

THE POETRY PROJECT NEWSLETTER
No. 80 February 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: February 4 - Tom Pickard & Bill Knott. February 11 - Gregory Corso. February 18 - Jana Harris & Ann Rower. February 25 - Steve Benson & Taylor Mead.

MONDAY READING & PERFORMANCE SERIES: at 8 pm, suggested contribution \$1. Hosted by Rochelle Kraut & Bob Rosenthal: February 2 - Open Reading. February 9 - Suzanne McConnell & Bernadette Mayer. February 16 - Andy Clausen & Jim Brodey (introductions by Allen Ginsberg). February 23 - Ted Greenwald & Gary Lenhart.

FREE WRITING WORKSHOPS (held in the Faculty Lounge of the Third St Music School, 235 East 11th Street).

Tuesdays - "Describing NYC" with Michael Brownstein, 7:30 pm.

Fridays - poetry workshop with Steve Carey, 7:30 pm.

SPECIAL WORKSHOP with Steve Benson, "Close Reading", Sunday March 1, 7 pm in the St. Mark's Parish Hall.

POETRY & PHILOSOPHY with Edmund Leites, Associate Professor of Philosophy, Queens College, and Charles Bernstein, Editor, Language magazine, Thursday evenings at 8 pm, February 5, 12, 19 & 26. Topics to be covered include (1) The Problem of Other Minds: The Presentation of Self in Poetry and Philosophy and (2) The Meaning of Stylistic Practises in Contemporary Poetry, Philosophy, and Criticism. These workshops will meet in the St. Mark's Parish Hall every Thursday except February 12, when the workshop will be held at the faculty lounge of the Third Street Music School.

Voting for the two elected members of the Poetry Project Advisory Board took place on Saturday, December 13, 1980. The two new members are Rochelle Kraut and Harris Schiff. (Other members of the current board are Paul Violi, Charles North, Alice Notley, Ed Friedman, Bob Holman and Maureen Owen). The Poetry Project would like to thank all of the above for their work, and, most especially, the outgoing members, Bob Rosenthal and Eileen Myles.

THE BENEFIT FESTIVAL: has been called the most successful ever, and why not? Yes, it was proven: the annual Mammoth can not fill to brim one marathon night but can do two in as well. From George Schneeman's handy poster to Greg Masters' final sweep of the broom, it was everybody, -140 poets! and so: to all performers, participants, aides and abettors -- the Poetry Project extends sincerest thanks and gratitude for getting the New Year to hop to on the right foot so poetically. And apologies to those who couldn't get in -- wait till next year. And wait till next issue for a full report.

To all those readers who have sent us contributions large and small, we thank you. And to all those who haven't we'd like to remind you that \$5 goes to defray rapidly escalating mailing and printing costs. Just thought to mention it.

Film Showing & Concert: Music by Vito Ricci, Films by Steve Fried, Ann Rower, Connie Blitt, Dave Lee. Friday, February 20, PS 122, 1st Ave & 9th St, \$2.50.

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BOOKS & MAGS RECEIVED

Smile by Ted Greenwald: TUUMBA PRESS, 2639 Russell St, Berkeley, CA 94705, \$2 (fairy tale search for the fountain of youth with a talking road & Kafka's bureaucrats)...
Let It Come Down by Paul Bowles: Black Sparrow, \$7.50p, \$14c (reissue novel first published 1952, written in Morocco, India & points between)...Saint Augustine's Pigeon by Evan S. Connell: North Point Press, 850 Talbot Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94706, \$12.50c...
Truth Barriers by Tomas Transtomer, trans. & intro by Robert Bly: Sierra Club Books, 530 Bush St, SF, CA 94108, \$9.95c, \$5.95p...Language of a Small Space by Deirdre Sharrett: Hartmus Press, 23 Lomita Dr., Mill Valley, CA 94941, \$4.50p...the murdered dreams awake by Cathy Ford: Caitlin Press, Box 35550, Stn E, Vancouver, B.C., npl...
Nothing by Jeanne Lance: Her Era Press, available from 1465 Hammersley Ave, Bronx, NY 10469, \$3 ("the sparseness of a 19th century New England winter coupled with the emotional politics of the contemporary business world"- Jana Harris)...Casting for the Cutthroat & Other Poems by Charles Entrkin: Berkeley Poets Wkshp. & Press, available from Book People, 2940 7th St, Berkeley, CA 94710, \$3.95

