

Dirt

by Gillian McCain

Ten-year-old **Anna Lee Kaye** came up to me at the **Paul Williams/ Cindy Lee Berryhill** reading and said, "Don't you usually wear crushed velvet?" "Yeah," I said, "But I'm into leather now." "Oh," she replied. She sounded so disappointed that I wanted to rush home and change. Dad **Lenny** was there giving support to Paul, who he told me afterwards had more impact on his rock writing than anyone, and to Cindy, whose second album, *Naked Movie Star* he produced. Cindy sang some amazing songs, and Paul was the human jukebox asking for requests from his book, *The One Hundred Best Singles*. It was a great evening, and Cindy and Paul are the best; if everyone in California is as nice as them maybe it's time I went out there. Speaking of Californians, **Roy Manzarek** and **Michael McClure** opened for **Lenny Kaye** and **Jim Carroll** at the Bottom Line in October. McClure and Manzarek performed the exact same show that they gave at NYU about four years back, and plugged Michael's new book, their new CD (even giving directions to Tower Records which is practically across the street) and of course, their alliance with that "genius" poet **Jim Morrison**. A drunk girl at the next table was showing her friends her locket filled with dirt from Morrison's grave. Thank God for Lenny and Jim. Jim read a hilarious story that's going to appear in his upcom-

ing book published by Penguin, and knocked me out with a poem called "Why I Am Not **Kurt Schwitters**." Lenny and Jim performed a song called "Still Life" that was just beautiful. Those two should be recording an album together. At the **Epiphany Albums: The Record That Changed My Life** reading at Fez **Carl Watson** read his brilliant **Janis Joplin** piece with the classic phrase, "**Hank Williams-Patsy Cline** gestalt." **Jose Padua** read his equally brilliant piece on **The Silver Convention's Fly Robin Fly**. **Kim France** gave a great reading with a brilliant line about the "archival tendencies of the male rock critic." **Jordan Davis** read a piece naming every record that didn't change his life, every record that may have changed his life, and every record that definitely changed his life. **Ed Friedman** read a piece comparing the effect of Mr. Tam-bourine Man on his life with a dog barking on **David Berkowitz's** life. He also sang a song called *Kung Fu Beach* with that amazingly sweet voice of his, and it was news to me that he used to play with **The Love of Life Orchestra**. By the way, the second issue of **MILK** will be out by December, and the theme is *The Record That Changed My Life*—with monumental works by **Ed, Carl, Jose, Lenny Kaye, Aurelie Sheehan, Ann Rower, Silvia Sanza** and more. Speaking of Silvia Sanza, her second novel on *Serpent's*

Tail, Twice Real, has recently hit the book stores and it's just as much a masterpiece as her debut, *Alex Wants to Call it Love*. I love that she continues on with some of the first novel's characters. I just wish she could write faster, because I'd like to live in Silvia's world as much as possible. What is **BLAM!** you ask? **BLAM!** is the first endeavor of **NecroEnemaAmalgamated**, a company consisting of writer, hypermedia designer, junk-mail producer and victim surrogacy proponent **Eric Swenson** and *ArtForum* writer **Keith Seward**. Its a hyper-media art & literature magazine that is going to be released on CD Rom in November, so look for it everywhere. Contributors include: **Janice Johnson, Tom Metzger, George Bataille, Kim Gordon, Lydia Lunch**, and more. The Friday Night Events series will be hosting an evening of Blam on Jan. 28; some of the contributors will read their works and then discuss the impact of hyper-media on the literary community—also, a **BLAM** demo will be set up in some corner of the parish hall. **Greg Masters** tells me that **Simon Pettet** has a beautiful corn husk hanging on his door. Is it true that the **Unbearables** are boycotting **No Bar?** Rumor has it that **Darius James' Negrophobia** might be produced as a play in California. A flake of dirt: N.Y.U. is holding a Beat Writing conference in the spring. What is the **MTV Spoken Word Tour?** I think **Steve Levine** wants **DIRT** to be nastier; he told me at the Towle/ North reading that it's a puff piece. **Sparrow**

tells me that his *Translations of New Yorker Poems into Plain English* has really taken off—**Eileen Myles** gave it to her writing students as an assignment. Sparrow will be heading a sit-in at *The New Yorker* sometime in November. Meanwhile, the **One Size Fits All Movement**—the first movement in history that absolutely everyone can join (as all that is required is one's name and shoe size)—continues to grow. **Allen Ginsberg** became a member, writing: "My hopes for the One Size Fits All Movement are infinite as space itself." **Hal Sirowitz** spread the doctrine in Scotland and Paris, and Sparrow met with Clergy for Peace in Jerusalem, an organization attempting a rapprochement between Jews and Palestinians. Five weeks after he explained One Size Fits All to them, there was a monumental breakthrough in the **Arab-Israeli peace talks!** For further information contact Sparrow at 475-5312. Sweet **P.J. Mark** dropped off the first issue of his literary mag (**Feed.**) which I haven't had a chance to read yet but it looks amazing—an absolutely great photo spread called *I Don't Feel So Good* by **Steve Wiley** is the highlight for me so far. Written work by **Michael J. Mintz, Pamela Hughes, David Roby** and more. Please get a hold of **Elizabeth Cohen's** book of poems *Impossible Furniture* (Nightshade Press, PO Box 76, Troy, Maine 04987). Beautiful poems that make you jump right back into kid-dom again. The best chap-book of the year award goes to
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Hauntings of a Knewer Gun:

