Homage to Creeley | Explanatory Notes” is but one example of this. It is the first of two “books” that appears inside another book—a bound object called *The Heads of the Town up to the Aether* (1962). Per its title, “Homage” consists of thirty-or-so poems, interspersed with unnumbered footnotes that pawn faux didacticisms and slight analyses meant to mislead their reader rather than comfort her with the dim resolution of meaning. “I’m the ghost of answering questions,” claims the Poet’s intervener, “Keep me at a distance as I keep you at a distance.” The “collection” of poems, in this instance, is already framed within a larger schematic of ideas—prefiguring the precarious task Katz has had in constructing, as he puts it, “a failed monument to the failure of the poetic which Spicer paradoxically championed.”¹

Several of the stand-alone poems Katz includes are exquisite, and they betray Spicer’s commitment to the serial form. Consider the Petrarchan sonnet, “We bring these slender cylinders of song,” in which poems are to be inhaled as poppers might—at least for those of us for whom reading poems has the capacity, for better or worse, to wholly envelop the mind:

We bring you opium of cellulose,
And frankincense inscribed in little scratches
And you can take a big or little dose
Or have your memory in scraps and patches.

Another favorite is the suite of fragments under the title “A New Poem,” in which Spicer pivots his focus “all the way down past [his own] skull” to discount the poetic devices, tropes, ghosts, and inspirations with which the *published* Spicer so readily dosed his readers. In the fragment that suggests a “beginning,” for example, Spicer inverts his claim that “Poetry should end in a rope,” averring instead:

I want to begin with a rope.
Human contact. All I have missed
These meaningless years. All that all have talked to have missed.

“Doors are closed,” reads another line, followed immediately by the stop-ended line “New poem.” As in “Be Brave to Things,” the poem Katz borrows for his title, the second-person addressee that grounds so much of Spicer’s mature lyric is noticeably absent here. Composed as a list of spare, articulate demands, in these late exercises, one gets a sense that Spicer used poetry to imitate the uglier parts of his life, and the fragments thus read like a strange private documentation of Spicer’s embittered final years—a slow unspooling to accompany his real-life penchant for being everybody’s least favorite friend.

Complementary to the lines that comprise “A New Poem” are what Duncan warned his listeners against—poems Spicer used to provoke or disturb readers; poems to push people away, not hold them tight. *Be Brave to Things* contours our sense of Spicer as that fitful, faggot poet for whom love was an explosion of comic implication, intimacy a hell of relation, and sex a trap. However, the deep cuts it serves up limn Spicer’s more unsavory attributes. Katz leaves it to us readers to stomach the many guises and devices of love and of hate—“put on,” you could say, because it’s poetry, but also painfully real—that Spicer spewed against people he refused to understand, among them women (as in “For Joe,” in *My Vocabulary Did This To Me*) and Jews, as in “For Bob,” included here.² Written between 1957-58, the years Spicer was writing *Admonitions*, “For Bob” marks the occasion of Spicer discovering that his then-boyfriend Russell Fitzgerald had begun a sexual relationship with Bob Kaufman, a half-Jewish, half-Black Beat poet.³ Here, as elsewhere, the poem becomes an odd site for Spicer—an asocial zone where he could play out his needlessly ruthless aggressions toward others. Spicer’s outlook on racial and sexual difference was medieval to his contemporaries—it’s one of the many reasons he died alone. To contemporary readers, however, Spicer’s “disordered devotion toward the real” might be worth reading with sustained attention—that is, not just as a “death note,” but rather in our consideration of the more abscessive tendencies of civic legislation and cultural discourse of the present. We don’t have to read past the poems for ongoing proof that Spicer was no God. Or if he was, then they stand in as proof that God too is bad.

The book closes on three plays, each of them an adaptation: *Young Goodman Brown*, of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s short story of the same name; *Pentheus and his Dancers*, an adaptation of Euripides’ *Bacchae*; and the gem of the trio, and perhaps of the whole volume, *Troilus*, a drama based on *Troilus and Cressida*, the teenage side-plot of the Trojan War penned in verse by Chaucer and later as a drama by Shakespeare. Spicer’s verbose translation of the classic, composed in large part before he

moved to Boston in 1955, faithfully moves through the basic plot of the tragedy without heeding to the stylistic markings of either of his predecessors. There’s the delightfully flat-footed pattering of Spicerian speech that’s perfected in later poetic works like *The Holy Grail*, wherein characters become uncanny projections of themselves, and of other figures in the play. If, on your first read, *Troilus* feels like the right stand-in for Jack, and Troy for San Francisco, I recommend reading the play again, reversing the casting, with Spicer as the long-fled slut Cressida, pained object of Troilus’s whiny plight. (*They’re all a pack of cards!*—remember?) There’s something destabilizing, almost alchemical, to Spicer’s restaging of these mythological figures, especially in *Troilus*. It’s a remarkably undead piece of writing that I would love to hear staged for the radio, with the achy platitudes of the leads voiced by my most plangent of friends.

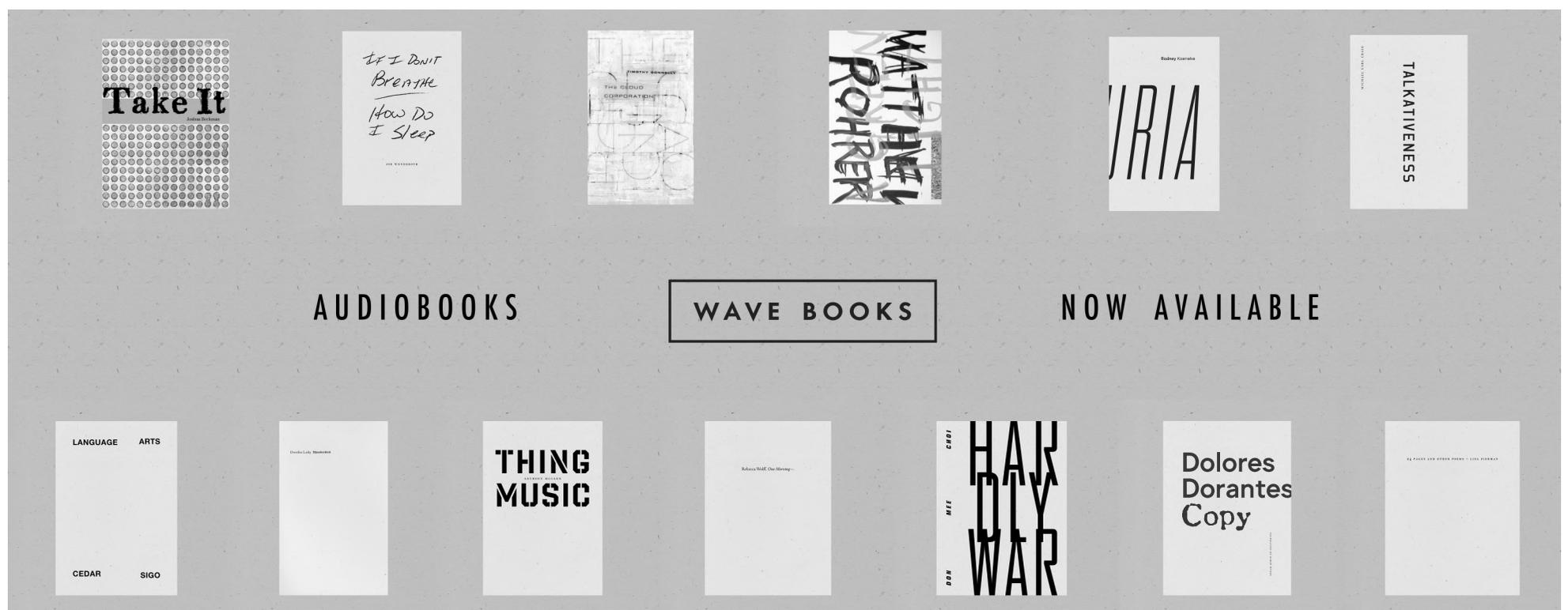
Katz concludes the list of imperatives that accompanied his editorial process with a humble declaration, and he sounds like Spicer in its twinkling ambiguity: “We might want this book,” he writes, generously suggesting that some of us might not. It’s the perfect attitude for entering this beguiling, at turns chilling, book of misfires, failures, and symptoms that accompanied Jack Spicer’s most affecting verse. It brings him back to earth. I can only hope the poet himself—who continues to exist in the form of one afterlife or another—relishes in the oceanic effects produced in us by his great love and his great hate.

