

poetry project

NEWSLETTER

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by Jeff Derksen

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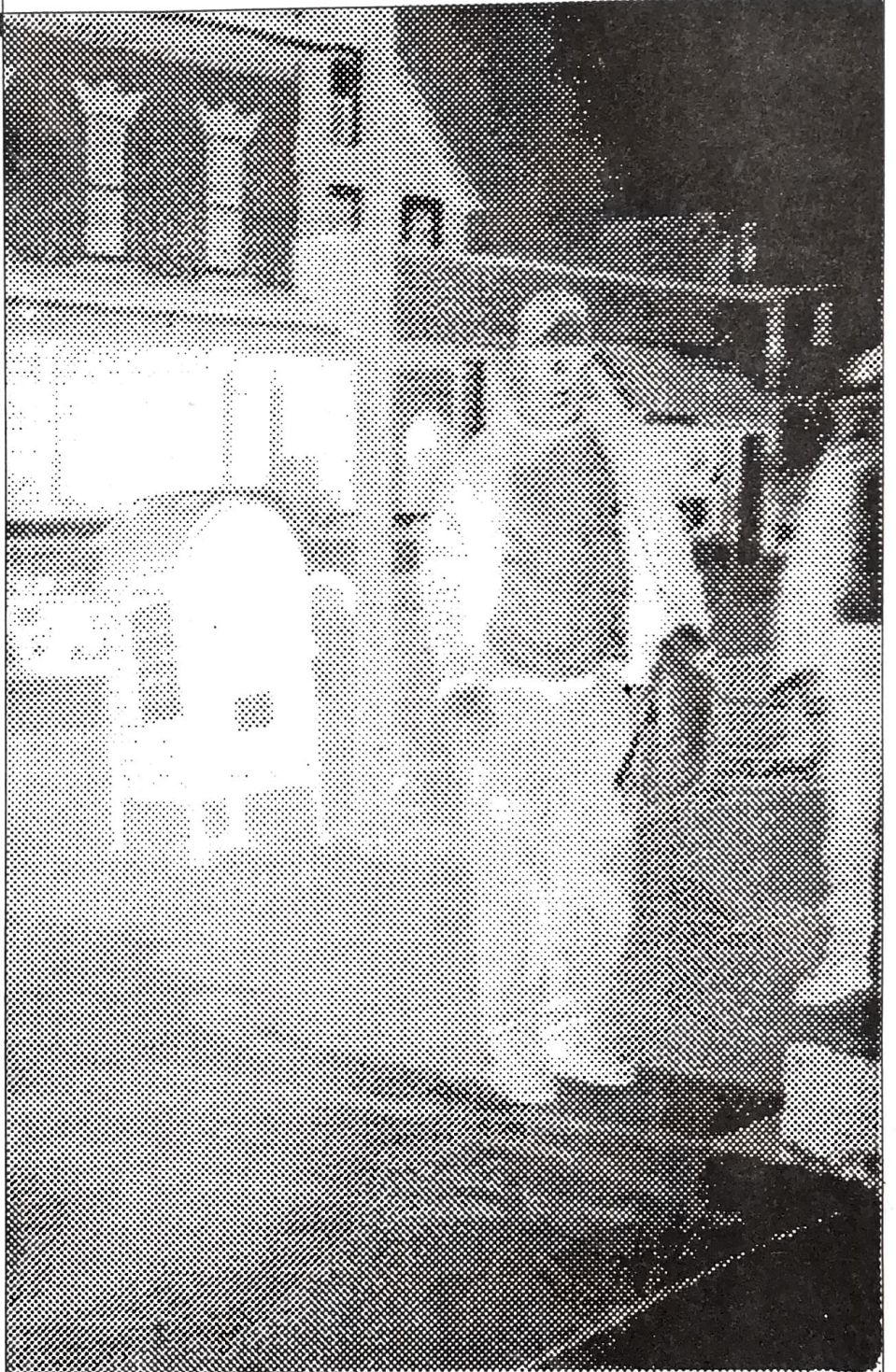
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Boulder Correspondent
European Correspondent
Internet Correspondent

SEATTLE, WASH.

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SEATTLE, WA

In a town where, oddly, people find the winters oppressive (hard to believe after several winters in New York) poetry tends to have a large following this time of year. Looking at any of the local free weekly papers you can attend a reading just about any day of the week, everything from slams to book signings and lectures. For instance, this week The New City Theater Rendezvous Readings features Stokely Towles & Amy Halloran. The OK Hotel features The Seattle Slam with live music. The Soil Art Gallery features an open mike to celebrate a new literary magazine called The Arms Extent & the public library is kicking off a new series with several local writers. Thus, there is no lack of poetic happenings to keep us occupied as the shortest days of the year continue. Recent highlights included a Subtext reading by Roberta Olson & Aaron Shurin. Roberta Olson has written some remarkable pantoums, among other things. Look for her work in the upcoming issue of *Talisman* (a selection of Seattle writers edited by Joe Donahue). Aaron Shurin read very beautifully from his books *Into Distances*, *A Door*, & concluded with a few extremely moving pieces from his collection of essays *Unbound: A Book of AIDS*.

MINNEAPOLIS, MN

A foot of fresh snow last night into early Sunday morning, & by noon the city crews had already cleared my alley; the tar of the main streets was visible; & even more people were out than normal, cross-country skiing, snow-shoeing, sledding the paths down to the Mississippi River. Does inclement weather stop anybody here? Several inches of snow during rush hour, & by 7:00pm more than seventy-five people made it out to Sherman Alexie's reading at the Minneapolis American Indian Center. Freezing rain, & a crowd packed the back corner of Borders, where Paul Metcalf gave an extraordinary reading in front of stacks upon stacks of self-help books. His week-long presence in the Twin Cities, which included two readings, a radio broadcast, & an interview forthcoming in *The Rain Taxi Review of Books*, coupled with Coffee House Press' publication of Metcalf's *Collected Works*, was undoubtedly the highlight of the season here (along with, I think, a reading by Amiri Baraka at the Walker coupled with a performance by the the University of Minnesota Jazz Ensemble of

Langston Hughes' "Ask Your Mama"). Jefferson Hansen & Elizabeth Burns put out a magnificent new issue of *Poetics Briefs* featuring writing on Alice Notley & vision, & the Xcp (*Cross-Cultural Poetics*) website is up & running (<http://freenet.buffalo.edu/~xcp/>), including a "Call for Papers" for the big conference here in October. By then, the snow will have stopped & begun again, perhaps. Shovel it, & they will come.

BOULDER, CO

Sitting here watching flakes resume, buffeted by Rockies wind, 10 inches of snow on the ground so far. Still battling the Christian amendments in these parts but 4 got defeated which would have brought back Creationism to the public schools! Last year we fought #17, a book banning agenda. *Pasta Poetics*, edited by Matt Hohner, a compendium of poets' recipes (taste Keith Abbott's Marsala-laden Zabaglione & Anselm Hollo's orange roughy Ceviche) is out to benefit a local homeless shelter. May be ordered c/o The Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics, 2130 Arapahoe, Boulder, CO 80302, as can *Persephonic*, a magazine of women's work to benefit Boulder Safehouse. Poets' Plays Players performed *Bury The Head of A Yak*, a rhizome of voices. Stan Brakhage's Sunday film salons at CU auditorium continue with Nathaniel Dorsky's TRISTE premiering there January. *The Robert Duncan Naropa Interview, 1978*, due out soon from Rodent Press/*Erudite Fangs/Poetry & Rare Books Collection/*Buffalo. Mary Crow (of Fort Collins), a poet & translator, is our new Colorado Poet Laureate. Ed Dorn introduced her recent reading at Koenig Alumni Center. Our beloved Naropa student Lisa Hammond lives on, though fleetingly, in coma (she suffered massive blood clot to the heart) with presumed brain damage. Lisa's originally from Michigan, now MFA in final year, worked with Ken & Ann Mikelowski in the Kavyayantra Print Shop, others, a lovely woman with musical voice, energy, talent.

ROME, ITALY

On stationary from the Hotel Mastroianni, Roma, Italia I have gone on an early Christmas excursion to Rome, ostensibly to buy a glass figurine for my Aunt; however, it is always nice to be in the (w)Holy City at Christmas time as the weight of tradition hangs thickly in the air. But these last few nights I have been kept up by a pack of roving, drunken Germans caroling. So I have been thinking . . . The 24hr. Poet "knows when you've been sleeping" on the job. He understands how the things one doesn't already know are lost. He realizes that it is difficult to prevent the Ego from invading the poem, like a light under the door. Sure, it's not important, but it keeps us up.

Even in the room, barely illuminated & filled with the half lit shapes of half lit shapes, the mind itself focuses itself on itself. & it becomes impossible to leave the bed & navigate, to turn off the light & open the mind. Consider that the modern prose poem was invented, as a matter of convenience by IBM. They called it the automatic return & the more affluent poets could afford it. Look at how a whole movement was named because the Selectric shiftlock does not lock out the lower case functions of numbers. Technology bleeds us of any real ability to innovate. The text remains at the mercy of the commodifiers & we remain inattentive to that. We need, not only, to better understand our methods, but also, the ways in which we are always kept in the dark by the traditions of commodification & desire. We need to be aware of our living, in the details of that living, in order to write that living into a tradition of its own.

INTERNET

Of the millions of sites on the Web, precious few are working the material of the medium which they use to deliver their texts. What I'm talking about here is the 'language' of the Web—or let's call it its 'idiom'—hypertext. However, a very rich investigation of this topic is currently under way & should be visited by everyone interested in writing on the web. The site is by Chris Funkhouser & is called "Toward a Literature Moving Outside Itself: The Beginnings of Hypermedia Poetry" (available, along with other works by Funkhouser at his EPC home page <http://wings.buffalo.edu/epc/authors> or directly at <http://cns.vax.albany.edu/~poetry/inside.html>.) Funkhouser declares that openly considering itself a work-in-progress, this "proto-anthology" sets out to demarcate electronic writing & give a link-enhanced narrative of its progress. You can also jump from this essay to "Poetry Webs 1996: 'Web Essays'" which also allows you to read Funkhouser's "Multimedia Effects," another powerful investigation of writing as it intersects with new technologies. In what other ways does the Web differ from print? For one thing, it can be used to set the print record straight. For example, want to see the correct source text for the Helen Adam entry in *Women of the Beat Generation*? Set your browser to "The Reluctant Pixie Poole" at Kristen Prevallet's page (<http://wings.buffalo.edu/epc/authors/prevallet/>)! Next, want to find great books on the web? There are many ways to make contact. Small Press Distribution now has an e-mail address (spd@igc.apc.org) & a web site is just up from Coach House Press (<http://www.chbooks.com>). For a list of "remote" poetry bookstores see <http://wings.buffalo.edu/epc/documents/bookstores.html>.

announcements

Jim Gustafson 1950-1996

Jim Gustafson, a Detroit-area performance poet and writer, died of complications following a cerebral hemorrhage on October 24th at the age of 46. Gustafson, a former Wayne State University student, often performed at WSU area venues including the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Center for Creative Studies and the WSU Colloquium Series. Gustafson was known for his flamboyant performance style. He created the **JUMPCITY REVUE** in the mid 1980's "as a way to take poetry and put it in the public eye (in bars & auditoriums) kind of like a Wild West Show where he was all the characters." Gustafson is remembered for his unpredictability, his joy of excess, and his devotion to poetry. As his close friend Mark Grafe writes, "Jim was a white trash metaphysician ever trying to alter the universe with the simplest of tools: his laughter and a typewriter. His work was a journey into the heart of the American myth and the dream of destination. Writing to keep language alive as a vital art form, to agitate the archetypes, expose the folly, and explore the process of myth-making itself." Gustafson's publications include **Shameless** (Tombouctou), **Bright Eyes Talks Crazy to Rembrandt** (Hanging Loose), **Virtue and Annihilation** (Alternative Press), **The Hurt** (Ridgeway Press), and **Breath Torque** (Yondotiga Press). He was also published in countless magazines from **Rolling Stone** to **The Wayne State Review** to **Exquisite Corpse**. Gustafson will be missed by many. As Robert Creeley says: "The insistent way he'd push things, show up half naked in the middle of winter, as Ken Mikolowski reminded me, the way he took life seriously, like they say, were all facts of a complexly and utterly sincere person. God knows he was a poet all the way. He was always a good friend to me."

John Ashbery Wins International Poetry Prize

On December 5th, John Ashbery became the first English-language poet to be awarded the Grand Prix des Biennales Internationales de Poesie. The prize, awarded by the Maison International de las Poesie, is intended to "crown the published work of a living poet, whatever his nationality may be." An international jury makes the selections. First awarded in 1956, the Grand Prix has been received by Saint-John Perse of France, Octavio Paz of Mexico, Leopold Sedar Senghar of Senegal, and most recently, in 1994, Inger Christensen of Denmark.

1997 Ruth Cable Memorial Prize

ELF: Eclectic Literary Forum, an internationally distributed literary quarterly, is accepting entries for the **1997 Ruth Cable Memorial Prize for Poetry** competition. An award of \$500 and publication in Eclectic Literary Forum will be awarded to the winner, in addition to three Honorable Mention awards of \$50 each including publication. The deadline for submissions is March 31, 1997. For guidelines, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: ELF 97 PC, PO Box 392, Tonawanda, NY 14150. Guidelines are also available on the internet at <http://www.pce.net/elf>.

Foundation for Contemporary Performance Arts Announces Grants

The Foundation for Contemporary Performance Arts announced its grants for 1996 on December 4th. Ten artists working in the United States and abroad received grants for \$20,000. These artists include local poets Patricia Spears Jones, Ron Padgett, and David Shapiro. Artists are selected by a nomination procedure on the basis of merit and imaginativeness of their work and the effect the support might have at

this point in their careers, which can be at any stage of professional development. The Foundation invites designated artists and arts professionals, who serve anonymously, to nominate outstanding individuals or groups working in the fields of dance, music, theater/performance arts, poetry, and visual arts. Grant recipients are selected by the Foundation Directors. The Foundation was established in 1963 by John Cage and Jasper Johns.

New Poetry Book Section at St. Mark's Bookstore

St. Mark's Bookstore is in the process of updating its poetry section to include more small press books and chapbooks. This has been made possible via the efforts of local poets Larry Fagin and Jordan Davis. As of the beginning of this year, the bookstore is stocking 100 new titles, mainly comprised of hard to find small press books. Davis and Fagin say "Now that a bookstore is supporting contemporary poetry, it's up to us to show equal support by buying poetry books from St. Mark's. The more we buy, the more the store will stock. Please visit the store, buy a poetry book, and tell them you appreciate their expanded poetry section."

Spring Poetry Chapbook Contest

White Eagle Coffee Store Press invites poets to submit manuscripts to a contest for chapbook publication. Manuscripts of 20 to 24 pages are being considered, and there are no restrictions on style or subject matter. Winners will receive \$150 and 25 copies. The deadline is March 30, 1997. For more information send a SASE to White Eagle Coffee Store Press, PO Box 383, Fox Grove, IL 60021-0383.

An Interview
with
ALICE NOTLEY

by
Judith Goldman



photo by Melissa Zexter

In late September I called Alice Notley in her Paris apartment, requesting to do an interview by correspondence with her. We exchanged three letters each over the next two months. Our letters cover

works produced by Notley in the 1990s, including *The Scarlet Cabinet* (with Douglas Oliver), *Close to me and Closer...* (*The Language of Heaven*), *Desamere*, *The Descent of Alette*, and *Mysteries of Small Houses*. Each of these outstanding recent books tells a story (at times, more than one), forms a discrete relationship to narrativity, and develops its own music. The following text is composed of excerpts from our correspondence.

10/2/96

Goldman: At your workshop at the Poetry Project last spring, you talked about voice, about saying "I" in a poem, using that I to shape the way you talk about yourself, and the way the "I" unifies the poem. You asked, at one point, "Is there an actual I who is exactly myself?" You also problematized narrative during the workshop, saying that narrative is an outside (false) structure that people use to jail their pasts. Do you see narrative as self-romanticizing—as though the "I" the story falls to becomes too large(?) or too idealized to be the "exactly [one]self"?

