

THE POETRY PROJECT NEWSLETTER

April 1983

#98

75¢

Free at The Poetry Project

some

some thing falls
to some floor.

someone remembers,
makes much of it.

the other one says,
i had no idea.

—Anselm Hollo

April Readings, hosted by Bob Holman, Rochelle Kraut & Bernadette Mayer. 8 PM. Suggested contribution.

April 4 - **Open Reading**
April 6 - **John Ceely & David Henderson**
April 11 - **Film Night with Ann Rower, Sandy Moore, Jason Hwang, Andrea Kirsch, Jacob Burckhardt, Connie Blitt, John Heyn & others**
April 13 - **Lynne Tillman & Edmund White**
April 18 - **Philip Whalen**
April 20 - **Bob Perelman & Jeff Wright**
April 25 - **Steve Levine & Molly Russakoff**
April 27 - **Marty LeBare & Joel Lewis**

Lecture: "Writing the Biography of William Carlos Williams" by **Paul Mariani**. Thursday, April 14th, 8 PM, cont.

Informal talk with **Philip Whalen** on Tuesday, April 19th at 8:30 PM.

Free Writing Workshops: Tuesdays at 7:30 PM with **John Godfrey**. Fridays at 8 PM with **Jack Collom**. Saturdays, a tri-lingual workshop with **Frances Chung** at 1 PM and at 10 AM a children's workshop with **Steve Levine**. **Yoshiko Chuma's** 'Movement Workshop for Poet' continues on Sundays at 2-4 PM till April 3.

'Readings From The Poetry Project' continues on WBAI 99.5 FM April 1, 15 & 29 at 8:30 PM, produced by **John Fisk**.

BOOKS RECEIVED

Code Poems by Hannah Weiner (Open Books, Station Hill, Barrytown NY 12507, \$3.50)...**At Fifty: a poem** by Joel Oppenheimer (Saint Andrew's Press, Laurinburg, NC \$9.95)...**Dear Carolyn: letters to Carolyn Cassady** by Jack Kerouac (ed. Arthur & Kit Knight, PO Box 439, California PA 15419 \$5)...**New York Notes** by Stephen Ratcliffe (Tom-bouctou Books, Box 265, Bolina CA 94924 \$3)...**Mass Psychosis** by Jeanne Lance (Jungle Garden Press, 47 Oak Rd, Fairfax CA 94930 \$7.50)...**The Art of Hunger** by Paul Auster (The Menard Press, London, available here through Small Press Dist. \$7)...**Elements of a Coffee Service** by Robert Gluck (Four Seasons Foundation, PO Box 31411, SF CA 94131 \$5.95)...**Journey Into Barbary** by Wyndham Lewis (Black Sparrow, CA \$12.50)...**Step Work** by Lynne Dreyer (TUUMBA PRESS, Berkeley CA \$3)...**Selected Poems** by D.M. Thomas (Viking, NYC \$15.75c \$7.95p also **A Dove in Santiago: A novella in Verse** by Yevgeny Yevtushenko, trans. D.M. Thomas, \$13.50)...**The Collected Poems of Lionel Johnson** (Garland Publishing Co, NYC \$60)...**Resuming Green: Selected Poems 1965-1982** by Roland Flint (Dial Press, NYC \$12.95c \$6.95p)...and two from F.A. Net-telback: **No Place East** (Rough Life Press, 1306 W 58 St, LA CA 90037 \$3) and **Bug Death** (Alcatraz Editions, 354 Hoover Rd, Santa Cruz, CA 95065 \$5)...

MAGAZINES, ETC. RECEIVED

Tangerine 3, ed. Tom Weigel (515 E6 St, #C8, NYC 10009 \$3 - Greenwald, Owen, Collom, Waldman, Brodey, Malanga, Goldstein...)**Parnassus**, ed. Herbert Leibowitz (Spring/Summer 1982 \$7 reviews galore)...**13th Moon**, eds. Ellen Marie Bissert, Marilyn Hacker (Volume VI, Nos. 1 & 2 - Piercy, Moore, Coleman, Derricotte, Fay plus art, reviews etc)...**Vanishing Cab**, ed. Jerry Estrin (827 Pacific St Box 101 SF CA 94133 \$15/3 issues - Seaton, Hunt, Roche, Moriarity, Robinson, Harryman, Pelaquier, Price, Ward, Estrin, Andrews)...**New Departures 15**, ed. Michael Horovitz (Piedmont, Bisley, Stroud, Glos GL6 7BU, England \$4 - packed issue: Snyder, Acker, Gascoyne, Fainlight, Neville much more plus lots of art)...**Barney 3**, ed. Jack Skelley (1140 1/2 Nowita Pl, Venice CA 90291 \$5/\$18 for 4 - Cooper, Equi, Gerstler, Holman, Schjeldahl, Spera, Clark, Sala...)**3 issues of The Passaic Review** came in, eds. Lorraine & Richard Quatrone (Forstmann Library, 195 Gregory Ave, Passaic NJ 07055 \$3 usually - Rixon, Boss, Holland, Klein, Van Houten, Hillringhouse, Lewis, Ginsberg, Ignatow...)**2 issues of Longshot**, eds. Eliot Katz, Dan Shot (142 Easton Ave, New Brunswick NJ 08901 \$3 ea - Hell, Ginsberg, Timmons, Ostriker, Clausen, Ruggia, Myles, Carroll, Baraka, Burroughs, Bremser plus much more)...**Magic Changes**, ed. John Sennett (553 W. Oakdale #317, Chicago IL 60657 \$5/\$12 for 3 - 'Time' issue: Bullen, Woods, Martin, Amabile...)**Life of Crime**, ed. Steven LaVoie, Pat Nolan (3218 Kingsland, Oakland CA 94619 \$8.20 - has got it all & may require lunar medicines; fresh as a slap in the office)...**Exquisite Corpse**, eds. Andrei Codrescu, Lawrence Markert (Eng. Dept, U of Baltimore, Charles St at Mt. Royal Ave, Balt, MD 21201 \$10 year/monthly - things are happening out there; articles, reviews, poems by Hilton, Marin, Doskow, Reverdy, Castle, Jacqueline, Kamenetz, Weaver, Marshall...)**Moody Street Irregulars**, a Jack Kerouac Newsletter, ed. Joy Walsh (PO Box 157, Clarence Ctr, NY 14032 \$5/4 issues - this fine issue features John Clellon Holmes & articles on other 'beats')...**Teachers & Writers** Vol. 14, No. 3, ed. Ron Padgett (84 5th Ave, NYC 10011 \$10/5 issues - this issue features articles by Willis, Harway Lopate, plus some poems)