Notes

¹ Katz also reminds readers that the book in question is composed of poems Spicer found solace in rejecting: “There are plenty of poems. One of the nicest things is when you learn that you can throw poems away—that you don’t have to save good lines and things like that.”

² Incomplete list of things we can presume Jack Spicer hated: the individual; his mom and occasionally dad; the east coast, Boston in particular; the “soupy romanticism” of the Beatles; Bob Dylan; in large part, women; the intersection of straight desire with his own; spirituality, and people who believe in it; triangulation (in 2020, I took a guy to Cypress Lawn Memorial Park with the express purpose of fucking whilst keeping the palm of my hand pressed against the cold metal receptacle Spicer’s remains are in, as if to participate in some sexy occult ritual of my own [“is this dictation?”]. I imagine Spicer would’ve hated this too, but I bet you anything Killian would’ve loved it. [nb. If you do make the journey, Spicer did not like flowers. As Killian reported in *Poet Be Like God*, he hoped loved ones commemorate him with green onions]); academics; academia; the poet Bob Kaufman; Dylan Thomas; Lawrence Ferlinghetti; most other poets; MFA poets; MFA programs; drugs; driving; twee literary magazines like *Poetry*; John Ashbery, whose first book *Some Trees* Spicer would apparently refer to as *Thumb Twees*—hilarious; Frank O’Hara; and Charles Olson, for his bad sense of humor, among other things.

³ “For Bob” is one of the poems Killian, in *Poet Be Like God*, notes that Spicer read the night of the 1957 reading that opens the essay. For readers interested in taking a deeper dive into Spicer’s knotty relation to race, I’d start with *Arcana: A Stephen Jonas Reader* (City Lights, 2019). Jonas was a black, queer poet Spicer met in Boston, and whose acidic verse Spicer found “bewildering.” Jonas was Spicer’s “anti-O’Hara,” “appointed, pure.”; “It was Steve,” said Spicer, “who taught me to use anger (as opposed to angry irony) in a poem.”



Fernanda Laguna

translated by Alexis Almeida

¿Quién va a quererme en el aeropuerto?

¿Quién va a quererme en el aeropuerto?
¿Quién va a quererme?
Hay que subir al avión.
Nadie cierra la puerta de la casa.
Nadie va a quererme en el aeropuerto.
Nadie va a quererme.
La borra de café en los tachos de basura me dice:
nadie nadie va a quererte en el aeropuerto.

Who is Going to Love Me at the Airport?

Who is going to love me at the airport?
Who is going to love me?
You have to get on the plane.
No one closes the door to the house.
No one is going to love me at the airport.
No one is going to love me.
The coffee grounds in the garbage can tell me:
no one no one is going to love you at the airport.

Honda

Mirar por una ventana
tapada por palmeras
es muy simple todo ahora
que estoy custodiada por tres mujeres que me guían.
Soy un auto de carreras
piloteado por las mejores.
Una me carga la nafta
otra me dice de dónde vengo
y la tercera me aclara a dónde elijo ir.
Es así
fui un colectivo sin frenos
y ahora una cuatro por cuatro Honda azul
tuneada para andar por todos los terrenos.
No es que me la crea
Pero me es necesario repetirme
que estoy mejor
que estoy mejor
que puedo estarlo
y que lo estoy.

Honda

To look out a window
covered by palm trees
everything is very simple
now that I'm protected by three women who guide me.
I'm a race car
piloted by the best.
One fills me with gas
another tells me where I'm coming from
and the third clarifies where I'm choosing to go.
It's like that
I was a bus without breaks
And now I'm a blue Honda 4x4
fixed up to drive on all terrains.
It's not that I believe it
but it feels necessary for me to repeat
that I'm better
that I'm better
that I can be
and that I am.

Varias yoes

Me cuesta mucho defenderme
no quiero ser injusta
y muchas veces lo soy conmigo misma
por ser justa con los demás.
Esto no está bien para nadie
ni para mí que soy alguien en el espacio de las relaciones.
Yo soy también otro
para mí.
o debería serlo.
Soy mi madre por ejemplo
y soy mi hija.
Soy la que pinta
y la que evalúa.
Soy la que hace
y la que se exige
la que dice
“eso que hiciste está bien, está mal”.
Soy dos por cuatro
y cuatro por ocho
una sociedad
y tengo varias mansiones
en una misma casa.
Un placard
la mesada de la cocina
mi cama
y el corazón de mi amor.
Soy ocho por cuatro
y lo que sí sé es que no soy una.
Soy la pequeña y soy la grande.
La del pasado y la del futuro.
El presente es miles de tiempos que no entiendo
ni puedo abarcar.
Soy la inabarcable
la hija de tal pero también mi hija.
Tener un tiempo para escribir
un libro que saldrá por una editorial top
y el ocultamiento de todo detrás de la multiplicidad.
¿Dónde estamos yo y la locura de ustedes
que son miles en cada uno?
La Tierra no es plana
es un territorio explotado en expansión
con sus miles de tiempos concéntricos.
Y ahí estamos ...
Como las manitas de las ratas
Moviéndose sin parar.
Pensando,
tratando de solucionar cosas
PROBLEMAS
tratando de saber qué parte de uno contiene el amor.
Buscando la piedra filosofal
que hilvane el todo.
Ese es el problema
ser múltiples y buscar síntesis.
Una parte de mí
se arrastraría como una serpiente
en medio de una pista de baile
y gozaría de ser aplastada.
Y otra busca resolver problemas
con una vecina que tiene toda la razón.
Hoy el día será muy largo
y el momento inútil de decir adiós al día
será igual a todos los demás.
Pero este día es muy largo en su multiplicidad
habré dejado una carta debajo de una maceta
y el destino se habrá corrido un poquitito más de mí.

Several "I"s

I have a hard time defending myself
I don't want to be unfair
and I often am with myself
while being fair to others.
This is not good for anyone
and not for me as someone in the space of relationships.
I am also another
for myself
or I should be.
I'm my mother for example
and I'm my daughter.
I'm someone who paints
and someone discerning.
I'm someone who does things
and someone who makes demands
who says
“this thing you did is good, is bad.”
I'm a two by four
and a four by eight
a society
and I have several mansions
in the same house.
A closet
the kitchen counter
my bed
and my lover's heart.
I'm an eight by four
and what I do know is that I'm not one.
I'm someone small and someone big
From the past and the future.
The present is thousands of time periods I don't understand
And I can't contain them
I am uncontainable
someone's daughter but also my daughter.
To have some time to write
a book that will come out with a good press
and the concealment of everything behind the multiplicity.
Where are “I” and all your madnesses
which are thousands in each one.
The Earth is not flat
it's an exploited territory that's expanding
with its thousands of concentric times.
And there we are ...
like the little hands of rats
moving without stopping.
Thinking,
trying to fix things
PROBLEMS
trying to understand what part of someone contains love.
Looking for the philosopher's stone
that stitches everything together.
That is the problem
to be multiple but to look for synthesis.
Some part of me
would slither like a snake
in the middle of a dance floor
and enjoy being flattened.
And another part tries to solve problems
with my neighbor who is always right.
Today the day will be very long
and the useless moment of saying goodbye to the day
will be the same as all the others.
But this day is very long in its multiplicity
and I will have left a letter under the flowerpot
and destiny will have slipped a little further away from me.

