

THE POETRY PROJECT NEWSLETTER
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Ted Greenwald, editor
St. Mark's Church, 2nd Avenue
& Tenth St. New York 10003.

With each month St. Mark's Church continues to be renovated by the Youth Preservation Project. This month the floors, next month the ceiling. Those who live or work in the neighborhood only have to look up to see the redone steeple and the new clock faces. Part of the Youth Preservation Project is a magazine called Nosotros about Puerto Rican life by people of about high school age for people that age. The Youth Project has put out the first two small books in an oral history series which are interviews with long time residents of the neighborhood: Minnie Fisher, Born One Year Before The 20th Century & Blending Into The Life, Community Documentation Workshop of the Preservation Youth Project. It's amazing what can get done when people take an interest. And everyone knows, you've got to have a floor before you can have a ceiling.

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The Mon nite (8:15 PM) readings are Mar 7 Open Reading, Mar 14 Cynthia Henderson and fatisha, Mar 21 A.A. Pritchard and Bruce Parker, Mar 28 Bob Holman and Jeff Weinstein. The Wed nite (8:30 PM) readings are Mar 2 Alice Notley and Lorenzo Thomas, Mar 9 Josephine Clare and Rebecca Wright, Mar 16 Andrei Codrescu and David Franks, Mar 23 Bernadette Mayer and Lewis Warsh, Mar 30 Rene Ricard and Steven Hall.

The (7:30 PM) workshops continue with Tues Jim Brodey, Thurs Bill Zavatsky, and Fri Barbara Guest. There will be two special workshops: Mar 3 Lorenzo Thomas, 7:30 PM guesting for Bill Zavatsky and meeting in the Parish Hall, and Mar 25 when Bernadette Mayer and Lewis Warsh will conduct a workshop, also in the Parish Hall. Tony Towle is doing a workshop at P.S. 1, 21-01 46 Rd, LIC, Take E or F to 23 St-Ely Ave, Sat mornings 10:30 AM co-sponsored by Poetry Project and P.S. 1. Newsletter thanks NYSCA and CCLM for partial grants.

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Readings Etc: Lots of TV. Nuyorican Cafe has a television show. Sundays at 11 PM on Channel J. And Greenwich Books has a show on Channel D on Fridays at 8:30 PM. . .As for radio: WBAI-FM remains off the air (strange situation) so this month so far we miss Susan Howe's and Michael Sappol's shows. . . KUFM in Missoula, Montana is putting out a radio show called "Off The Wall" which will review small press books on the air. . .The New York State Small Press Association Distribution Project is in the process of putting together its first catalogue. For info write to Box 151, Village Station, NYC 10014. Eligible to New York State small presses and magazines. . .Poetry/An Exhibition will be held in City Univ Grad Center Mall, 33 W 42 St thru Mar 23.

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THE ANTHOLOGY SINCE 1960: Some Notes Toward An Overview.

In 1960 there was no representative anthology of American poetry. There was The New Poets Of England And America (edited by Donald Hall, Robert Pack and Louis Simpson), originally published in 1957 and in its 5th printing by 1960. It was primarily an academic collection and dealt more with "English verse" than American poetry. It was (and is) of no use if you wanted to know what was happening in America, in the American language. Its main virtue was that it made very very clear the need for an anthology that in some way offered a cross-section of post World War Two poetry in America.

In 1960 Grove Press published that much needed anthology. It is called The New American Poetry: 1945-1960, edited by Donald M. Allen. For poets and readers (young or old) this was

an event. The New American Poetry stands to this day as a seminal force in the presentation of the diverse possibilities in contemporary American poetry. The editing of the anthology gives a dignity to many voices (schools if you are so inclined). Donald Allen worked (as he still does) with an openness which could be inclusive of many practitioners, but with a toughness that could cut work that didn't make it. It is amazing how much of the work in this collection still stands, and in some cases (as with Paul Carroll, Ed Marshall, Ray Bremser, Gilbert Sorrentino to name some of the obvious) are among the poets best and most successful attempts at the "maker's art."

Despite claims of subsequent anthologies, there has been no anthology which in any way is as important in White American poetry, in this age. The New American Poetry came into being because of the need, and the growing pressure, for younger (new) singers (makers) of poems to be read (heard) and acknowledged as present here in all their many forms. The lack of Third World writers is obvious. The limitation as regards women is glaring, but all this taken and considered, it still exploded as a bombshell and blew its way into the hearts and minds of new generations of readers and writers. It remains surprisingly fresh.

