

THE POETRY PROJECT NEWSLETTER
No. 62 February 1979
Vicki Hudspith, Editor
St. Mark's Church
2nd Ave. & 10th St., NYC 10003

READINGS AT ST. MARK'S: Wednesday Nights, hosted by Ron Padgett & Maureen Owen:
Feb 7--Leslie Silko & Michael Brownstein. Feb 14--Big Valentine's Day Group Reading.
Feb 21--Alice Notley & Terence Winch. Feb 28--Russell Banks & Ted Greenwald. Monday
Nights, hosted by Bob Holman: Feb 5--Open Reading. Feb 12--Joe Chassler, "Eat My
Sensibilities" / Jennifer Q. Smith, "Spring Line". Feb 19--"Kill All Your Darlings"
with Rachel Walling, Elinor Nauen, Maggie Dubris and Greg Masters / "The Reasons".
Feb 26--Eileen Myles & Ted Berrigan.

+++++

READINGS AROUND TOWN: The West End Cafe, 2911 Bway & 114th St. Sundays at 2pm, \$2.
Feb 4--Second reading from "The Big House" with Bob Holman, Sharon Mattlin, Tom
Savage, Cassia Berman. Feb 11--The Consumptive Poets; Maggie Dubris, Elinor Nauen,
Rachel Walling with mysterious guest appearance by Maria Mancini. Feb 17--Regina Beck,
Spencer Holst. Feb 25--Janine Pommy Vega, Charlie Plymell. Viridian Gallery, 24 West
57th St., NYC 8th flr., 7PM \$2. Feb 15--Steve Hamilton, Jackson MacLow. Feb 22--Yuki
Hartman, June Jordan. Ear Inn, 326 Spring St, 3PM, \$2. Feb 3--Ed Friedman, Bob
Rosenthal. Feb 10--Dick Higgins, Steve McCaffery. Feb 17--Barbara Guest, Ray DiPalma.
Feb 24--Steve Carey, Tom Carey. Droll-Kolbert Gallery, 724 Fifth Avenue at 57th st.,
7PM, Free. Feb 1--Carter Ratcliff. Feb 8--Rachelle Bijou. Feb 15--Michael Lally. Feb
22--Joe Brainard. Museum of Holography, 11 Mercer St. 7:30PM, Free. Feb 8--Richard
Kostelanetz. ACIA, 28 East 4th St. 8PM, \$2. Feb 15--New York State Poetry Anthology;
On Turtle's Back, reading with: Neil Baldwin, Maureen Owen, Siv Cedering Fox & many
more. Brooke Alexander Gallery, 20 West 57th St., 6PM, \$2 presents "Face Of The Poet"
by Alex Katz, 14 Color Aquatints with readings by each poet on the following dates;
Feb 13, 20, 27. All proceeds go to the St. Mark's Poetry Project. Poets included:
Ted Berrigan, Carter Ratcliff, John Godfrey, Alice Notley, Bill Zavatsky, Kenward
Elmslie, John Perreault, Ted Greenwald, Rene Ricard, Tony Towle, Peter Schjeldahl,
Michael Lally, Gerard Malanga, Ann Lauterbach. Distribution of poets on these dates to
be announced. Studio of Creative Movement, 60 West 25th St., at 6th Ave. 8PM, \$2.
Feb 9--Maureen Owen, Carol Rubinstein.

+++++

WORKSHOPS AT ST. MARK'S: FREE / Writing Workshops / FREE.

Tuesdays: Writing workshop with Ed Friedman, 7:30pm at Third Street Music School.

Feb 27: One-time workshop with Michael Brownstein, 7:30 at Third St. School.

Thursdays: Jan 11, 18, 25, Feb 1: Poetry & Meditation workshop with Neil Hackman,
7:30pm at Third St. Music School.

Feb 15, 22: Poetry & Translation workshop with Hiroaki Sato, 7:30pm at
Third St. Music School.