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Dereliction

Gabrielle Octavia Rucker

The Song Cave



Dereliction by Gabrielle Octavia Rucker

With playful and daring precision, Rucker shoulders doubt and belief in beautiful balance, inviting us into her universes with an arrow, marrow, and a heaven-sent play-ground vision. This debut is resplendent—an ecstatic-ancient-ever-present. Simply put: *Dereliction* brought me to tears.

—Joselia Rebekah Hughes

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POETRY

Brannan Prize: Arianne Ayu Alizio

Arianne Ayu Alizio was selected as the winner of the Fourth Annual Brannan Prize by Judge Daniel Borzutzky. On Alizio's works, Borzutzky writes:

These Brannan Prize winning poems are awesome! Visually, they are surprising, innovative and evocative; their shapes are brilliant containers that emit the energies and drives and desires that the poems communicate. The lines are poignant, rich, and memorable (“until I’m ancient again / until I’ve been here before”.... “give me your sharpest penance and not lollipop reinforcements.”) !*&#@!! These are challenging, fun, powerful poems and I’m excited to see what’s next for our author whose vision and spirit will surely delight and inspire readers.

oh
my spine
i'm
melting
or grinding
down
into a
fine
paste
i pray
to have some
of me
one day
why is utility
one F away from
disposal
or spiral or
averted eye
contact i'd like
to think
i'm above
it that
i'm some
unfuckwithable mechanism
but sometimes perilous
forces get the better
of me when my
guard is low tide
and there is
no horizon
but you
can hear
its beautiful dumb
wholeness that knows
everything you can't
see
you can let me
out here
i don't
have my
bearings which
means i must
be powder
and this is
all turning
out just like
i hoped
and my dust
is dis
solving
into
the wettest
folds of the
coastline
under
a new
moon
until i'm
ancient again
until i've
been here before

shell attention

rising
with if not before
the sun
an intervention

innards infer utmost
angels, terrible or otherwise
that tether
pluck tight rope grappling
fuck
an invitation

to do away
with earned softness

nature-beveled
you go to share your gem with someone
in hopes they see it too
an intimate announcement
gripping what you can't
hold the marrow

borne witness
a coordination

in which the main character is
no longer so vulnerable
in which forfeit is
no longer imminent and
who you've been praying to finally comes
through divine logistics
it's all in the delivery
this reminds you

nothing's a non-sequitur
as long as your attention has somewhere to sit and please
hold on wholly
i want to
grow in plural totality and know we'll get there safely
in one piece all my pieces i'm trying
to some saturnian extent

i relinquish i defer to the tide i

return return return
where we gather come
collect

venus in the imperative
an invocation
touch the sand on your lunch break and
tell each grain how if you knew what you wanted, you'd have it by now
and mean it
as in everything that is holy
can we just be real for a minute

i'm tired of trying to make good time
to pull the tide back
too much structure without
boundaries i need to
submit more succumb just
give me something to hold honestly
i'm tired of driving with all my i's
what i really came here to say is
i want more and better
loss

Reviews

Get the Money!: Collected Prose (1961–1983)
by Ted Berrigan | City Lights
Review by Alicia Wright

Get The Money! has the peculiar privilege of neither having to establish or confirm Berrigan's place in literary history. Instead, it furnishes a refreshing intimacy, which might be the real hallmark of Berrigan's interpretation of his particular cultural air. In the editors' deft arrangement of the work between chronology and category, something elusive though cherished about Berrigan is restored to the literary record from out of oral history, archive and folder. Both in terms of what it is to know a person through their writing and to know a writer's work through their personality, it is perhaps as close to someone's written essence as can be had.

Get the Money! joins two other collections of Berrigan's work: *Nice To See You: An Homage to Ted Berrigan*, edited by Anne Waldman (1991), a commemorative volume in which some of these prose works previously appeared, and *The Selected Poems of Ted Berrigan* (2011), edited by Alice Notley and Anselm and Edmund Berrigan. *Get the Money!* shows how Ted Berrigan worked in a range of different written modes, often paid and public, but just as consistently playful and private, bringing his characteristic candor to any written endeavor. With Nick Sturm's archival steering and editorial eye supplementing the family's effort, there's a sense of completion, care, and even relief palpable in this latest volume, closest in spirit to a literary commonplace book. This collection will be indispensable for Berrigan aficionados and newcomers to his work alike. Like the richest records left behind by writers, *Get The Money!* makes explicit Berrigan's cultivation of himself as a presence, writer, person, and literary mind.

What's collected in its 293 pages is a range of work all falling under mid-twentieth century cultural criticism's auspice, as was the New York School's purview: book reviews, letters, book reviews as responses in verse, art show reviews, letters, birthday notes, journals, interviews, obituary, remarks, portraiture, workshop and teaching notes, short scripts, introductions, travel notes, and the curiously titled "Longer Works of the More Academic Type." The contents of this final section come from a folder hand-labeled with the above phrase that Berrigan assembled himself before his death. It's a loose title, though each piece is saturated with connoisseurship, pith, and sometimes devastatingly funny cracks that even I understand, removed from the scene as most contemporary readers are.

One of the intimacies we see in *Get the Money!* is that such pronouncements aren't saved just for the publications: critical assessments in the form of exclamations, annotations, or imitations also shape Berrigan's thinking in writing. This is my sense of what's going on with the previously unpublished "Litany," which annotates remarks from conversation with, presumably, Bernadette Mayer—though this, like a handful of other pieces in this section, requires of readers some contextual guesswork through intimacy's prism:

"he implied . . . (that my book MEMORY)
. . . was cold and unemotional
but he meant that in a good way and I still
don't really
understand that."

*

"these are opinions so I don't have to be fair
. . . ."

*

"William Saroyan is good."

*

"The New York Times travel section etc."

*

"I think it is more interesting to read Civilization & Its Discontents as a novel . . . the character of Freud, as the person writing the novel, already known to us, is much more interesting to us during the reading of it as the main character, than so many novel characters who ultimately have no secrets."

Berrigan's prose, like his *Sonnets*, frequently takes the form of process-oriented expressions of deep textual and artistic study. *Get the Money!* offers readers the chance to watch Berrigan develop that skill over time, on and offstage, Desoxyyn-driven or otherwise, late nights or long days, it kind of doesn't matter: a real, and, as this collection shows, self-taught sensibility was at the fore.

Get the Money! collects Berrigan's art writing, and it shows that in writing about painting, Berrigan practiced the interpretative clarity, instinctive feeling, and scrutiny that would eventually shape his critical approach to poetry. In the most apparent editorial intervention and important recovery of *Get the Money!*, the editors culled deep cuts from brief pieces to comprise the enigmatic "Sentences from Short Reviews." As Nick Sturm explained in a recent launch reading, the editors compiled the piece through identifying the author initials "T.B." in the pages of *ARTNews* archives. Berrigan had more in common with art and dance writers like Fairfield Porter and

Edwin Denby than we previously could have known. Berrigan's art writing, which he did for money, helps us read his poetry not just as method-driven collages or modulations of personal tone, but as faithful interpretations of experience rendered in sometimes abstract, sometimes representational terms.