Notley: In that workshop last May, I was presenting considerations and techniques associated with a manuscript I'd just finished called *Mysteries Of Small Houses*. The project of *Mysteries* was to "re-center the I." I'd been writing narratives with fictional characters for a number of years and suddenly saw "I" as a challenge and a mystery. I wanted to investigate the

basic I (I mostly uncorrupted) as closely as possible. Basic I is terrifying of course. It really exists, but we seem to construct everything—our world, our social forms, our narratives, and our anti-narratives—in order to keep it hidden. I wanted to find "my self"—as the only self I could investigate—in the context of my past in order to determine its constancy, or lack of it, across the years. I thus had to re-see my life. I tried for a scary honesty; I wanted to be frightened by my own existence. Be as alive as I am and not be in other people's ideas of life-shapes or other people's theories about the non-existence of the self. Yes, I think narratives of the self are often self-romanticizing, but not because they make the I too large, rather because they make it too small and not precisely individual enough. I think each I is both huge and unique. As for voice, I probably talked about how the voice comes from the depths of the unique body and the unique self and each person's voice—taking voice to be both sound and style—is different. For example, I can tell the difference between each person's poems, no matter how imitative or downright bad they are, after a few sessions of an ongoing workshop. Why is that?

Goldman: Describing your own writing, you said, "I remember everything; it isn't past, it's wild," and further stated that names tame things that shouldn't be tamed. How do you free your writing from the constriction of narration? Do you feel that you have to de-narrativize or un-name certain memories as part of your poetic process? Do you ever find that words in and of themselves are conducive to narration and

find it difficult to free them from coalescing into already recognizable forms? Does a poem represent a process of organizing the self?

Notley: The quotation—"I remember everything; it isn't past, it's wild"—is from the first poem in *Mysteries Of Small Houses*. It's called "Would Want To Be In My Wildlife." It's a kind of introduction to the process of the book. That is, in order to write it I went into a sort of hypnotic trance, which really wasn't very different from my normal writing state, though it felt new and exciting anyway. I think perhaps I went deeper into that state than usual, in order to remember things. But I find that there is a particular state to write from in which I am free from the constrictions you mention, free from stories as I already know them and also free from my current tag words. In the case of *Mysteries* I tried to find my four-year-old self and to re-enter the house where I lived when I was four, because it seemed that when I was that age I was both most natural and most good. I identified essential self with that age—the problem then became, what was the purpose, if any, of my later experience? As you may have gathered, I'm always inventing a new way in to writing poetry. I suppose that's how I manage to keep such things as shape and narrative and vocabulary fresh for myself. As for your final question in this sequence, I don't try to organize my self so much as to find it over and over, though I often try to organize what I think about things.

Goldman: Your newest published works, particularly *The Descent of Alette*, as well as *Desamere* and *Close to me & Closer*. . . (*The Language of Heaven*), are very much concerned with story telling. These are phenomenally intricate texts that, as you state in your preface to *Close to me*, "anyone can understand." Did you specifically think of these books as a project of producing texts that anyone can understand? or perhaps better said, who are or who aren't these texts for? What is the poet's (social/political) responsibility to articulate the memories of the self and the wildness or presentness of the memories as represented by an I? How are the narratives that these recent works present different from narratives that you consider too structured or, to put it bluntly, dead?

Notley: I wrote *Alette* in particular for everyone, or at least for the sort of people who ride and take shelter in the New

York City subways. I wrote *Close to me*... to demonstrate the aptness of the non-intellectual voice for speaking of profound things. I wrote *Desamere* as an eco-warning: I'm not afraid of the ecological cliché especially as the situation becomes more and more drastic. But I *always* want to write poems anyone can understand. And I always have wanted to. Even in my most "difficult" works I've always tried to include some more generally attractive aspects—a highly defined, seductive musical shape, or jokes, patter, color. I think that so-called popular poetry underestimates the verbal intelligence of so-called ordinary people, who in turn haven't been properly taught poetry in school. Meanwhile so many people's careers in the academy and in poetry seem to depend on their obfuscating poetry, making it seem as theoretical and intellectual as possible. The consequence is that ordinary people think they can't understand poetry, and popular poetry talks down to them, these people who in bars, on streetcorners, and at kitchen tables conduct sophisticated verbal dealings daily, tell stories at least as well as any professor of literature, get at each other with words in the most subtle ways. My books are for anyone, anyone who feels like taking the chance and the time. Of course that still won't be a lot of people. In relation to political/social responsibility in *Mysteries of Small Houses*: If I say that the self is wild and free and vast, is the real, but is only realized apart from the social and political restrictions we're always laying on each other—the implications are obvious: Let's get this dead weight off that smothers self-realization, catches us up in economic situations that are globally harmful to others and to the planet, enslaves us to one or another doctrine. As for how my narratives are different from "dead" ones: For one thing the music is different each time. When I invent a new music for my poem, I insure that I won't tell a story I've already told or that I can predict. And then there's the "matter" or subject of my books—it's always something that makes me shaky and that I can't deal with adequately. I won't be able to cover it, I won't be able to kill it.

Goldman: In your workshop, you also discussed language-based or text-based writing that uses words instead of ideas as "amusing," but superficial. How/why did you stop writing language-based poetry (if that is how you would describe some of your earlier work)?

Notley: I don't think I've ever written language-based poetry as such. I've always had too much to say. Too much happens to me personally, and more, there's what's happening to the world... There's too much to talk about, to deal with. I'm not interested in "language" when there's so much danger in the air. I sometimes use "language" to help me get to what I want to say or to an area of feeling or responsibility. The words, coming both from my depths and from the outer world with its urgencies, help me locate my poem.

Goldman: On a more simple autobiographical note, do you consider yourself an expatriate? Is there a community of writers in Paris that you identify with? Do you ever feel nostalgic about or homesick for the States/New York City?

Notley: People keep asking me the expatriate question. It always surprises me because of that word, which has daddy inside it and all sorts of loyalties and localisms. I don't consider myself a patriot or an expatriate; I'm here, I'm staying, my French is still terrible. I've mostly been looking at the U.S. from Paris, in that sudden new way available from being outside it, but I'd prefer to be looking at the world now. Though the U.S. is where my professional life is and will be. But the world is effectively dropping more and more boundaries, becoming one thing. There isn't a real community of writers here that I identify with. I identify with a national (American) and finally international community of writers that exists in the air, in books and magazines and letters; that's been the case for a long time, since before I moved to Paris. I'm afraid I don't miss New York much, I lived there too long, but I very much miss certain friends. What I do miss is the Southwest and Needles, the desert—very sharply sometimes. But the experience of being in another culture is continuously...pungent. I like Paris because of the French, the French working people, shop people, are smart and politically informed and witty and contrary to popular opinion, very nice. And then there are negative things to notice, the language to grapple with, another history—it's something to do! In New York I'd gotten so I wasn't sensitive to anything new there.

10/15/96

Goldman: In the next few questions, I want to concentrate on how you figure yourself as a feminist, and how you

Local Heroes

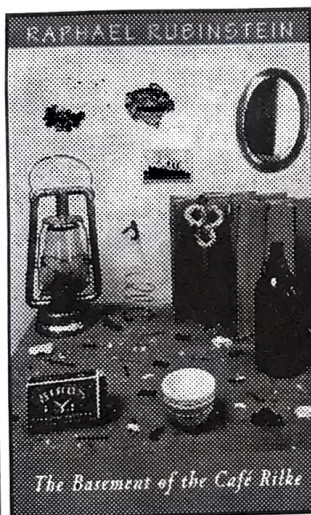
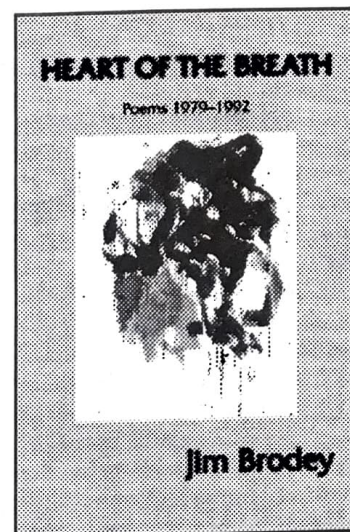
from **HARD PRESS**

Jim Brodey was an incandescent hero of his generation. From the end of the sixties until his death in 1993, he was a poet who lived his poems, who dared everything. If it frightened and sometimes disgusted most of his friends and fellow-poets as much as it fascinated and attracted them, so what? In his "name poem" on himself he wrote:

Whosoever lives by the poem shall
Die by the poem which is energized
By the breath of all breathing ones

Whosoever lives by the poems shall
Be blessed by words you make up and
ride like a racehorse locomotive..."

Brodey got a hold of that "racehorse locomotive" energy - or it got a hold of him - and for nearly twenty years he hung on tight. These poems span that whole time. The energy is undiminished from first to last. Brodey has many established fans in poetry circles, and this collection fully justifies his reputation.



This is the first collection of poems by noted writer and art critic Raphael Rubinstein. His essays and critical writings have appeared in *The Village Voice* and *Artforum*, and he is on the editorial staff of *Art In America*. The incisive, insightful style that has made him a popular writer on art and culture is here brought to bear on a different subject matter: the poet and the world.

Reviewing *Cafe Rilke*, poet David Bromige says, "The simplicity is not deceptive, it's the obvious reframed; It takes nerve to face us into these truths. This book makes me feel that an honest man is writing. It takes tact to make one sit still for that."

And this from Harry Mathews: "Raphael Rubinstein's first collection of poems is lucid, compelling and endowed with astonishing authority."

"His voice is unmistakably his own and, remarkably, it is spoken in a second voice that keeps the most eloquent distance from it. In this ambiguous space Rubinstein gathers intense, precise observations of the world without and within.... The poems that emerge display a classic intensity in their synthesis of emotional vividness and critical alertness."

The adventures of Magazine Girl, Grace and Egg, among others, in an unidentified (possibly unidentifiable) metropolis known only as "New York." A deconstruction of nostalgia - memoir as a manic, free-associative-meditation worthy of Neal Cassady - in these 74 prose-poems.

A stalwart of the punk-poetry revival of the eighties centered around the Poetry Project, Gillian McCain has been there, and done that. With Legs McNeil she recently co-authored another, less metaphysical look back, the best-selling *Please Kill Me: an uncensored history of Punk*. This collection offers another look into that world, through a different, more difficult and personal window.

Reacting to *Tilt*, poet John Ashberry said: "Gillian McCain's poems are like urgent telegrams from next door, or oddly but brilliantly cropped snapshots of the life that is going by." This eccentric and affecting viewpoint offers us an opportunity to stop in our tracks, see something we thought familiar reveal, suddenly, an unexpected side.



Available at bookstores or direct from:

Hard Press
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West Stockbridge, MA 01266



constitute your poetics as a woman (or how being a woman informs your poetics). How does mothering fit into your poetics? What about the poetics of everyday life?

Notley: I'm not interested in a poetics of mothering or in mothering, nurturance, procreation, even creation *per se*. I'm interested in being the mother of my own children—whom I also see as my very close friends. I'm interested in the status of the mother in society, which I take to be pretty low, like that of the poet, since there's no pay for it unless you do it for someone else's kid. And I'm not interested in a poetics of everyday life—I really can't stand the phrase. I used it in the title of an essay ("Notes On 'The Poetry Of Everyday Life'") because I was assigned it, but the essay is about enlarging or even transcending our notions of what that is. I'm interested in a poetry that's as inclusive as possible. And I found out very early on in my career that much of my experience was excluded from poetry up to that time. For example, it's astonishing to be trying to get on as a poet while bearing and rearing a child, realizing that there are only a handful of poems in the language that deal with your state of mind and urgencies. Sylvia Plath sometimes refers to being a mother and was one of the few examples available to me of a poet-mother. Her last poems though brilliant are sick. I have no idea why she's an icon of feminism. She's a dreadful example for any young mother who needs courage. Are we all supposed to kill ourselves and endanger the lives of our children? I felt as if I had to invent out of air a way of speaking of my experience as a mother: that was at first. Later I had to invent forms to contain my children's voices since they were never not where I was even while writing. I quite enjoyed the latter—inventing the poem "January" and those talky poems that took place at 101 St. Mark's Place; but sometimes while I was writing the earlier work I felt quite desperate.

Goldman: How do you feel reading magazines with your work and work by your sons in them? What correspondences or lack thereof do you see between your work and their work?

Notley: I'm pleased that my sons are both poets. Poetry is an honorable, exacting, necessary occupation. I can't think of a better one. It isn't surprising to me that someone might pick it up from his parents, or rather pick up insights into why it's necessary and how it's done. Because, of course, poetry

isn't about who's the best poet. It's about continuing the tradition of poetry, making sure its "services"—spiritual, intellectual—remain available to people. I read their poems to see what I can pick up from them. They're more in touch with certain kinds of things—new sounds—than I am. I of course am wiser than them due to my great age.

Goldman: What about your relationship, as a woman writer, to male poets? (I guess also both contemporaries/poets in history.) Are there particular female poets in history who have greatly influenced you? What about contemporaries?

Notley: I've had very good relationships with a lot of male writers; I've also had a problematic relationship with poetry's politics, institutions, ideas as to what poetry should be, etc., due to being a woman. Both have always existed simultaneously and sometimes intertwined. Ted [Berrigan]'s influence on me was profoundly benign and necessary. I'm not sure what poet I would be now if I hadn't met him. When I first knew him he was a little skeptical about women poets. He wasn't sure that he liked the poetry of the women poets he knew about as much as he liked the men's poetry, partly because women were denied involvement in the parts of life that seemed to give poetry its edge. He quite quickly changed his tack though. It seems to me now that he recognized my talent before I did and fostered it as much as he could—to the extent of insisting we leave England in 1974, when he didn't really want to, because he thought I needed to be around American poets and similarly insisting on leaving Chicago in 1975 to get me to New York and the poets there. I think he recognized before we did that Anne [Waldman], Bernadette [Mayer], Maureen [Owen], and others and I constituted a real generation of poets and a new kind of voice. Ted really cared about poetry. But I had consistent support from the very beginning of my poetry from men such as Bob Creeley, Anselm Hollo, Tom Clark, and Phil Whalen, and a little later Edwin Denby. I felt that Doug [Oliver] was seriously interested in my poetry from our first meeting in 1973. Likewise I don't remember a lot of gender problems at The Poetry Project. In the years I lived in New York, the Project was most often run by a woman. It was a woman-friendly institution, though we fought a lot about everything, so we probably fought about gen-

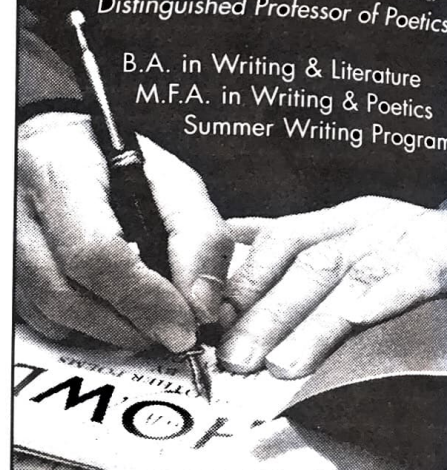
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der too—it's hard to remember. For me the gender problems arise when I'm not allowed to speak: men will dominate the room, the subject, the theory, the panel. They like to compete and only like to compete with each other. Women poets still, thus, get goddessed. Men lead movements and argue with each other over the present and future of poetry, insuring that they get more space in the so-called discourse. It's like they're still doing all the real thinking. We're geniuses, they say, and then go back to arguing with each other. Somehow we don't have any power, so we never get attacked. It's also a fact that the ways in which poetry gets published, discussed, and accepted into the academy or whatever are ways invented by men: book publication, magazines and magazine formats, forums for discussion, standards of discussion, standards of publication, not to mention the whole idea of a literary movement, the academy, the avant-garde are all male forms. There's a sort of male-ish bossiness and proprietorship that never quite gets shaken. And the notion that this is the only way, that it's always been

this way, that no one invented it.

Goldman: I just read *At Night The States* and was really amazed at how you achieved both a presentation of fragments—in their sharpness (an almost 'indecent,' insistent, implicit fragility)—and also a wholeness, a body going through time, meaning a body of thought, going through time... I have been thinking a lot about elegies—in a way, I always trip over ideas about elegies and the "deadness" of figures whenever I write—maybe this is a kind of music for me? You imparting a kind of life after death—a very real one; your self as an intrusion upon coldness, dis-aliveness or pathetic reanimations were an amazing address/redress of elegy... Do you feel that this is akin to what you were doing in *Close to me*, with your father? I think that book is not as "ghost-oriented"...

