

The Poetry Project

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The 1988 Symposium

subtitled *The Poetry of Everyday Life*, took place at St. Mark's Church on April 7th through the 10th, with 32 poets participating in a variety of readings, panel discussions and lectures. In this issue we are publishing Carl Rakosi's introductory remarks to the panel discussion in which he participated, and Lorenzo Thomas's lecture. We will be publishing other poets' contributions to the Symposium in future issues.

NEW FORMS - INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

By Carl Rakosi

[For the Panel Discussion held on the afternoon of April 9th, entitled "New Forms/New Functions". The panel also included Mei-Mei Berssenbrugge, Joel Oppenheimer, Paul Violi, and Rebecca Wright, and was moderated by Lorenzo Thomas]

I must confess at the outset that I have never deliberately set out to invent new forms. When I started to write, it was not necessary because lots of new forms with exciting possibilities for the new subject matter had just been developed by Williams and Cummings. That work was done. All I had to do was to choose which ones would best suit my material. But of course I made my own changes. Thus my attention was on other things in the making of a poem which were more difficult and problematical for me and which I had to work out for myself. Nevertheless as time went on, some new forms did come to me, but always in response to a particular content and to what I find visually pleasing on the page, a poem that looks airy and graceful. For example, extending the usual space between words registers them in the mind as individual entities and signals that this is where, and now is when, the mind should meditate on them and summon their associations. Similarly, extending the space between lines, enough to make the reader wonder why, and moving them to the right or left, while giving an immediate visual relief and interest, produce a subliminal effect not unlike the silences in a piece of music when the spirit has time to resonate to the emotion being expressed. This resonance is anticipated in the score and is as much a part of the music as the notes. To some extent, in fact, it is the resonance-filled silences which give the music its depth and fullness. What I'm suggesting, in other words, is that space need not be a null between words and lines, that its nature is expressive, and that it can be a part of a poem's score.

An airy, graceful shape on the page is not suitable, of course, to every kind of poem. It would have turned my long, narrative poem, "The Old Poet's Tale," into an ugly sprawl. What that poem needed was something that would express both control and movement. I struck it right when I hit on the unrhymed tercet, which expresses movement along a straight line, which is what a narrative is. On the other hand, I wrote "Modules" in a long and very thin, scraggly form, not more than one or two words to a line, because the poem is about a phonograph cartridge, which is oblong and narrow, and the ideas and images in the poem were tightly compressed and tangled, the way a cartridge is. Too simplistic, no doubt, but I thought that getting form and content to speak with one voice was more useful to this particular poem than an attractive appearance. Now a few general observations.

1. Form seems to matter somewhat in proportion to a poem's size. The very short poem is pretty much the same whatever form is used. Innovation does little for it. The longer a poem, the more it seems to need form, not only to keep it from disintegrating but also to say its subliminal bit about the poem's over-all design and import. Innovations in form, therefore, may be an organic necessity for it.

The issue is also related to the kind of poem one is writing. If one is being satirical, ironic, humorous, the whole point is vested in the content. Inventions in form, in this case, are rather pointless.

2. A poem that looks like a square or a rectangle on the page looks constipated and puritanical.

3. New forms are, in a sense, the product of an attitude. The person to whom writing is an intellectual game or a form of play will be constantly motivated to invent new forms. Inventing them is part of the fun, part of the challenge and interest in the game. To the person to whom poetry is not a game, a preoccupation with inventions will be distasteful. Demeaning, in fact, because it puts devices ahead of the real life in a poem, and, at best, reduces it to the dimensions of the device, and at worst, corrupts it. Cummings is a case in point. After one became used to his new devices, and learned to live with them, they lost their newness and one saw that they were intended to shock his readers and make them admire him for the bold fellow that he was. So far as the poetry was concerned, it served no purpose other than to draw attention to the poems as inventions; in other words, to serve themselves.

4. There's no denying that to the writer, inventing new forms is an important and exciting business, and often necessary in order to express his originality, but we must not delude ourselves that that is what is important to the reader. The reader who is not a literary historian is into a different experience when he reads a poem. To him the only thing that matters is the final product, the poem's inherent interest and durability. The values to the poet of inventing can not be passed on to the poem. That has to stand on its own merits.

Addition To Introductory Statement

5. Notwithstanding anything anyone says about new forms, so long as people differ and writers have imagination and a need to be original and distinctive, or to be simply themselves, and so long as the world keeps changing and the writer's experiences in it along with it, there will be, there have to be, new forms. But a new form can be very good for a poem, or middling, or a distraction and a bore. Obvious but necessary to say because experimentation has built up so much honor over the years that it tends to be honored whether it is good or bad.

(Carl Rakosi, along with William Carlos Williams, Louis Zukofsky, George Oppen, and Lorine Niedecker, founded the Objectivist movement. His books include *Ex Cranium*, *Night*, *Amulet*, *Droles de Journal*, and *History*. His *The Collected Poetry* was published in 1986, and a second volume, *The Collected Prose*, was published in 1987 by the National Poetry Foundation)



("New Forms/New Functions Panel": from left to right, Rebecca Wright, Paul Vjoll, Carl Rakosi, Lorenzo Thomas, Mel-Mel Berssenbrugge and Joel Oppenheimer.) Photo: Vivian Selbo.

I CUDDA HAD A V-8: POETRY AND THE VERNACULAR

by Lorenzo Thomas

[Lecture delivered on the evening of April 7th. Other lecturers that evening were Bernadette Mayer, Alice Notley, Ron Padgett, and Ron Silliman.]

Let me begin with an optimistic observation. All discourse is intentional and premeditated. We cannot "stop to think" — we're always thinking — even if circumstances sometimes impinge upon our judgement and our utterances, therefore, betray poor thinking.

"Talk fast" and "Think before you speak" are parallel guidelines that usually result in flashy blunders of candor or solicited lies. Perhaps we are considering events transacted in nanoseconds, but I insist that almost all human activity is premeditated.

Poetry, as we all know, is an often effective remedy for the sometimes life-threatening, ailment of spontaneous speech. Poetry is formulaic language, a cure for blurting. Whenever poetic speech pretends to be vernacular language it does so with the power of all deliberate artifice and a disclaimer should flash across the screen of your brain and be imprinted in the wax of your ears. Just to digress, I must mention my favorite disclaimer from a sleazy TV station in Houston. The chiron print on screen and the voice-over tells us, in properly solemn tones, "The following program may be unsuitable for many viewers; discretion is advised." Talk about industrial-strength premeditation! You knows, I gots to watch *that* movie!

But, as Max Shulman once said, I digress. Actually, Max Shulman said that thousands of times. But, I digress; I'm really supposed

to talk about our topic: "The Poetry Of Everyday Life."

The relationship between poetic diction and the vernacular utterances of everyday life is adversarial and parasitic in both directions. Poets become poets because we, this happy breed, have — through dint of genius — figured out an alternative to the "Shucks, I cudda had a V-8" syndrome.

We live in an age of growing illiteracy in a nation determined to destroy regional dialects and accents and impose a bland least-common-denominator "standard," "broadcast," or "edited" American-English on its inhabitants. Curiously, "English as an official language" is the project of a political regime that prates about a philosophy of government decentralization and non-intrusion into citizens' lives. In any case, I am here to say that poetry is *not* and cannot be vernacular expression.

No matter what it may pretend to be — and *pretend* is the signal word — poetry is, by definition, heightened speech. It is the stuff of dreams and nightmares, not dimly unpremeditated slips-of-tongue around the water-cooler. When poetry attempts to depict "everyday life" it is either *ventriloquy* (and often ironic) or *documentary* (and usually polemical and satiric). Quite often, poets who attempt to "capture the language of the people" think of the people as "fair game." Of course, such poets — basking in their own sense of personal superiority — have nothing but good intentions. William Blake, I think, told us where that road leads.

Once you have learned it, condescension is a hard habit to break. Poets can deal with "everyday life" by spilling their guts. But who, in his or her right mind, would do that? What's left is the poet as commentator and here is the real problem. The *depiction* of "everyday life," whether innocently accurate or polemically — if not mendaciously — manipulative, can only be the most formal and artificial enterprise on this planet. In fact, however, our own "dailiness" is a very studied practice of premeditated artifice.

Erving Goffman's notion, in *Presentation Of Self In Everyday Life* (1959) that life for each of us is really nothing more than a skillful verbal performance, is buttressed by Juergen Ruesch and the poet Weldon Kees in their extraordinary book *Non-Verbal Communication* (1956) where it becomes apparent that we consistently order our physical environments in ways that create "stage sets" for our verbal performances.

Poetry that attempts to depict "everyday life" is really a critical examination of (1) the relationship of candor and premeditated performance, (2) traditions of discourse, and (3) where you live. Williams' *Paterson* and Pound's *Cantos* approach dailiness in a polar relationship. One man's ephemera is another man's civilization. Yet both Pound and Williams, to many of us, are old fogies rummaging in attics: and "everyday life" to some folks is the possible visit to Attica.

Once again, Amiri Baraka pointed out long ago that "the view from the bottom of the hill" is not the same as the view from the top, but that those at the bottom had been sold on the concept that "God don't ever change." Right or wrong, that really doesn't matter. What does matter is understanding that, in this country, "everyday life" depends on who you are and where you really live. "English as our official language" aside, dailiness is various and if poetry can do anything about it, it is to document and celebrate the variety of the American quotidian. Gwendolyn Brooks' "The Bean Eaters" and Wallace Stevens' "Sunday Morning" will illustrate my point. From "Sunday Morning":

*Complacencies of the peignoir, and late
Coffee and oranges in a sunny chair,
And the green freedom of a cockatoo
Upon a rug mingle to dissipate
The holy hush of ancient sacrifice.
She dreams a little, and she feels the dark
Encroachment of that old catastrophe,
As a calm darkens among water-lights....*

And, Gwendolyn Brooks' "The Bean Eaters":

*They eat beans mostly, this old yellow pair
Dinner is a casual affair.
Plain chipware on a plain and creaking wood,
Tin flatware.*

*Two who are Mostly Good.
Two who have lived their day,
But keep on putting on their clothes
And putting things away.*

*And remembering...
Remembering, with twinklings and twinges,*

As they lean over the beans in their rented back room that is full of beads and receipts and dolls and cloths, tobacco crumbs, vase and fringes.

Clearly, these are carefully premeditated utterances intended to produce very specific responses. When the Panamanian poet Roberto McKay tells us that "the poet's business is telling the truth," he also alerts us to the fact that the poet has also carefully decided what "the truth" is and has constructed a discourse that will, the poet hopes, effectively convince readers to believe what we are told. Elliot Abrams is not as good at this stuff as McKay is, but you understand what I'm talking about. Premeditation.

