

THE POETRY PROJECT NEWSLETTER
No. 69 November 1979
Vicki Hudspith, Editor
St. Mark's Church
2nd Ave. & 10th St. NYC 10003

READINGS AT ST. MARK'S: Wednesday Nights hosted by Ron Padgett & Maureen Owen:
November 7-- Ahmos Zu Bolton and Jeff Wright. November 14-- Will Bennett and
Karen Edwards. November 21-- Lorenzo Thomas and Barbara Barg. November 28--
Ishmael Reed and Steve Levine.

Monday Nights hosted by Bob Holman: November 5-- Open Reading. Nov 12--
Zoe Best, Brenda Connor-Bey and Roland Legiardi-Laura. Nov 19-- Richard Bandanza
and Michael Castro. Nov 26-- Kevin Jeffery Clarke and Peter Rose.

WORKSHOPS AT ST. MARK'S: FREE/WRITING WORKSHOPS/FREE/Note: With the exception
of the Sunday workshop, all begin at 7:30 pm and are held at the Third Street
Music School, 235 East 11th St., NYC.

Tuesdays-- October 16 thru January 15 with Eileen Myles. January 22 thru April 8
with Charles Bernstein. April 15 thru June 24 with Jamie MacInnis.

Thursday-- November 29 A special one-time workshop with Ishmael Reed.

Fridays-- Poetry Writing Workshop with Alice Notley.

Sundays-- Poetry Writing Workshop with Harris Schiff/ 6pm in the St. Mark's
Parish Hall.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: ANNOUNCEMENTS: ANNOUNCEMENTS: ANNOUNCEMENTS: ANNOUNCEMENTS

November 2-- There will be a special reading by Robert Bly, at 8:00pm, to be held
at the Ethical Culture Society, 2 West 64th St., New York City. Tickets are
\$5.00 each for the general public.

SOLICITATION FOR WORK: UROBOROS, a literary review published by Allegany
Mountain Press, 111 North Tenth Street, Olean, New York 14760. Essays, poetry,
fiction & graphics on the topic of creative processes i.e. dreams, archetype,
altered states of consciousness (ed:*click*). Submissions should symbolize
the creative process via structure, images, theme, etc. SASE required.

THE NATIONAL POETRY SERIES, 284 Fifth Avenue, NYC 10001. Write for information
or rules. Deadline: March 15, 1980.

HOT OFF THE PRESS: Jonathan Aitken, 36, a member of the British Parliament,
when accused of writing love poems responded publicly by saying he was "very
confused" by the reports of his expressing his feelings in verse: "I'm not
a poet. I've never written a poem in my life. I'm a respectably engaged man."
(excerpted from the New York Post)

THE WORLD (32) edited by John Yau should be out in early November. It will
contain work by both writers and artists. It will cost a dollar and be worth
every peso. Copies may be obtained by writing The Poetry Project, c/o John Yau.

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SPECIAL THANKS DEPT: A call of panic went out. A Chic Champagne Collation ensued, with the following celebrities in attendance: Frances LeFevre, Madeleine Keller, Tom Weigel, Greg Masters, Didi Susan Dubelyew and her 7 month old baby daughter Erinn, Elinor Nauen recently returned from her Far Western tour, Eileen Myles phantom reporter of Associated Poets Press, eminent cartoonist and mechanical artist Chassler, Rose "Metropolitan" Lesniak, Barbara Barg the Raven Haired Beauty, Barbara "Saint Joan" McKay, Steve Levine special mystery guest, Ann Rower direct from the French Riviera, and Joni Miller, famous Rubber Stamp Heiress who rubber stamped 1000 collector editions of the October Newsletter. What an event! To get on the invitation list- call the Project Office 674-0910 for more information.

AFTER YOU

It is a very long walk
over hill and dale
and through the entertainment capitols of the world
to the dump.

Bill Berkson

BOOKS RECENTLY RELEASED: p=paperback, h=hardback, npl=no price listed.

**DEAD DUKE BOOKS, c/o G. Masters, 437 East 12th St. #26, NYC 10009: Polar Ode by Eileen Myles and Anne Waldman. Coast to Coast Collaboration completed for reading at Zu, NYC last December, printed here in its entirety. Cover by Steve Levine. (\$2p).

**BLACK SPARROW PRESS, P.O.Box 3993, Santa Barbara, Calif 93105: Testimony Vol.2 by Charles Reznikoff (\$6p/\$14h). Play The Piano Like A Percussion Instrument Until The Fingers Begin To Bleed A Bit by Charles Bukowski (\$4p/\$14h). Don Juan or, The Continuum of the Libido by Paul Goodman (\$5p/\$14h).