Saturdays: Poetry workshop for kids aged 8-13, conducted by Bob Rosenthal, on ten
consecutive Saturday mornings 11 am - 12 noon, beginning Feb 3. Limited to
15 kids. Call 674-0910 for info.

Sundays: Poetry workshop with Harris Schiff, 6pm (note new starting time) at St. Mark's
Parish Hall.

Thursday: Feb 8: One-time workshop with Leslie Silko, 7:30pm at Third St. School.

+++++

The MASSIVE NEW YEAR'S BENEFIT Evening at Entermedia Theatre was an overwhelming success. Over a 100 performers included poets, tap dancers, flame jugglers, theatre pieces, films and songs. Special thanks to the performers. And thanks to the audience, journalists and Entermedia Staff, who helped make a truly memorable evening. By 9pm the theatre was sold out, with many people waiting outside to get in. One last word of credit to the following technical people, without whom the entire evening couldn't have run as smoothly as it did: Stage Manager/Jacqueline Burnham. Technical House Crew/Robin Srebnick, Ina Goldberg, Carol Rosegg, Robert Golibart, Joseph Asaro, Marty Knopf, Ted Williams. Press Representative/Valerie Warner. Emcees/Ron Padgett, Maureen Owen, Bob Holman. Taping crew/Greg Masters, Gary Lenhart. Artist-in-residence/ Joe Giordano. Benefit photographer/ Jacob Burckhardt. Poster photograph/ Rudy Burckhardt.

+++++++

ANNOUNCEMENTS: ANNOUNCEMENTS: ANNOUNCEMENTS: ANNOUNCEMENTS: ANNOUNCEMENTS:ANNOUNCEMENTS:

SPECIAL BELATED THANKS: To Helena Hughes and Charlie Martin, principal figures in organizing the successful CBGB's Fire Benefit for three incredibly big nights running. Their names were unintentionally omitted in the December 1978 Newsletter. Apologies and THANKS!!!!!!

PRINT CENTER ANNOUNCES NEW ELECTRONIC TYPESETTING EQUIPMENT: Two major improvements over the Center's old equipment is that justified (flush right) copy is now automatic and all corrections can be made right in the machine, totally eliminating the need for cutting in corrections at a light table. Centering, indentation, multiple columns and tabular forms are also greatly simplified. Interested persons should call the Center (212 875-4482) for details and to reserve time on the machine (a small hourly rental is charged). The Center is open from 8:30AM to 6:00 PM Monday through Saturday. Arrangements can also be made to use the machine in the evenings. As ever, the Center's staff is available to undertake jobs which require large amounts of time or particular expertise. Rates are generally well below commercial prices. For more information, call Robert Hershon or Larry Bush at the Center. (875-4482)

THE NATIONAL POETRY SERIES: The National Poetry Series has been established to publish 5 books of poetry each year through five participating trade publishers. The publication of the books will be funded by James A. Michener, Edward J. Pizsek, The Ford Foundation, The Witter Bynner Foundation, and the five publishers--Doubleday, E.P. Dutton, Harper & Row, Random House and Holt, Rinehart & Winston--. One manuscript per author may be submitted to the Open Competition, and the work must be previously unpublished in book form (collected poems are acceptable). No eligibility restrictions (except for American citizenship) will be placed on those submitting manuscripts. Each entry must include a self-addressed, stamped envelope, as well as a self-addressed, stamped postcard, and be sent to: The National Poetry Series, P.O. Box 508, Murray Hill Station, New York, NY 10016.

Deadline for Open Competition March 15, 1979

Announcement of all selections June 10, 1979

Publication of all books March 15, 1980

For more information: Daniel Halpern or Susan Dwyer (212) 695-8432

SPECIAL THANKS: in helping with the January 1979 Newsletter to: Madeleine Keller, Yuki Hartman, Maureen Owen, Joe Giordano, Ron Padgett, Harvey Lillywhite and "Howard".

DEADLINE: for all Newsletter material is the 1st of the month for the following month.

+++++++

BOOKS RECENTLY RELEASED: p=paper, h=hardback, npl=no price listed.

