

THE POETRY PROJECT NEWSLETTER

No. 60 December 1978

Vicki Hudspith, Editor

St. Mark's Church

2nd Ave. & 10th St., NYC 10003

READINGS ST. MARK'S: Wednesday nights, hosted by Ron Padgett & Maureen Owen;  
December 6 -- Three English Poets introduced by John Ashbery: Anthony Howell,  
Fiona Templeton, Alan Fuchs Dec 13 -- Barbara Guest & Charles North Dec 20 --  
A Dynamite Program To Be Announced Soon -- Dec 27 -- Jerome Rothenberg\* &  
To Be Announced.

Monday nights hosted by Bob Holman; Dec 4 --Open Reading Dec 11 -- Lois Elaine  
Griffith & Anet Ris in "Sealed In Sevens" with Tom Brown & Steve Tintweiss Dec 18--  
Cassia Berman & POEZ in "If Called By A Panther" (life of a street poet)  
December 25 -- CLOSED----MERRY CHRISTMAS EVERYBODY!!!!!!!!!!!!

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READINGS AROUND TOWN: Japan House, 333 E. 47th St., 7:30pm, Dec 4: Lucien Stryk  
will read translations and will be accompanied by koto music and shakuhachi flute.  
FREE ADMISSION ---- ZU (formerly El Centro) 140 West 24th St., Fridays at 8pm:  
Dec 1 --Gerard Malanga & Rene Ricard Dec 8 --Harris Schiff & Simon Pettet Dec 15--  
Open Reading + Special Famous Guests Dec 22 --Anne Waldman & Eileen Myles Dec 29--  
Rochelle Kraut & Bob Rosenthal ----THE WEST END CAFE, 2911 Bway & 114th St. Sundays  
at 2pm: Dec 3--Tom Johnson & Guy Gauthier Dec 10--Ron Padgett & Jeff Wright  
Dec 17--The Big House reading: Ed Friedman, Phillip Lopate, Ann Lauterbach, Charles  
Bernstein, Ted Greenwald (more of The Big House readings to come in the following  
months) ---- EAR INN, 326 Spring St., Saturdays at 3pm, \$2. cont.--Dec 2--Frank  
Sampieri & Carol Korzeniowsky Dec 9--Peter Seaton & Maureen Owen Dec 16--John Godfrey  
& Kit Robinson Dec 23--Melvyn Freilicher & Hannah Weiner Dec 30--Edmund White &  
Terence Winch

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WORKSHOPS ST. MARK'S: FREE / Workshops begin at 7:30pm / FREE  
Tuesdays with Ed Friedman, 3rd St. Music School, 233 E. 11th Street  
\*Thursday December 28th with Jerome Rothenberg, 3rd St. Music School  
Sundays with Harris Schiff in the Parish Hall, St. Mark's Church / Yes, Harris has  
landed again! Of his workshop, he says it will be an informal traveling workshop  
emphasizing spontaneous composition of poetry & developing skills of public reading  
Nov 30/Dec. 7, 14, 21 --with Edmund Leites, Poetry & Philosophy, 3rd St. Music School

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NOTICE: Paul Violi will be teaching a poetry workshop at S.U.N.Y. beginning Feb. 1979

CETA JOBS 1979: We advise anyone interested in a future position to register with their  
Neighborhood Manpower Service Center. A list of these centers is available at the CETA  
office of the Department of Employment, 220 Church Street, Room 1231, NYC. Later in  
the fall, watch the newspapers for announcements of jobs available to artists.  
- Cultural Council Foundation

DECEMBER 9: This year's first Poetry Project Community Meeting/Parish Hall / first  
Community Election of 2 people to Project Advisory Board. Voting: 10am to 12 noon  
Community Meeting 12 noon to 1:30pm. For further information call 674-0910

.....ANNOUNCEMENTS...PING PONG...PUBLICATIONS...SPECIAL THANKS...ANNOUNCEMENTS..

DECEMBER 10 --- Sunday, 3 00pm: POETS PLAY PING PONG--Upper West Siders vs. Lower East Siders (?) West Village vs. Tribeca & SoHo (?) OR Come and Just Play!!!! Have Fun! at Marty Reisman's Ping Pong Palace, 96th & Broadway (between Pway & West End) for details call YUKI HARTMAN 595-3092.....