Notley: The short poems in *At Night The States* have always been difficult to read aloud, mostly because the audience doesn't know how to take them. The audience can't figure out whether to applaud or not. I find that interesting, thinking about it now. There may be some special value in poetry that the applause mechanism can't intrude on. Anyway, in these poems, as is obvious, I was intent on going on, going through. I wrote them with no thought as to their qualities; I scarcely thought of them as poems. I looked at the folder of them about a year after I'd completed them and was struck by the fact that they were poems, that I didn't know of any like them, and that they might possibly be of real use to someone else. Around that time I wrote the title poem, which is quite different, and then I had a book. Writing *Close to me* was very different; I'm not sure the two compare. You see, I've been talking to my father for a long time now. He may be so alive to me that notions of elegy don't relate to the writings he figures in. I began having dreams in the mid-80's in which he told me things and gave me instructions. Several of these dreams were involved in the inception of *Alette*, in which he is, of course, the owl. But when I began *Close to me*, I felt that he was talking to me. Period. Not dead, no elegy. I wanted to try to get close to death as a state, and he was my guide but he wasn't dead, not the way Ted is dead in *At Night The States*.

11/10/96

Goldman: The way you define what being a poet does as a service really

means a lot to me. I feel strongly that being a poet is political, that it fulfills an important subversive political function. Of course I'd also like to see a changing social framework, and think I have seen experimental writing meet with somewhat more success in the world at large on its own terms and poets partially earn a living or get recognition by it. In general, when this happens, I characterize it not as an annexation (like a dilution), but a victory... This all relates to what you say in your talk, "The 'Feminine' Epic,"* when you describe what led you to write *Alette*. How do you reconcile thinking about social problems systemically—like national culpability and "needing an epic"—but also as related to "godlike forces," like accidents or problems in causality? Or that the repercussions of actions might exceed or defeat the intentions behind them? Is *Alette* a kind of purposive accident, a use of "godlike forces" that make accidents, tripping up "human" (or nationalist) intentions? In "The 'Feminine' Epic," you say you want to tell a "continuous story." One reason I find this so important is because of the tradition of Romantic ellipse that continues even now—as a lacuna where all the action happens, or at least, the crisis happens. We're supposed to know it already; it's in the social script, even though it's semi-unsayable or sublime. The necessity of continuity means the story might not go as planned, i.e. pay attention! And that nothing is unspeakable.

Notley: You seem to be proposing a difference between what can be understood through reason and what keeps happening without anyone's foreseeing it, as if reason were the human-species quality and disruption or the unforeseen or the inspired, the godlike. I think that reason is also part of the godlike, that being able to see things whole and with detachment is as assuredly godlike as creating or initiating something unexpected. Life seems to be about the two together, in the sense that it couldn't exist without both, would be stationary without disruption and chaotic without rational analysis, so they are both of god whatever that is. My epic is an accident—as is everything else I write—in that it turned out entirely differently from how I sort of foresaw it. I don't plan on the accident, so in that sense it isn't a purposive accident—I don't anticipate the surprises or I wouldn't be sur-

prised, I guess. I don't try to trip up human intentions, I'm not interested in subversion: I'm very blatant.

Goldman: What I also like about "continuous story" is that you don't say the whole story—as if it were something that could be exhausted or that you would want to finish and exhaust. That poetry is a place for story, against the other narratives of narrative works like novels, because of the epic form. *Alette* is set apart from the work of many contemporary writers who investigate an aesthetic of breakage and fragments. Do you feel that there is some contradiction in the singularity of continuity? Can a singular story be told or is the story of it, the narrativity of it, something that joins others to it, that binds them, as you say in giving "some of the guilt back to the national community"?

Notley: The singularity of continuity is entirely appropriate to the way I know and perceive. Mostly I wanted to see if I could tell that kind of story; I'm interested in trying out as many possibilities of poetry as possible and in being as skilled as I can be. Telling that kind of story seemed to be difficult, so I thought I'd better try it. Writing in fragments and with breakage seems to me to be easy, although sometimes I feel like doing that anyway. I don't like to rule anything out.

The measure of *Alette* isn't based on the unification of a chorus: the two relevant pieces from *Beginning With A Stain* are, and some, maybe a lot, of *White Phosphorous* is, but *Alette* is in a virtually unified voice. It's a woman's epic because I wrote it and because its protagonist is a woman; and of course a "singular story can be told" because I did so, though I propose it as a gift for anyone who wants it, who thinks it applies to them or simply would like to read it. I very much like the relation of protagonist and chorus, as in classical Greek drama and in oratorio, but I don't believe we're always all in the chorus except in some impossible overview. That isn't how a life works; anyone is singular and somewhat plural and at perhaps the most crucial moments anyone is very very single.

Goldman: Does it seem like part of what you are doing is unifying voices whose growth was stunted and whose (voice)body was fragmented and scattered the moment it began to gain strength? What I'm interested in here is another political issue at stake in poetry that you discuss in your epic talk, which is not just the marginality of poet's lives

[continued on page 28]

*"The 'Feminine' Epic" is a talk that was given by Notley at New York State University Writers Institute, SUNY Albany, in October of 1995.

INSIDE LOOKING OUT: ON COMMUNITY

by
Jeff Derksen

AS "COMMUNITY" HAS BEEN A VEXED QUESTION FOR THE communities that I have been involved with, I am going to shy away from the definition of community and talk about how communities become defined both internally and externally. I do, however, wish to differentiate

between community and audience. By audience I mean, on the one hand, a shifting group of people who show up for readings and other *events*, and on the other hand, an imagined group of consumers who may buy particular books. Audience then doesn't have the same concerns about identity that arise within communities, partially because audience is defined less as an ideologically imagined group (in the sense that Benedict Anderson writes of nations) but more as a group of consumers. In this frame, texts are stopped in their social tracks at the moment of consumption.

Within communities there is a pressure to imagine the group or site as a cohesive or coherent body, as an ideological cohesion based on aesthetics or some other point such as class, gender, sexuality, race or ethnicity. This internal definition often implodes under the pressure to unite around a point that is plural, multiple and unstable. I won't cover this ground here as there has been a lot written about this formation, but I will just say that these internal definitions work on a concept of subjectivity that is at odds with how individuals (citizens) in the community define themselves. Even within communities there is a drive to differentiate.

But communities are defined as well by structures or discourses outside of themselves. This constitutive outside or discursive exterior gives an identity to a group or perceives a group even when group members

may not. Communities, countering this external pressure, also define themselves in opposition to these structures. For a writing community this may first take the shape of some sort of negative aesthetic identification, for instance a poetry community may define itself in opposition to narrative, or against a perceived dominant poetic. For instance, that Language poets are still viewed as a fairly unified group whose poetics oppose a lyric subjectivity or an official "workshop poem." At least this is how they are seen by one portion of the Canadian academy. These oppositional aesthetics set up a series of negations that split audiences, but they do initiate debates about aesthetics and ideology—a dialogue that doesn't take place within audience.

This oppositional or negative identification or formation is a tactic against official verse culture. Within Canada, where official verse has been instrumental in constructing a national subject, an oppositional aesthetic carries a politicized challenge by locating a state aesthetic that creates myths of identity that then inform everything from domestic economic policy to foreign policy. In Canada these challenges have come from communities as various as the Industrial Writers Union, Acadian writers, the Writing Thru Race conference, feminists writers, and the Kootenay School of Writing [KSW] at points in its existence.

The KSW provides another paradigm of formation. Rather than a group brought together through internal similarities, it was a formation that cohered around the 1984 cutbacks to post-secondary education—so an external political event was the catalyst and unifying factor. As an imagined community, it was, at first, based on a shared ideology and not a shared aesthetic—in this case there was a split between these two. Later, KSW cohered around internal aesthetic and ideological factors and a new set of pressures were created.

A community is described as a failure if it does not fulfill the expectations of the constitutive outside. In some ways this clash of discourses and of goals results in writing communities not recognizing that they have been transformative to the lives of the people directly involved with the community. As well, the public literary sphere in a city can be transformed by a

writing community: that is, transformation can be internal and external as well. There is not yet a suitable discourse to measure the effects of a writing community that has defined itself in opposition along aesthetic lines. The discourse of sociology does not recognize the discourse of the *avant garde*—to use that troubled term. Cultural studies comes close to being a discourse that could recognize how an *avant garde* can transform the public sphere, but it tends to still be caught in a view of formally innovative poetry as being “merely” small or “merely” formal. This, I think, has to do with cultural studies emergence from and a reaction to a literary studies that could not accommodate context as anything other than a backdrop, a scrim. Cultural studies, at least in its early stages in Britain in the late fifties and early sixties, defined itself in opposition to such limited literary methods.

Aijaz Ahmad, in his book *In Theory: Classes Nations, Literatures* proposes that the small-scale yet nonetheless transformative aspects of *marginalized* (another troubled term) communities are not recognized because the dominant culture which arbitrates what is recognizable or coherent blocks or denies that recognition. To illustrate, Ahmad, a South Asian poet and critic, suggests that the so-called collapse of Communism is based on the West's view of its own victory—however, in India, the Communist Party remains vital. Ahmad also proposes that a form of community exists at a sub-national level, or even sub-civic level—a level that is not geographically defined. I'm very much attracted to this idea. It seems to supply a method for an effect of community to be recognized, despite it not fulfilling the view of the dominant culture. For instance, a poetry community does not have to be geographically defined (or regional) in order to be effective—and by effective I mean that it has some transformative force on its members and on the imagining of the public sphere. As a Canadian, this allows me out of the bind of regionalism which is tied to

nationalism and a cultural nationalism. It also leads the way for a community that could define itself as a link of coalitions, sharing ideological concerns. This coalitional community would not define itself from within but by a reaction to an analysis of ideology. Differentiation along the lines of race, class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality and aesthetics would not foreclose the possibility of community because this community would not depend upon internal cohesion. This coalitional community could also be transitory, basing itself around a particular issue.

I'll return now to the constitutive outside and how it defines, or sketches in negative space, a community. A community will come to be known by a dominant character or trait or tendency—an aspect of this community is *isolated* by a constitutive outside. Commonly these characteristics are abruptly representational: a community is racialized, aestheticized, etc., that is, they are defined in opposition to a norm set by the dominant culture. All very anthropological, unfortunately. Once designated, it is possible for the constitutive outside to prescribe how this community should function, what its effects on the public sphere should be. For writers of colour, this imperative has been narrative. This attachment of aesthetic or generic expectations to racialized writers is so strong that, at points, if a writer of colour does not fulfill them, they are no longer recognized as a member of that community; they are in some way, deracinated.

In Canada this is clear with Fred Wah and Roy Kiyooka whose identities as writers were not read through the racialized frame of their works (texts that engaged a racialized identity either formally or on the semantic level) because of their challenge to representational forms. When I have pointed this out to critics (who form a part of the constitutive outside along with governmental structures, such as official multiculturalism in Canada) I've been told that these writers did not sufficiently represent themselves as racialized—identification is seen as only inter-

nal as the constitutive outside denies its effect.

For an “*avant garde*” or communities that define themselves as oppositional, the constitutive outside demands that they give up their “elitist” status and seek a larger audience, that their discourse is secretive and allusive. Thus occurs through state funding agencies like the Canada Council. It is critical to note that the constitutive outside invokes the movement from community to audience as a positive and necessary step; this has similar but not homologous consequences for both an *avant garde* and writers of colour. So the structure or discourse that can not initially make sense of a community enacts expectations, which are often internalized, that dictate how this community can become (to use some current metaphors) “visible” or “make their voices heard.” This, of course, may not be what this community set out to do. For not all communities *measure* their effectiveness by being visible to the panoptic gaze of a dominant culture.

Perniciously, the dominant culture, once having played a part in defining a community, can then identify with that community. The dominant, over drinks in a bar, will suddenly say “It may look like I'm the centre, but I'm actually just as marginalized, or even more so, than you.” With the the centre claiming to be the marginal, the actual power the dominant culture exercises is obfuscated—the dominant denies its power in a strategic self-identification with an oppositional or “beleaguered” community who it has partially defined.

This paper was originally written for a panel on “community” at the New York City Poetry Talks at New York University in the Spring of 1996. Jeff Derksen is the author of two books of poetry, Dwell and Down Time (both from Talon Books), and an essay on poetics and cities “Sites taken as Signs: New Vancouver Writing” in Vancouver: Representing the Postmodern City (Arsenal/Pulp). He currently lives in Calgary and is working on antistemic poetics and multiculturalism.

Ian Hamilton Finlay

by

Brian Kim-Stefans

SCOTTISH POET IAN HAMILTON FINLAY IS certainly one of the most controversial and provocative artists working today, yet he has eluded much discussion by American poets not only for his difficult "politics" but because of the wide range of

his mediums for expression. After his early work which linked Scottish folk idioms with a deft exploration of cubist and constructivist aesthetics, Finlay has generally opted for such forms as the one-word poem, the poem that contains only information without contextualizing commentary (beyond an occasional footnote), or the poem printed along with a single emblematic image, forms that place his work outside of easy assimilation into popular postmodern rubrics. As a "concrete" poet he has taken the field to new levels, taking the earlier word-and-image juxtaposition and making the image the *material* of the poem itself; thus, in poems made out of neon lights ("Windflower" and "Strawberry Camouflage" are two), the pink or blue neon lights are contrasted with the words they construct. He has painted poems on the shells of tortoises and floated poems on wooden circles in ponds, and often links brief poems with three-dimensional images such as in "Nuclear Sail", which is a depiction of the conning tower of a nuclear submarine carved out of black slate. Underlying and linking these explorations of form is Finlay's elaboration of a language or constellation of figures by which he has hoped to point to a larger, abstract and primarily ethical universe, or to concretize this ethical universe through these figures. This universe is difficult to describe, however, for though it appears to

contain relationships with systems such as those of the pre-Socratics, or to the writings of revolutionaries such as Robespierre and Saint-Just, it is an amalgam that is reconciled only in the work itself, which combines the specificity of mean-

ings possible only through language with the immediacy of the visual perception of simple images, but conveyed like a cultural and intellectual puzzle.

Born in 1925, Finlay has gone through many stages in his vocabulary as an artist and as a citizen in the arts community; indeed, he has turned his many conflicts with the Scottish Arts Council into the subject of some of his works, one of which was the "Crates Event" in 1979, an "event" based on the accidental return to Finlay of several works that had been confiscated by the SAC. At seventeen, Finlay served in the RASC and saw service in Germany; upon returning to Scotland, he worked as a shepherd in the Orkneys, and it was during this period that he had his dream of "Sweet Philosophy," in which he found "visionary happiness in discoursing with classically-clad philosophers in a kind of bright green-grassed grove". His early poems in Scottish caused a furor in Scotland but were greatly admired by Americans such as Lorine Niedecker and Robert Duncan. In fact, when Niedecker sent Finlay some of her poems that used non-standard American speech, he felt that he had found, perhaps for the first time, someone who could sympathize with his aesthetic interests, and he eventually translated a number of her poems into Scottish. This correspondence is described in the recent Finlay double-issue of the Scottish journal

Chapman, from which the following poems — the first Neidecker's original, the second Finlay's rendering — are reprinted (his interest in the "concrete" may also have been spurred by the great emphasis on the grapheme that translations into Scottish require):

She now lay deaf to death.
She could have grown a good rutabaga
in the burial ground
and how she'd have loved these woods.

One of her pallbearers said I
like a damfool followed a deer
wanted to see her jump a fence (

pretty thing
the way she runs.

Noo lyn deaf tae daith...

Och, think on aa the rhubarb
she nicht hae grawn there
on her lair
an hoo she wud
hae lood sic wids.

The wan o her pallbearers saye
I, silly eedjit
gaed aff ahint a deer
never'd seen a deer

Loup over a fence (O

aw
the brow
wee dear...

Finlay founded the Wild Hawthorn Press with Jessie McGuffie, which eventually published books by Niedecker, Zukofsky and himself, and it is this project, along with his periodical *Poor. Old. Tired. Horse.* (the title is taken from Robert Creeley's poem "Please") that initiated his interest in design and typography. During this early period, he was also writing distinctive short stories and plays in a high Symbolist manner, but after a time he ceased any activity in these forms. He held his first exhibition of toys that he had designed in 1963, thus taking a further step in his progression to explorations of stasis,

making a move — in the words of Yves Abrioux, author of *Ian Hamilton Finlay, A Visual Primer* — "away from Syntax toward 'the Pure'". Three years later, he settled with his wife Sue Finlay at Stonypath, where they began to construct their world-famous garden based on principles of eighteenth century English theories of landscape.