The problem facing any poet who pretends to be expressive in vernacular language about quotidian concerns is the possibility that readers will be offended by artifice. The fact is that almost all "poetry of everyday life" is written, quite properly, in highly stylized poetic language. If vernacular speech has any poetic eloquence, that eloquence is almost accidental. I was talking to a wonderful folklorist and writer, Bill Brett, from Hull, Texas, and he was telling me about the phrases used in the Oil Patch by the roughnecks, the drillers, and he mentioned a phrase that they call "suitcase sand" which is what they describe a dry hole as. They'd say "What was that on your rig." And they'd answer, "Well, we hit suitcase sand yesterday." And I said "Oh Bill that's so poetic and metaphoric." And he said, "Well that's just illiterate people trying to explain things the best way they could."

The truth is, we only appreciate the portraits of our daily lives when they are — through the poet's or painter's training in artifice — better than our own carefully premeditated, but often flawed presentations (or, sadly, "renderings") of self. We love it when we listen to ourselves talking about ourselves and don't have to cringe because someone (consider Donohue, or Ellease Southerland, Eudora Welty, John Ashbery, or Oprah Winfrey — with the skill of their ventriloquy) has made us know that there are other options in understanding our lives than the phrase of another gifted poet who gave us, "Damn, I cudda had a V-8!"

"The thing about novels," Alice Notley wrote in *Margaret & Dusty* (1985), "aren't the characters / better than / ourselves?" Of course they are; but that is what I mean. Vern, y'know what I mean?

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(Lorenzo Thomas's publications include *The Bathers*, and *Chances Are Few*. He has been anthologized in *New Black Voices*, *Another World*, and *Poetry of Black America*. He co-edited *Roots Magazine*, and has been a contributing editor to *Hoo Doo*, *Black Box*, and *Nimrod* magazines. He is presently Professor of English at the University of Houston.)



(From left to right: Charles North, Charles Bernstein, Mel-Mel Berssenbrugge, Paul Vlolli, Rebecca Wright, Tony Towle, Carl Rakosi, Joel Oppenheimer, Bernadette Mayer, Ed Friedman, Lorenzo Thomas, Gary Lenhart, and Michael Scholnick.) Photo: Vivian Selbo.

REVIEWS

SPLURGE II: *Likewise*, by Paul Violi; Hanging Loose Press, 1988; 86pp. \$7 paper.

I can't think of anyone who is writing better poems right now than Paul Violi. Many of the inspired modes, and moods, that appeared in his last book, *Splurge*, make new appearances in *Likewise*: the satirical and purely comic (including the comic "found"), the outrageous word-play, the narratives and dramatic monologues, the bleak states of mind, the pure lyrics. He doesn't hold back. In addition the new book has a group of terrific adaptations from the Italian, plus two long poems either of which could justify a whole book by itself.

A part of Violi's "splurging" is to be generous with words; he's an includer rather than a whittler. The somehow unwarranted and excessive — gratuitous puns, satirical cracks, unexpected surreal bits — spill out of his lines as if he can't help himself. But he can. If you read the poems *fast*, as if they were meant to be read that way, you can miss any number of carefully attended to phrases, images and figures, many of them brilliant, and in addition a good deal of substance. Violi is one of the few genuinely funny poets around, not merely witty, *funny*. But he's also a surprisingly careful writer.

If it weren't such a literary idea, one might consider calling him a Metaphysical. If anything sets his poems apart, it is the yoking together of the totally dissimilar: "Slow Lightning," "squat elegance," "champagne in a dirty glass," "a pile of junk and generosity," "absurdity and squalor," "flowering contradiction." In all sorts of ways — oxymoron and zeugma, comic poems counterpointing more "serious" ones, marvelously inventive two-term names — *contradictions that flower* seem to be at the heart of his poetic impulse. In "Little Testament," the book's wonderful *big* closing poem, he says what instigated the poem was seeing "a lump of gold in the road," which turned out to be "bees / who like ferocious translators / had taken on the shape / of what they were devouring: a dead frog." What an amazing, complex image. The most striking poetic mood in the book — in all his books — somewhere between disaffection and limbo, almost always contains the seeds of its own banishment, which is one reason even the "dark" poems never seem cynical or truly depressed. Another reason is the verve with which he writes. Moreover, unlike most funny poets, Violi writes beautiful lyrics too, on the facing page and also on the same one. He also undercuts his own occasionally elevated tone with phrases and quick turns of feeling that are so low-down as to seem perverse. I could go on. Among many subsets of this double-sidedness is a brilliant way he has of bringing abstractions to life and definition, often in that most literary of figures, personification: "the little wings of an immensity" (well, let's call that one "avification"), "all futility and quacking isolation" (hmm...)

*Or, as Clarity said to me,
"Let's shoot the breeze."*

(from "Parkway")

Because of all the obvious humor in his work, I feel the bleaker side, apparent in the adaptations (from Cecco Angioleri, Michelangelo, Leopardi, Fra Mauro) as well as in poems in his own voice, deserves attention. There are a surprising number of references, often ironic, to emptiness, confusion, disappointment, futility. In the middle of "In Praise Of Idleness," the speaker, atop a "flunkgirder" on an unfinished building — a ruin — has this ironic little talk with himself:

*Want a cigarette? Nope.
Got a match? Nope.
See any alternative to solipsism? Nope.
Hedonism? Nope. Sloppy stoicism? Nope.
Did you know that Maryland
has no natural but only man-made lakes? Nope.*

Just when it seems there is no way out of his idle, disaffected state, the "creatures of idleness," some of whom are "big and clumsy and sly / and like to lick my watch," appear, and soon afterwards the last flake of snow

*grows larger
as it descends, and presents
when it lands in a burst of brilliance
the floorplan for a new building
where every wet, beaded window
is a picture of pleasure and expectation.
The drops ripen, moments in the light,
questions that, answered by a feeling,
slide away as clear as my being,
a drop at a time down the glass.
When the wind blows this hard
it's about to say something at last.
The earth down to its bare magic,
wind and glass, water and light.*

Although he is drawn to Michelangelo's self-disgust (and his adaptation is an amazingly lively litany of complaints) and Cecco's sardonic invective:

*If I were fire, I'd burn the world away;
If I were wind, I'd blow it down;
If I were water, I'd let it drown;
If I were God, I'd deep-six it today.*

(from "Sonnet")

the Leopardi "L'Infinito" is closer to Violi's "peculiar sense of nothing," his attempts to carve some meaningful shape and gratifications out of the randomness and almost existential idleness he finds himself held by. Somehow beauty, and more specifically poetry, have a redeeming part to play. Nor is his vision of confusion anything but clear-sighted, as in the perfect couplet that closes the book:

*It is my own gift of darkness,
less than I mean, all I can say.*

The lovely little "Triolet" which forms a kind of coda to the Idleness poem (and which proves that this form is not in fact impossible) seems an emblem for the plight and the hope, both.

I haven't done much, I realize, to suggest the *imagination* at work in Violi's poems — I wonder if that amounts to a slip. Imagination, whatever it means in these rather dry post-modern ergo propter lingua days, isn't much looked to for any light it can shed on the value of particular poems, or for that matter on poetry in general. Indeed, it often looks as though we have been "freed" to get on with our task — which seems, curiously, to be anything but poets. Let me therefore call attention to the abundant imagination that pervades *Likewise*. "King Nasty" is a brilliant piece of dramatic monologue that goes on for 13 pages satirizing Hollywood, and the Reign of Terror of the French Revolution. (Can the Reign of Terror be *satirized*? If it leaps "Out of the Pol Pot and into the frying pan" and includes heads that roll but also bounce and speak, probably.) The reader is left not quite knowing how to respond, although fascinated horror, or perhaps horrible fascination, seems in order. Equally imaginative in a different vein is "Little Testament," roughly after Villon, which collates a big range of real and imaginary experience, bestowing "gifts" on the deserving and undeserving, including the poet, the "occasional nihilist."

Among the shorter poems, some that stand out are the lovely nocturne "Slow Lightning," the absolutely hilarious "Fable: Kid Blanco" and "Drastic Measures" (both containing some real-life domestic drama beneath the surface), and the perfect opening poem, "Abundance," which takes off from Williams' rollicking "The Dance," but the way a plane takes off from a runway: the rest of the trip is Violi. Apparently out to depict the vibrant life of Canal Street (as Williams celebrates Breughel's depiction of a peasant fair — this is getting Platonic), the poem begins, outrageously,

*In Breughel's great picture Canal Street,
restaurant customers order roast swan
instead of chicken, hurled salad
instead of tossed salad...*

goes on to satirize a street peddler and his audience, shifts in mid-flight to "silver towns and sea and fields" and farmers who throw "animals, large animals, / into the air to be carried away / on the winds of exuberance" and eventually, but only eventually, returns to Canal Street. Often the effect of Violi's exuberant imagination is to set poems to bursting, not simply as here via random or surreal connections, but often via stretching or undercutting of the familiar ways, including formal ones, poetry handles things. A portion at least of the invention and the pleasure occurs in the space between the unstated habits and conventions, and the rule-smashing.

One potential issue I see in these poems is the rearing up of violence, even cruelty, as comic material, background, or even focus. It's at its most obvious in "King Nasty," which has the framework of satire for justification, but makes an appearance in a number of places, even a gratuitous cameo one (which I guess is the joke) in the title of an otherwise very pretty lyrical poem, "When To Slap A Woman." In similar fashion a few horrifying historical anecdotes crop up out of Violi's reading, one startling one involving images of faces left in ice following the Siege of Leningrad, another involving the German pirate Stoertebaker who managed to run past 14 of his crew *after* he

was beheaded. Well, we do live in the Age of Blue Velvet. Myself, I think much of this material — let me not fail to mention an ironic "Totem Pole" consisting mostly of beheaded figures from history — the edge to the work, belongs with the "occasional nihilist" side of Violi's poetic impulse. He's not just kidding around, and he doesn't hold back. What he does do is turn whatever provides the impulse into poems which give evidence of his curiosity and learning, feelings, wit, and struggle to come to terms with private demons. He is, when the occasion arises, as tough on himself as on anyone, and he displays a sharp eye for beauty in and out of language, in whatever terms and on whatever terms it presents itself.

Although a few of the poems in *Likewise*, good by most standards, aren't quite up to the book's high standard, in just about all of them Violi manages to bring off something extraordinary. Take "Private Jokes," a poem in a minor mood, which closes with a stunning image of Tragedy and Comedy as Siamese twins

*starting the day
in the usual way,
washing each other's hands,
combing each other's hair.*

Or take "Midnight Shift," which begins in a familiar mood, a limbo with no possibilities:

*—But then to feel your hand instead, palm up
on the bed like a little boat in the dark,

with everything calm for an instant
before out of nowhere all of you lands
on me with a great laugh, a splash of hair.*

That's singing at heaven's gate. Not the movie.

—Charles North

* *

THE WRITING LIFE

I doze off at my writing table. A pale green fungus blooms on the doodled page. Slowly, it spreads. It mounts my hand, climbs along my cradling arm, and gradually begins to cover my snoozing head. Its color deepens. It grows thicker and denser. Eventually, a rich, moss-like growth carpets my entire head and shoulders, the length of one arm, and most of the surface of the table, including the unabridged dictionary. My snores from within this topiary rug are muffled, barely perceptible to the ear.