One doesn't just decide that the time has come for editing such an anthology. Editors like Jerome Rothenberg have tried to force the idea of an anthology as "a sacred book." The result is that Rothenberg's often sensitive intelligence and preceptive taste become forced, artificial and archival rather than responsively editorial. The point is, The New American Poetry was already there; present in this country at that time and needing someone to put it together. It found that editor in Donald Allen who was already (as Editor of Evergreen Review) clearing ground.

In 1965 Robert Kelly and Paris Leary edited A Controversy of Poets (Doubleday). It is a mixture of almost everyone who was visibly active in American poetry at that time: the academics (English-American poets) and the new American poets (from Jackson MacLow to Paul Blackburn). It is a grab-bag and yet, in retrospect, it is also a collection that lays out a definite direction in American poetry: the gradual erosion of the most independent voices and their slow movement toward center (consider Allen Ginsberg's dialogue with Eberhart and Lowell and how strongly they seem to come together now. Or, as Amiri Baraka pointed out, as early as 1966, in his essay "Poetry and Karma": "Richard Wilbur and Allen Ginsberg could hang out in a number of joints, in common, and laugh about it, being 'accomplished poets' at home...I mean that they are A Club, and separate from their Lords, but that they have tales (tails) which are similar...." The anthology is a room and today it would seem that that room is filled with just about everything and everyone. A Controversy Of Poets was one of the first rooms that was filled.

ALL THIS IS HISTORY. What about the anthology now?

It is amazing when we realize how many anthologies have been, are still being, published each year. The range and quality is widely varied. These anthologies do not just deal with poetry. They cover everything: fiction, poetry, non-fiction prose, interviews. They bring together information. As is always the case, only a few will emerge as books (collections) with impact. But, taken as a whole, these anthologies build a singular and great presence.

Quincy Troupe and Rainer Schulte's Giant Talk (Random House, 1975) is an anthology that opens up the historical and active sense of Third World writing. It brings so much together so clearly that it becomes a central source. It never becomes an archive and it keeps a sharp and clear editorial point of view (vision). It is an example of what an anthology should be (what any work should be): OF USE.

A collection like Louise Bernikow's The World Split Open (Vintage, 1974), while suffering from a lack of an Introduction of any real insight or use, is an historically sound and educationally important collection of women's writing, in the Western tradition. An anthology like this, supplemented by contemporary collections like: We Become New (edited by Kathy Ruby and Lucille Iverson; Bantam, 1974) and Amazon Poetry (edited by Joan Larkin and Elly Balkin; Out and Out Books, 1976), becomes an alive and useful tool. It brings us the information we need.

But it is not just a matter of the "great" or "important" collections. That's only the most obvious aspect. The question is: How can we use anthologies? How do anthologies operate in our lives?

There is the idea of an anthology as a collection of writers around a theme: regionalism,

common cause, historical survey, personal relationship, or personal taste. There are numerous anthologies edited and published in each of these modes. This is a new and exciting development; not at all limited to poetry or college texts. As a matter of fact, at the present there seems to be no limits except the imagination of the editors.

It is the anthology and not the "literary magazine" that is now the format that is most useful and available to a general readership. It is the anthology that can present new work, new ideas, or even traditional material in a generative context.

The literary magazine has lost its energy and there are not many left that have editorial impact. Very few of us wait with bated breath for the latest issue of a magazine (unless of course we have work coming out in it). There was a time when that was not the case; when the magazine was where we went for the latest word. Literary magazines are, today, at best, non-directed collections (often of anthology size) expressing personal taste. At worst (and most commonly) they have become fragmentary collections of work by writers who have no real direction. The magazine has become a collage and is no longer concerned with "the whole fabric" ("the idea delivered whole"). Anthologies have begun to fill the gap.

