

# THE POETRY PROJECT

The Newsletter of The Poetry Project Ltd, at St. Mark's Church in-the-Bowery

#133

April/May 1989





## CORRESPONDENCE

Aug something  
The Conservatory

Dear Beebleberry,

I've just dropped my glasses into a pot of hot spaghetti sauce. Not on purpose. They slid off my slippery nose. It's Friday. I'm sleepy. England is weird. A granny has run amuck (mok?) in Islington. She ripped up her couch and destroyed her kitchen and threatened the neighbors with "fire irons." They say she has a rare brain disease and is now resting comfortably in Luton SanitOrium (arium?). I hope.

That is the news. I have spent better part of week (since Susan flew back to Denver) working in Glen B's studio (a real Rube Goldberg set up). I've also been to look at things. I've "discovered" Meredith Frampton. And Algernon Newton. (painters) When the weather is good I go to Hampstead Heath or Clapham Common. Did you know that the British put the accent on the second syllable of "mandatory"?

And, no, there is no copy of The Painter's Eye to be found. Anywhere hereabouts. Nor are there many other things. Like edible comestibles. But in the Victoria & Albert there is a beautiful rococo limewood bow tie.

The best art i saw was: Gustons ('70s) at Saatchi, C D Friedrich's Winter landscape (new purchase) at NG [National Gallery]. Picasso's cartoony saltimbanques (two of 'em) on loan from Hermitage. Denton Welch's self port. Stubbs. Constable. Kline's "Meryon" (Tate) and Asger Jorn (!). Late Picasso (lots). Kokoschka's "The Crab" Cézanne's lake and Seurat's bridge at Courtauld. But best of all was Vermeer at Queen's Gallery: Lady & Gent at Virginals — leaving the big floor and perspective of cool blueblack & cream tiles, yow. Then according to Gowing (my guy) what's up in the mirror is easel and behind that a *box* (camera obscura!) So there. And she is so sexy (shoulder line, puffy lemon chiffon). Jeez, he really LOVED women. Well, I had to tear myself away.

Susan enjoyed herself here immensely, I think. She bought a lot of things. Miniature Victorian cup, (with "feet") & saucer (sea & ships motif). Keats' life mask. (spooky). '50s dresses (Venice & "jazz" motifs). Cashmere (chartreuse) & angora (salmon) sweaters. Miniature breviary. Ceramic cat (motley, '40s). Etc. Now she is preparing to teach her first class. Intro to Lit. Gidget Grows Up.

Now we are in a rainstorm. The sky is...green. Nile green. The milkman has dropped & broken a bottle of...m...milk, that's it, milk. And the rain is washing it away. Long trickles down the lane.

Now it's night. Television is great. 200 more lines. "The Falcon Steps Out" (Tom Conway, 1945) looks GREAT. I *see* all the shades of grey. But the film is stupid and poorly acted. But now it's 3 old beefy farts raving about the trade deficit. Tomorrow I'm having two old friends (from 1966) for tea. I'll need digestives (McVitties), Wensleydale ("the Mozart of cheeses"), Jackson's (loose) darjeeling, very thin sliced hungarian salami, and a small selection of fine tea cakes.

Patricia Highsmith is, finally, too morbid, but This Sweet Sickness is excellent. And do you know her "Ripley" books? From Glen's zonko library I've sampled Jerome K. Jerome, not bad, and Backs of National Gallery Pictures (wonderful).

And you? And Lynn? Are you wonderful? Well? And the boy? And the OTHERS who come and go? Should I swap apts. with Konrad Steiner for two months or so and live in The Tenderloin and write my novel?

Keep those cards and letters coming in. Kaloo

Calais,

Yr brother

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## New Form

by Mei-Mei Berssenbrugge

That particular conjunction of events which includes the history of your body, your experience, and your art vertically, and the time and circumstances you are in horizontally, seeks an expression, that is inevitably unique, or new.

A formal problem or limit represents a limit of what you can make or say or see, at a particular moment. You might make a new form by following a desire or an intuition into a further, more contemporary part of you, such as varying line length according to the horizon, embedding scientific terms into an equivocal or into a lyric context, using thought imagistically.

I find the idea of newness interesting, during a time when there is no recognized critical aesthetic. The criticism is at the edge of what it can discern or say, and so it's interesting to seek emerging form in fashion, in the margins of the artist, on the street, in experimental physics.

I have an intuition of a new form, as a new expertise in the topology of expression, emotion, and culture.

At first I characterized this new form by an idea of the horizontal, a horizontal cut across experience and culture, synchronistically and democratically, rather than the familiar vertical cut into tradition and essence.

But now I want to say it is a topological section or point of view, which could then include both verticals and horizontals along a complexity of a continuous surface, and with a new set of formal dynamics.

It's something which might take collage farther.

It's my intuition about an aesthetic, or perhaps an intuition about a poem, and would require a new craft or form, analogous to the invention of a mathematics of surfaces.

It's an aesthetic I've noticed in younger or "newer" writers that is just beyond my grasp. I have an urge to understand what they know that enables them to generate this ungraspable form, and it is an urge from the intuition which desires a way to express convolutions of experiences and meanings in me, which are somehow all rising into a present tense, or a tense of one time, or one surface.

It could be a way to write a poem across fragmented concentrations, for example, if you are raising children, instead of by traditionally pursuing a single line. It could be a way to write a poem that responds to the barrage of layered stimuli in the world.

A friend tells me, when she sees a deer next to a rock on a far hill, she learned as a child, by concentrating, to make the deer appear larger and closer, and the rock to diminish. When I ask a Yupik boy how he finds an animal on empty tundra, he tells

me, you just look for the animal, until you see the animal.

The scientific notion of color as wavelengths of light — that we have in the light on our hands all possible colors — may not be true if you can call memory into being, using a color. We can imagine a person inventing a color, now, seeing it for the first time, and that that new color's entrance pertains to a new appropriateness in the environment for it to be seen, not a predisposition.

This could be how a new form takes place.

(This piece is a revision of that delivered at the Poetry Project's 1988 symposium.)

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### PAN-TONGUE

*for Kenward Elmslie*

Not too shy attempt the venture now  
& begin America's vaudeville, radio, commedia  
I'm a talkie fireball in the night  
I love my country, nuts & liberation

Begin USA vaudeville, flicks, musical commedia  
It's all lyric, truant, garden-gates, a lexicon  
I love my country, nuts & liberation  
linguistically a generation of first landings

It's lyric, tyrannic, pearly gates, leggy  
goodness of thighs, gentlemen's "digs", euphonious  
& linguistically a generation of first landings:  
speech of slave, high-born, convict-talk

Goodness of eyes, soap-commerce, euphonious  
in a speech that mixes the accents up  
Speech of slaving labourer, or isolated conviction  
Sweet in my ears, of this I'm made

Voices that mix the accents up  
Words have voices of their own  
Sweet in my ears, of this I'm made  
More measured than English, I hate the government

Words have voices of their own  
"roust out somebody jerk a little chin music"  
More measured than English, kiss Noah Webster instead  
My country ain't just a swill nasal twang

Roust out somebody jerk a little chin music  
Not too shy attempt the venture now  
My country's got everything everything everything  
and talking talking through the night

— Anne Waldman



## New Year's Day

by Michael Brownstein

Yeah! HA! This is for all you replicas out there, pulverized by indecision: Thai or Japanese, baby, which'll it be tonight? Yeah!

Hey listen, they told me when they let me out of that fuckin crazy house that I'd be among people who are alive now — real people — but all I see are provisional ones, stuck in the holding tank and rationalizing it, brandishing their little compact discs and things as proof of their sophistication, all the little social markers proclaiming that they exist — hey, we're cool, we're vital, we know what radicchio is — it's endives covered with blood, right?

People don't even know what they're doing now, they're eating other people thinking it's some thrilling new kind of entree — "boy finger pie" — the newest culinary delight. They're all wearing the same eyeglasses too — those little round coin-shaped ones, you know, perfectly round so you can better see the fear, my dear — and going to the same doctors, going on the same vacations and fucking the same lovers. Well, alright, maybe they *are* alive, but in the same way that trees at a fuckin tree farm are alive, planted in rows, indistinguishable from each other, patiently waiting to be harvested for a Merry Christmas of Death.

Hey, I'm glad you and me ain't them, right? It'd be too much to take, too life-like. To think we're rows and rows of identical Scotch pines shivering in the wind, permanently on a quarter tab of acid, being cautious and terrified and dependable, always in the place we're supposed to be. And we better be, baby, or they'll pull that salary line right out from under us — that tenure track — and then what? Isn't freedom the same thing as unsubmitiveness?

So be cool, pretend all this isn't happening, cultivate the little differences that proclaim you're unique. You know, your precious tics and attitudes, your penchant for suspenders or Cheerios, your snapshots of Mom and Dad, your little net of pet likes and dislikes, your favorite colors, your styles of dress and turns of phrase, your powerful, eerie "inter-personal relationships" — *so important* for your mental well-being to know that somebody's hung up on you — yeah, and your quaint childhood memories, too, let's not forget those. Let's pretend with a vengeance that you're unique, with this year's fashions and little diversions, this year's pecadilloes and weekend drunks, your list of favorite records and movies, this year's stars, this year's plane crash. Hey, we *must* be alive, cause 300 people just went down in flames in Uttar Pradesh!

Pretend if you want to, suckers, but I won't. I'm cutting out right after I cash my next paycheck. Yeah, you bet!...Or maybe the next one. Or the one after that...Just gimme a little time. Soon my kids'll be grown and I'll be free. I'll be proud to see em goin to college and all, scared little bunny rabbits so cute in their crew-necks, learning to kiss ass and get laid, cultivating their uniquenesses with little semesters abroad. And I'll sink back into my pot belly bifocal easy chair and turn to Wifey and say, "Next year, baby. Next year I'm cutting out. Just you wait and see..."