At the doorway behind me, my girlfriend glances in on her way to the kitchen. She smiles at what she sees. "Oh good," she thinks. "He's working." And she treads along more quietly.

—Barry Yourgrau

Ground Work II: In the Dark, Robert Duncan; New Directions. 90 pages. \$19.95 cloth, \$9.95 paper.

Ground Work II: In the Dark is all that one might have expected of Robert Duncan's last book, a work of grand depth and seriousness exploring the shadow lands between life and death and "before What Is...in the dark this state / that knows not sleep nor waking, nor dream / —an eternal arrest." ("After A Long Illness").

For this poet whose lyric voice was almost a match for the mythical Orpheus' in its capacity to coax harmonies out of wild contradictions, symbolic fulfillments seemed to flock like the birds charmed out of the trees in those Orphic myths. It's poetic justice, then, that his final book should appear within a few days of the dispersion of his mortal remains. After all, this was a poet who refused to believe in chance. "Creation," he said, "is everywhere intending." Obeying the "orders" of a cosmic creative intent constituted Duncan's life work. "The world floods the moment we write," he once said. "We don't get to sit down and push that world, or invent it."

Postmodernist social affiliations notwithstanding, his true poetic affinities were prior; talking just last year about his role in the Olson-Creeley push, he told me he'd always "lagged behind, consciously," feeling he "belonged to an older constellation."

The "older constellation" was the Orphic/Romantic, a tradition evolved out of medieval mystical hermeticism and neo-Platonism, and culminating in the nineteenth-century yearnings for transcendental wholeness — or what Duncan playfully called "altogetherness" — of those writers who were his real spiritual antecedents, Shelley, Blake, Nerval, Poe, Baudelaire, Whitman.

Duncan once defined the romantic as a condition in which the actual and the spiritual are revealed at the same time. ("Working in words I am an escapist," he said, "but I want every part of the actual world involved in my escape.") The title of his first book expressed this: *Heavenly City, Earthly City*. So does almost every poem here in his last one. As in so many earlier Duncan poems of sensuous erotic rapture, sexual communion yields ego-dissolving bliss in "an Eros/Amor/Love/Cycle": "O every thing / was in the passing away into the kiss." But much more prevalent as a subject here — "Now truly the sexual Eros will have / left me and gone his way" — is an equally paradox-embracing convergence of failing physical systems with psyche as death drawing near "Secretly / in the dark."

To say a terminal illness is the main matter here, or that this book is dominated by considerations of mortality, would be both true and sadly limiting. "Tears will not start here," the book's opening line, is a promise fully kept. Not that sentimentality was ever a Duncan trait. Dread and apprehension are here, honestly "actual" enough in poems frankly addressing death, but far less prominent in the emotional totality of things than wonder and suspense — the same watchful suspension of disbelief, a sort of waiting for the flood of transmission (or trance-mission), which has always given Duncan's work a

powerful sense of openness and receptivity.

Given the timing, it's indeed hard *not* to read this book as a journal of holy dying. Its very format is foretold in its eerie and stirring final lines, by an approaching shadow figure — no longer a desired lover but a "particular Death" — who dictates the disposition of the last two decades of the poet's work into two books, the 1983 *Ground Work I: Before the War*, and this one:

*"I have given you a cat in the dark," the voice said.
Everything changed in what has always been there
at work in the Ground: the two titles
"Before the War", and now, "In the Dark"
underwrite the grand design. The magic
has always been there, the magnetic purr
run over me, the feel as of cat's fur...*

The imminent arrival of the ending hanging over the story informs even the intimate pacing and measure of the verse here, weighing down the somber metric of a poem like "To Master Baudelaire": "When I come to Death's customs, / to the surrender of my nativities, / that office of the dark too I picture / as if there were a crossing over, / a going through a door."

To my ear the poem which accomplishes that measured "crossing over" most dimensionally is "The Styx." Here the sacred mythic river of the Greeks — crossed by the souls of the dead on their journey from the realm of the living — becomes first a watercourse deep within the earth, then with typical Duncanesque doubleness a premonitory psychic dream-river, drawing the hesitant, divinely-originated soul back homeward.

*Styx this carver of caverns beneath us is.
Styx this black water this down-pouring.*

*The well is deep...
The light of day is not as bright
as this crystal flowing...*

*the river beneath the earth we knew
we go back to.
Styx pouring down in the spring from its glacial remove,
from the black ice.*

*Fifty million years — from the beginning of what we are —
we knew the depth of this well to be.*

*Fifty million years deep — but our knowing deepens
— time deepens —
this still water
we thirst for in dreams we dread.*

Even Orpheus' lyric song, which made actual rivers stand still, couldn't halt time's flow. Robert Duncan's poetry here completes its final paradox-resolving proposition, reminding us that the song itself becomes part of that great flow.

—Tom Clark

SONS OF THEIR SKINS: ADVENTURES IN BRITISH DISSONANCE...a survey of recent developments in the poetry of the United Kingdom.

Tom Raworth, *Visible Shivers*; O Books, Oakland, CA, 1987. Unpaged, \$8 paper.

Tom Pickard, *Custom & Exile*; Allison & Busby (dist. by Schocken), New York, 1985. 64 pages. \$6.95 paper.

Roy Fisher, *A Furnace*; Oxford, New York, 1986. 48 pages. \$7.95 paper.

Simon Pettet, *Lyrical Poetry*; Archipelago Books, New York, 1987. 68 pages. \$5 paper.

John Ash, *Disbelief*; Carcanet; New York, 1987. 127 pages. \$9.95 paper.

Douglas Oliver, *Kind*; Allardyce, Barnett; Berkeley, CA, 1987. 190 pages. \$12 paper.

Anthony Barnett, *The Resting Bell*; Allardyce, Barnett; Berkeley, 1987. 382 pages. \$16 paper.

J.H. Prynne, *Poems*; Allardyce, Barnett; London, 1982. 319 pages. \$15 paper.

Andrew Crozier, *All Where Each Is*; Allardyce, Barnett; Berkeley, 1985. 318 pages. \$15 paper.

(Note: Allardyce, Barnett books are available from SPD Inc., 1814 San Pablo Ave, Berkeley, CA 94702; and Segue Distributors, 303 E. 8th St., NYC 10009)

In 1976, critic George Steiner, then Extraordinary Fellow of Churchill College, said the almost unsayable in his essay *Linguistics & Poetics* when he stated:

To an observer, it is very nearly an unavoidable conclusion that English as it is spoken and written in England today is an enervated, tired version of the language as compared with the almost Elizabethan rapacities and zest of American English and of the breathless literature it is sending into the world.

Commentators who have followed in the wake of those above remarks have proffered varying theories for the fall in Britannia's literary production. Marxists have noted that the dissolution of England's imperialist empire also coincides with its literary decline: that England's faded standing as a world power is reflected in its literature. Cultural critics have pointed out that American English, with its free borrowings of vocabulary, phraseology and construction from the many ethnic groups that make up this nation, gives it a greater flexibility and creative use than the slow-to-change Queen's (King's?) English.

In the realm of poetry, certainly the metal test for current linguistic practices, the decline in British literature is most evidenced. The most English of 20th century English poets was an American import (Eliot), and its best hope (Auden) left for America and quickly acclimated to life on this side of the Atlantic. Oddly, some of the finest of twentieth-century British poets are products of languages and cultures that the Anglo-Saxon ruling class attempted to dismantle and subdue. The Celtic Welsh offered Dylan Thomas and David Jones a tradi-

tion of poetics and a counter-history to draw upon. Hugh MacDiarmid wrote his remarkable poetry in both Scots and English. And Basil Bunting drew upon the dialect and traditions of Northumbria.

If one examines what Eric Mottram calls "official" poetry in Great Britain — an accoutrement of leisure life along with "comedians and cigarettes, 'my car' and 'the box'" — one realizes that careerists, party hacks and line-toers are of one great brotherhood of self-aggrandization. The poets who followed in the wake of the anti-Modernist 50's "Movement" group hold the equivalent positions of power in the Art Councils, the University, and the major publishing houses as do the American poets who emerge from the MFA Creative Writing programs.

There is, however, a strong counter-poetry that exists in England, challenging the current canon of received values of decorum. This alternative tradition can be traced to the poets Charles Tomlinson and Gael Turnbull, who began publicizing the poetry of William Carlos Williams in the British writing community in the Fifties. The aural effects of Williams's poetry was previously considered, by no less an authority than William Empson, to be inaudible to British ears. Though Tomlinson and Turnbull's efforts were rather solitary campaigns, they did attract a few poets to the prosody of American-style Modernism.

The Albert Hall poetry reading of 1965, captured in Peter Whitehead's documentary *Wholly Communion*, marks public awareness of a new poetry in Britain that had been emerging since the late Fifties. Spurred on by the Beats (Ginsberg had his first reading in England in 1963) and products of a robust British economy that was opening up the universities to the burgeoning middle class, the new poets shed the political conservatism and provincialism that had marked so much of then-recent British poetry. Although a rereading of Mikhail Horvitz's 1968 *Children of Albion* anthology makes one realize that a good deal of the poetry of that loose collection of anti-establishment writers was somewhat conventional and, often, not very good, it did create the ground for a later generation of poets whose work remains, sadly, too little heard in this country.

Tom Raworth [See Raworth interview elsewhere in this issue. -Ed.], who was in attendance at the Royal Albert reading, has found as much of an audience for his work in the U.S. as he has in Britain. "My method is the essence of simplicity," he once stated, "I write down fragments of language passing through my mind that interest me enough after thought has played with them for me to imagine I might like to read them." His new volume, *Visible Shivers*, will be warmly received by both his old readers and those new to the work. The first section is a journal work from a 1971 stay at Yaddo ("dank day a good day for english poetry"), while the remainder of the book is a selection of recent poems. While much of the work extends upon the principles that take shape in the volume *Ace* (1974) — short lines with little punctuation that create a multiple syntax akin to dial-flipping on late-night radio — Raworth has included a number of short political poems that owe something to Ed Dorn's "Hello, La Jolla":

THE SCENT OF CARS

frightening
to think
of people
waiting
all day
to see the queen.

Tom Pickard's *Custom & Exile* is his first volume of poetry since 1979's *Hero Dust*, which was a book of selected poems. A Geordie from Newcastle whose friendship at age seventeen with fellow townsman Basil Bunting encouraged the latter to break his long silence and write the magnificent *Briggflatts*, Pickard has taken Bunting's advice of "taking a chisel to write" by creating tight aphoristic poems that are some of the finest contemporary examples of the Poundian writing project:

DOMESTIC ART

on a white
cabinet

in our three
blued
bathroom

she has folded
over a glass dish
of abalone shells

a bright pink
facecloth

Though Roy Fisher is of the generation of Tomlinson and Turnbull, his alignment with post-Modern poetics — his use of fragmentation and surrealistic techniques — has had a great deal of influence among younger British poets. His most recent book, *A Furnace*, is a contemporary masterpiece which this short citation can do little but bring to it some public awareness. A book-length sequence, it was described by one critic as a portrait of Great Britain under Thatcherism. That is, perhaps, part of the greater landscape this poem undertakes — the collapse of the West into post-industrial Late Capitalism, a society that has no need for a proletariat and produces nothing but the exchange of information:

The age has a cold blackness of hell
in cities at night. London
is filled with it, Chicago cradles it
in ice-green glitter along
the dark of the lake. Birmingham Sparkbrook,
Birmingham Centre, Birmingham Castle Vale
hang in it as holograms.....