**FRONTWARD BOOKS, c/o R. Kraut, 334 East 11th St. #16, NYC: Hog Wild by Susie Timmons. Covers and drawings by Susie Timmons (\$1p). Poems by Daniel Krakauer. Cover by Alice Notley. (\$1p). Small Poems To God by Neil Hackman. Cover by Rudy Burckhardt. (\$1p).

**SWAMP PRESS, 4 Bugbee Rd., Oneonta, N.Y. 13820: Anchors of Light by Alice Fulton. Beautiful handset & letterpress book. Hardcover illustrated by Gary Tynski. (\$3p/\$13h).

**CODA PRESS, INC., 700 West Badger Road, Suite 101, Madison, WI 53713: Holy Smoke by Fanny Howe (\$3.95p). Illustrated by Colleen McCallion.

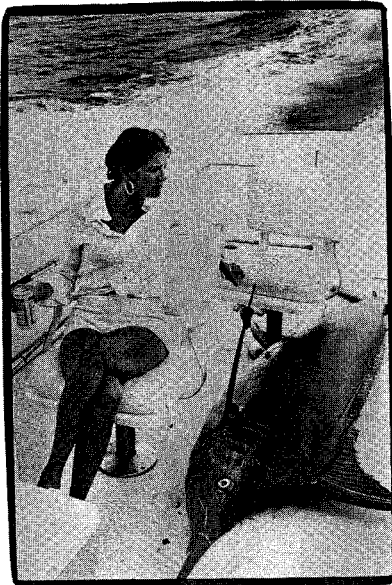
**RELEASE PRESS, 411 Clinton St., Brooklyn, N.Y. 11231: On Sundays We Visit The In-Laws by Steven Schrader (fiction/\$3p).

**COMMUNITY DOCUMENTATION WORKSHOP, St. Mark's Church-In-the-Bowery, 10th St. and 2nd Ave., NYC 10003: Long Road from Lares by David Perez/An Oral History (autobiographical/no price listed).

**VIKING PENGUIN INC., 625 Madison Avenue, NYC 10022: New & Selected Poems by Irving Feldman (\$7.95p/\$15h).

The Poets' Encyclopedia--A Special Issue of Unmuzzled Ox edited by Michael Andre and Erika Rothenberg. (\$4.95 paper/\$14.95 hardback--paperback is part of subscription price of \$8.00 for 4 issues). 105 Hudson Street, New York, NY 10013

FISH



See Woman

--Walter de Maria

FRAME OF REFERENCE

As the author's chair was empty, we sat in it, assuming all authority. Poets are the best authors. And here their business is to examine, not the individual, but the species, to remark general properties and large appearances. Audacious! The Poets imagine all knowledge; and thus their Encyclopedia contains everything worth knowing or imagining. Everything? The poet, of course, does not number the streaks of the tulip, or describe the different shades of the verdure of the forest. Everything is seen as a part of a Whole.

--Michael Andre

Ideas are failed thoughts.

--Vicki Hudspith

GENIUS

Genius:--I'm the big cheese!--we'll all die of that disease. --Arthur Rimbaud
a working by Ursule Molinaro

LOVER

When he came back to be with her, she wanted him to feel less guilty for having left her. She borrowed ten dollars, bought long stemmed roses & placed them conspicuously. When he asked, she said they were from a new lover.

--Carolee Schneemann

MONEY

The first time I got money I bought one pistachio nut and then when I got more money I started taking my dog to a better beauty salon and going out with girls. It's great to buy

friends. I don't think there's anything wrong with having a lot of money and attracting people with it. Look who you're attracting: everybody.

--Andy Warhol

tape by Jeff Goldberg

NOT

Not wanted in fifty states.

--Michael Brownstein

REVIEW

A journalistic statement about what the work being discussed is not and about who the reviewer is.

--Dick Higgins

SHERRY

Julius Caesar cut from his Mother's womb

caedere to cut off (caesura)

Sanskrit khidāti (tear)

Jack Wilson--Woroka--"cutter"
(vajrachedika--Diamond--"cutter")

Caesar to Kaiser to Tsesari, Tear

And a town in Spain, Caesaris
became Xeres, Jerez,

and the English sd,
sherry.