— Michael Brownstein

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Lyons	Corbett	Highfill	Mycue	Kleinzahler	Blevins	Pines	Owen
Violi	Churchill	Napora	Feiring	Butterick	by	Berthoff	Pommy-Vega
Rattray	King	Ackerman	Kosteljanetz				
Anderson	Berlin	Baldwin	Upshaw	VanderMolen	Lenhart		

Giants Play Well in the Drizzle  
**GIANT DRIZZLE READING**  
341 39th Street, Brooklyn, Third Floor  
Sunday, April 23: Opens at Noon  
Readings begin at 1 p.m.  
B or R to 36th Street, Brooklyn

MORE MORE

### FOR KYRAN

where we dream & close our eyes there's  
no floor to speak of see how we  
crawl across the rafters balance on the  
beams under us there is only the ceiling  
of the room below over us stars

the boy caught the falling baby he caught  
the baby in the air the sidewalk imminent

if they ask you how you get to bed  
you just tell them you step lightly

— Maureen Owen



**BLACK & TAN FANTASIE: *Among The Blacks*, Ron Padgett; Avenue B, New York, 1988 (dist. by Segue Foundation, 300 Bowery, NYC 10012). \$7.50 paper.**

In 1960, a Texan named John Howard Griffin wanted to know what it felt like to be a black man in the Deep South. Really wanted to know what it felt like to be black. So by taking heavy doses of Oxsoralen (a drug used to treat vitiligo — a condition that creates milky white patches on the skin), intense sun lamp treatments, and shaving off his straight hair, Griffin became “A Negro” and began an odyssey in the guise of a poor, middle-aged black man that would be recounted in his best seller *Black Like Me*. That book, still in print and having sold twelve million copies in fourteen languages, remains one of the most popular and memorable documents of the Civil Rights Era.

Around the time that the newly black Griffin was experiencing the daily life of racism in the South, comedian Lenny Bruce was at the peak of success as a night-club performer. The king of the so-called “sick” comics (a short-lived genre associated with beatniks and those whose material departed from the usual fare of wife jokes and Borscht Belt shtick), Bruce had achieved equal degrees of notoriety and fame for his convention-bending stream-of-consciousness performances and as a “dirty-mouth,” whose notion of propriety seemed open-ended.

During a performance at New York’s Playboy Club, Bruce spotted basketball star Wilt Chamberlain at a ringside table. Pausing from his monologue, Bruce bent over the apron of the stage and asked Chamberlain for a drag from his cigarette. Chamberlain complied. Bruce examined the cigarette and then exclaimed in mock horror: “HE NIGGERLIPPED IT!” The audience gasped, fully expecting the 7’ 2” Chamberlain to squash little-guy Bruce like a cockroach. Instead, Chamberlain totally broke up, almost falling off his chair in laughter. Bruce always felt that the best way to neutralize words associated with prejudice was to hold them up to ridicule, decontextualizing them from the discourse they stemmed from. Unfortunately, the Catholic Church and the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office (neither agency being known for an interest in semiology) did not share Chamberlain’s reaction to Bruce’s material and initiated the legal persecution of Bruce that led to the comedian’s blacklisting from virtually all night clubs outside of San Francisco — and his death from a morphine overdose in 1966.

It has been a while since we’ve heard the sort of discoursing on race that both Griffin and Bruce engaged in. Not that things have gotten better in this country — rather, racial tensions recently appear to be at a high point with little hope of healing expected under the lukewarm stewardship of George Bush. People seem to have simply tired of the “race” question, as they have seemed to have tired of thinking about entrenched poverty, sexism, and other social issues that once had a place in daily conversation.

Ron Padgett’s *Among The Blacks* is a modest attempt by one man to come to terms with his feelings and attitudes towards African-Americans. A work in two sections — a translation of French proto-surrealist Raymond Roussel’s *Among The*

*Blacks (Parmi Les Noirs)* and Padgett’s prose memoir of the same title (which will henceforth be referred to as *Among The Blacks II*) — Padgett has taken two opposing writing strategies to, in his words, “see what happens when two disparate things are put together.” The opacity of Roussel’s story and the high grammar-school composition style of Padgett’s memoir create a text that seems to locate the “republic of dreams” in a roadhouse just outside of Tulsa.

For the uninitiated reader, Raymond Roussel is part of the small band of literary outsider/oddballs who have had much influence upon New York School poetry — other members of this group including Henry Green, Ronald Firbank, and Alfred Jarry. A true eccentric (being both very wealthy and very weird), Roussel created many of his mature texts through an elaborate series of word games which he outlined in his *How I Write Certain of My Books* (using the text of *Among The Blacks* as an example of his methodology). His *La Source*, which for fifty pages describes a spa pictured on a bottle of mineral water, is a precursor for John Ashbery’s “The Instruction Manual” and the novels of Alain Robbe-Grillet. Roussel, according to Michel Foucault, is one of those “writers who have literally been obsessed with the problems of language, for whom literary construction and the ‘interplay of language’ are directly related.” In the case of *Among the Blacks*, it was not until Roussel had, through a word game, created the opening and closing lines of the prose text, that he could write the rest of the work. “The phrases found,” he writes, “it was a case of writing a story which could begin with the first and end with the second.”

As Padgett noted, Roussel’s *Among The Blacks* stands quite opposite from his own prose memoir — save one sentence. Roussel’s text is about another text entitled *Among The Blacks*, which is about a “master mariner name White” and his adventures with a black chief named Booltable. In summarizing this story within a story, the narrator declares “...White spoke of this memory of separation, the crossing, and then of the shipwreck and his ‘return to life’ among the blacks.”

A few pages after this statement, Padgett begins his version of *Among the Blacks*. “I just cleared my throat, as if I were about to say something aloud” — a statement which comes just after a Creole proverb, used as an epigraph, which translates roughly as “chicken shit is not butter” — and separated from the body of the text by a big black dot. This statement serves as both an establishing shot reflecting the author’s unease with what he is about to say and to slyly remind the reader that the notion of the “voice” in the text “clearing its throat” just at the point of utterance (which in fact has already happened) is as much a literary construct as anything found in Roussel’s text. The text of “white-writing” (Padgett as America’s home-grown Camus?) is as much a deliberate literary strategy as Roussel’s elaborate textual defacements and that the hoped-for results for both is the creation of a literary text.

Padgett’s first recollection of being “among the blacks”) seems straight out of a D.W. Griffith shooting script:

*My first memory of a black person is of what was then called*



a "niggerman", his rain-streaked face in the night lit by a flash of lightning as my mother glances toward the bedroom window and screams.

(p.17)

This Southern Gothic recollection is displaced by a long recollection of Berry, who mowed the Padgett family's lawn. Berry is "easygoing and good natured", though the boy Padgett has to make sure that the glasses and pitcher that Berry used on his mid-afternoon break were washed "extra well" at night. Although Padgett's parents looked down on blacks, they treated Berry with courtesy. It was not until Padgett drives by Berry's lonely one-room shack that he considers what sort of pain lay beneath Berry's soft demeanor.

Padgett goes to a grade school that resembles '50s TV-land — pure whitebread. Even the schoolwork involving other peoples and cultures faintly sounded like fairy tales. However, one teacher, a Viola Mason, instills in Padgett a sense of justice and fair play. He goes home and argues with his parents when they use the word "nigger." Despite his feeling a righteous, youthful indignation, Padgett "rarely even saw a black person, let alone had one as a friend."

A bit later and it's Civil Rights Time (Eisenhower Era) and young Padgett "ostentatiously sits at the back of a bus, among the blacks, who were as much surprised by this gesture as the white passengers were disgruntled by it." He writes an angry school essay called "On Racial Prejudice," yet, in his diary, struggles to find his way out of the web of prejudice that he inherited through his family and his culture. At the same time Padgett is coming to terms with racial prejudice, he discovers that he himself was a victim of social prejudice. His crime? — being the son of a whiskey bootlegger in a "dry" state. Padgett becomes a non-existential version of Norman Mailer's "white Negro":

*No matter how good my grades were, no matter how well I played baseball, no matter how clean my clothes or proper my manners, there was this streak of social shame that ran through my life outside home and set me apart from others. The parents of some were wary of me, others would not invite me to their homes or allow me to ride in their cars.*

Padgett, in kind, kisses off polite white society by rejecting materialism, growing his hair long and by writing poetry. He listens to Leadbelly, John Lee Hooker, and Art Blakey. He discovers the writings of another white connoisseur of negritude, Jack Kerouac, and even gets this Great Daddy-O of the Beatniks to contribute to his little magazine, *The White Dove Review*.

As Tulsa slowly begins to integrate in the early '60s, Padgett goes East to attend Columbia University. One morning, during his first week in Manhattan, he gets mugged:

*...I got off at the wrong subway stop and walked through a deserted park when a big black man came up behind me and put a knife to my throat and demanded money. I had only 65 cents in my pocket, but I had the nerve to ask him to give me back a*

*nickel for coffee. 'Here, take a dime', he said, 'It's a dime if you just have coffee at the counter'. Then he told me to walk straight ahead and not look back or he'd kill me.*

(p.29)

Things do get qualitatively better as Padgett makes his way through "the mixing bowl" of New York. He meets LeRoi Jones and then is startled to discover that a mail correspondent, Lorenzo Thomas, is actually black. The rise of the militant Black Power movement makes him feel somewhat rejected as he goes from a Tulsa "niggerlover" to a New York City "honky" (though Padgett notes that both descriptions were true of him); still, Padgett takes pleasure in his son's well-integrated kindergarten class and that his son's first and best friend was of Black/Danish extraction.