CONSUMPTIVE POETS LEAGUE, 27 First Avenue, Suite 9, NYC 10003:

KOFF 3, incredibly consumptive issue containing perforated tear-out KOFF centerfold calendar for 1979 with naked notables such as; Michael Lally as Mr. January, Charles Bukowski as Mr. February, Bill Berkson-Mr. March, Tom Carey-Mr. April, Bill Kushner-

-Mr. May, John Godfrey-Mr. June, Simon Schuchat-Mr. July, Bob Rosenthal-Mr. August, Bob Holman-Mr. September, Joel Oppenheimer-Mr. October, Simon Pettet-Mr. November, Kim Chi Ha-Mr. December (whew!!) and special hand-signed unfolding landscape by Susan Bresler, as well as poems, essays on time, and "Fotcherism Finalized" this is a collector's item, check it out (\$1.50 p) / SHAMBHALA PUBLICATIONS, INC. 1123 Spruce St., Boulder, Colo. 80302: Talking Poetics From Naropa Institute Vol. 1, edited by Anne Waldman and Marilyn Webb, introduction by Allen Ginsberg, lectures and essays by Robert Duncan, Diane Di Prima, Ted Berrigan, William S. Burroughs, Edward Dorn, Michael McClure, Ron Padgett, Clark Coolidge, Jackson Mac Low, John Cage (\$6.95 p) / SUN & MOON PRESS, 4330 Hartwick Road #418, College Park, Md 20740: SHADE by Charles Bernstein (\$3. p) / TUUMBA PRESS, 2639 Russell St., Berkeley, CA 94705: a.k.a. by Bob Perelman (\$2. p) / GREY FOX PRESS, Bolinas, CA: Selected Poems by Edward Dorn with a preface by Robert Creeley and edited by Donald Allen, (\$3.50 p) / THE COACH HOUSE PRESS, 401 Huron St., Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5S 2G5: Terrific at Both Ends by Victor Coleman (\$4. p) / THE SEGUE FOUNDATION, 300 Bowery, NYC 10012: ROOF VIII, works of Octavio Paz, Diane Ward, Peter Seaton, Larry Eigner, and Bruce Andrews, (\$3. p) / ROOF BOOKS, subsidiary of SEGUE: Part Songs by James Sherry (\$2 p) / UN POCO LOCO published at The Poetry Project, 2nd Ave & 10th St., NYC 10003: works of Jamie MacInnis, edited by Larry Fagin (npl) / A HUNDRED POSTERS, 689 E. 17th St., Brooklyn, NY 11230: #36 contains works of Nick Piombino (donation) / L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E, 464 Amsterdam Ave., NYC 10024: #6 with focus on Gertrude Stein, also reviews and other writings (\$4 per yr.) / # Magazine, 86 East 3rd St., NYC 10003: translations of Mayakovsky, Cavafy, Max Jacob (donation) / DIANA'S BIMONTHLY PRESS, 71 Elmgrove Ave, Providence, RI 02906: works by Rosmarie Waldrop, Kathy Acker, Raymonde Linossier, Hannah Weiner (\$3.50 p) / CITY LIGHTS BOOKS, Columbus & Broadway, San Francisco, CA 94133: ZELDA by Kaye McDonough (\$3.50 p) / Clean Asshole Poems & Smiling Vegetable Songs by Peter Orlovsky with an intro by Gregory Corso, works from 1957--1978 (\$3.95 p)

+++++

On the Runway

So bad this morning
 Contemplated suicide by plane
 pulled binding off blanket w/ teeth
 Cried for not crying, &
 Guess what -- no tears
 Held love between legs
 Tried to think legs weren't my legs
 Wrenched back reaching for clock
 Threw clock out window
 Just to see glass break

Bob Holman

Entrance to the City, by Rachele Bijou (Buffalo Press, 15 Laight St. NYC, NY 10013) \$3.

Kenneth Koch, in his poetry workshop at the New School in the mid-sixties, used to talk about the rarity of humor in contemporary poetry, especially in the poetry of women. Primarily due to his influence, women don't dare to write sad poems anymore. Rachele Bijou's book is full of light satire and parody, as well as a detachment from most persons and from ponderous situations.