Amnesia

for Ted Greenwald

Temperature four thousand
degrees below

Frontiers of lovely
black ice

Minutes cracking off

Small things
want to leave

Antique white fashion
the momentum of bliss

Midnight the horizon
cloud of brittle shine

—Terence Winch

THE WORLD RECORD VOL. 1&2

Ashbery Baraka Berrigan Carey Clark Cool
lidge Creeley Denby Ginsberg Hollo Koch
Kyger Lenhart Levine Lowell Mayer Myl
es Notley Owen Padgett Prince Rakosi Rez
nikoff Sanders Waldman + 25 more 2
EPs \$10 + \$2.50

THE POETRY PROJECT
10th Street & 2nd Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10003

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In his "Essay About Experimental Films That Ended Up As An Essay About New Zealand", featured in the debut issue of PARALLAX, Roger Horrocks sums up the heroics involved in the founding of that journal: "These essays may try to say too much, they may seem 'strained' or 'doctrinaire' to some readers, but they have a great deal of energy behind them, which is the energy of a change taking place at a deep level and is just starting to crack the surface. The essays are an attempt to see it more clearly, to trace the lines of stress..."

New Zealand is a difficult place to be an artist. Its mainstream culture is gentler than ours, but more tyrannical: 'mainstream' is hardly an operative word, because the New Zealand avant-garde has had so little credibility that for most people, "mainstream" means "universal". This is compounded by a tendency to talk about works as being "up to standard" or "professional" (i.e., comparable to works done someplace else), inhibiting much reflection on what it is that people there actually *do*.

An art student did an independent project in the early '70's which involved walking down the main street of Auckland on his hands and knees barking like a dog. This received national coverage. Editorials suggested he be put under psychiatric observation and the school's funding be restricted. New Zealand must be the last country in the western world with a bourgeoisie that cares enough to be shocked.

This extreme conservatism is in part derived from aesthetic choices made by some very progressive and articulate artists during the 1930's and '40's. As Horrocks describes the birth of New Zealand realism, "...Culture was so thin on the ground in those days that the question was where to start. The answer was: to attempt to bring a general audience into existence by taking the local way of life as a subject." New Zealand is a small enough country (3 million people) to prohibit much alienation from the country's life and thought. As violently as you might disagree with people, you either know them personally or think that you do. Artists in New Zealand have been scathing about their country's pull towards mediocrity, but few have been able to just exist apart from it. In New Zealand's classic realist literature, it is the nation rather than the artist who is celebrated; even now, when the rhetoric of social democracy is so far removed from the country's reality, there's still a pull towards the big "We". Artists who have ignored, or renounced, or tried to re-define this have had big trouble. When Paul Maunder's company, Amamus, began making theatre pieces which applied the psycho-physical performance techniques developed by Grotowski's Polish Theatre Lab to New Zealand social history and experience, critics and most audiences dismissed the work as "self-indulgent". Geoff Stevens' and Phillip Dadson's brilliant film, "Test Pictures", was criticized for its listless, microscopic examination of a relationship by an audience that loves Ingmar Bergman.

PARALLAX's first issue features unpublished writings of the avant-garde visual artist Len Lye. These letters and writings are fascinating in themselves, but published in PARALLAX, they have an added edge: Lye was a New Zealander who left the country as a young man, knowing that he would have been unable to pursue his work in New Zealand at that time.

Given their desire to establish some sort of contemporary 'tradition' in New Zealand, around which people can comfortably work, PARALLAX's fascination with New York as a source of cultural legitimacy is both understandable and an-

noying. Roger Horrocks' essay accurately flips back and forth between New Zealand and the rest of the world, assessing without obsessing over the importance of outside influences. But attempts to define "post-modernism" for New Zealanders in terms of American art history, seems superfluous and misdirected. Wystan Curnow's essay, "Post Modernism in Poetry and the Visual Arts", breathlessly jumbles notes, observations and manifestoes taken from the last 25 years or so of American art. Shying away from narrative, the essay is an assemblage of quotations arranged to imply some kind of cause-and-effect geneology. Misleadingly, Curnow imposes an academic obsession with chronology upon the artists whom he quotes. For example:

"The post-modernist says—he will cite Heisenberg, Whitehead, Merleau-Ponty—there is no choice, a man *is* inside his content. "All observations are participations". (Richard Schnechner). Hence Olson's assertion: 'Art does not seek to describe but to enact'"

Why imply that artists often use philosophical texts to legitimize their choices? Why is Schechner's thought about the responsibility that comes with watching pushed to inform Olson's thought about action? Curnow seems uncomfortable with the random development and passive co-existence which is part of the artform he is trying to define. This contradiction occurs often enough in art criticism but it's boring and not very pertinent to PARALLAX's purpose, which seems to be more about what happens to these forms when they're practiced in New Zealand by New Zealand artists.