Padgett ends his little memoir with the wish that "the entire world were made of pieces interchangeable among all puzzles" and a yearning "for those moments when the other person looks at me and sees a man around forty, tall, slender, with short silver hair and wearing wire-rimmed glasses for eyes that look straight out, and likes the fact that I too am different." *Among The Blacks II* is certainly neither the white take on *Soul On Ice* nor an update on Norman Mailer's famous "White Negro" essay (which struck me as being a rather silly exercise in sounding serious in a reread of it). Padgett is not the hipster trying to absorb "the existential synopses of the Negro" (to quote Mailer); rather, he seems to be just trying to understand himself and his world a little better through "an unstylized outpouring of feeling," a confession of sorts. It is a weirdly brave little book; the baldness of its statement and its attempts at a rapprochement with an entire ethnic group is as Utopian an ambition as Roussel's labyrinthine world made from language. Without Griffin's voyeurism or Bruce's addiction to the outrageous, Padgett's memoir of a dissenting voice in white America works because of its lack of ideological intrigue or authorial ambition. Perhaps the placement of the two oppositional *Among The Blacks* is to remind the reader that both are literary texts and nothing else. In the manner of the distancing devices which form the aesthetics of both Bertolt Brecht and Jean Luc Godard, Padgett reminds us not to merely be the passive audience for the author's confession/memoirs, but to put one's own personal history to a parallel scrutiny. In 1989, this may very well qualify as an act of radical proportions.

— Joel Lewis

### Self-Portrait

Poetry made to order  
is similar to knowing  
that there are many stops  
along the path.

Groucho Marx was compassionate.  
He knew the rules and changes  
of times and consciousness.

It's all true. Here I am,  
really.

-- Mark Yanofsky



*I, Orhan Veli*, Orhan Veli, translated from the Turkish by Murat Nemet-Nejat; Hanging Loose Press, Brooklyn, New York, 1989. \$15 cloth, \$8 paper.

In addition to writing these poems, Orhan Veli (1914-50) translated from French into Turkish poems by François Villon, Jacques Prévert, Jules Laforgue, and Japanese haiku. As the latter especially evidences, he was the kind of poet who believes that poetry is not what gets lost in translation, but what carries across. He seemed to believe that all poetry was translation — from the immediacy of consciousness into the medium of words — and that the poet should sacrifice as little as possible in that translation to the opacity of style.

Knowing nothing of the Turkish language, I can only assume that Veli's poems are as fresh, colloquial, witty and direct as Murat Nemet-Nejat's translations of them. Because Nemet-Nejat's own poems share many of the same virtues, that's not an obvious assumption. But being an admirer of Nemat-Nejat's poems and having read some of his other translations, I think I can isolate some of Veli's qualities. In any case, *I, Orhan Veli* refreshed me.

Though Veli's poems stand firmly by themselves, I would advise that most readers read the illuminating introduction before diving into the poems. In it, Nemet-Nejat supplies a biographical profile of Veli; sketches briefly and informatively the relevant Turkish poetic background; for comparison provides translations of other Turkish poets; and succinctly frames relevant questions of poetic diction. He also makes this case for Veli: "In their delicate moments, his poems create the illusion that they are not poems, that they could be tossed off inadvertently by anybody. I think this quality is both the source of the main criticism against him and an indication of his main achievement."

#### AM I IN LOVE?

*Was I going to have thoughts also?  
Was I going to be an insomniac like this?  
Was I going to be quiet like this?  
To stop caring for the tossed salad I loved so much?  
Was I going to turn into this?*

Veli's poems provide no more literary distance from events than do most bar or coffee-shop chats. That may explain why they do not go on long. There is no room in them for comment or narrative. They are short, forceful bursts of intense concentration. At their best, they seem almost mystically radiant, but the mysteries are daily ones. I suppose they could properly be called transparent because of the simplicity of vocabulary and absence of rhetorical flourish. They rescue common vocabulary from slovenly usage and revive in words an active charge, not so that we meditate on them, as in "concrete" poetries, but so that we respond to them fully without fussing too much over each. So the resulting communication has a sense of urgency. Technique serves boldly but modestly the subject.

Though Veli speaks often of intoxication, the poems are startlingly lucid. The impression is more often like walking

into the sun-drenched morning street after a second cup of coffee than like the crepuscular fuzziness we conventionally associate with drunkenness. In Veli's inebriation, objects rush at him with the clarity of four dimensions. Like brief bursts of light, the poems bestow on common objects an insistent presence. I'm reminded of certain translations of Basho or Tu Fu, or the sturdy illuminations of some of Joe Ceravolo's poems, especially those in INRI.

#### SEPARATION

*I stand behind the boat, watching;  
I cannot jump into the water, the world is lovely;  
I am also a man, after all; I can't cry.*

As strong as the poems are individually, the force of them mounts as one continues through the book. I think hard to remember the last book of poems I read that benefitted so from reading beginning to end, preferably at one or two sittings. By the time I finished, the book seemed considerably grander than the modesty of such brief lyrics would imply.

There are several subjects that recur, perhaps contributing to this impression. Many of the poems, for instance, are given to the bittersweet pleasures of wine, women, and song. Although occasionally too familiar in the treatment, more often the genre, which so easily becomes tedious or boorish, is revived by the freshness of the expression and the intensity of the passion.

Another recurring subject, seldom overtly or didactically handled, is the grotesque injustice of twentieth-century politics. In his introduction Nemet-Nejat finds it necessary to defend Veli against charges that his work is trivial, especially when compared to the engaged poetry of the Communist Nazim Hikmet. Though I appreciate the political power of melodrama, such criticism strikes me as sentimental and crude. Often Veli's protests are understated, but he also cries out starkly in poems that are impossible to misunderstand (e.g., "Everything Is For You", "For Free", "Poem With Fleas"). Veli's canvases are small, but his sympathies generous. He celebrates a range of people performing a variety of social tasks, each endowed with her or his own grace. Here are poems not *to* but *of* the water-carrier, the sewer worker, the girl who lives in industrious poverty, the respectable bourgeois lover, the gypsy fiddle player. Above all, here is the international milieu of the educated, impecunious white-collar worker, the wage-slave with romantic dreams and unfulfilled promise. These poems transcend political differences of East and West to speak to anyone who works with certificate or rubber stamp, whose days are molded by timeclocks and bureaucratic replications, whose evenings are fraught with undue expectation and frittered away in inexpensive clubs, who suffers the distance between heightened yearning and grubby reality, who may have glimpsed the sublime only to have the vision oppressed by a headache.

Yet, though complaint is frequently the mode and melancholy the tone, Veli's poems leave you not with a sense of desperation but of appetite. The joy of his art is cumulative and



inspiring. The poems seem so immediate and transparent that it is only as you progress through the book or on subsequent readings of a particular poem that you begin to appreciate how artful, rich, and deft they are. Too often I close a book of poems and ask why does that poet bother? After reading *I, Orhan Veli*, I went to my desk to write a poem. Later, as I enjoyed a drink, I thanked the deities that I have the friends I do.

### THE DOGWOOD TREE

*It gave its first fruit this year:  
Three carnelian berries;  
It'll give five more  
Next year;  
Life is long,  
We can wait,  
What's the rush?  
The divine dogwood  
Tree!*

By the way, can anyone think of a press that has published a more interesting list over the last two or three years than Hanging Loose?

— Gary Lenhart

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### Spring Training

*for Becky*

Full speed ahead! in fact it  
is here & alas I am there that is to say  
I am here & the Yankees are in Florida  
where the green & blue are extreme & particular  
and a blaze of sun anoints the heroes  
of a ruthless nostalgic crowd  
of dreamers. Dave Winfield is wearing  
wire-rim glasses & describing his education.  
I am in right field with a catcher's mitt  
playing for the Twins in pinstripes &  
self-consciousness. The newspapers make very little  
of a woman making the team. Nor do they think it strange  
that I'm as old as Dave. Dave does tho.  
Your unlined skin! he marvels. Your jet-black hair!  
And an autodidact to boot.  
Boot an easy fly, I mutter nervously.  
Dave looks stern. What do you call an Irishman  
who's been buried for 50 years?  
Billy Martin? I suggest.  
Pete! He laughs, I laugh, we all laugh.  
It is spring & it is baseball & the Yankees  
are guaranteed a world championship  
& life is as simple as a slow-roll foul  
down the first base line.

— Elinor Nauen

*Rope Boy to the Rescue*, Lee Harwood, Drawings by Peter Bailey. North and South Press, Middlesex and West Yorkshire, 1988. \$10.

The book is titled *Rope Boy to the Rescue*, but the opening poem, the only one in which Rope Boy figures, does not have that title. It is called "Bonsoir, Monsieur Bailey" which declares, among other things, that Peter Bailey, the artist who did the book's nine linocuts(?), is the poet's fellow climber.

In Gustave Courbet's painting *Bonjour, Monsieur Courbet*, Courbet painted himself with knapsack, pilgrim's staff, and easel, tramping across treeless French countryside — and is met, not by a fellow artist, but by a well-dressed gentleman and his deferential servant. As realistic as this painting is (and the figures of Courbet and his patron are known to be accurate portraits), it was also intended by its author to be read allegorically. The artist is pictured on an aesthetic and moral pilgrimage, at home out of doors, in touch with nature. He is eagerly greeted by representatives of money and labor. Both Courbet and this particular patron were *Fourieristes*, and this narrative painting has to do with the future of the Socialist revolution. The painter invites us to see this artificially assembled realism as loaded with meaning, to notice the intricate composition, the placement of each man's hat, for example.