NOTICE Forge, a new magazine of poetry, edited by Christopher W. Parker, will be appearing quarterly. The editors are now seeking submissions for the first issue due in early spring. Patches of 3-5 poems should be sent to The Editor, Forge, 47 Murray Street, New York, NY 10007. Subscriptions will be \$6 a year. Individual issues \$1.50.

NOTICE Writers in search of tranquil surroundings should apply now for workspace at the Rockland Center for the Arts, 27 South Greenbush Road, West Nyack NY 10994. Workspace is available at no charge for a period of six months to a year for writers in need of a quiet place to concentrate on a writing project. Submission of a resume, work sample and application are required for admission. For more information, contact Sheila Wolfe at (914) 352 0377.

SPECIAL THANKS in helping with the November issue of the Newsletter to Frances LeFevre, John Vitek, Rose Lesnaff, Yuki Hartman, Gary Lenhart, Gregory Masters & Howard.

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BOOKS RECENTLY RELEASED UNITED ARTISTS FOUR Box 718, Lenox, Mass 01240, single copies \$2/subs \$3 for 5 issues, edited by Bernadette Mayer & Lewis Warsh. United Artists Four contains works of Charlotte Carter, Clark Coolidge, Ted Berrigan & Tom Clark (interview) Lewis Warsh, Bernadette Mayer, Bill Berkson.....the unspeakable visions of the individual, PO Box 430, California, PA 15419. The Beat Journey (\$7.50 paper) interviews letters poems photos galore of Allen Ginsberg, Kerouac, John Clellor Holmes, Carolyn Cassady, Michael & Joanna McClure, McDarragh, Philip Whalen, Huckle Corso, Burroughs (this is a terrific book full of juicy tid-bits on the Beat "scene")...BURNING DECK PRESS, 71 Elm Grove, Providence, RI 02906 (letterpress) a Mask of Motion by lyn hejninian (\$2.50)/ When I Walk I Change the Earth by Ruth Krauss (\$2.50)/ Film Noir by Bruce Andrews (\$2.50) The Countess From Minneapolis by Barbara Guest (\$3.50)/ Aiasphere: le torse and by Christopher Middleton (\$2.50) (Offset) Miners Getting Off The Graveyard by Walter Hall (\$3.50)/ The Capture of Trieste by Tom Ahren (\$3) PRINTED EDITIONS, PO Box 842 Canal St. Stn New York, NY 10013. A Dialectic of Centures: Notes towards a Theory of the New Arts by Dick Higgins (\$7.95 paper) BLACK SPARROW PRESS, PO Box 3993 Santa Barbara, CA 93105: What's for Dinner? by James Schuyler (novel-\$4.50 paper/\$10.hard).....PLUE WIND PRESS 820 Miramar, Berkeley, CA 94707: Night Shift by Maria Gitin (\$3.50 paper) THE SHEEP MEADOW PRESS distributed by Horizon Press, 156 5th Ave NYC 10010 The Moonlit Upper Deckerina by Naomi Lazard (\$7.95, hard).....THUMBA PRESS 2639 Russell St., Berkeley, CA 94705: PRAXIS by Bruce Andrews (\$2. letterpress) ..... HERMES BOOKS, 4514 N. Spaulding, Los Angeles, CA 90036; Between High Tides by Daisy Aldan (\$5.95).....HOLMGANGERS PRESS, 22 Ardith Lane, Alamo, CA 94507: Animal Book by Eric Felderman (\$2.95).....TREACLE PRESS 437 Springtown Road New Paltz, NY 12561: Hymns To The Night by Novalis translated by Dick Higgins (\$3.paper/\$8.hard) also The Book of Persephone by Robert Kelly (cover & photomontage by Carolee Schneeman) (\$3.paper/\$8hard) ANGEL HAIR BOOKS Box 718, Lenox, Mass. 01240: Clairvoyant Journal 1974 by Hannah Weiner (\$3.00 paper)(great cover photo by Tom Ahren).....