The World #34, ed. Ann Rower, The Poetry Project, St. Mark's Church, 10th St & 2nd Ave, NYC 10003, \$3: colossal prose issue including Richard Hell, Paul Bowles, Notley, Waldman, Fyman, B. Mayer, Cookie Mueller, Nauen, Myles, Weigel, Steve Fried, Barg, Rubino, DeLynn, Lenny Goldstein, Wright, Ed Friedman, Lesniak, Schiff, Ricci, Nolan, Timmons, much more...Little Light 3, ed. Susan Cataldo: 52 E. 7th St, NYC 10003, \$2 (20 pages by Bob Rosenthal + Weigel, Sanders, Lenhart, Owen, Holman, Nauen, Hughes, Garrison, Laura, Cataldo)...United Artists Twelve, ed. Bernadette Mayer & Lewis Warsh, 172 E. 4th St, #9B, NYC 10009, \$2.50, sub. rate \$8 for 5 issues: Veitch, Rakosi, B. Mayer, Berrigan, Elio Schneeman, Russell Banks, Warsh, Coolidge, Godfrey, Notley, Ginsberg...L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E #13, ed. Charles Bernstein & Bruce Andrews: 464 Amsterdam Ave, NYC 10024 (reviews, essays by Silliman, McCaffery, Bernstein, Ward, B. Mayer, Schjeldahl, S. Howe, much more)...Gallery Works Four, ed. Holland, Lance, Yurechko: 4279 22nd St, SF, CA 94114, \$2.50...The New York Culture Review, ed. D. Stokes, L. Davis: 128 E. 4 St, NYC 10003, \$6 for 6 issues (homey newsletter)...The Nation, ed. V. Navasky: (#8, Fall Books issue)...# Magazine, ed. Wachtel, Lewis, Breger: 337 E. 5th St, NYC 10003, contrib. (Lenhart, Hamill, Elman, G. Succop)

The new John Giorno 'Dial-A-Poem Poets' album is out, Sugar, Alcohol, & Meat & has cuts by a few dozen poets, singers, etc., including: Algarin, Ashbery, Barg, Berrigan, Burroughs, Tom Carey, Fyman, Ginsberg, Holman, Kraut, Myles, Pinero, Padgett, Ricard, P. Smith, Snyder, Violi, Vosnezensky, Waldman. Write to 222 Bowery, NYC 10012 if your book or record store doesn't have it.

Hard Press Series #17, ed. Jeff Wright, 340 E. 11 St, NYC 10003, \$1 for 4 postcards by: Susan Cataldo, Pedro Pietri, Bob Holman/Paul Zinkievich, Dave Morice/Gertrude Stein.

The Little People's Theater Company presents Mother Goose (1:30) & Three Little Pigs (3:00) every Saturday & Sunday, January 17 through April 5 at The Courtyard Playhouse, 39 Grove St, NYC. Music & lyrics by Regina Beck.

Ms. Wanted: Pacific Quarterly Moana (intl. multi-cultural & lingual mag based in New Zealand) seeks submissions from Black writers for special issue of Black Lit, 60s-80s. Critiques on Black writers, essays, interviews, reviews, poetry & prose should be sent to: L.E. Scott, 17 Mahoe St, Eastbourne, Wellington, New Zealand. Deadline is Feb. 28.

Bill Knott will be teaching a poetry workshop at the Y starting February 12. Call 427-6000, ext. 176 for information.

ENOUGH SAID: POEMS 1974-1979 by Philip Whalen (Grey Fox Press, San Francisco, 1980)
\$4.95 p.