A wise reader will examine carefully the placement of elements in Lee Harwood's poems, for his use of references to the past and to everyday objects — and most especially for the dramatic phrases: "Sunk / without a trace?" "Haunted by the moon." "Foolish Pride." Often they are so self-consciously used they are placed within quotes:

" 'Mother, I am far away from everything.' " " 'I fly to you.' "

Dear readers, this is not the 19th century, when by allegory an artist (or poet — I'll simply say author for convenience) exerted deliberate, even absolute, control over the audience's perception; a time when authors and critics alike agreed there was one right vision to be extracted from a given work of art.

WE read each other's art subjectively — and we are ever willing to discover that an author wasn't aware of the full implications of his own work. In fact, we think of this as a positive attribute, though a 19th-century reader might have been horrified. We'd think of such an author as ultimately successful for creating that which has a life of its own, a work capable of returning something unexpected — and dynamic — to its audience. We're seeing the "being" of an art work, and, in spite of what some say, we don't behave in accordance with the idea that style is all. There's no accounting for the way we may sleuth around the whole context of a work looking not for allegorical content but for psychological gestalt. No aspect of the author's work or life is taboo for us.

Harwood's opening reference to Courbet certainly and properly suggests that we should consider his "realism" carefully. And it informs us that this poet, in the company of other authors of the late 20th century, is seeing modern times on a time-line that didn't start *de novo* with the daring inventions of the early



I keep reading Lee Harwood in terms of music, not painting or fiction, despite the vibrant visual images and the evocative and familiar stories that infuse these poems. And I think of Brahms, his person and his music: especially that modesty he displayed in both. No posturing in his sweetness, no dumb belief that "simplicity" is an automatically saving grace. Like Brahms, Harwood has the caution and *sang froid* of someone who often hikes in the mountains alone. This is always done with care, in both its senses. And both are far more daring authors than they, at first, appear. Moreover, Harwood shares with Brahms the modest understanding of modern heartbreak — never a simple thing, no matter how straightforward. A good-night song for her kids, for example, or Harwood's suite "Winter Journey" (pp. 26-29).

Neither shies from employing — and in Harwood's case, self-consciously exposing — his submission to rapture. In his poems, the 19th century interpenetrates the 20th as smoothly as in real life, and in "O, O, O, .... Northern California":

*Through the open car window  
fine phrases from an opera float out:  
"What new delights!  
What sweet sufferings!"*

England, someone said, is an old house, stuffed with stories, and Harwood lives there, as surely as his sensibility has been tuned by sympathetic attention to the last century. But this is our time, and in these poems Constable landscapes exist only in a continuum, in space as an activity. The marvel is that Harwood is able to project a sureness that his sentence won't be broken off before it's spoken. He gives a full easy measure to long lines, though he does, as a storyteller, face the familiar 20th-century mountain of mixed data and debris. He makes a luxuriant, ample time, odd in this modern world.

He reclaims territory: rhapsodies for the moon, for poetry that simply brings tears to the eyes, also the movie that wrings tears from its simple audience, rhapsodies for art, and for you, whatever "you" might be.

He claims, "I'm not a Chinese poet by any 'stroke of the imagination.'" But I'm not so sure.

Our storyteller doesn't burden us with all the hard thought he has given to the questionable relationship between the banal and the grand, the cliché and the universal. He is not looking to present us with "judgement" or "reason" or "purity." The impenetrable forest is a forest of cliché. "Realism" is a name that can easily be given to the familiarly repeated events that form the plots of opera, pulp adventure, fairy tales, Sunday-supplement feature stories, and actual heartbreak, the ache and loss of foundered relationships. Are these not familiar stories indeed?

But — it is also no accident that he chose (or permitted) the back-jacket photograph to show him with hiking boots and knapsack, far up in the hills. There's probably a pilgrim's staff

lying behind one of the rocks.

It's a key to his method that the awkward dancing bears are held. "A thin but sufficient chain keeps them in place." Or that his borrowings of cliché purple-segue so seamlessly into his lines. The shrieking pleas of a small boy scapegoated in a family argument are as much a part of the landscape through which the storyteller moves as "three small clouds pass in a line above Worthing." (p. 41)

In the last section, "unfinished," Harwood develops a grand opera in which audience, performance, performer, plot, are all considered in turn, as naturally as his naturally artificial landscapes contain no strained breaks between organic things and those of human manufacture. There is such an easy use and disabusement of allegory in these stories. Yipe! Folks will think the whole book is an elaborate Freudian *roman à clef*.

Several things are needed for a kite to fly, for a kite to bear heavy burdens. One must be able to get air underneath. *There's* a cliché to contend with. Harwood flies heartbreak and loss not because they are light, nor does familiarity make them so. He flies them because his structure is so engineered; and he makes it seem easy. In his hand, the prose-poem, so often misused by the narcissistic and the self-important (who can't jettison a syllable, or leave a stone undescribed) is a musical vehicle, sturdy enough to carry a familiar story, and it flies out, opening as it moves.

There is room. It is not surprising that Harwood collaborates easily, as he did in the book *Wine Tales*, with poet Richard Caddell, or here. Mr. Bailey has taken part, and made visual art that accompanies each of the sections. His images are sustained by the space/time of the poems and make apt and elegant use of them. The poems permit just that sort of engagement from attentive readers, and it's my fancy that there will be many of them.

— Martha King

#### AFTER DANTE

Her shadow, short  
of color, is longing,

betrays a lost green  
glance grown hard and,

absent, hears sweet  
white, ignores

the sour light bare  
blue neglected moon

devours, care should  
shoulder each red hair,

when, unaware, her  
shadow wounds, walks.

— Art Lange



*Will She Understand?* Fielding Dawson; Black Sparrow Press, 1988. 154 pages. Cloth, \$20; paper, \$10.

While Jay McInerney, Bret Ellis and their kin fade out after a couple of highly praised but shallow novels, quality fiction continues to be written, and it is a credit to Black Sparrow that they keep publishing the work of Fielding Dawson, the genuine article. The author of the classic *Penny Lane* trilogy and *The Mandalay Dream* is still at it, finding more reasons to think and feel and be alive than one book can easily contain.

Like his previous collection, *Virginia Dare*, *Will She Understand?* mixes stories with collages. Sometimes the graphics illustrate the stories they are coupled with, and sometimes not. In the case of three prose sketches, the collages take on a life of their own, actually contributing to the non-linear universe of the texts. "End of a Dream," "Over There" and "Double Vision — The Rewrite" are on-page pieces printed *en face* with collages which draw their seemingly disparate subjects together into an eerie night-world of fear and uncertainty.

The book collects 32 prose pieces of various kinds; some long, but most of them only two or three pages. For Dawson, the short story is a dense form with no room for extraneous details. Yet one does not feel rushed. He makes the form seem easy, moving from the surface down deep into the psyche of his characters, extracting truth and lies, exposing them to the light and ending there, leaving the reader to sort out the rest.

Dawson has a special talent for writing city stories, and there are several in this collection, the best of which is called, "The Fourth Surprise," which is also a Christmas story. The humor and ego-depreciation of this one is moving, with Dawson alternating between deep psychological analysis of his character's motives and the fast-moving dialogue that has come to characterize the best of his work.

Perhaps the most satisfying stories in the book are his jazz stories, of which there are five. One features an encounter between Miles and Mozart in a downtown bar. In these stories, Dawson communicates the thrill of being in the presence of the great jazzmen, their cool, bop humor and their equally cool stance towards their admiring fans. You can almost hear Miles' solo on "Bye Bye Blackbird" leak out from between the lines of prose, a quality not found even in the best jazz criticism. "The Blue In The Sky" is a reminiscence of a night in East St. Louis when, with two friends, a young soldier goes to a night club to hear Charlie Barnett, Philly Jo Jones, and June Christy one last time before he goes overseas. The young men get tossed out after one of them says something to a thug's girlfriend at the bar. Easily the most poetic of the five jazz stories, Dawson's excitement over the music and its makers is contagious.

The longest story in the book is called, "Kid Stuff — a Novel in Outline with Notes." This is a story about two boys on the baseball team exploring their sexuality — with each other. Or is it a story about their friend Brenda, who saw what they did? Or is it a story about her obsession with what she saw, and how it affected the lives of everyone around her? Or is it a story

about the dangers of becoming a politician after experimenting with homosexuality as a boy? Or, as is the case in many Dawson stories, is it a story about a writer writing such a story? The labyrinthine relationships between the characters and their author seems familiar, a technique used in the *Penny Lane* novels as well as in *Virginia Dare*. It would be easy to skirt the issues raised in the story by using this technique as a distraction, but Dawson uses the writer's doubts to enhance the actions of his characters, lifting the story out of the plot, involving the reader in the making of the story. It remains to be seen whether or not his characters resolve the problems they face, and it takes a lot of courage to leave them alone after a certain point, resisting closure by presenting the tale as an outline or a sketch.

Dawson's style is both urban and down-home at the same time. He is both introspective and speedy. He can polish a story so brightly it shines, and he can use the unfinished sketch to get beyond the bounds of polish, into the raw emotions of circumstance. The way Dawson embraces opposites is surprising and delightful. Read *Will She Understand?* and see what I mean.

— Mitch Highfill

\* \*

## WORD/PLAY

### MEDICINE SHOW'S APRIL CARNIVAL OF THE SPOKEN WORD

#### READINGS AT 8 P.M. \$4

- 10- SUZANNAH LESSARD + MARIE WINN
- 12- CHARLES MARTIN + WADE NEWMAN
- 18- BRUCE BAWER + PHILLIS LEVIN
- 25- GAIL JACKSON + VIJAY SESHADRI

#### STAGINGS AT 8 P.M. SUN AT 7 P.M. \$6 ACTORS, DANCERS, MUSICIANS PERFORM. THE WRITER IS PRESENT. DISCUSSION MAY FOLLOW.

