

THE POETRY PROJECT NEWSLETTER
No. 82 April 1981
Greg Masters, Editor
St. Mark's Church
2nd Ave. & 10th St. NYC 10003

WEDNESDAY READINGS: at 8 pm, suggested contribution \$3. Hosted by Bernadette Mayer & Bob Holman: April 1 - Steve Carey & Susie Timmons. April 8 - Lyn Hejinian & Robert Grenier. April 15 - Joe Brainard & Michael Palmer. April 22 - Kenneth Koch. April 29 - Michael Scholnick & Simon Schuchat.

MONDAY READING/PERFORMANCE SERIES: at 8 pm, suggested contribution \$1. Hosted by Rochelle Kraut & Bob Rosenthal: April 6 - Open Reading with Short Feature: Mona Fertig, Cathy Ford, Penny Kemp. April 13 - Kirby Malone: Death Valley Daze, Poets Overland Expeditionary Troop, Marshall Reese: Micro Songs. April 20 - Reading by Roberta Gould & Performance by Janet Ziff & Madeleine Keller: The Fine Art of Waitressing. April 27 - Barbara McKay & John Paul.

FREE WRITING WORKSHOPS:

Sundays, 4 pm, in the Parish Hall - "Tropical Sensibilities and the Immediacy of Language" with Jessica Hagedorn.

Fridays, 7:30 pm, at the Third St. Music School - Poetry Workshop with Steve Carey. Special Workshop with Simon Schuchat - Thursday, April 30, 7:30 pm, free, at Third St. Music.

FREE CHILDREN'S POETRY WRITING WORKSHOP: Ages 7-14, Saturdays in April & May, Noon to 1 pm, with Susan Cataldo in the Parish Hall. To apply, kids should send a brief letter to Susan Cataldo, c/o The Poetry Project, telling her their name, address, phone number, & age.

SPECIAL LECTURE - Clifford Burke - Thursday, April 23, 7:30 pm, \$2, at the Third St. Music School (235 East 11th Street).

SPECIAL EVENT- An Exhibition of Basil King's "Paul and Joan"--a 9' x 7' portrait of Paul and Joan Blackburn with 6 preliminary studies for the work. Opening: Tuesday, April 21, 6 to 8 pm. On view Wed-Thurs (Apr. 22-23) 1-5 pm, and Sun, Mon (Apr 26-27) 1-5 pm; Wed, Thurs (Apr 29-30), 1-5 pm. In the Parish Hall.

WBAI, 99.5 FM will begin broadcasting selected current readings taped at The Poetry Project on alternating Saturdays starting April 4 & next on April 18 at 8 pm. The show is being recorded & produced by John Fisk, and Bob Holman & Bernadette Mayer will record new intros. April 4th's show will be Gregory Corso. Other Saturdays at 8 will also feature poetry recordings. And alternating Thursdays are: Live From The Nuyorican Cafe, on E. 3 St, 9:30-11:30, and, don't forget, the 99.5% Perfect Players.

WILLIAM BURROUGHS JR PASSES

William Burroughs Jr. is dead at 33. The author of "Speed" and "Kentucky Ham", and the son of William S. Burroughs, died in a Florida hospital on March 3rd at 6:35 AM from internal hemorrhaging due to a deteriorating condition related to a liver transplant he had 5 years ago.

A brilliant writer, devoted to the life of Jack Kerouac, Billy represented the disenfranchised beatnik and hippie in the 1970s and 1980s. He was the ordinary guy like millions of others around America, who took it seriously and got high on the street and there he was a pathetic derelict, alcoholic, speed-freak, junkie, straight kid who fucked everything up and suffered the real life horrors, while the living heroes like William Burroughs and Allen Ginsberg seemed to transmute the suffering and make it painless for themselves. So Billy is the ordinary hero, who in a strict constructionist sense, stayed on the road. I suppose everyone who knew Billy feels they didn't help him enough. Lay your head on my shoulder.