One of the titles, "The Portrait of a Young Girl as a Secretary," makes Joyce's original title seem pretentious. Other parodies within this poem are: "My mornings are measured out with his coffee cheese saltines." After Eliot, comes O'Hara: "Oranges and sardines/ Sardines and oranges/ I mustn't forget O'Hara/ Good morning, Mr. Joyce/.." I like the way she does that, with a swing! The last two lines, in the voice of the murky executive "Mr. Joyce," sum up the secretary's position very well: "Would you come in here a moment/ I think I flushed my wallet down the toilet."

The first stanza of "Woman in Front of the Eclipse/ Her Hair Ruffled by the Wind" is an imitation of John Ashbery's "Instruction Manual." I imitated it once, too, but didn't know it. Bijou knows. Ashbery's opening lines: "As I sit looking out of a window of the building/ I wish I did not have to write the instruction manual on the uses of a new metal..." So Ashbery has an elaborate fantasy about Guadalajara instead. Bijou's version: "As I stare out my window/ I do not wish/ I did not have to write/ This poem on Miro..." Her perversity forces her to write about women who don't have to worry about writing this poem. Among them: "My neighbor/ A 45 year old file clerk/ Proud she's not a secretary/ For she is modest/..." An entirely witty poem.

The first twenty-five lines of "Esprit du Corps" appear to have been lifted from an announcement for the Union Dime Savings Bank's Annual Dinner at the Plaza. The band that plays is "the Nobelman." Bijou neglects to single out Faulkner or any other famous players. This is probably due to a desire to employ Tolstoyan paradoxes instead: "Some of the people jump up to dance/ But most are too full/ And prefer to wait for dessert."

Bijou is a better satirist than romanticist. There are, however, several good personal poems in this collection. What they lack is a wide variety of mood and depth of sensibility. "Touch and Go" is written in a serene unreflective mood that a minor rejection cannot disturb. Here it is:

In a greyhound bus
On the outskirts of Paris
Rusty walks up the aisle
I jump up
And tell her about my poems
She's happy for me
And we're both glad
To see each other
She stays a moment longer
Then continues walking
Toward the back
I sit down
And notice the seat
Next to me is empty
But I'm happy anyway

A nice, but naive poem. If her friend were really happy to hear about her poetry, she would sit down next to her. It's easy to understand the young poet, excited about her poetry, wanting to tell everyone; and the reaction of an old friend, unexpectedly met, with nothing comparable to tell. Serenity sits on one seat; irony, next to her.

I laughed as I read most of the poems in this inventive collection. So did the people of Afghanistan, who understand what the Russians are doing to them. It was the week before Christmas when nothing was merry in the city or the world. Thank you, Bijou!

---Mary Ferrari

+++++++

The Road is Everywhere or STOP THIS BODY by Rosmarie Waldrop
(Open Places, Stephens College, Columbia Mo.)

The Road is Everywhere or STOP THIS BODY by Rosmarie Waldrop is a book-length series of poems, divided into four sections. The poems are very concentrated; the lines short and intense. The images are drawn from definitions of traffic and forms of circulation. The poems are about language, especially the limitations of the poem as it exists on the printed page. Outlines, whether they appear on the page as margins, or the way our bodies project into space, are really only thresholds of experience.

Ms. Waldrop continually opposes the vertical movement of traffic and the conventional, horizontal way of reading the lines of a poem. We are always presented with the illusion of getting somewhere. Although the author uses the image of "time's arrow" to lead us to believe that we are moving forward in space, we are left with the "dwindling illusion/of going places/on this page" (14). As one desires to go beyond language, there are only more and more words. The abundance of words, like the appearance of roads to the traveler, presents an unlimited field of travel. Even doubts about language are, finally, only words. She asks, almost despairingly, ".../echoes/echoes/echoes/ these words do they/ mean something/because/I keep coming back to/an old sentence/sucks back my breath/at a harsh angle" (#33).