I loved Tony Green's "Auckland-Wellington Tapes", a moving observation of places, people and things that keeps being interrupted and informed by the writer's thinking about art and art history (Green is an art historian). "Tapes" is written in a discursive style familiar to us, "the graph of a person's mind", as Philip Whalen called it. It's a style not often used in New Zealand, and is so pleasurable when used controlledly by someone with an interesting mind:

"I don't really know what time it is but the shops are still open in Lower Hutt the High Street is wider than Takapuna longer and the shops are bigger I had a steak medium rare about an eighth of a pound of it in ZORBA'S STEAK BAR Lower Hutt I haven't turned the top light on in the motel room it's kind of nice and gloomily dimly seen over there a girl with green face by Trechikov red lips yellow dress oriental eyes lots of dark hair..."

I know the places that he's writing about, and they're dreary, but I've never known them so actively perceived.

Not all of the original New Zealand work in PARALLAX is as good. But something about the energy of this venture makes that which might otherwise seem truly terrible, encouraging. In "Books Received", a letter is quoted from the poet Rodney Barnett which accompanied his book: "The principles of synchronicity and diachronicity are indistinguishable from our perception of them. Time cuts through place and vice versa. New Zealand is consciousness." This is an audacious thing for someone to say in New Zealand. I want to believe that for this person it's really true, that "New Zealand is consciousness."

—Chris Kraus

The Sonnets by Ted Berrigan (United Artists, 172 E. 4 St, 9B, NYC 10003, \$5)

Innocence gleaned, annealed!

anneal—to free from internal stress by heating and gradually cooling. 2. to toughen or temper, as the mind. 3. to fuse colors onto by heating. To kindle, to burn, akin to fire.

“You know, I find this book incredibly sad,” I said, waving my copy of *The Sonnets*. “I always did,” he replied, “but I thought it was me.” I walked around conversing with Berrigan one day and it was the perfect day for it. Universal Limited Art Editions was doing a show of their first ten years. I saw “Stones”, the O’Hara/Rivers collaboration. “Poetry belongs to Me, Larry, *Painting* to you...” The flipness of O’Hara, Berrigan’s light-footed hero. I like to beat people up. Heavy. I never beat people up. Oh, he was just kidding. I know, I know, it’s a variation on a line.

“See, See, and this one with Williams in it, you take the middle lines, yeah, those two, and then you read the ones in back of them, yeah, those two, and it’s really a regular poem, it’s very straight-forward,” I was told proudly. This is a few years ago and someone *very* informed was just getting warmed up to telling me where every line in *The Sonnets* comes

from. “*Some* I was told,” he boyishly admitted, “but others I found!” “He stole all those lines,” someone else informed. That really changed my life. Now when I see someone’s library the first thing I want to know is “Did you buy these?”

It’s interesting if you compare O’Hara’s vividness, his being-in-life, to Berrigan’s “Now I rage in a blue shirt at a brown desk/ in a bright room.” It’s like Buck Mulligan’s tower in *Ulysses*. First I read the book, then I saw the movie, then I went to Ireland and saw the tower. When I look back on it it’s the movie I’m seeing. Andre Bazin calls movies a plastic art like a death mask and peculiarly that’s the kind of art I think *The Sonnets* are which is why they strike one as so oddly sad. I think I was thinking when I was ahead. They’re monuments written by a young man walking through the graveyard of literature. And if you talk to Ted Berrigan about *The Sonnets* today you’ll find that unlike talking to most poets about something they wrote 20 years ago you’ll find yourself talking about something strangely alive that he was certainly there for like when Boston beat New York three to one. *The Sonnets* in reading and re-reading always possess that terrific smack of impersonality, absence of passion, principles, love...*Ouch*, who wrote that?!

—Eileen Myles

FROM HENRY JAMES

“Don’t forget it.”

“What?”

“Don’t forget anything anyone ever said.”

Impossible, impossible -

If anyone ever asked me how much of this was true of course I’d have to say I don’t believe any of it. I met my friend’s husband’s girlfriend the other night, she was young and anxious to be liked, he was defensive and nervous. I remembered what it was like going out with older guys, how you eventually realize that they’re using your youth the same way that you’re using their age, i.e., to torture themselves.

“I want a happiness without a hole ... the bowl with all the happiness ... The bowl without the crack.”

What am I going to do, what I want, political theatre?

I have no interest in the river this winter, only in people, I don’t think I like them.

—Chris Kraus

HEAR, HEAR

The Z-D Generation by Edward Sanders (Station Hill Press, Barrytown, NY 12507)

Edward Sanders' *The Z-D Generation* is a manifesto that picks up the same theme pursued in his 1976 *Investigative Poetry* from City Lights, but handled with a less dogmatic more straightforward poetic approach. It is still an exhortation to investigate and rediscover truths that have been inadvertently lost or suppressed by the secret police machinery throughout the ages. It asks the reader to include political consciousness on his or her list of things to address in leading the righteous life. Sanders is dealing mainly with the larger world-wide propensity for secret police apparatus paranoia. There are those who will say that it doesn't exist. Sanders says investigate, uncover the dark plotting secrets of anonymous power grubs. Easy too, because the scorpion breaths are addicted to recording their self-righteous deeds of murder and cruelty. This is the *data* that a ZDist will root out like a hog will truffles, data that will dissipate the warrior caste and pin its skin to the dusty bricks in the museum of the history of man's cruelty to man.