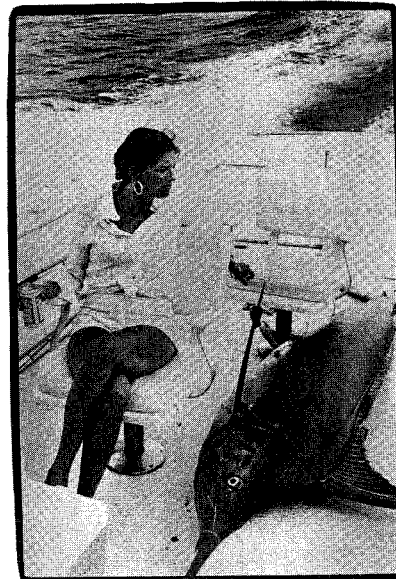
--Gary Snyder

UNMUZZLED OX

One morning, after leaving my copy on a magnificent porch all night, a Maine fog rolled in, leaving the pages suitably warped. Brash & sophisticated. Amusingly pornographic! Coherently alphabetical! Remedy for all recent illnesses, distressing dinners and house-guests.

--Vicki Hudspith

WOMAN



See Fish

--Walter de Maria

Interview with Nick Piombino (parts of Call Collect, a book-length collage, have appeared in Slit Wrist (3/4), 100 Posters (Dec. 1978), and 432 Review (Number 4). He currently lives in Brooklyn, N.Y.).

Vicki Hudspith: Would you talk about the collage work you've been doing?

Nick Piombino: Yes. Well, many writers have to deal with the issue of fragments and fragmentation of effort--where you may be working on a whole bunch of different ideas at one time. The fragment seems to be an obsession with modern writers, and the collage mode offers a writer a sense of integration.

V.H.: When did the visual element work its way into your fragments of writing?

N.P.: I started making collages in Italy when I was living there in 1969. I went there to write and found that I had more time on my hands than writing ideas. I did the first collages on a plaster base that an artist friend made for me. The collage became a kind of synesthetic expression--a way that I could experiment with the language, and a way to give a collage more than purely visual impact. I would take written fragments and construct them as I might construct a visual collage--thinking of sections of writing in a visual way yet bearing in mind the meaning of each fragment as part of the actual theme. Then, when I was asked to publish things, I wouldn't send a long piece. Instead, I would take parts of various pieces and construct a collage: each section had its own integrity but could run off in a way and each would speak to the other. I have collages that I derive writing from and writing that I derive ideas to do collages from. So, you see, I have this kind of dialogue with my work. In the past two, almost three years, I've been working intensively with photographer Roland Antonelli. He takes super close-ups of sections of a collage, and from that, we recycle fragmented parts.

V.H.: Do you sometimes begin Collage Number One with an overall photograph and use a section of it later on, as a close-up, in Collage Number Two?

N.P.: That's right, you got it. That was the first set, and it was in the Milan show. We did 40 eight-by-ten expansions of one collage, and six of them were in the show. Roland then did about 40 or 50 slides, close-ups, and these will be enlarged to poster size. Some people think that collage is finished. I don't really feel that way. It's a blueprint for collaboration between artists. People don't want to do only one kind of art form any longer.

V.H.: Some of that negative reaction seems to be toward the word "collage," which for me is a 1960s word that carries a connotation of a limited kind of random thought. The way you're approaching collage seems more incisive and studied....

N.P.: Right, this is not just putting down pictures to see what they'll look like. Lately, I've been working with press type on glass and pressing out fragments of words on glass--a kind of visual writing or hieroglyph making. I put paper behind the glass so that the light comes through onto the paper. Here again is a way of seeing language outside the mode of the page. Collage works as different ways of imagining text. We're coming up with a new kind of lexicon and our own vocabulary for speaking about these things.

Interview with Diane Wakoski (poet, teacher and lecturer, living in Michigan).

Vicki Hudspith: What work are you doing currently?

Diane Wakoski: I have a collection of poems called Cap of Darkness, which will be published in February by Black Sparrow. I'm also working on a long section of Greed, Part 12 that contains prose, and also has poems about an encounter with George Washington out in the desert.

V.H.: Would you talk about your series of George Washington poems?

D.W.: I've been writing these poems off and on for years, and they embody my whole sense of what it means to be an American, and I find that in the figure of George Washington. He's a combination of the ridiculous and the absurd and of all the virtues that somehow compensate for being that way. This is the first time I've put George Washington in a Greed poem. So I'm bringing my two series together, although it's not the end. Black Sparrow is going to reprint all the Greeds, which will be a big publishing event--for me at any rate. They had wanted to print them all together before, but I said not till I finish. Then I decided I never wanted to finish, but I don't write more than one Greed every four or five years.