Finlay said in an interview: "Before we had the garden, I considered myself to be a poet and I wrote things in notebooks or I did prints. But with the garden, one makes this astonishing discovery that you can actually change a bit of the actual world by taking out a spade of earth. And this, to me, was really. . . a momentous discovery." Finlay's work changed dramatically when he started work on the garden, and he began to use imagery that not only defied the cosmopolitan in its rusticity, but to provoke responses from viewers who were accustomed to flux, pastiche, irony, and psychological depth in their art. Imagery from the military became an element in his iconography, and soon the trawlers that represented the pastoral to him were being replaced by battleships such as the Japanese *Yamato* and the USS *Enterprise*. One of Finlay's most illustrative printed works is the depiction of a tank in an overgrown forest with the words "Et In Arcadia Ego" beneath it, a reference to Poussin's *Arcadian Shepherds*, depicting the shepherds gazing at this phrase carved in a tablet discovered in a forest. Abrioux writes that this image reflects "the progressive formation of the cultural concept of 'Arcady', with its almost infinite

tissue of poetic references converging upon the point that even here, in the ideal pastoral world, death is present." Finlay's print, because it adopts a pre-existing motif, rises from the level of a moral "emblem" to an enigma, for (Abrioux writes) "the treasure, such as it is, is necessarily remote from us, and we have no foolproof method of lifting the hermetic seal." That is, whereas the classical moral emblem is not aware of its medium and refers to nothing outside of itself, Finlay's neo-classical "enigma" refers not only to the moral sentiment but to cultural predecessors, thus contrasting this apparently eternal equation to its own multiplicity of expressions through history. In this way, part of the strangeness of Finlay's "Et In Arcadia Ego" is like that of Magritte's "Ceci n'est pas une pipe" (his idiosyncratic homage to the French artist replaces the pipe with a machine gun) in that there is a visual distancing, or doubling, accompanying the directness of the verbal statement.

Finlay has retained this Arcadian equation in the design of his own garden and those that he has been commissioned to design; the role of the "viewer", then, upon visiting the garden, becomes that of a collaborator in its cultural reduplications. One critic has contrasted his neo-classical gardens with Poussin's painting by observing that the former "[projects] the visitor into a concrete experience which is not limited by the borders of the picture frame or predetermined by the imperfect enunciation of the

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inscribed message." A garden as ordered and orchestrated as Finlay's is, however, still framed—and *needs* this frame, for its meanings are centered around its own contexts with the exterior world. This is an important element to remember when interpreting his work, for his gardens never want to colonize the outside, to populate it with replications of itself, but is always aware of its separateness and high artifice; they don't even propose a vocabulary for the world through which it can observe itself, but merely an image—and actual location—in which the "eternal", a sort of imageless ideal, can be sensed.

"Finlay and commentators working with him have on occasion set his work in opposition to the modern world—a world whose values are characterized (adversely) as 'secular', 'liberal', 'pluralistic', 'materialistic', and 'utilitarian'", writes another critic, "Counter to this, some re-spiritualisation, some idea of a whole culture and a right relation to nature is suggested, in accord with what is called a 'Western tradition'; and some history of loss is implied." Because Finlay is both uncompromising yet indirect in his intentions (from one angle he is a visionary involved in a private symbology, from another a political propagandist as blatant as a Soviet poster artist — one hesitates to embrace or approve of his work, since one fears that hidden meanings may emerge to tip the scales, and turn his project from a delicate and profound investigation into obsessions with the military and totalitarian governments. He has taken, for instance, an interest in the architecture of the Third Reich, and has corresponded with the architect Albert Speer, who had designed, in secret, his own neo-classical garden while the Nazis were in power, and had in the process developed many theories of gardening. Because he is willing to correspond with people like Speer, and because there is no general discourse on how to approach the aesthetic aspects of such political phenomenon as the French Revolution

and the Third Reich, gauging the value of his interest in the architect and his times is difficult. Is he merely interested in that which is absent from our contemporary art vocabulary, or does he want a resurrection of the values that underlay the aesthetic component of the world's historical nightmares? Finlay's work clearly champions the inevitabilities of nature over the illusory eternity that technology seems to provide, and yet does he have to use such imagery as the "SS" in the shape of lightning bolts—more imagery from the Third Reich—to make this point? As an artist who sets himself and his work apart from much of the "modern"—his gardens are designed to defy the highways, airports, and even other gardens, that are their neighbors—he has also taken this "setting apart" as the *subject* of his art itself, conceiving, it appears, the artist's role in society as being akin to that of a soldier at war, and hence finding a justification for the belligerence of his symbols.

Finlay's is a representational art that returns to the trees, wind and waves sacrificed in early modernism, but passes up the medium of paint and canvas so that the perceiver is returned to the object direct. A poem of his from 1968, composed entirely of the names of trawlers, contains a note of nostalgia that disappears when one realizes that the nostalgia being expressed is composed out of actualities that are, nonetheless, in danger of being lost; the trawlers become, in this way, concrete poems speaking of the loss of themselves both as medium and subject:

Green Waters
Blue Spray
Grayfish

Anna T
Karen B
Netta Croan

Constant Star
Daystar
Starwood

Starlit Waters
Moonlit Waters
Drift

His discovery, upon placing his first concrete poem on the landscape, was that the poet is not limited to describing Utopias but that the poet can usurp the medium that was once thought reserved to architects, and bring syntax to the physical landscape. In the process, he has also utilized a number of the most volatile symbols in his quest to escape an ironized (and hence forgetful) view of history, to find stasis in the postmodern flux, to describe the presence of the death in his "Arcady", and to make cultural statements that are direct and altering, yet also enigmas. The works *demand* to be judged (the Epic Theater comes to mind) but one also recognizes the difficulty of rendering them propaganda for a political cause, for they all retain the quality of the "toy", all of them foregrounding their artifice as much as anchoring themselves within the "ethical" conscience—retaining, finally, the sheen of a formalist self-referencing that place them well within the idiom of the postmodern.

Bibliography

Ian Hamilton Finlay. *A Visual Primer*, by Yves Abrioux (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992).

Chapman, No 78-79 Ian Hamilton Finlay, edited by Alec Finlay (Edinburgh, 1995).

Wood Notes Wild. *Essays on the poetry and art of Ian Hamilton Finlay*, edited by Alec Finlay (Edinburgh: Paragon, 1995).

Brian Kim Stefans is the editor of *Arras* magazine. His poetry can be found in *Premonitions*, the *Kaya Anthology of New Asian North American Poetry*, and he has work forthcoming in *Torque*.

FEBRUARY AND MARCH SUNDAY READINGS

DOWNTOWN — February 2nd @ 3 p.m.

JAMES LASDUN, author of *Woman Police Officer in Elevator* (Norton)

DOWNTOWN — February 9th @ 3 p.m.

DAVID LEHMAN, author of *Valentine Place* (Scribner)

AMY HEMPEL, author of *At the Gates of the Animal Kingdom* (HarperCollins)

DOWNTOWN — February 16th @ 3 p.m.

KAREN VOLKMAN, author of *Crash's Law* (Norton)

MATTHEW ROHRER, author of *A Hummock in the Malookas* (Norton)

DOWNTOWN — February 23rd @ 3 p.m.

STAR BLACK, author of *Waterworn (A Gathering of the Tribes)*

GEOFFREY O'BRIEN, author of *Floating City: Selected Poems 1978-1996* (Talisman)

JEROME SALA, author of *Raw Deal: New and Selected Poems* (Another Chicago Press)

DOWNTOWN — March 2nd @ 3 p.m.

JEFFREY HARRISON, author of *Signs of Arrival* (Copper Beach)

DAVID RIVARD, author of *Wise Poison* (Graywolf)

DOWNTOWN — March 9th @ 3 p.m.

Ecstatic Occasions (University of Michigan) anthology reading by contributors:

MARC COHEN, COLETTE INEZ, DAVID LEHMAN, CHARLES NORTH, PAUL VIOLI, MARJORIE WELISH

DOWNTOWN — March 16th @ 3 p.m.

PAUL HOOVER, author of *Viridian* (University of Georgia)

KEITH WALDROP, author of *Locality Principle* (Avec)

DOWNTOWN — March 23rd @ 3 p.m.

ROBERTA ALLEN, author of *Certain People* (Coffee House)

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WRITING WORKSHOPS AT THE POETRY PROJECT

Poetry Workshop (Tuesday evenings 7-9 pm; 10 sessions from February 18-April 29th)

The workshop will center on weekly writing assignments designed to stretch our poetry skins. We will work with surprises, journals and other procedures as a group. We will also examine different elements of performance poetry and its history, exploring possibilities through visits with a variety of guest artists. The goal of the workshop is to create a trusting and informal environment where we can discover new forms and happy accidents with inspiration and ease.

Poet, actor and vocalist, Todd Colby is the author of *Ripsnort* and *Cush* both from Soft Skull Press. He has performed his poetry on MTV, PBS and Canada's New Music Network. This is the second workshop he has lead at the Poetry Project.

Experiments in Poetry 1997 Workshop (Friday evenings 7-9 pm; 10 sessions from February 21st-May 9th)

Bernadette Mayer's *Experiments in Poetry Workshops* at the Poetry Project have been legendary. A variety of writing methods are explored in connection with Mayer's ever-expanding lists of experiments, exercises, rehearsals, practices and intentions. This workshop will include in-class exercises and focus on works written during the ten-week course. Some Sessions will include talks and presentations by special guests.

Bernadette Mayer is the author of numerous books of poetry and prose. Her recent books include *Sonnets, The Formal Field of Kissing, The Bernadette Mayer Reader, The Desires of Mothers to Please Others in Letters and Proper Name*. She has taught writing workshops at the Poetry Project since 1971.

Prose & Poetry Workshop (Saturday afternoons, noon-2 pm; 10 sessions from February 22nd-May 10th)

"Constraint, as everyone knows, often has had bad press. All those who esteem the highest value in literature to be sincerity, emotion, realism, or authenticity mistrust it as a strange and dangerous whim."
—Marcel Benabou (from *OULIPO: A Primer of Potential Literature*)

The class will devise and examine various forms of restraint—structures to which one willingly submits. The intention being that each device generates at least one piece of writing. In the most successful writing the device will be invisible. The focus of the class will be on prose, prose poems and short texts; the maniacal, fantastic and everyday, UFO abduction literature, Multiple Personality Disorder, ecstatic literature, and George Perec.

John Yau is the author of more than a dozen books of poetry, fiction and criticism. His recent publications include *Radiant Silhouette: New & Selected Writing 1974-1988, Edificio Sayonara, In the Realm of Appearances: The Art of Andy Warhol, Hawaiian Cowboys, Ed Moses: A Retrospective of the Paintings and Drawings, 1951-1996 and Forbidden Entries*. His *The United States of Jasper Johns* is forthcoming from Zoland Books. Yau has taught at the Pratt Institute, Brown University and the University of California at Berkeley and has received awards from the General Electric Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York Arts Foundation and the Academy of American Poets.

FEBRUARY 3
Open Reading, sign-up at 7:30 pm [8 pm]

5

Laird Hunt & Bill Luoma

Laird Hunt is the editor and publisher of *Psalms 151*, a literary journal. His work has recently appeared in *The World, Proliferation* and *Mirage* magazine. Bill Luoma's most recent book, *Western Love* was published by Situations Press. He is also the author of two chapbooks, *My Trip to New York City* and *Swoon Rocket*.

10

Jah'ni & Evelyn McDonnell

Poet, performance artist and storyteller, Jah'ni is the host of the *Open Mic* at Brooklyn's Moon Café. A member of the Association of Black Storytellers, Jah'ni has published work in *Freedom Rag* magazine. Evelyn McDonnell is the former Associate Editor at the *San Francisco Weekly* and the former Music Editor at the *Village Voice*. She co-edited the anthology *Rock She Wrote* and co-authored the forthcoming official book of the musical *Rent*. McDonnell is the Editor-in-Chief of *Registrar* magazine.

12

Ira Cohen & Gerard Malanga

Ira Cohen is a writer and photographer whose recent books of poetry include *The Stauffenberg Cycle* and *Other Poems, Media Shamans Ratio 3* (with Gerard Malanga and Angus MacLise) and *From the Divan of Petra Vogt*. He recently released a CD of readings entitled *The Majoon Traveler* with music by Ornette Coleman, Don Cherry and others. Poet, photographer and filmmaker Gerard Malanga worked closely with Andy Warhol during what some regard as that artist's most important period in the mid-sixties. In addition to his most recent book, *My Trip to New York City*, Malanga has written a feature-length film-script, *Cinéma parlant*, and co-authored (with Victor Bockris) *UPTIGHT: The Velvet Underground Story*.

17

Monday Blue
Segments II and Live in Bologna.

14

A Roundtable Discussion on the Transgressive Arts

With Sylvere Lotringer, Penny Arcade, Nan Goldin, Carolee Schneemann and Ann Daley. Sylvere Lotringer, is the General Editor of *Semiotext and a Professor of French literature philosophy at Columbia University*. His works include a monograph on Antonin Artaud and *Overexposed*, a straight-forward study of the treatment of sexual perversion in America. Penny Arcade has toured the world twice with her sex and censorship show, *Bitch! Dyke! Faghag! Whore!* Her new work, *Bad Reputation*, is an all-girl revenge show running through March 16th at Performance Space 122. Arcade is an artists advocate affiliated with the National Coalition Against Censorship and Feminists for Free Expression. Nan Goldin is a photographer whose work is currently on exhibit at the Whitney Museum. Carolee Schneemann is a groundbreaking visual artist who has created a body of work over the last thirty years that has played a defining role in the development of performance, installation, video, and body art. Ann Daley is a visiting Assistant Professor at the Department of Performance Studies at NYU. [10:30 pm]

17

AWOL Love Vibe & Paula Hunter

AWOL Love Vibe is a Canadian polyvocal poetri featuring Kedrick James with John Sobol and Alex Ferguson. The group recently toured Europe, including England and the Czech Republic and will be releasing a CD and book project, *AWOL Love and Vibe Ecstatic Almanac* during summer 1997. Paula Hunter is a performance artist whose work explores text-based movement. Last season she was produced at the Dance Theater Workshop, and she is currently Artist-in-Residence at Movement Research. Hunter teaches performance and installation at the Rhode Island School of Design and has been published in *Juice* magazine.

19

Bobbie Louise Hawkins & Elinor Nauen

Bobbie Louise Hawkins' recent work includes three books of poetry, containing one-hundred poems each: *Sensible Plainess* features one-hundred poems selected by Anne Waldman, *Bitter Sweet* is comprised of one-hundred poems selected by Anselm Hollo and *Fragrant Trappings* is a selection by Lucia Berlin. Poet, writer and editor Elinor Nauen is the author of a new collection of poems *American Guys* and the editor of the recently published *Ladies, Start Your Engines: Women Writers*

Moon this year. Nemet-Nejat is currently working on a series of original poems entitled *Io's Song*. Peter Lamborn Wilson's most recent book is *Shower of Stars*. [10:30 pm]

24

Debby Branch & William Jelani Cobb

Debby Branch is a poet and novelist who has studied at the Strausburg Institute. She is the author of *Obtuse Bird Jonesing* and her work has recently appeared in *COVER* and *The American Poetry Anthology*. Essayist William Jelani Cobb is a freelance writer for Washington DC's *City Paper* and the Associate Editor of *One Magazine*. He is currently writing a biography of Ellsworth "Bumpy" Johnson.

26

Rachel Blau DuPlessis & Marjorie Welsh

Rachel Blau DuPlessis's newest book from Potes and Poets Press is *Drafts 15-XXX, The Fold*; it continues the long poems in *Tabula Rosa* (1987) and *Drafts 3-14* (1991). Among her other works are *The Pink Guitar: Writing as Feminist Practice*, the edition of *The Selected Letters of George Oppen* and two books of feminist literary criticism. Marjorie Welsh's poetry collections include *Handwritten, Two Poems, The Windows Flew Open* and *Casting Sequences*. An art critic since 1968, she has written articles for *Art in America*, *Art International*, and *ARTnews*. Welsh was recently included in the anthology *From the Other Side of the Century: A New American Poetry, 1960-1990* from Sun & Moon.