The "Z" stands for Emile Zola, the "D" for Denis Diderot, two examples of fearless investigativeness in the cause of freedom of information. Zola dedicated the last of his life to the exoneration of a French military officer accused of treason, an acquittal that came only after Zola's death. Diderot was the compiler of an enormous 18th Century Encyclopedia of world ideas and data which took twenty years to complete. Under this banner, the ZD Generation is concerned "with the PRECISE, IMMEDIATE/application of DATA/of *Historical Reality*, of *Encyclopedic Wisdom*". A 10,000 strong ZD Generation "will fashion/a complex/of J'Accuses and Encyclopedic Paradigms/which overcome/the taunts & onslaughts/of the War Caste." Areas open for investigation by ZD's would be:

1. crack the JFK/MLK/RFK cases
2. fashion
the Encyclopedia of 20th Century War Criminals
3. Municipal Power, Low Cost Housing, Food Co-ops,
the crushing of the rip-off will of the phone
company, universal health care, the end to nukes,
the triumph of Solar Power, and penny-a-page
photocopying for all!

ZD's have to keep the three adverbs in mind: "Ceaselessly, Relentlessly, Ethically." If anyone is a living example of these principles, it is most certainly Edward Sanders, poet and visionary. In the barest, but still electrifying language, broken up into easily digested common denominators, he urges the reader to "Interrogate the Abyss!", "Keep the issues alive!", and "Open a file/on your favorite right wing nut/today!" "Eleutherarchy" is the watch word.

Sanders is a modern day, acid-blitzed Thoreau whose talent has always been monumental. He is the Doctor Strange of bards, one of the more unique poets writing today, and one who has successfully integrated an enlightened political consciousness with an effective poetic. He is also an example of the poet committed to his obsession. His tenacity is admirable, essential, and it is exactly the quality missing from what passes for "modern" poetry. In *The Z-D Generation*, Sanders speaks the unpronounceable anarchy of the century, not an old fashioned sabotage, but a release, a give away. Despite the heady material and its almost sci-fi prophetic intensity, he keeps his perspective and, most importantly, his sense of humor. Although his work is sometimes marked by the dust elbows of ancient alchemists take nothing Edward Sanders has to say with a grain of salt.

—Pat Nolan

The Oxford Shakespeare: Henry V, The Taming of the Shrew, Troilus and Cressida (Oxford University Press, \$19.95 ea.)

In this new edition of Shakespeare's plays, each editor retains an independent critical viewpoint. Gary Taylor, for instance, sees "Henry V" as "a study of human greatness," suggesting that in his cold-blooded brilliance as a field general Prince Hal prefigures the character of Shakespeare himself, equally "a man in an intensely public profession who nevertheless remains deeply private." Conversely, in his introductory essay on "Troilus and Cressida," Kenneth Muir convincingly refutes standard autobiographical interpretations, arguing against the view that "Shakespeare's plays are closely related to his life," and proposing the play not as a statement of personal disillusionment but as hard-eyed "realism" on the complex subjects of war and sex.

"Henry V" and "Troilus," both plays set on the battlefield, are two of the first trio of releases in Oxford's new Shakespeare series. The third, "The Taming of the Shrew," is a play about war between men and women; Shakespeare's "position" in this dispute makes the play (a sort of Elizabethan "Stepford Wives") a more difficult one for modern audiences to take seriously, a matter addressed by H.J. Oliver in his preface. Oliver encourages taking "Shrew" as a superbly written farce, to be enjoyed for its fun—while admitting that, however ironically, Shakespeare's very skill in creating character makes the play unsettling on terms other than the farcical: the problem, Oliver suggests, of a young dramatist mingling genres that don't combine.

Each of these new editions contains thoughtful, thoroughgoing notes and commentary, glosses, paraphrases, textual excursions, and exhaustive discussion of the stage history and stage problems of the respective plays. In keeping with the primary aim of the series—to provide a new Shakespeare for the theatre—the texts are presented in modernized spelling, with special attention given to restoration of full original stage directions.

The introductory essays not only contain a collation of previous critical thought but make some interesting new contributions. Taylor, the associate editor of the series, is particularly good at noting contemporary dramatic values at work in "Henry V"—comparing Nim, for instance, to a Pinter character, and finding a "Dickensian variety of life" in Shakespeare's Eastcheap commoners. Taylor's voluminous annotation of the hilarious double entendres in the work's pidgin-French linguistic by-play is equally admirable—given the inevitable proviso that half page notes are anyway a necessary evil to the general reader, and may, as Samuel Johnson said, clear up particular passages, but at the cost of leaving the mind "refrigerated by interruption."

Even more impressive, perhaps, is Muir's lucid account of the world of "Troilus" as a very contemporary-seeming "fallen" one, anticipating the "black comedy" of the post-World War I modern age (which, he points out, was responsible for the play's revival). Editor Muir has the ability to "go straight to Shakespeare's meaning, while the philological and antiquarian commentators kill one another in the dark," something a turn-of-the-century scholar once attributed to the greatest of early editors, Dr. Johnson.

Fourteen more volumes in the Oxford series are now in preparation; if the first three are any evidence, this venture promises to endow us with a comprehensive actor's and reader's Shakespeare that will shed light—and give pleasure—for generations.