Ted Berrigan's line goes:

heads: Philip Whalen
tails: John Ashbery

(that's an old master story)

and it is, because it's true that we have in these and a few other poets still extant some masters of the tongue, the American tongue, at this time, who are writing and somehow always continuing to write the poem that began for us sometime around 1956 and has kept on coming, with the changes the times have made it, ever since. As Philip says at the end of the preface to this newest collection, ENOUGH SAID, a book of 75 pages with poems 1974-79, "I continue, after all; and the consequences." And it does continue because with Philip Whalen as maybe with few other really poets I know about now you get the sense of "it is continuing" the single poem he's writing, which is his disembodied maybe eye running its fingers over the stuff of his daily life, stuff that keeps coming back, then new stuff, stuff out of old centuries, foreign countries, obscure books, old stuff seen in a new light, then there's a trip he goes on (ornamental scroll work on a dresser next to a window giving out onto a seascape with sailboats), and returns to his room and all the objects in his room still are there, only they look different. But how? Maybe the hanger leaps off his clothes pole in the closet. So I don't think you can get too much closer to anyone than you can get to someone in these poems. They are very seamless, almost interchangeable, yet, arranged chronologically, they do make a kind of tight structure taking you some way from point A to point B. Then you get there and want to go back to see how it happened. And you can never tell. Because I think it's pretty mysterious here the way it develops. As Philip says, again in the preface, "Sun heats, wind cools, simultaneously; what am I after?" This is a theme I saw in the book, this what am I after. It reminded me very much of something like what happens in Zen practice (Philip Whalen has been a Zen priest since 1972 or so) when you are always asking "What is it?" or "Who is it?" and things are unfolding. This kind of thinking. He doesn't know what he's after ("What do I want/ What am I really after/ Sometimes a tree answers"), he doesn't know where the poem is going, he is expressing the words as they come, beautifully and perfectly because of his years of experience and almost beyond belief range of reading (I think he's read more than anyone; now he's re-reading everything), but he doesn't know what he's doing, he's completely in the dark. So the poems often have this weird shape to them. You wonder how it could be they ended up that cock-eyed way, but they did, and particularly in this volume they are so quiet (in a Whalen way, if you can apply the word "quiet" to what we have here) that they all of them have an air of formal perfection, while at the same time they seem completely off-handed.

Rodomontade

Did you sleep. Did the same person
wake
"I CAN HEAR SOMEBODY BREATHING."
The day swells and contracts tidally
With the sun.

While not able to go ahead I divide
Spread out from ears east and west parallel
To the wall, sometimes far above and beyond it
I don't care about time, either

Each page of the book splits along the edge
To reveal many thin sheets inside:
Color reproductions, drawings, more and newer messages
Brighter words

And then sometimes the mystery is more stated, the poem comes on pretty direct and profound:

How Many Is Real

Whether we intended it or liked it or wanted it
We are part of a circle that stands beyond life and death
Happening whether we will or no
We can't break it, we are seldom aware of it
And it looks clearest to people beyond its edge.
They are included in it
Whether or not they know

I first found out about this poetry maybe ten years ago when someone gave me a copy of ON BEAR'S HEAD for my birthday. Maybe now we have all digested this writing so much we forgot what a kick and shock it was when first came on it and how much it liberated us, completely, it was so ordinary, so plain, so perfect. And then some of it was so exotic insane full of words sprayed out all over the page like no one'd ever done before or since; someone who knew perfectly well how to write and who moreover was in touch with everyone else who knew perfectly well how to write, writing in ways no one ever had before, ways which were very startling and gave you the idea that writing was what your head made it, not what made your head your head. Philip Whalen has survived all that and the writing is still minute by minute liberating. This new book is remarkable in that it's the first one we've had whose works are written primarily in Zenshinji, or Tassajara, the Zen Monastery in the Los Padres National Forest near Big Sur, where Philip has lived about half of the years since 1974 and now. So if anyone is following what changes this kind of experience will have had on him, this new book will answer some of that. The full moon appeared. Ideal conditions prevail. He continues, after all.