Something will be supposed
to inhabit it, though it is not
earth, sky or sea. There will be
spastic entrepreneurial voyages twitched out
from wherever its shores may lie.

It takes a healthy dollop of *chutzpa* in 1988, in this treacly age of postmoderndeconsemiolacania to entitle one's book *Lyrical Poetry*. Simon Pettet seems to own some of that rare conditioning and has delivered a small volume that lives up to its billing. Pettet, out of London and an East Village resident for over a decade, serves up short, almost offhand poems whose full force doesn't really hit until the eyes have almost ceased scanning the page:

SPLEEN

What can't keep
can't keep
and that's the end of it.

I've considered
giving it to the birds
but I don't have
that patience.

John Ash is another British emigre, and like Pettet, has been considerably influenced by New York School poetry. At a reading he recently gave at Brooklyn College, he noted that the primary reason for moving to New York City was the difficulty in being a New York School poet residing in Manchester. His fifth and most recent volume, *Disbelief*, contains mostly poems written since his 1985 arrival in New York, and the strength of many of the poems therein seems to confirm his decision to emigrate. Despite the similarity of name to another New York School poet (I had once thought it a typo) and the dedication of poems to familiar New York School dedicatees (David Kermani and Darragh Park) I find Ash's work deriving more from the later W.H. Auden, as his work lacks the critical edge contained in the poetry of Ashbery, Koch, and O'Hara. In "Croissant Outlets in Seattle" he states "I regard the world as on TV / on which I change the channels at will." His work takes particular pleasure in creating small, momentary principalities whose residents are citizens of the imagination. Disarmingly retro, *Disbelief*, like Auden's *Nones*, is a good read (a term rarely brought up nowadays) full of music and surface play done simply for the pleasure of the author and reader. Is there room for another esthete poet? V.I. Lenin: "Better a good idealism than a bad materialism":

Not horns of the Bois nor Bugles of Vincennes,
nor accordions, bars, or the elegance of ugly women
can hold me back, for I hear sirens —

sirens of factories and ships
and I will go to Manchester:
it will be charming and provincial
I will taste the rustic dishes
I will take my ease amid the clean
Victorian buildings and quiet oils of its canals.
(from "Nostalgia")

One of the most significant publishing ventures in the world of alternative British poetry has been the "Agneau2" series of Allardyce, Barnett. The series attempts to issue comprehensive collections of poets whose works are otherwise only available mostly in rare and/or hard-to-find editions.

The most recent addition to this series is Douglas Oliver's *Kind*. Oliver, like Roy Fisher, writes a politically engaged poetry that is in touch with all aspects of human experience — as opposed to the literary wallpostering that is endemic to much American political verse. He is also one of the few contemporary writers who practices the lost art of satiric poetry, the prime examples being his mock-oracle text, "The Cave of Suicession" and "The Infant and The Pearl," a long poem concerning modern Britain based on the medieval dream vision, *Pearl*.

His recent move to Manhattan, slightly ahead of this edition of collected poems, may not be as celebrated as Auden's shift of venue, but may prove to be as significant to our current poetry community.

SELLING

*In a dinghy called "Carry Me"
we lie like rats to save our souls
in their defeat and sail again
east across Brightlingsea estuary
as the angelic
drains over grey horizons to its birth*

*Print this sea in case
we're on the last time of its going
many miles together.*

Those familiar with Anthony Barnett's two books from Rhode Island's Burning Deck press will be happily surprised with *The Resting Bell*, which collects his poetry from 1968 to 1985. Trained as a percussionist and active in improvisatory music, many of Barnett's often terse poems transform daily life in musical themes and variations. His is an abstracted Objectivism, his stanzas placed against the silence of the white page as Anton Webern did with his packets of lonely notes.

J.H. Prynne is considered by some to be the finest poet writing in England today. His comprehensive *Poems* tracks a career that begins in the shade of Charles Olson, eventually evolving into an original poetry that finds the political in the strands of the various discourses that share the air in our society. Recently, I have detected Prynne's influence in such recent American works as Barrett Watten's *Progress*, and Bob Perelman's *First World*. Prynne's work, like that of Robert Duncan and Louis Zukofsky, is a poetry that demands *engagement* by the reader; the surface difficulty the work proposes is a reflection of the difficult task of the inquiry and examination of civil society that the poet has taken up:

BOLT

*If you set your mind to it, the words
tell you the first levels are the free ones,
only the end is fixed by its need
to be freely led up to. And for me
all levels are held up but the last,
the parting shot I don't dream of
but see every day. Then you buy
another notebook, scissors vanish
and the spiral binding shews justly
the force of even intervals.*

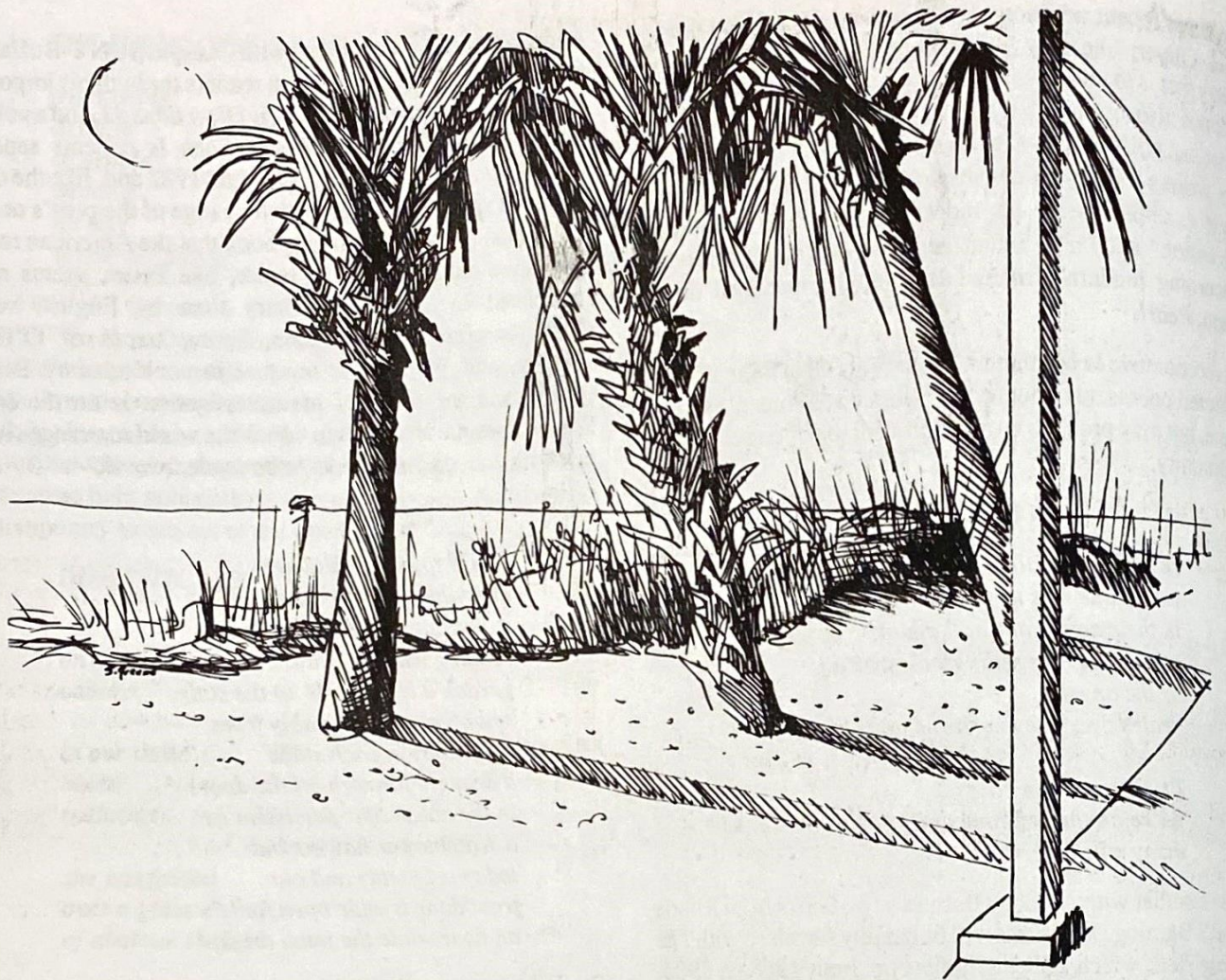
Andrew Crozier, who studied with Olson at SUNY-Buffalo, is somewhat familiar to American readers through his important Ferry Press, an appearance in *New Directions* 32, and a volume from Burning Deck. *All Where Each Is* collects separate volumes published between 1967 and 1982 and, like the other Agneau2 volumes, brings forth the range of the poet's oeuvre rather than the occasional chapbook that the American reader may have chanced upon. Crozier, like Pettet, seems more influenced by American poetry than by English verse. Crozier's conversational tone, baring traces of O'Hara, Creeley, and Wieners, is unusual in contemporary British poetry, and the focus of his investigation is on the small Williams-esque moments in which the world rearranges itself just long enough for a poem to be made from it:

TACKY

*White spirit in hallways
everything after winter
wants cutting and trimming
reading waiting while
garden advice drifts up the stairs
smoke vents implacably from
a chimney in each stack
a draught through all the doors
in the house ajar persistent as
a Watchtower hawkler but
today is Sunday and our
front door is wide open for
an hour while the jamb dries.*

The British poetry that critics claim to be exhausted is the poetry of the received forms and ideas. The poets under discussion in this brief survey are only part of a larger group of poets who, by the main, are closed out of commercial publishing houses and university posts. I could easily add Wendy Mulford, Asa Beneviste, Peter Riley, and Allen Fisher to the list of significant contemporary British poets, if only their work were more available to American readers. Ironically, we have turned the tables on Great Britain; after years of British ignorance of American poetry (T.S. Eliot on W.C. Williams in 1935: "A poet of local interest, perhaps" and referred to Wallace Stevens, at age 72, as a "young chap" when giving the OK for the latter's *first* {in 1952!} British publication), we have successfully ignored what is significant from our neighbors on the other end of the North Atlantic Turbine. Our literary insularity ignores the fact that we are part of an enormous English-language writing community that encompasses six continents (maybe seven — perhaps there are Antarctic poets writing *Things To Do In McMurdo Sound*) and that can include Dennis Brutus, Geoffrey Hill, and Steve McCafferey as poets of our language. The variable art of Messrs Raworth, Prynne, Pickard and company is not just a display case of current work from the Mother Church of our bricoleur's tongue; these volumes represent some of the most exciting developments in contemporary poetry. Although some of these books are difficult to procure, they all have American distributors and will reward the diligent reader amply for the effort spent.