Only immobility and death bring rest from this compulsive need to keep moving. Death will ".../abridge and stop/the growth of words and cells and cysts and coins/and cars and embryos and bluish grass" (#24). Death is what overtakes the idea of forward movement since we must return, cyclically, to dust and ".../every/nerve every breath every/grain of dust/to dust cancers over/the bloodstream/the bloodstream/the bloodstream/the bloodstream/the bloodstream" (#7), stopping the breath and pulse of the poem.

There is an intelligent working of language within these poems. The combining of images: circulation of coins, the idea of currency and value, visceral references, particularly the lungs and the circulatory system; the poet is continually translating one form of measurement into another. There are images drawn specifically from an automotive vocabulary which unite these poems. Ms. Waldrop uses road signs as a further visualization of the text. These poems are concerned with ideas about perception, which relate to the way we read the text of STOP THIS BODY.

I keep going back to these poems, thinking I finally understand them, only to discover new levels of meaning. It is a difficult book to read; the author uses no connectives as a transition from line to line and there are many unresolved clauses that come to no conclusion. Although this book is concerned with movement, it is more like an anti-movement, anti-flow. One experiences this in trying to feel the poems' rhythm and cadence. Despite its difficulty, the reader is involved in new ways of approaching the field of a poem. The poet moves toward the EXIT sign (#80), but even that won't get her out of her struggle with language. As she says, she participates in spite of herself, and sings, as Yeats said all poets do, amid their uncertainty.

--by Madeleine Keller

The Big House A Collection of Poets' Prose.

Edited by Michael Slater. Ailanthus Press, 200 W. 83rd St., NYC 10024 (\$3.95 paper)

There has sometimes been the question, posed in prose of course, of whether or not poets can write prose, poetry being viewed, by the questioner, as less disciplined than prose, somehow less "responsible", in not having to stick to the facts of real life (a phrase which automatically italicizes itself). My own opinion has been, that if you can write interesting poetry, you can easily write prose that is at least competent; and the reverse is definitely not true.

The contributors to Michael Slater's anthology of prose by poets, The Big House, certainly proves the first part of my proposition. (For the second part, look at the verse of any well-known novelist.) There is quite a bit of good to excellent writing in this book-- though nothing anywhere near as revolutionary as Mr. Slater's hasty, unnecessary, and outrageously sweeping introductory essay promises. His first sentence proclaims that "Instinctively, we know that language is a prison," which is a hell of a position for a writer to take. A good use of language is liberating. He is implying the pun with the title: The Big House as slang for a Federal penitentiary, that the writers are in jail. I would suggest that lack of language is the real solitary confinement. This essay is the only prose in the book that has no business being there. Fortunately, it has nothing to do with what follows.

Another of the introduction's inaccurate remarks (and the only really concrete one) is that even the more "readable" pieces "are still winks at, parodies of, narrative form". Some of the strongest selections in the anthology are the true events (ostensibly, and it doesn't matter) related by Bob Rosenthal, Charlotte Carter, Phillip Lopate, Greg Masters, Sharon Mattlin, and Michael Lally; and the traditionally narrative story by Barbara Baracks. This is exactly the kind of prose that poets are not supposed to be able to write, and if there is any winking or parody from the above-mentioned, it is far too subtle for me.

There is some very good parody and humor however in the selections by Ed Friedman (two of his three), Ted Greenwald, Keith Abbott, and John Yau. On the other hand, Tom Savage's invented monologue by Stendahl is so straight-faced and serious that it is almost a parody of the parody this idea would probably become in anybody else's hands.

For fiction out of the imagination, as opposed to real life (more italics), and without obvious parody, there is Lyn Hejinian, Ann Lauterbach, Marjorie Welish, Lynne Dreyer, Elizabeth Ayres, Eileen Myles, Fanny Howe, Ed Friedman (in "Pure Stealing"), Bob Holman, Cassia Berman, Bernard Welt, and Anne Waldman. Although the works by the last three may have had their basis in real incidents, they have been more or less fictionalized by means of style.