Leap Year by Charles North

(Kulchur Press, 261 Fifth Avenue NYC 10016--\$3.50 paper/\$7. hard cover)

Another bonanza from the Kulchur Foundation, Leap Year weighs in at 128 7x10 pages. Accompanied by Paula North's cover and line drawings, it's a gorgeous book, the selected works, 1968-1978, of a writer James Schuyler has called the most stimulating poet of his generation. That remark seems more significant if you consider that Charles North didn't begin writing until he was 25.

The delight is in the poems' unpredictability. An early one, "To The Book," records a list of totally fallacious literary judgements ("Open poetry died with Whitman./Closed poetry died with Yeats./Natural poetry was born and died with Lorca...") that closes on a powerful and serious note. "Chaucer", a block of biography, suddenly turns into a love poem. "King Porter Stomp", a nod to WCM's "Danse Russe", originates in the mundane--the miserable experience of having to get up on a cold night and tend to a wailing baby--and reaches the sublime. "Lineups" is funny, a NYC classic that sportswriter Larry Merchant once devoted two columns to in the New York Post, but when the world's leading diseases take the field you wonder who is on the opposing team. A poem entitled "For Dorothy Wordsworth" contains a parody of "Sailing To Byzantium". Written over five and partly inspired by Rilke's "Duino Elegies". "Elegiacal Studies" abruptly ends half way through the ninth section. But with satisfaction guaranteed:

...Snow, by being too perfect  
gorges itself on its effect. These sunburned lapses  
that stop time at the cost of music, of barreling into ears  
stretched to reach and touch whatever they hear, are  
the drawing and the task, coming together for the sake of the world.

The studies continually play off the weightiness of their conception. They could be simpler, but the challenge is in the rules North sets up for himself--a pool game with only bank shots allowed.

Humor remains a strong element in his poetry without lessening its overall effect. And the joke is usually at the expense of traditional or contemporary devices, the uses or abuses of form and convention. "The Brooklynese Capital" unrolls a list of kennings right in line with Shakespeare's calling the vagina the glove of Venus, or Schuyler naming the ocean the penis shrinker.

"Some versions of Reeds": reeds as in clarinet, clarinet as in North playing one in an orchestra at the age of 13. It's a long poem and begins in a tone of Works and Days didacticism, then changes into a celebration of tonality in music and by inference, in poetry. The instructive passages reappear, deadpan but informative. Images are alternately brief or expansive, direct or intricate. North has a penchant for involved and witty similes and here they achieve baroque heights that are sometimes a joke, sometimes as fascinating as a high wire act. As the poem progresses, the shifts between high and low, cliché and originality, provide a metaphorical link between style and subject, word and thought, "that makes us stop and listen attentively/ to its rushes, and sometimes exceed ourselves." He uses the same technique in "Japanese Woman Beside The Water", where he imitates Matisse's painting in a run-on, "all-over" sentence. It reminds me of Hemingway prolonging a 160-odd word sentence in Death in the Afternoon to move with as well as to describe the grace and suspense of the faena.

There are no duds in the book, yet I wondered why poems such as

"Naming Colors", "Georgia O'Keefe Series" or "Sonneteer" were not included instead of some that were. And one crucial typo should be noted: The numbers above certain words in "Fixture" should have appeared everytime those words do.

Ultimately, the most refreshing thing about the works is how a wonderful sensibility shines through the experimentation, ingenuity, and abstract lyricism. They depend on what Pound meant by "the quality of the affection." They are often very personal and yet don't rely on an unrelieved seriousness or egocentric point of view. Many of the short lyrics are beautiful--stunningly beautiful--love poems. Here's a free sample, one called "From The French":

The color of coral and of your lips  
Tilts the car of night and its silent axles.  
The door is fragrant, the alcove large and dark,  
And there among the flowers, in the dark,  
I find for your fabulous hair a silent bed.

I will show you, meanwhile, the countries of snow  
Where the amorous star devours and dazzles.  
And where a false calm aspires to defraud  
You of your gifts, the night will deafen it  
In notes of your extravagant praise.

Yet to be with you while wanting you in the night  
I allow you some space in which to move.  
If you should appear as a blue flower  
On the drape of the moon the sky will receive you.  
Permitting space and voice to go without reference.