V.H.: I am staggered by your prodigiousness as a writer. Does one have to be very disciplined to write as much as you do?

D.W.: One has to be obsessive and/or compulsive. One does not have to be disciplined. I'm not a person who can or wants to write every day. I write because I need to write and I therefore write when I need to write.

V.H.: In the early sixties you were part of a thriving community of writers on the Lower East Side. How do you feel now about that time in your life?

D.W.: The sixties in New York were very much like the early twenties in Paris. It was the beginning of my career as a poet. I can't think of any better fortune to happen to a young writer or artist than to have been alive during one decade of a century that will be looked upon as a great one for art- and to have been in the city where it all happened.

V.H.: Who are you reading right now?

D.W.: I'm reading Richard Shelton's new book. I've always been interested in his work, and now I think he's moving more toward narrative, which to me has always been the mainstream of contemporary American poetry. In the late 1950s and early 1960s I was one of those trying to wrench the academic establishment away from the notion of the English lyric. The lyric is still prevalent, even though we've had three decades of poetry moving toward narrative. William Carlos Williams certainly moved far away from the lyric, although he worked from that as a model. I'm very interested in poets who are using the narrative in a unique way. Even though I too love Roethke, I think he's an anachronism rather than part of the mainstream. A book that I truly admire is Frank Bidart's Book of the Body. In it is "Ellen West," a long, dramatic, narrative poem about a woman who has anorexia nervosa. It brings together so much of the craziness of our culture. He underscores the old transcendental tradition--to put it one way--the desire to be without a body, to transcend your body. This is something I've wished for all my life. The irony, of course, is that I've become a poet of the body! I've wanted to abandon my body and have now created this fantasy world of the body! But "Ellen West" points up the entire 20th-century technological confusion between our love of material things and our disdain of them. It seems to me a crucial theme of the 20th-century. I'm so envious of that poem. I'd give anything to have written it. The narrative is innovative, and it pursues themes that I myself am so interested in. I don't really know what to do personally as a writer in terms of that poem. In one sense it challenges me: it's a poem that I feel I must top, and I don't mean this literally. In another sense, I feel I must write something comparable that would make me stop feeling envious. That poem has been on my mind now for two years. I admire its narrative skill on top of all the things he's doing intellectually.

Tennessee Williams in Tangier by Mohamed Choukri. Translated by Paul Bowles. (Cadmus Editions, P.O. Box 4725, Santa Barbara, CA 93103, \$6.00 paper).

This book will make New York's humidity go dusty as cafe life in Tangier takes over and Tennessee Williams emerges from his historical literary mystique. Mohamed Choukri's knowledge of Williams' work is as considerable as his insistence upon approaching the man personally: Tennessee wanted to buy a rubber bathing-cap, and we went from one shop to another along the Boulevard, looking for it. All the caps they had were for women. Each time they brought out one of those he burst into laughter. Finally in one place the proprietor showed him several kinds. One had a wig attached. The hair looked like the fur of a baby donkey. He held onto it, laughing. When he caught his breath, he exclaimed: The place to wear this is the Cafe de Paris!...I was thinking that I had never seen a writer who was as amusing as Tennessee, and that nonetheless he was the man who had written Summer and Smoke and Cat on a Hot Tin Roof.

I liked the book's emphasis on encountering and documenting encounters by Choukri, author also of Genet in Tangier, an equally interesting portrait though not as candid perhaps as a result of knowing Genet previously. Williams on the other hand is met for the first time on page one (in a cafe of course) and the entire acquaintance takes place within the book.

Translator Paul Bowles makes Choukri quite accessible and lively to read in English. The language is simple and bare: Tennessee laughed. His friend had not budged. He seemed to be congealed.

Choukri never uses quotation marks to signal beginnings or ends of conversation. Though confusing at first, with so many quotes being used, this device gives the speaking voices an equal surface with the descriptions of sitting in cafes or walking with Williams. Talking just isn't any bigger deal than being with Williams.

Tangier is home for Choukri, not an exotic opiate and there is a sense of suspended time as one would expect in Morocco: He began to read. I divided my time between looking around the tea-room and day-dreaming. As he finished reading each page he passed it to me. Sometimes I read an entire line, and sometimes only a word here and there. The story took place in Italy. I read and took sips of my drink...The people at the other tables spoke in very low voices and the soft music that came out of the walls was calming. Now and then a car or motorcycle went past. The rest of the time it was quiet. Every page took Tennessee several minutes to read. Each sip of my drink or puff on my cigarette or taste of my pastry killed a moment of time. Now and then Tennessee chuckled to himself.