For a real essay there is Peter Schjeldahl; there are "Episodes" (journal plus remembrances) by Michael Slater; a transcription of a taped essay/soliloquy by Charles Bernstein; abstract meditations by Richard Kostelanetz, and Ron Silliman; and a piece by Bernadette Mayer. With these last four writers we are in the "gray area" where poetry and prose become notoriously indistinguishable. Mayer in particular has not departed at all from the work she is known for.

Not that this is necessarily bad, it is just that no new aspect of her sensibility is revealed; which is one reason for a poet to explore the possibilities of another medium. This brings to mind the question of whether the selections here are "better" than the poetry by the same poets. Not the poets I am familiar with, but I am not completely familiar with the work of everyone here. However, this book is definitely worth having. Prose by poets is in fact interesting; a poet should try it and, if inspired, pursue it. As opposed to his essay, Mr. Slater's arrangement of the pieces is virtually impeccable. Don't browse, read it through, for the maximum effect of the diversity. Everyone will have personal preferences but, all in all, The Big House is, as they say about prose, a good read.

-- Tony Towle

In the afternoons, unless the weather was very nasty, the old man rode his tall gelding for several hours. I become restless at my desk after several hours of concentration, and nothing gives me greater pleasure than riding through the woods.

---Lyn Hejinian, Story

D introduced Alice, who was called by old and close friends, Bob, to S and T, who in turn were known to their old and close friends as Kit and Paul since Bob was a friend of D, who had no other name, although sometimes answered to the name Jack, Kit and Paul were treated as old and close friends of Bob's.

---Ted Greenwald, Spare Hours

There is a past each of us is given, no not given as if it's wrapped and then presented but given in exchange for a moment of silence in the present, as each moment of love is past as I fear so heartily the loss of it wishing it only to begin again as quickly as the fire becomes the vivid red

---Bernadette Mayer, I Imagine Things

Clare drank the tea as if it were neat whiskey. Then she asked for some whiskey. Smiling, they gave it to her. I amuse them, she thought.

"Now that I've had everything," she said, "I can finally go to sleep."

Back downstairs she found the old man was now waiting in front of her door.

"Now what?" she said.

"I thought maybe you'd invite me in for some tea."

"Not until you take a bath."

---Barbara Baracks, Pleasure

Yet who could own noon as well as a cow.

---Eileen Myles, Of Time and the Sense Astronaut

the earphone jack instead of the microphone jack so i'm talking to myself the last ten minutes and uh I enter this conversation midstream i was saying let me see questioning the idea of what a person is in the context of my being depressed personally in what sense does it does it does it does that

---Charles Bernstein, G--/

A. It's such a pleasure to see you. How do you like my new suit? It's very expensive.

B. No, don't kiss me I have a herpes.

A. Thank you for being so thoughtful of me. It's such a pleasure to see you.

B. Yes, isn't it a nice hotel lobby? There are so many people I don't feel conspicuous at all.

---Ed Friedman, Greetings

Now it's just some design, the highlights off leather and dark hair, a drawing you might make of your imaginary friend, someone who hangs around places people are always on their way out of.

---Bernard Welt, Getting From One Place To Another

... i never got the rubbers that year because i told the fat lipped snow cone boy he would be castrated if he ever came near me or my buddy again. o god and the stomach of my 14th year was in my head as we marched down that dark summer street

---Michael Lally, 1970 Fragment

Gardenia

There is "corduroy" and there is "long brown hair"

and they could be the beginning.

After all it helps,

if you describe, to make the tactile real.

Then there is the precinct of "crave",

how it goes down and stays down

like an anchor to longing

and the pulleys on which the pail ascends

chafe against the mildew and the rock.

If I give you "crave"

will you trade

water running in the sink

where I placed the gardenia?

-- Ann Lauterbach

St. Mark's Church In-the-Bowery
The Poetry Project
10th st & 2nd ave
New York, N.Y. 10003

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
New York, N.Y.
Permit No. 605