- Norman Fischer

Ron Padgett, poet & past director of The Poetry Project, has written to urge the New York artistic community to do something about the impending abolition of Rent Control. He's written to & supplied us with the following list of city, state & federal officials relevant to the lower east side. Part of his letter, which might serve as a model:

Dear _____

I wish to point out that in all the talk I've heard about the abolition of rent control in New York City, no one has mentioned one very distressing fact: the erosion of rent control has already not only kept promising young artists from moving to New York, it has also driven out some already living here. A Mecca for aspiring artists of all kinds for the past five or six decades, New York became the artistic capital of the entire world. But without the steady influx of young artists that preeminence will wither, and our culture diminish. The abolition of rent control would be the coup de grace.

I assure you that if the landlords of this city are turned loose they will cause a mass exodus of those young (and not-so-young) artists who think that life is something more than making a buck.

Sincerely,

City, State, and Federal Officials directly relevant to the Lower East Side:

1. Governor Hugh Carey
Albany, N.Y.
 2. Mayor Ed Koch
City Hall
New York, N.Y. 10007
 3. Carol Bellamy
President of City Council
City Hall
New York, N.Y. 10007
 4. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan
733 Third Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10017
 5. Senator Al. d'Amato
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515
 6. Congressman Bill Green
137 East 57th
New York, N.Y. 10022
 7. Councilperson Miriam Friedlander
City Council
City Hall
New York, N.Y. 10007
 8. State Senator Manfred Ohrenstein
131 Waverly Place
New York, N.Y. 10011
 9. State Assemblyman William Passannante
131 Waverly Place
New York, N.Y. 10011
 10. Andrew Stein
Manhattan Borough President
Municipal Building, Room 2050
New York, N.Y. 10007
 11. State Assemblyman Sheldon Silver
2 World Trade Center
Room 5489
New York, N.Y. 10047
 12. Thomas Manton, Chairperson
Housing & Building Committee
New York City Council
60-14 Roosevelt Avenue
Woodside, N.Y. 11377
- The League of Women Voters, 817 Broadway, NYC 10003 (677-5050) publishes a booklet with these and other addresses: They Represent You, available at a nominal charge.

I Remain: The Letters of Lew Welch & The Correspondence of His Friends, 2 vols., ed. Donald Allen (Grey Fox Press, Bolinas CA, 1980) \$5.95p.

Charles Olson & Robert Creeley: The Complete Correspondence, vols. 1 & 2, ed. George Butterick (Black Sparrow, 1980) \$20c, \$7.50p.

Robert Creeley, at the workshop he conducted for the Poetry Project November 12, said if he were beginning again he would strive primarily to write "simply, clearly and directly." Lew Welch's work embodies those qualities while remaining vivacious as James Schuyler's, often sparkling like the prose of Madame de Lafayette. He left a handful of poems as inspired as any I know of, & some beautiful fragments. It's exciting to have his letters handy.

The Welch letters (addressed to Gary Snyder, Philip Whalen, Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, Marianne Moore, W.C. Williams, Donald Allen & others, but mostly to his mother, Dr. Dorothy Brownfield Welch) including replies amounts to just over 400 pages. The quality of the writing is erratic. Many of the letters are soused, maudlin, self-pitying, glib. That's the charm of letters; they are intimate. Welch's prose at its most casual aims for always & occasionally attains the unself-conscious immediacy of "Whose kid is that?" He is desperate, resilient, enthusiastic. He maintains standards of serious communication & luxuriates in word play. He usually finds something important to say so he takes care saying it.

It seems the consensus among younger poets of my acquaintance that here is "a classical case of a particular neurosis of those times" (1945-70). That kind of analysis is beyond my competence, but I wonder if that "classical" doesn't testify to an

artful clarity achieved at cost. Certainly Welch suffered the contradictions of American rhetoric & practice. Who can say yes to Conquest & Sham? Who can say no with no regrets? Welch continually removes to wilderness, returns to the city for its version of community. His alcoholism compounds every dilemma. At his best he is imaginative, lucid, funny & sincere. At his most valiant he recites poems to fellow taxi-drivers & salmon fishermen, posts Philip Whalen poems to inspire Montgomery-Ward copywriters. Is it quixotic to expect poems to move a common audience?