There are a lot of reasons for the emergence of the anthology as an active and productive form: 1) The economics of editing a regular magazine (money and time) are restrictive. 2) The editing of a "good magazine" requires a sophistication that is not easily found in an editor. A good magazine editor does more than say: "I like that." or "I don't like that." He or she has to have an idea (a reason). 3) An anthology usually focuses one's attention on a theme. The editor can remain clear about what he or she is looking for. 4) Economically it is cheaper to produce a one shot book (anthology) than an on-going magazine. 5) There is growing interest in anthologies. People are willing to buy them, much faster than they will buy a little magazine. (The prices are often comparable.) 6) As a result of the growing appeal of anthologies, book dealers are much more willing to stock them (they are easier to handle and keep track of); libraries buy them regularly; readers feel they are useful additions to their collections (it serves a purpose). 7) Big publishers are often very willing to publish anthologies and distribute them. They make money. (There are many more reasons, but these make my general point.)

I have found that anthologies often give me a chance to contact the work of writers I have not been able to follow (keep up with) in magazines. I got a copy of Michael Lally's None Of The Above: 31 American Poets. Crossing Press, 1976. While it was limited in its range and quality it brought together a group of writers that I wanted to have a chance to read. I wanted to see what they were doing. The collection was useful to me and I discovered a few writers who were very pleasing. Lally brought together a group of poets that he was turned on to and saw as related. That was good enough. It was unfortunate that he chose, like so many other editors of anthologies, to declare: "The work in this book represents the conclusion of an important cultural era in the history of the USA, 1945-1975." This type of nervousness always leads to unsupportable statements, and that is sad. But, it does not change the fact that such anthologies are intimate and of value.

William Carlos Williams says about the little magazine: "To me it is one magazine, not several. It is a continuous magazine, the only one I know with an absolute freedom of editorial policy and a succession of proprietorships that follows a democratic rule... When it is in any way successful it is because it fills a need in someone's mind to keep going." This now applies to the anthology.

The anthology is a public format and opens up rather than closes off. It is a form that moves from editor to editor and it is one anthology. We go to it, in a way we can no longer go to the little magazines, to read the news in, on and about our lives.

(The following is a short list of some current anthologies. It is meant to give you some idea of the range.. It is not a critical list. The issue of quality is something for the readers to decide. This list is weighted in the area of poetry. That is only because it was what I happened to be looking at when I put this together. It would be of very great use for someone to begin to put together an annotated bibliography of anthologies.)

TIME TO GREEZE: Incantations From The Third World. Multiple editors. Glide Publications, 1975
... The Poetry of The Negro: 1746-1970. Edited by Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps (revised edition of the original 1949 anthology). Doubleday, 1970. . . Technicians Of The Sacred. Edited by Jerome Rothenberg. Anchor, 1969. . . Contemporaries: 28 New American Poets. Edited by Jean Malley and Hole Tokay. Viking, 1972. An Anthology of Concrete Poetry. Edited by

Emmett Williams. Something Else Press, 1967. . . The New Naked Poetry. Edited by Stephen Berg and Robert Mezy. Bobbs-Merrill, 1976. . . The Prose Poem. Edited by Michael Benedikt. Dell, 1976. . . Nuyorican Poetry. Edited by Miguel Algarin and Miguel Pinero. Wm. Marrow, 1975. . . 15 Chicago Poets. Edited by Richard Friedman, Peter Kostakis, Darlene Pearlstein. Yellow Press, 1976. . . Jambalaya. Edited by Steve Cannon. Reed, Cannon and Johnson, 1974. . . Modern Poetry of Western America, Edited by Clinton Larson and William Stafford. Brigham Young Univ. Press, 1975. . . The Penguin Poets: Modern Poets Series. In over 24 volumes usually collecting 3 poets in each volume. Penguin, on going. . . Mountain Moving Day. Edited by Elaine Gill. Crossing Press, 1973. . . Down At The Santa Fe Depot: 20 Fresno Poets. Edited by David Kherdian and James Balofian. Giligia Press, 1970. . . Brewing: 20 Milwaukee Poets. Edited by Martin Rosenblum. Giligia Press, 1972. . . The Male Muse. Edited by Ian Young. Crossing Press, 1973. . . An Anthology of New York Poets, Edited by Ron Padgett and David Shapiro, Vintage, 1970. . . Roof. Editor not listed. Segue Press, 1977. (Harry Lewis)

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from THE BIRTHDAY NOTATIONS (objet trouve)

September 27, 1841. Dresden.