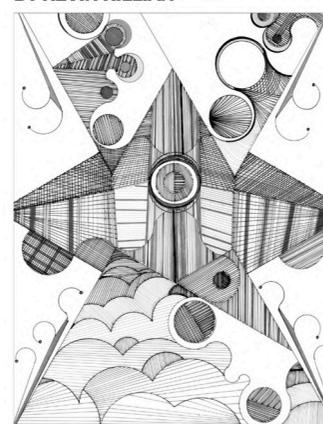
Berrigan's "Painter to the Poets," a tender commentary on Jane Freilicher, very nearly—and I do mean *very nearly*, like one click away—compelled me to spend the remainder of my savings on one of her paintings currently listed on 1stdibs.com. He infuses each of his written forms with the meaning of his enthusiasm's measure—short, long, personal, professional—just as the collagist sees materials' potential distributed by creative utility, not just by an object's conventional purpose. Berrigan cares about whatever makes the present feel like history, especially fun, important literary history. Myth-making requires reminders, and certain treasured names pepper Berrigan's prose like a reflexive idiom. Obsessive enthusiasm, total devotion, true hype, and unvarnished disappointment are the most salient metrics in his responses to art and writing. The killer thing is that he's just so startlingly correct, as when he makes his perhaps most intimate and most prophetic remark that "Alice Notley is even better than anyone has yet said she is." Perhaps the crown jewel of this vatic ability is his review of O'Hara's *Lunch Poems*, which is where you'll find his god-level assertion that "It's a great book! You won't be able to avoid it." Reading that review alone leaves me with a real hankering for what's missing from the thoroughly sanitized reviewing practices we tend to enforce at present. Such consistently flinty reviews are almost categorically extinct. But that's not his only mode: Berrigan's more mannered treatment of F.T. Prince, which usefully includes a generous selection of a long poem, reminds me a little of Guy Davenport in tone. Willingness to learn through experiment, risk open proclamations, to relish humor, or to rely on your informed feeling for a poet makes for good and interesting poetry criticism. It also helps if, like Berrigan, you're right more often than not.

Beyond the friendship affinities for which he's best known, while reading *Get the Money!* I began keeping a list of other writers that Berrigan liked (Kenward Elmslie, Barbara Guest, Harry Mathews) and felt a little pity for ones he didn't much (Norman Mailer, Jonathan Williams, Donald Barthelme). It's just as instructive to come across his takes on the influence of Wallace Stevens, gradual acceptance of Charles Olson, and friendly hangs with Robert Creeley as it is to see his adoration of Anne Waldman (see "Anne Waldman: Character Analysis"), Eileen Myles, Tom Raworth, Anselm Hollo, or Larry Fagin.

Especially in his early New York days, Berrigan made his name as much by editing as by being a poet. Consider "Some Notes About C," an account of the first prolific year of Berrigan's influential literary journal. *C Magazine* existed to create what Berrigan wanted to see in the world: "And I intended and intend for 'C' to exist as a personal aesthetic statement by me. Etc.," he concludes. The first issue saw four names in its table of contents: Dick Gallup, Ron Padgett, Joe Brainard, Ted Berrigan. *C* was a calling card at cocktail parties, an opportunity to forge contact with writers he liked, a way to publish himself, his heroes and his friends, and his first hyper-conscious intervention into literary history—"I was conscious every minute that my name was on the title page," he wants us to know. Frank O'Hara read it; John Ashbery too. Both were in it to boot, and it brought Berrigan's taste ever closer to the source.

A commonplace book is also a social history, and this wouldn't be a representational volume without occasional hits of party reportage, seen especially in the popular demi-fiction "The Chicago Report," or "Ten Things About the Boston Trip" and laced throughout Berrigan's journals from the sixties and seventies. Berrigan isn't quite as elliptical in his journals as Susan Sontag; as Alice Notley pointed out in a recent interview, the journals weren't intended for publication. Nor do we see him here as narratively fulsome as Anaïs Nin. But there's something privately kindred in each writer's self-conscious identifications and stylizing in

**FIVE STARS:
SELECTED AMAZON REVIEWS,
VOLUME 4
BY KEVIN KILLIAN**



SELECTED BY TED REES & DAVID BUUCK

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their respective diaries. You can teach yourself how to live as a literary person by reading this kind of work, especially by someone who himself studied and aspired to it—especially if you aren't exactly born to high culture.

One winter evening in February 1963, Ted Berrigan made an aesthetic vow: "I want to write poems that cannot be understood until they are felt. They must be read, then must germinate in the brain until they flower. Then the [sic] will be apparent—but still they cannot be paraphrased with any meaning for others. Each reader must make something out of them himself, w/o effort," he wrote in his private journal. And a little later down the page, the only entry from June: "No fucking makes for many Poems." *The Sonnets* had been written but they weren't to be published until the following year; C Press was just beginning. It might seem odd at first to think of Ted Berrigan as an outsider artist, even as he famously sent back his M.A. diploma, and even as his is one of the most beloved legacies of a twentieth-century poet whose life came to an early end. The Poetry Project and this newsletter itself, which he helped to found, guide, and edit in its early days, are part of his literary legacy (and from which several late reviews are drawn for *Get the Money!*). But he felt keenly that he wasn't one of those "sophisticated sons-of-bitches, all these Harvard-educated poets who knew very well very talented painters," as he says in an interview with Charles Ingham, with the exception of James Schuyler, whom he also admired, and O'Hara. Berrigan's was a different achievement: he was a working class war vet from Providence, and he blew into the city an unknown fireball. *Get the Money!* makes immediate Berrigan's quotidian world: the scramble for money, teaching gigs, and support, for childcare and domestic exchanges between friends and partners in loving notes and babysitting favors. This world would become the material particularly for women poets of that milieu, like Notley and Mayer. Taken together, Berrigan's accounts model the life's work it took for a working-class poet to become integral to the history of U.S. poetry. It's a great book! You shouldn't avoid it.

Elixir by Lewis Warsh
Ugly Duckling Presse
Review by Terrence Arjoon

LIKE AN INTEGER DIVIDED BY ITSELF

Lewis Warsh's posthumous collection *Elixir*, put out by Ugly Duckling Presse, is like walking downtown the morning after you've slept not enough, and not well, and you walk the avenue and you think: Vlad used to live above the wing joint, I got into an argument there on that bench by the dog park in Tompkins, a didn't a gas-line blow up that building on the corner? There used to be a bookstore there. In *Delirium New York*, Rem Koolhaas argues that verticality in NYC is a secret eddying— such

that the catacombs below spit forth noontime ghosts to walk among the living. We are there with Warsh as he writes, in the eponymous poem *I see the faces of friends everyday*.

I write this review from the Rose Reading Room of the NYPL. It is the only library in the city that has any Warsh materials, outside of the NYU Fales Collection. You're telling me I can't get *Alien Abduction* at the Brooklyn Public Library? Warsh started *Angel Hair* with Anne Waldman, which ran for six issues from the spring of 1966 to the spring of 1969. *Angel Hair* also published many poetry collections during the decade following. He co-founded and edited *United Artists* with Bernadette Mayer from 1977 to 1983. He taught workshops at The Poetry Project, Queens College, LIU, SUNY Albany, and countless other institutions. In 2020, I went to the book launch for Warsh and Mayer's collaborative book *Piece of Cake*, published by Station Hill Press, where I briefly served as an assistant to Sam Truitt.