- 14, 15, 16- CORNELIUS EADY + ED VEGA
- 21, 22, 23- PAUL METCALF +  
SUZANNE OSTRO ZAVRIAN
- 26 + 30 (AT 3) DIANE DUNBAR
- 28, 29, 30 ALVIN ENG + SCOTT SOMMER

MEDICINE SHOW 431-9545  
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BET. FRANKLIN + LEONARD)  
PARTIALLY FUNDED BY N.Y.S.C.A.



## WEDNESDAY NIGHTS

### April

**5** ELAINE EQUI is the author of *Accessories* (The Figures) and recently moved to New York City from Chicago. RICHARD FRIEDMAN is a founder/editor of Yellow Press in Chicago and author of the collection of poems, *Physical Culture*.

**12** TIM DLUGOS' books include *Je Suis Ein Americano* and *A Fast Life*. His work will be included in an anthology *Poets for Life: 75 Poets Respond to AIDS* (Crown). JANE DELYNN's new book *Real Estate* is being reprinted by Ballantine Books this fall.

**19** ROSMARIE WALDROP's recent books include *The Reproduction of Profiles* (New Directions) & *shorter american memory* (paradigm press). She is co-publisher of Burning Deck Press. BERNADETTE MAYER is the author of *Memory, Studying Hunger* and a new book, *Sonnets* (Tender Buttons). She teaches at The Poetry Project and The New School for Social Research.

**26** KIMIKO HAHN is the author of *Air Pocket* (Hanging Loose Press) and is the Project Director of Word of Mouth, a multi-cultural arts project. TYRONE WILLIAMS is the author of *Convalescence* and the forthcoming *The Adventures of PI* (Post Aesthetic Press).

### May

**17** LYN HEJINIAN's works include *My Life* and her translations from Russian of Arkadii Dragomoshenko's *Description*. She is an editor of *Poetics Journal* and founder of Tuumba Press. DAVID BROMIGE's *Desire: Selected Poems 1963-1987*, (Black Sparrow) received the 1988 Western States Book Award. RAY DI PALMA's recent book is *The Jukebox of Memnon* (Potes & Poets) and his *Selected Poems 1966-1986* is forthcoming from Sun & Moon.

**24** MICHAEL BROWNSTEIN is the author of nine books of poetry & fiction, including the novel *Country Cousins* and the recent collection of stories, *Music from the Evening of the World*, (Sun & Moon). PHILIP LOPATE's most recent book is *Against Joie de Vivre*, a collection of personal essays. Poseidon/Simon & Schuster is also reissuing his *Being with Children* and *Bachelorhood*.

**31** BOB ROSENTHAL is the author of *Cleaning Up New York* (United Artists) and *Rude Awakenings* (Yellow Press). He is co-administrator of the Committee for International Poetry which recently hosted the Chinese Poetry Festival at MOMA. Fiction writer and playwright JOHNNY STANTON is the author of *Mangled Hands* (Sun and Moon). He is the long-time editor of Siamese Banana Press and ring-leader of the Siamese Banana Gang.

## MONDAY NIGHTS

### April

#### 3 OPEN READING

**10** PHILLIP MAHONEY is a NYC cop and author of a book of poems *Catching Bodies*. His new book, *Supreme*, is due out in March. JANICE JOHNSON is "an avid self-impersonator, has never been completely convinced of her existence, but does an excellent job of faking." She has work in *Cuz* #3.

**17** JACK HIRSCHMAN is the author of numerous books of poetry, including *Lyripol* and *The Bottom Line*, and translations, including *Artaud Anthology* and *Mayakovsky's Electric Iron* (with Victor Erlich). SARAH MENEFEES' first book, *I'm Not Thousandfurs* was just published. She's active in the homeless movement.

**24** REAGAN UPSHAW writes about and deals in art. He is the author of the just-published long poem *On the Cape* (The Press of Events). EDMUND BERRIGAN, age 14, is the author of *Ace of Hearts/Half Past* (1984) and *Dinosaur* (1982). He was born in England and plays guitar.

### May

#### 1 OPEN READING

**8** CARL WATSON just recently moved here from Chicago where he was the cofounder of the poetry newsletter *letter eX* as well as the magazine *b(Rave)*. He has published two books. SHARON MESMER also co-founded *letter eX* as well as the magazine *B City*. She is the author of *Jayne Mansfield's Head*.

**15** NICOLE BURDETTE is a playwright, poet, and actress. She's appeared in two of her own plays, *Punchdrunk* and *Another Time, Another Place* produced by The Naked Angels Company. RICHARD BOES is an actor who has appeared in all of Jim Jarmusch's movies as well as Eileen Myles' play *Feeling Blue, Parts 1, 2 & 3*. He'll be reading from his hefty manuscript, *A 1000 Windows*.

**22** Four Poets Who Have Appeared at the Open Readings This Year: MAGGIE ESTEP, a poet from the Lower East Side, likes cats and some people, and is writing a novel called *Thermonuclear Sweat*. BILL NICHOLAS is a student at NYU. NEIL BERMAN doesn't really have anything to say about himself. WALT MAYFIELD, a former New Orleans newspaperman, is now an Alabama tree farmer and Massachusetts Community College English teacher. He has studied writing with Grace Schulman at the 92nd Street "Y".

**29** ROB FITTERMAN is the author of *Leases* (Periphery Press/Red Ozier) and *The Call* (Northern Lights). He's had poems in *Acts, Sulfur, Paper Air, Origin, & Mudfish*. He's co-coordinator of the Ear Inn reading series. DAVID STERNBACH wrote *swell* (working notes of february, 1987) and is at work on a new book, *Self Help*. He's an editor at Pantheon and also co-coordinator of the reading series at the Ear Inn.







# THE POETRY

St. Mark's Church  
New York, NY 10003

# PROJECT

2nd Ave. & 10th St.  
(212) 674-0910

## April

- 3 Open Reading
- 5 Elaine Equi & Richard Friedman
- 10 Phillip Mahoney & Janice Johnson
- 12 Tim Dlugos & Jane Delynn
- 17 Jack Hirschman & Sarah Menefee
- 19 Rosmarie Waldrop & Bernadette Mayer
- 24 Reagan Upshaw & Edmund Berrigan
- 26 Kimiko Hahn & Tyrone Williams

### Lecture Series

- 16 "The Translator's Apology" with Catherine Washburn (see next page for details) 7 pm

Events begin at 8 pm, admission by contribution of \$5 except where noted. Programs subject to change.

## May

- 1 Open Reading
- 8 Carl Watson & Sharon Mesmer
- 15 Nicole Burdette & Richard Boes
- 17 Lyn Hejinian, Ray Di Palma, David Bromige
- 22 Maggie Estep, Bill Nicholas, Neil Berman & Walt Mayfield
- 24 Michael Brownstein & Philip Lopate
- 29 Robert Fitterman & David Sternbach
- 31 Bob Rosenthal & Johnny Stanton

### The Poetry Project 1989 Symposium

#### 4-7 Poetry for the Next Society

Four days of readings, lectures, discussions and parties with Miguel Algarín, Houston A. Baker, Amiri Baraka, Roberto Bedoya, Yolanda Blanco, Ed Bowes, Charlotte Carter, Daryl Chin, Gregory Corso, Allen Ginsberg, Yuki Hartman, David Henderson, Erica Hunt, Jill Jannows, Hugh Kenner, Kenneth Koch, Roland Legiard-Laura, Joel Lewis, Nathaniel Mackey, Kofi Natambu, Alice Notley, Ron Padgett, Marjorie Perloff, Ed Sanders, Matthew Smith, George Tysh, Anne Waldman, Hannah Weiner, Rita Weisskoff, Philip Whalen, Peter Lamborn Wilson and more. (See next pages for details)

### Lecture Series:

- 21 "Beckett's Prose" with Clark Coolidge  
(see next page for details) 7 pm



## 1989 SYMPOSIUM

### POETRY FOR THE NEXT SOCIETY

#### Thursday May 4

8 pm Reading: Amiri Baraka, Kenneth Koch, Alice Notley, Philip Whalen.

#### Friday May 5

1 pm Panel discussion: *Rendering the Future*. Panelists will include Hannah Weiner, Charlotte Carter, Yuki Hartman, Peter Lamborn Wilson.

3:30 pm Panel discussion: *Language and Television*. Panelists will include Ed Bowes, Daryl Chin, David Henderson, Jill Jannows and Rita Weisskoff.

8 pm 4 Lectures: *Poetry for the Next Society*. Houston A. Baker, Allen Ginsberg, Hugh Kenner and Marjorie Perloff.

#### Saturday May 6

1 pm Panel discussion: *Nicaragua: The Poets' Revolution*. Panelists will include Yolanda Blanco and Roland Legiardi-Laura.

3:30 pm Panel discussion: *Ted Berrigan's Sonnets: A 25th Anniversary Assessment*. Panelists will include Kenneth Koch, Joel Lewis, Ron Padgett, Marjorie Perloff and Philip Whalen.

8 pm Reading: Gregory Corso, Ed Sanders and others.

#### Sunday May 7

1 pm Reading: Nathaniel Mackey, David Henderson and others.

3:30 pm Panel Discussion: *Poetry for the Next Society: Design for Continuing Investigation*. Roberto Bedoya, Erica Hunt, Nathaniel Mackey, George Tysh, and others.