—Tom Clark

4 Reviews by Carl Solomon

Beat Museum - Bardo Hotel, Chapter 2 by Brion Gysin (Inkblot Publications, Am Here Press, Santa Barbara CA, npl)

This surrealist novel by Brion Gysin, long-time collaborator with William Burroughs during the latter's "cut-up" period, is the first time I have seen an independent work by him apart from Burroughs. Burroughs, however, does appear in the novel as a character, "Bill Buroon". There is some hint in Gysin's style of his possible influence on Burrough's surrealist post-*Junkie* style. Gysin's use of surrealist imagery in dealing with a similar subject matter seems better controlled than that found in late Burroughs' novels. The novel, detailing its protagonist, Ion's, picaresque adventures in existential Paris, evokes memories of both *Gargantua and Pantagruel* and Nathaniel West's *A Cool Million*. Sort of an amalgam of these two influences. Quite amusing also is Ion's contempt for Camus, contempt for both Camus' last effort (*The Fall*) and for the manner of his final demise. It is very funny and never slows down. Novelette-length, it is a good entertainment.

A Table With People, poems by Marc Kaminsky (Sun Press, NYC \$6)

It is convenient to forget about the humanity of Jews when you read the ravings of certain celebrated literary lunatics (do you hear me, Jack Kerouac, do you hear me, Antonin Artaud, do you hear me, Louis-Ferdinand Celine?) It is impossible to forget about the humanity of Jews, and the ordinary beauty of their life-death cycle when you read these poems by Marc Kaminsky. His book is divided into 3 sections: poems about the city, the best of which is one called "American Men" about the windshield washing bums in the Bowery area; poems about his broken marriage which say something to every man who has ever been divorced; and poems about his selfless service to the elderly, which are very moving and so, so real. He is a good poet who reveres *tzaddiks* and such people out of the Hassidic tradition. The ethnic hatreds and dilemmas of our time? When has the world ever been without them? They don't concern Marc Kaminsky much.

Jungle Girl poems by James Krusoe (Little Caesar Press, LA, CA \$4.95)

A collection of poems culled from various small (and unknown to me) magazines. They are economically written, in various forms, all in most excellent taste. They are philosophical, whimsical, literary and contain good sense. The poet seems to be in his late 30s—generally an age when conclusions are hard to arrive at—so much is past and so much more is ahead. Well done.

The Invention of Solitude by Paul Auster (Sun Press, NYC. \$6)

How many Jewish-American boys remember going to the circus with their fathers and getting a ring from 8 foot 6 inch Robert Wadlow, recently dead tallest man in the world? Well, Paul Auster is one and I am another. These cherished "Rosebud" memories that we think make us unique more often than not are shared by more people than we care to believe. Hell, I thought Kierkegaard was writing directly to me and here, in Paul Auster's magnificent memoir of his life, is Kierkegaard writing directly to Paul Auster. The whole thing's fake! These *philosophes* are convincing us all, *separately*, that we're wonderful people—in order to sell more of their books! What a cheap way to strip kids of their time and money!

Seriously though, I felt, as I read this book, genuinely humbled by Paul Auster's brilliance in mastering the writer's craft. This is as moving a nostalgic autobiography as *The Seven-Story Mountain* was some decades ago. Auster has learned his literary lessons to perfection. My only criticism is that, perhaps, he takes it all a little too seriously and that his exploration of memory (which is top notch) gets a little boring (for my taste) toward the end. High points, though, are fascinating thoughts about Holderlin feigning his insanity and the therapeutic value of baseball as a source of structure in a world that seems as wildly chaotic as an Earth thrown off its axis.

car going in shape
a modern junk-heap exterior
time taken up math

mach mach I hear
a communication
the bird sounds watery
letting enough things pass
thin/thick going up in fog

—Larry Eigner

Look Where It's Come From

Four Lectures by Stephen Rodefer (The Figures, Berkeley CA, \$5)

In the body, as well as in the body politic, what grows *in* is mostly painful. What grows out, or “up” (as Bucky Fuller would *not* say), feels good.

These past years in the culture have been a time of massive encouragement for the in-grown. Thus, it is a thrill to see any counter-attack launched against that drift by writers like Steve Rodefer, most particularly in his recent “big bang” collection *Four Lectures*.

In order to begin to reconnect with an essential *gentilezza*-by which I intend a combination of gentleness toward all that surrounds us, as well as a sense of worth, and thus, a spontaneous (as opposed to inherited) nobility—we need to survey what, in fact, surrounds us here, in the oft-times grim twilight of the century. In that respect, television is not helpful, although it may provide material as do press and radio and what conversation we manage. The “survey” has to be a work of art—the kind of knowing that involves human engagement of an intensity not required by the ‘media’. For word people, this is poetry: which, as Edward Dorn accurately points out, can be “found anywhere”—but needs to be assembled and regenerated by what is not merely a computer.

Privileged to attend and participate in Rodefer’s January/February residence at Intersection, here in sybaritic San Francisco, I would like to do a little testifying as to the impact of his work. I see it as a major successful effort to *deal* with life after the decline and fall of Detroit, a new symphony of the word-matter of the late 1970’s and early 80’s, an opus forward of *The Waste Land* but with a similar wonderful sense of “He Do the Police in Different Voices”, Eliot’s original title for his most durable and funniest poem (question: why could WCW never see its life-enhancing humor?). If these be tall statements, I do not think they are due to over-long exposure to the Pacific, as I know that I don’t expose

myself too much to that formidable ocean except when stoned out of my gourd *At Malibu* (another wonderful instance, created by Tom Clark, of the accurate survey of states of language).