Elixir begins with "Night Sky" which serves as sort of proem: this book is a book of the night. Tercets weave, extend, elongate, before snapping back to reframe the situation, which is our only situation:

...Do I hold
on for a moment or do
I slip over the edge?

Night-life in the country, night-time in the parking lot, night-life in the baggage claim.

There is a conditional nature to *Elixir*—statements are posed in the hypothetical: "Someone's mother *might* be calling you home to dinner." [Emphasis mine.] Potential problems are introduced and quickly flung away:

There's a void between
the person I used to be and
the person I've become: what
of it?

What of it? What is there to do when you have changed as we all must and do? Not much it would seem. Warsh is not nihilistic, or hopeful—he just concluded that there might be more important things going on. At this dead-end, around which entire bodies of work have been built, Warsh zooms in to the particular:

I can see
the freckles on your neck
in the cold light of day.

What I am most fascinated by is the structure Warsh conforms to in "Anything you Say," "Single Occupancy" and "Elixir": double-spaced single lines, which occasionally continue onto the next line in this paperback edition, which sometimes continue their thoughts, expand, focus in, veer, refute, or completely ignore the content of the previous line. I think of Walter Benjamin's idle inquiry in *One Way Street*: "But when shall we actually write books like cata-

logues?" Like Benjamin's *Arcades Project*, these lines, Warsh's *verzetteln*, scraps of a poetic and lived life, are assembled into some new elixir.

One might as well pee on the street & hope
a police car doesn't pass

This is the definition of cogitare, to collect
one's thoughts.

He put the barrel of the revolver inside his
mouth, but nothing happened.

Whereas another poet, Ashbery for example, might use conjunctive adverbs like "therefore," "however," or "nonetheless" to connect two lines, the connections between these lines are lost in the blank white space between them. The function of the line as an independent unit of thought and meter is blurred by their vertical relation—i.e., the fact that one line is situated below the previous one implies some sort of narrative connection, or at the very least, some accumulative result, as in a geometric theorem. And yet, they do connect—pissing in the street is quite enjoyable; a bit more like living *with* risk than collecting your thoughts self-critically, with nothing to show but an attempt to erase them. But there's no judgment here, or more accurately, admonition—just the facts of the matter where you eventually, walking, end up in the place Warsh begins "Elixir" with:

What matters most my friends are gone.

The double-spaced line allows for a shift not only in thematic or narrative concerns, but in mode and register. Warsh switches from the bisected compacted idioms of "what matters most" and "my friends are gone" to

See their faces, hear them speak

to

"I have so many regrets," he said.

Warsh begins with the personal: his friends and community are dead, and he knows he too will die soon. Then he moves into the Marc Antony-esque imperative: bear witness to them, "see their faces." Bear witness with this line—which is also the funeral procession—into the third person dialogic—who is "he"? Warsh, the Warsh-Narrator, or some other? In this way Warsh's lines ripple outwards beyond "I-remember." The art is in the arrangement, in repetition and swerve.

I wrote an imitation of this poem, "Elixir," to try to better understand how Warsh moves from line to line, in the same way that Anselm Berrigan wrote *Primitive States*—and felt a kinship between this process and Mei-mei Berssenbrugge's, Lisa Robertson's, Anselm's. I showed my friend Maddie what I did, and told her what I was trying to do. She said that maybe when you're older this way of writing by line seems like the "right" thing to do. It was not an entirely successful attempt. Even

so, I discovered that this double-spaced variable line, which is the visual and sonic unit of measure, and is the unit of a thought, of time and space-making the internal machinations of a poem visible without caesura or enjambment; as Philip Whalen writes, "Showing the mind thinking." However it's not entirely non-narrative. Warsh maps these constantly shifting interior and exterior modes in the purest and simplest expression of it: the unit of the line. It is a witnessing of the shapeliness of a mind that contends with the inevitable decline in the shapeliness of his city, of his people, and of his body, of

[his] scrawny shoulders.

Almanac of Useless Talents by Michael Chang
Herringbone Books
Review by Dani Putney

OPULENT, JUDGMENTAL, AND DOWNRIGHT DIRTY

Michael Chang's *Almanac of Useless Talents* is the book I wished I read before getting an MFA, then trying to be a "serious poet." Because as Chang shows us, nothing in po-biz *really* matters. That's not to say poems can't have significance, that they can't make all the difference, because any avid poetry reader knows they can. However, to write poetry, to be a poet—the dailiness of a poet's life *should* be subjected to all the jokes, all the Derridean deconstructions you can muster. If poetry were to be this or that, and not everything all at once, we wouldn't have voices as scintillating as Chang's to bask in the I-don't-want-to-ever-look-away glory of.

With Chang's *Almanac of Useless Talents* fresh on my mind, all I can think of is breaking genre boundaries, allowing yourself to write how you want, when you want. Chang's collection, for instance, beautifully breaks three cardinal rules I had hammered into my head in poetry school: (1) Don't rely too much on pop culture, as you want your poems to be timeless. (2) The weight of a poem should be balanced—you don't want all the punch to come at the beginning or end. (3) Every line in a poem composed of monostichs should be equally important.

We see Rule #1 broken in literally every poem within Chang's collection, but my favorite is "香格里拉 SHANGRI-LA," in which Chang name-drops queer daddy of poets D.A. Powell, *Percy Jackson* twinkboy actor Logan Lerman, and *Phil of the Future* (any younger millennial who's anything should've watched this) all in one poem. Chang even time-travels to the ostensible birth of "great American poetry" by fucking with Walt Whitman: "Read abt Whitman 'self-ghosting' & when I say I have a new kink—." The opulence of this poetry emerges from the pop-cultural catalog from which their book was birthed, but perhaps of greater significance is their work's simultaneously earnest and downright vulgar

Jay Wright, *The Dramatic Radiance of Number: Selected Plays of Jay Wright, Volume One*, edited by Will Daddario

Jay Wright, *Figurations and Dedications: Selected Plays of Jay Wright, Volume Two*, edited by Will Daddario

Glimmerings and Constellations: Creative and Critical Responses to the Plays of Jay Wright, edited by Will Daddario

Charlie Markbreiter, *Gossip Girl Fanfic Novella*, with Illustrations by River L. Ramirez

David Larsen, *Zeroes Were Hollow*

David Larsen, *Syrup Hits* facsimile edition

Hanni Ossott, *The Body, the Landscape: Greece Poems 1970-1980*, translated by Clara Briceno, designed by Faride

Mereb with Oriana Nuzzi

Devin King, *Gathering*

Kenningeditions.com

treatment of culture. We can have Paris Hilton epigraphs alongside invocations of Mei-mei Berssenbrugge, sadboy yearning for fuckboys alongside Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectionality. Here's a standout cross-cultural moment in "MARCO! POLO!":

You want some bath salts & Listerine

I want you to flip me duplex it lick the arches
of my feet

Fuck me with your golden shovel

Think of Eleanor Roosevelt to keep from
cumming

or is it Patty Hearst

Lines like these demonstrate their author's deep knowledge of the poetic "tradition" (whatever that means—and a word I'm sure the poet would question themselves) through the various shout-outs of individuals and cultural phenomena, all while sassily throwing them under the bus. Does this poem pay homage to Terrance Hayes' golden shovel form, or is Chang shitting on it? Do they like Jericho Brown's duplex, or is the form all sex and games to them? Maybe the multitudes of Chang's work cannot—and should not—be untangled, much like the specter of Daddy Whitman the poet calls upon earlier. Poetry is play in *Almanac of Useless Talents*, and as a reader, I want to entangle myself in the orgiastic fun.