It is easy to forget that this encounter takes place over a brief three weeks. One loses track as time drags out in the cafes. It's not a long book, it reads smoothly, quickly, but you want the immersion to last longer, even weeks.

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For the second year The Kulchur Foundation has provided a generous grant to the Poetry Project, for "...continued indispensable and unequalled service to the poetry community." Thank you, again!

The following essay by Bill Zavatsky is based on an interview with Vicki Hudspeth. He is the author of Theories of Rain and Other Poems, director of SUN and lives in New York City.

One of the things that's been disturbing me in recent years is that most of the new poetry I read makes absolutely no emotional impact on me. After questioning myself, I've concluded that it's not my problem; most poets don't seem to care if their work affects the reader. In fact, most poets have sold themselves a bill of goods which they've never bothered to question: that they are the more articulate ones, more in touch with their own feelings and the feelings of others. In short, they've swallowed Pound's notion that "Artists are the antennae of the race." Some are, but I'm more and more convinced that the majority of poets are just as out of touch with their feeling-lives as those who buy self-help manuals.

Since I've just turned thirty-six, I'm also interested in how one stays alive as a writer of poetry. One strategy--a New York School favorite--is to remain perpetually adolescent, a condition encouraged by our society. Part and parcel of this attitude is an obsession with image, metaphor. But beyond a certain age the impulse to pile image upon image quiets down--the "Dylan Thomas Problem" one might call it. By his late twenties or early thirties the image-poet must look for other channels of expression because the fabric of images seems increasingly forced, artificial. At about this time many of the writers who dominated their poetry scene disappear, or their work experiences a dramatic falling-off in quality. When the conflicts or tensions that originally led them to write--job, sex, marriage, education, the struggle for a style and content--have to a large extent stabilized, these poets "lose their inspiration." So if a poet doesn't build other strategies, if he's staked it all on image, on recording the tiny flashes in his mind, if he's only been cultivating a relationship with language to the detriment of the life-experience contained in his work, he finds himself in trouble. And these later strategies--those of maturity--can't depend on an adolescent joie de vivre. I'm being critical, but I don't see much difference in other "schools."

Most of the younger New York School poets have a contempt for the daily give-and-take of experience which masks itself as a contempt for content. They're convinced it's some kind of esthetic crime to write poems about something, something other than language. They've convinced themselves that content will drag along in the wake of language, their main target. I think that's a crucial error. It's based on the notion that language-activity is more viable than experience itself. For me, language is inextricably bound up with meaning, and meaning is also held in contempt by many of the younger poets because that's exactly where all the hard questions come up: who am I, what has happened to me, what have I done with my life, where am I going? It's easy to take flight from these questions into an obsession with language-texture, with surface. The New York School poets produce the most beautifully finished poems in America, impeccable language-objects. That doesn't mean they produce the most deeply felt or most moving pieces of writing. The "Language Poets" have banished meaning from the poem--at least to the exclusion of any feeling or life-connectedness I can find--and content themselves with exercises in formal relationship--textures, sound, visual arrangement, etc. This isn't anything but a new formalism, and in my opinion, renders their work completely academic--utterly intellectual stuff. Which is why it fails to move me.

There's also a problem in the notion of a literary "scene" itself. Scenes create energy, they help young writers learn quickly, but they also breed dependency. A young writer will keep writing to stay afloat in a scene, even if his or her work is empty. Scenes are also notoriously uncritical of themselves, at least in America. Without self-criticism, at least, a poet has no future. It's easy to stay popular in a scene by shutting up about things which desperately need to be addressed--love, sex, death, friendship, anger. There aren't many poems around about these things--at least not from the younger New York School writers. Which leads back to the first thing I said: how can a writer expect to move his or her reader unless he's willing to take chances with the very stuff of his own emotional life? --BILL ZAVATSKY

chrysanthemum porch

by an open dark outdoors myriads to us,
a world where a jar stands among trees
and several scent-heads bump among themselves,
autumn for a summer porch.

and darker odors chewable hang
a small snag away
over a blunt rim
wise not to try the room today
and frighten the chair
dropped on all fours out there.

among gauzes of motion wind slams the rug
i crawl towards leaves or door.
alarmed, the chair falls over.
a shadowy corner, flowers go radiant and ridiculous
but i get my teeth in them, all in good time

-- Ann Kim

St. Mark's Church In-the-Bowery
The Poetry Project
10th St. & 2nd Ave.
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