. . . . We have reached Dresden safely. . . . In general the trip was good. I thought a lot about things; I thought about you and all the thoughts were radiant ones On the road my tranquility was disturbed only by crawling out of the carriage onto a train, where like a dream turning into reality I met Bakunin and extremely hard wooden benches. Both made things terribly uncomfortable . . . but we're in Dresden.

Ray DiPalma

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Blue Is The Hero by Bill Berkson, L Publications, 1976

Anyone familiar with contemporary poetry of an experimental nature must be aware of the editing job Mr. Berkson has been doing at Big Sky books. His press carries one of the most impressive lists of any small publisher in America and if you don't think that the Kyger, Coolidge, Watten and Greenwald books are already classics, then you deserve to have your books pushed uptown by seedy salesmen for some fatuous multinational entertainment combine. The appearance, after sixteen years of slim publication, of Bill Berkson's Selected is not in the least indicative of when this book should have been available. This handsome book, designed by the author, had to wait till the middle of the subaru seventies for the same reason that makes Bill such a great editor: personal humility.

From the very first, from 1960, the poems are witty and exact, textures both of spatial and conceptual arrangement. You won't find too many 21 year olds who can write like this:

Love comes but once to a shoe
and must be stepped on
if we, any of us, are to
survive...in its tracks, the moth
capered like his sailor-suit photo against,
my speedy dessert season, an armistice wrested
from the trees

(from Breath)

but then again, you'll find very few late-thirties poets with the personal confidence to write "Poem// Like Angels, I can only arrive/On the point of your admiration,/And what kind of thing is that/For a grown man?/ But what I really want/Is to do what I can/For nothing in particular,/Letting the black holes rip,/ As they may, through your lives,/And golden light on the stones/Just before sundown, anywhere."

Blue Is The Hero is an important book because it presents the work of a neglected master, as it has developed during the fifteen most experimental years of American Poetry. Bill

Blue Is The Hero is an important book because it presents the work of a neglected master, as it has developed during the fifteen most experimental years of American poetry. Bill Berkson began writing with the tremendous advantages of a thorough cultural education, a tri-lingual speaking ability and friendly relations with almost everyone in the New York art world. His poetry has never, seemingly, had to alter itself for any reason other than personal taste, and perhaps because of this, has expanded conceptually as opposed to stylistically. The ambience has changed from New York City with its all-out bombardment of imagery and sharp diction to the west coast with its more personal, quiet lifestyle. Through it all, though, is a clear mind expressing the ins and outs of one American existence, in time, with humor and good will. We should be pleased to inhabit the same world as Blue Is The Hero, because it is a world that promises delight from the act of living, and delivers in a special way that delight. I find his work conceptual in the sense of poems made to make a certain effect, crafted with intelligence to that singular end. Take a look at the poem for Les Levine, the Bicycle Thief poem, Traveller's Companion, the shorter prose poems. Each moves for a different reason and is hand-made, in American, within its own self-contained orbit. You won't find formula poems here, pleading for National Book Awards with "vast sensitivity," or other nonsense torqued down from the universities at the end of bitter season. These are poems written for fellow artists that detail the day-to-day pleasures and wrinkle-free handkerchiefs of our culture. Take them as letters from his life to ours, that's all. I could say they are fresh, valuable, individual but you can only discover that for yourself. You will.

(Charlie Walsh)