MARCH 3
Open Reading, sign-up at 7:30 pm [8 pm]

5

A Celebration of The Diary of James Schuyler

This evening will celebrate the *Black Sparrow*, published in 1971, the diary of James Schuyler's poet Corbett will host this program of readings by John Ashbery, Ann Lauterbach, Jane Freilicher, Eileen Myles, Simon Petett, Ron Padgett, Tom Carey, Darragh Park, Raymond Foye, Barbara Guest and Geoffrey Young. Pulitzer prize winning poet, James Schuyler is considered one of the most influential members of the New York School. His poetry is collected in the volumes *Freely Espousing, The Crystal*

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17
Monday Blue
 An evening of post-Valentine's Day blues music and text, featuring many special guests.

10
Deborah Gregory & Remileku
 Deborah Gregory is a contributing editor at *Essence* magazine and a freelance writer for *Vibe*. She is currently co-writing (with Angelo Ellerby) a book on Urban etiquette, entitled *What's Your Excuse?* She is also completing her memoir as well as a one-woman show, *Leopard Lives*. Remileku is a singer/songwriter whose work reflects an eclectic mix of influences, including rock, soul, folk and hip-hop. She has opened for such artists as Jimmy Cliff, Toots and the Maytals, Charmaine Neville and Dr. John.

19
Hanging Loose Press 30th Birthday Celebration
 This evening will feature Hanging Loose Press book authors including Sherman Alexie, Mary Ferrari, Jendi Reiter, Charles North, Beth Bosworth, Maureen Owen, Frances Phillips, Yukihede Maeshima Hartman, D. Nurkse, Harvey Shapiro, Kimiko Hahn, Rochelle Ratner, Larry Zirlin, Jack Agueros, Ron Overton, Hettie Jones, Tony Towle, Carole Bernstein, Michael Stephens, Mark Pawlak, Emmett Jarrett, Murat Nemet-Nejat, Marie Harris, Donna Brook, Sam Kashner, Gary Lenhart, Elinor Nauen, Ed Friedman, Kathleen Wiegner, Steven Schrader, Paul Violi, Robert Hershon, Ron Schreiber and Will Lane. [7:00 pm Note early starting time]

19
Bobbie Louise Hawkins & Elinor Nauen
 Bobbie Louise Hawkins' recent work includes *three books of poetry*, containing one-hundred poems each: *Sensible Plainess* features one-hundred poems selected by Anne Waldman, *Bitter Sweet* is comprised of one-hundred poems selected by Anselm Hollo and *Fragrant Trappings* is a selection by Lucia Berlin. Poet, writer and editor Elinor Nauen is the author of a new collection of poems *American Guys* and the editor of the recently published *Ladies, Start Your Engines: Women Writers on Cars and The Road*. Nauen's previous books include *Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend: Women Writers on Baseball*.

21
Revealing the Hidden: The Return of Gargoyle Mechanique
 A tribute to the theater of anarchism and exhausted misfitism with Matthew Courtney, Carl Watson, Victor Bruce Godsey, Casey Scott, Fly, James Godwin, Zero Boy, Sasha Forte, David Huberman, Steve Jones, John S. Hall, Christopher Funkhouser, Patty Onorato and Christian X. Hunter. [10:30 pm]

23
Book Party for Anne Waldman's Iovis II
 A Celebration of the Coffee House publication of the second volume of Anne Waldman's *Iovis*. [3:30 pm]

31
Phillip Brown & Martin Johnson
 Performance artist and jazz singer Phillip Brown recently presented his one-man-show, *An Evening of Black Magic*, to wide critical acclaim. He is currently a degree candidate at the New School's Jazz and Contemporary Music Division, and he will be performing a new work-in-progress at the Poetry Project. Martin Johnson has been a journalist for 12 years, covering music and other topics for many local and national publications including *Pulse* magazine, the *Village Voice*, *Newsday*, *Vibe*, *The Chicago Tribune*, the *San Francisco Weekly*, *Downbeat* and *Vogue*. He is the Coordinator and Jazz Consultant for Prodigy on-line service.

12
David Henderson & Cecil Taylor

David Henderson is the author of *Felix of the Silent Forest*, *De Mayor of Harlem*, *The Low East* and *Scuse me While I Kiss the Sky: A Biography of Jimi Hendrix*. He has a new collection of poetry, *Neocalifornia*, forthcoming next year. Pianist, poet and composer Cecil Taylor has been at the forefront of experimental music in the jazz tradition for more than forty years and he has read his poetry at the Poetry Project many times. *The New York Times* described his music as "elegant fury" and Taylor himself, commented that "literature, theater, it's all important...you want to create the utmost that is possible to continue the ideas of certain people who have enriched your life." Taylor's many musical recordings include *Love For Sale*, *Silent Tongues*,

21
Wine of the Beloved: An Evening of Sufi Poetry & Live Music
 With Murat Nemet-Nejat, Sharam Shiva and Peter Lamborn Wilson. Sharam Shiva has translated more than 400 of Rumi's poems from the original Persian. Many of these poems serve as the basis of Shiva's performance work. Shiva's numerous collections include *A Garden Beyond Paradise: The Mystical Poetry of Rumi*, *Two Suns Rising: A Collection of the Sacred Writing and the forthcoming Whispers of the Heart: A Collection of Rumi's Passionate Poems*. Murat Nemet-Nejat's translations from the Turkish poet Ece Ayhan as well as the essay *The Peripheral Space of Photography* will be published by Sun &

The Poetry Project is located at St. Mark's Church in the Bowery
 131 East 10th Street, New York City 10003
 http://www.poetryproject.com

All events are \$7 and begin at 8 PM unless otherwise noted. Programs are subject to change.
 For information call 212 674-0910

book reviews



photo by Julian Stapleton

KAMAU BRATHWAITE *Black + Blue*

New Directions (80 Eighth Avenue, NY, NY 10011), 1995, 69 pages, \$9.95.

In *Black+Blue*, Kamau Brathwaite makes "an altar out of skulls." His work is a judicious labor of fierce prodding into history for language. This collection of poems is an exploration into the history of the Middle Passage of slavery through the history of the Blues. Brathwaite is able to conjure up the language of this particular livelihood where death and struggle have challenged the spirit residing "in the bones, in the crushed totems." Brathwaite's works are meditations on the notion of spirit and ancestry in the relics and languages of the Caribbean: "When you disappear and the god takes over." Perhaps he delves into disappearance itself in order for his words to take over. He discusses the resilience of self and language in the shadows of imperialism and colonization.

Since Brathwaite is an historian as well as a poet, his accuracy rests in his ability to notate the language of the Blues, its innovations, and its relationship to history. Brathwaite puts his spin on the blues—so that it is all working some sort of Brathwaitian equation—an eight-sided perspective where utterance is the musicality of language. His poetry accumulates speed, rhythm and density. Only Brathwaite successfully merges the ambitions of poetry and history. The poems breathe, push for wisdom, rely on brevity, and ask the reader to listen carefully to sound. He depicts corrup-

tion in historical terms so as to politically, psychically, and spiritually locate the birth of the blues and the journey of the Bluesman from the Caribbean to North America:

Corruption in the eye
Corruption in the blue
Corruption in the green

His book's first section is entitled "Fragments" and the opening poem called "Fetish" defines the point of entrance. His poems seem driven out of a desire to claim the word as a magical or devotional object—a fetish. He starts out telling, explaining to the reader, the artifacts for storytelling are fetishes: "decayed relics, splinters, shell are journey." A common medium for artistic expression, wooden sculptures are introduced as Brathwaite's relics; referring to "splinters," suggesting a "fracturing" or "fragmentation" of African artistry by colonization and the Middle Passage. This reduction of its totemic/fetishistic value to one determined merely by commerce is much like the artisans themselves. Stylistically the poems fracture to illustrate this circumstance:

torn up roots
broken boxes.
ruins:

old harbour
cartagena
tenochtitlan

ravages

but out of the ruins
grass
still presses

out of the cracks
crawls
green

out of the silence
harbours
time

Brathwaite, through the physicality of his objects and their placement in

the poem, announces the 'splinters' of the sculptures and wooden art panels, as if to say they have no language, as the works themselves do not when damaged by the theft and transportation that also brought communal disunity. With this admittance, he allows symbolism to guide the shift from potency to neutrality: "Now scuttles on tin when it was a conqueror before."

Brathwaite reclaims relics by invoking their significance. He relies on the repetition of certain words that connote daily communication, activity, or ritual such as words like fetish, cowers or oars to invoke the symbolic and psychic space of his poetics: "contemplation restores them to our time/makes once more the oar. fossil's bone/the fetish of our worship." The oar is especially loaded, as it suggests the oars that slaves manned to row themselves into exile in the event of low winds under the lash, oars made ironically from trees that possessed spirits. These trees sundered without regard into oars (splinters) and with only a treasonous (to the African people) purpose in mind are, as oars, as discountenanced, devalued, and ironic as the slaves that man them and, centuries later, come to identify with them: "totem of screams/hollow bamboo branches/of what was once a tree." Brathwaite, by invoking the object, is not opposed to its symbolism on the immediate levels.

As he puts: out of the silence / harbours / time: The political set-up makes way for the atrocities felt by the victims of the middle passage, centuries later, finding the language of their misappropriated fetishes and lives in a past that was supposedly effaced by deprogramming (slaves were consciously mixed hodgepodes of tribes whenever possible throughout the middle passage, to keep them from communicating and to effect the forgetting of their languages in a Babel of dialects and tongues). Brathwaite celebrates the irony of this with "out of the silence" as a common (imposed) tongue that has permitted communication between tribes.

When we come back to his notion of a fetish in order to understand his

poetry we wonder what a fetish signifies: "broken boxes." What he appears to do is to guide a concept alongside a ritual where they inform each other with and without interference. In "Time," he defines the concept of time as "grey wood stretched with grain." He is also bringing us to the time spent in the journey itself, the Middle Passage.

waste of moon
waste of stars
waste of ships

footsteps
the tribe this
april
stripped of its
fetish

In "Schooner" Brathwaite locates us in the ship, he actualizes the space in order to document the journey, there he states "I see you older than I wd wish you" The blues starts to seep in... "stretch out my love to you across the morning but cannot reach your hand." After this sort of documentation where we understand the injustices placed on the narrator while he is being relocated, we can give way to his utterance, silence, and his blues. He becomes the Bluesman: "This midnight drummer" There, Brathwaite launches into another space, in a different font, the repetitions begin like the sound of the drum:

like a rat
like a rat
like a rat-a-tat tappin

like a rat
like a rat
like a rat -a-tat tappin

we eyes we teet we eatin

like a rat
like a rat
like a rat -a-tat tappin
an we burnin babylone
haile selassie hallelu/jah
haile selassie hallelu/jah
haile selassie hallelu/jah

an we burnin babylone

Brathwaite invokes so many voices: slaves, preachers, Coltrane, drums, silence, blues, and urgency. He chants, marking the repetition in drums, rituals and in the music of the

blues but also how fragmentation causes repetition:

into voice the voices
into violins the violins
to violence of drums
of silence the silence
wet wet broeken

repeat-

ing itself like yes like yes like yes ter-
day w/its sores w/its old scores to pay
w/its time w/its rope w/its hope . of
revolution

His poetry: "the four corners of your understanding," the hounfor, or ritual space for Voudoun, has four corners that correspond to the saying "the four corners of the earth" an understanding forged by the African exiles' bond with the earth, the geographical paralleling the ontological. It is precisely this "mapping" that allows Brathwaite to understand the poem as a ritual or space. And, in a sense, he understands the poem which will always try to access the significance behind the lyrical, lyricise the political act, and inhabit the language of ritual. This is what the Bluesman and the poet must do.

PRAGEETA SHARMA

JOHN WIENERS

707 Scott Street
Sun & Moon Press (6020 Wilshire
Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90036),
1996, 126 pages, \$12.95.

ANDREI CODRESCU

Alien Candor
Black Sparrow Press (24 10th Street,
Santa Rosa, CA 94501), 1996, 303
pages, \$15.00.

JENNIFER MOXLEY

Imagination Verses
Tender Buttons Press (available
through Small Press Distribution,
1814 San Pablo Avenue, Berkeley, CA
94702), 1996, 90 pages, \$8.95.

The restored version of a "lost" late-Fifties classic, a dark tale of love and its veils, mystery, tragedy, romantic and sexual obsession, passion and its strange dizzying excitements and pains, set in the fog-shrouded, lonely streets of the City by the bay...

No, I'm not talking about Hitchcock's *Vertigo*, but about another cult-classic work of darkly obsessive

vision also created by a visitor to the city in the same year. The visitor in this case was a young, unknown poet from Boston, John Wieners.

Wieners' *707 Scott Street* is the recently rediscovered journal of this legendary Beat writer's extended sojourn in San Francisco. The period is the year following the appearance of his stunning debut volume, the 1958 *Hotel Wentley Poems*, which won him Allen Ginsberg's nomination as the "tragic *maudit*" of the North Beach poetry crowd.

A kind of rough-cut version of the same material from which *Wentley* derived, the journal provides a revealing first look at the rich, raw block from which Wieners' luminous work of the period was carved.

It is, too, perhaps the most atmospherically- evocative historical document of the strange, smoky, jazz-and-junk-haunted nights of sense and transcendence that hatched the San Francisco Renaissance in poetry.

Dogs bark in my ears. My man lost.
My soul a jangle of lost connections.
Who will play in the light at autumn,
when all men are alone.

(from "The Waning of the Harvest Moon")

For the youthful writer of these pages, "charting the progress of my own soul", poetry appears not as a prospective career but as an immediate-present life condition, a soul-serious "estate" or calling. Its harrowing discipline involves hunger and search, poverty and sacrifice, but in the lotus-eating hours before dawn, opens out into an exotic, alluring dreamscape, sanctuary and refuge from the workaday 'straight' world. ("Sur-real is the only way to endure the real we find heaped up in our cities.")

Battered and ravaged yet ordained to a rhapsodic priesthood of lyric vision ("one can practice the pure poem in life...making art a religion," the young poet discovers elegance, glamor and spirituality amid the seediest circumstances: sleazy fleabag hotel rooms, mean streets, back alleys, end-of-the-night bars with their cast of dubious, desperate denizens.

"And if I cannot speak in poetry, it is because poetry is reality to me, and not the poetry we read, but find revealed in the estates of being around us.

NEW AND CURRENT TITLES
FROM THE POST-APOLLO PRESS

Quill, Solitary APPARITION

by Barbara Guest

Of Quill, Solitary APPARITION Barbara Guest writes:... even in a loose-limbed vertical structure risk is encountered; to concentrate on that risk where the image recedes, lugging its solitary and watered shadow.

Quill, Solitary APPARITION is of perfect weight
The whole is on a blade.

— Mei-mei Berssenbrugge

NEW POETRY ISBN 0-942996-26-7 \$12.95

The Spring Flowers Own &
The Manifestations of the Voyage

by Etel Adnan

Harrowed by desire's ancient curse, in solo crushed-heart universe, always in every brutish intimacy of public event—harrowed by love's detach's imperishable lie, by love's unfailing resurrection—harrowed by subtlest helplessness, grossest anger—Etel Adnan's work possesses maturity one had thought extinct.

— Duncan McNaughton

POETRY ISBN 0-942996-14-3 \$12.00

Mezza Voce

by Anne-Marie Albiach

There is no other poet like this in the world. Even at its most difficult, its passions are mesmerizing.

— Paul Auster

POETRY ISBN 0-942996-11-9 \$12.95

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"It is necessary for the poet to be ignorant of the true mystery, and yet to contain it wrapped around him."

The cloak or mantle of unknowingness in which the 25-year-old John Wieners of 707 Scott Street insistently contains his poetic persona marks him as a poet of 'negative capability' in just the sense that that earlier Romantic, John Keats, meant.

Indeed, the Wieners of these journals practices a fealty to his art as wholehearted and unmisgiving as Keats's. Seraphic, vulnerable, almost selfless, a master at the same time of the delicacies and nuances of high-romantic rhetorical aspirations and of the common facts of desire and need, he shows himself here as, if not our Keats, then at any rate already a necessary noir angel of American Poetry.

Notable multi-media culture-critic Andrei Codrescu's *Alien Candor: Selected Poems 1970-1995* reminds us that America's often been most clearly perceived through alien eyes.

With "a subject as big as the world" and "all the whispering text about me," Transylvanian emigré Codrescu here renders his long poetic exile as a provocative odyssey through the cities and scenes of several adventurous decades. Codrescu's poems feature sparkling intelligence, agile wit and epigrammatic speed, a sly radicalism subverting, a wry irony musing, a sober rage gentled into lyric humor by a tenderly affirmative heart.