Rules #2 and #3 fall apart in poems like "Carnal Flower," in which (spoiler alert) the beloved is revealed to be Satan. Chang successfully relegates the poem's big reveal to the very last line through a process of syntactical tug of war, varying their line lengths in an ebb-and-flow pattern. The "u vegetable" opener builds up to the "he treats me right, makes me hot chai, knows better than to call it 'chai tea'" of line seven, then the poem recedes to begin the process again. Because this poem is also composed of monostichs, each

one-line stanza takes on an air of importance, leading readers to view the beloved as some God-level figure in relation to the speaker—one who could push and pull the speaker's body like a wave on a coastline—and they'd be right for the wrong reasons.

We love Chang for this trickery and can't help ourselves from slapping our thighs in laughter. Every poem is a roller-coaster ride: you don't know what you're going to get or where you'll land, but you want to continue reading to find out. Chang's poems may also be described as a Pandora's box behind an oversized trench coat—who knows what's underneath, but you always gleefully pull back the fabric.

Returning to "Carnal Flower," lines like "u smell like sheep" appear alongside "frowns upon senseless state-sponsored violence," both descriptions of Satan but of different weight. The former line introduces a playful irreverence, characteristic of Chang's dominant tone throughout their collection—of course they'd outrightly tell a beloved they smelled. That's Chang's bailiwick. However, the latter line emerges from the political gravity of our contemporary social-justice consciousness. As somebody who annoyingly prides themselves on being woke, I would love to discuss such political matters with a beloved, especially when they're as steamy as Satan. And who's to say an ovine, anti-violence lover *can't* exist?

Perhaps that's the joy in the unevenness of "Carnal Flower"—it doesn't have to always take itself too seriously because it *knows* its message, audience be damned. Satan-as-lover can smell like sheep while also hating the military-industrial complex because as readers, we're already in love with Chang's voice. The fun becomes earnest and vice versa in Chang's oscillations between high- and lowbrow language, text-speak and full-length sentences—this time, what's underneath the trench coat just happens to have horns.

Ultimately, it's this register-breaking voice

that wins me over in *Almanac of Useless Talents*. Narrating the collection is a speaker aware of themselves and what games they're playing, all while weaving in currents of queer yearning and much-deserved critiques of hegemonic cultural institutions. Chang may be the queen of obvious—"subtle is not in my vocabulary," they tell us in "AREA CODE 886"—but this clarity adds layers of meaning and purpose to the collection's poems. Like the po-biz Chang makes fun of, poems themselves need not be obscure or too "academic." While many of Chang's poems are delivered through jokes or one-liners, their poetry truly comes alive in moments like the end of "帶走你的垃圾 TAKE OUT YOUR TRASH":

Gimme a tongue bath & thank me for it

Apart from me you do nothing

R u sure

No ur straight

I love it when you don't make sense

The last time I had arugula on a pizza

you were still alive

I read this poem as a lament for a deceased ex-lover, perhaps, more specifically, an ex-lover who was experimenting with their sexuality with the speaker. Through the poem's humor, we can see a speaker deeply aware of their emotions—the lasting effects the deceased has had on them. I want to engage in hours-long conversations with this speaker about dumb boys, Asian representation, and poetry-world gossip, us being judgmental, sentimental motherfuckers the whole way through. I want to hold the speaker's hand while they laugh and cry through ex-loves, experiences of fetishization, and run-ins with racist assholes.

Maybe another way of describing the singularity of Chang's voice as a poet is "the lit

friend you never knew you needed," one to give you real talk and get you through your MFA workshops with all the fuckboys writing about their oppression as white men. Chang's poetry is like the friend who keeps you from dropping out of your MFA, the one who tells you, "Fuck them all." Because in the end, Chang's rule-breaking and unforgettable voice prove that through all po-biz's drama, reading and writing poetry are worth it.

I usually bristle when people call marginalized poets' work "necessary" or "urgent," but what *is* necessary about Chang's poetry is the mirror it forces upon readers: "Look at yourself, lighten your load," it says. "Don't take yourself too seriously." And, dear reader, I hope you pick up a copy of *Almanac of Useless Talents* and join me on this journey of lightening.

HERmione by H.D.

New Directions

Review by Holly Raymond

H.D., as both a mystic and a modernist, felt keenly the value of circling back on things, of tracing spirals of reiteration and reconfiguration where she'd been before. "Things brought back became a sort of hecatomb," she writes towards the end of her 1927 *roman à clef* *HERmione*, reissued by New Directions (2022), "a heap of things, things, all having set symbolism, having some sort of office." Like many of H.D.'s other occluded memoirs, *HERmione* is a kind of dissident Eurydice-work, looking stubbornly backwards where the gaze should have foreclosed a sense of return. In fact, H.D. does more than look: she sifts carefully but furiously through the rubble, and experimentally pieces together the same fragments into different configurations with each successive transit.

The book's first sentence runs "Her Gart went round in circles," which aptly sets the tone—both of H.D.'s intense strafing around the site of memory, and the way in which the book

diffuses its point of identification. H.D. has some coy fun with protagonist/proxy Hermione Gart's nickname, "Her," which is persistently flagged as a nudging of the "I" out of the spotlight—"Her" and "she" rendered interchangeable referents in a blurry, flickering way as Her proceeds towards something like H.D.'s sense of what aesthetic self-determination might mean for a woman modernist.

HERmione covers Her's floundering early 20s in rural Pennsylvania, on the outer margins of her father's academic milieu and tentatively bound in artistic and psychosexual entanglements with Ezra Pound and Frances Gregg stand-ins George Lowndes and Fayne Rabb. Lowndes (waifishly hot, bad at dancing, and compulsively dismissive of Her's faculties) is a suitably overbearing, obnoxious, and suffocating character. Rabb (ethereal, vague, and equally judgemental of Her's aesthetic projects) signals a kind of unmooring from the obligations of marriage and domesticity, linked as she is with the occult trappings H.D. persistently aligns with liberation and communion throughout her career. Fayne is all tea leaves, rappings on the pane and ouija boards, while Lowndes is just mean comments and unfulfilling forest-sex. As Francesca Wade observes in her afterword to the novel, *HERmione* is one of the most stridently sapphic of H.D.'s prose works, depicting Her's nimble evasion of Lowndes' lassos, sidestepping the looming promise of a bourgeois wedding plot as well as Lowndes' claustrophobic attempts to curate Her as a pet social project. Her's practice of writing can only begin to stir within the orbit of other women, the women dismissed as declassé and provincial by the Euro-tripping Lowndes. The book pivots around the proxy war between Lowndes and Rabb—the cosmopolitan, witty, and egregiously bitchy Lowndes imagining himself as the author of a version of Her ("you are a poem though your poem's naught," he chides towards the end of the book) while Rabb offers the dreamy possibility of a mutual immersion or dissolution into the "we" which proves capable of actually making writing possible.