Four Lectures covers so much life and time, so much of what is heard and otherwise perceived inside and outside the human head, anyone’s head who has lived a little longer than your average valley girl or even Lower East Side punkette, that any comparative takes as to “influence” or “rank” simply become irrelevant. Don’t let the term “lectures” put you off this book: Rodefer intends it as “what’s talking”, what is heard to be saying/writing. He insists on the way locutions are and repeat and key themselves in and to our listening heads and hearts. As Robert Creeley says on the back cover, “SOLID. GREAT and *useful*...possibly the last real *sense* you’ll be offered”. Well, let’s not hope the last; meself, I have found mucho continuing sense in works of, say, the last seven years by Berrigan, Clark, Creeley, Dorn, Frym, Gallup, Mayer, Menefee, Notley, Padgett, Raworth, Schiff, Wright...well, happily the list goes on.

Four Lectures sweeps us along by an astoundingly simple eloquence which is not a dolled-up *Under Milk Wood* multi-vocalization but an honest, persistent, and to my mind life-giving attempt to cleanse our brains’ ears to hear with the heart and to perceive what’s going on. Realizing that I haven’t quoted a single line from the 70-odd page work, I now recommend it to your reading and hearing with a quotation from its final page:

“All right. Enjoy the heads of your beaches, I’m not going in order
To get tied up on spec, but I wanted you to meet your fellow brains. Thank you,
People of destiny, for your brilliant corners. I like your voice. Look where it’s come from.”

That’s as humbly accurate as I have always wanted to be.

—Anselm Hollo

Chicago

They tell me nothing and I answer well fuck you,
and if I choose to be a plumber it’ll be a husky one,
so if you bet your last dollar on the stupid butcher
don’t expect me to sympathize at the other end,

as I go down bragging and laughing,
feeling the pulse in my ribs and waist,
as the old man dusts off his mouth,
half naked and sweating and proud to be a hog.

—Stephen Rodefer

Riding the One-Eyed Ford by Diane Burns (Contact II Publications, Box 451, Bowling Green, NYC 10004, \$3.50)

Like any poet who's any good Diane Burns knows there are nymphs in the woods. It must help being American Indian. Didn't Homer come out of the Stone Age too? When our ancestors sat down around the campfire to listen to the poets beat on their tomtoms & strum on their lyres they wanted to hear a good story. A story takes you from a beginning to an end. You wind up someplace from where you started. You will have changed. This book is of poems that are stories full of metamorphosis. The Ford has one eye. A fern is drawn a phallus. We explode like quails from the dugout. An eighteen year old rodeo star becomes middle aged in a few short lines before our eyes. We go from sober to drunk, drunk to sober in several bouts with firewater; & in one poem Diane feels herself becoming a plant.

Sitting in Washington Square she can smell a new season in the air & thinks of back home

On Lac Court Orreilles
the ice is breaking up
melting
succumbing to April.
The Canadian geese
are flying
home.

Uncle Waynaboozhoo and Grandpa
are making little birchbark baskets
and whittling spigots
(they burned through the veins
of young branches with
a hot coat hanger)

Waiting on the maple trees
who are waiting on the
sun in late April.

She didn't bitch. When she's jailed & beat up, she gives us the facts without the rhetoric. The poem "Gadoshkibos" which deals with the extermination of her race, has nothing to do with death, but with the life force that goes on despite it. I heard Ms. Burns at a reading once say that the braided beads around her neck weren't made by her but bought at Bloomingdale's. If where she comes from is American Indian, what she is is a Human Being. Often her poems are beautifully said, often there's a striking image.

In "Just Passin' through Chicago" I thought the poem ended at the bottom of its first page & was surprised to see that two more lines of it continued onto the next. To end it

I thought I'd write something about it
but couldn't think of a word
UGLY enough

would be enough. In "Sante Fe" I'd like to see the poem end with the line

Yew don't have to run once you git over the fence

That's a nice image, the fence, a place to stop & ponder, a good metaphor. What follows seems an explanation. If you have to wind it up with "this is what I mean" your poem's not speaking clearly.

—Don Yorty

Oracle Night: A Love Poem by Michael Brownstein (Sun & Moon Press, College Park, MD \$6)

Oracle Night is a long meditation on love and loves, past and present, and, oracularly, future. A remarkable quality of attention to the movement of the poet's mind, in the process of remembering, infuses every line.

The memory here is not of people, their names and their bodies. It is, curiously, a memory of *ideas*, which had once been occasioned by people. A memory both intellectual and sensual flows through the work, giving its language a unique and truly original power. There is silence, too at the core of this poem. "To read *Oracle Night* is to step off a busy street into a quiet courtyard that is like the space between our perceptions and what we perceive," John Ashbery writes.

While I can't think of anything even remotely similar to compare this poem to, I can point out that the scope of its ambition is uniquely American. Great American poets have all been writers of long poems. A successful long poem is the final statement of living at white poetic heat, of being able to connect islands of consciousness in the vastness of American geography. Walt Whitman, William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, Charles Olson and Allen Ginsberg have all covered awesome territory. Brownstein's long, mystical night, filled with unrelenting perceptions, may well be drawing close.

—Andrei Codrescu

(This review appeared originally in *The Baltimore Sun*.)

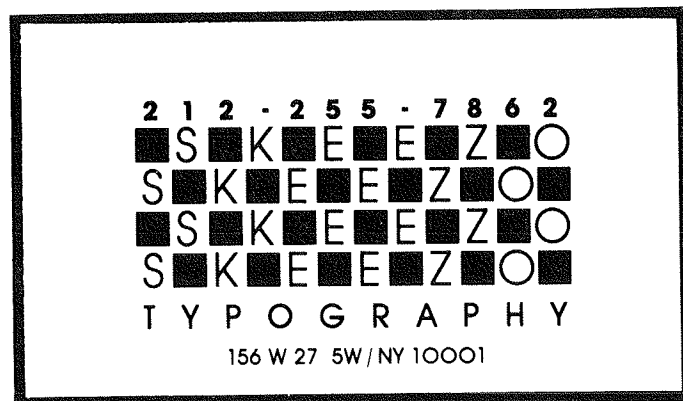
THE MOON

So, this is the moon.
There are only holes
where once there were motels.