—Joel Lewis



***Limousine Dreams*: poems by Vicki Hudspith, drawings by James DeWoody; Bench Press (141 W. 24th St., New York, NY 10011). No price listed.**

Limousine Dreams is one of those smart, stylish collaborations between poets and artists characteristic of the "New York School." This slim 8 1/2 by 11" volume contains 14 pages of poems by Vicki Hudspith, with facing drawings by James DeWoody. The drawings, like the cover, are limited to the colors yellow and black, but are otherwise various and clever. The poems contain lyrical passages, but are mostly narratives of life in New York City during the bold, glamorous 80s. The characters inhabit largely the same social world as the attractive young couples in Alex Katz's paintings, so readers soon find themselves in a "cozy / room filled with elegant people drinking / beautiful paintings on all peripheries." It's almost like the movies, so this must be where we have aspired to all our lives, but we are soon made uncomfortable by the woman who drinks too much and plows out the door threatening loudly to soon return. Although she doesn't, we soon notice that everybody is drinking a little too much; it's evident that nobody is as comfortable in this milieu as they appeared when the scene opened. We even run into our narrator suffering from hangover at a business lunch. Hudspith doesn't miss much, nor does she paint anything in sentimental hues. The satire here is clear, focussed, unsparing. In these documentaries, an unslaked thirst drives the poor drunk, and the rich. I've always admired most those poems of Hudspith's in which the narrative is

extended, and so enjoyed the five longer poems here most. In one of them, "The Best Deal in Town," folks come from far and near to Manhattan for the "big wanting wall" that promises everything. But, as Hudspith says, "Wanting is always so thirsty."

So beneath the glamorous appearances, there remain all those vague and particularly thirsting desires, all destined to be disappointed. These poems are not for the faint-hearted or self-deluded. The hopes raised by the Promised Land turn out to have been conjured by the Sales Department, and the goods purchased to fulfill a dream prove to be not what they seem, are maybe even a little tacky. When our narrator goes to Fort Lauderdale on spring break, it's an outlander version of the same story.

*The ocean like an aquamarine gem gently rolls
up to the goofy graceful palms sticking up
every which way behind the McDonald's
housed in a 50's Cuban style
white washed stone building
trimmed in red and yellow, the best golden arches
probably ever small advertising planes
zoom back and forth with messages
Where the next cocktail hour will be and what to see
scrawny pimple-faced boys traveling in teams
trying to get laid*

The distance between what the commercials tell us we will see and what we see is daunting. In a style almost as hard-boiled as Dashiell Hammett, our narrator pierces the veil of this tropical paradise, just as she does daily in the advertising center of the universe. But she also continues resolutely with good humor and unflinching resourcefulness. Though she knows the score, she is a "happy prisoner of [her] life / (Most of the time)." Significantly the limousine of the title shows up only to whisk off an obnoxious Irish preppy and his unfortunate date, who imagined Hawaii but must settle for a big blue drink, a kissy Irishman, and a hotel room with a carpet plush enough to fall into.

In the space of 14 pages, Vicki Hudspeth covers a lot of territory with disarming directness and tough-minded restraint. In contrast to the disappointment that is the fate of most limousine dreams, these poems offer much more than the title advertises.

— Gary Lenhart

Head, Bill Kushner; United Artists Books (Box 2616, Peter Stuyvesant Sta., New York, NY 10009). \$5 paper.

I read *Head* cover to cover and enjoyed every minute of it because there is real beauty in it and the constant reward of illuminated truth. Look at the poem called *Fall*.

*He's got this wonderful long view
of these rather weepy, hysterical trees
so that no one is really surprised
when the boy with the hearton walks in
"aglow with the dew of centuries"
and promptly sits down. A few leaves
flutter, a few break and fall, but most
ignore it all, they've seen it all
and I prefer to remain anonymous, anyway
just sorting this blue-veined leaf, those glistening limbs
intense and quiet as that time of day
that is neither day or night, a last lingering light
faintly flickers here to there, we should be home
inside, alone, and what delight to find we are.*

and you will see Kushner's poetry's a written conversation like Shakespeare or Catullus, totally modern offhand yet observed, his caesuras well placed with the casualness of natural breath, his everyday words beautifully said, everything a poem should be and is, ambiguously clear amusing grief sonnets actually not long, never boring, readable reads. Out of the holy moment of Write It As You Go Bill Kushner comes (& comes & comes) like Venus from the shell with a phallus rising against the NYC skyline funny and sad at the same time telling it all:

HOT

*Helplessly, he groaned, and started pumping
whimpered, cried, moaned, grunted, and all the
electric ripples of ecstasy that shot all through
the naked flare of his strong-arcng buttocks. He*

*leaned forward, close, his breath hot and sweet
"You're a hot little bastard, aren't you?" Just
the rough sound of his voice was strangely exciting
inquisitive tongue into armpits, tantalizing
cock dancing a spontaneous adagio on his
senses to fiery flame and sent his belly seething
in pickups, campers, tractor-trailers, even a bus
heaving on top of him straddling his muscular torso
ramming deep into the wet heat of him, trying
that big frightening thing. He wanted to feel it all*

This is Kushner at his most musically erotic. And these sonnets often deal directly with sex — raunchy, movie house, back-room sex — using an abrupt shorthand borrowed from pornography. But despite the aroma of uppers and cum there's still an air of innocence. That last, somehow unfinished "He wanted to feel it all" is a clue. The search goes on. It is not surprising then that cruising as a metaphor plays such a strong part in these poems.

What sets Kushner apart in his hunger-for-flesh dissection of the gay scene is his humor and his wide-eyed wonder. Bleaker, jaundiced and relatively soulless eyes have peeked around on some of the same territory, but the resulting poems don't go nearly as deep. What Kushner may lose in intensity he more than gains in emotion, humor and humanity.

— Don Yorty & Richard Carlsen

* *

"If there's a cutting edge
...Between C & D is on it."

—AMERICAN BOOK REVIEW

New Writing
from the
Lower East Side
Fiction Magazine.



BETWEEN C&D

Edited by

Joel Rose and Catherine Texier

For the Best in Paperbacks. Look for the Penguin

INTERVIEW WITH TOM RAWORTH BY TED GREENWALD

What does it feel like to be a poet in the "postmodern" era?

Thirsty Work. I never even figured out what modernism was. It's not the first thing I think about in the morning. Where's the coffee?

Is there any future in words?

The future of words is in balloons. To take the place of the light bulb. Are there any words in the future? Should we breed for purity? Eugenics of the vocabulary.

Do you think poetry will ever develop an economy?

Only of phrasing.

Why does the media have such a hard time with poetry?

I guess they think you can act everything. Edited highlights, you know.

How important is boredom?

I think boredom is crucial. I think it's the only distinction I make in things.

How so?

If it's boring, ignore it. Find something that's not boring straightaway. You're never alone with a thought.

Do you have a sense which direction poetry's taking as we move into the 21st century?

Nope. Probably words will still be involved.

What's your favorite movie of the 80's?

I can't think of things as dated. I liked the noises of *Blade Runner*. If that was the 80's.

What does love got to do with it?

Probably everything. The mysterious *it*. The world of *it*. I always liked the world of *it*. *It's* snowing today. You're *it*.

Is inspiration necessary?

Not for eating. But especially before exhalation.

What's your favorite weather?

Uh huh. Autumn morning, without rain.

Who gets the horse?

The French peasant eats the horse. I ate horse tartare in Italy

once and it was great.

Who does the dishes?

Water.

Who gets the girl?

Which.

Whichever.

Whoever. Or should that be, whomever?

Any advice to beginning writers?

Remember your reading. You're is You Are.

Last thoughts?

Probably. I hope to go out thinking.

Did you think of that?

The answer. Not the question.

If so, why not?

I like that as a poem.

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At the Church

Minister

We are gathered here today o Flock...

Young Tyke

We are not!

Mother

Sssshhhhhh

Minister

Madam, your son is correct

Young Tyke

I'm a girl!

Mother (*pointing finger*)

And you...(sobbing) He's your father!

Young Tyke

DADDY!

Minister (*with arms uplifted*)

It's all true

CURTAIN

—Bob Holman

a journey

all the energy clotted like blood stained
blackened in the veins of my brain
a mass of cherry jello half-cut trembling pitifully on the dish
deep down from the depth of my unconsciousness
mental hell is rising sulphurous
somewhat red somewhat black melting the earth
the consciousness

in the kitchen, chocolate syrup stale
pouring out from the plastic bottle
melting with yellow oxidated butter
fork glitters dim on the table
knife unwashed shining savage
cutting the pancake into pieces
with thick unsharpened blade
cutting the time cutting the space
cutting the universe inner and outer
into pieces never will be attached again
ties of the world broken
and the order disappears

then i castrated by the 32nd emperor of china
Ming Yang, exiled into the Gobi Desert filled with dunes
chased once by the clay soldiers of the tyrant
missioned to free my country again
yet the sun melts my flesh and will
the footsteps left on the sand getting zigzag
the sun burns...i faint
suddenly from the dune
a figure springs out splashing the sand
an old man with white thin beard
a sage
cutting the space with tai-chi motions
chained by the yellow noodles
burdened by the beef bones
yells with zen-master koan cries
—power doesn't last long, the dominance fades
spitting chicken soup steaming rainbow into the air
waving his huge boiled broccoli umbrella
and the seasoned vegetables glued on his body like cloth
protecting me from the burning sun

he points at me with his skinny finger
sort of like a mummy's penis
—you have been through dire hell haven't you
the manipulations in the court,
the poisoned apricot served on your dish
the dagger glittered in your bedroom
the snake tangled in your shitpot
and your balls cut away
it was tough, tough shit

but you got to tell the folks
your countrymen, the hog-chasing farmers
the streets-spitting merchants,
the chinese-petticoat-lifting whores
what you have been through, the hell you have experienced
then he disappears

like piss fallen on the heated dunes

the sun burns, burns reflecting the malice of this universe
a gigantic california grapefruit radiating the fatal beams
giving me more than sun-tan

the time passed noon i guessed
the longer hand of my watch was gone
safari jacket on my body dried like paper
a still wondering by the side of brown bubbles
swelling like hills left and stuck inside of an espresso cup
stumbling over the twinkling rocks of sugar
on the white porcelain curving circle
smelling coffee

by my left shoulder i gaze down into the bottom
the sticky muddy swamp of espresso
above my head i see the inside of
blossomed purple petals
hanging in the air

the madness the madness in caffè degli artisti in greenwich ave.
while black-wearing artists talking about love
and their mental problems

—can i have the check please
i stand up from the seat and say
sweating on my back
the waitress's pimples also wearing black
walking toward me smiling with her thin lips
—espresso? she asks
—ESPRESSO?
it is quite a masculine voice
and the slight smell of chicken soup
chinese
i look up
the sage stands there
mumbling
—power doesn't last long
hypnotized i stand
murmuring
—dominance fades
he concludes
—for life doesn't last long
not yours
not others'

i heard someone drop the
dishes

pieces on the floor

—yoshi

* *

married three years

all the china's broke

—Bruce Andrews

Books Received

The Man on the Moon, William Allen; Persea Books, New York, 1987. 90 pages. \$6.95 paper.