- John Giorno

BOOKS AND MAGAZINES RECEIVED

When Nobody's Looking by Michael Brownstein: Rocky Ledge Cottage Editions, Wallstreet, Salina Star Route, Boulder, CO 80302, \$2...Summer Sleeper by Sandy Berrigan: Telephone Books, 109 Dunk Rock Road, Guilford, CT 06437, \$2 + .75 postage...The End of the Line by Tom Clark: Little Caesar Press, 3373 Overland Ave #2, LA, CA 90034, \$3 (speculative, angry, heroic poems celebrating the off the road locale & folks of the Rocky Mtn peaks & "soft impeachment of her ways"...from Toothpaste Press, Box 546, West Branch, Iowa 52358: Charms by Jonathan Cott, \$4 and Canciones by Antonio Machado translated by Robert Bly, \$4p, \$30 signed hardcover...

Bingo, ed. Susie Timmons, 630 E. 14 St, NYC 10009, npl (fine 'rag', great poems by Berrigan, Brodey, H. Hughes, Hanson, Mayer, R. Morse, S. Gunning & Cendrars trans. by Padgett...Little Caesar 11, ed. Dennis Cooper, see above for address: (another huge issue which starts off with an hilarious chapter from a collaborative novel by James Schuyler & Tom Carey & ends 234 pages later with Tom Clark's review of Marianne Faithful. In between reviews, interviews with Lally, Clark & I.B. Singer, off the wall rock n roll histories & mucho poems by Myles, Schjeldahl, Dlugos, Waldman, Britton, Hall, Greenwald, Benson, Equi, Malanga, Vega, & on. 30 Writers Pick Their 5 Favorite Records. Uneven but extensive & diverse. Editor & publisher Cooper is the biggest cultural event in LA since Hollywood. A generous \$2...Rocky Ledge 7, ed. Waldman, Bye, see above: Gallup, Hejinian, Scholnick, Whalen, S. Berrigan, R. Brown, Antler, Towle, Gilfillan, Guravich, D. King, Padgett, editors, & interview with Diane Di Prima, \$2...From the Center: A Portfolio, Native American Art & Poetry, Strawberry Press, PO Box 451, Bowling Green Station, NYC 10004: attractive brief collection, \$7.50...

Terry Winch & Doug Lang are contributors to a new album, Celtic Thunder, which Maureen Owen says is fantastic. Available for \$6.50 postpaid from Green Linnet Records, 70 Turner Hill Road, New Canaan, CT 06840

There will be a publication party for Mary Ferrari's new book, The Isle of the Little God, on April 27 from 5-7 at the Gotham Book Mart. The publisher, Kulchur Foundation, cordially invites all readers of the Newsletter to attend. The price of the book is \$3.50p and \$7h.

Dick Higgins will be presenting his new performance work, The Things We Did In Europe, along with percussionist Roger Berard on April 4th at the CMS (Creative Music School) off Route 28A near Woodstock, NY (914) 338-7640 and on May 9 at 224 Centre Street, NYC (212) 431-5127. Or call (914) 758-6488.

It seems that the NYC District Attorney is going to extraordinary lengths to prosecute Amiri Baraka for the charge of resisting arrest when all other charges against him, stemming from a domestic quarrel, have been rejected by the Grand Jury. It's been reported that the prosecution has asked that Baraka be jailed as an "example" for his opposition to the establishment of our society as attested by his writings. His probation report recommended probation not jail yet the DA has searched out & applied technicalities of law irrelevant to the drift of evidence. It appears obvious that Mr. Baraka's freedom is being threatened by the courts, not for the charges on which he was originally brought in, but for his writings & activism, & sentencing him to jail would be horrible proof of racism, censorship & repression. Readers of the NL can help by writing the judge: The Honorable Bernard Fried, Jury Part 1, Criminal Court, 100 Centre Street, NYC, NY 10013. (Letters should be mailed before April 15, 1981, requesting that the judge set aside the sentence.)