At the same workshop Robert Creeley observed that after WW 2 the "tacit hope of the Moderns" was overwhelmed by despair, anxiety and isolation. In this he is confirmed by the letters of a young New Hampshire chicken farmer. Only 23 at the curious beginning of his correspondence with Charles Olson, Creeley had written the very first poems in For Love & a few stories collected in The Gold Diggers. Olson, in the full ripening of his projective verse formulations and composing the poems included in Selected Writings, seeks a company after his break with Ezra Pound. Creeley's response to Olson's query, Who is there?, comes finally to: me for me & you for you. The 300 pages which comprise the first 2 volumes of what should eventually come to 7 or 8 volumes is about 3/4 Creeley. That is true especially of volume 2, where the loss of so many Olson letters is lamentable. For the uninitiated, the difficulties of Creeley's early style is compounded in these letters by a plethora of etceteras, wayward colons, & prematurely quaint jazz jargon (What do you mean, that poem is too much? Olson replies). These letters remind how large a part bebop played in post-war poets' phrasings. Poundian economic motives & Olson's archaism mingle with the insistences of Stendhal, D.H. Lawrence & Dostoevsky, from whom the young Creeley is deriving a way of moving. This correspondence is of course less various than Welch's, & is occupied up front with the poetry biz: how to get work before the eyes, who to push & when to do it. Olson & Creeley are tough characters in that professional sense. They are not squeamish about the politics of literature. The figure of Ezra Pound hovers over their deliberations. Their shorthand moves so fast one is glad they so passionately repeat themselves.

- Gary Lenhart

EVEN SO

The waffles march, even so the ache
in landing relied too heavily on
unsuitable barges, barging around
report, worry to needs, worry
to what instigates what's about.
Decisions decay in the intricate
rubble of motion's dethroning--
fine for the hat, inscrutable
for the bologne. A personal life
wishes unpacking, settle in, finger
the frontpiece. Escape toward
or release to. No sense of
his, or, a modest keeping
in the soap sends the launderer
to the Balkans. Small as snails
and wild as cotton candy--
petty pretense, routine misalliance.
A dusty demeanor on a
recycled platter. Knocks
on the door of deferred opportunity
(mops on the floor of perfumed
importunity). We remain but
not to test the wobbles
and wings that "allow for
the continued coordination of as
many people". "As many lives
as loaves." Projects that had
to leave the project. We're
already started in fact.

- Charles Bernstein

The Temple by Janet Hamill (Telephone Books, Box 672, Old Chelsea Sta., New York, New York 10011, 1980) \$2.50p.

Janet Hamill's poetry takes me to a strange place that is also familiar--an Africa of the imagination--where such well-known assemblings of experience as travelog and day book take on new life as she incorporates them in her verse, while making almost physical contact with the real and the exotic in places like the Hotel of Paris in Rabat. I came away from The Temple feeling that, had Rimbaud so chosen, his own book about Africa might have been very much like Ms. Hamill's in certain essential ways. At least that part of Rimbaud, which seems to exist at or just beyond the fringe of possibility and is only able to build its dwelling place, its temple, by an almost more-than-human intensity and transcendence of limits, is alive and well in this book.

Another entry into her work is through its strange and wonderful odic quality. Almost exactly like Pindar or Hoelderlin, she has created long irregular strophes which apparently depend on no informing principle other than their author's voice, rising and falling in obedience to her African experience. However, there is much more than that in her prosody, for upon closer examination it displays its own slow resonances and rhymes. Some, stubbornly and accurately, remain purely aural, while others, and those perhaps the most interesting, are visual as well.