A heady and lively collection, *Alien Candor* leaves no doubt that for all his admirable enterprise in other fields, Codrescu has continued to remain a poet before everything.

New and exciting, a first book by Jennifer Moxley with the deceptively 'traditionalist' title *Imagination Verses* bravely offers words as a possible door to a liveable future: "there's a place for us, and such/a country."

Like many young writers anxiously uncertain in the face of "the towering worry of fin de siecle," Moxley's response takes her toward an 'elevated' style of serious intellectual and political engagement, "seeking the archives of a careful choice—the hewn thin line/of created memory."

In their tenuous grapplings against the emotional and moral constriction of a predatory age, Moxley's innovative *Imagination Verses* tap into poetry as a collective undercurrent of the human. A gesture at once retrospective and utopian, their groping for the sounds in which suffering and dreams are welded is itself a proposal of hope, a glimmer in the dark of the millennial no man's land.

TOM CLARK

PAUL AUSTER

Why Write?

Burning Deck Press (71 Elmgrove Avenue, Providence, RI 02906), 1996, 58 pages, \$10.00.

Some years ago, when he was four and still following daily telecasts of *Sesame Street*, my son instructed me in a way I have not forgotten. He had just figured out something that had been puzzling him. Months before, he had learned that one person did the voices for both Big Bird and Oscar the Grouch, two incongruously whimsical regulars often presented in dialogue with each other on the show. But how was this done? He knew now. There had to be a tube. First the man did one voice, then he got inside and, whoosh, he did the other.

Come again? What kind of tube? Well, said the boy, big enough for the man to get through, going fast from one end

to the other, and change outfits. Only we don't get to see the tube. They don't show it on TV. But that's how anyone could do it.

My son's insistence on bodily transport instead of the simpler, less strenuous mode of voice projection I was quick to assume is what stays with me. I am reminded of it now because of certain premises in *Why Write?*, the selected tessalation Paul Auster has arranged from diverse occasional pieces into a persuasively reasoned story-teller's manifesto. Ventriloquism and physical transposition, in fictive guise as dialogue and plotting, both play a part in defining his commitment. A child's awe in the face of what there is to consider is the sustained level of reality this book gives us. Fluctuations in pressure, as the literal immensity of sheer novelty is condensed, are gauged to register an itinerary of our rapt attention before the unforeseen.

The real marvel is how the book grows as it goes, when you consider that Auster is working in the distinctly minor modes of commissioned writing: responding to a questionnaire, introducing a fellow writer, contributing to a memorial tribute. In an impressive way, each imposition underscores a central paradox. "It is a strange way to live one's life, and only a person who had no choice would choose it as a calling." His own choices thus far would seem to have been clearly made, and the list of his published books makes an apt frontispiece; it sets up as a full page, and that says something. Yet the stratagem of desperation the quotation evokes also hints at enormous risk in the undertaking.

Kafka once proposed writing as a form of prayer. There is something of that in Auster's design. "A Prayer for Salman Rushdie" spells out how keenly he can relate to a fellow writer's predicament, but it is in the closing section, which takes the form of a direct appeal to a residing higher power for suspension of the death sentence in a specific court decision, that he makes clear the further social obligation he holds as a writer, beyond the simple claim of being considered a public figure.

The progress of the book is summed up in its shortest text. "Word Box," Auster's contribution to a collaborative installation with two visual artists, serves as a fulcrum. A nut-shell

aphorism houses the main argument in its metaphoric equation, placed slightly off-center in the sequence and presented in a series of photographs so each word gets a page: "THE WORLD IS IN MY HEAD MY BODY IS IN THE WORLD." The other selections spin potent variations on this.

When Auster turns his attention to "the telling of a good story," he does not shirk from giving it the strictest, most restrictive, definition ("the elaborate and systematic construction of a circle") and further posts two basic requirements, namely "the patience...necessary to the telling" and "the ability to savor the least detail...along the way." Such skimpy delineations are fleshed out in the actual procedure, however. Instead of some cheesy reassurance, you get the satisfaction of proof authenticated right before your eyes in a full-scale demonstration, a personal memoir of Charles Reznikoff that makes you want to get on line with the late poet by reading his work.

While there is no simple answer given to the nagging overriding question that the overall title proposes, the book is exceptionally good on the total process. As writing, *Why Write?* is an elegant elaboration on the novel circuitry of the enigma so brusquely announced in the title. Where ellipsis is the accepted postmodern mode, Paul Auster works to fill the gaps. That is the absorption of art, the work of the pen. Here it is, submitted into evidence: the writing of a lifetime as work in progress, yet a genuine telling of the writing life as well.

VYT BAKAITIS

MELANIE NEILSON

Natural Facts

Potes & Poets Press, Inc.(Elmwood, CT 06110) 1996, 65 pages, \$11.00.

And took a lute, from which there pulsing came

A lively prelude, fashioning the way
In which her voice should wander.

'Twas alay

More subtle cadenced, more forest wild

Than Dryope's lone lulling for her child; ...

(John Keats, *Endymion*)

When Keats wrote these lines in 1820, he could expect that his reader would have a shared understanding and emo-

tional connection to the Greek mythology referred to. The specific reference to "Dryope" (a nymph who was ravished by Apollo and, with her infant son, transformed into a lotus tree), as well as the overall mythological backdrop of the poem, was part of a common experience for a 19th century English reader. The references to mythology tap into a sort of vertical root or well; they recall the drama of antiquity in one stroke, without disrupting Keats' continuation along a more horizontal, narrative line in *Endymion*.

In "Album", the first of four sections in Melanie Neilson's *Natural Facts*, the author creates a similar relationship for a 20th century American reader by tapping into our shared experience of the Civil War. To simply indulge in the nostalgia of that history—its language, events and objects—would create the kind of sentimentality suited for a mini-series because there is no bridge to the present. However, what Neilson does is similar to what Keats does; her poetry invents a personal history while touching the nerve of our own shared history. If we don't recognize all of the trees, we recognize the roots.

"Album" begins with a clean slate, a drawing board:

Album—from the blank white pages
April from the nightbird century.

The history is about to be reclaimed through a highly personalized, "borrowed" vocabulary and a repeated set of historical icons. The syntax and rhythms are purposefully bridged to a fragmented present, yet the historical references still strike this vertical chord of our shared history. Also, "the blank white pages" speaks to our end-of-millennial tendency to redefine, digest, or synthesize our histories. . . "Bound to be an accumulation." The repetition of words like: *cherries, night-birds, fire, ships, homily, penmanship, Lincoln* and *album* go a long way to create this revision, as heard in the next two poems in "Album"—"Romance Of Cherries" and "Mary Todd Lincoln and the Birds of America":

Wild bird cherries
Flesh enclosed seeded stone
Young green clusts
Unhidden hardy, Northern . . .

* * *

Will Congress
Canary the cannon?
Remember me.

Neilson furthers this personal history, defined by the repetition of an idiosyncratic and yet highly referential vocabulary, by lacing several choruses of repetition throughout the first part of the book:

five oh five three
five oh five trees
fire of five trees . . .

* * *

India ink shaded
Black-edged
Black-edged
Black-edged.

The subtlety of Neilson's language is extraordinary. She echoes the "time-piece" of 19th century American speech in the delicacy of the assonance and alliteration throughout the section. In the above quote, the interplay of the "i" and the "e" is, in and of itself, reminiscent of that period. The repetition of "Black-edged" bouncing off of "shaded" is a subtle yet powerful reminder of our history. In this way, she takes Keats' referencing device a step further.

But to what end? Why has Neilson embraced this time-period to reclaim or re-represent? As Neilson carefully chooses her specific vocabulary, two agendas come to mind. Even though the vocabulary and the references belong to 19th century America, the structure of the language is contemporary. You can't go home again. I.e. by transforming the language, the author is acutely aware of the relationship of history to memory and personal experience: "verse versus/ vertical reality". The configuration of the new structures, created by this particular and peculiar vocabulary, creates a relationship for the author to the subject, so that the poetry is not a subject of that history, but instead the author has created an object from that history. The depth of Neilson's project succeeds because, in every line, we are faced with the texture of at least two readings—two time periods—of the text. Secondly, the language Neilson has chosen to reclaim is clearly a feminine one as evidenced by the words I listed earlier. The need to reclaim these his-

torical facts (as a woman, as a Tennessean) is obvious; the method Neilson employs to do so is anything but obvious. The author creates rhythms, grammars, and associations that we have never heard before.

In "Natural Facts", Neilson is never too far away from our present, complex relationship with language and history. She begins with the cultural commonality of the Civil War and ends the last section of the book by defining our contemporary culture with an unpredictable combination of past and present icons: from cherry pie to elvis presley. In both cases, the selection of icons and sounds is enormously unique and specific to Neilson's representation of history. As Mina Loy reminds us so precisely: "Poetic rhythm, of which we have all spoken so much, is the chart of a temperament." In Neilson's case, the temperament reflects a fragmented, isolated and eroded language filtered through this accumulation of facts.

In the middle sections of the book, the Civil War references become more shrouded, more broken and less recognizable. The struggle to reclaim history, becomes more apparent in the process. Just when the world of "Album" seems defined, it is turned upside-down, made less accessible, in the following two sections: "Glacial Erratic" and "Sequel: When SHEEP Ate MEN." These two sections speak to this erosion while still carrying over a trace of the "Civil Noir" myth:

Dear carrots. A stone.
Carriage fishing compass
Stopper dates and times
When the bread,
Conversant raised hand.

In the final section of the book, which shares the title of the book's name, "Natural Facts," the language re-emerges in contemporary culture, where the writing is still disjointed, but the connection to the culture is more palpable: "Something something elvis skyline," or the brilliant opening line of "Poet and Bird", "Oh caption, her caption," or the Nelson Riddle-like "The Sensuous Strings of Melanie Neilson." In this last section of the book, Neilson brings us up to the moment of our accumulation, our shared experience, our mythology. In this land of "Natural Facts", she examines poetry's place in our late capitalist mythology while still manipulating the

language from the earlier mythology:

Ahoy background poetry
In some small
Wordy furniture

* * *

A sense of ownership is like
A sense of lunch

* * *

From here to financially

Like Keats, Melanie Neilson, in a single word or phrase, recalls the mythology of our own American history, only to distort it and rebuild it again in her own personal accumulation of our shared history: "I am a little century." So that, indeed, "Words are signs of natural facts" (Emerson), and we are fused to the language, events and references of both of her centuries. *Natural Facts* invents a new bridge from our history to our contemporary culture through a highly personalized, idiosyncratic art. *Natural Facts* is an American guidebook to take us to our past, present, and future worlds.

ROBERT FITTERMAN



photo courtesy Kelsey Street Press

ERICA HUNT (POEMS) & ALISON SAAR (DRAWINGS)
Arcade

Kelsey Street Press (2718 Ninth Street, Berkeley, CA 94710), 1996, 56 pages, \$15.00.

On the cover (one of the many woodcuts by Alison Saar) of Erica Hunt's second book, *Arcade*, the only other human figures besides the central (and naked) protagonist are presented as interior (tattooed onto her loins to be precise); outside the body remains

nothing but abstruse shreds of patchwork, benign enough yet as busy and crowded as Hunt's native New York—even though here are no specifically urban "markers." There are a few more such markers in the book proper ("I go for bonus points by being closest to the traindoor when it enters the station" and the poem "Magritte's Black Flag" is entirely devoted to the NY Transit Authority) yet more often the city is "seen" in her choice of disjunctive fragmentary (though occasionally more meandering and flowing) poetic techniques.

What small town academics may "escape" to in their reading, one may find in the daily life of the urban fast lane ("Motion Sickness"). There is little or no time to roll out the red carpet of the contemplative mode. If thinking is whining, having no time for thought may be pleasing (unless one concedes that whining is not only good but also, and more importantly, sexy.) If thinking, however, is what allows an insouciant detachment from whining, such a fragmentary existence the city affords may swallow up the necessary lie of the detached observer and deny it voice. Such a lie may not be necessary for poets acclimated to working Manhattan, but it may be for those who have decided to live in Jersey City as voyeurs for the same reason they have renounced the writing of poems to play the role of critic.

In New York (as in "postmodernism"), Emersonian "self-reliance" is usually a scam: "the words won't write themselves/out of their depth unless someone/listens to them" and "people 'make' /the people around them/and they write/to write/the reader/out of retreat..." "Depth" and "the essential solitude" is often anathema, or seen as a kind of decadence: "All the great heroes slept late. The common folks get up early and fight/for the victory." It seems at first that Hunt is pointing out the "trouble with genius" here and siding with the "numerous". Yet, when she writes "The kindness of months replaces spirit of unlimited demand for sacrifice,/so that men in business suits may grow fat," she calls into question the "kindness" of the common as well.

Hunt well knows that any dialectic that doesn't allow a place for the mesh of meaninglessness becomes as meaningless as any descriptive or "music" based poetics that makes no room for deliberate meaning ("No way to extin-

guish this dialectic/except through draft after draft of textual ethics". Her strength, in her own words is "to follow the meaning/even as it stands zig zags along the sheer edges/of sight..." Hence, she's common-genius, critic-poet, outsider-insider:

We try to scan the headlines at a polite distance. Of course no one believes a word of what we know will be written there, even when they throw the predictable live bait before the blood-bored crowds. We wear our indifference with dignity, in fact, it gives us dignity, separates us from those who've been taken in or begun to fade in the glare of the bright arcade lights, the rings and buzzes—crowding those who live the war game instead of play it, just past the point where a thought can be followed.

Such detachment often, however, becomes a bandaid on the wound. What the speaker is trying to be indifferent to is, ironically, indifference itself—the indifference of the "arcade". But meeting indifference with more indifference may simply compound the helplessness and cruelty one tries to write oneself out of (if "in" it to begin with.). One is "left with dream transcriptions and delinquencies instead of passion outside the parenthesis" and "moving forward...is really standing still at the station." The desire to detach herself from detachment, from the merely "platonic bombs beneath the feet of an undecided public standing on a ledge"—as if decision could defuse such human bombs—shows that passion does not mean anger for Hunt (or that anger is a positive energy).

In "Squeeze Play," we see just such a decision (if not a final solution) in the move from tragedy to a "second guess" in which "mood swings this way and that" to, finally, "the heroine...a figure made of glass at which we each get a turn to throw our voices"—i.e., an ideal figure (or self), to be filled, or at least inhabited, embodied. This celebration of the possibilities of the "self" is most pronounced in "Risk Signature" and "Madame Narcissist." The former poem (perhaps more of a portrait of her collaborator Alison Saar than it is a self-portrait) celebrates *will* in contrast to the disjunctive credo of "Ecstasy" while the latter is in classic catalogue poem style. Hunt's usual declamatory quality here is unit-

ed with a performative orality that has more in common with younger writers than it does with many writers of her generation. It would be a mistake however to reduce the intellectual sophistication here to a mere celebration of an "ego-tripping" personae who "contains multitudes" and can be "everything and nothing." For when Hunt writes "I have as many layers as any serial killer" and a few lines later writes "I'm in the moment," she is *not*, strictly speaking, contradicting herself. Rather, the juxtaposition invites us to feed ourselves with questioning and question the myth of interiority and psychological complexity and helps explain (or glosses) Saar's enigmatic cover in which the distinction between "inner" and "outer" becomes inverted rather than resolved "in the flesh." In personalizing the arcade that has opposed the human (whether we prefer to see it as "the city" or as "language itself"), Hunt is somehow able to achieve a gentle, unmechanical, symbiosis, that need not be restricted to "these impersonal times."

CHRIS STROFFOLINO

VINCENT KATZ
Sextus Propertius

Sun and Moon Press (6020 Wilshire Blvd, Los Angeles, California 90036), 1995, 151 pages, \$11.95.

You must read Vincent Katz' new translation of the ancient Roman poet Propertius. Handsomely printed by Sun & Moon, this volume contains 22 beautifully rendered poems from Propertius' first book of elegies. Mr. Katz has titled the book *Charm* (Latin: *decus*) and explains this choice in his introduction to the text:

I initially fixed on *decus* as the deciding quality of Propertius' world. . . . This word can sometimes be translated 'grace,' sometimes 'charm' It seemed to embody the appropriate way a lover is meant to approach the beloved It is an attitude of respect, combined with understanding & passionate involvement.