Separations, Tom Beckett; Generator Press (8139 Midland Rd. Mentor, OH 44060), 1988. \$3 paper. With an introduction by Bruce Andrews.

periods, Selected Writing 1972-1987, Phil Demise and Phil Smith; Gegenschein (111 Third Ave, #12C, NYC 10003). approx 370 pages. no price mentioned. "A distinguished collection of experiments, representing nearly two decades of thinking about the frontiers of creative literature today."
- Richard Kostelanetz.

Goodbye, Sweetwater, Henry Dumas; Thunder's Mouth Press, 1988. 347 pp. \$19.95 cloth, \$9.95 paper. A celebratory collection of Dumas's fiction, published 20 years after his death.

Trumpets from the Island of their Eviction, Martín Espada; Bilingual Press (Hispanic Research Ctr, Ariz. State U., Tempe, AZ 85287), 1987. 93 pp. No price mentioned. With a foreword by Robert Creeley.

The Brotherhood of the Grape, John Fante; Black Sparrow Press, 1988. 178 pp. \$20 cloth, \$10 paper.

Savings, Linda Hogan; Coffee House Press, Minneapolis, 1988. 78 pp. \$7.95 paper. Winner of the American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation.

The Horn, John Clellon Holmes; Thunder's Mouth Press, 1988. 250 pp. \$19.95 cloth, \$9.95 paper. Reprint of the 1958 classic. "The most successful novel of jazz that has ever been published." - San Francisco Chronicle.

Against Numerology, poems by Richard Caddel, Drawings by Basil King; Twickenham & Wakefield, 1987. Unpaginated, \$9 paper.

Selected Poems, Antonio Machado; Harvard Univ. Press, 1982. 316 pages. Just issued in paper at \$16.95. Translated by Alan S. Trueblood. Facing English and Spanish.

the gates of ivory, the gates of horn, Thomas McGrath; Another Chicago Press, 1987. 128 pp. \$7.95 paper. "An Orwellian examination of the effects of power on the individual by someone who personally faced the investigators..."

At Night the States, Alice Notley; Yellow Press, Chicago, 1987. 76 pp. \$6.95 paper. With cover design and drawings by George Schneeman.

Shadow Wars, D. Nurske; Hanging Loose Press, Brooklyn, NY 1988. 74 pp. \$15 cloth, \$7 paper.

Strip Mining, Susan Osterman; Cambric Press, 1987. 72 pp. \$7 paper. "Her style is a glorious combination of e.e. cummings,

Ferlinghetti and something of her own." - Laura Vargas.

Dolphin Leaping in the Milky Way, Jeff Poniewaz; Inland Ocean Books (4540 S. 1st St., Milwaukee, WI 53207), 1986. 143 pp. \$6.95 paper. "Timely—strong, obsessive, impassioned." - Anne Waldman.

Ice Cubes, Kit Robinson; Roof (300 Bowery, New York, NY 10012), 1987. 93 pp. \$6 paper.

Housing, Preservation, & Development, Tom Savage; Cheap Review Press, 1988. 85 pp. \$4.50 paper. With an introduction by Bernadette Mayer.

Selected Poems, James Schuyler; Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1988. 292 pages. \$25. Not to be missed.

Requiem for a Dream, Hubert Selby, Jr.; Thunder's Mouth Press, 1988. 279 pp. \$9.95 paper. First published 10 years ago. By the author of *Last Exit to Brooklyn*.

Voyaging Portraits, Gustaf Sobin; New Directions, 1988. 128 pp. \$9.95 paper. "Gustaf Sobin excels in this art in which poetry and magic seem one..." - Robert Duncan.

More or Less Urgent, Nina Zivancevic; New Rivers Press (1602 Selby Ave, St. Paul, MN 55104), 1988. With photographs by Sokhi Wagner. 68 pp. \$5 paper. "Among us bilingual guerrillas, she is the chief flame-maker." - Andrei Codrescu.

FOR ROBERT DUNCAN

d. February 3, 1988

How the arm moved
throwing the poet's
ashes out of the boat
how it all comes back

How the whole story
form of telling curves
the story around
these cosmic corners

How the stars swam
how the moon
was dying down
out over the water

To loosen out into
those big quiet waters
little pieces of
us all are floating on

—Tom Clark

ARCHITECTURE

for Donna Dennis

I want to move into
 an outlaw corner of your psyche
 Stage set - bulbs & angles -
 for a smaller person
 Dream scale unfolds the non-fugitive
 peaceful kind of thought echoing in a subway
 You work at arm's length, mysteriously
 rummaging at the controls

ALEX KATZ'S "FRANK O'HARA"

Vitality being what emanates from the surface

Like a priest
 who got into a
 different business,
 you said, Alex,
 of Frank
 Here the control:
 shoulders & arms
 relax
 Hawk nose sniffs air
 Intellect & sharp intent
 conjoin to be
 Up on his toes
 He cuts vitality
 into space

TALL TOWN STUN

Yvonne Jacquette pulls up the street
 Paint lifts, poises the street
 Louder than flat-paint-statement
 Louder than street-quarrel-statement
 Louder than dark-sex-movie-material only
 Louder than paint itself
 Brave lights, myths or textures
 manifest innocence & experience
 graceful dollops, waves, bob & bauble
 traffic sweep, going downtown,
 strokes of love, going heroic.

—Anne Waldman

* *

Peeping Tom

The woman
 passing the soap
 along the
 curves of her body,
 one leg up:
 the soap appears
 and disappears.

—Murat Nemet-Nejat

VICTORIANA

A girl sits by a stream, washing her feet. She wears rough-hewn trousers and a rude homemade shirt. But she is a very pretty girl, with fat cheeks and a small, plump foot. I try to think of something with which to bribe her to take off her shirt. There are wildflowers growing all around me in the dappled sunlight. I gather a vivid handful of them and then I stoop under the branch of a tree and approach her. "I've been admiring you from behind those trees," I announce. "Don't be alarmed, I just think you're the prettiest girl I have ever seen and I would like to present you this bouquet as a sincere token of my heartfelt esteem." She looks startled; but she accepts the flowers I extend. Bashfully she sniffs them with her little pert upturned nose. I look on, smiling. "I wonder, could I possibly impose on you to do me a small favor?" I ask her, coaxingly. Nose still in the flowers, she looks up at me. When I've explained what I have in mind, her eyes grow big. Then they look off to the side. She inclines her head in thought for a long moment and purses her lips tartly. Then she glances at me, and she stands up. She hands me the flowers, unfastens the ties of her shirt, pauses, then flings the shirt wide open. I stand before her with the flowers in hand, gazing in rapture. With a peal of laughter she throws her shirt back together, snatches the flowers out of my hand, grabs up her sandals and darts off into the trees. I run after her a few halting steps, then I stop at the side of a tree and listen, enchanted, to the pealing of her laughter as it flits deeper and deeper into the flickering woods.

—Barry Yourgrau

* *

My friend Sabri
 And I always talk
 In the street at night
 And always drunk.
 He always says,
 "I'm late for home."
 And always two loaves
 Of bread under his arm.

—Orhan Veli

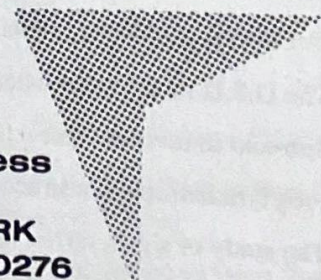
(translated from the Turkish by Murat Nemet-Nejat)

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Below are selected responses to the last five of the questions/topics on the *Questionnaire* which appeared in the February/March issue of the Newsletter. Responses to the first four appeared in the April/May issue:

What effect has "performance" had on poetry, in, say, the last 20 years?

Made us realize how the job of communicating your work takes on another dimension after it's typed up. Alas, also the advent of the "I love her readings, but her work's dead on the page" syndrome. (Richard Friedman)

It has enabled audiences to see what they're getting. (Charles Haseloff)

Performance has had a devastating effect on poetry's audience, but virtually no effect on poetry itself. (Steve Levine)

Made the hysterical evident. (Brian Cox)

My poems *are* performances — words on pages, words to be sung or spoken. I am not alone in this. (Dick Higgins)

The inclusion of those precious little quotation marks as somebody continues to try and put it in its place. This is the kind of nonsense question you would have hoped Performance Art would have stopped people from mouthing. Tearing down the fences is what we hoped would happen, but people seem to be back stringing barbed wire and issuing passports now more than ever. (Jay Gibson)

Performance takes me outside obligatory uniforms. Also provides amusement for my processes. Feels good. (Barbara Barg)

One hopes that it has made poets hear their own works better, as well as those by others. One also hopes it may have sold a few books. (Anselm Hollo)

Not much. poetry seems to have had an effect on "performance". (Paulette Licitra)

Can you hear me? (Charles Bernstein)

What do you mean by "years"? (Ron Padgett)

Poets who read out a lot get laid more than closet poets. (Steve Toth)

Define "Semiotics":

No. (Victor Bockris)

Why? (Annabel Levitt)

If I could... (James Schuyler)

One-half an otic. (Ron Padgett)

Sort of 1/2 an otic. (Dan Wilcox)

I do not know this word. (Serpoohi Benazzi-Pilosian)

Semiotics is half an otic, or to be more precise, an incomplete otic, often signified by raising a rigid middle finger (of either hand). (Pat Nolan)

Words fail me. (Barbara Barg)

The process whereby systems of language are analyzed to determine the relationships among the parts which constitute the studied corpus. (Michael Scholnick)

A cafe-play in which characters wear black turtleneck cashmere by Comme des Garçons. (Brian Cox)

Often when I hear the word, the phrase "semi-idiotics" occurs to me immediately thereafter. (Tom Savage)

Seeing all marks as organized signs, and reading them as one would read a language. (Rachel Blau DuPlessis)

The U.S.D.A. program where Peterbilts haul dangerous parasites through unaware hamlets at night. (Richard Friedman)

Sub-text in reverse; distraction from spontaneity; propaganda for the spirit. (Paulette Licitra)

Frog lyricism couched in academic prose. In 50 years it will be as unintelligible as Marxist critiques of the 1920s. (Reagan Upshaw)

The study of signs, no? (Anselm Hollo)

It is the study of how meanings are conveyed. (Dick Higgins)

Semiotics is a bad thing that happens at a university, but it does no harm. It is one of those academic crimes without victims.
(Howard McCord)

What's the subtext of this question? (Charles Bernstein)

What is of particular interest to you in your writing at present?