One very sophisticated example of her counterpointing voice and eye occurs in "Sacrifice":

There's a fire inside the mountain where a puma rests
on the continents of silence. the unfurnished living-
rooms in space. where now a sacrifice takes place, be-
hind a landmass of skeletons. the ice floes creep. long
lines of leopards in the snow. you have to go. to keep
the logs. keep burning in a halestrom. the corpse of a
bat in the night. stills. the windowsills are dirty. and
hope trembles on the legs of a dying, praying mantis
Solstice.

Here the long, almost guttural "s" in such words as "sacrifice", "space", and "landmass" is interrupted and changed to "o-macron (long o)" by "snow". This new tune in turn is expanded and played with in a new series of words like "go", "windowsills" and "hope". Finally both patterns conclude at "Solstice", which is also an important stopping point in terms of the total articulation of the poem. The author's care in these areas, I think, must be noticed as still another example of the rigorous freedom attainable in vers libre, if that point still needs further insisting upon.

Yet still another of her crafts appears in lines like these from "The Watertower":

In ancient China they used to dream of oceans
where the rivers came together
they could close their eyes and see the mountains
in the middle of the lightning
there was something vast and frightening

Here lines two and four function equally well in possible syntax with the line immediately before or after. This is an eminently practical extension of the ancient Greek trope apo koinou ("building from a common point") and, as such, seems very much at home in poetry which, as I've tried to show, is Pindaric in more than just the obvious ways.

But finally The Temple is about the voyaging of a spirit that can hold equally in its steadfast and impassive gaze such absolutes as:

I lift my shirt
to the Snake of All Possible Dreams
and surrender/to fear/and the thorns
in my spine/in the Temple/at 4 A.M.
-- HOTEL RABAT/Sleeping Fit

and:

we read all the books on Pythagoras
then laid them down and fucked till dawn

but this morning. there's nothing but sweat baths and mutilation
before us.

--THE PYRAMID OF THE MUSICIANS

And the Temple itself? According to the title poem it exists as a funhouse on an
imaginary boardwalk located "off the coast of a lunar sea/the last hermetic outposts
of the mind" where:

For fifty cents
I paid the entrance fee
and walked through the corridors
lined with mirrors
feeling like a piece of jelly
clinging to a mold

--THE TEMPLE

Ah: how experience breaks at the same time as it remakes: the refinery of the soul.
The Temple is an impossible, delightful and altogether necessary place to be. Read this
book.

I can't let this review go without praising the really superior production Telephone
Press has provided. With respect to layout and design (especially the red and black
title page) and the wonderfully clean and efficient typeset by Ed Hogan/Aspect Composition,
Telephone has once again convincingly demonstrated that offset printing, which these days
is becoming something of a universal cottage industry, given literature's abandonment by
the self-styled major publishers, can routinely rise in its way to the same quality and
elegance as, say, French publishing in the Thirties regularly attained. At any rate
Telephone has done Janet Hamill, and us, proud.

--Charles Doria

Power and Weakness of Poetry

Speech Delivered by Allen Ginsberg on Oct. 17, 1980, To The Serbian Writers Conference
Held in Belgrade, Hungary.

Power of poetry is in breath we breathe: breath is in english from latin spiritus
or in-"spiration." So power is breath: natural thought, secret thought and big mind
between breaths: in between breaths!

So the power is breath and in between breaths. Weakness: weakness is: human
breathing with lungs. With lungs! So the body of poet is vulnerable, open. Open to
invasion of police, of torture, of intimidation... open to information from outside.
Also, open to feeling from outside.

Therefore the poet is defenceless, has no defence against the pain of being born,
the change of body in ageing.

Defenceless against illness, defenceless against the wars of the world, and
defenceless against death and the destruction of his ambition, and fixation, and
obsession. There is no "solid land" for the poet nor for humanity. This weakness is
intelligence.

This weakness is intelligence coming to him from outside, from outside his own ego.
He hears something else outside his own self -- this is different from the power of the
state or the nation, and also different from the monolithic chauvinism (chauvinisme
monolithique) of the human species itself, which in our century has destroyed many
thousand other species of sentient beings. Poet knows we are in danger of destroying
our own species also.