A Report from the Buffalo Festival of New Poetry, by Tony Door

For those of you who do not have a copy of *The Poetry Project Newsletter* Oct./Nov. 93 Vol. #151 handy, & were just as startled by the abrupt ending of this account (due to lack of space) as I; let me briefly recapture the "feel" of that note worthy gathering, in a local which some less generous have termed—the "mistake on lake."

Upon last writing, I had sought (much as Charles Darwin might have sought upon first reaching his *archipelago galapagos*) to looked about me, thinking to categorize & observe.

In short, those present did not resemble that mass of people who reek "poetry," but are interested in none but their own, whom you might see on any given night at the mul-

titude of abysmal Open Mike abominations that abound in this abrasive & truculent city. Also absent were those Neo-Beats & other Street-Wise types who are found to congregate at the *Nuyorican* on any given **Thursday**, in any given year. Nor were there many in attendance that you would regularly encounter at *St. Marks* in the hipster crowds who frequent that venue on **Monday** or **Friday**. Nor even those of the **Wednesday** night *John Yau* reduced size crowd that you get to see full blown at the occasional *92nd Street Why*. Much more so, these poets were non-specifically cut from the fabric of a *Rob Fitterman*-run **Saturday** afternoon at the *Ear Inn*. This is not to say everyone from the

Ear went, just that if you went to the *Ear* you would not be surprised to see any one of them. & almost without exception, those people whom I did know who attended *Bluffalot*, I have met at the *Ear*.

Then I began, as any member of the Z/D Generation might, a short list of those moments when the participants stood out in high relief against the background of their ideas. These moments stand in my mind like beacons: Iconographic representations, if you will, of the larger arguments which have yet to be formulated & judgment passed on. For the events themselves let this description stand as a partial listing of the shape of
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I want to *cleans* it in an icy wind.
 And what *kind of tripe* is that?
 Still, last night I *did wish*—
 no, that's *my business* and I
 don't *wish it now*. "Your poems,"
 a *dunkhead* said, "have grown
 more *open*." I don't want to be open,
 merely to *say, to see and say, things*
 as they are. That at my elbow
 there is a *wicker table*. Hortus
 Second says a *book*. The fields
 beyond the *feeding sparrows* are
 brown, *palely brown* yet with an
inward glow
 like that of *someone of a frank good*
nature
 whom you trust. I want to hear the
music
 hanging in the air and drink my
Coca-Cola. The sun is off me now,
 the sky begins to *color up*, the air
 in here is filled with *wildly flying*
notes.
 Yes, the sun moves off to the right
 and prepares to *sink, setting*,
 beyond the *dunes, an ocean on fire*.

There's still some talk around about the short poem, whether or not it's still valid, still capable of the surprises poetry (on those rare occasions) can generate. One of the greatest pleasures of the *Collected* is that it makes Schuyler's short poems, early middle and late, available to everyone, regardless of race, color, sex, or preoccupations with validity. The remarkable long poems are here too. What a pearl of a *Collected Poems* to have around to remind one what poetry is, particularly now that Schuyler's other books are close to falling apart from being read over and over.

—Charles North

Of all the poetic lines his are the most something, maybe correct, the best, the

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crystal lithium poem—quite gone when christened, maybe best when compared never. As exact as in pencil motionless among the sphere of all stuff & nouns that want to be nouns, nouns that are full of admiration for a particular time, a pretty inevitable as Zukofsky arms us for, Jamesful Schuyfills fulfills all the criteria in Z's test of poetry: grace & energy & sound measure & meaning, impact content & inevitability, emotion conviction and perception. And both having the flower-loving too. It seemed to us he invented the thinking of everything starting with morning swinging able past sleep to the nonviolent necessary, i love you necessary, and he is kept exempt, to write to happen as we are all beholders and constrictions never matter, on a page a lot of letters lie in bed walking around or seasons stopping in today to advise us to imitate him.

—Bernadette Mayer

Letter to the Editor

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snide, patronizing reference to "his reputation for casually tossing off his funny, urbane, boldly straight-from-the-heart 'I do this I do that' poems." Then thrown in as a clincher, this gratuitous comment: "The famous nonchalance now looks to have been deceptive."

Well, it's too bad Ted Berrigan and Jim Brodey aren't still around, hanging out in the St. Mark's area; they both loved Frank and would, I'm sure, set the record straight. But perhaps people from the old days who are presently part of the Poetry Project—Ron Padgett, Rudy Burckhardt, Paul Schmidt, Morris Golde, and Tony Towle immediately come to mind—will let the current crop of younger poets know what Frank O'Hara was really like.