In other words, Lowndes collapses the categories of muse and patron into one role isometric, too, with editor, critic, and censor. He may open doors for Her, but only the doors of his choosing, at his own whim—Her remains *his*. Her's creative and sexual relationship with Fayne Rabb, on the other hand is inchoate and aimless, but untethered from the onus of being cultivated and curated by a male mediary. Their rapport may lack a recognizable name (*HERmione* is a book deeply concerned with its own post-facto dumbness, the vocabularies which H.D. possesses in the late 20s that Her lacked—psychoanalytical, philosophical, sexual...) or might inhabit a name which neither Her nor Rabb can at that point articulate, a queer pocket on the fringes of modernist self-fashioning, but it does, materially, lead to the creation of art. Through an eminently H.D.-ian twist of linguistic alchemy, Her comes to

self-knowledge through knowledge of a *her* ulterior to Her self:

"Things are not *agacant* now I know her. I know her. Her. I am Her. She is Her. Knowing her, I know Her. She is some amplification of myself like amoeba giving birth, by breaking off, to amoeba. I am sort of mother, a sort of sister to Her." Names, for H.D., are lively and agential things, and the act of choosing her own name, or engaging in various contentions with the names given to her by others, is a recurrent site of struggle. In *HERmione*, the final dehiscing of that conclusive "HER" from its "mione" is a desperate and reflexive victory which Her herself spends much of the book trying to understand.

...

In a brief preface provided by H.D.'s daughter Perdita Schaffner, we see the work of someone who *survived the conditions* of this book wrestling with the allure and the repugnance of its project. "But the past will not leave me alone," Schaffner writes. "It pulls me back and under. It surrounds me. The more remote it may be, the closer the encirclement." It's difficult to not feel a little sympathy for Schaffner, caught up in the riptide of her mother's obsessive, ritualistic relitigation of the past. But it's just as hard to deny the magnetism of H.D.'s restless treatment of autobiography as the site of perpetually inconclusive recontextualization. In a book so feverishly committed to seeing its heroine escape the procrustean orbit of a domineering aesthetic, H.D. often feels seduced by the familiarity and cozily circumscribed perimeters of her childhood milieu—the leafy, humid Pennsylvania pastoral that both she and Lowndes persistently link with Shakespeare's dreamy Arden. One of the great utilities of H.D.'s autobiographical prose—or one of its great weaknesses, if you're impatient with this kind of thing—is how bare it lays its own sentimentality. In her poetry, too, there's a persistent desire to gaze lovingly at ancient things, to fantasize about touching what is absent and obsolete, but it is often obfuscated behind the classical or the mystical. H.D. likes missing things—likes being able to mythologize the assorted gaps and lacunae that memory refuses to render up directly.

In her poetry, this backwards gaze towards history is an increasingly spiritualized and oblique strategy of metempsychosis, of cultural or genetic memory refracted through a linguistic field. In her prose, however, it often presents itself unabashedly as nostalgia for earlier, less sophisticated, more acutely *feeling* versions of H.D., who experienced things with less precision but more intensity. This is extremely useful for readers interested in the germinal stages of H.D.'s career-long indecision between the calls to self-definition and autonomy on the one hand and the dream of a collective, if selective, intelligence or consciousness on the other. H.D. undertook the writing of *HERmione* eight years after 1919's *Notes on Thought and Vision*, in which she

vividly describes an epiphanic moment of "jellyfish consciousness" akin to ego death, and the book's fixation on tiny, private omens, premonitions, symmetries and minor necromancies sneakily betrays the presence of H.D. the mystic behind Her Gart the gifted burn-out. The jellyfish consciousness, the book suggests, is there, whether Her knows it or not, glimpsed in the margins of a long sick-bed rhapsody at its climax.

H.D. wrote a frankly exhausting number of autobiographical novels, with more or less thin facades of fictionality, and it's maybe the rare reader who seriously needs to read *all* of them. But *HERmione's* retrospective scavenging and rummaging is a masterpiece of tenderness and half-embarrassed hindsight, a strikingly vulnerable and revealing text by an author sometimes prone to gnomish prickliness. Together with her later text *The Gift* (which deals largely with her younger childhood years in Pennsylvania), we see an unusually unguarded and even lushly romantic side of H.D., as well as a sense of immediacy and presence in space characteristic of her early poetry. This reprint is a gem for H.D. enthusiasts, but it's also just a pleasure to read, one of the most inviting and, in the author's mercy for her younger proxy, most *generous* of her prose works.

***Broken Gargoyles* by Diamanda Galás**

Intravenous Sound Operations

Review by Kamikaze Jones

I once coated the concrete halls of a Bed-Stuy storage facility with a torrent of my own blood in an accidental feat of acolytic devotion to the widely celebrated composer and "Diva of the Dispossessed" Diamanda Galás.

It was the summer of 2012, and the dubious threat of the apocalypse as dictated by the "ancient Mayan calendar" had begun to coagulate over Nostrand Avenue. I was working as a plucky young (unsustainably) bisexual intern, or more accurately, a hash-addled, extended vocal technique novice, directly under Diamanda's assistant, while she cared for her ailing mother in San Diego. I got a bit careless with an exacto knife one afternoon while repackaging vintage promotional materials. While I narrowly avoided nicking a major artery in my left forearm, blood squirted indiscriminately from my hapless gash and I fainted on the frantic assistant's shoulder. Sixteen stitches, all for the sake of the archive!

Forgive the gushing goth within me, but this abrupt exsanguination and its subsequent keloid insignia felt in some marginal way apropos given the legacy I'd volunteered to help preserve. This was my rite of indoctrination into the plasmatic cosmogonies conjured by Galás's staggering oeuvre, one marked by extraordinary feats of compassionate release, public exorcism, and surgical precision. Indeed Galás, when referring to the technique deployed on her groundbreaking recording for

solo scream *Wild Women With Steak Knives*, compares her voice to an "unmerciful brain surgery, a kinesthetic representation of the mind diffracted into an infinity of crystals." Before investigating the seemingly limitless expanses of her instrument—encompassing Monica Belluci vampire orgies, collaborations in subtractive synthesis with Iannis Xenakis, and revelatory primal scream sessions in anechoic chambers under the influence of LSD—Galás undertook formal academic study in biochemistry and behavioral psychology, eventually persuaded by an encouraging coterie of outlaw drag queens to pursue a full-time career in singing. Galás's work later became the denunciative, lacerating voice of radical AIDS activism with her infamous live album *Plague Mass*, a militant, decibel-shredding condemnation of the Reagan administration's weaponized silence in the face of the epidemic. To attend a Diamanda Galás performance is to enter an operation theater and witness a craniotomy of the collective unconsciousness, executed without anaesthetic, in which every twitch of exposed sulci and sluice of cephalic leakage is an act of confrontational exposure.

Yet assembling a sonic glossary of corporeal debasement, an unyielding maelstrom of embolism and psychic hemorrhage, has never been Galás's endgame, despite the glut of journalistic portrayals that lazily render her as a Grand Guignol caricature. While it is true that Galás has long been an established gallows humorist, whose Rabelaisian wit is often eclipsed by the bulk of her conceptual rigor, she is most resonant as a preternaturally gifted moirologist: a funeral wailer whose unhinged prostrations towards ineffable grief are buttressed by her deft recontextualization of pre-existing texts. When filtered through the alchemy of her inimitable voice, interpretation and citationism become tools to reanimate the dead. In other words, the memento mori is the message. Galás uses the innate ephemerality of her body to channel universal mourning in remarkable and unprecedented ways. In moments untethered from legibility, Galás's virtuosic glossolalia functions in a similar manner to the asemic writings of Henri Michaux; it gravitates beyond the lexicon of embodiment to reconstitute language at both a molecular and spiritual level, traversing multiple liminal borders often within a single inflection or glottal stop.