Tension. (Brian Cox)

Trying to tell the truth & what do we do about form? (Reagan Upshaw)

Trying literally not to repeat myself. (James Schuyler)

Regular everyday stuff. (Annabel Levitt)

How to drive myself and perhaps a few others happily crazy for a minute or two — totally out of our gourds — Moments of the Marvelous, however modest. (Anselm Hollo)

Honesty. (Paulette Licitra)

Clarification. (Howard McCord)

Original Self-worth. (Charles Haseloff)

Tough question. (Michael Scholnick)

The words. (Charles Bernstein)

My novel, which is beautiful, funny, tender, and unpublished. (Richard Elman)

The exclusion of the quotidian. The inclusion of the quotidian. No commas. Science, Oblivion, and Naphthalene (mothballs).
(Steve Levine)

I am sometimes terrified and other times grieved by how lost I am. I don't understand writing. I can see how one could understand publishing; but I'm not even sure what writing *is*. Oh, I know what it has been, and of course I know it in a book. It's overwhelming, the possibilities, the even unguessed manifestations that will appear in the next five years; even as we cannibalize the wreckage of each passing day's destruction; we are mad and unable to deny it. Without denial we face the enormous task of acceptance and understanding. And I don't know anything. (Jay Gibson)

My own efforts to synthesize particulars of Chinese poetry are still an important component of my writing. (Pat Nolan)

To avoid writing about sexual experiences; to avoid the extremely boring use of obscene words... (Daisy Aldan)

Developing it for U.S. Government personnel preparing for overseas duty. (Barbara Barg)

Perseverance. (Victor Bockris)

Ur-ding. (Robert E. Kimm)

Words, and how to make them disappear. (Ron Padgett)

Other questions/topics of interest to you:

None of those were questions. They were gnomic utterances. (Robert E. Kimm)

Will the USA go bankrupt and be overrun by the equivalent of the Vandals? Who are the guys in silver suits, do they eat people? Why don't I win the lottery? Why can freeway shooting become a popular fad but not poetry? (Sheila Toth)

Screaming. Fucking. Talking. Walking. Eating. Reading. Visiting People's apartments. What happened yesterday. What's going to happen today. (Victor Bockris)

None. (Ron Padgett)

Diversity but not parochialism. (Rachel Blau DePlessis)

This is a question which tempts one to explore the labyrinth of philosophical speculation. (Serpoohi Benazzi-Pilosian)

Who the hell is Mel Parnell? What do Giaconda Belli and Saul Bellow have in common? Whatever happened to Paul Pines?
(Richard Elman)

I find it hard to be concerned with what most poets write about, their own personal lives, when one can go to Penn Station

and see a scene out of Dante. Multitudes of humanity in various stages of decay slowly die before our eyes as we go about our daily lives. (Jerome G. Frank)

Shifting plates. Short shifts. The *correct* time. (Steve Levine)

Charles North's sense of humor; the future of Mexico's relationship with the U.S.; John Milton; Presidential hopeful Gary Hart's recent statement that our government "is acting as a collection agency for the banks"; and so on. My favorite movie of the 80s? *Raging Bull*, if 1979 counts. (Michael Scholnick)

Why have I failed to be recognized as a great poet? Is there still time? Why are women's bathrooms cleaner, on the whole, than men's? Are the sexes really equal, in view of the above (overwhelming) evidence. (Charles Haseloff)

The relationship of egotism, hustlerism, and interpersonal savvy to what poetry gets published as well as read. (Tom Savage)

A. Writing w/out the use of alcohol/drugs. B. Barguing up the wrong tree. (Barbara Barg)

Why is there so much good poetry being written at present and why does that disturb so many poets and writers about poetry? (Charles Bernstein)

Writing for theater. (Richard Friedman)

Where is Lee Harvey Oswald when we *really* need him? (Dan Wilcox)

Labels are boring, analyzation puts my third eye to sleep. (Paulette Licitra)

What's in a painting that you can't find in a photo, and vice-versa? What should Ovid or Catullus have done to strike a blow against Roman imperialism? Why does anybody read Joseph Brodsky? Who are the contemporary European poets (do they still do that there)? Will Reagan invade Nicaragua? What happened to the review of Vicki Hudspith's book? (Gary Lenhart) [It's in this issue. -Ed.]

Poems as: thought, noise, "music," "picture," inscriptions, graffiti on the great moving wall. (Anselm Hollo)

Finding a cheap second-hand book store. (James Schuyler)

When am I going to get invited to do a Monday night reading? (Reagan Upshaw)

Suggestions for the Newsletter:

I like its present incarnation. (Dick Higgins)

I no longer give free advice. (Barbara Barg)

The newsletter feels too self-conscious — seems to try too hard to be hip & I'm not sure what kind of hip you're going for...It's much too serious, too frowny. I usually thumb through it looking for anything written by Jeff Wright — I would have loved to see the Poem "Annie" (whether you enjoyed it or not.). (Paulette Licitra) [Ed. note: see "Letter Received" in Feb/March issue. The title in question is not a single poem, but a book-length series. Apropos, the editor voiced no opinion on it but merely printed the author's PR letter in full. However the book is being sent along to Ms. Licitra with our compliments and she may judge its merits for herself.]

I understand your focus on the NY scene. But it might be interesting if occasionally you included some information about doings elsewhere. (Howard McCord) [Coming out every other month even precludes announcing most events that take place in NYC. In "Magazines Received", however, we do try to list publications that specialize in telling what's going on in other areas of the continent. If that is what you meant. -Ed.]

Publish all things which threaten it and are counter to its purpose. (Brian Cox)

Now we're finally talking. OK, you're doing good. Keep up the good work. Try to lighten up a bit. Laughter cures many contemporary diseases. Keep on strokin zee kees ma bay-bee. I appreciate your asking. Have a nice day & come again soon. (Robert E. Kimm)

For \$20 you should come out more regularly & have lots of pages, with lots of poems. (Dan Wilcox) [Twenty-four pages seem like *plenty* when you're trying to fill them. -Ed.]

Provisions for those of us who are never in New York. (Steve Toth)

A page of poems contributed by readers (or the editors) which were written throughout the civilizations and ages.

(Serpoohi Benazzi-Pilosian)

Give the staff tenure, fringe benefits and salaries commensurate at least with those of Sanitation men. Don't print poems in the Newsletter, unless they're "News!" Seems to me the poems that do get published in the *newsletter*, do so not because of their

quality, but because of *who* the authors are, in connection with the Project — at least 99% of the time. (Charles Haseloff)
[Who *are* they?—Ed.]

A story on important figures from the 60's & 70's who became obscure or lost — where they living? What they doing for dough? Still writing? Did the world owe them a better shake — are they bitter or born again? (Richard Friedman)
[Some of them end up editing newsletters. -Ed.]

Establish payments for contributors. What Poetry Project-minded writer wouldn't smile for joy to receive their \$10-15-20 fee? (Michael Scholnick) [Such a radical idea as payment for poetry is too outré even to be considered. -Ed.]

Avoid all temptations to sink to the level of interpersonal "gossip"? (Tom Savage) [We agree, but did you see who M. was *talking* to, at his own *reading*?! -Ed.]

Keep them like this one — it's the best I've seen in 10 years. (Steve Levine) [This is the most subtly vicious sarcasm we've seen in 10 years. - Ed.]

Recommended reading lists by writers and what writers are reading now. (Annabel Levitt) [Ms. Levitt (and/or any of our other readers) is hereby invited to submit one. - Ed.]

More short fiction! More short short fiction! An essay on Paul de Mann and James Jesus Angleton. (Richard Elman)
[Unfortunately, the CIA has already nixed our feature on James Jesus. -Ed.]

Little interviews are very nice. The one on Bill Berkson, for example, was most enjoyable. Reports such as Maureen's also are fine for Newsletter readers. (Daisy Aldan)

I like the way the Newsletter is going, particularly that more poetry is being published. (James Schuyler)

Stop with the poetry that has little but political correctness to recommend it. Sparrow's and Joel Lewis's reviews (along with the ed. note) were fine examples of the short review. (Reagan Upshaw)

The last newsletter moved in a refreshing direction, but I would like to see more capsule reviews (more extensive annotations of the received books). I would also like to see a column by the editor, maybe along the lines of Jimmy Cannon's "Nobody Asked Me, But..." Given the constraints of money and time, I think PoPro loyalists have always asked too much from the newsletter and given too little. How about a "Where Are They Now" column? (Gary Lenhart) [Making bracketed asides is more satisfying than doing a whole column. -Ed.]

The last couple of issues of the Newsletter have been a delight: wish they could be twice as large. Can't think of much in the way of genres to add — perhaps 'competitions'? and a *sottisier*? (Anselm Hollo)

Put Alice Notley on the cover & sell out the issue. Put Rochelle Kraut on the cover & sell out the issue. (O.K. Bob? Put Helena Hughes on the cover & print extra copies. More interviews. More photographs. More young kids. More letters. More strange facts about poets. More history. More biography. More jokes. (Victor Bockris)

The art is terrific, the layout pleasing to the eye and easy to read. I'm always interested in how the readings go: the attendance, the poet's "performance", the reaction to the work, etc....a little reportage for your readers out in the hinterlands. I like the interview with Bill Berkson and maybe you could commission more mini interviews with the poets who pass through your hallowed portals. I don't know what kind of response you're going to get from this questionnaire, but I don't think asking your readership to respond to topics concerning writing/writers is too much...maybe twice a year.... (Pat Nolan)

Don't print Leon's "Annie." (Ron Padgett)

*

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The editor would like to thank everyone who took the trouble to answer the *Questionnaire*. Certain of the suggestions will be seriously entertained.

Magazines Received

Exquisite Corpse, Jan-April 1988. (PO Box 25051, Baton Rouge, LA 70894) \$2.50 per issue, or annually at \$15. Includes translations from the German by Anselm Hollo, and a review of John Wieners by Joel Lewis.

Hanging Loose #52, 1988 (231 Wyckoff St., Brooklyn, NY 11217). Three issues per year, at \$9 subscription; or \$3.50 per copy. This issue includes a Latino supplement.

Iowa Review, Fall 1987, Vol. 17, NO. 3. (Univ. of Iowa, Iowa City, IA 52242). \$6.95. They "do not read manuscripts over holidays or over the summer." (But maybe over the weekend?) This issue contains an interview of Kenneth Burke by Richard Kostelanetz; and a "Personal Retrospective" of Burke by J. Clarke Rountree III (the magazine's editor).

Manitoba Writers' Guild Newsletter (206 - 100 Arthur St., Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3B 1H3). Volume VII, No. 5, May 1988. It probably doesn't make any sense spending \$30

to become a member unless you happen to live near there; however, since I always enjoy seeing their newsletter, I thought I'd mention it. The Guild's 2nd annual International Beer Festival will be held on June 23rd, in support of which they quote A.E. Housman: "Cold beer drunk on an empty stomach creates in me a state so simple and pleasant as to be beyond remembering."

Mississippi Review (U. of Southern Miss., Southern Sta., Box 5144, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-5144). Volume 16, No. 1, 1988. \$10 per year. Single copies "usually" \$5. This issue contains work by Primo Levi and Maxine Chernoff.