"No Trifling With Love" by Alfred de Musset will be presented at Braathen/Gallozy, 76 Duane St, NYC at 7:30 on April 16, 17, 18, 19, & 21-25. The production is directed & produced by Rudy Laurent, asst. director Christine Dreuilhe, and stars George-Therese Dickenson, Bill Rice, James Presley, Zou-zou Lebovice & others.

JUDYISM by Jim Brodey (United Artists, 172 E. 4th St., 9B, New York, New York 10009).
Cover by Martha Diamond. \$3.50p.

I love its cover--mountainous Jim coming over to speak to the people. It's all deep in haze and the hand-writing is primitive. Brodey is passing through very real fields at a dreamy pace--"A relaxed flame flutters through," or "Diamond Sutra candy stain catches explosions of traffic glare" (both from "Listening to Joni Mitchell") and the poet is definitely swimming alone when all of a sudden I wonder, "But doesn't this Brodey guy got any feet?"

Was the thin dark hair in my eggs
Yours? Maybe. Mine? I have no
Dark hairs. Nowhere? Nowhere.

(from "Six Pack")

His poems are like Jack Kerouac on a mountain top thinking about all the great things he'll do when he gets down. But Brodey is also down there doing it and he's thinking about it while he's doing it--"You make me itch, itch, itch"(from "To My Hemorrhoids") --basically taking a songlike reaction to life, really, I guess a song to love but his blooming and precise grimaces describe the whole texture, I mean hemorrhoids and all.

I've always found his "To My Hemorrhoids" pretty disgusting any time I've heard him read it. I had an "American Realism" professor in college who confessed to the class that he had never read Ulysses because he was unable to get past that toilet scene in the first chapter. When Jim Brodey writes a poem the toilet is there in every room as well as the unquenchable romanticism of this guy who is a poet.

Is it light yet? Yes. Daylight? No.
What then? A certain kind of light
That originates in us? Yes. How?
From poems.

(from "Six Pack")

He writes with a rich, disturbing kind of balance--his poems are frequently raunchy enough to ease you into accepting their nearly religious sweetness. Few poets can comfortably speak in such lofty tones. Brodey can actually make you believe it.

See his tributes to musicians: Dewey Redman, John Coltrane, Joni Mitchell. In these poems and also poems directed to other poets: "John & Judy," "Mr. & Mrs. Inspiration," and of course the touching "Myles Beyond" Jim Brodey displays a rare ability to greet other artists on the page, across the street, at the reading--other artists are as real and as likeable as food, and as necessary, I guess to his own work. I don't think there's a touch of claustrophobia in any of these poems. You approach a poem like Unless and you hear Brodey muttering inside his cabin, really on his mountain-top. Confronting loneliness, lust, considering his possibilities--"Get drunk tonight. Unless I stay here writing all night, I'll probably/Go see Paul, and see if he has any new grass to smoke..." Humble, average meanderings of a guy trying to decide what to do with the evening. But, he's already decided and is getting a big laugh out of it. He knows you're out there listening.

- Eileen Myles

THESE LAST AMERICANS

Have no sense of history
They think Ronald Reagan
Is the shit of some celestial goldfish
Floating to the top of the tank

- George Tysh

THE WORLD'S MOST WONDERFUL SINNER

The Dice Cup: Selected Prose Poems of Max Jacob, Edited and with an Introduction by Michael Brownstein (SUN, New York City, 1979). Translated from the French by John Ashbery, David Ball, Michael Brownstein, Ron Padgett, Zack Rogow, and Bill Zavatsky.

On February 24th, 1944, leaving the mass he had just finished serving as an acolyte at the crypt of the basilica of St. Benoit-sur-Loire, Max Jacob was arrested by the Gestapo and taken to a detention camp in Drancy where he died in less than ten days, on March 5th. Born 67 years earlier in Quimper of Jewish parents in the heart of Brittany, his life and work hold the imprint of a childhood and adolescence lived in a region rich in legends and profoundly Catholic.