Paul Violi

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CATCH MY BREATH by Michael Lally (\$5.50 paper--Lucky Heart Books,  
Salt Lick Press, P.O. Box 1064, Quincy, Illinois 62301)

CATCH MY BREATH is the vintage Lally anthology. Poetry, "prose", and fiction are included--the earliest at least begun in 1960, when Lally was 18; included are "The South Orange Sonnets", which, it is now clear, are 60's classics on the order of Mick Jagger singing "Satisfaction". Structurally, these divide the book: before it are various "tales from the Jersey Shore", pieces on the Army, loving black women before it became fashionable; after it, several pieces from Lally's activist (left) days, a beautiful poem "Empty Closets", and "Islands", one of my favorite stories.

Although the writing spans 14 years, the early work never sounds "immature", no sign of author groping for style. It is already there. The topically-oriented pieces continue to work, even those on the 60's which, as Lally has often remarked, are further away than the 50's. This can only be due to the fact that, although partisan, he is neither sentimental nor rhetorical. (i.e. try reading Soul On Ice today.) There

is the feeling of continual freshness, most remarkable in the oft-heard "Sonnets". The occasional awkward lines are consistently rescued by Lally's verbal pizzazz. There is the sense of history (personal historical) that is both the source of much of Lally's popularity and, conversely, his dismissal in certain circles: "just another autobiographical poet." Or: the reverse snobbism of those born on the "wrong side of the tracks

Lally's "autobiographical" work is not confessional--no catharsis, either on his part or the reader's is called for. Less obvious is the structural function of Lally's continual insistence on anchoring himself (chronologically, geographically, politically, sexually): being up-front about his perspective and his prejudices. Lally tries very hard not to pull the wool over anybody's eyes; he aims for an intelligent, participatory reader. Not that his work is "objective", or strives to be; the evaluative is embedded in his prose, but the clarification of perspective makes it possible for a reader to separate oneself from that aspect of the work--even to disagree with it--without making it necessary for them to cease listening.

"Anchoring" of other sorts is a standard fictional device, a way to deal with that old fiction bug-boo: point-of-view. There are both "insincere" narrators (Nabokov likes these); and "sincere" ones, like Isaac Bashevis Singer, who in most of his stories will remark that he writes in Yiddish that he fled from Eastern Europe, etc. Lally also uses personal history and like Gertrude Stein in The Making of Americans he unselfconsciously makes reference to the act of writing: "I dont (sic) know, is that the way I felt then?" "So what am I writing all this for?" "This is how it happened."

But these casual forms of storytelling, the insistence on place and time and language, syntax, and thought patterns of specific places and times do have one drawback for Lally. Despite the curious notion of some writers and critics that Lally just scribbles willy-nilly out of his head onto the page, the technique is anything but. Lally the narrator, does not transcribe "raw material" but formally organizes a written story as if it were a spoken one--with all the personal digressions and asides this implies. It is this which makes Lally's narrative unusual, not the hipster/black/greaser talk which in fact appears rather rarely, and usually in dialogue. Now, this can be called a "con job", "insincere" to employ the rhythms of one talking off the top of one's hat. But this is a formal convention, a choice, valid as any other, not of course the "ultimate" one--for the clues to sincerity will always lie off the page. That people do suspect Lally of not polishing his work is an indication of how well this convention works.

Why Lally uses this convention is a clue to something significant about his work, his desire to be "accessible", which I believe he is. It is a pity this book will only reach the standard small press audience. Lally writes for a larger audience than the one he currently has, for his concerns are not strictly "professional" (aesthetic). And yet, there is a large conceptual gap that separates Lally from other poets whose concerns and/or public persona superficially seem to resemble his. Lally, for all his charisma and energy, aims for an entirely different relationship with his audience than such virtuosos as Patti Smith, John Giorno, Anne Waldman. Whereas they aim to transport reader/listener into a kind of emotional trance high, a unification with themselves as writer/performer--Lally aims for separation, judgment, the division of reader's intelligence from his own, the active direction of it to his work. It is what his "anchoring" is all about: here I am, there

you are, we are not the same, nonetheless, maybe I can show you something.