Single events \$10 contribution, \$7 for Poetry Project members.

Symposium passes: \$50, \$25 for Poetry Project members

Sponsors passes: \$100 (includes commemorative poster and 1-year membership in the Poetry Project).

## LECTURE SERIES

Sunday, April 16th, 7 pm: *The Translator's Apology*. Translator and editor CATHERINE WASHBURN will discuss how the translation process mirrors the act of critically reading poetry. She will read from her recent translations, in particular, the work of Paul Celan.

CATHERINE WASHBURN translated *Celan's Last Poems* edited the *20th Century German Poetry* and is at work on her first novel, *The Translator's Apology*.

Sunday, May 21st, 7 pm: *Beckett's Prose*. Poet Clark Coolidge will read a selection of Samuel Beckett's prose, both from published work and private correspondence. Questions and discussion with the audience will follow.

CLARK COOLIDGE is the author of over twenty books including *At Egypt*, *The Crystal Text* and *Solution Passage: Poems 1978-1981*. The catalogue for *Samuel Beckett's Teleplays*, an exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery last fall, included an essay by Coolidge.

## WRITING WORKSHOPS

"Poets Theater Workshop," Tuesdays at 7:30 pm, (April 11th -May 16th). Workshop leader Bob Holman and co-leader, Miguel Algarín, founder of the Nuyorican Poets Cafe will emphasize Shakespeare, Miguel Piñero, the Neighborhood -- Loisada. Poets Theater is defined as a play not only written by a poet, but directed, designed and performed by poets as well. Primarily for poets, performers/actors/visual artists/ musicians are invited to participate. The workshop is a hands-on immersion in the subject with class readings of selected Poets' Theater Texts -- but quickly explodes into acting exercises, directing techniques set construction rehearsal strategies, and ultimately a staged production.

BOB HOLMAN is co-coordinating the series of readings, "Poets in the Bars," in April & May. His latest book is *Panic DJ\*: Performance Text*, a collection of poems, raps and songs

"Exercises and Experiments in Poetry and Prose," taught by Bernadette Mayer, Fridays at 7 pm (through May).

BERNADETTE MAYER is a former Director of The Poetry Project. Her books include *Mutual Aid*, and *Sonnets*.

"Word!: Language, Signification, and Rhythm in New World Writing (Today)," taught by Kofi Natambu, Saturdays at 12 pm (ongoing through May).

KOFI NATAMBU is the editor of *Solid Ground*, a literary magazine of the arts, culture and politics, and the author of a collection of poems, *Intervals*.

\$50 annual registration fee includes membership privileges, and admission to all regularly scheduled events.



*Cultural Affairs in Boston*, John Wieners; Black Sparrow Press, 1989. 207 pages. \$9 paper, \$20 cloth.

There's a pilgrimage at the heart of these poems whose pilgrim is driven by an ethic created in solitude. Like Genet, Wieners moves in a world relentless in its hard disregard for touch and human investment. Wieners is true to his ethic. He's got Whitman's soft hand on the lips of a diminished city. Touch is the Redeemer and Redemption's at the core.

*A man's skin is his own. His majesty. What an honor  
when another human wishes to touch it and deposit  
within it his nature's gifts. Tendernesses of love do*

*not disappear, they build calendars, appointments, notes  
as a book in the October morning to catch the  
sunlight glimmering through a tenement window,  
when two people meet, or three, or four as some record of  
will.*

(from "Nudes")

There's a monastic quality in all of this. "The Queen's rosary once told by the buttons on a sailor's fly..." are the sacraments. In covenant comes ecstasy, but when Love fails its pilgrim, the inspiration turns on the poet unharnessed.

*running water to cover ugly thought  
from poisoned skin and pest-filled brain  
stretched thieves of black rot,  
aiding by impersonated reign.*

(from "Fugitive")

Beatitude comes through the employing eye. He probes his landscape for windows of enchantment, for "the loves / the sunlight wonders on the / windowsill." When the eye fails he applies a unique ear to the line. A few examples: "and soft blows upon our mouths" "I but welcome sleep's kiss" "listening to old music through morning" "page pearl rose lips" "a laugh a warmth at my hip a hand".

Wieners moves his monologue through empty pool halls, old bars and sailor haunts, enormously alone. Every empty doorway speaks, each landscape is alive with his soulful investment. It takes courage to give the world so much of one's self. Well-being is secondary, Love is all; master, destiny, and field of honor. Wieners the busted aristocrat; Scarlet O'Hara in the tenements, the last Romanoff driving a taxi in Miami. "To live outside the law," Dylan said, "you have to be honest." Wieners is honest.

*It's a dangerous racket,  
being regarded as a religious object,  
and it is a racket, if you  
don't admit to it.*

Reign.

("What A Poet Is For")

*Cultural Affairs in Boston* covers the same years as his *Selected Poems*, with two extra years (1956-57) at the beginning, and one (1985) at the end. The *Selected Poems* is the classic

Wieners. If one were to own only one of his books, it would be that one. This present book is the next necessary volume for those still hungry for more. Raymond Foye, poetry's Perkins of the '80s, did another professional job, from what must've been a very difficult ms. Foye hasn't taken an easy waltz yet. We are very lucky to have him.

— James Ruggia

Gee this is a  
great culture you've got here I  
really like the way the  
vultures circle over all  
the buildings.  
What is this then some  
kind of meat product?

Pheromes are  
the poetry of insects.  
Every species has its poetry,  
most of it bad.  
Where was I oh yes I  
remember,  
wretchedly vamping before the  
empty stage of an  
etiolated avant guard.  
That's it, I was  
a cancer or, more likely mold on  
the body of the republic.  
Some tedious recitation of  
old grievances against my  
betters from the  
fecal remains of  
invidious, reptilian psychopaths.

I knew a psychopath once she  
was charming.  
Being with her was like eight years  
of the lowest rate of industrial reinvestment  
in the world.  
Why suffer the  
indignities of reproduction when  
in the rent-free society of the future  
we'll all be friends  
whether you like us or not.  
We needed E.G. Marshall to  
tell us that for Sears.  
It's like Dianetics although  
why the Attorney General of  
The State of New York should favor one  
over the other is  
more than I can say.

— Sal Salasin



## Wiener Roast

You, you wouldn't know love  
if it bit you on the dick

My punch has no force  
for your tiny heart is scaled over  
you bleating armadillo

The large and deliberate unterrered moments  
are my cyclones, tatters to you

I was a fool  
to think I could love a one  
who has to be coaxed and coached  
I was a fool to think  
I'd want a piece of meat  
someone else took a bite of already

Your emotions pay a dime on the dollar  
you're an empty lot too stupid for weeds

Craven white-feather  
flinch you must  
from my telegraphic truth  
fear ties you to the tracks  
and you're flattened by the ghost of such as me

Risks are for fire-eaters  
you, you drink milk and breathe through your nose  
you eat raisins and live at home

— Elinor Nauen

## Tanqueray

We awake together before dawn and the  
alarm.  
Although it is dark,  
I can see your leopard-skin eyes.  
You comment softly on my dragon breath  
as the morning flames char the air.

Visions of French Toast float outside  
the window of your Spartan room.  
Sometimes it brushes the pane,  
causing syrup to run down to the ledge.

I long to go back to my loom  
where I am in the middle of a fertility  
tapestry  
just for you.  
You like the pregnant beetle motif.  
Its symbolism is unique you say.  
We fall silent while watching the sun  
stream in.  
It is green, like a bottle of expensive  
gin.

— Teresa Keefe

## Love

I'm sick of love. OK, I love love.  
I haven't, though, done a very good job  
of being in love or of being loved.  
No doubt my parents are to blame yet  
I love them. Shabby and expectant,  
that's how I've been. Heartless and  
cruel, self-absorbed, possessive.  
A provider of nothing but charm.  
Sometimes some Häagen-Dasz.  
I'm a complete washout of the  
French New Wave, whose movies  
promised my eager generation  
a lifetime in bed talking with  
beautiful, intriguing partners.  
I've lost my sense of humor and  
what sensitivity those movies told  
me was worth suffering for.  
It's gone. I can't find it for looking.  
All a big lie too's the shame of it.  
I regret it all. A youth misspent.  
Hung out with the wrong people,  
clung to all the wrong obsessions,  
adopted a stance to support all  
these cranky excuses for belief.  
And love, love was supposed to  
be the center, the iron girder,  
the permeable doily of a shared  
and trusting exploration.  
Instead, someone I loved called  
me a sexist. Me, who thought women  
were perfect, unquestionably.  
So perfect I wanted to own one.  
In the twilit night of this city's  
dense enchantments and disenchantments,  
perhaps I've learned to recognize  
that assuming is as brainless as  
American consumerism. And this is how  
I will find love. My number at work is

— Greg Masters

## LGA

E motion compresses into F face  
Which is sweetly unreflecting  
Since a death of inner light  
Accelerates some particles  
She wonders what this is about  
She hands on his every word  
He hands on her every word  
F motion expands into G face  
Which is longingly a-news  
Since its life of inner light  
Accelerates some particles  
She wonders aloud  
He wonders asleep

— Ted Greenwald (© 1989)



Below are selected answers to questions 5 through 8 of the *Questionnaire* which appeared in the December/January issue. Selected answers to the first four questions appeared in February/March, and those to the last one, the "self-question-and-answer" will have to wait, due to limitations of "space", until the fall.