Although he authored well over forty works of literature in every imaginable style and category, Max Jacob is probably best known for his collection of prose poems entitled Le cornet a des (The Dice Cup). This veritable text book on the prose poem consists of, among other things, prose fragments, captions, whacky aphorisms, superstitions, anecdotes, one page novels, trompes l'oeils, dreams, melodrama, art criticism, and visions.

On October 7th, 1909, in the room on Rue Ravignan which he shared with Picasso, he experienced the presence of Christ. He converted to Catholicism soon afterwards but had to wait more than five years to be baptized. Max Jacob's witty, outrageous personality made the sincerity of his conversion long suspect. It never diminished the lyricism, the verbal juggling, the humor, the refreshing sensibility of his work. Max Jacob's life, times, and work are put into perspective in Michael Brownstein's intelligent and very informative introduction to the Sun selection. In Brownstein's words, Max Jacob's achievement is "the creation of a work owing its captivating existence to a total assimilation of modern day life. He created a world that can be savored in all its complexity and variety to an extent shared by few other long poetic works in this century. Max's work is never didactic, never argues for artistic method or philosophy."

Max Jacob has also supplied his own perspectives to his work. One is a humorous, anecdotal piece written in 1943 in which Picasso is made to say, "You know perfectly well that the imitator's always better than the inventor." The other is the more serious, illuminating "Preface of 1916" in which Max Jacob sets down, in a precise, classical manner, the definitive word on a form that gained popularity more than a century ago among avant garde writers in Paris.

Let's distinguish a work's style from its situation. The style or will creates, that's to say separates. The situation distances, that is, it excites the artistic feeling; one recognizes that a work has style if it gives the sensation of being self-enclosed; one recognizes that it's situated by the little shock that one gets from it or again from the margin which surrounds it, from the special atmosphere where it moves.

Max Jacob combined a totally modern sensibility with a careful 19th Century expertise. As Picasso's roommate during the formative years of a great art movement, and associate of many young artists of that era who would later find their way into the pages of history, he can be considered a founding intelligence behind Cubism. But while most of his friends and their imitators were blessed with fame and fortune, Jacob became a casualty of some "brutish chutzpah" and remained simply an oddity in the realm of French letters, purposely ignored by the likes of Andre Breton and the Surrealists whose "surrealism" pales beside that of this "provincial Jew and cosmopolitan homosexual, penitent Catholic and fervent joker, searing sceptic and mystical visionary".

With the rise of Hitler and the war, his mysticism accrued. The anti-Semitic persecutions, the death of his brother, his sister's arrest and deportation, all these things prepared Max Jacob for his tragic end: "I'll die a martyr".

WAR

At night the suburban boulevards are full of snow; the bandits are soldiers. I am attacked with swords and laughter and stripped clean: I

save myself only to fall into another square. Is this the courtyard of a barracks, or of an inn? So many swords! So many lancers! It's snowing! I'm being pricked by a poison syringe: they want to kill me; a skeleton's head veiled with crepe bites my finger. Dim streetlamps cast the light of my death in the snow.

The poems that allude to war were written around 1909 and could be deemed prophetic. As Jacob says in a note to an earlier edition of Le cornet a des, "they date from a time which ignored universal suffering. I foresaw the facts; I didn't have an inkling of the horror."

Despite the early dates of these works, Max Jacob is as startling and modern as any writer today, if not more so. He had an instinct for the psychological and a penchant for the mystical. He possessed a terrific selfconsciousness that enabled him to expose, in full, glowing colors, every odd aspect of his life, the circumstantial evidence of his sins. As Brownstein puts it, "Max Jacob revealed a fine awareness of the relativity of all perceived existence."