Charm works in Propertius, Mr. Katz goes on to argue, in terms of magical seduction, passion and obsession, terms that on first glance might seem incompatible with the notion of grace or charm. However, Katz argues

that obsession is "a necessary corollary of involvement, and Propertius would rather die in the name of involvement than live a life of indifference. A life without passion is a living death." Such a life is also devoid of poetry. Or perhaps we should say, along with Propertius and Mr. Katz, that passion is the necessary condition for writing good poetry, or at least good erotic poetry.

Sextus Propertius lived in Rome from approximately 50-10 BC. Little is known about his life other than, like Virgil & Horace, he was patronized by Maecenas and was liked by Ovid. Of Propertius' work we have four books of elegies that contain the names of various roman personae and eschew more traditional mythic & epic modes. We might call the work of Propertius people poems in the tradition of Catullus, or Personism as Mr. Katz mentions in his introduction. For both Catullus and Propertius write wild and humorous erotic lyrics addressed to friends and lovers, and both riff on the Greek poet of Lesbos, Sappho. The lover of Catullus is named Lesbia; the lover of Propertius, Cynthia.

In the context of the erotic lyric, one should think of Sappho and her boast directed against epic poetry. I would venture that the following lines from her poem "hoi men hippeon straton" are the first definition of such a poetics:

Most men take strategic knights, while
others
claim armymen. The rest hold up bat-
tleships
as the greatest show on earth. But I
declaim.

It's who do you love.

Catullus and Propertius both follow Sappho's lyric very closely. In Elegy 6 we read Propertius addressing Tullus, his soldier friend:

You go ahead and try to surpass your
uncle's power,
restore ancient rights our allies have
let slide.
You never had time for love even in
your youth;
an armed nation was always your con-
cern.

Erotic boasting is not epic. Or perhaps it is more accurate to say that epic boasting is concerned mostly with armymen and history. Lyric boasting

goes like Propertius' Elegy 7, presented here in its entirety in Mr. Katz' elegant, biting, and hilarious English; the poem's narrator addresses Ponticus, an epic poet:

While you tell of Thebes and Cadmus,
Ponticus,/ and the tragedy of fraternal
warfare,/ and, if I may say, you con-
tend with Homer himself/ (may the
fates go easy on your songs),/ I pursue
my loves, as is my wont,/ and look for
something against my hard mistress.

I am a slave not so much to genius as
to suffering,/ complaining the hard
times of my youth./ This is how my
life's used up, this my fame./ this is
what I want my poetry known for./ Let
them praise me, Ponticus, for being
the only one to have pleased that/
sophisticated girl, and for having
often borne her unjust threats./ May
the neglected lover of the future read
me carefully,/ the knowledge of my ills
may give him foresight.

If The Boy should also strike you with
his dead eye bow,/ (though I wouldn't
wish my gods to violate you),/ then
you'll cry that your camps, your seven
squadrons,/ lie far, far, away, silent in
eternal inactivity./ In vain you'll try to
compose a subtle verse./ and laggard
Love will throw down no songs to you.

Then you will not marvel so often at
this 'insignificant' poet./ Then I may
be preferred to the other Roman tal-
ents./ Youths won't be able to keep
silent at my tomb:/ There you lie,
great poet of our ardor./ So beware
when you trash my poems with con-
tempt:/ Lazy Love often charges a
huge interest.

This is a gem few translators ever get the pleasure of polishing. Mr. Katz has put on a nice coat.

As for the details of the translation, Mr. Katz has done an admirable job. One technical choice is interesting to discuss. The Elegies have been separated into stanzas in service to what Mr. Katz calls 'the period.'

I have included stanzas because I feel they are relevant to the rhetorical concept of 'period,' which can be thought of as the breath necessary to express a given thought. . . .

Also in service to this 'period,' and dependent upon Mr. Katz' fine ear &

his commitment to rendering English speech, his translations expand and contract certain of Propertius' lines so that the word count and line length of the Latin sometimes do not match those of the English. In other words, Mr. Katz' fluxing feet and use of stanzas do not keep a strict harmony with the quantitative, visual shape of the Latin words. Taking the quantitative as a point of departure, the translator would be forced to privilege the energy, sound and disjunction of the inflected Latin more than the 'period.' Always this is the nightmare of the classical translator. Either tack is justified and the best translations flip back & forth between these two poles, as Mr. Katz renderings consistently do.

In summary, I'll say Sappho invented the lyric boast. The boast is the lyric adopted by Catullus and Propertius, deals with vocatives, is against the epic, & springs from passion. Vincent Katz has done a good thing. His *Charm* captures the energy of the original so that an English reader feels the pleasures and pains of the Latin words.

Footnote: I acknowledge the work of Page duBois for some of these ideas and recommend reading her new book *Sappho is Burning* published by Chicago University Press.

BILL LUOMA

GILLIAN MCCAIN

TILT

Hard Press/The Figures (P.O. Box 184, West Stockbridge, MA 01266), 1996, 84 pages, \$10.00.

Contemporary prose poetry frequently suffers beneath limbo definitions which, at their elementary worst, describe the prose poem within the narrow parameters of "a poem written in paragraph form." Too often the prose poem is no more than an exercise for those who, their allegiance to prose/poetry being either/or, are unwilling (unable?) to explore the challenges of the form. The captivating possibilities of literary amalgamation would seem to demand the filling out of prose poetry as a genre. To any reader searching for this captivation, Gillian McCain's *TILT* is a challenge to any, all such boundaries of prose poetry; the work as a whole is a notable contribution to the cultivation of the

genre.

McCain's work cannot be broken down into prevailing themes, recurring and traceable ideas or primary focus—she chooses instead to wrestle with diverse aspects of the physical and psychological world, incorporating objects, people and ideas into a catalogue of poetical living. The operating force of her material comes in simple word units, accumulating into an astounding parade of words as if McCain had taken a dictionary and reformatted, reorganized, rearranged it to create the many microcosms and macrocosms of TILT. The table of contents, a list of one-word titles, is the poetic prelude to the book, a foreshadowing of clues such as:

cloud, silence, skin, mirror, interior, journey, self, hotel, pool, box, history, chaos, hair, revolution, war, holes, magic, separation, memory, nothing, touch, light, life, sex, travel, truth, walls, freedom, night, mind, time, cat, car, love, city, work.

But this is just the beginning. Tilt's prose poems make for the rare reading experience that is enjoyable and visceral as much as it is thoughtful and thought-provoking. McCain presents the reader with singular moments, still, as if held; moments swept along ever-changing time continuums; clichés cut up into unique rarities; mad streams of consciousness slowed down by the very form and style of the prose poem; word-play plays; plays on meaning; and more.

The personal world is political is social is otherworldly is vice versa and endlessly recombined.

Above all, McCain is a poet's poet. TILT is filled with witty social and poetical commentary, for instance, in a poem such as "Truth" (after a recent symposium at the Poetry Project:

"Milk was souring in the rectory. Mr. MacLow quoted the late Mr. Cage: Now, I am saying it. Ms. Harryman stated, I had no imagination, growing up. The marxist poet spilled seltzer on the floor and ordered me to clean it up. It's hard to get good help these days."

But most of all, McCain's first book is filled with great promise. As she says in "Love": "My earldom is spiritually bankrupt, just like Jack Kerouac's

raincoat, but I'd like to remind everyone that I plan on paying back every piaster."

BRIDGET BREHEN

ANGE MLINKO
Immediate Orgy & Audit

lift press (10 Rear Oxford Street, Somerville, MA 02143), 1996, 26 pages.

Ange Mlinko's first chapbook, **Immediate Orgy & Audit** does just that: rushes headlong, immediately and simultaneously pulling between the two zones or poles evoked by the title. An Orgy of urban/personal language hinges on well-constructed (Audited) lines, forming joints that slide in and out of one other or unfold down the page:

"I was really born in abashed autumn to average the possibilities in voracity, dream or have a party?"

The poems always opt for both. They do the New York School thing of Frank O'Hara's Third Avenue El in "You Are Gorgeous and I Am Coming" or Bernadette Mayer's magnetic energies spun by urban sprawl, trials of love and landlords. Like these poets, her work comments on the nature of language at the very moment she recollects a thought or statistic: "...Three years ago I lived there, the downtown view / a wish fulfilled, those huge (though few) towers like bar graphs flying off a pie chart, lights / in grid windows patternless yet somehow not without meaning's statistical grin." The naming of names in "City Story" proves that New York School tendencies are not a locality. Bill in Boston could be Corbett, in San Francisco, Berkson in NYC, Luoma. The point is the expression of a hope for community, of some response or recognition that any poet experiences.

Musicality, not only in the sense of scored word tones and rhythms, but as mode of composition is primary. The book begins with the line, "I TURN off their songs to hear my song hearing nothing I wait" calling to mind Spicer's trope of the poem being beamed in by radio wave from otherworldly (Martian) sources.

Orgy & Audit: both words contain two syllables; both words contain two consonants and two vowel tones; their

meanings evoke oblique opposites: Hot Sex versus Cold Tax: Love & Money, a poet's condensed code for, dare I say it, gender politics and class analysis. But it's the language itself that is at once pleurably orgasmic (orgasmic): "falling purple Lent on equinoctial gold" and audited: read, edited, condensed, examined and HEARD.

Mlinko's tough use of romantic tropes:

"O LIBERTINE! I was laughing at my credit line when you called! They extended it they ascend my rent to what I can't afford to be tethered to by bribe alone, heaven"

conjures Jennifer Moxley's direct address and use of the lyric fragment; also her belief in poetry's power to "think of a helmet for it, using words."

The newly revolving door of **Immediate Orgy & Audit** has opened out to the more recent series of like-minded poems in the premiere issue of MASS AVE, a poetry magazine edited by Dan Bouchard. By doing a reading of two of these poems, both of which put forth a multiplicitous poetics as sketched out above, the poems in the chapbook reveal themselves further.

The 13-couplet "Pop Song" consists of closely electric vowel music and word jumps beginning with "Some girl, some other girl, some trouble, some woman" (short "O" sounds). The jittery energy of "rapidly prolix with nerves" auditorily loosens to "can relax beside the ambulance and ask if," though still connected by "x"'s. (One of my favorite traces in these poems is Mlinko's penchant for the "x"s that pop out in both "Pop Song" and "Hex," a curse or invective verse X-ing out a bothersome landlady.)

"Pop Song" is associational on a tighter vocabularic level than "City Story's" more anecdotal, long-lined gloss on the circumstances surrounding the writing of "Pop Song", attempting to trace the heightened, yet unrecognized nature of what Jennifer Moxley terms "poetic labor," the unrecordable trace of what happened at the moment of writing that is always erased in the actual poem. "City Story" begins with a line reminiscent of the opening line of the chapbook mentioned previously, in which the poet sets up the scene in which the

poem will appear, "by accident": "Sometimes I sit at work and think there must be more to work than working" after which "I crashed from my high went walking up Newbury Street anonymity chagrined between / women in good suits & girls in costumes". The poet walks, post-poem, into another poem cataloguing the urban landscape of consumer products that tempt her, and that she satirizes: a menu of chi-chi food, vintage clothes, finally to bookstore and across the Charles where she exchanges of "Pop Song" for a pair of tights.

Both poems end with the same gutsy assertion of a new voice broadcasting on the airwaves: "Look, I'm the court poet now // with perks" ("Pop Song") while "City Story" catalogues an extended wish list of the fame and fortune her new poem will bring: " 'Pop Song' climbed the charts. I had to perform it at the Half Shell albeit / at a free concert; the Esplanade was packed to the Arlington Street Bridge. I was advised / to eat only at the Other Side Cafe...The ICA promised me a reading every Monday night (the Stone Soup people / protested) but they promised to revive great poetry in our city singlehandedly."

Whereas in "Pop Song" the poet is still ensconced in "a ghost-friendly castle // on inspiration's ocean," at the end of "City Story" she advises herself to stick to her day job after at her fantasized "CD-release party at the Middle East where nobody talked to me convinced me something / was wrong. Viking couldn't publish my book when it was discovered I had lost / the rights to the song" and "Cast adrift, stuck with the only limo in Somerville ..and "Steve...moved to the burbs, where we eat wild blueberries every night and shoot raccoons."

Her characteristic playful toughness ends "Pop Song" with "where someday you'll visit briefly / and be missed briefly".

Be sure to read these poems in their entirety in Ange Mlinko's **Immediate Audit & Orgy** and, the premiere issue of **MASS AVE**, which carries some other vibrant new work from across the country.

LEE ANN BROWN

[MASS AVE is available from:
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ROD SMITH
In Memory of My Theories
O Books (Berkeley, CA) 1996, 81
pages, \$9.00.

[O]ne cannot lie to an aphasiac. He cannot grasp your words, and so cannot be deceived by them; but what he grasps with infallible precision, namely the *expression* that goes with the words, that total, spontaneous, involuntary expressiveness which can never be simulated or faked, as words alone can, all too easily . . .

-Oliver Sacks, **The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat**

Daah dee dah dee dah dee dah dah
-J. S. Bach, **Suite No 4 in E flat major, Prelude**, Pablo Casals, Cello

On November 5, an article in **The New York Times**, titled "Using Rats to Trace Anatomy of Fear, Biology of Emotion," offered a metaphor (or perhaps an actual scientific explanation) of the manner in which Rod Smith's poetry interacts with consciousness. The **Times** article states: "New research strongly suggests that emotions are biological functions, channeled through the amygdala, which triggers physiological responses. A direct pathway goes from sense organs to the sensory thalamus and from there to the amygdala. This pathway does not allow for cortical processing and may be responsible for emotional responses a person does not understand." The aspect of this model of the (albeit rat) brain I find most compelling is the notion of a direct pathway that bypasses the traditional center of "understanding," that allows for emotion (which could include aspects of the so-called intellect) and response without comprehension. I would add to it, however, the suggestion that the necessary and sufficient conditions of "understanding" should in turn be altered. Rod Smith understood as Bach is. And then some. This is a guess, but Rod Smith's work goads me to suspect a syntax of emotion, of import, a direct route between sound and sense, between the cadence, the symphonic structure, of a poem and the variety of things we call its meaning. This is intuition, but "should anyone ask what intuition is, it's what you think / it is" ("In Memory of My Theories"). Smith often employs this kind of sad (that's all there is) and

comforting (you haven't been getting it wrong) truism, tautology even, that shows language in all its self-referential, obvious obscurity. He simultaneously offers a simple definition of the word *intuition* and fragments that definition amongst the infinite number of possible yous addressed.

Although what I am provisionally calling a "syntax of emotion" could be assembled with a syntax of vision and spatial composition, I conceive of it as a function of sound in time, and my primary understanding and appreciation of Smith's work has come from hearing him read. While the music is there on paper, built-in (and his work is quite carefully and generously laid out on the page), he has the Stradivarius and the cheat sheet—I imagine something akin to Eric Satie's "Performance Indications" (**A Mammal's Notebook**), with directives such as "bedig yourself," "haggard in your body," and "light, but decent." If he comes to your town, go.

As regards the Sacks quote and some of what I may have implied above, **In Memory of My Theories** is by no means incomprehensible nonsense, or even something approaching so-called sound poetry. It matters that it's not in French. (Visually, very fine distinctions are drawn between upper- and lowercase letters, punctuation marks, indents, etc., making as full a use of the notational capacities of English as of the aural, though never with a sense that there is a rigid, predetermined system in place.) Smith's work is laced with content and highly modulated. But he doesn't just make sense, he *makes sense*. It is impossible to peel the skin of words off the apple of what Sacks calls "expression." Perhaps the work describes itself best: "veiled lattice tangle, ask it to weep lint. the ear is the mortal tense, entering the chest / through the inkstand. That aura of miffed significance swirling in the / unshed mask of distillate matter" ("Sieff").

These poems are both hyper-linguistic (i.e., language pointing to itself, as an object with all the attendant baggage of etymology, linguistics, etc.) and sub-semantic (i.e., symphonic, the direct route described above). For small-scale examples of the former see lines like "a musical event miss taken for a lyric kingdom // the distant air enters // through distant lungs" ("Bad Ashbery But Fun"), "The lightning is an exaggeration of the light" ("illeg-

able) Lake"), "The tiger of a growth / A hill full—a hole full / is scantily easily scattered" ("XCII (cinder-sifter)"), and "life-size freight / the light of / lightful / lighting / bring to throw or shed & cream or bulb / beak / break / ottava rima the terrible / silent excess of tortured imputation" ("Your goofy fremitus . . ."). The latter, the symphonic accumulation of punch, is harder to show in this context, taking place as it does over the course of entire poems, the course of the book. And, moreover, it is wrong to present these two aspects of the work in opposition or contrast. That apple won't be peeled either. It's all skin. Or all flesh. (Collective relevant regular migraine People are / failing // I don't feel // more or less red Most // When the moment hits / In the voice / knocked numerous // diffuse ambiguity // snow paper" ("The Inveterate Poem").