*What is the proper attire for poets?*

Loose flowing garments. Cardboard tubes. Rose-petals in strategic spots. Hell, I don't know. Señor Neruda, Mr. Cash, and yours truly prefer basic black. (Anselm Hollo)

Willi-Carlos-Willi Wear. (Greg Masters)

Clothes. (Paul Muolo)

An exquisite corpse. (Victor Bockris)

(Tom Savage)

Flowers and musk; rags weaved in an enormous quilted cloak; naked except for one dangling cigarette; a business suit and bare feet; a grass suit and bird-nest earrings; a white pinafore and a black whip; a dress made of scrabble letters, open at the back; masked falcons perched on both wrists. (Laura Foreman)

The proper attire for poets is, of course, the red gown worn by Bette Davis in *Jezebel*, (that slut!). (Bill Kushner)

Skin and syntax (Tom Beckett)

Poets can wear anything they want. Other day I was going out & didn't comb my hair because poets don't have to comb their hair if they don't want to. (Don Yorty)

The best we can afford, so we don't get too depressed. (Dick Higgins)

I believe poets should dress like Tony Towle, have haircolor like Elinor Nauen & haircuts like Bozo the Clown. Tits like Maggie Dubris. (Maria Mancini)

Sleazy academic, frumpy bohemian, regular guy (union), natty mortician, slyly maniacal Brooks Brothers: a multitude of styles awaits today's discriminating poet. (Paul Violi)

Didn't Allen Ginsberg state the poet stands naked? Or who was it? (Rose Lesniak)

Underpants, and gravity. (Bill Berkson)

Clean clothes for most occasions, dirty ones for a few. (Dick Higgins)

Attar of Roses. (Maria Gitin)

Poets should be ashamed to wear black leather. (Dalton Trumbo)

This question makes me wonder if you couldn't think of anything else to ask, or was it formulated by a Yuppy? (Judith Horam) ["Yup." -Ed.]

*What part does a poet's diet play in his/her work? Do you have any particular eating habits before or during writing?*

The part just below the throat. (Richard Jarboe)

Third clarinet. (Charles North)

Hard, marathon writing bouts fueled only by lots of Coca-Cola & pretzels. (George Liaskos)

No alcohol before. Afterwards, ok. (Paul Muolo)

chips/booze/coffee/up/down/in/out (Kimberly Lyons)



Before the act I try to eat at least a few spiders and hard-boiled thistles; afterwards I like to get drunk. (Charles Haseloff)

(Tom Savage)

Diet is symbolic. I'm 300 pounds, and like staples after writing such as hot dogs and Chinese food. (Mark Yanofsky)

Just now I ate a pumpernickel bagel. The better my health is, the more metaphor I use, I notice. (Sparrow)

Acid and vodka worked nice for a while but I haven't been able to digest much since the Republicans have been in office.  
(Greg Masters)

You are what you eat: if you eat lots of carrots you will write like a carrot. I, myself, eat fried tofu and fried dumplings and my writing clearly reflects this. (Laura Foreman)

Eat right, pay less. (Bill Berkson)

(a) It keeps him/her alive. (b) I never eat immediately before or during writing. (Anselm Hollo)

If you don't eat sushi, I don't know how you can write at all. (Maria Gitin)

If poets are eating good food it means that they are now in a position to do something about homelessness in this city.  
(Dalton Trumbo)

I've found that you can't be creative if you're hungry. (Judith Horam)

Diet affects longevity so if you eat poorly, write fast — ha! — quickly. (Akua Lezli Hope)

A big English breakfast served in a restaurant by a beautiful Lebanese girl who is a sex slave of the owner but who may soon escape. (Victor Bockris)

None. I abstain from eating before and during. (Janet Hamill)

I love writing so what I eat doesn't matter. (Richard Vetere)

Particular eating habits? Oh, you must mean the way I shove handfuls of popcorn in my mouth, and the keys get all greasy and the closer I get to writing about something that matters, the more popcorn I shove into my mouth. (Cheri Fein)

**How has the prevalence of computers/word processors changed poetry?**

Not at all. (Joe Somoza)

Enhanced the delivery system. (Richard Jarboe)

They've made it too easy to edit. (Judith Horam)

Made it more computerized? (George Liaskos)

Jury's out (buying new software). (Charles North)

It has, but I don't want to think about it. (Kimberly Lyons)

Made it easier for mediocre writers to send multiple submissions to many more literary mags. (Morrie Warshawski)

Computers/word processors are slowly fossilizing poetry. This does not mean that fewer poets will emerge as time goes on. Those who do will find an ever-increasing shrinking audience for their work, unless the genre is made to adapt to forms and transmissions the new technologies provide, or simply mastermind the transmissions where they don't presently exist.

(Gerard Malanga 26:xi:88)

I never learned to type well so the advent of cheap, correctable technology has been a blessing. (Akua Lezli Hope)



They have put soul into poetry. (Herbert Elbern)

Computers? I don't go anywhere without my Wang. (Bill Kushner)

(Tom Savage)

Not having to rewrite is great. (Don Yorty)

By making poetry even more of a lost art and extinct option. (Mark Yanofsky)

Cathode screens crucify prose but have no effect on poems, which come from God. (Sparrow)

I'm intimidated by my computer and haven't written a poem on it. It makes editing a lot of fun, though. (Greg Masters)

It's made submissions easier and eliminated typos. It certainly doesn't appear[sic] to have created better poets or poetry. (Alana Sherman)

None. Poets can't write. (Scott Pfaffman, artist)

Less tactile feedback. (See "diet.") (Bill Berkson)

It has gotten a lot of poets in trouble for storing their poems on computer disks at work. (Ellen Carter)

Being computer-illiterate, I'm not sure. (Joanne Seltzer)

I never thought I would ever find myself "on" a computer, but here I am, sitting here, using one to record other people's opinions of it. (Tony Towle)

**How do you feel about using autobiography/"true events" in your work?**

Good. I feel good about it. (Charles North)

Me! Me! More about me!!! (Maria Mancini)

No feeling whatsoever. (Scott Pfaffman)

My poetry is full of the stuff. (George Liaskos)

That's what keeps the work honest. (Joe Somoza)

Spread the manure around. (Paul Muolo)

Terrible. I'm always afraid I'll get arrested for indecent exposure. (Charles Haseloff)

Couldn't imagine any other way to write. (Morrie Warshawski)

(Tom Savage)

I find my own life a source of material I would be a fool not to use. (Richard Vetere)

It's nobody's business. (Richard Jarboe)

I feel that it isn't even a choice. What else is there? Anything imagined is true! (Mark Yanofsky)

It doesn't help friendships. (Greg Masters)

My work is entirely true, though the other day I started a poem at The American Savings Bank then moved to the 14th St. Post Office, and *pretended* I was still in The American Savings Bank. I felt a little guilty about it, but the poem survived duly. (Sparrow)



No one knows the difference, anyway. *(Rose Lesniak)*

Just fine, as long as they don't seem self-important. A little myth comes with the territory. *(Anselm Hollo)*

If I think about something and don't do it can I count that as a true event? *(Perry Souchuk)*

I wish I could use less of it, be more fictitious, but the real world is so stubborn. *(Ellen Carter)*

Do I have a choice? I write from my own experience. *(Joanne Seltzer)*

I always tell the truth as I make it up. *(Maria Gitin)*

It depends on who "you" are. If you are someone whose story has been told a million times...then please don't do it again.  
*(Dalton Trumbo)*

What is truth? *(Cheri Fein)* [We'll consider this question for a future questionnaire of its own. -Ed.]

I use them as a way of generalizing from what I really know. *(Dick Higgins)*

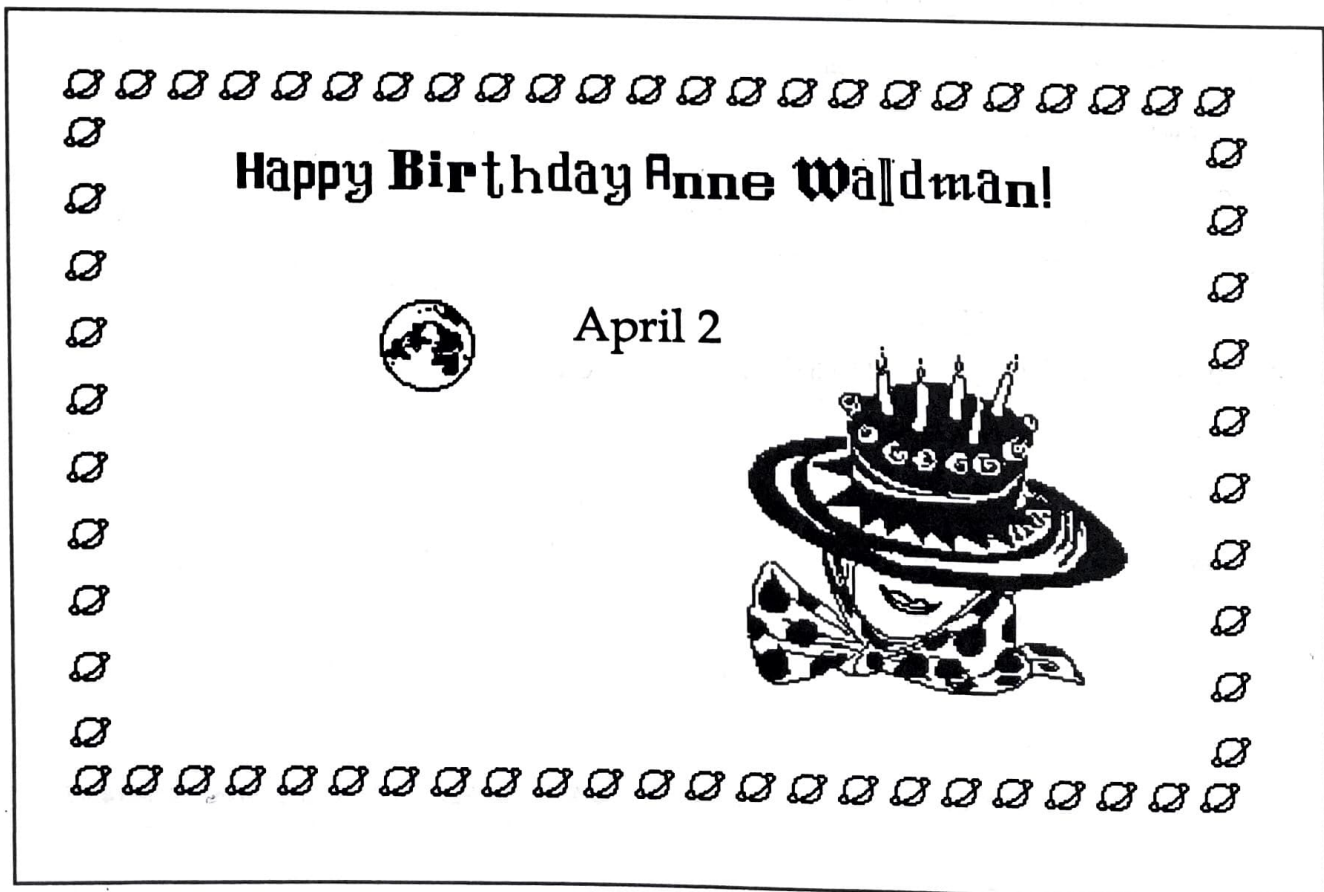
I much prefer to make fiction of the raw materials. *(Janet Hamill)*