Although Lally's work is "accessible", the prose/fiction in this book is not especially so. Certainly it is less "readable" than his poetry, which has on more than one occasion left me talking and writing in his rhythms. The work must be approached with patience, the readers willing to conform their mind to its contours, rather than waiting to be seduced. Thus the aptness of the title, CATCH MY BREATH, It's up to the readers, who will no doubt smile as they read the final sentence: "The crowds cheer."  
 ---Jane DeLynn

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Tomb

I look to the depths  
 as I try to write,  
 and am still  
 on the surface  
 when they are not there,  
 close to buildings sky and roofs  
 of those across the way  
 in irritating proximity  
 to so many of those moments  
 of literary crisis, that which entails  
 what actually got done  
 then cut off like the sun  
 which gets lost early this time of year  
 behind the Kennedy Valve Building  
 no longer the Kennedy Valve Building  
 on a spot no longer owned by Aaron Burr.

Tony Towle

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Nothing For You by Ted Berrigan (Angel Hair Books, Box 718, Lenox, Mass)  
 (cover & frontispiece by George Schneeman)

This is Berrigan's tenth book. These plain-speaking, rough & graceful undated poems speak to us of travel, devotion, the high art of living (read that as survival) and the artliness of survival (read that as enjoyment), horniness, language and dope fun. Frequently they have an illustrative feeling, as the poet puts a candle behind our eyes and stories go flooding out on a wall in front of us. Berrigan is fascinated with the well-articulated line. Several times I got the feeling that these works were born under great and sensitive pressure.

Poet squeezes the right word(s) to complete his poem. Right on the right word, beat, emphasis or notion-flash. Sensation is the key word here. As sensational as its eventual product.

As the Ace Modern Liberator of Sonnets there are several here. "One, London" being the most interesting of these. As this poet has mined the diamond littered turf of the sonnet, he continues to write works that look like sonnets. Fifteen line poems, thirteen line poems. "In Anne's Place" is an excellent example of this tendency.

However, each poem is treated as its own situation, so there is a great variety of method & look. The travel pieces seem the most inspired. "London Aire" and "Three Poems" flow like graceful quilts upon the unblemished pages.

These are poems that never fall comfortably into a set pattern or type. They are maverick works, by a poet interested in so many realms of experience and intelligence that they just naturally ooze out of him. "Monolith" seems to have something in common with the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E group while the totally blissful and wildly inspiring "Written On Red Roses & Yellow Light" ignites the heart throb to a sonic pitch.

One gets flashes of Charles Olson and Frank O'Hara. But that's just it, flashes. Berrigan is so much his own poet, that if you let him, he'll intoxicate you with what Phil Whalen calls "Magic and lunacy, poetry spells and music".

Being privy to new poems aside, I've seen the book length version of "Train Ride", and when it comes to the pill poems, Ted Berrigan goes bodiless. Read that as be-yond.

Nothing For You takes its place. Nine-hundred pound angels do not ignore him.

---Jim Brodey

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#### VAMPIRE POEM

Deepening inanimate unfairness  
I hear them singing

Jack Kimball

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NEWS GOSSIP:NEWS GOSSIP:NEWS GOSSIP:NEWS GOSSIP:NEWS GOSSIP:NEWS GOSSIP:NEWS GOSSIP

Our foreign correspondant Simon Shouchat will be reporting to us on poetry and the state of the art in China very soon::HELLO SIMON!!!!!!

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News on Rocky Flats trials of Allen Ginsberg, Daniel Ellsberg & others coming in the January Newsletter, NO NUKES--

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The Fire Benefit for St. Marks Church at CEGB's was a huge success, notorious performer/poets were; Richard Hell & the Voidoids, Elvis Costello, Anne Waldman, Andrei Voznesensky, Ted Berrigan (MC) Ginsberg, Padgett, Maureen Owen & others. Eavesdropper "X" reports that Lita Hornick said she had the most fun in her life =====WHEW=====

## The Geminids

I can see it in the set of furniture  
the curve of ornaments against the wall  
a stepping off place, from what is  
known to what is not  
and the body there, in its water  
swimming  
picks up the threads  
ferries the mind home listening  
for meteors  
as though a chord were struck  
and one saw it, green  
some vast piano.

Janine Pommy Vega

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