This elliptical obliteration of Cartesian dualism, this exalted sodomization of a body without organs, arguably reaches its purgatorial climax on *Broken Gargoyles* (2022), an album forged from the ideological mortar that binds the tombs of unknown soldiers, the ruins of leper colonies, and the sallow halls of overcrowded hospice facilities. Inspired by the historical ostracization of servicemen disfigured during WW1, who upon repatriation were forced to wear iron masks to disguise their maimed faces or disappear from public altogether, Galás harnesses the early expressionist poetry of Georg Heym, most prominently his work *Das Fieberspital*, which details the an-

guish and delirium of yellow fever patients forced into isolation in the early 20th century German medical wards in which his father worked, and *Die Dämonen der Stadt*, depicting the pagan god Baal perched atop a crumbling edifice, portending the immense carnage and psychic wreckage of The Great War.

Broken Gargoyles is a contrapuntal sonic dip-tych, a bipartite onslaught of free indirect discourse and interdimensional slippage: vision obscured by congealed gauze, sensation blunted by morphine drip, clustered trajectories of nonlinear violence, rupture, flashback, and phantom pain. It is immediately clear that we are not in the company of the Faustian blues chanteuse of *The Singer* (1992) or the Lorena Babbitt-turned-harpy of *The Sporting Life* (1994). This is Galás as innovative neoclassicist, as baroque avant-garde visionary. In *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality, and the Mystery of Desire*, Wayne Koestenbaum describes operatic tone production as an act which "...participates in that larger, historical throat, the Ur-throat, the queen's throat, the throat-in-the sky, the throat-in-the-mind, the voice box beneath the voice box." Galás, who stresses the traditional bel canto style of singing as a foundational base for her more strident vocal exhumations, gnashes at the threshold of these signifiers to trouble the complex mythologies attached to them. Each archetypal throat exists in a loaded continuum; it is fitting that the etymology of gargoyle comes from the Old French *gargouille*, the noise of both air and water mixing in the throat. Here the gargoyle's throat is ragged, ulcerous, parched, and struggling in vain to phonate.

"Mutilatus" begins the first of its 23 minutes *in medias res*, with a modulated piano rumble that evokes the clanging of tinnitus, the whirring and ringing of the eadrum amidst a vast explosion. A fusillade of keening from another realm gradually emerges. It is the throat of the Valkyrie, polyphonous and prismatic,

wordlessly invoking the names of the slain. This initial overture of detonation transforms into an aching beautiful processional drone. We are concussively lifted out of the trenches into the sacrificial rites of a Nibelung ossuary, before the sound of a frigid wind brings us back to the combat-ravaged landscape, where Galás switches registers from her treble-laden fugue state to a hoarse, eviscerated *Sprechstimme*. Vultures hover eagerly in the interstices between putrefaction and petrification as the casualties accrue. Chimes appear intermittently between more turbulent passages, as if to denote sparse granules of memory. The relentless multivocality and terminal velocity deployed here is reminiscent of, on the one hand, Pierre Guyotat's *Eden Eden Eden*, a labyrinthine one-sentence screed written in the aftermath of Guyotat's desertion from the Algerian war, and on the other the unsparing nihilism of Elem Klimov's celluloid hellscape *Come and See*. Acoustic guitar, a rarity in Galás's catalogue, appears stark, unadorned, detuned, as if to signify distant old-world comforts. We then hear the striking of a match, a reminder that night has fallen. A sickening thud echoes from the depths of an asylum basement. The Teutonic litany resumes with renewed vitriol, over a pestilent electronic buzz, a swarm of flies emptying from a dilapidated elevator shaft. A discordant piano figure closes the track with stumbling Brechtian menace.

The second movement is entitled "Abiecti," Latin for "those thrown away, abandoned, out-cast." It starts with an aural *Sturm und Drang* of metallic scraping strings. Here the oppressive din of cauterizing instruments and the rattling of stretchers overwhelms the listener. It sounds as if Galás's esophageal lining is irrevocably torn over the course of these 17 minutes. She shrieks for fallen men who have relinquished their autonomy and their anatomy to the military state. In the wake of battle the aphasic utterances of the disinherited, of the tongueless, teeter at the edge of meaning. It is

the throat of the demon queen Rangda, a fathomless shock corridor, coruscating in febrile disjunction as it swallows entire populations. It was important for Galás to note upon the album's release that *gorgon*, not dissimilar from gargoyle, shares a Proto-Indo-European root with the Sanskrit word *garjana*, signifying guttural sounds or the growling of a beast, and thus possibly began as an onomatopoeia. We envision the laugh of the decapitated Medusa as her head sails through a plume of sulfurous smoke across enemy lines. A Blitzkrieg of indignation fomented in the stereo field, blasts of white noise spread like electrical fires in an evacuated military base. These final passages gesture towards the despicable continuity of war, with digital processing that alludes to drone surveillance and biological weaponry. A coda of distorted voice suggests an electrolarynx but also points towards crimes of the future—to profiteers' and nationalists' propensity for continued orchestrations of barbarism and exploitation. Through her attention to the abominations of the past, Galás vehemently critiques the systemic failures of modernity, exposing the proletariat still suffering under the collapsed façade of neoliberalism while predicting the consequences of a reinvigorated global wave of fascist ideology.

If we were to conduct a thorough medical examination of Galás' body of work, where the rectum is a panopticon and the vena cava courses with *santa sangre infectada*, it is through the endoscopic dexterity of *Broken Gargoyles* that we may diagnose the proverbial Queen's throat as an infinite warzone: shrapnel-embedded, deterritorialized, inexorably marred by atrocity. It is within this psychoacoustic terrain, that of spontaneous tracheal implosions and distended suppurating uvulas, that Galás' voice can potentially operate as a graft or a transplant, regenerative in its confrontation and disavowal of intergenerational traumas.

***The Vanishing Signs* by Cam Scott**

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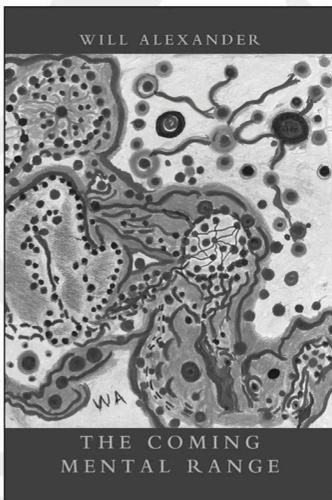
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A LUSTFUL SUPPLEMENT TO SOMEONE ELSE'S SCRIPTURE

Doubled characters, mirrored forms, and incommensurate pairs proliferate in Cam Scott's wide-ranging *The Vanishing Signs*, a book of essays on experimental writing emerging in the crises of neoliberalism, surveying a wide array of works from the late 1970s to the present. But doubles are never static twins. They inaugurate dialectical transformations, illuminating what's discontinuous in aesthetic representations of subjectivity under capitalist social relations. A brief but incomplete index of Scott's subjects: Robert Glück's mirrored self in the 15th century religious pilgrim Margery Kempe, whose non-relation to her lover (Jesus Christ) initiates desire; Dionne Brand's *The Blue Clerk*, in which a clerk presides over the poet's left-hand pages, "where the verso is historical and the poem occasional," reintroducing experience into the terrain of logistics; Kevin Killian's celebrity obsessions and pop cultural avatars, which initiate a "literature from below" by tracing the gap between stars and fans; medieval plague and the AIDS crisis, whose homologies reveal not a simple continuity of corporeal ravages, but changing social relations, where HIV outbreaks can be read as "an index of proletarianization"; or the bad double of Canada's racial imaginary in assigning hybrid identity to Métis people, where "mixing is predicated on the notion of purity" rather than its dissolution, as read through Gail Scott's *The Obituary*.

These motifs draw our attention to mediations of subjectivity, using formal or narrative means to elongate perception and de-automize cognition. This phrase comes from the Russian critic Viktor Shklovsky's *Theory of Prose*, which Scott invokes in his essays. In sonically buoy-

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