The Sun edition of The Dice Cup is the first book-length selection of Max Jacob's work in English. The list of translators include John Ashbery, Michael Brownstein, and Ron Padgett, and the translations are certainly accurate. Personally, the directness of Jacob's language in some of the translations is blunted by an unimaginative, conventional approach. This, by no means, should diminish the importance of this publishing event. The publication of The Dice Cup has been long awaited. The information it sheds on the prose poem and its genius is like the news that the saucers have landed.

- Pat Nolan

i.m. max jacob

just a little artist, a little motherfucker, caught in the
roiling of time hands grabbed him out of--

believed in weeding, they did, & he was a weed, flowered beyond
& above the greatest french garden:

was plucked, & destroyed, by those hands in black gloves--

regulation, s.s., acronym for schutzstaffel,

protective squadron: protective of what? of another little
artist, little motherfucker, weed,

grew like a killer vine over europe, & was burned off her
surface, not much later.

both of their seeds still circling the planet.

- anselm hollo

CCLM is sponsoring a Conference for Editors & Writers on April 2 & 3. Panels, forums, etc. Contact Lenora Champagne (212) 675-8605 for info.

New open Poetry Reading series at Sylvette, 504 LaGuardia Place, every Thursday at 7:30 run by Orion Isaac Feig. Free.

The Jaime De Angulo Reader, Edited by Bob Callahan (Turtle Island, Berkeley, CA, 1979).

Jaime De Angulo first came to my attention in 1950 when his article on the Pit River Indians of California, "Indians In Overalls", appeared in the Hudson Review. I immediately became enamored of its down-to-earth, realistic style which, for the first time in my experience stripped the American Indian of his Hollywood glamour and made him seem like an ordinary human being, like someone you might meet in the street. Really, a sort of "Jews Without Money" in relation to the group of people nowadays referred to on job applications as "Native Americans". It appeared around the same time, also, as "Invisible Man" and was as effective in destroying a conventional stereotype as Ralph Ellison's work was. It was my good fortune to know in those years a young poet (whose name I deem it wisest not to reveal here) who was an acquaintance of De Angulo himself and who offered to get me the manuscript of his subsequent collection of Indian folk-tales and drawings for my uncle's publishing house (A.A. Wyn). Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, myself, and all of my friends of that period were enormously enthusiastic over that collection, which I worked on in an editorial way as a labor of love, and which was finally published in 1954 as "Indian Tales". It had, incidentally, been obtained by my poet friend with the help of the wife of Ezra Pound.

Bob Callahan's "Jaime De Angulo Reader" includes much previously unknown De Angulo lore, and previously unpublished autobiographical fiction, drawings and poetry. Though the author, whose photograph on the cover of the book is somewhere between Don Quixote and El Cid, may be considered to have only an esoteric reputation, he was esteemed and loved by a wide following of distinguished artists (Robert Duncan, Henry Miller, Blaise Cendrars, and Robinson Jeffers, to name a few).

Much as the Artaud anthology spread the reputation of one little known genius during the '60s, this De Angulo reader may serve a similar function in regard to another romantic eccentric of nearly equal stature. It is a good thing that such works appear before the first half of this century is utterly forgotten. The selection of short poems in this collection called "Coyote's Bones" offers works as beautiful as the best of haiku-art which it most resembles. As a sample (and it is all in this vein)

I a seal lie on the rocks warm in the sun

I remember the Esselen, the Mukne,
the Saklan, all the tribes that lived
From the Sur to San Francisco Bay.

I dive in the water, and my head looks like a man
Swimming to the shore in the dusk.

I like to wander along the bright streets
at night in the crowd.

There is a beautiful alienation here, resplendent in its isolation. In the stories of "Indian Tales", De Angulo made great use of Ovid's device of turning people into animals and animals into people so that the dividing line between them often became blurred, albeit in a very charming way. His work is full of Indian "magic" and Indian wisdom--bits like "to die is to lose one's shadow" and "God is Coyote" (this mischievous, impish, Indian deity---who could be mistaken for a bum---somewhere between the Loki and the Odin of Norse mythology, combining good and bad character traits).