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BOOKS ETC: From Z Press, Calais, Vt. 05648: James Schuyler, The Home Book: Poems and Prose 1950-1971, \$3.50; Pat Nolan, Fast Asleep, \$2.50; & Brad Gooch, The Daily News, \$2.50 . . . From Angel Hair Books, Box 257, Peter Stuyvesant Sta., NYC 10009, William Corbett, Columbus Square Journal, \$3, & Bob Rosenthal, Cleaning Up New York, \$2.50 . . . From Frontward Books, 437 E 12 St #17, NYC 10009: Ed Friedman, Black Star Pilgrimage & Steve Toth, Rota Rooter. . . Ruth Krauss & Esther Gilman, Little Boat Lighter Than A Cork, Magic Circle Press in association with Walker and Co., NY, \$5.50. . . From Midnight Sun, c/o Guy Gauthier, 223 E 28 St/ 1RE, NYC 10016: Stanley Nelson, Chirico eyes, \$1 & William Kushner, Night Fishing, \$1 . . . From Olson: The Journal of the Charles Olson Archives, Special Collections Dept, Univ of Connecticut Library, Storrs, Conn 06268: No. 5 (Notes and Essays, 1945-57, Background to the Maximus Poems) & No. 6 (Early Unpublished Maximus Poems, 1953-1957), \$10 annually (2 issues) . . . Pequod Vol 1, No 4, (Paradis & Rudman, editors), PO Box 491, Forest Knolls, CA 94933 (\$2 single) . . . From Tuumba, PO Box 1075, Willits, CA 95490: Kenneth Irby, Archipelago & Dick Higgins, Cat Alley, \$2. . . William Burroughs, Junky, Penguin, 72 Fifth Ave, NYC 10011 (This time, complete & unexpurgated). . . Some mailings from The Alternative Press, 3090 Copeland Road, Grindstone City, Mich 48467, 3 mailings \$10 (Hand-printed book marks, postcards, etc.). . . LA-BAS #5 (Douglas Messerli, ed), Box 509, College Park, Md 20740. . . Wendy Rose, Long Division: A Tribal History, Strawberry Press, 11 Broadway/Suite 933, NYC 10004, \$1.50. . . 432 Review (Simon Schuchat, ed), Box 1030, Peter Stuyvesant Sta, NYC 10009 (Complete issue devoted to works by Jim Brodey). . . Richard Vetere, Memories of Human Hands, Maryland Books, 84-39 90 St, Woodhaven, NY 11421, \$3. . . From the unspeakable visions of the individual, PO Box 439, California, Penn 15419: The Beat Diary (Arthur & Kit Knight, editors), \$10.95 (Tons of pictures!). . . Sun & Moon #3 (Douglas Messerli & Howard Fox, Editors), 4330 Hartwick Rd./#418, College Park, Md 20740. . . Phillis Gershator, A Bibliographic Guide to the Literature of Contemporary American Poetry, 1970-75, Scarecrow Press, Inc., 52 Liberty St., PO Box 656, Metuchen, NJ 08840, \$6.

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The Goldfish Speaks From Beyond The Grave by Jim Burns, The Salamander Imprint, 3 Cadogan Square, London SW1X 0HT, England, 1976, \$8.00/cl.; \$4.50/pa.

Jim Burns' latest book of poems, The Goldfish Speaks From Beyond The Grave, proves what the public generally believes: a writer drinks because he observes more and writes because he drinks. However, I am a cookyhollic (particularly cookies with gooey sweet icing, vanilla

cookies) rather than an alcoholic and I write too. In fact my husband, Arthur, affectionately calls me "Vanilla Wafers". And he doesn't get angry when I add a box of them to my hips; after all, I'm pregnant now so I'm allowed.

The opening poem has the dying goldfish thinking: "The horror is that there is no horror,/ but there is certainly despair,/and I knew what that was all about." That opening poem (also the title of the book) tells of the despair and futility of a middle class person/family; also the despair of being thoughtful/observant enough to be a proletarian poet. Jim Burns is a poet for the working class, who gets his hands dirty. One of the 52 selections is especially amusing -- also it could be terrifyingly real -- "An/ immediate purge is being launched, the smooth/ announcer says, the aim being to purify/ the social atmosphere. Top of the wanted list,/ pornographic poets." In one of the latter selections ("Some Of My Best Friends Are Alcoholics") Burns says: "Life becomes/ a sequence of mornings seen from someone/ else's floor." In another work ("Casual Poem") I was delighted to see him mention Nick (Kimberly) of Compendium (Bookshop) who buys many of our Beat Books and Beat Diaries.

Jim Burns writes about what he knows in a language that is easily understood; I don't approve of works that make several dictionaries an absolute necessity; happily, while reading Jim Burns' The Goldfish Speaks From Beyond The Grave there was nary a dictionary or thesaurus in sight. (Kit Knight)

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ROSENTHAL CLEANS UP

One American traditional genre is the "how to..." book. Foremost examples are Moby Dick or Life On The Mississippi, which tell you how to go about a specific task; catching whales, piloting steamboats. The task is used as a correlative to living your life, and in the writing of such a book there's a fine line to tread between "life" and the job at hand--God knows Melville leaves the practical aspects of whaling for the metaphysical every chance he gets. If you actually know how to do whatever you're writing about, and if you write clearly, you'll probably make a good book. Everyone is interested in how to do something--its such a practical reason for reading. And what could be more practical than cleaning your house? In Cleaning Up New York Bob Rosenthal, with clarity of speech and perception, lets you know how he, a pro, does the job. My own house is a total wreck, but by following his suggestions I've been making slow progress towards perfection. His book will inspire you to do the same.