But there *is* a motel somewhere.

Little white men take you to it.

—Terence Winch



Back in North by Liam Fennelly (Open Window Books, 100 Bleecker St, NYC 10012 \$2, cover by Yvonne Jacquette)

What a brutal trip. The tea spilled all over the floor and the jacket of the Christian Brother from Antigua, who laughed maniacally. Now I could be anywhere, with only the green Holiday Inn neon looming out of the dark.

The poems in Liam Fennelly's first book, *Back in North*, pin a wry sense of humor to a musical rhythm, an elaborate grid of sense perceptions. The experience recounted above is contained in Fennelly's poem "On a Way":

that was

there, that description.

I only noticed the blue sky—well so fast
that... and then we arrived at the four o'clock.

Yes, every station was for sure a moment,
back then, when it was a
gardens. In comparison.

On the inside, a brutal surface.

But there is much more. There is the "description" and the reality contrasted to it. "that was, there"—that description existed; or "that was *there*, that description." Yet, distracted or misled by the description, the narrator "only noticed the blue sky—well so fast / that..." Too fast; there is no conclusion.

What was the trip? The phrase "back then", a generality, would lead us to believe the trip is more than a specific, physical train ride. "back then" "every station"—every station in our lives' progression—was seen as "sure", via the description. Back then, our life was a garden.

These thoughts though rhythmically insinuated rather than bluntly stated by Fennelly, come to a taut conclusion in the last lines. The "gardens" were "in comparison" to something less clear, something meaningless. The true perception leaves, honestly, "a brutal surface." Fennelly is too elliptical, however, to draw a conclusion; we are faced with another surface. It may be a mirror, a window or a painted backdrop: this is the delight of Fennelly's ethos.

Does the syntax bother? Perhaps at an initial reading there is a slight jar, but isn't this what we want from a poem? We don't read to glorify in what we already know but to experience a meaningful jolt, expressed only so. After several readings, perhaps surprisingly, Fennelly's poems coalesce into a completely comprehensible (or at least sensible) rhetoric (if not shedding every shred of ambiguity).

Fennelly, a linguist and musician finishing his B.A. at N.Y.U., has learned to write fluently in the Ashberian language of *The Tennis Court Oath*, taking advantage of its emotional potential. Many of us came to be able to translate this tongue, but not many have learned to write it for themselves. Unlike certain forms of musical composition, this grammar is one of exciting possibilities, allowing new explorations of expression and thought:

What was the word? Why did?
It all seem so long....

those frequent repairs make
no good meal, you
sound the same.

Time to relax....

for the dictionary contains
no entry for

this exit, though we prefer.

We've had, but can't be done.

Resembles, so that

we say

"the note sent?"

and speeds readily

into nearby vacant lot.

("Enough of Days")

However, even in this short book of nine works, Fennelly does not limit himself formally. "Fable" is reminiscent of Terry Reilly in its slow, repetitious modulations. "Sale" seems to be composed of cut-up lines from advertisements, yet the juxtaposition makes us focus on the words themselves and the multiplicity of their meaning, their apprehensions and underlying eroticism. The last line is particularly explosive. After reading "Sale" it is hard not to appreciate ads as literature.

Fennelly's sense of humor comes through in the understated dilemma of "Every Precaution":

"Problem with the landscape here—it rocks
the trees somewhat. Except for a few distant
trees, the area is mostly populated by a few trees..."

The rocky outcrop neared which told him where
they were. He scatters some stones with his foot,
briskly adding, "...Just a precaution."

(lines 1-6)

What beautiful music is included here as well:

They are intrigued. They remove to soften the
delight. The water is nearby. They arrange.
A perfect setting for more.

(lines 10-12)

The poet's style seems to come together (though this may be a rash supposition) in the last two works in the book, "The So-Called Basilica" and "In the Valley". When I questioned Fennelly about a certain passage, he replied simply, "That's the way it was.":

hidden are some:
the gift-policies, their tiny label
eventually swifts sideways into
vast see-over ebb
and other precious "gifts";

(from "In the Valley")

and I came to see how it can be: the direct expression of a feeling, a literary truth that comes forth full-blown, is known yet can never be deciphered. Time to relax. Your "I" has receded, but soon it will grow again, back in north.

—Vincent Katz

first time in a decade

market street, san francisco,
he's walking to work in late afternoon light

suddenly feels like crying so hangs a right
into the florist's and sends her a rose

—Anselm Hollo

The Secret of the Waterfall

(Jan. 21-30, 1983, Douglas Dunn Studio, Douglas Dunn & Dancers: Susan Blankensop, Kenneth Delap, Grazia Della-Terza, Douglas Dunn, Diane Frank, Deborah Riley, with Reed Bye and Anne Waldman, poets. Choreography by Dunn, Poetry by Bye/Waldman, Design by Mimi Gross and Charles Atlas.)

The Secret of the Waterfall was first conceived as a video project and taped by WGBH-Boston last summer on Martha's Vineyard. Now we are somewhere on Broadway; not in front of a television. The rear flat to our vision warmly executed by Mimi Gross has a blue curtain to its right, expands into orange space marked by white bars. Central on a kidney shaped table are a cup, a plate with grapes, oranges, an apple, and bananas. Down to its left is a box or is that an open door? Reed walks by and hides. Casual stuffed divans and a couch litter the floor sparsely. Two squat stools painted to match the orange and white flat sit in front of the fruit table. On the audience right is a quarter scene: the sea, a pink car and a table and chair on a patio. There is some forgettable music here but then it goes away.