I have never been interested in people's fantasies. Just tell me what really happened. *(Victor Bockris)*

"Truth," autobiographical or not, probably has no place in poetry. *(Kimberly Lyons)*

I think we're all entitled to play around with the facts of our lives until we understand them better. *(Tom Beckett)*

"It may be that poetry makes life's nebulous events tangible to me and restores their detail; or conversely, that poetry brings forth the intangible quality of incidents which are all too concrete and circumstantial. Or each on specific occasions, or both all the time." — Frank O'Hara *(Bill Berkson)*





## Books Received

*Forms/Froms*, Dennis Barone; Potes & Poets Press (181 Edgemont Ave. Elmwood, CT 06110), 1988. Upaginated. \$7 paper. "An invitation to reading strategies beyond my instinctive straightforward, A to Z approach. These are exotic strategies..." — Gil Ott

*Music from the Evening of the World*, Michael Brownstein; Sun & Moon, Los Angeles, 1989. 104 pages. \$10.95 paper, \$14.95 cloth. "A short, elegant collection of eight stories — usually about men and women who've withdrawn into worlds of their own making...evocative and mysterious investigations into the nature of reverie or compulsive routine." — The Kirkus Reviews

*Minnie Pearl*, Todd Colby; Evil Clown Publications (c/o Colby, 330 E. 83rd St., Apt. L-E, NYC 10028), 1989. Unpaginated, no price listed.

*A Young Recruit*, Jean Day; Roof Books (303 E. 8th St., NYC 10009), 1988. 58 pages. \$6 paper. "These poems are quiet and intellectually demanding at the same time they are tough and filled with passion." — Susan Howe.

*Welcome to the Barbecue*, Ron Kolm; Low-Tech Press (30-73 47th St., Long Island City, NY 11103), 1989. 48 pages. \$5 paper.

*Memoir*, Honor Moore; Chicory Blue Press (795 East St. North, Goshen, CT 06756), 1988. 76 pages, \$11.95 paper. "As if excavating her life, Honor Moore has uncovered with care the artifacts of the heart, and with deep intelligence explored the fissures in common speech..." — Carolyn Forché

*Pantoum*, Ron Padgett; Teachers & Writers Collaborative (5 Union Sq. W., NYC 10003), 1989. 5 1/4" floppy disk for the Apple II series. \$44.95. Three levels of play leads the user through "the playful and delightful poetic form known as the pantoum".

*The Letters of Ezra Pound to Margaret Anderson: The Little Review Correspondence*. Edited by Thomas L. Scott, Melvin J. Friedman, with Jackson R. Bryer; New Directions, 1988. 384 pages. \$37.50 cloth.

*It A Come*, Michael Smith; City Lights, 1989. 61 pages, \$4.95 paper. "Michael Smith was on the threshold of consolidating a rapidly rising international reputation as a poet when he was murdered by supporters of the Jamaican Labour Party on 17th August, 1983." — Linton Kwesi Johnson

## Announcement

### Talks/Out of Line Spring 1989

Thursdays, 8:00 pm, Admission \$5. April 13: Fiona Templeton. April 27: James Sherry. May 11: Nick Lawrence. Talks/readings given at the Segue Foundation Performance Space, 303 East 8th Street.

## Magazines Received

*Archive Newsletter*, No. 41, Winter 1989. (Univ. of Cal., San Diego, Dept. of Spec. Collections, C-075-S, La Jolla, CA 92093) Includes Clark Coolidge and Maureen Owen.

*La Bella Figura* (Rose Romano, Ed., PO Box 411223, San Francisco, CA 94141). Literary journal devoted to Italian-American women.

*Life of Computer Crime* (Black Bart Poetry Society, PO Box 798, Monte Rio, CA 95462). "late '88 / early '89" This issue promises Tom Clark's home phone number and Andrei Codrescu's secret CIA Swiss bank account number, but damned if we could find either one. Also, it's probably risky to correct the French of a group called the Black Bart Poetry Society, but twice they refer to (as "Criminal of the Month") Carolyn Forché as "Carolyn Forche (accent grave over the e)" when it's an accent *aigu*.

*Paper Air*, Vol 4, no. 2. (PO Box 40034, Philadelphia, PA 19106). \$7. Includes Lyn Hejinian, Thomas McGrath, Bob Perelman, and Ron Silliman.

*Temblor*, Issue Number 8 (Leland Hickman, Ed., 4624 Cahuenga Blvd., #307, N. Hollywood, CA 91602) \$7.50. 178 pages of too many poets to mention. Continues to be an impressive publication.

## Vermont 1966

Summer dress with red stripes  
Wet too from rain

I watch her move slow down the dirt road  
Her hair moving in the wind  
When she reaches the lake  
She turns and waves  
Her hair coming through the sun  
All fingery like shadows

It's a hot day  
The air is hot  
I can't see her breath  
But it feels like steam

Steam in August

I walk back to the cabin  
Waiting for a sign

Summer dress with red stripes

-- Robert Margolis



Important questions like  
How many units did you move, or,  
whose panties are these?  
It's liver pate made from  
my liver, seized fresh by an  
eagle every day and  
rushed to you on ice.  
No, don't thank me.  
I've got the heartbreak of psoriasis and  
fifteen seconds before the  
entire universe shuts down.  
You wouldn't like that,  
true or false.

I'm blind and  
my dog is dead  
BUT I GO ON NONETHELESS!  
My favorite disease is  
kari-kari you  
get it from eating the brains  
of your enemies.  
It's a marketing strategy from  
hell.

— Sal Salasin

#### POEM

I wish I could write like Joe Brainard, but I can't.  
(But that's just the way Joe Brainard writes,  
that sentence! He could have written that  
sentence!)

No, logically, only someone who wasn't Joe  
Brainard could have written that sentence.  
(Joe Brainard doesn't write logically.)  
You mean he could have written that sentence?  
(Easy. Only you wrote it.)  
You mean there's still hope?  
(Sure.)

— Paul Schmidt

#### TANKA

Where the blossoms fail  
Like snow on the dock  
Bring 50,000 in cash

Or you will never see  
Your baby again

— Sluggo

## Five Fine Books from HANGING LOOSE PRESS

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## The Dish Room

The Dish Room  
is a boiling Hell  
Steam, Steam, Smell and Yell.  
Scarey manager comes like a Satan  
Crys when I drop some dishes:  
"What the Hell You doing Now?"  
His crying echoes  
With the sound of Dishes  
Coming on the Beltconveyer, with their garbages and goups  
on them.

Coming, Coming Dishes are Coming!!  
I'm at the end of the Line,  
Got to take the Dishes real quick  
But they're hot, hot like Bullets, pierce my hands, burn my  
skin.

I make myself to think  
About the people of Nicaragua.  
How they suffer, How they die, How they fight desperately  
Against the Invading Power

And I'm fighting against Dishes...maybe desperately  
Dishes are coming.  
I take it, I take it,  
Take it Oops

Crash. Crash. A Bunch of Dishes Break into pieces.  
Another Yell, like an Atomic Bomb  
Blows bunch more Saladbowls into pieces on this floor  
Like our Planet in its end  
Crash and blows, Explosion of Every thing  
and yell, and scream  
and Silence.

Job is over, nothing moves.  
No more Noise, No more Voice, No more Heat of man and  
machine

Like after the end of our lousy planet.  
Huge Vacuum in the space  
and Silence...Silence...  
I hate this Silence.

— Yoshi Yamamoto

\*

### T. Square Sketching

Big black dog named  
Ralph on a rope  
My earlobe is cold & fresh  
What's up, Nunzio? You  
ain't got nothin to run &  
throw?  
blue glitter in the  
sidewalk cracks  
The trees look like parsley  
Today I asked for  
carrots  
Hooker in deep woe

— Ellen Carter

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\*

Dear Mrs Mike

I liked your collection of stories very much. None of my friends are interested in your work so neither am I. I would like to publish one of your works but my financial advisors think you are a poor investment. Everyone thinks you are a jerk. I think you are very intelligent and

— Mike Topp

The four poems printed together on page 16 have a common theme. They were among the many love poems read at the annual St. Valentine's Day Reading at The Poetry Project.



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