So the poet's weakness is his power. Expressed on the sound vibrations he sends out on his breath. As: Hum, Hum, Hum or: Aah.

The poet's weakness is his power which he sends on the sound vibrations of his breath. So he is like a radio or television station. All he needs is his own "soft machine", his own body, to broadcast. All he needs to broadcast is his own body as the poet Sappho twenty six hundred years ago broadcast cadences, rhythms, which continue for millenia. Sappho: Ta Ta, Ta Ta, Tatata, Ta Ta, Ta Ta, // Ta Ta, Ta Ta, Tatata, Ta Ta, Ta Ta, // Ta Ta, Ta Ta, Tatata, Ta Ta, Ta Ta, // Tatata, Ta Ta. She broadcast this cadence twenty six hundred years ago and that breath-rhythm has longer life than the civilization that surrounded her.

So, Jean Arthur Rimbaud, William Blake, Walt Whitman, have voices that last longer than their police, than their state, their culture, and their own egos.

So in our time some poets such as Bob Dylan or the Beatles have voiced sound vibrations heard by many generations around the world and these originally are the vibrations of the black blues musicians and poets; so that actually the world has been changed by the most obscure and militarily "weak" culture. The african cultures have altered the thinking process and rhythms of the entire world -- In that sense the poet's weakness, his openness, is his power.

I Submit My Favorite Books

Lorna gave me Jane Eyre for Christmas and quickly suggested after that you must read this. It took me six months to read Jane Eyre but felt rewarded by the experience and afterwards the Wide Sargasso Sea by Jean Rhys was a gas. That was my main relationship recently--in between it was Numbers by John Rechy, Yoga, Health & Reincarnation by Jess Stearn (also a Edgar Cayce specialist) and then Somebody's Darling by Larry McMurtry a newly discovered American artist by whom I have also read other works. Susan loaned me Rita Mae Brown's Plain Brown Wrapper over dinner last Wednesday in Brooklyn. Rita is irritating and bombastic & often very truthful. I hear she lives with a tennis player. Oh, and also Marguerite Duras' The Ravishing of Lol Stein graced my mind for a time. It was a red hardcover edition stolen from an Iowa Library. Vicki's red dots marking off favored passages gave me long moments of questioning pleasure about the young Vicki's thoughts & obsessions. And I liked the characters' names: Lol Stein, Tatiana Karl. I liked the place--Town Beach. However I don't think I liked this book so much. It was plodding and it thinks too much & it wearied me. Good night.

- Eileen Myles

Ended up one night at the Squat Theater Benefit at the Rock Lounge on West Broadway & before finding myself on Canal St. at 4 A.M. saw some acts which I thought I'd plug. Two regulars of the Squat ensemble, Eva Buchmiller & Jossi Gutmann, were what made me get out my notebook: Jossi walked on stage & began playing rich skeletal cadenzas & arpeggios on his violoncello like Bach making chocolate and Eva came on with a heavy overcoat, set fire to a sleeve & with her Dietrich scowl serenaded us feeding us dreams while her sleeve flamed up. Not for the sedate. The Lounge Lizards were fun, 50's type jazz instrumentals which made me want to be Bar Mitzvahed again so they could play the reception. They're all primo musicians but maybe they're locked in a style. Luther Thomas's band wasn't tight enough for a funk band tho they had the early crowd about to dance. Marilyn & the Movie Stars seemed like the product of another drunken evening, they might have had hairy chests, didn't stick around to find out. Rockercise, a dance ensemble, are the best thing since "Hey let's go with the Upbeat Show."

telephone booth number 9054

woke up this morning
feeling excellent,
picked up the telephone
dialed the number of
my equal opportunity employer
to inform him I will not
be into work today
"Are you feeling sick?"
the boss asked me
"No Sir" I replied:
I am feeling too good
to report to work today,
if I feel sick tomorrow
I will come in early

- Pedro Pietri

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

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