How remote from American pop culture is De Angulo's way of seeing and expressing things.

Artaud, in another way, had been equally fascinated by the Indian (see "Journey To The Land Of The Tarahumaras" and "La Culture Indienne"). However, De Angulo had training in anthropology, worked with Carl Jung and Alred Kroeber and seems to have had a more benign though equally bizarre personality. One thing this reader reveals to me, a shocking thing but believable, is the information that De Angulo, father of two children, passed some time near the end of his life "masquerading as a drag-queen in San Francisco's Chinatown." In America anything can happen!

"Don Gregorio", a novelette in the collection, is about his father, another quixote-esque ridiculous haughty Spaniard, and is set in France near the turn of the century. His works dealing with Spanish themes and Spanish characters fill out the picture of the man and his work but, for me, lack the pungency and appeal of the works dealing with American Indian themes.

All told, though, this is a beautiful and indispensable collection.

- Carl Solomon

COLLABORATION

I attribute my inability to forgive
and never forget
to growing up around Sicilians
like always taking everything personally

Or
walking through a door before opening it
I bump my head several hours later
confused about what really happened
It's so difficult to look forward

This
and Mussolini forcing cod liver oil down
the throats of his prisoners to get them to talk
also has something to do with being Italian

- Susan Cataldo

Erstwhile Charms by Reed Bye (Rocky Ledge Cottage Editions; Wallstreet, Salina Star Route, Boulder, CO, 80302).

This is a very appealing book, the work of a poet interested in the self, the natural world, and the language that holds them together. It displays a gritty tenderness towards all three. Some of the poems are effortless-seeming lyrics dealing with familiar experience: the onset of fall, people going by, a plane ride, small changes in the weather. The modesty of aim and approach takes nothing away from the interest of these poems, which notice, associate and improvise originally and touchingly--as well as, on occasion, humorously and even vitriolically ("Vitriol"). Bye writes denser, more language-oriented poems too; some feature serial questions, archaisms, late 20th-century exclamations. Although I can't come up with a satisfying reason, it seems to me that on the whole, and at this scene change in our whirling poetic theater, the quieter, less "strategic" poems are somehow less familiar, more original, than the others. They seem more essential for the poet. I don't conclude that this makes Reed Bye any less contemporary a writer. He has a sentimental impulse, mostly held in check, and an occasional lame statement jars; mostly, though, the poems are very good, and in "Park," "Twelve-Thirty," "The Echo Of An Interesting Woman," "Eldora," and "Working On A Building," among others, everything comes together. There are two hilarious pieces using homespun dialogue. "Jet Log" closes the book fittingly with a runway touch-down and makes the familiar into pure poetry with no hint of what it takes to do that. Many, as they say, don't have it, try as they may. Reed Bye has it.

- Charles North

Winter is so punk. It's Steel shades shaded tin & these
strung-out Ash trees their anorexic limbs dovetailing
with the light. I often go walking with a second figure
we laugh about how we both should have taken up
painting instead. Once
from an opposite crosswalk We saluted a man with
Fuchsia for hair A thatch the hue of Modern Pussy!
We chortled. Winter is so punk
the sunlight's raw & all the bushes Seem to be
in poor health sometimes you wish
you still knew the people you used to know
better

I was still stirring the noodles
when he threw the broccoli back into the frying pan
& the fight was on! It must be a sign
that the disappointments of life are setting in.
We lolled in the hay til noon intellectually discussing
passion You can't blame short hair for everything!
Remember when the word moonlight meant romance &
now it just means holding down two jobs My
uncle Trap got layed-off the track for five years for
doping horses As a kid I used to hold them for him
Shank in hand I'd ask "How come you give them a shot before
they run?"

to make a constellation he'd say into which
or upon which other constellations fit or are placed
unfitted & are cut by circumstance to fit
other times he'd just say
"vitamins."

- Maureen Owen

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