Sincerely,

Joe LeSueur



DIRT

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Larry Fagin and Clark Coolidge for *On The*

Pumice of Moron. They put Maya Angelou's *On The Pulse of Morning: The Inaugural Poem* through an Oulipo exercise and then Geoff Young of The Figures designed it EXACTLY like Random House's edition of the poem. My favorite lines: "Lift up your heart diseases/ Each new housecoat holds new champions/ For a new behavior./ Do not be wedded forever/ To feathers, yoked eternally/ To bubble gum." Yes! *On The Pumice of Moron* is available from Small Press Distribution for a measly five bucks, but act fast because it's a limited edition. Please, anyone who is interested in being involved in a Friday Night reading, send me your work—poems, fiction, journals, autobiography. Thanks, and don't forget to show up here for the **New Year's Marathon** (it's my birthday).

HAUNTINGS

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things to come:

John Byrum, Miekal And, Liz Was & Liaison, made poetry humor, process & participation. If Helen Keller made a joke in the forest & no one were around to hear it, would it be a poem about sound?

Chris Strofollino reached the highest heights attainable during the conference at a panel discussion on *Word & World*, when he suddenly insisted that he was himself baseless & groundless. The poet, troubled by the giantesses from Toronto, found himself treed when he climbed onto his chair & crouched there, as proof that he was in fact not grounded. {Causing many to wonder: "Isn't there an electrical socket somewhere nearby?"}

The panel on *Reading & Refiguring* steadfastly refused to answer anyone's questions. This reticence seemed at first to be an attempt to refuse the refiguring implied by the questioning, & then it seemed a refusal to attempt a question which required refiguring. Finally, Melanie Neilson left everyone stunned & satisfied by completely refiguring herself & reading the audience.

The most useful piece of information to come out of the whole meeting was an observation made during the discussion

on the *Ethics of Small Press Publishing* made by Wisten Cornell, a visiting lecturer from New Zealand. He suggested that if a book or magazine sold only 1,000 copies, this did not represent a segment of the public interested in reading poetry, but was instead a mailing list of people who might be known.

Eventually, things began to get a bit weird. The best talk given by someone who was not actually invited was given by the *Barscheit Nation*. Who with an almost imperceptible nonchalance, & an astoundingly imperialist {& they aren't even American.} swagger, just short of walked right in & took over. Brought about by an event whose causes ran parallel to this invasion, the best reading of the conference was given at the very end by someone who wasn't even there.

One panelist, having only moments before called for "a new imaginary tense" blasted away at the only one of the poets at the conference who even seemed to have come close to making that new tense real. The splendor blaster of the incendiary, pyro-classical verbotage of tense, an individual who had so thoroughly reworked the language that the meanings of such simple & yet rigidly defined words as *combustible* took on whole new meanings when issuing from his mouth. My question finally is, "How can you be sure you disagree with someone when you can't actually be sure he is saying the same thing you think you hear?"

Which brings to mind some of the most important things about this conference, the conversations one was able to either get into or even just overhear. Unfortunately these existed merely as a residue of the structure of the conference more than as an element of its design. {There were too many Panels & Readings & not nearly enough "down time" during the day.}

So much so was this true that, one might never have gotten the chance to speak with those to whom one really wanted to talk. From my perspective the people most likely to be stood in line in order to be talked to at this conference were Peter Gizzi, Steve Evans & Ben Fried-

A SHEEP ON THE BUS[©]

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Sharon Glassman - Mike Tyler
 Christian X Hunter - Linda Yablonsky
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lander. However, there were many pleasant surprises. It is possible that Rod Smith does not ever actually sleep, but if you were still up at 3:00 AM it was well worth your time to stay up the rest of the night with him. {Because if nothing else, he told the funniest stories about other people you might ever hear.} Quite unexpected were the appearance of two women from George Mason College, who have studied with Carolyn Forché. Lacking any formal ties to either this particular "poetic movement" or any of the individuals involved, & providing an especially irreverent & insightful point of view, they claimed to have actually enjoyed themselves, & even found the poetry to be for the most part of

some interest.

Of overheard conversation, one of the very few "established" poets who came to the confuenge, {ostensibly to "see what was happening"} was caught marveling, as if having been just visited by those from outer space, "Last night these people went to a party & after having already listened to poetry for three days, organized a reading *at the party!* & except for a few people who were in the kitchen, everyone sat quietly & listened. But what was really amazing was that when the people in the kitchen got a little loud, everyone turned around & told them to be quiet."

Oddly for such a pessimistic profession, (& such a pessimistic group individually), there was a feeling of optimism & well being overlaid by a strange sense of reverence, all embodied in the answer to the question, "Divine emanation or Earthly paramour?" which was Robert Kocih. To speak with the man was to be as if one speaking in a dream.

i hope that in the future i find myself interested enough in finding out what's going on to take a couple of days off work & go upstate to have me a look around. There was for all its posture & lack of presence, something uplifting about this controversy of poets, which occurred early last April near a still frozen lake.

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