Moody Street Irregulars (a Jack Kerouac Newsletter), No 18 & 19. \$5. (PO Box 157, Clarence Center, NY 14032). Contains a wide variety of poems, memoirs, and articles about and to the Master.

'no:tas, Spring, 1988, Vol 3, No. 1. \$10 per year. (correspondence: Marla & Pat Smith, 2420 Walter Dr., Ann Arbor, MI 48103). This issue has work by Joel Oppenheimer, Jackson Mac Low, Robert Kelly, and Kofi Natambu.

Outlaw Newsletter, April 1988, Vo. 1, No. 1. 8-page 8 1/2 by 11" format. (PO Box 4466, Bozeman, MT 59772). \$7 a year, no single-issue price mentioned, but one has the feeling a deal could be made. This first issue includes "Three Criteria of Cowboy Poetry" and a recipe for "Savory Elk Roast", and this quote from Will Rogers: "The outside of a horse is good for the inside of the man."

Ploughshares, Vol. 13, No. 4. \$5.95, per issue, \$15 per year (Box 529, Cambridge, MA 02139). Special poetry issue, edited by Bill Knott, in which is included (among many) Ai, Elaine Equi, Erica Jong, Gregory Orr, Bob Perelman, and Charles Simic. Also an interview of Craig Raine, the British "founder" of "Martianism" (a term apparently coined by British critics).

Shenandoah, 37/4. \$3.50. "A Poetry Issue" (Box 722, Lexington, VA 24450). \$11 per year. Includes poems by Denise Levertov, John Hollander, and Joyce Carol Oates.

This Month in Maine Literature, May 1988, Vol. III, No. 5 (19D Mason St., Brunswick, ME 04011). \$15 per year membership in Maine Writers and Publishers Alliance. (See note on Manitoba Writers Guild, above.)

Unmuzzled Ox, #25. \$2, \$20 for subscription. (105 Hudson St., NYC 10013). "The third of four issues continuing The Cantos of Ezra Pound" and an interview with Galway Kinnel.

Announcements

POETRY PROJECT ON THE AIR. Through the efforts of the Poetry Project Broadcast Service, readings from The Poetry Project are being heard by audiences across the country. WBAI in Manhattan is airing readings and talks on two programs: "Art Magazine" and "Nommo Radio." Recently Amiri

Baraka's historic lecture given at the Poetry Project, "Greenwich Village and Afro-American Music" was aired for Black History Month.

Tapes specially prepared for broadcast by Poetry Project broadcast consultant, John Fisk, are uplinked to satellite and are available for use by over 300 stations which are affiliates of National Public Radio. WLRN in Miami and stations in Baltimore, five stations in Alaska, and stations in the Midwest are already airing readings from The Poetry Project.

Individual stations are also featuring poets associated with the Project. On "Wordsongs", a program featured on WNYU (89.1 FM in Manhattan), poets Michelle Clinton, Jim Brodey, Lewis Warsh and others have read their work the night before their appearance at The Poetry Project. And WKCR, in Manhattan, has aired tapes of readings on its weekly "Composed on the Tongue" program.

Richard Hell, coordinator of The Poetry Project Monday Night series, has been invited by TV station KERA, Dallas, to have Monday Night poets read live by phone. The reading is accompanied by video images designed by the poet. Cookie Mueller and Jeff Wright participated this past winter.

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Write this summer! Starting up: "Teacherless writing class" based on Peter Elbow book, "Writing without Teachers". Call Marsha Zeesman at 718-622-2537.

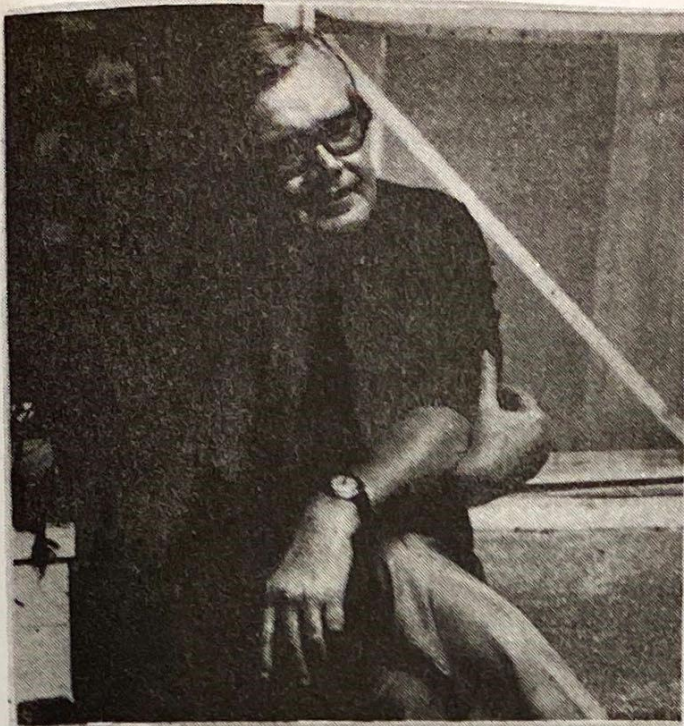
John Ashbery has been elected a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets.

VISIONS, "The International Magazine Of Illustrated Poetry" welcomes original work, from modern to traditional. For the current issue and guidelines, send \$3.75 + \$1 postage to Black Buzzard Press, 4705 S. 8th Road, Arlington, VA 22204. Then submit 3 to 8 poems with a SASE to the above address.

Bruce Boston and Anita Patterson have been chosen as the recipients of the 1987 Annual Achievement Awards in Fiction and Poetry by the subscribers of *Z Miscellaneous* magazine.

A new foundation has been formed by Penny and David McCall, to help artists in financial need. It plans to award around \$100,000 per year in grants. Age is no criterion, and grants can be used for paying the rent or subsidizing more expensive projects. It's apparently only for visual artists but needy poets often know needy artists, so pass the information along. Applications can be had from the Penny McCall Foundation, 575 Lexington Ave, NYC 10022.

Wanted for Anthology: "Foresays: Graces Before Sex" Prayer-poems suitable as preludes to all sorts of sex acts - anticipatory thanks as in traditional graces - apotropaic, dedicatory, minatory, cautionary, invocational, paeans, epinikia, checklists...Unpublished poems only. Generous honoraria & national distribution anticipated. Send with SASE to Sam Abrams, Lib Arts, RIT, Rochester, NY 14623.



John Clellon Holmes
1926-1988

* * *

LETTERS

Dear SPN,

Joel Lewis complains that some of the poets he likes are not in my anthology, *Up Late*. He also likes to play "my canon is better than yours," and takes me to task for choosing Ted Berrigan's "Things To Do in Providence" over "Red Shift," and Anne Waldman's "Goddess of Wisdom Whose Substance is Desire..." over "Baby Pantoum." Well, golly gee, Joel! I have noticed that many reviewers identify so desperately with the books that they are reviewing that they imagine they have written or edited them. When they open their eyes and see somebody else's name on the cover, they go bonkers. That's understandable, as is the position of the SPP Newsletter whose official mouthpiece Lewis often is. The current administrators of the Poetry Project are not in *Up Late* either.

Sincerely,
Andrei Codrescu

* * *

PPN Minister of Truth Joel Lewis replies: I was a little disturbed by Andrei's reference to me as "official mouthpiece" of the PP Newsletter, so I called up my friend, Larry Speakes, for some advice. "Joel," Larry told me, "some folks are never happy with anything less than total adulation! And did you see the review of *Up Late* in *Letter ex*?* Check this out — 'St. Marks, a cynosure, casts its strong voodoo vibes over Codrescu.' — go figure!" "Larry," I asked, "is that quote for real?" "Would I lie to you?"

*Jan/Feb 1988, No. 35 (PO Box 476917, Chicago, IL 60646).

THE POETRY PROJECT WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR RECENT GIFTS:

The Gramercy Park Foundation, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, the Picred Heller Foundation, the Abraham Gottlieb Foundation; and Dore Ashton, Tim Dlugos, Laurie Harris, Richard Howard, and Jane Kitselman.

WE WOULD ALSO LIKE TO WELCOME OUR NEW AND RECENTLY RENEWED MEMBERS:

Stephen Arbogast, Aram Boyajian, William Considine, Scott T. Caywood, Jane Christensen, Debora Erkas, William Golightly, Bob Holman, James Honzik, Lawrence Jones, Kynaston L. McShine, Stephen Paul Miller, Dennis L. Moritz, Mario Najar, Alan Nathan, John Oakes, Michael Ontkian, Susan Osterman, Philip Perkis, Bob Rosenthal and Rochelle Kraut, Michael Scholnick, Kay Sturdivant, Ivan Webster;

AND VOLUNTEERS AT OUR 1988 SYMPOSIUM AND POETS THEATER FESTIVAL:

Tom Albrecht, Sheila Alson, Aram Boyajian, Etan Ben-Ami, Fina Cannizo, Shoshonna Cohen, Christopher Cox, Peggy DeCoursey, Debora Erska, Jeanette Farrell, John Fisk, Elizabeth Fox, Cliff Fyman, Joshua Galef, Daniel Garrett, Phil Goode, Tom Hanan, Steven Hall, Mitch Highfill, Deborah Humphries, Eva Hsu, Basil King, Tom Koehne, Scott Konrad, Lori Landis, Steve Levine D.D.S., Greg Masters, David Nolan, Noreen Norton, Betsey Osborne, Susan Osterman, Wanda Phipps, Greg Pond, Jill Rappaport, Steve Raspa, Victoria Smart, Victoria Stanbury, Lorna Smedman, Jacqui Spadaro, Mary Sternbach, Mary Sullivan, Jamie Tang, Anique Taylor, Nina Zivancevic.

Cover and inside drawing by Susan Greene. Layout by Jean Holabird.

* * *

UNITED ARTISTS BOOKS

Head by Bill Kushner. "Bill Kushner's streetwise *joie de vivre* observations charm the hardest of macho hearts. Frank O'Hara would surely approve. These energetic "songs of a goof" are sheer gravy heaven." Anne Waldman. Paperback, \$5.00.

Smoking In The Twilight Bar by Barbara Henning. "Shaped like the spaces of open windows, Henning's works are snapshots of a stark reality, squares of light on a dark wall. Her bold black and white scenarios are of tough, durable women, barefaced and vulnerable survivors. She has written their picture." Maureen Owen. Paperback, \$5.00.

Information From The Surface Of Venus by Lewis Warsh. A new book of poems by the author of *Agnes & Sally* and *The Corset*. Cover by Louise Hamlin. Paperback, \$6.00.

Box 2616, Peter Stuyvesant Station, New York, N.Y. 10009

Full listing of all UNITED ARTISTS titles available on request.

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Yes I wish to become a member of The Poetry Project. Here is my tax deductible membership gift:

\$50 \$75 \$100 \$200 \$500 \$1000

No, I do not wish to join at this time but here is my tax-deductible contribution of \$_____.

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