If one is of the upper-middle class in background and education, becoming a servant of sorts is karma yoga, and cleaning up in general is that same kind of yoga. (The physical and mental labors of cleaning.) Rosenthal is aware of socio-economic class relationships--the book abounds in sharp observations on the "artificial" relationship between the cleaner and customer--as well as being aware of the "natural" relationship between the cleaner and who he cleans for; there are these things that need to be done, see, and everybody has one or another to do. First novels are generally about a young man (or woman, recently) finding a place in the human universe. There's a hideous pitfall of self-consciousness embedded in this kind of writing, one which Rosenthal most elegantly sidesteps by concentrating on what he does, not his intellectual or emotional self-definitions. Cleaning Up New York is an einbildungsroman about making, or actually, clearing away and cleaning up one's place, not finding it as such. It is a more useful book of this type than The Sorrows of Young Werther. Cleaning Up New York is an entertaining memoir, an insightful observation of social relationships, a lucid exposition of efficient, effective cleaning procedures, and much much more.

It can be ordered from Angel Hair Books, Box 718, Lenox Massachusetts, 01240, at \$2.50 the copy. It is a practical and profound work, and belongs in every home which proposes to be both literate and clean. (Simon Schuchat)

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THE BLACK STAR PILGRIMAGE by Ed Friedman, "the escape story," Frontward Books, 437 E 12 St, #17, NYC 10009, \$1.50.

To come across an interestingly-written, therefore truly original, prose work in the past ten years that has not been affected (read that as "inspired") by either William Burroughs,

J.D. Salinger, or John Barth (read that as "Thomas Pynchon") is an exceptional feat. But, dare I say it, here's one.

Friedman is perhaps the closet Beckett, his novel is interestingly not overwritten or so involved that his reader is at some great loss to be able to tell what's happening whenever. While Beckett's main concerns continue to be those of quickly dying hermit and at the same second those of a guy sitting in a chair in a room scribbling like mad, Friedman seems like some runaway surveyor fleeing soberly over a landscape that does not include himself.

To try and make sense out of this decidedly disconnected poetic language spew-and-stumble that the author has cooked up herein would be like decoding the language of ballpoints themselves. And to no avail. One need only roll with the delightful punches and take the entire narrative as a whole (hole?). To look at it as an unfolding scene might have better results: The hero is in a car with someone else named La Salle, they are shooting across the land, from time to time our host invites danger like cops almost catching up and blasting holes in their car (could even be a space ship, it don't say which), and bye and bye there are some tremendously mellow poetic descriptions: "For a moment at midnight we're almost in the sky," and "You can run all day in the desert while the mountains hardly move at all." Like maybe he's totally haunted as I was having seen the reflections of a California dusk in the bright shining finish of a hotrod on the steaming Mojave desert dry lake floor. No question, he's been there and came back to tell his tale as best he can. Better.

This short book (I do so wish it was about 500 pages long!) is a real find amidst the usually bland factors of a slowly decaying literary world fond of gags and errors. Ed Friedman has made a successful stab at establishing a foothold in coherent gibberish. Way to go, Ed. Keep up the good work. Make yours a narrow fight. (Jim Brodey)

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tonight's the night

for carlos figueroa

i get these strange visits/doorbell

ringing & ringing

(pedro & the blues) rum gone

step to octavio paz

hear the click of my clock

see the photo of mia's face

on the mantle:

still & beautiful.

i wonder if there are saints/if

one has my name

can i see visions or fell a state

dance the best merengue in town

or land in a new world

pure?

i feel this music/tenor solo by

david murray has my name on it

it's about communion

kin to my soul all these sad friends

on night subways riding towards nothing

new

holding onto old shirrelles' songs

cause something has meaning

Patricia Jones

THE POETRY PROJECT
10th St & 2nd Ave
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First Class Mail