Like Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, of which I am reminded by Smith's use of red above, *In Memory of My Theories* is a text that listens very carefully to itself, that hears the linguistic assumptions implicit in its propositions, and that then goes on to question, subvert, pervert, and toy with them, all the while mindful of their serious and real-world ramifications. Smith throws "language games" and "people are starving" alike into the lottery hopper, and retrieves them, "sutured by or // accomplished. Sedimentary articulation / become the lush agnostic coal of // [. . .] everything in this one // nothing in addition" ("The Latest Attempt").

Which brings me to a few notes on content and method. *In Memory of My Theories* is an invective, a question, a treatise, and a prayer. It engages issues of perception, resemblance, artifice, and politics—the political as an intellectual and emotional force—the consequences visible when world and language are attended to. It bears both the tyranny of the American government, and the tyranny of the self aware of its cognitive limits. "The surface, if it's found // is a symbol. Discrepancy's essence // Is curlicue / Is land terrific // perceptual shifts hug the coast & shimmer / amidst what I consider even now // the assassinated evident / getting nowhere / with a ten foot pole" ("In Memory of My Theories").

Smith takes standard dichotomies (interior/exterior, mind/body, etc.) and reconfigures them, removes the standard value grid to reveal a more wrenching grid of doubt. "[A]nd the body you have / is entirely the body / of vacuous mental images // constant round of becoming / bless me to transmute them // we are by nature heavily there // and there appears" ("In Memory of My Theories"). Everything is false, and yet incessantly weighted. Or weighted by the inability to distinguish. The same details reappear (clocks, dust, habit) as if markers that we are lost and covering the same ground over, though someone has been there in the interim to rearrange things just a little. "[T]hese savored days / these cycles / lapse back into statement // certain non-abstractions melt the equal sign and once / cloned become the dust we use to protect our paintings" ("In Memory of My Theories"). And we are back to the real, to detail, to staring at the impenetrable details of accumulated history with which we obscure the distorted image of ourselves we chose to show posterity.

This de-dichotomizing is also part of how Smith's work is structured and moves—motion, if not arrival, being key. He revels in the habits of syntax, and breaks them. The action lies not in the action of event, of verbs, but in that

of connection, a linguistic motion—derived from his use of prepositions—of what belongs to what, what suture, what addition. Even the verbs are sometimes made to work like prepositions. "So It Is that / the direction is indented by the dubious double affect of the undone area she / is to be believed to inhabit" ("Sieff"). The motion is made constant also by musical combination, vowel-sound surface progressions and Anglo-Saxon sound patterns within a Latinate (however interrupted) syntax.

The emotional impact of the work is neither representative nor reductive. Though in some contexts notational, it carts a "life-size freight," takes place on the one-to-one scale at which it is written. Alongside these philosophical, linguistic, and emotional (by which I think I mean a manner of tragic pleasure, "hoarding // surely intense // loss // his mouth // shuts his // stammering // tools" ["For Loss"]) effects, *In Memory of My Theories* is also frequently funny, sometimes vulgar, and never sentimental or lax. It is not (a venial, if not a cardinal, sin) the re-telling of a pre-processed experience, interpretation included, but an investigation of, the very act of, experience and interpretation, a thought-experiment protocol on itself: "Always to know the pattern // being difficult // things this / is called // to make" ("For Loss").

DEIRDRE KOVAC



BRENDA COULTAS

Early Films

(Rodent Press, Boulder; 1996); 77 pages, \$10.00.

The best writing rearranges our nervous systems and changes the way we see the world. When writing works, it is "a reflecting pool of human wonder." It is like film in that it moves. The light flickers so fast that we do not see any flickering at all, but a fluid motion—continuous and real. This is how Brenda Coultas writes. Brenda writes so deliberately that most of the words feel like they fell from the sky onto the page. "You are encircled by it." Her poems are stories. Her stories come from a place, but it is difficult to remember how come we have all been to that place many times, but we can't bring anything back from there. Only Brenda returns full of memory and foreboding.

There are psychics and hunting lodges and there are things going on behind the walls and under the covers. It's not necessarily scary, but it can be. It's not necessarily funny, but I laugh a lot when reading it. "It's the new meat." There is a lot of virginity getting lost, some incest and some killing. "Father, your daughter dreams of

touching each night. All of that dreaming is fraying the sheets." There is the Mayonnaise Man. Angels hang around the Dairy Queen. People give birth to hair-balls.

Brenda Coultas writes delirious works with deadpan seriousness. There is a knowing naivete in this writing that comes up from behind and tugs on your solar plexus. I wish I could explain how she does it, but I have read and re-read this book, and I can not isolate her "technique." I think she is earnest, but just then I noticed a joke. I'm prepared to laugh out loud, but then suddenly I feel like my childhood fears have been pulled out of my heart and projected onto my retina. Coultas' writing can be alarmingly intimate.

I wish to compare *Early Films* with Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, or Jakov Lind's *Soul of Wood*, or Nerval's *Aurelia*. The voice(s) in her work have something in common with Faulkner's narrators (rural, sensitive and just a little bit off kilter). The vignettes remind me of Lind's early work, especially the stark realism brought to bear on frighteningly unreal people and places. Like Nerval, Coultas brings a kind of lucid dreaming to life in her texts. But these comparisons don't really do justice to the writing. When one encounters something truly original, there is always a desire to compare it with something else. Perhaps there is a familiarity reflex which gets activated. Maybe comparisons satisfy a need to place a work in a context. Brenda Coultas has created her own context.

Early Films is not just another new book by another new writer. There are lots of those around, and many of them are quite good. *Early Films* is a revelatory work of ferocious vision. In short, this is an essential book. Don't take my word for it. See for yourself.

"I keep going until the street lights end and I am alone and safe. Only then can I open up the weapon I've made of my heart, a blue flint that when struck produces sparks, flame and ash."

MITCH HIGHFILL

[continued from page 8]

in American society, but also in choosing the identity of poet as a political stance, as an activism in itself, as united with and sharing common elements with other subversive /constructive activities. Do you see it as your service ("And what if I owe an epic?") to bring out what might be private knowledge and force it into a public domain, as well as bringing out a part of communal knowledge that doesn't surface very often, that is constantly being hidden? To force what are, in a way, new things into narrativity?

Notley: Again, I don't feel that I'm unifying voices; I'm more trying to represent them. You refer to "choosing the identity of poet as a political stance, as an activism in itself..." A couple of things there. I'm never quite sure that I chose the identity of poet, I feel more as if it chose me, or at least as if it gradually happened that I got co-opted by it. There was a point at which I found myself too fascinated by poetry to do anything else. I do think that it can be an activism and that it doesn't have to have a political subject to be that. I think the poems I wrote in *When I Was Alive*, an out-of-print book consisting of imitations of dead male poets but coming out of the most in-between moments of a woman's life, bespeaks as much activism as *White Phosphorus* does. What you stand for is often more important than what you struggle against. How to live as opposed to how to fight.

Goldman: As you say, "We live in that total international multicultural natureless world" but do we really live in it in terms of the command that you speak of? What I'm trying to get at, here, I guess, is change, and how poetry works as a force in the world to make change happen. Is it a matter of changing how things are represented or of changing the quality of life itself? I guess it's possible to relate this to experimental poetry's assuming more of the reader to begin with...as you said in Letter #1, much popular poetry doesn't assume enough intelligence.

Notley: I think all poets—myself included—tend to exaggerate the evil they might do with their poems. All poetry is marginalized, not just experimental poetry. I find it hard to imagine an international corporate poem, unless there came to be a market for such a poem, but there's really no market for any poetry. Well I suppose there will be a multinational form of the New Yorker poem, maybe there already is. What I'm much more interested in is keeping up with the way the world is changing and both resisting

its changes—since few of them seem positive right now—and, understanding that the young are necessarily embroiled in those changes, being exceedingly sympathetic to what's going on. Poetry itself doesn't make things happen, it's more subtle than that. Poetry's part of everything that's happening culturally. It also sends itself into the future, when a certain poetry might be finally appreciated. But I think that rather than overtly change things it accompanies, comforts, gives courage, amuses, stimulates, etc. Partly *Alette* is that with which you compare your own experience. Poetry is poetry by being all of its selves though, even its doggerel self. I honestly don't think of myself as an experimental poet, because I don't think in such terms much, well I did say New Yorker poem. I write usually what is seems to me poetry needs next; I suppose that's why all my works look different from each other and I suppose that's what lands me in the experimental category.

Goldman: In your talk on the epic, when you discuss the "natureless world" in terms of *Desamere* ("There's no one to kill because the machine of natural obliteration can't be stopped"), does that mean we have to work in a closed economy of social value towards representation? I'm asking you this because for a moment there you seemed to present a kind of closure that was pretty bleak... when in fact your recent work, take *Alette* for example, often seems to articulate its own world, its own power structures and environment—as good can happen in them, and as open: they are surreal, while referentially and politically engaged; they are symbolically and minutely concerned...

Notley: Regarding "There's no one to kill, etc." and "natureless world," and "do we work in a closed set and fight in a closed economy..."—that's not even the point. The point is much worse, I fear. I wrote *Alette* before *Desamere* [although *Alette* was published after *Desamere*], it's not more recent. The question of the future of the planet explodes all theories of a suitable poetics, suitable representation and so on. That kind of discussion becomes irrelevant. I'm never going to support inept poetry, but frankly when I read the facts about global warming or overpopulation I really don't care how one's supposed to write the poem. If a whole world is being destroyed, I don't

think it matters as to whether it's correct to "imagine" that destruction or to attack it from a vantage of realistic depiction and overt reaction. Either will do, as long as we're talking about the problem.

Goldman: You ask: "Why did I want to write about a woman of action if women don't act and if I don't really approve of deeds?" You also talk about women's deeds being "symbolic action." But I think that a lot of what you are doing is making what is usually viewed as symbolic really literal, or active. In talking about poetry accomplishing spiritual/intellectual services or tasks, would you say that the task you set for yourself in *Alette* was to externalize dreams and not to take them as just dream language that symbolizes something in "real" life relationships, but other possible, forceful narratives that don't stand in for something else, but are what they are?

Notley: I think dreams are partly a way of thinking and that the figures and actions in dreams tend to be symbols, but of much more than relationships. They can stand for qualities, abstractions, hard-to-define ideas the way that gods and goddesses and their actions do in myths. But they're hard to pin down so also, as you say, they are what they are, and sometimes they are, I think, only being a story, as if to amuse the dreamer. People like to be told mythical stories because there's both a story and all that resonance.

Goldman: Could you talk a little bit about your trance technique poetics, and finding your one I? I only know about your process from the workshop tapes and what you told me in letter #1... I think people might be really interested in this, and how it relates to the techniques of H.D., Robert Duncan, even Rimbaud...and the hypnagogic. How do you define trance writing in terms of poetics? What does this have to do with writing a feminine epic and making the heroine put what is underground on the surface and fight it out there? How does the epic connect with what might be considered its opposite, your personal autobiographical work? If the autobiographical poems are different than that, how are they different? (A difference in uncovering the musics?)

Notley: I don't think I used the trance technique exactly when I was writing *Alette*. For that work I would use dreams I'd had at night or would try to fall asleep briefly during the day or sim-

ply close my eyes and try to see something, follow a chain of imagery. If I was using dreams, I would try to choose details quickly or make the decision to use the material at all quickly—I was trying to be as automatic as possible. I didn't use those techniques for *Close to me* and *Desamere*: with the former I didn't have to do anything special for my father's voice to start speaking in my mind; for the third section of the latter I concentrated on images gathering under my eyelids—aren't such images called eidetic?—and forming their own plots. I discovered a different sort of technique in the process of writing *Mysteries Of Small Houses*, a sort of deep relaxation which made my limbs tingle and was very pleasant. I discovered, from doing some reading, I was probably practicing a mild form of self-hypnosis, so I began to employ a few of the certified self-hypnosis techniques, concentrating on a landscape, making my arm heavy, counting backwards and so on. In terms of poetics, I guess I'd say that this process is not very different from the one I ordinarily associate with writing poetry. You go into a sort of trance to write; you shut out much of the world so that only the poem is transpiring and if you're getting materials from your environment it's only transpiring in terms of your poem. As far as *Alette* and what's underground coming to the surface, I was interested first of all in the liberation of people from the dreary exigencies of "chartered" unnatural tyrannized lives, by throwing open the possibility of psychological liberation—this can't be the only way humans have lived, so much is repressed—not desires, but all sorts of possibilities and potentials. I don't know how the epic books and the autobiographical book connect, except that the latter also contains story elements and also creates a background for the writing of the other kind of work, a naturalistic parallel.

Goldman: I also really value what you said in your first letter to me about doctrinaireness: "finding some reflection of it [in poems] of what they've [people in the academy] been taught to think or its lack." Are there other poets in particular whose terms create helpful different frameworks for you to talk about poetic/social issues, that you think work around, through, or with dominant ideas about deconstruction/post-modernity that are so doctrinaire?

Notley: At the moment I work most in conjunction with Doug. We're interested in the same kinds of forms and

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share many of the same concerns, but speak so differently from each other, being American and English, that we're enriched by the different textures of our languages. And also the differing textures of the ways in which we think. I also always want to know what people like Ron Padgett, Lorenzo Thomas, Anne Waldman, Anselm Hollo, etc. think about things. I continue to be interested in the work of Leslie Scalapino, Eileen Myles, Joanne Kyger, Lyn Hejinian. I want to know how mature minds are dealing with what's going on in the world. And I'm waiting to see what the very young will come up with in terms of forms and techniques. Anselm and Edmund are both quite interesting at the moment. As is Alicia Wing, say. I also feel as if I'm picking up on some things that Ted was doing at the end of his life that have sort of lain dormant since his death. I think that there's been a dearth of intelligent commentary on his work and that his later work has been ignored—but that's good for me, I can steal from it with no one watching.

Alice Notley's most recent book, Mysteries of Small Houses, is forthcoming from Penguin. She has also recently completed a manuscript entitled Disobedience. Judith Goldman is a poet and graduate student living in New York City. Her first book, adversities of outerlife, was published by Object Editions in 1996.

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Absolute Disaster: Fiction From LA

Edited by Lee Montgomery, Dove Books
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144 pages, \$13.50.

Black Mountain Revisited: A Video Documentary

Produced by Joe Cardarelli and Jim
Skipper, Maisonneuve Press (Washington,
DC), 1990, 54 minutes, \$33.95.

the book, spiritual instrument

Edited by Jerome Rothenberg and David
Guss, Granary Books (New York), 1996,
160 pages, \$21.95.

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100 pages, \$10.50.

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San Francisco, CA 94110-2951), 1995, 30
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1993, 143 pages, \$9.95.

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Distribution, 1814 San Pablo Avenue,
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Graywolf Press (St. Paul, Minnesota),
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OWEN HILL**LooseEnds**

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Edited by Marlene Miller, Iris Editions
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FRANK KUENSTLER**The Seafarer, B.Q.E., and Other Poems**

Cairn Press (New York), 1996, 105 pages,
\$13.95.

ladies, start your engines: women writers on cars and the road

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On Your Knees, Citizen: A Collection of "Prayers" for the "Public" [Schools]

Edited by Rod Smith, Lee Ann Brown,
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25642, Washington, DC 20007), 1996,
48 pages.

Online Diaries: The Lollapalooza '95 Tour Journals

Soft Skull Press (New York), 1996, 128
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DAN PAGIS**The Selected Poetry of Dan Pagis**

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1996, 69 pages, \$12.95.

STUART ROSS
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ECW Press (Toronto), 1996, 102 pages,
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FLOYD SALAS
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Arte Publico Press (Houston), 1996, 100
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University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996, 79
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Response
Sun & Moon Press (Los Angeles), 1996,
97 pages, \$10.95.

MARIA LUISA SPAZIANI
Sentry Towers
Translated by Laura Stortoni, Hesperia
Press (Berkeley, CA), 1996, 90 pages,
\$13.00.

CHEZIA THOMPSON-CAGER
The Presence of Things Unseen: Giant Talk
Maisonneuve Press (Washington, DC),
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