The poets enter from opposite sides to start their collaborative poem subtitled "A Domestic Visitation". They refer to the dancers immediately. "They must correspond to a set of actual options." (A fruit table.) The poets stand and move and speak as poets that is to say with a rhetorical stiffness. The dancers soon enter and the poem dialogue continues into dance. The dynamics really start flying. The dancers move indifferent seeming to the poet's speechifying. Eyeball attention has been softened up, one is all ears to the dance.

The dance of Douglas Dunn as continued from collaborations in Grand Union to full scale dance Dunn in "Lazy Madge" or last year's Danspace is the commitment to opening structure without disemboweling the spacial planes he has

set upon. The dancers move like plastic bags blowing *clearly* across Broadway. The poets rattle as garbage cans in the same blow. They work in couples or full groups with the occasional three or foursome. The dancers are casually attired in pastels and loose fitting tops. They make the floor deep and bring air low. There is the violent gesture directed at beauty which is a sitting duck on our imagination. The dancers do anything but respond to the poets words. The dance in process moves to the poets' breath and spacing between words.

The poets recite, whisper, confess to the audience. They can touch the dancers as occasionally a dancer may consort with a poet as a form of rest. How does a poet move across the stage? By flirting with a dancer and not the dance. At one point Mr. Bye is hoisted by four dancers and carried to his new spot. The poem is left in tact as something read and not given an oratorical whole. There are of course moments of performance within the poem such as Ms. Waldman chanting "A BABY A BODY ADOBE ABODE A BABY A BODY ADOBE ADOBE" et cetera. The poem itself remains light and listing and playful; its only fault is to increasingly fall in love with the dance but then that is what we are doing too.

The Secret of the Waterfall is infinity (the cast numbers eight) or it is that things come and go. There is a striking illusion created when the dancers are all on the floor and the poets are standing as if they were giants before the abyss. It seems to me that the golden moment to many of Dunn's dances is when everything hinted at happens centered on a single moment. The golden moment for me in *The Secret of the Waterfall* is a moment behind the waterfall where all is still and quiet: a pure nothing happening is the comfort of knowing a secret. There soon follows the real ending which ties the poets and dancers together into a single braided rope cut by Douglas and there it is: Life is Entered.

—Bob Rosenthal

going at sunset
the sun sinking
before the moon came out
at the other side of the sky

did you hear anything?

birds lambs cows trains
cars and nothing else
just trees and fields
I enjoyed my walk
it was lovely

—Annabell Levitt

Manuscripts are now being accepted for the Ron Silliman Issue of **The Difficulties**. Deadline for submissions August 1. Send to Tom Beckett, 429 Irma, #3, Kent, OH 44240.

Steve Silberman, 2070 Fell St, #4, SF, CA 94117 is compiling an anthology of disarmament-oriented poetry. Include brief bio & SASE.

Backward Dancer, PO Box 649, North San Juan CA 95960 is seeking work for its next issue which is 'pursuing the trickster figure in world myth, teachings, contemporary poetry and stories, in any form of art...' Deadline Sept. 1.

Puerto del Sol, a southwestern magazine, is soliciting poetry and fiction. Deadline June 1 c/o Joseph Somoza, 33 Rogers Ave, Manasquan NJ 08736 (poetry) or Kevin McIlvoy, Dept of English, Box 3E, New Mexico State Univ, Las Cruces NM 88003 (fiction). SASE.

Revista Chicano-Riquena, 'the major Hispanic literary and arts magazine published in the United States' is asking for work by Hispanic writers for a special issue devoted to children's literature in Spanish or English. They also invite submissions for their next quarterly issue from artists & photographers. Send to them at University of Houston, Central Campus, Houston TX 77004.

A correction for last issue: read Hammett for Chandler in Art Lange's poem.

Rose Lesniak is selling off some worldly possessions including books. Call 675-0194.

Jobs With Peace Benefit Poetry Reading by Sekou Sundiata, Louis Reyes Rivera, Patricia Jones, Walter Lew, Kimiko Hahn, William Allen & others to take place on April 10 at St. Malachy's Church, 239 W 49 St. at 7 PM. \$5 donation. 566-1323.

The Manhattan Theatre Club, 321 E 73 St, NYC 10021 is offering 3 five week writing workshops: Women's Writing, poetry & prose with Jana Harris begins Tues. May 3, 6-8 PM. Poetry of Experience, with Bill Zavatsky, begins Wed. May 4, 6-8 PM. Returning to Writing, poetry & prose, with Janet Sternburg, begins Mon. April 11, 6-8 PM. \$55 each. 288-2500.

The Ear Inn Readings, 326 Spring St, at 2 PM, \$2.50: 2—Barbara Guest & Mei-Mei Berssenbrugge. 9—James Sherry & George-Therese Dickenson. 16—Ray DiPalma & Bob Perelman. 23—TBA. 30—Ted Greenwald & Jim Brodey.

A London Anthology will be published soon & they are asking for subscriptions at 4 Pounds (American?). Depending on the success of this fund drive, the issue will contain work of several London writers including: Eric Mottram, cris cheek, Iain Sinclair, Bill Griffiths, allen fisher, Pierre Joris, Paul Gogarty, Betty Radin, Maggie O'Sullivan. 'Cheques' payable to Consortium Of London Presses, at 262 Randolph Ave, London, W9, England.

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